

Martin Heidegger

LETTER ON "HUMANISM"*1

Translated by Miles Groth, PhD

We still by no means think decisively enough about the essence of action. One knows action only as the bringing about of an effect, the effectiveness of which is assessed according to its usefulness. However, the essence of action is perfecting <something>. Perfecting means to unfold something in the fullness of its essence, <and in so doing> to bring it forth, *producere*. Therefore, <the> perfectible is actually only that which already is. Yet that which above all "is," is *be[-ing]*. Thinking perfects the relation of *be[-ing]* to the essence of man. It does not make or effect this relation. Thinking only bears it as that which is handed over to *be[-ing]*. This bearing consists in the fact that in thinking *be[-ing]* comes into language. Language is the place for *be[-ing]*. Man lives by its accommodation. Those who are thoughtful and those who are poetic are the overseers of these precincts. Overseeing for them is perfecting the evidence of *be[-ing]*, insofar as they bring this up in their utterances and save it in language. Thinking does not in that way just turn into action in the sense that an effect issues from it or that it is applied <to something>. Thinking acts in that it thinks. This <kind of> action is presumably the simplest and at the same time the highest because it concerns the relation of *be[-ing]* to man. But all effecting

1 Heidegger's marginal notes in his copies of the various editions of the lecture are included in **GA 9**. They will be cited with edition number preceded by *. Page numbers in **GA 9** [= **W**] are given throughout in braces preceded by 1.

*First edition (1949): "What is said here was not first of all notes that were worked out at the time but belongs to the way of a path that was begun in 1936 as a "moment" in the attempt to speak of the truth of *be[-ing]* in a simple way.--The letter still speaks the language of metaphysics, and, I admit, knowingly. The other language remains in the background." (**W** 313, n. a)

rests on *be[-ing]* and is intent on <some kind of> *be-ing*. Thinking, on the other hand, lets itself be absorbed by *be[-ing]* in order to speak the truth of *be[-ing]*. Thinking consummates this allowing. Thinking is *l'engagement par l'Être pour l'Être*. I do not know if it | {314} is linguistically possible to say both of these ('par' et 'pour') in one, namely, as *penser, c'est l'engagement de l'Être*. Here the genitive form "*de l' . . .*" expresses both the *genitivus subiectivus* and the <*genitivus obiectivus*>. Yet <the terms> 'subject' and 'object' are the jargon of metaphysics, which from early on in the form of western logic and grammar co-opted the interpretation of language. Today we have only just begun to discern what was concealed in the process. The freeing of language from grammar by a more original articulation of its essence remains <something> for thinking and poetry to do. Thinking is not only *l'engagement dans l'action* for and by *be-ing* <in some way>, meaning what is actual in the present situation. Thinking is <rather> *l'engagement* by and for the truth of *be[-ing]*. Its history is never past, it is always imminent. The history of *be[-ing]* bears and determines every *condition et situation humaine*. In order to first learn to experience purely what is termed the essence of thinking, and that means to also carry it out, we must free ourselves from the technical interpretation of thinking. Its beginnings reach back to Plato and Aristotle. There thinking itself is valued as a kind of τέχνη, a procedure of thinking over in the service of doing and making. In that case, however, thinking over is already seen with a view to πράξις and ποιήσις. Thus thinking, when taken by itself, is not "practical." The characterization of thinking as θεωρία and the determination of cognition as <a way of> behaving is one already in accord with the "technical" explanation of thinking. It is more a reactive move to preserve a sort of independence for thinking in contrast with action and doing. Since then, "philosophy" has had to justify its kind of life before "science." It thinks that this will most certainly happen by elevating itself to the level of science. Yet these efforts amount to the relinquishment of the essence of thinking. Philosophy is pursued by the fear of losing respect and value | {315} if it is not science. This is regarded as a shortcoming which is equated with being unscientific. *Be[-ing]**² as the element of thinking is abandoned by the technical explanation of

2*First edition (1949): "*Be[-ing]* as eventuality [Ereignis]; eventuality: voice [Sage]; thinking:

be[-ing]. Beginning with the Sophists and Plato, "logic" has sanctioned this explanation ever since. One <thus> assesses thinking according to a measure inappropriate to it. This assessment resembles a procedure that <would> try to evaluate the essence and capabilities of a fish according to how long it is able to live in on dry land. For a long time now, for far too long, thought has been on dry land. Can one now call the effort to bring thinking back into its element "irrationalism"?

Undoubtedly, the questions in your letter would become clearer in actual conversation. In what is written, thinking loses something of its deftness. Above all, however, it can only with difficulty keep to the multidimensionality peculiar to its realm. The strictness of thinking*³, in distinction from science, is not merely in the artificial, that is to say, technical and theoretical exactitude of <its>] concepts. It lies in the fact that uttering remains purely in the element of be[-ing] and lets what is simple rule in its manifold dimensions. But, on the other hand, what is written offers the beneficial constraint of a thoughtfully spoken version. For now, I should like to select only one of your questions. The discussion of it may shed some light on the others.

You ask: *Comment redonner un sens au mot 'Humanisme'?* This question from an intention to retain the word 'humanism'. I wonder whether that is necessary. Or is the unwholesomeness renouncing [Entsagen] the voice of the eventuality [Ereignisses]." (W 315, n. a) 'Sage' might as well be translated "telling," where its sense is of something 'telling' or revelatory, as in a telling comment or observation.

³First Edition (1949): "even here 'thinking' <is> formulated as thinking of the truth of be[-ing]." (W 315, n. b) Here is an example of Heidegger's practice of representing 'Sein' as I have presented it (be[-ing]), namely, to indicate the recognizable word marker while emphasizing that its standard meaning should be stricken from our experience. He began the practice in print in *Zur Seinsfrage* (1955), translated by William Kluback and Jean T. Wilde for a bilingual edition, as *The Question of Being* (1958) New York: Twayne.

caused by all terms of this kind not yet obvious enough? Of course, we have been wary of "isms" for a long time now. Yet the market of public opinion craves ever new ones. | {316} We are always ready to meet the demand again. And terms like `logic', `ethics', <and> `physics' first turn up as soon as original thinking has come to an end. The Greeks in their great age thought without such terms. Not once did they call thinking "philosophy." This comes to an end when it withdraws from its element. The element is that out of which thinking is able <to come forth> to be thinking. The element is what is really prevailing: <it is> what is prevailing. It looks after thinking and thus

brings about its essence. Simply put, thinking is thinking of *be[-ing]*. The genitive says something twofold. Thinking is of *be[-ing]* insofar as thinking, brought about by *be[-ing]*,*⁴ belongs to *be[-ing]*. Thinking is at the same time thinking of *be[-ing]*, insofar as thinking, belonging to *be[-ing]*, listens to *be[-ing]*. As regards its essential origin thinking is what it is as a listening belonging to *be[-ing]*. Thinking is--this says that *be[-ing]* has looked after its essence in an always becoming way. To look after a "thing" or a "person" in its essence means to love them, to assist them. Thought in a more original way, this availing means giving favor to thought. Such availing is the 4*First Edition (1949): "Only a hint of the language of metaphysics <remains>. For since 1936, `event [Ereignis]' has been the leading word of my thinking." (**W** 316, n. a) The word led Heidegger along many paths of exploration. The sense of the word in general is of something "phenomenal" in the popular sense: a miraculous event that eventuates as a turning point in the life of those who experience what the event bears. There is also a sense of festivity associated with such events. Perhaps `eventuality' would work even better, since it includes the sense of what is fated to be (what Heidegger will later term `das Geschick', i.e. what has come down [to us] as the tradition). Yet there is also the clear sense that the event happens by chance. Perhaps Heidegger has in mind by `Ereignis' what is more basic than either the predictable (what science pursues as Nature) and what comes as totally surprising (the miracle). The usage is closest to the English word `event' in the phrase "in the event that" The root of the word `Ereignis' is the reflexive verb `(sich) ereignen', which means "to come to pass."

authentic nature of prevailing, which does not just carry out this or that <act>, but can let something "come to be" in its coming forth, that is, let it be. The prevailing of availing is that on the "strength" of which something is genuinely capable of being. This prevailing is what is genuinely "possible," that whose essence lies in availing. Be[-ing] makes thinking possible in terms of this availing. The one makes the other possible. As the prevailing availing, be[-ing] is what is "potent-ial." As the element <of thinking>, be[-ing] is the "quiet power" of availing prevailing, that is, <of> the possible. Under the influence of "logic" and "metaphysics," the words `possible' and `possibility' are, of course, only taken in distinction from actuality, that is, according to an determinate (<i.e.,> the metaphysical) interpretation of be[-ing] as *actus* and *potentia*, a differentiation which is identified with *existentia* and *essentia*. If I speak of the "quiet power of the possible," I do not mean the *possibile* of an already presented *possibilitas*, nor *potentia* as the *essentia* of an *actus* of *existentia*, but rather be[-ing] itself which, availing, prevails over thinking and thus over the essence of man, that is, over its relation to be[-ing]. To enable something here means to preserve it in its essence, to keep it in its element.

When thinking comes to an end as it turns from its element, it makes good the loss by acquiring value as τέχνη, <that is,> as an educational tool, and thus as schoolwork, and later on as part of <the process of> acculturation. Gradually, philosophy turns into a technique of clarification based on highest principles. One no longer thinks, rather one "does philosophy." Such activities then go public as "isms" that in competition try to outdo each other. The domination of such terms is not by chance. In modern times, it lies above all in the dictatorship peculiar to the general. But so-called "private life" is still not essential, that is, being human. It merely sticks to a negation of what is public. It remains the dependent offspring of <public life> and feeds on its <own> retreat from what is public. It thus attests to its own will to subservience to the general public. Because it stems from the domination of subjectivity, this [the general public] is itself, however, the metaphysically conditioned institution and authorization of the frank display of

<all> kinds of be-ing in the unconditional reification of everything. That is why language falls into the service of providing routes along which reification, as the uniform accessibility of everyone to everything, spreads out in disregard of every limit. Thus does language find work under the dictatorship of the general public. This decides beforehand what is intelligible and what must be rejected as unintelligible. What is said | {318} about "one" in *Sein und Zeit* (1927), §§ 27 and 35, is by no means meant as a casual contribution to sociology. Just as little does this `one' mean the ethical existential counterpart to a person's being himself. Instead what has been said <there in **Be[-ing] and Time**> contains a pointer about the original affiliation of words with *be[-ing]* <which has> thought through the question about the truth of *be[-ing]*. This relationship remains hidden by the domination of subjectivity, which appears as the general public. However, when the truth of *be[-ing]* has become worthy of thought for thinking, reflection on the essence of language must also attain another position. It can no longer be mere philosophy of language. That is just why *Sein und Zeit* (§ 34) contains a pointer about the essential dimension of language and touches on the simple question of the manner of *be[-ing]* in which language as language thus is at any time. The ubiquitous and rampantly proliferating impoverishment of language not only undermines the aesthetic and moral responsibility of all use of language. It comes of an endangering of the essence of man. A merely sophisticated use of language still does not prove that we have as yet escaped this essential danger. Today it may indicate rather that we have not even seen the danger, and cannot see it because we ourselves have never even faced up to it. The recent frequently and much too belatedly discussed decay of language is, however, not the reason for, but rather a consequence of the process, dominated by the modern metaphysics of subjectivity, that almost ceaselessly causes language to abandon its element. Language still refuses us its essence, that it is the place of the truth of *be[-ing]*. Language, moreover, gives itself over to our sheer willing and machinations as a instrument of the domination of <every kind of> be-ing. This itself [some kind of be-ing] appears as what is actual in the web of cause and effect. Acting in a calculating way, we encounter <all kinds of>

be-ing as what is actual, but also, scientifically and philosophically, in explanations and proofs. To this [calculating] <there> also belongs the assurance that something is inexplicable. With such assertions we think confront | {319} the mystery. <It is> as if it were taken for granted that the truth of *be[-ing]* let causes and reasons for explanations or, what amounts to the same thing, their incomprehensibility be instituted.

But if man is once again to discover the nearness of *be[-ing]*, he must first learn to ek-sist in the nameless. In like manner, he must recognize not only the seductions of the general public but also the powerlessness of private life. Before he speaks, man must first let *be[-ing]* again have an impact on him, being so taken by it as to be in danger of having little or scarcely anything to say. Only thus will the preciousness of their essence again be restored to words, and to man <will be restored> once again an accommodation for his living in the truth of *be[-ing]*.

But, now, is there not in this claim upon man, is there not in this attempt to prepare man for this claim upon him something to be said for man? Where else does "regret" lead than in the direction of bringing man back again to his essence? What does this mean except that man (*homo*) become (*humanus*)? In this way humanity remains what is of concern to such thinking, for this is humanism: brooding and caring that man be human and not "inhuman," that is deprived of his essence. But in what does the humanness of man consist? It lies in his essence.

But whence and how is the essence of man determined? Marx demands that the "human man" be recognized and acknowledged. This he finds in the "community." "Communal" man is, for him, "natural" man. In the "community" the "nature" of man, that is, all of his "natural needs" (food, clothing, reproduction, economic subsistence) are equably guaranteed. Christians see the humanness of man, the humanity of *homo*, in his delimitation from deity. He is a Christian man as "God's child," who in Christ | {320} hears and accepts the claim of the Father on him.

Man is not of this world, inasmuch as "world," thought theoretically <and> platonically, is only a passing passage on to the beyond.

