

"Preserving the *Ethos*": Heidegger and Sophocles' *Antigone*

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The Question

Heidegger claims a word such as "ethics" begins to flourish when originary thinking [*ursprüngliche Denken*] has come to an end.¹ He implies one ought neither to desire nor to elicit the end of originary thinking to the extent such thinking remains accessible or incumbent upon us, even as we inquire into ethics. In originary thinking one does not ask about ethics to articulate the content of this or that normative theory. One must think what is essential to ethics by first thinking what is essential to human being (*Dasein*) in his "ek-sistence" toward Being, thereby to apprehend in a more "attuned" way the relation between fundamental ontology (*Fundamentalontologie*) and ethics. Heidegger himself has provided the requisite thinking in his *Dasein* analytic, as developed in *Being and Time*, then in subsequent works, so that one may follow Heidegger in his expectation that one think what is essential to ethics.

But "ethics" is itself a term in need of clarification according to its "essence" [*Wesen*], even before one merely assumes or posits a concept of ethics as normative theory, i.e., what is denominated *ethike*. Thus Heidegger could say (LH, 255):

Where the essence of man is thought so essentially, i.e., solely from the question concerning the truth of Being, but still without elevating man to the center of beings, a longing necessarily awakens for a peremptory directive and for rules that say how man, experienced from eksistence toward Being, ought to live in a fitting manner. The desire for an ethics presses ever more ardently for fulfillment as the obvious no less than the hidden perplexity of man soars to immeasurable heights. The greatest care must be fostered upon the ethical bond at a time when technological man, delivered over to mass society, can be kept reliably on call only by gathering and ordering all his plans and activities in a way that corresponds to technology.

Who can disregard our predicament? Should we not safeguard and secure the existing bonds even if they hold human beings together ever so tenuously and merely for the present? Certainly.

The essence of the human is thought essentially only when (a) thinking is guided by the question concerning the truth of Being, and (b) the human is not elevated to the center of beings, thus (c) the whole of being is not construed according to anthropocentric interests. Absent fundamental ontology, the essence of the human is not thought at all, in which case humanity succumbs to the forgetfulness of Being (*Seinsvergessenheit*). Neither is the essence of the human thought properly when the human is made the center of beings, i.e., when the epistemological frame entails immersion in the subject-object dichotomy consistent with the metaphysics of presence.

Heidegger does not leave the matter there. He would have us not merely sustain a provisional morality that binds tenuously and merely for the present, i.e., during "the planetary domination of Technology" or "Enframing" [*das Ge-Stell*]. For Heidegger, another kind of questioning must be undertaken, provisional moralities to be interrogated consistent with the question concerning the meaning of Being (*Seinsfrage*): "we must ask what ... ethics [is]" (conceived as *a discipline*) even as we would interrogate the content of all normative theory given an "essential" determination by Plato and Aristotle.

Why so? Prior to the explicit beginning of philosophy as such in the writing of Plato, "thinkers" before him knew not of an ethics in the sense of a discipline that is a branch of "science" (*episteme*). Yet their thinking was not "immoral." Pre-Platonist thinkers understood something essential to ethics without their thinking being bound, or determined in advance, by *theoría*.² In the absence of a theoretical determination they were nonetheless able to apprehend (and presumably also to appropriate) what is "moral" in the sense of manifesting a fit way of life, a fit way "to be." Without constructing a "system" they also did not construe the essence of ethics as a universal standard applied to particulars, both real and possible. "Everything that we see in particulars is always determined by what we have in advance," yet such "determination" is subject to err in making sense of uniquely human acts never merely something "present-at-hand" (*Vorhanden*) or intelligible in that way at all.³

Heidegger (LH, 256) introduces his paramount claim and authoritative referral to a source of that pre-Platonist essential thinking:

The tragedies of Sophocles—provided such a comparison is at all permissible—preserve the *ethos* in their sagas more primordially than Aristotle's lectures on 'ethics.' A saying of Heraclitus which consists of only three words says something so simply that from it the essence of the *ethos* immediately comes to light.

The saying of Heraclitus (Frag. 119) goes: *ethos anthropoi daimon*. This is usually translated, 'A man's character is his daimon.'