Considered explicitly by name, *humanitas* is reflected on and striven for in the time of Roman republic. *Homo humanus* contrasts with *homo barbarus*. Here *homo humanus* is the Roman, who exalts Roman *virtus* and ennobles it with the "incorporation" of παιδεία taken over from the Greeks. The "Greeks" are the Greeks of the Hellenic world whose character was formed in schools of philosophy. It <*humanitas*> is concerned with *eruditio et institutio in bonas artes*. Παιδεία so understood is translated by 'humanitas'. The authentic *romanitas* of *homo romanus* persists in such *humanitas*. In Rome, we come upon the first humanism. There it remains in essence a distinctively Roman phenomenon which comes of the encounter of the Roman world with the education of the late Greek world. The so-called Italian Renaissance of the 14th and 15th centuries is a *renascentia romanitatis*. Since *romanitas* is what matters here <in the Renaissance>, it is all about *humanitas* and thus about Greek παιδεία. However, the Greek world is always seen in its later form and this is seen as Roman. The *homo romanus* of the Renaissance is seen as the antithesis of the *homo barbarus*. But now the inhuman is the presumed barbarity of the Gothic scholasticism of the Middle Ages. Therefore, there always belongs to humanism, historically understood, a *studium humanitatis*, which in a determinate way reaches back into antiquity and thus also becomes each time a revival of the Greek world. This appears in 18th century [German] humanism as represented by Winckelmann, Goethe and Schiller. Hölderlin, by contrast, is not a part of "humanism," precisely, in fact, because he thought the fate of the essence of man more originally than "humanism" is able to do. |

{321} But if one understands by humanism in general man's effort to become free for his humanness and to find in it his dignity, then the meaning of humanism is different depending upon one's conception of "freedom" and of the "nature" of man. In the same way, its ways of

realization differ. Marx's humanism needed no reversion to antiquity, as little as does the humanism in terms of which Sartre conceptualizes his existentialism. Christianity is also a humanism, in the broad sense given the term, insofar as, according to its teachings, everything depends upon man's spiritual welfare (*salus aeterna*) and the history of mankind appears within the scope of Christianity. Different as these kinds of humanism may be in their ends and basis, the manner and means of their actualization, and the form of their doctrine, they nevertheless all concur that the *humanitas* of *homo humanus* is determined from the viewpoint of an already well established explanation of nature, history, the world, <and> the basis of the world, that is, of be-ing on the whole.

Every humanism is either grounded in metaphysics or makes itself the ground of some metaphysics. Every determination of the essence of man that already presupposes a reading of be-ing, without <raising> the question of the truth of be[-ing]--be it intentionally or unintentionally--is metaphysical. It therefore appears, and precisely with respect to the manner in which the essence of man is determined, that what is peculiarity to all metaphysics is that it is humanistic. Accordingly, every humanism is metaphysical. In the case of the determination of the humanness of man, humanism not only does not ask about the relation of be[-ing]^{*5} to the essence of man. Humanism even precludes this question, which by virtue of its origin in metaphysics it neither knows about nor understands. | {322} On the contrary, the necessity and

⁵*First edition (1949): "Owing to their manner of speaking [Sageweise], 'be[-ing]' and 'be[-ing] itself' at once attain *the detachment of the absolute*. But as long as the event [Ereignis] is withheld [zurückgehalten wird], this manner of speaking is also inevitable." (W 321, n. a) This 'Bezug' is really a pull [Zug] exerted on man. Later Heidegger will develop the meaning of this "pull" on man which amounts to a tension between be[-ing] and man. When Heidegger is speaking of the relation between be[-ing] and man from the point of view of be[-ing], he will use the noun 'Bezug' to name the relation.

sole manner in terms of which the question about the truth of *be*[-ing], which is forgotten*⁶ in and by metaphysics, can therefore come to light in the midst of the domination of metaphysics only if the question "What is metaphysics?" is raised. Above all, every question about "*be*[-ing]," even the one about the truth of *be*[-ing], must at the outset be introduced as a "metaphysical" one.

The first humanism, namely, the Roman, and all the kinds of humanism that have come into fashion up to the present presupposes <that> the most general "essence" of man is self-evident. Man is considered to be the *animal rationale*. This designation is not just the Latin translation of the Greek <phrase> ζῷον λόγον ἔχον, but a metaphysical explanation. This designation of the essence of man is not wrong. But it is conditioned by metaphysics. But its essential provenance, and not just its limits, became worth questioning in *Be*[-ing] and Time. What has come into question is, first of all, entrusted to thinking as <what> is intended for it, but by no means <as a way of> getting rid of it as though it were consumed <by thinking> in an empty pursuit of doubt.

Indeed, metaphysics confronts *be*-ing in its *be*[-ing] and thus also thinks the *be*[-ing] of *be*-ing. But it does not think *be*[-ing] as such, <it> does not think the distinction between the two (Cf. *On the Essence of Grounds* [1929], p. 8; also, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* [1929], p. 225; in *Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit*, First edition (1947): "But what is 'forgotten' [diese 'Vergessen'] is eventually [ereignishaff] to be thought out from 'Ἀλήθεια [truth].'" (W 322, n. a) The meaning of 'Ereignis' (the event of *be*[-ing]) in Heidegger's thinking should be kept in mind when reading 'ereignishaff'. The English sense of the word 'eventually'--"surely to come"--captures Heidegger's meaning in this note and provides a hint about the meaning of 'Ereignis'; namely, that, as an event, it is bound of come into its own. 'Das Ereignis' is what is bound to happen, what must come to pass, what will come about or come to be. The verb 'wesen' handles the sense of this "coming to be" from the perspective of what comes to pass. This "it" can only refer to 'das Sein'. But we still want to ask: What is the meaning of this *be*[-ing]?

addition, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 230). Metaphysics does not question the truth of be[-ing] itself. It therefore never asks in what manner the essence of man belongs to the truth of be[-ing]. Not only has metaphysics not brought up this question so far. This question is inaccessible to metaphysics as metaphysics. Be[-ing] waits just so that It alone will become worthy of thinking to man. With regard to the determination of the essence of man, however one may determine the *ratio* of the *animal* and the reason of the living thing, | {323} whether as "<practical> capacity for principles," or as "<practical> capacity for categories", or whatever, the essence of reason is always and in every case so grounded, that in every apprehending of be-ing in its be[-ing], be[-ing] is always so brought to light that it eventuates in its truth. In the same way, "*animal*," ζῷον, already presupposes an explanation of "life," which necessarily rests on a reading of <its kind of> be-ing as ζωή and φύσις, within which what is living appears. But apart from this, and above all, it finally remains to ask for once whether, to begin with and as decisive in advance of everything else, the essence of man lies in general in the dimension of animality. Are we at all on the right track toward the essence of man if and as long as we define man as one living being among others in contrast with plants, animals, and God? One can proceed this way, <namely,> in such a way, <that> one can situate man within <the realm of> be-ing as a kind of be-ing like all the rest. One will thereby always be able to say something correct about man. But one must be clear about the fact that man is thereby decisively relegated to the realm of the nature of animality, and even if one does not equate man with the animals, but instead grants him a specific difference. In principle one always thinks <here of> *homo animalis*, even when *anima* is presupposed as *animus sive mens*, and later on this <is presupposed> as subject, as person, <or> as spirit. Such presupposing is the way of metaphysics. But in that way the essence of man is thought little of and its provenance is not thought of, the origin of its essence which, for historical humanity, always remains the future of its essence. Metaphysics thinks man up from *animalitas* and does not think <further> on to his *humanitas*.

Metaphysics refuses to have anything to do with the simple constancy of essence that man comes to be in his essence only as long as he is absorbed by *be[-ing]*. Only in terms of this claim "has" he come upon that wherein his essence lives. Only in terms of this <kind of> living does he "have language" as the accommodation that keeps safe what is ekstastic about his essence. Taking place in light of *be[-ing]* is what term I {324} the ek-sistence of man. This way <of *be[-ing]*> is suited only to man. So understood, ek-sistence is not only grounds for the possibility of reason, *ratio*, but ek-sistence is also that in which the essence of man looks after the provenance of his determination <as ek-sistence>.

Ek-sistence can be said only of the essence of man, that is, only of the human way to "be", for as far as we have heard, man alone is admitted into the venture of ek-sistence. So, for that reason, ek-sistence can never be thought of as one specific kind of living thing among other kinds <of living thing>, assuming that it is becoming to man to think the essence of his *be[-ing]* and not only to give a natural history and historical account of his makeup and habits. Thus even what we mean by the comparison of man as *animalitas* with "animals" is based on the essence of ek-sistence. The body of man is essentially other than <that of> an animal organism. The aberration of biologism is not thereby overcome even by the fact that one annexes the soul to what is bodily in man, the mind to the soul, and the existential to the mind, and preaches high regard for the mind more loudly than ever, in order, after all that, to then let everything revert to the experiencing of life, with the cautionary guarantee that thinking disrupts the flow of life with its stuffy concepts, <i.e.,> that the thinking of *be[-ing]* deforms life. That the physiology and physiological chemistry [biochemistry] of man as an organism can be investigated in a natural scientific way is no proof that the essence of man lies in this organicity, that is, in the scientifically explained body. This counts for as little as the view that the essence of nature is locked up in atomic energy. It may even be that nature just hides its essence in the face that it turns toward the technical seizure <of it> by man. Just as little as the essence of man consists in being an

animal organism can this inadequate determination of the essence of man | {325} be set aside and compensated for, so that man is provided with an immortal soul, or with the capacity for reason, or with characteristic of being a person. The essence <of man> is overlooked, and indeed on grounds of the same metaphysical scheme of things.

That which man is, that is to say, in the traditional language of metaphysics, the "essence" of man lies in his ek-sistence. But ek-sistence thought in this way is not identical with the traditional concept of *existentia*, which means actuality in contrast with *essentia* as possibility. In **Be[-ing] and Time (GA 2, p. 56)**, in spaced type, is the sentence: "The `essence' of existence lies in its life." The point here, however, is not the antithesis of *existentia* and *essentia*, since these two metaphysical determinations of *be[-ing]* as such, to say nothing of their relationship, are not yet in question. The sentence contains even less a general statement about existence, insofar as this <word `Dasein'>, introduced in the 18th century as a another word for the term `object', is <meant> to express the metaphysical concept of the actuality of what is actual. Rather, the sentence means this: Man so comes to be that he is the "<There and> Then," that is, in light of *be[-ing]*. This `be[-ing]' of the <There and> Then, and only this, has <about it> the essential tension of ek-sistence, that is, the ekstastic instance of the truth of *be[-ing]*. The ekstastic essence of man lies in ek-sistence, which is different from <a> metaphysically thought *existentia*. This [*existentia*] is conceived by medieval philosophy as *actualitas*. Kant conceives *existentia* as *Wirklichkeit* in the sense of the objectivity of experience. Hegel determines *existentia* as the self-knowing idea of absolute subjectivity. Nietzsche grasps *existentia* as the eternal return of the equivalent. It thus remains an open question whether indeed even the *be[-ing]* of a stone, or perchance life as the *be[-ing]* of plants or animals, has been thought extensively enough as *existentia* according to what seem to be different explanations of it as actuality. In any case, evidently, living things are the way they are without | {326} enduring their *be[-ing]* as such in the truth of *be[-ing]* and safeguarding what is coming about of their *be[-ing]*. Presumably, in taking

place in such a way, animate nature is, among all <the kinds of> be-ing that <there> are, the most difficult to think because, on the one hand, it <animate nature> is in a certain way closely related to us but, on the other hand, is at the same time, however, separated from our exemplary essence by an abyss. On the other hand, it might appear that the essence of the divine were closer to us than what is seemingly strange in animate nature, closer, that is, in an essential remoteness with which, as what is remote, our eksistent essence is nevertheless more intimate with than it is with the scarcely conceivable, cryptically bodily kinship with animals. Such considerations cast a curious light on the easy and for that reason always still premature characterization of man as the *animale rationale*. Because, at any given moment, plants and animals remain bound to their environment, but are never liberated in light of be[-ing] (and the "world" is only in light of [be[-ing]]), for that reason language does not matter to them. Nor, however, do they therefore hover, worldless, in their environment because language is denied them. But in this word 'environment' is condensed all that is puzzling about animate nature. In essence, language is not what comes out of an organism; neither <is it> what comes out of a living thing. For that reason, it can also never be thought in an essentially correct way <when> reduced to symbolic expressions or even <to> semantics. Language is an illuminating <that is itself at the same time an> obscuring of what is to come of be[-ing] itself.

Thought of ekstatically, ek-sistence does not coincide with *existentia* either in terms of content or as regards <its> form. In terms of <its> content, ek-sistence means taking place further on*⁷ in ⁷That is, ek-sistence takes place out yonder, be-yond, ahead of itself, i.e., in the future, precisely where the truth of be[-ing] is indicated. The key element of the term 'Her-aus-stehen' is the 'aus', which can also have the sense of "in terms of," as Heidegger's reference in the following note to the letter's companion piece when it was first published suggests.

**Plato's Teaching of the Truth*, First edition (1947): "'Hinaus': hin in das Aus des Auseinander des Unterschieds (das Da), nicht 'hinaus' aus einem Innen.'"--"Out yonder': yonder, in what is, in terms of what is outside the difference (<i.e., outside of> the <There and> Then [Da]), not <in

the truth of *be[-ing]*. *Existencia* (existence), on the contrary, means *actualitas*, actuality in contradistinction to bare possibility as <merely having an> idea <of>. Ek-sistence names the determination of that which man is in the event of the truth. *Existencia* is thus the name for the actualization of that which something is as apparently <based on> its idea. The sentence "Man is {327} ek-sists" does not answer the question whether man is or is not actually there, but rather answers the question about the "essence" of man. We are used to asking this question just as inappropriately when we ask what man is, or when we ask who man is. For in the "Who?" or "What?" we are already on the lookout for something like a person or for an object. But what is person-like both overlooks and gets in the way of what is coming about of ontohistorical ek-sistence no less than does what is object-like. For that reason, the word 'essence' was placed between scare quotes in the sentence previously quoted from *Be[-ing] and Time* (GA 2, p. 56). That intimates, then, that this "essence" is determined neither by *esse essentiae* nor by *esse existentiae*, but rather by what is ek-static about existence. As what is ek-sisting, man takes place in terms of ex-istence just as he takes the <There and> Then as <what is in> light of *be[-ing]* into his "care." Ex-istence itself, however, comes to be as the "imminent." It comes to be in the utterance of *be[-ing]* as befitting what is becoming.

It would be the greatest error, however, for one to want to account for the statement about the ek-sistent essence of man as though it were the secularized transference to man of a thought asserted about God <which has been> taken from Christian theology (*Deus est ipsum esse*, for neither is ek-sistence the actualization of an essence, nor does ek-sistence itself in any way bring about and fix what is essential. If one understands what in *Be[-ing] and Time* is termed "scheme" as a kind of representational presupposing, then one takes it as an accomplishment of subjectivity and, within the scope of the "existential *analytique*" of "what *be[-ing]* <is> in the world", does not think of it in the only way "the understanding of *be[-ing]*" can be thought, terms of the going> forth of something that is within." (W 326, n. a) Heidegger does not have in mind some sort of externalization, but rather the 'aus' has linguistic meaning as "in terms of."

namely, as the ekstastic relation*⁸ <of ek-sistence> to the illumination of *be[-ing]*. A sufficient apprehension and consummation of this other, subjectivity relinquishing thinking is, of course, made more difficult because in the publication of *Be[-ing] and Time*, the third part of the second division, "Time and *Be[-ing]*," was withheld (cf. *Be[-ing] and Time* [GA 2], p. 53). | {328} Here the whole works*⁹ is upended. The part in question was withheld because thinking refused to give in to an adequate uttering*¹⁰ of this turn <of events and thus, with the help of metaphysics, did not come through <with what it had promised>. The lecture "On the Essence of Grounds," which was thought out and presented in 1930 but only published in 1943, gives a true glimpse of the thinking of the turn from "be[-ing] and time" to "time and be[-ing]." This turn does not mean a change of standpoint*¹¹ from *Be[-ing] and Time*, but rather that, with it, for the first time the thinking sought after gets to the place of that dimension in which *Be[-ing] and Time* is <to be> experienced, experienced, namely, through a fundamental experience of the forgottenness of *be[-ing]**¹².

8*First edition (1949): "<this is> inexact, better <would be>: <an> ekstastic instance in light <of be[-ing]>.." (W 327, n. a)

9First edition (1949): "in the what [Was] and how [How] of what is worth thinking about [des Denkwürdigen] and of thinking." (W 328, n. a). 'Das Denkwürdig' is also "what is memorable or notable."

10*First edition (1949): "letting emerge [Sichzeigenlassen]." (W 328, n. b) 'Sagen' might also be translated 'rendering', "giving back."

11First edition (1949): "that is, the question about *be[-ing]* [der Seinsfrage]." (W 328, n. c) Heidegger's question remains the same, although he turns (back) to time for the further working out of the question.

12First edition (1949): "forgottenness [or oblivion] [Vergessenheit]--forgetting [Λήθη]--forgetting (as hiding) [Verbergung]--revocation [Entzug]--dispossession (dépassement) [Enteignis]: eventuality [Ereignis]." (W 328, n. d) A similar marginal note (on 'Verborgenheit') appears in the

On the other hand, Sartre articulates the fundamental statement of existentialism in this way: life precedes what is of the essence. In doing so, he takes <the terms> *existentia* and *essentia* in the sense they have for metaphysics, which since Plato has said that *essentia* precedes *existentia*. Sartre reverses this proposition. The reversal of a metaphysical proposition, however, is still a metaphysical proposition. In this form, the proposition persists along with metaphysics in the forgottenness of the truth of *be[-ing]*. For though philosophy may determine the relationship between *essentia* and *existentia* in accordance with the meaning it had in the controversies of the Middle Ages, or the meaning it had for Leibniz, or in some other sense, it still remains to ask, first of all, by which venture of *be[-ing]* this differentiation*¹³ within *be[-ing]* comes before thinking as *esse essentiae* and *esse existentiae*. It remains to consider the reason why the question about this venture of *be[-ing]* was never asked and for what reason it could never be thought. Or is this--<namely,> that this is how things stand with the distinction between *essentia* and *existentia*--not a sign of the forgottenness of *be[-ing]*? We must suppose that this | {329} venture of *be[-ing]* does not lie in something merely missing in human thinking, to say nothing of the more modest ability of early western thinking. The differentiation of *essentia* (essentiality) and *existentia* (actuality), hidden in its essential provenance, dominates through and through what has come down <to us> of Western history and all history <that has been> determined by Europe.

Fifth edition of Heidegger's copy of the *Einleitung zu: "Was ist Metaphysik?". Der Rückgang in den Grund der Metaphysik [Introduction to "What Is Metaphysics?. Getting to the Bottom of Metaphysics (1949), in GA 9, 370, n. a)* It is notable that 'erfahren' also means "to discover," so that Heidegger is also saying something about the fundamental experience of the forgottenness of *be[-ing]*, namely, that it amounts to a discovery of that forgottenness.

¹³First edition (1949): "This differentiation [Unterscheidung], however, is not identical with the ontological difference. Inherent in this [the ontological difference], every differentiation belongs on the "side" [Seite] of *be[-ing]*." (W 328, n. e)

Sartre's main point about the priority of *existentia* over *essentia* justifies the word 'Existentialism' as a suitable name for this philosophy. But the main point of "Existentialism" has not the least bit in common with the sentence from **Be[-ing] and Time** <cited earlier: "The `essence' of existence lies in its life.">. Apart from the fact that, in **Be[-ing] and Time**, no statement about the relationship between *essentia* and *existentia* can in any way even be expressed, since there it is a question of getting ready for something that is a forerunner <of things to come>. As has been said, this was done rather awkwardly. What is still most worth saying today might perhaps become an incentive to go along with the essence of man to the point where it, <i.e.,> thinking, pays attention to the dimension of the truth of *be[-ing]* prevailing by way of it. But even this could happen in any given moment only with respect to *be[-ing]* and with regard to ex-istence, which man sustains by ek-sisting, <but> not, however, for the sake of man, so <that he would be able> to claim that civilization and culture are his creation.

However, in order that we of today might enter the dimension of the truth of *be[-ing]* in order to be able to reflect on it, we are first of all, therefore, obliged to make clear for once how *be[-ing]* has to do with man and how he is absorbed by *be[-ing]*. Such an essential experience happens to us when it dawns on us that man is only as long as he ek-sists. Were we to start off by saying this in the language of the tradition, then it would go: Man's ek-sistence is his substance. For that reason, the sentence "Man's `substance' is life" is repeated from time to time in **Be[-ing] and Time**. However, thought in terms of the history of *be[-ing]*, "substance" is already a obscuring translation of οὐσία, a word which names the presence of what is presenting itself and ἰ {330} at the same time generally means, with enigmatic ambiguity, that which is presencing itself. Were we to think the metaphysical term `Substanz' in this sense, one that was already in mind in **Be[-ing] and Time** in consequence of the "phenomenological destructuring" carried out there (cf. **GA 2**, pp. 33-34), then the sentence "Man's `substance' is ek-sistence" means nothing other than that the manner in which man makes his very own essence a present of *be[-ing]* is by means of an ek-

static taking place in the midst of the truth of *be[-ing]*. Through this essential determination of man, <however,> the humanistic interpretation of man as *animale rationale*, as <a> "person," <and> as a mental <and> spiritual <and> bodily essence was discerned to be incorrect, but was not rejected. On the contrary, our sole consideration is that the highest humanistic determinations of the essence of man have not even heard about man's real*¹⁴ dignity. To that extent, the thinking in *Be[-ing] and Time* is anti-humanism. But this opposition does not mean that such thinking took sides against what is human and advocated what is inhumane, defended inhumanity, and debased the dignity of man. Opposition to humanism is thought because it does not locate the humanity of man high enough. Of course, the essential nobility of man does not lie in the fact that, as its "subject," he is the substance of <his kind of> be-ing, in order, as the ruler of *be[-ing]*, to let what is <intended> to be the be-ing of <any kind of> be-ing dissolve all too loudly into <much> celebrated "objectivity."

14*First edition (1949): "Dignity that is proper [eigene] to, that is, appropriate to [zu-geeignete], appropriated by [er-eignete] him [man]. Suitability [Eignung] and eventuality [Ereignis]" (**W** 330, n. a) There is also a sense here of a dignity that has been dedicated to [zueignente] man, that has happened to [ereignete] man alone. The word `Ereignis' was, of course, a lifelong focus of meditation by Heidegger. Here and above, some of its senses are emerging in the text. It is a word that only gradually revealed its meaning. Heidegger glosses many passages in the *Randbemerkungen* of the *Gesamtausgabe* with the word `Ereignis'. Otto Pöggeler suggests that the terms `Eignung' and `Ereignis' correspond to `δύναμις' and `ἐνέργεια' in Aristotle's philosophy. See his article "Destruction and Moment," translated by David Magurshak, in Theodore Kisiel and John van Buren (eds.), *Reading Heidegger from the Start. Essays in His Earliest Thought* (1994) Albany: SUNY Press, p. 151, and Heidegger's essay "Vom Wesen und Begriff der Φύσις. Aristoteles Physik B,1," from a course given during the first trimester 1940 at the University of Freiburg, reprinted in *Wegmarken* (1967), **GA 9** 239-301, translated by Thomas Sheehan in *Man and World* (Dordrecht) **9**, 1976, 219-270.

Man is rather "projected" into the truth of *be[-ing]* by *be[-ing]* itself, so that ek-sisting in this fashion, he might mind the truth of *be[-ing]*, in order that, in light of the *be*, <the kind of> *be-ing* that he is might appear as *be-ing*. Man does not decide whether <a kind of *be-ing*> appears and how it <appears>, whether and how God and the gods, history and nature, enter into, <and> come into and out of, presence in light of *be[-ing]*. What is to come of <any kind of> *be-ing* rests with | {331} what has come down <to us>*¹⁵ of *be[-ing]*. However, the question for man remains whether he can find his essence in that [the essence] of what is to come, which is in accord with that which has come down <to us>, and if that is the case, accordingly, as what is ek-sisting, he has to mind the truth of *be[-ing]*. Man tends to *be[-ing]*. That is all that **Be[-ing]** and *Time* is out to think through whenever ekstastic life is discovered to be <in> "regret" <of> *be[-ing]* (cf. § 44a, **GA**, pp. 299 ff.).

But *be[-ing]*--what is *be[-ing]*? It "is" <the> It <apart from the `gibt' in "Es gibt">. To discover and articulate <what> this <means> is for the <kind of> thinking that is to come to learn <to do>. *Be[-ing]*--this is not God and not the reason for the world. *Be[-ing]* is essentially more far off*¹⁶ than all

15*First edition (1949): "Ge-schick: Versammlung der Epochen des brauchenden Anwesenlassens." (**W** 331, n. a) "Ad-vent [from *advenio*: "to come to"]: <the> convening [from *convenio*: "to come together"] of the epochs of what is needed to let <*be[-ing]*> come to presence." The noun `Gebrauch', which can be construed as what has been provided to meet such a need, means linguistic "usage." The various usages of *be[-ing]*, understood as the bare infinitive, converge in every new venture of *be[-ing]*. Earlier in the text, Heidegger had used the word `das Geschicklich', "what is becoming," in the sense of what suits, or fits man. (This sense carries over into the nonphilosophical term `Schick', *chic*, stylish.) Heidegger here also has in mind the standard meaning of `Geschick' as "fate," as well as the related term `Schicksal' ("destiny").

16First edition (1949): "Weite: aber nicht die des Umgreifens, sondern der ereignenden Ortschaft;

<of the kinds of> be-ing but is at the same time closer to man than every <kind of> be-ing, be this <the be-ing of> a rock, an animal, a work of art, a machine, be it an angel or God. Be[-ing] is what is closest. Yet what is near is furthest from man. From the start, man forever clings always and only to just <the kinds of> be-ing. But when thinking conceives of be-ing as be-ing, it appeals decidedly to be[-ing]. But, in truth, it regularly thinks only be-ing as such, and precisely not, but never, be[-ing] as such. The "question about be[-ing]" always remains a question in accordance with about be-ing. The question about be[-ing] is still not at all that which the tricky term [*Seinsfrage*] indicates: <namely,> the question in accordance with be[-ing]. Even when it becomes "critical," as with Descartes and Kant, philosophy always follows the trend of metaphysical conceptualizing. It thinks on <and on>, from <one kind of> be-ing to <another kind of> be-ing, with a glance in passing at be[-ing]. For every staring-point of <a kind of> be-ing and every turning back to it is, after all, in light of be[-ing].

But metaphysics only knows the illumination of be[-ing] as either, with regard to the "way it looks" (*ιδέα*), the look of what is presenting itself, or, critically, as what is sighted, from the viewpoint of subjectivity, in the seeing <things> as <something or other> of categorial conceiving. That means the truth of be[-ing], as illumination in and of itself, remains hidden from metaphysics. | {332} This hiddenness, however, is not a defect of metaphysics, but rather its chief asset, undisclosed to it and yet what is really lasting of its particular richness. But the illumination alone is <itself the same as> be[-ing]. In the midst of what is going to come of be[-ing], <the illumination> grants metaphysics a first-time look at what of that which is presenting itself touches upon what is coming to pass for man, so that man alone can for the first time touch upon be[-ing] (*θιγεῖν*, Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Θ 10) in becoming aware (*νοεῖν*). <But> sight at first draws attention to outlook. It gives itself over to this <outlook>, if becoming aware has become <only> als die Weite der Lichtung." (**W** 331, n. b)--"Expanse: not that of the encompassing [i.e., what the horizon contains], however, but the place [i.e., the temporal "point of"] of what is coming to pass, as the expanse of the illumination <of be[-ing]>."

a setting <things> out in front of oneself, <as> in the *percipio* of the *res cogitans* as *subiectum* of *certitudo*.

Given that, in general, we can so unceremoniously ask the question at all, how then is *be[-ing]* related to ek-sistence? *Be[-ing]* is itself the relationship*¹⁷, in that It keeps ek-sistence to itself and gets it together in its living, that is, ek-static essence, as the point of the truth of *be[-ing]* in the midst of <any sort of> *be-ing*. Because man, as what is ex-sisting, ends up in this relationship as which *be[-ing]* itself comes to pass, during the time that he lives through it <the relationship> ek-statically, that is, mournfully takes it upon itself, at first he misconstrues what is closest <to it> and holds out for what is once removed. He even takes this to be what is closest. Yet nearer than what is closest, <namely, some kind of> *be-ing*, and farther off for everyday thinking than what is most distant from it is what is itself nigh--the truth of *be[-ing]*.

Forgetting the truth of *be[-ing]* in deference to the onrush of <some kind of> *be-ing* that is not reflected on in its essence has the sense of what in ***Be[-ing] and Time*** was called "forfeiting." The word does not mean the Fall of Man understood in a moral philosophical and, at the same time, ^{17*}*Plato's Teaching of the Truth*, First edition (1947): "Verhältnis aus Verhaltenheit (Vor-enthalt) der Verweigerung (des Entzugs)." (**W** 332, n a.)--"The relationship in terms of <the> holding back (withholding) of the refusal (of the withdrawal)." This note has a great deal to offer toward understanding what Heidegger understands about silence regarding something. He attributes silence the nature of the circumstances surrounding the relationship between ek-sistence and *be[-ing]*. The withdrawal of *be[-ing]* accounts for man's holding back from speaking it. The essence of these circumstances is a kind of tension [Bezug], with man holding back in response to the pulling back of *be[-ing]*. I visualize something like a dead heat tug of war. The character of any `Verhältnis' is that it sustains a certain proportion between the two sides or parties to the relationship. Again the courtroom image suggests itself. It is as if language were on trial, with *be[-ing]* as the prosecutor and the essence of man (ek-sistence) as the defendant.

secularized way, but instead names an essential relationship of man to *be[-ing]* within the relation of *be[-ing]* to the essence of man. Correspondingly, the terms 'authenticity'¹⁸ and 'inauthenticity', | {333} <words which were> used in a provisional way <in **Be[-ing] and Time**>, do not betoken a moral existential, or an "anthropological" distinction, but rather <refer to> the "ekstatic" relation of the essence of man to the truth of *be[-ing]*, something that is above all else worth thinking about for once since <it has been> hidden from philosophy up to now. But this relation is not the way it is on grounds of <our> ek-sistence, but, rather, the essence of ek-sistence, living <a life> ekstatically, comes of the essence of the truth of *be[-ing]* in a way becoming <to it>.

The one thing that thinking would like to achieve, which for the first time it tries to bring out in **Be[-ing] and Time**, is something that is simple. In this capacity <as something that is simple>, *be[-ing]* remains mysterious, the plain intimacy of what is unpretentiously at work. This which intimates¹⁹ comes to be as language itself. But language is not only language, insofar as we

18*First edition (1949): "aus dem Eignen des Er-eignens zu denken." (**W** 332, n. b)--"<Authenticity means> to think <in terms of> what is becoming <at the heart> of what is coming to pass." The sense of "what is becoming" in this gloss is "what fits" or "what suits," as when one says that a certain article of clothing is very "becoming" to the person wearing it. Heidegger is playing on the root 'eignen' in 'er-eignen' (hence the hyphenation), thereby pointing out that what is fitting or suitable (becoming) is to be found there within the event coming about or coming to pass. In other words, the coming to pass as a relationship includes within it something becoming. As a gloss on the term 'Eigentlichkeit', Heidegger's marginal note says that at the heart of what has the character of "what comes to pass" is "the 'ekstatic' relation of the essence of man and the truth of *be[-ing]*." That relationship is what fits (is becoming to) man. In other words, at the heart of man's authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*) is the "fit" between man the truth of *be[-ing]*.

19*First edition (1949): "im Sinne der Nahnis: lichtend bereithalten, halten als hüten." (**W** 333, n.

conceptualize this when the matter comes up as the unity of linguistic form (script), sound, and meter and meaning. We think of the phoneme and the grapheme as the body of the word, <and of> sound and meter as the soul <of the word>, and what is in accordance with the meaning <of the word> as the spirit of language. We usually think of language in terms of its correspondence to the essence of man insofar as the latter is conceptualized as *animale rationale*, that is, as the unity of body, soul, <and> spirit. But just as in the <concept of the> humanity of the *homo animalis*, ek-sistence and, with it, the relation of the truth of *be[-ing]* to man is disguised, so does the metaphysical organic explanation conceal its ontohistorical essence. According to this <explanation>, language is what is brought about by *be[-ing]* and <is> the place for *be[-ing]* provided by it [*be[-ing]*]. That is what it means to think of the essence of language in terms of its correspondence to *be[-ing]*, that is, namely, as this correspondence, which is, as it were, an accommodation for the essence of man.

But man is not just a living thing that in addition to having other abilities also possesses language. Rather, language is the place for *be[-ing]*, living within <which> man ek-sists during the time that, minding it, he belongs to the truth of *be[-ing]*.

So it happens, then, that in the determination of the humanness of man as ek-sistence, ¹ {334} a)--"in the sense of what approximates: to keep at the ready in bringing to light, to keep, as in to keep <a secret>." The word `das Nahnis' is a neologism, formed by adding the suffix ` -nis' to the verbal stem `nah- ' of the verb `nahren', "to approach or get close to." It means "what gets close to something else." Heidegger is describing something that intimates, gets close, or approximates, but never quite gets there. The verb `nahren', "to approach," has two opposite senses: "going away toward" (as in "The train is approaching the end of its line.") and "coming in this direction" (as in "The train is approaching the station."). The attraction between *be[-ing]* and man is like that between neighbors who live very close to each other and who are drawn to each other, while still wanting to keep their distance.

man is not what is essential <to the determination>, but instead *be[-ing]* <is>, as the dimension of what is ek-static about ek-sistence. This dimension, however, is not the well-known spatial <realm>. On the contrary, everything spatial and all that is spatiotemporal comes about in what is dimensional^{*20}, which is of the very character of *be[-ing]* itself.

Thinking pays attention to these simple relations. It tries to find the appropriate words for them in the midst of the language of metaphysics, which has long since been handed down, and its grammar. Assuming that a term means anything in particular, can this <kind of> thinking still be designated humanism? Surely not, insofar as humanism thinks metaphysically. Surely not, if it is existentialism and it is represented in the way Sartre articulates it in this sentence: *précisément nous sommes sur un plan où il y a seulement des hommes* (*L'Existentialisme est un Humanisme*, p. 36). As thought about in *Be[-ing] and Time*, this would read: *précisément nous sommes sur un plan où il y a principalement l'Être*. But where does *le plan* come from, and what is *le plan*? *L'Être et le plan* are the same <thing>. In *Be[-ing] and Time* (**GA** 2, p. 281), it is said, intentionally and cautiously: *il y a l'Être*: "there is" *be[-ing]*. But "il y a" inaccurately translates "there is." For the "it", which in this case "gives," is *be[-ing]* itself. The <word> `gives', however, names the essence of *be[-ing]* <as> giving, <i.e.,> granting, its truth. Giving itself in <the sphere> of what is open

²⁰*Plato's *Teaching on the Truth*, First edition (1947): "Space <is here understood> neither in addition to [neben] time, nor reduced [aufgelöst] to time, nor inferred (or deduced) [deduziert] from time." Undoubtedly, Heidegger has in mind the fundamental meanings of the Latin term `deducere', "to bring down or lead away from in time," as though the "deduction" were a "come down" from the temporal to the spatial. We recall that the original meaning of `dimension' in geometry is "what metes or measures out something": μέτρον. It is what guarantees that there is a time and place for everything, which is the ontological meaning of παιδεία. Here Heidegger suggests that *be[-ing]* has the character of the dimensional, understood in this sense of meting out *inter alia* time and geometric space.

<along> with the latter itself is that very same *be[-ing]*.

At the same time, "there is" is used to temporarily avoid the phrase "*be[-ing]* is," since ordinarily <the word> `is' is spoken of as something that is. That is the sort of thing we call <a kind of> *be-ing*. But *be[-ing]* precisely "is" not <a kind of> "*be-ing*." If the "is" is spoken without a closer reading of *be[-ing]*, then *be[-ing]* becomes all too easily conceptualized as a "*be-ing*" in the manner of any <other kind of> *be-ing* which effects causes and is effected as an effect. All the same, in the early days of thinking Parmenides said ἔστι γὰρ εἶναι: "It is, namely, *be[-ing]*." In this utterance is hidden the inceptive mystery of all thinking. Perhaps "is" can come to be spoken in the appropriate way only of *be[-ing]*, ἰ {335} so that <any kind of> *be-ing* <precisely> "is" not, never "is." But because <in that case> thinking should for the first time reach the point of speaking <of> *be[-ing]* in its truth, instead of explaining it in terms of *be-ing* as <a kind of> *be-ing*, it has to remain open as a concern of thinking whether and how *be[-ing]* is.

Parmenides' <utterance> ἔστι γὰρ εἶναι is still unthought even today. From this one may gauge how it goes with the progress of philosophy. If it pays attention to its essence, philosophy does not progress at all. It is at the point of always thinking the same <thing>. Taking steps forward, namely, away from this point, is <taking> a false step that follows thinking like a shadow it has itself cast. Because *be[-ing]* is as yet unthought, in ***Be[-ing]*** and *Time* it is still said of *be[-ing]*: "there is" <*be[-ing]* and not "*be[-ing]* is">. Yet one cannot just go right ahead and without a clue speculate about this *il y a*. This "there is" is at work as what has come <to us> of *be[-ing]*. Its history attains language in the words of essential thinkers. For that reason, thinking that thinks in <the> truth of *be[-ing]* is, as thinking, historical. There is not some sort of "systematic" thinking and, in addition, for illustration, a history of earlier opinions. But nor is there, as Hegel thought, merely a systematics, whose law of thinking amounts to the law of history and, at the same time, can resolve this <history> into the system. Thought more originally, there is <a> history of *be[-ing]*

<only> within which thinking, as reminding, belongs to this history which is itself brought about by thinking. Reminding is essentially distinct from the later recollecting of history in the sense of past goings on. History, to begin with, does not happen as events. And it is not what is passing. The events of history come about as <they come> out of the venture of the truth of *be[-ing]* (cf. the lecture on Hölderlin's hymn "As though on a holiday . . ." [1939, GA 4, p.].) *Be[-ing]* belongs to what has come down <to us> to the extent that It, *be[-ing]*, gives itself. However, thought of as what has come down <to us>, this means It gives itself and at the same time refuses <to give> itself. All the same, Hegel's determination of history as the unwinding of "spirit" is not untrue. However, it is not in part true, <and> in part false. It is I {336} as true as metaphysics is true, which, with Hegel, for the first time brings up its <own> essence <as> thought absolutely in the system. Absolute metaphysics, with <its> inversion in Marx and Nietzsche, belongs to the history of the truth of *be[-ing]*. What stems from it is not affected by or possibly explained away by refutations. It can be grasped only as long as its truth is back safe in *be[-ing]* itself and removed from the arena of mere human opinion. All refuting in the field of essential thinking is foolish. The quarrel among thinkers is a lovers' quarrel about what alone matters. In turn, it helps them to gain the simple sense of belonging to what is the selfsame <matter>, in terms of which they find what is appropriate to what has come down <to us> of *be[-ing]*.

Assuming that in the future man will be able to think the truth of *be[-ing]*, he will at the same time think in terms of ek-sistence. Ek-sisting, he takes place in what has come down <to us> of *be[-ing]*. The ek-sistence of man, as ek-sistence, is historical, but not first of all or therefore even just because so many things happen to man and in human affairs in the course of time. Because it matters to think the ek-sistence of *be-ing* there {Da-sein}, it matters so essentially to the thinking of ***Be[-ing]*** and *Time* that the historical relevance of existence be discovered.

But is it not said in ***Be[-ing]*** and *Time*, where the "there is" is brought up (GA 2, p. 281), <that> "[. . .]

[o]nly as long as there is existence, . . . [']is there['] be[-ing]"? Indeed. That means, only as long as the illumination of *be[-ing]* comes to pass does *be[-ing]* pass itself along to man. But that the <There and> Then, <that is,> illumination as the truth of *be[-ing]*, comes to pass is a dispensation of what is becoming of *be[-ing]* itself. This is what has come down <to us> of the illumination <as *be[-ing]* itself>. But the sentence <just quoted> does not mean that man's existence, in the received sense of *existentia* and, as thought in the modern period, the actuality of the ego *cogito*, is the kind of *be-ing* by means of which *be[-ing]* is produced for the first time. The sentence does not say that *be[-ing]* is a product of man. In the introduction to ***Be[-ing] and Time*** (GA 2, p. 51), it is put simply and clearly and even in italics: "*Be[-ing]* is the *transcendens per se*." Just as the overtness | {337} of spatial intimacy <to all things> surpasses every near and distant thing, so is *be[-ing]* essentially more boundless than all <manner of> *be-ing*, because it is the illumination itself. But *be[-ing]* is nevertheless thought of according to the initially unavoidable formulation of a still dominant metaphysics. Only in this respect does *be[-ing]* come to light in a kind of surpassing and as this <surpassing>.

The preliminary determination <that> "*Be[-ing]* is the *transcendens per se*" takes into consideration in a simple statement the manner in which the essence of *be[-ing]* has thus far enlightened man. This retrospective determination of the essence of the *be[-ing]* of *be-ing* in terms of the illumination of *be-ing* as such remains unavoidable for formulations by earlier thinking of the question about the truth of *be[-ing]*. Thinking thus attests to its essence [the essence of the *be[-ing]* of *be-ing*] in a way becoming to it. Far be it for it [thinking] to claim to start from scratch and explain away as false all philosophy that has come out of the past. If, however, the designation of *be[-ing]* as the *transcendens* pure and simple already names the simple essence of the truth of *be[-ing]*, that and that alone after all is surely a question for the <kind of> thinking that attempts to think the truth of *be[-ing]*. That is also what is meant on [GA 2] p.304 <of ***Be[-ing] and Time*** by saying> that only out of "sense," that is, out of the truth of *be[-*

ing], is it to be understood how *be[-ing]* is. *Be[-ing]* comes to light for man in the ek-static scheme of things. Yet this scheme of things does not produce *be[-ing]*.

But more than that, this scheme of things is essentially one that is imminent. What is at issue in envisioning is not man but *be[-ing]* itself, which in the ek-sistence of *be-ing* there accommodates man as his essence. That which has come down <to us> comes to pass as the illumination of *be[-ing]*, which is the way it <*be[-ing]*> is. It grants *be[-ing]* intimacy. In this intimacy in the illumination of the "<There and> Then," man lives man as one that is ek-sisting, without as of yet actually having the power to go on and take over this <kind of> living in particular. The nearness "of" *be[-ing]*, which is as it is in the "<There and> Then," is thought out from <the perspective of> ***Be[-ing]*** and Time in the address on Hölderlin's elegy "Homecoming" (1943), <where> we hear that "home" spoken of in the bard's poem | {338} and hear it spoken of <coming> from an experience of the forgottenness of *be[-ing]*. The this word [*Heimat*'] is thought of in an essential sense, not patriotically, not nationalistically, but ontohistorically. At the same time, however, the essence of home is spoken of with the intention of thinking of the homelessness of modern man in terms of the essence of the history of *be[-ing]*. Nietzsche experienced this homelessness for the last time <in the history of *be[-ing]*>. He could find no other way out of the midst of metaphysics than the overturning of metaphysics. But that is hopelessness at its best. Hölderlin, however, when writing "Homeland," is for that very reason concerned that his "countrymen" meet up with their essence. By no means did he look for this [essence] in some sort of egoism his people. He sees it instead in an affiliation with what has come down <to us> of the western world. But the western world is not thought of just regionally as the Occident, as distinguished from the Orient, not merely as Europe, but rather world-historically in terms of its intimacy with the source <of the Western world>. We have scarcely yet begun to think about the mysterious relations with the East which have been put into words in Hölderlin's poetry (cf. "The Ister," and also "The Journey," third stanza and ff.). <In the poem> [t]he world is not told about what is

"German" in order to rehabilitate it [what is "German"] by means of <an appeal to> the nature of the German <people>, but on the contrary, <the talk about what is "German"> refers to <the> German <language>, in order for it to become part of the history of the world by way of its traditional affiliation with the <German> people (cf. with "Hölderlin's Poem `Reminding"). The home of this historical living is intimacy with *be[-ing]*.^{*21}

The decision as to whether and how God and the gods refuse themselves and night prevails, whether and how night falls on a life among sacred things, <and> whether and how an appearance of God and the gods may happen anew with an emergence <again> of what is sacred, <the decision about these things> is made in this intimacy, if at all. But what is sacred, which is still the only sphere of the essence of divinity which in return alone grants the dimension of the gods and God, thus comes | {339} to light for the first time only if, first and with lengthy preparation, *be[-ing]* itself has come to light and has been experienced in its truth. The overcoming of homelessness, in which <state> not merely man but, rather, the essence of man has lost its way, starts out from *be[-ing]* in just this way.

Thinking of homelessness in this way comes of <the> abandonment of *be[-ing]* <that is in the nature> of *be-ing*. It [this abandonment of *be[-ing]*] is the sign of the forgottenness of *be[-ing]*. In consequence of this, the truth of *be[-ing]* remains unthought. The forgottenness of *be[-ing]*

21"Die Heimat dieses geschichtlichen Wohnens ist die Nähe zum Sein." (**W** 338.25)--Alternate reading: "Home to <this kind of> historical living is <temporal> nearness to *be[-ing]*."

Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit*, First edition (1947): "Als diese Nähe verwahrt und birgt sich das Sein selbst." (W** 338, n. a)--"Be[-ing] itself protects itself and hides as this intimacy." It is difficult to avoid the verb "is" in phrases beginning with `als', but that is just what Heidegger wants to do at all costs in indicating *be[-ing]*. *Be[-ing]* and this intimacy are one and the same. One "is" not the other. Heidegger's discussions in *Be[-ing] and Time* of the "existential-hermeneutische `Als'" are helpful here. See especially **GA 2**, pp. 210-211.

manifests itself indirectly in that man always just sees and works with <various kinds of> be-ing. Because he cannot help but have a conception of *be[-ing]*, *be[-ing]* thus becomes explained as just "the most general," and thereby, the most all-encompassing <kind of> be-ing, or as a creation of an infinite <kind of> be-ing, or as what has been made by a finite subject. At the same time, "*be[-ing]*" has from time immemorial stood for "be-ing" and, inversely, the latter <has stood> for the former, the two of them turned back and forth as though <caught up> in a strange and even mindless confusion.

Be[-ing], as what has come down <to us> which becomes truth, remains hidden. But the fate of the world is presaged in poetry, without its having as yet emerged as the history of *be[-ing]*. Hölderlin's thinking in the history of the world which comes to language in the poem "Remembering" is for that reason essentially more original and therefore more a matter for that which is to come than <, for example,> Goethe's mere cosmopolitanism. For fundamentally the same reason, Hölderlin's relation to the Hellenism is something essentially other than humanism. For that reason, when faced with death, young Germans who knew about Hölderlin thought and lived something other than what was in public held out to be the German view <of death>.

Homelessness is becoming the fate of the world. For that reason, it is necessary to think about that which has come down <to us of *be[-ing]*> ontohistorically. The roots of what Marx had learned from Hegel to recognize in an essential and meaningful sense as man's alienation go back to the homelessness of modern man. This <homelessness> is evoked, and <evoked> in fact by what has come down <to us> of *be[-ing]* in the form of metaphysics, through which <it is> consolidated and | {340} by which it is at the same time concealed as homelessness. Because Marx enters into an essential dimension of history as he discovers this alienation, for that reason the Marxist view of history is superior to other <views of> history. But because neither Husserl nor (so far) Sartre, as far as I can tell, recognize the essentiality of what is historical about *be[-ing]*, for

that reason neither phenomenology nor Existentialism enter into that very dimension within which a productive discussion with Marxism would for the first time become possible.

In addition to this, it is also certainly necessary to free oneself of naive conceptions of materialism and from paltry refutations that are supposed to work against it. The essence of materialism does not consist in the assertion <that> everything is merely matter rather than in a metaphysical determination according to which all <manner of> be-ing appears as material for labor. The modern metaphysical essence of labor is presaged in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* as the self-establishing precedent for unconditional production, which is a reification of what is actual, experienced by man as subjectivity. The essence of materialism stays hidden in the essence of technology, about which a great deal indeed is written but <to which> little thought is given. Technology is in its essence an ontohistorical venture of the truth of be[-ing] that lies in forgottenness. It does not go back to the τέχνη of the Greeks in name only, but rather stems from τέχνη in an essentially historical way as a manner of ἀληθεύειν, that is, <as a manner> of making manifest <some kind of> of be-ing. As a form of truth, technology is established in the history of metaphysics. This [metaphysics] is itself a distinguished phase in the history of be[-ing] and hitherto the only one that is in full view. One may express in different ways one's attitude toward the foundation and teachings of communism. It is ontohistorically certain <, however,> that it articulates an elementary experience of what is world-historical. Whoever speaks of "communism" only as a "<political> party" or as a "world-view" thinks too bluntly, just as those who mean by the term "Americanism" only a life style and a decidedly contemptible one at that. The danger*²² into which, <at least> up to this point, Europe clearly

22*First edition (1949): "The danger meanwhile has more clearly come to light [ans Licht gekommen]. The relapse of thinking into metaphysics takes on a new form. It is the end of philosophy in the sense of the complete disintegration [Auflösung] in the sciences, whose unity at the same time blossoms anew in cybernetics. The power of science does not let itself be trapped in an invasion and attack <that have been> somehow or another contrived, because

has been drawn is presumably this, that first and foremost, its [Europe's] thinking, once its greatness, has lagged behind*²³ the essential course of the dawning fate of the world, which nonetheless remains determined in a European way in the fundamentals of its essential provenance. Given its essence, and without having even considered the efforts <it has> exerted to explicate itself, no <kind of> metaphysics, be it idealistic, be it materialistic, <or> be it Christian, is itself able to bring home <to man> the <meaning of> what has come down <to us>, which <in terms of> thinking means to attain and gather what in a fulfilled sense of *be[-ing]* now is.*²⁴

`science' belongs in the set-up [Ge-stell], which further displaces [verstellt] the eventuality [Ereignis]." (**W** 341, n. **a**) The word `Rückfall' may also mean `relapse', as in the recurrence of a chronic illness, or `reversion', in this case a return to metaphysical thinking. The term `Gestell' plays an important role in Heidegger's discussions of technology. The root of the word means "place." The hyphenation discloses the root word and indicates the *fait accompli* of what has taken place. Perhaps the best way to think of the *Ge-stell* is as what remains after something vital has taken place, like the shell of a sea animal. The *Ge-stell* is fixed and limits what will fit within its scheme of things [Entwurf], just as arrangements that have been made for an event of some kind accommodate only certain people and things within their scope, allowing and disallowing selected elements. At work in the *Ge-stell* is this strict code of admissibility and inadmissibility of evidence, for example, as laid down in rules of courtroom procedure in the practice of law. Like Aristotle, Heidegger borrows philosophical terminology from jurisprudence-- but also from soccer.

23*First edition (1949): "relapse [Rückfall] into metaphysics." (**W** 341, n. **b**)

24*Platons *Lehre von der Wahrheit*, First edition (1947): "What is <thought> now [jetzt], now in the days of willfulness in willing [Willen zum Willens]? Now <there> is unconditional neglect [Verwahrlosung], the word taken [gedacht] strictly ontohistorically, <i.e.,> with nothing of the true about it [wahr-los]; the opposite <of which is> what is becoming [geschicklich]." (**W** 341, n. **c**) In

In view of the characteristic homelessness of man, the coming venture of man appears to ontohistorical thinking in that which he finds in the truth of *be[-ing]* and <in his> starting out on such <a venture of> finding. Every nationalism is, metaphysically <speaking>, an anthropology and, as such, subjectivism. Nationalism is not overcome by a mere internationalism, but is rather <in that way> only expanded and elevated to a formal principle. Nationalism is as little humanized or abolished by *humanitas* as individualism is <abolished> by a collectivism with no sense of history. That is the subjectivity*²⁵ of man within a totality. He | {342} fulfills his unconditional self-assertion <in it>. This will not allow itself to be declared null and void. It does not let itself be sufficiently enough experienced by <a kind of> thinking that has intervened one-sidedly. Expelled from the truth of *be[-ing]*, everything revolves around only man only as the *animal rationale*.

But the essence of man lies in the fact that he is more than merely a man, insofar as this is conceived of as the rational living thing. Here "more" must not be understood as <meaning this sentence Heidegger is at his most elliptical in his manner of expressing himself. Here his text calls for *Interpretation*, which means adding words when necessary, compared with hermeneutics, which is *Auslegung*, the exposing of implicit meanings. Translation, for Heidegger, is both *Interpretation* and *Auslegung*. This is because all *Interpretation* has a hermeneutic goal which is *Auslegung*. *Interpretation* in translation is not taking liberties or exercising poetic license, but rather intervening in order to make clear in another language what comes through quite directly and easily in the original. Heidegger had to do this with Parmenides' Greek and translators of Heidegger's texts must do this with his German at certain. In the note, Heidegger brings more clarity to the connection between truth and what is becoming [geschicklich] or fitting. What is becoming to something what is true to its essence.

25*First edition (1949): "Industrial society [die Industriegesellschaft] <considered> as the definitive subject, and thinking as `politics'." (W 341, n. d)

something> added on, as if the traditional definition of man were to remain its fundamental determination and then experience an augmentation merely by the addition of something existential. The "more" means more original and thereby more essential in essence. But here something mysterious appears: man *is* [emphasis added] in imminence. That is to say, as the ek-sisting counterpart of *be[-ing]**²⁶, man is that much more than the *animal rationale* than he is <equivalently> less so in relationship to man understood in terms of subjectivity. Man is not lord over *be-ing*. Man is the tender of *be[-ing]*. Man loses nothing by this "less," but rather he gains <something by it>, since he <thus> gets to the truth of *be[-ing]*. His gain in this is the essential neediness of the tender, the dignity of whom is to be called on by *be[-ing]* itself in the observance of its truth. This call comes as the utterance from which the givenness of man derives. In his ontohistorical essence, man is the <kind of> *be-ing*, whose *be[-ing]* as ek-sistence is such that it lives in intimacy with *be[-ing]*. Man is next to *be[-ing]*.

But, as you have probably wanted to counter for quite a while now, does not such thinking think precisely of the *humanitas* of *homo humanus*? Does it not decisively think the meaning of *humanitas* as no metaphysics has or ever could think it? Is it not "humanism" in the most extreme sense? Certainly. It is humanism which the humanity | {343} of man thinks from <his> intimacy with *be[-ing]*. But, at the same time, it is a humanism with respect to which, not man but rather the historical essence of man, is at stake in its coming from the truth of *be[-ing]*. But then is not the ek-sistence of man at the same time won or lost in this game? So it goes.

In *Be[-ing] and Time* (GA 2, 51), it is said that all questions of philosophy "redound to existence."
26*First edition (1949): "better <said>, in *be[-ing]* *qua* eventuality [Ereignis]." The word `Gegenwurf', now obsolete in everyday German, was the translation of *both* `obiectum' and `subiectum' (ὑποκείμενον) among the early German philosophical mystics. Thus, as Heidegger well knew (although he does not say so here), as the *Gegenwurf* of *be[-ing]*, man is neither subject nor object in counterpoise with *be[-ing]*.

But here life is not the actuality of the ego cogito. Nor is it merely the actuality of subjects being at work with and for one another and thereby coming into their own themselves. In fundamental distinction from all *existentia* and "existence," "ek-sistence" is ek-static living in intimacy with *be[-ing]*. It is vigilance, that it, the regret over *be[-ing]*. Since something simple is to be thought by this <kind of> thinking, it is so difficult for that reason for the traditional conceptualizing that <we know> as philosophy. But what is difficult here does not consist in indulging in some special sort of reverie or forming a complicated concept, but rather it is hidden in the step back that lets thinking enter upon a discovering <a certain kind of> questioning and drop the having of opinions that is customary in philosophy.

It is everywhere thought that the attempt <made> in **Be[-ing] and Time** came to a dead end. We will let the matter of this opinion drop. Even today the thinking of **Be[-ing] and Time** has not gotten beyond the few steps attempted in the treatise of that name. But perhaps it has in the meantime entered somewhat further into its question. However, as long as philosophy occupies itself only with continually obstructing the possibility of letting itself get involved for once with the matter of thinking, namely, the truth of *be[-ing]*, it is certainly in no danger of ever being destroyed by the severity of what matters to it. <And> [s]o "philosophizing" about failure is separated by a chasm from thinking that is a failure. Were a man to succeed in this, no danger would befall him. To him would come the only present from *be[-ing]* that could be becoming to thinking. |

{344} But this also means <that> the matter of thinking is not reached in such a way that it paves the way for small talk about "the truth of *be[-ing]*" and about "ontohistory." The only thing that matters is that the truth of *be[-ing]* come up for discussion and that thinking come to speech in this way. Perhaps then language calls far less for an overhasty speaking out <on things> than for the proper silence. Yet who among us today might fancy themselves at home on the path of silence in his attempt to think? Provided that it extends further, our thinking could perhaps point

to the truth of *be[-ing]*, that is, to it [the truth of *be[-ing]*] as what is intended. With that it would be relieved of mere surmising and the having of opinions <much> sooner and <would be> pointed in the direction of what has already become the rare craft of writing. The matters on which what something is depend, even though they are not determined for all eternity, come only at the right time, even if <only> at the last possible moment.

Whether the realm of the truth of *be[-ing]* in which the freedom of its essence is spared is a dead end or <something that remains out in> the open, every everyone may judge <for himself or herself> according to the way in which he has himself tried to follow the appointed way or, what is better still, has tried to clear the way for a better path, that is to say, <a path> appropriate to the matter. On the penultimate page of *Be[-ing] and Time* (**GA 2**, p. 577), are found the following sentences: "The dispute regarding the interpretation of *be[-ing]* (that is to say, not of <some kind of> *be-ing* nor of the *be[-ing]* of man) cannot be settled *because it has not yet been provoked*. And in the end it does not let itself "start a fight"; rather the provoking of the dispute no doubt requires some preparation. But the preceding endeavor is solely on the way to this." Even now, after two decades, these sentences still have value. In the days to come, let us as sojourners also continue approaching the incipience of *be[-ing]*. The question you have put <to me> helps to elucidate the path.

You ask: *Comment redonner un sens au mot 'Humanisme'?* Your question not only presumes that you want to retain the word 'humanism', but it | {345} also includes the admission that this word has lost its meaning.

It has lost it [its meaning] owing to the insight that the essence of humanism is metaphysical, and this now means that the question about the truth of *be[-ing]* has not only not been posed, but rather <is> blocked <from being asked> inasmuch as metaphysics continues on in the

forgottenness of *be[-ing]*. But precisely the thinking that leads to insight into the questionable essence of man has at the same time brought us to the point of thinking the essence of man more originally. In view of this more essential *humanitas* of *homo humanus* there follows the possibility of restoring an historical meaning to the word `humanism' that is older than its oldest <meaning as> reckoned by history. This restoring is not to be understood as if the word `humanism' were without meaning as such and a mere *flatus vocis*. The "*humanum*" in the word `humanitas' points to the essence of man. The "-ism" indicates that the essence of man is meant to be taken essentially. The word `humanism' has this meaning as a word. To restore its meaning can only mean to determine the meaning of the word once again. That calls for experiencing more originally for once the essence of man, to again for a second time indicate the extent to which this essence is in its own way becoming <to it>. The essence of man lies in ek-sistence. It [the essence of man] depends essentially on this, that is to say, on *be[-ing]* itself, insofar as, in this <depending essentially>, *be[-ing]* accommodates man as <what is> ek-sisting to <his> vigilance over the truth of *be[-ing]*. Supposing that we resolve to retain the word, `humanism' now means <that> the essence of man is essential for the truth of *be[-ing]*, so much so that it therefore does not even depend simply upon man as such. We thus think of "humanism" in a curious fashion. The word amounts to a name that is a "*lucus a non lucendo*."

Should one still use the term `humanism' for a "humanism" that speaks <out> against all previous humanism | {346} but which nevertheless does not make one an advocate of the inhumane? And that, in sympathy with the prevailing trends in usage, only in order to go along with the prevailing trends of usage, which are suffocated by metaphysical subjectivism and immersed in the forgottenness of *be[-ing]*? Or in outspoken resistance to "humanism," should thinking risk taking the initiative that could occasion its being for once taken aback at some point by the *humanitas* of *homo humanus* and its foundation? If not already compelled to do so by the world-historical moment itself, it [such thinking] could at least awaken a reflection, not just about

man, but about the "nature" of man, <and> not just about <that> nature, but, even more originally thought, about the dimension in which the essence of man, determined in this way by be[-ing] itself, is at home. Yet should we not rather bear a while with the inevitable misinterpretations to which the path of thinking has been exposed up to now in the element of be[-ing] and time and let them slowly wear themselves out? These misinterpretations are the expected reinterpretation of what has been read, or solely what has been thought <to be in what one has read>, <but> which <is based> on that which one has intended to find <in what he reads> before reading <it>. They all prove to have the same construction and the same basis.

Because "humanism" is spoken out against <here>, one fears <that there will be> a defense of the inhuman and a glorification of barbaric brutality. For what is more "logical" than this, that for one who negates humanism, there can remain only the approval of inhumanity?

Because "logic" is spoken out against, one believes that word is out that the rigor of thinking is called off, in place of which the despotism of urges and feelings is brought to power, and thus "irrationalism" is proclaimed to be what is true. For what is more "logical" than this, that whoever speaks out against what is logical defends the illogical?

Because "values" are spoken out against, one is appalled by a philosophy that ostensibly dares allow disrespect for mankind's highest qualities. For what is | {347} more "logical" than this, that thinking which denies all values must necessarily pass everything off as worthless?

Because it is said that the man's be[-ing] is "what it is to be in a world," one has it that man is demoted to <being> an essence of this world only, in consequence of which philosophy becomes lost in positivism. For what is more "logical" than this, that whoever maintains the

worldliness of what it is to be a man accepts only what is of this world, and denies values and rejects all "transcendence"?

Because reference is made to Nietzsche's words about "the death of God," one declares such conduct to be atheism. For what is more "logical" than this, that whoever has experienced the "death of God" is one who is godless?

Because what humanity values as lofty and sacred is always spoken out against in everything just mentioned, <it is supposed that> this philosophy practices an irresponsible and destructive "nihilism." For what is more "logical" than this, that whoever always thus denies what is really <a way of> be-ing and takes a stand on the side of what is not <a kind of> be-ing and because of that preaches the mere no-thing as the meaning of actuality?

What's going on here? One hears talk of "humanism," of "logic," of "values," of "world," of "God." One hears talk of some kind of opposition to these. One is acquainted with what is mentioned and takes <it> as <something> positive. What speaks out against what is mentioned, <and> as hearsay has it, <does so> in a not exactly prudent way, one immediately takes as its negation, and this <in turn> as "what is negative," in the sense of what is destructive. Now somewhere in *Be[-ing] and Time* there is explicit talk of "phenomenological destruction." With the help of logic and *ratio*, which are often invoked, one thinks that what is not positive is negative, and so encourages the rejection of reason and therefore deserves to be denounced as a kind of depravity. One is so full of "logic" that everything which is offensive to the customary indolence of opinion is immediately rung up as its opposite. One tosses everything that does not keep to the well-known and much beloved positive | {348} into the previously depicted pit of mere negation, which negates everything <and> thereby ends up in no-thing and consummates nihilism. One lets founder in such nihilism everything that one has found out about with the help

of logic.

But does "what is against," which thinking proposes over against what is commonly thought, necessarily show up in mere negation and in what is negative? That happens only if beforehand one sets up what is commonly thought of as "the positive," and absolutely and at the same time negatively decides about the range of possible comparisons with this <positive>, and then only, of course, inescapably and definitively, which is to say with no prospect of anything else freely in view. A refusal to permit reflection on the previously held "positive," together with the positing and opposing from which it believes it has escaped, lies hidden in such a way of proceeding. With a constant appeal to what is logical, one gives the impression of honestly being engaged in thinking, while one has <in fact> renounced thinking.

That the opposition to "humanism" by no means comes out in defense of the inhumane, but rather opens up other prospects, <now> should have become somewhat clearer.

"Logic" understands thinking as the conceptualizing of be-ing in its *be[-ing]*, which itself serves the conceptualizing of what is general in the concept. But how do things stand with reflection on *be[-ing]* itself, and that means with thinking which thinks the truth of *be[-ing]*? Only this thinking hits upon the more original essence of *λόγον*, which was submerged and lost even by the founders of "logic," Plato and Aristotle. To think in opposition to "logic" does not mean to stand up for what is illogical, but rather just means to think about the *λόγον* and the essence of it [the *λόγον*] appearing early on in thinking, that is to say, to take pains for once in preparation for this kind of pondering. What do all such extensive systems of logic still mean to us if they themselves, and without understanding what they are doing, decline in advance the task of asking, even if just for once, about | {349} the essence of the *λόγον*? If one wanted to make counter-objections, which is, of course, fruitless, then one could with even greater justice say,

<that> irrationalism as the refusal of *ratio* prevails, unrecognized and uncontested, in the defense of "logic," which believes <that> reflection on the λόγος and on the grounding in it of the essence of *ratio* can be avoided.

Thinking <that is> opposed to "values" does not hold that all that one explains as "values"--"culture," "art," "science," "the dignity of man," "world," "God"--is worthless. On the contrary, it matters <to such thinking> to understand that, by the very characterization of something as a "value," what has been judged to be such <a "value"> has been robbed of its worth. That is to say, through the evaluation of something as a value, what has been judged to be so becomes accepted as merely an object for valuation by man. But that which something is in its be[-ing] is not exhausted in its being opposite <to something else>, especially not when objectivity has the character of a value. All valuing, even where it values positively, is a kind of subjectifying. It [valuing] does not let <any kind of> be-ing <just> be, but instead valuing lets <every kind of> be-ing, solely as the object of its conduct <as valuing>, pass. The remarkable effort to demonstrate the objectivity of values does not know what it is doing. When one finally proclaims "God" to be "the highest value," that is indeed a degradation of God's essence. Here and as a rule, thinking in <terms of> values is the greatest blasphemy that can be thought of vis-à-vis be[-ing]. To think in opposition to values therefore does not mean to beat the drum for the worthlessness and invalidity of be-ing, but rather <it> means to bring the illumination of the truth of be[-ing] into the presence of thinking in opposition to the subjectifying of be-ing <[of any kind> to <the status of> a mere object.

The reference to the "what it is to be in a world" as the essential in the *humanitas* of *homo humanus* does not mean to claim that man is merely a "worldly" creature, understood in the Christian sense, thus turned away from God and without any tie to "transcendence." One means by this word [‘Transzendenz’] what would more clearly be called the transcendent. The

transcendent is | {350} the supersensory <kind of> be-ing. This is considered to be the highest <kind of> be-ing in the sense of being the first cause of all <kinds of> be-ing. God is thought of as this first cause. In the term "what it is to be in a world," however, "world" does not at all mean an earthly <kind of> be-ing in distinction from what is a heavenly <kind of be-ing>, nor "what is worldly" in distinction from "what is spiritual." In every determination whatsoever, "world" means, not a <kind of> be-ing or realm of be-ing but, rather, the overtness of *be[-ing]*. Man is and is man insofar as he is what is ek-sisting. He stands out in *be[-ing]*'s overtness (which is how *be[-ing]* itself is <what it is>), which as utterance has itself plunged the essence of man into "mourning." Imminent in this manner, man stands "in" the overtness of *be[-ing]*. "World" is the illumination of *be[-ing]* in which man stands out of his imminent essence. The <term> "what it is to be in a world" speaks of the essence of ek-sistence with regard to the illuminated dimension out of which the "ek- " in ek-sistence comes to be. Thought in terms of ek-sistence, in a certain sense "world" is precisely what is ulterior within and for ek-sistence. Above all, man is never man as a "subject" this side of the world, whether this [a "subject"] be taken as an "I" or a "we." Nor is he ever simply a subject which, to be sure, always also relates itself at the same time to objects, so that its essence has always lain in the subject-object relation. In his essence man is <the> exemplary <essence> in the overtness of *be[-ing]*, <an overtness> for which what is open illuminates beforehand the "between" within which a "relation" of subject to object can for the first time "be."

Nor does the sentence "The essence of man is based on what it is to be in a world" imply a decision about whether, in the theological-metaphysical sense, man is something whose essence is only of this world or something of the world beyond.

With the determination of the essence of man in terms of his kind of life, nothing as of yet has been decided thereby about the "existence of God" or his "non-existence," and just as little <has

been decided> about the possibility or impossibility of the gods. For that reason, it is not merely premature but indeed wrong in advance, if one maintains that the explanation | {351} of the essence of man in terms of the relation of this essence to the truth of be[-ing] is atheism. And what is more, this arbitrary way of ordering things is wanting even with respect to the attention <given> to <what one has been> reading. People do not care that since 1929, in *On the Essence of Grounds*, there is the following (**W** 159, n. 56): "Through the ontological interpretation of existence as <what it is> "to be in a world" nothing is decided either positively or negatively about a possible be[-ing] for God. All well and good, but a *more adequate concept of existence* is gained for the first time through an elucidation of <what> transcendence <is> with regard to which <kind of> be-ing can be *questioned* at this point about how things stand ontologically with <regard to> the relationship to God of existence." But if one still thinks about this observation as usual, in too limited a way, one will <go on to> explain that this philosophy decides neither for nor against God's existence. One comes to a standstill in indifference. Thus it is indifferent to the religious question. That sort of indifferentism thus falls prey to nihilism.

But does the foregoing observation espouse indifferentism? Why then are certain words, and not just any <of them>, italicized in the remark? To only just suggest that <the kind of> thinking which thinks in terms of the question about the truth of be[-ing] interrogates in way <that is> more original than <the way> metaphysics can question <things>. The essence of the sacred is be thought out for the first time in terms of truth of be[-ing]. The essence of divinity is to be thought for the first time in terms of the essence of what is sacred. What the word 'God' is supposed to speak of by name can come to be thought and spoken for the first time <only> in light of the essence of divinity. Or will we not be able to understand and hear these words <really> for the first time if we, as men, that is to say, as <the> eksistent essence, are to be capable of experiencing a relation of some kind of God to man? But how, then, is man in the ongoing history of the world even going to be able to seriously and rigorously question whether

God approaches or withdraws, if man refrains from thinking himself into the only dimension in which that question can be asked? But that is the dimension of what is sacred, which remains hidden | {352} if that <dimension> of *be[-ing]* which is open is not illuminated and <yet>, in its illumination*²⁷, is near man. Perhaps what stands out about this era consists in the reserve of the dimension of what is wholesome. This alone is perhaps what is unwholesome.

Yet this reference <to the dimension of what is sacred>, thinking, which exhibits the truth of *be[-ing]* as what is intended <by *be[-ing]*>, has in no way been inclined to decide in favor of theism. It [such thinking] can be as little theistic as atheistic. This <is the case>, however, not on the basis of an indifferent attitude, but rather from attention to the limits set to thinking as thinking, <and is> due, in fact, to that to which it [thinking] is given <over> to thinking <about> by the truth of *be[-ing]*. If and when that thinking is content with its task, at that instant in the actual course of events man is given direction as to the original dimension of his place in history. In that thinking in such a way tells the truth of *be[-ing]*, it has confided in what is more essential than all values and every <kind of> *be-ing*. Thinking does not overcome metaphysics in that, ascending ever higher, it surmounts it and elevates it to some place or other, but rather in that it takes place back in the intimacy of what is closest. A stopover, especially where man has gone too far with

²⁷*First edition (1949): "Illumination as illumination of what is concealing, which is its own self-obscuring containing [*sichverbergenden Bergens*]." (W 352, n. a) The concealing Heidegger has in mind prevents one from keeping *be[-ing]* in mind. This is how *be[-ing]* is and remains concealed. Moreover, the concealing is self-obscuring, so that one is oblivious to the concealing, that is, to the failure to keep *be[-ing]* in mind. In the psychological realm, which Heidegger does not have in mind here, there is something analogous to this in repression, which is forgetting and forgetting that one has forgotten anything. Repression always refers to content of one kind or another but the *sichverbergenden Bergens* is "of" *be[-ing]* itself. More important, perhaps, is the fundamental sense of `bergen' as "to contain," in the sense of "hold back," "hold in reserve," "restrain."

subjectivity, is more difficult and more dangerous than an ascent <would be>. The stopover leads to the poverty ek-sistence of *homo humanus*. In ek-sistence the sphere of *homo animalis* is left behind. Domination by this sphere is the indirect and longstanding basis for the bedazzlement and despotism of that which one terms biologism, but also of that which one knows by the term pragmatism. To think the truth of *be[-ing]* also means to think the *humanitas* of *homo humanus*. It is necessary for *humanitas* to be at the disposal of the truth of *be[-ing]*, but without humanism in the metaphysical sense.

But if it is so evident that *humanitas* is intrinsic to the thinking of *be[-ing]*, must not "ontology" then be supplemented by "ethics"? Is this not essentially just what you are getting at | {353} which you articulate in the sentence <in your letter that reads>: "Ce que je cherche à faire, depuis longtemps déjà, c'est préciser le rapport de l'ontologie avec une éthique possible"?

Soon after **Be[-ing]** and *Time* had appeared, a young friend asked me: "When are you going to write an ethics?" The way in which the essence of man is thought <of> so essentially, namely, solely in terms of the question about the truth of *be[-ing]* (in the course of which, however, man has nevertheless not been exalted to be at the center of <all the kinds of] *be-ing*), must awaken <in man> the longing for a compelling direction, and for rules, that is, <as to> how man, experienced in terms of <his> ek-sistence for *be[-ing]*, should live in a way becoming <to him>. The wish for an ethics presses ever more ardently for fulfillment as the evident, no less than the hidden, perplexity of man mounts up to what is <finally> immeasurable. Every care must be given to a commitment to ethics in a time when technological man, served up as a creature of the masses, can attain to any kind of reliable stability at all only by means of the <sort of> organization and regulation of its planning and practices that answers to technology.

Who can overlook this crisis? Should we not protect and safeguard the existing ties <with

ethics>, if after all, they only hold together the essence of man in a makeshift way and merely for the time being? Indeed. But does this need <for something temporary> ever release thinking from that which it recalls is left for <it to be> thinking about and <which>, as *be[-ing]*, is to begin with the word and truth of <every kind of> *be-ing*. Further, can thinking from here on out get rid of thinking <about> *be[-ing]*, even though this has remained hidden in oblivion for such a long time, yet at the same time makes itself known at this very moment in the world by way of the disruption of every kind of *be-ing*?

Before we attempt to determine more exactly the relation between "ontology" and "ethics," we must ask what "ontology" and "ethics" themselves are. It is necessary to consider whether what can be designate by the two terms is adequate or <even> close to what is asked of thinking, I {354} which, as thinking, has to think the truth of *be[-ing]* before all else.

Of course, should both "ontology" and "ethics," together with all thinking in terms of disciplines, become untenable and our thinking thereby become more disciplined, how then do things stand with the question about the relation between the two disciplines of philosophy known as "ontology" and "ethics"?

"Ethics," together with "logic" and "physics," come into fashion for the first time in Plato's school? These disciplines originate at a time when thinking is allowed to become "philosophy," philosophy <then becoming> ἐπιστήμη (science), and science itself <becoming> a subject in school and school work. In the passage through philosophy understood in this way, science comes to pass, <and> thinking passes on. Up to this time thinkers know nothing of "logic" or "ethics" or "physics." Nevertheless, their thinking is neither illogical nor immoral. But they have thought φύσις with a profundity and breadth that all later "physics" was never again able to attain. Sophocles' tragedies (if such a comparison may be permitted at all) include the ἦθος in

what they say more originally than Aristotle's lectures on "ethics." A saying of Heraclitus that consists of only three words says something so simple that from it the essence of the ethos immediately comes to light.

The saying of Heraclitus goes (Fragment 119): ἦθος ἀνθρώπῳ δαίμων. One tends in general to translate it: "For man, his uniqueness is his daemon." This translation thinks in an up-to-date way, but not in a Greek way. <The word> ἦθος means whereabouts, where one lives. The word designates the exposed sphere in which man lives. What is open about his place lets appear what is passed on to the essence of man, and <which>, coming over <him> in its intimacy, <he> thus dwells on. Man's place comprises and establishes as true what is to come of that to which man in his essence belongs. For Heraclitus, the word for this is δαίμων, god. The saying says <that> man, insofar as he is man, ἰ {355} lives in intimacy with god. A story Aristotle tells (*De partibus animalium* I, 5 [645a 17ff.]) accords with this saying of Heraclitus. It goes: Ἡράκλειτος λέγεται πρὸς τοὺς ξένους εἰπεῖν τοὺς βουλομένους ἐνυχεῖν αὐτῷ, οἱ ἐπειδὴ προσιόντες εἶδον αὐτὸν θερόμενον πρὸς τῷ ἰπνῷ ἔστησαν, ἐκέλευε γὰρ αὐτοὺς εἰσιέναι θαρροῦνας εἶναι γὰρ καὶ ἐνταῦθα θεοὺς . . .

"We are told about something Heraclitus said to visitors who wanted to get to see him. Approaching him, they saw him warming himself by an oven. But they were caught unawares, above all because he encouraged them and invited them to come in with just these words: `Of course, even gods come in here.'"

To be sure, the story speaks for itself, yet a few things are to be stressed.

The group of foreign visitors in their inquisitive pushiness regarding the thinker are at first glance disappointed and at a loss about where he lives. They believe they will surely come across the

thinker in conditions that, contrary to man's customary way of living, everywhere bear the traits of what is exceptional and unusual, and for that reason exciting. The group hope that during their visit to the thinker's <place> they will find matters that will supply them, at least for a certain amount of time, with the wherewithal for an entertaining chat. The foreigners who want to visit the thinker perhaps anticipate seeing him at a moment in which, lost in reverie, he is thinking. The visitors want to "experience" this, not perchance in order to be affected by thinking, but solely in order to be able to say that, as a result <of their visit>, they have seen and heard someone of whom it is reputed that he is a thinker.

Instead of this, the curious ones find Heraclitus next to an oven. That is quite an ordinary and unremarkable place. To be sure, bread is baked there. But Heraclitus is not himself busy baking. He has stopped there only to get warm. Moreover, in this ordinary | {356} place he betrays the utter poverty of his life. The sight of a freezing thinker offers little of interest <to the visitors>. At such a disappointing sight, even the curious ones then immediately lose the desire to move even closer. What are they to do here? The ordinary and uninspiring occurrence of someone frozen standing by the oven can be observed by anyone anytime at home. Why then should they call on a thinker? The visitors are about to turn to leave. Heraclitus can see what is written all over the faces of the disappointed curiosity seekers. He knows that, for the group, failure to appear of the anticipated affair is already enough to force those who have just arrived to immediately turn around again and leave. Because of that he encourages them <to stay>. He expressly invites them to come in with the words εἶναι γὰρ καὶ ἐνταῦθα θεοὺς, "Of course, even gods come in here."

These words place the place (ἦθος) of the thinker and his doings in a different light. Whether the visitors immediately understood these words, or understood them at all, and then saw everything in this different light, the story does not say. But that these events were recounted and have

come down to us today rests on the fact that what they report grows out of and characterizes the atmosphere created by this thinker. καὶ ἐνταῦθα--"even here" in front of the oven, in this homely place, where each thing and every circumstance, everything done and thought is intimate and familiar, that is to say, has been around, "here, too, of course," in the vicinity of what has been around, εἶναι [. . .] θεοῦς, it is such <a place> "that gods come in" <to it>.

ἦθος ἀνθρώπων δαίμων, says Heraclitus himself: "A (familiar) place is <a place> that is open to man for the presentation to <man> of <the> god(s) (<that is, of> the unfamiliar)."

If, in conformity with <this> the fundamental meaning of the word ἦθος, the term ethics should reflect man's place, then that thinking which thinks the truth of *be[-ing]* as man's original element as something ek-sisting is already in itself original ethics. But this thinking I {357}, then, is to begin with not ethics <at all>, because it is ontology. For ontology <is> precisely <what> always thinks <about the kinds of> *be-ing* (ὄν) in their *be[-ing]*. However, as long as the truth of *be[-ing]* is not thought, all ontology is without foundation. For that reason, thinking which attempts to think <ontology> beforehand in the truth of *be[-ing]*, as in *Be[-ing] and Time*, terms itself fundamental ontology. This <thinking> strives to get back to the essential grounds on which thinking the truth of *be[-ing]* originates. The approach of a different inquiry no doubt removes this thinking from the "ontology" of metaphysics (even that of Kant). But therefore "ontology," be it transcendental or precritical, is not subject to critique, not because it thinks the *be[-ing]* of <the various kinds> of *be-ing* and thereby forces *be[-ing]* <to be> a concept, but rather because it does not think the truth of *be[-ing]* and thus fails to recognize that there is a kind of thinking that is more rigorous than conceptual thinking. Thinking which attempts to think <something> beforehand in the truth of *be[-ing]*, in the absence of any initial success brings up only an insignificant part of that entirely different dimension <of *be[-ing]*>. This <shortcoming> itself is even distorted, inasmuch as it does not even manage to keep to the essential support provided by phenomenological

looking and yet nevertheless puts aside <all> inappropriate designs on "science" and "research." However, in order to make that attempt at thinking distinctive and at the same time intelligible for current philosophy, it could at first be expressed only within the horizon of what was current and using terms familiar to it.

In the meantime, I have come to understand that even these terms will immediately and inevitably lead to error. For the terms and their related conceptual language did not come to be thought over once again by the reader in terms of the matter <that it was> to be thinking about in the first place, but rather this matter came to be represented in terms that clung to their accustomed meanings. Thinking that asks about the truth of *be[-ing]* and thereby determines the essential place of man from out of *be[-ing]* and on the strength of this, is neither ethics nor ontology. Therefore the I {358} question about the relation of one to the other no longer has a basis in this realm. Nevertheless, thought more originally, your question has meaning and an essential importance.

That is to say, it must be asked: If, in considering the truth of *be[-ing]*, thinking determines the essence of *humanitas* as ek-sistence, in terms of its pertinence to *be[-ing]*, then is this thinking nothing more than a theoretical conceptualizing of *be[-ing]* and man, or with such knowledge does it permit itself to infer directives for everyday life and make them available <to us>?

The answer is <that> this thinking is neither theoretical nor practical. It comes to pass before this differentiation <has been made>. Insofar as it is, this thinking is reminding <us> of *be[-ing]*, and nothing besides. Belonging to *be[-ing]*, because <made> imminent by *be[-ing]* in the observance of its truth, and absorbed by it [*be[-ing]*], it thinks *be[-ing]*. Such thinking has no outcome. It has no effect. It fulfills its essence in that it is. But it is in that it states its case. Only one stating <of its case> belongs to what matters for thinking, <the one>, always historical, <that

is> in accordance with its import. Its materially binding force is fundamentally greater than the validity of the sciences because it is freer. For it refrains from <doing anything to> be[-ing].

Thinking cultivates the place of be[-ing], wherein the articulation of be[-ing], always in a fitting way, instructs the essence of man in living in the truth of be[-ing]. This living <in the truth of be[-ing]> is the essence of "what it is to be in a world" (cf. **Be[-ing] and Time [GA 2]**, p. 73). The comment there on "be[-ing] in" as "living" is not just etymological fooling around. The comment in my lecture on Hölderlin's words "Voll Verdienst, doch dichterisch wohnet / der Mensch auf dieser Erde" is not an embellishment of a kind of thinking that has fled from science into poetry. Talk about the place of be[-ing] does not <come from> the transference of an image of someone's "place," but, rather, on the basis of a suitably thought essence of be[-ing], we will one day be more than likely able to think what <a> "place" and "<to> live" are.

| {359} All the same, thinking never creates a place for be[-ing]. Thinking accompanies historical existence, that is, the *humanitas* of *homo humanus* in the world of a coming to an end of what is good.

In the illumination of be[-ing] what is evil appears precisely along with what is good. Its essence does not consist in the mere baseness of human action, but rather lies in what is malicious about rage. Both what is good and what is wrathful can, however, come to be in their be[-ing] only to the extent that be[-ing] is alone what is questionable. The provenance of the nihilating hides in it <be[-ing]>. What nihilates comes to light as the Not-like. This can be responded to by the "No". Under no circumstances does the "Not" arise out of the saying "No" of <a> negation. Every "No" that is not misinterpreted as a self-willed insisting on subjectivity's powers of putting <something> in <its> place, but is rather something permitting of ek-sistence answers the claim of the nihilating that has been brought to light. All "No"<-saying> is nothing but an affirmative answer to the Not.

This allows that to which it extends to prevail. People think that the nihilating is nowhere at all to be found in the <ways of> be-ing themselves. That proves to be true, so long as one looks for the nihilating in a kind of be-ing, <that is,> as some kind of actual disposition toward <a kind of> be-ing. Seeking in this manner, however, man is not looking for the nihilating. For be[-ing] is no actual disposition which lets itself hold on to <some kind of> be-ing. Be[-ing] is nevertheless more actual*²⁸ than any <kind of> be-ing. Therefore, because the nihilating comes to pass in be[-ing] alone, on be-ing, we can never become aware of it [the nihilating] as some kind of be-ing. In particular, the comment about this impossibility never demonstrates <the claim about> the origin of the Not in saying "No". This proof then seems to support <the claim> only if one formulates be-ing as what is <the> objective of subjectivity. One then concludes <in favor of> the alternative, <namely,> that because it never appears as something objective, every Not must <therefore> be the product of some act of the subject. Whether, however, the saying "No" at first posits the Not as merely something thought or whether the nihilating at first claims the "No" as what is to be <doing the> speaking | {360} in the letting <come to> be of <any kind of> be-ing, this can certainly never be decided in terms of a subjective reflection on thinking already formulated as subjectivity. By no means has the dimension proper to the formulation of the question been arrived at as of yet in such reflection. Granted that thinking is part of ek-sistence, it remains to ask, then, whether all <saying> "Yes" or "No" is not already eksistent in the truth of be[-ing]. If this is how it is, then <saying> "Yes" or "No" itself is really dependent upon be[-ing]. As dependent, they can never posit for the first time that to which they themselves are due.

Nihilating comes to be in be[-ing] itself and in no sense in the existence of man, insofar as this is thought of as <the> subjectivity of the *ego cogito*. In no sense does existence nihilate in such a
28That is, "be[-ing] has more of an effect than any kind of be-ing." It is more "real" to man than any kind of be-ing. It is in an active sense more than any kind of be-ing is. *First edition (1949): "insofern Sein Seiendes "sein" läßt." (W 359, n. a)--"insofar as be[-ing] lets <any kind of> be-ing "be"."

way that man as <a> subject carries out nihilation in the sense of a refusal, but rather *being* there itself, as which man in <his> essence ek-sists, belongs to the essence of *be[-ing]*. *Be[-ing]* nihilates as though *be[-ing]*. Therefore, in the absolute idealism of Hegel and Schelling, the Not appears in the essence of *be[-ing]* as the negativity of negation. But there this is thought <of> in the sense of absolute actuality as the unconditional will, which wills itself alone, in fact, as the will that belongs to knowing and to love. *Be[-ing]* as will to power still remains hidden in willing of this kind. But why the negativity of absolute subjectivity is "dialectical" and indeed why nihilating appears through dialectic, but at the same time is in essence disguised, cannot be discussed here.

What is nihilating in *be[-ing]* is the essence of that which I have termed no-thing. For that reason, since it thinks *be[-ing]*, thinking thinks <the> no-thing.

Be[-ing] first gives rise to what is in favor of the good and brings pressure to bear against what is unwholesome.

Ek-sisting in the truth of *be[-ing]*, only to the extent that man is part of this <giving of *be[-ing]*> can commendation | {361} of those directives that are bound to become laws and rules for man come from *be[-ing]* itself. To commend in <classical> Greek is νέμειν. A νόμος is not merely a law, but <thought> in a more original way, <it means> the restrained commendation <of directives> of what is becoming of *be[-ing]*. Only this makes it possible to instruct man in *be[-ing]*. Only such a dispensation <of directives> is able to <reach man> and obligate <him>. Otherwise, all law is only what has been made by human reason. More essential for man than all establishment of rules is finding his place in the truth of *be[-ing]*. The experience of what is lasting first furnishes this place. The truth of *be[-ing]* provides the support for all <ways of> behaving. In our way of speaking, 'support' means 'protection'. *Be[-ing]* is the protection that,

in its truth, man oversees in his nature as ek-sistent in such a way that it gives ek-sistence a place in language. For that reason, language is above all the place of *be[-ing]* and the accommodation of the essence of man. <But> only because language is the place that accommodates the essence of man can historical humanity and man not be at home in their language, so that it [language] becomes the center of its [language's] intrigues.

But now in what way does <the> thinking of *be[-ing]* stand in relation to theoretical and practical <ways of> behaving? It surpasses all observing because it is concerned with that in light of which it [thinking] can for the first time spend time going about looking as *theoria*. Thinking listens to the illumination of *be[-ing]* since it <the illumination of *be[-ing]*> invests what it says about *be[-ing]* in language as the place of eksistence. Thus is thinking a kind of conduct. But <it is> a kind of conduct that surpasses all *praxis*. Thinking towers above all action and producing, not because of the greatness of something it is doing and not because of the consequences of something it is bringing about, but rather because of the slight value of what it is perfecting <although> without much effect.

Thinking brings up, namely in what it says, just the unspoken word <of> *be[-ing]*.

The turn of phrase used here, "to bring up," is in this case to be taken entirely literally. *Be[-ing]* comes <in>to language *zur Sprache kommt*] illuminating itself. It is always on the way to that <language>. For its own part, what is thus coming | {362} mentions ek-sisting thinking in what it says. This [the topic of ek-sisting thinking] is raised alone through the illumination of *be[-ing]*. Thus in that mysterious and yet, for us, always empowering manner, language for the first time *is*. To the extent that language, thus fully <having come into> its own nature, is historical, *be[-ing]* is kept true in <our> reminding <ourselves of it>. Thinking, ek-sistence occupies the place of *be[-ing]*. It is as though this were not at all happening over <a kind of> saying that is <of the>

thinking <kind>.

However, an example has just now come to light of this conduct of thinking. Of course, to the extent that we think expressly of what <is brought up> in language by the turn of phrase "bring to language" that has come down <to us>, only this and nothing else, <and> to the extent that in the future, in having a care about what is spoken, we always keep this thought in mind as that which we are to be thinking about, we <will thus> have brought to language something of what is coming to pass of *be[-ing]* itself.

What is strange about this thinking of *be[-ing]* is <something> simple. Precisely this <simple something> keeps us from it. For we expect thinking, which is known world-historically by the name "philosophy," to take the form of something that is unusual, which is accessible only to the initiated. At the same time, we conceive of thinking in the manner <in which we conceive> of <the> scientific <way of> knowing and its research enterprises. We gauge our doings according to the impressive and successful results of *praxis*. But what is done by thinking is neither theoretical nor practical, nor is it the coupling of the two ways of behaving.

Thanks to its simple essence, <the> thinking of *be[-ing]* makes of itself something unrecognizable. However, if we get to be on intimate terms with what is unusual about the simple, then we are all at once overcome by embarrassment. The suspicion mounts up that this <kind of> thinking is reduced to arbitrariness, for it cannot keep hold of *be-ing*. Where on earth is thinking going to find what is appropriate to it? What is the law of what it does?

At this point the third of your questions should be attended to: *comment sauver l'élément d'aventure que comporte toute recherche sans faire de la philosophie und simple aventurière?* Poetry may be mentioned in passing at this point. It confronts the same | {363} question in the

same way as thinking. But the scarcely considered words of Aristotle words in his poetics still hold good, that writing poetry is truer than exploring <the various kinds of> be-ing.

But thinking is not just *une aventure* in looking into and asking about what is unthought. Thinking, in its nature as the thinking of *be[-ing]*, is absorbed by this. Thinking is drawn from *be[-ing]* as what is coming (*l'avenant*). *Thinking*, as *thinking*, is latent in what is to come of *be[-ing]*, in *be[-ing]* as what is to come. *Be[-ing]* has already come down to thinking. *Be[-ing]* is as what has come down <to us> of <the life of> thinking. But what has come down <to us> is in itself historical. Its history has already been brought up in what is said by the thinker.

Remaining ever and anon to be brought up and in its remaining <thus> waiting for man, what is to come of *be[-ing]* is all that matters for thinking. For that reason, essential thinkers always say the same thing. However, that does not mean <they say> the same things. Admittedly, they say this <same thing> only to the those who venture to go on to think after them. To the extent that thinking on <things> historically, thinking pays attention to what has come down <to us> of thinking, it is already obligated to what is appropriate, <that is,> to what is in accordance with what has come down to us. To save <oneself> by taking flight into what is alike is <the> safe <thing to do>. The risk <to be taken> is to hazard dissension in order to be able to say the same thing. Equivocation threatens, and mere quarreling.

Appropriateness of what is said about *be[-ing]*, in its capacity as what has come down <to us> of truth, is the first act of thinking, not the rules of logic, which can become rules only in terms of an act of *be[-ing]*. But paying attention to what is appropriate to saying that is <of a> thinking <kind does> not only make it evident that we always think from *be[-ing]* about *what* to say and *how* it is to be said. It is equally essential to consider *whether* what is intended ought to be spoken, in what way, at what moment in the history of *be[-ing]*, in which dialogue with this

<history>, and based on which claim it <what is intended ought to be spoken>. In its unity, that threefold <something> which is mentioned in an earlier letter is | {364} defined in terms of the law of appropriateness of ontological thinking: <namely,> the strictness of reflection, the carefulness of saying, <and> the economy of words.

It is time to break oneself of the habit of overestimating the value of philosophy and therefore asking too much of it. What is needed in these times of need is less philosophy but more attention to thinking, less literature but more care given to the literal.

The thinking of the future is no longer philosophy, <but> not because it thinks more originally than metaphysics, which means the same thing <as philosophy>. <At the same time,> [h]owever, the thinking of the future can no longer, as Hegel desired, give up the name "love of wisdom" and come to be wisdom itself in the form of absolute knowledge. Thinking is on the decline for want of its former nature. Thinking salvages language in <its> simple saying. Language is thus the language of *be[-ing]* as clouds are the clouds of the sky. In what it says thinking leaves inconspicuous traces in language. They are as inconspicuous as the tracks left by the farmer who walks slowly through his fields.

Freiburg, November 23, 1945

Dear Mr. Beaufret,

Your friendly letter which Mr. Palmer delivered several days ago has given me a great deal of pleasure.

I have known your name for only a few weeks through your excellent essays on "Existentialism" in *Confluences*. So far, unfortunately, I have only Nos. 2 and 5 of the journal. Even in your first essay (in No. 2), I see the elevated concept of philosophy that you have. Here are hidden realms that are going to come to light only in the future. But that is going to happen only if rigor of thinking, carefulness of saying, and economy of words take place on a greater scale than heretofore. You yourself see that a gaping abyss divides Jaspers' thought from mine, to say nothing of the completely different question that animates my thinking and that oddly enough people have not yet grasped. I treasure very highly Jaspers as a personality and as a writer, <and> his effect on college students is considerable, but the already nearly canonical grouping together of "Jaspers and Heidegger" is *the* misunderstanding *par excellence* that circulates throughout our philosophy. That is surpassed only by the notion that my philosophy is "nihilism"--my philosophy, which does not, like all philosophy heretofore, question only the *be[-ing]* of be-ing (*l'être de l'étant*), but rather the truth of *be[-ing]* (*la vérité de l'être*). The essence of nihilism, on the contrary, consists in the fact that it is not able to think the *nihil*. As far as I have been able to tell in the few weeks since I first became acquainted with it, I sense in the thinking of the younger French philosophers an extraordinary *élan* that indicates that a revolution is being prepared for in the area <of philosophy>.

What you say about the translation of 'Da-sein' as 'réalité humaine' is to the point. So is your excellent remark: "*mais si l'allemand a ses ressources, le français a ses limites.*" Here is hidden an essential hint about the possibilities of mutually learning from one other in productive thinking.

'Da-sein' is a key word of my thinking and thereby also the occasion for great misunderstanding. To me, 'Da-sein' means not so much 'me voilà', but rather, if I may say this in a perhaps impossible French: *être le-là*. And *le-là* is the same as 'Αλήθεια: emergence--overtness.

But this is only a superficial hint. Fruitful thinking has need not only of writing and reading, but <also> of the *συνουσία* of conversation and of teacher teaching work . . .

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