This translation thinks in a modern way, not a Greek one. *Ethos* means abode, dwelling place. The word names the open region in which man dwells. The open region of his abode allows what pertains to man's essence, and what in thus arriving resides in nearness to him, to appear. The abode of man contains and preserves the advent of what belongs to man in his essence. According to Heraclitus' phrase this is *daimon*, the god. The fragment says: Man dwells, insofar as he is man, in the nearness of god.

Heidegger's instruction is clear: a proper understanding of ethics is to be found in the tragedies of Sophocles, but also in the fragmentary thought of Heraclitus. Ethics is not thought essentially, Heidegger counsels, if conceived merely in terms of "rules" that lay forth how the human is to live in a fitting manner. More than rules are at issue, for they are ever secondary to that human achievement Heidegger calls *dwelling* [*Bauen*]. By pointing beyond "the modern way" of thinking to "a Greek" way of thinking, Heidegger would have us think *the essence of dwelling* rather than (as in the case of "virtue ethics" of concern to Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle) the achievement and manifestation of "character" (i.e., human "excellence"—*arete*—that manifests *eudaimonia*).

Heidegger (LH, 258) proposes: "If the name 'ethics,' in keeping with the basic meaning of the word *ethos*, should now say that 'ethics' ponders the abode of man, then that thinking which thinks the truth of Being as the primordial element of man, as one who *eksists*, is in itself the original ethics. However, this thinking is not ethics in the first instance, because it is ontology." The antecedent of this conditional proposition reveals the way Heidegger would have us construe the meaning of "ethics": Undertaken as a mode of interrogation, ethics first and foremost ponders *the abode* [*der Aufenthalt*] of the human being (one consequence of which can be, of course, the elucidation and articulation of normative theory providing rules for living). This thinking cannot but *think the truth of Being*, this "truth" [*aletheia*] apprehended as *the primordial element of the human being*. The human is then understood as *one who ek-sists in* (stands out into) *the truth of Being* (in contrast to the metaphysical or practical-philosophical modes as *zoön logon echon* or as *zoön politikon*). "Ethics" and "originary ethics" are thereby inextricably interrogated together.⁴

In writing tragedy Sophocles does not thereby produce a fundamental ontology, yet his sagas preserve what is essential to "ethics" and "originary ethics" as Heidegger would have us interrogate them.⁵ Challenged to examine Sophocles' tragedies, we are to find therein what is preserved and yet instructive if we today are to move beyond provisional moralities,

enabling our meaningful confrontation with the planetary domination of technology. Because of Heidegger's keen interest in Sophocles' *Antigone* I turn to it. Whatever we find in Sophocles' sagas must be consonant of the same theme pronounced by Heraclitus: they "think and say the same."

Sophocles' *Antigone*, Heidegger's Commentary

It is appropriate to begin with Sophocles' *Antigone* if only because it is the first of "the Theban plays" ("produced in 441 B.C.," *Oedipus Rex* produced "some fourteen or fifteen years later") that inaugurates Sophocles' principal theme.⁶ Yet the *Antigone* is particularly apt in another sense. For Heidegger, beginnings disclose an "essential configuration," holding sway or governing what ensues thematically.⁷ The *Antigone* discloses what is essential for Sophocles and for us, involving us immediately in what Heraclitus intends us to understand in his saying, *ethos anthropoi daimon*—in the sense given it by Heidegger. There is "an essential connection" between Heraclitus and Sophocles in their appropriation and respective elucidation of the *ethos*.

At the outset of the saga, Antigone's query to Ismene speaks of the sufferings "sprung from their father" Oedipus. The god Zeus "achieves suffering" even for the survivors. Their suffering extends to their engagement of the plight of Polyneices. Both daughters are faced with the prospect of sharing in "the labor and act" that may mend a misdeed—Polyneices' corpse left "unwept" and "untombed," contrary to what befits proper burial and, thereby, due honor of the dead.⁸ If Antigone perceives the matter correctly, both sisters are called to a deed despite it being forbidden by the command of Creon. Antigone declares what is essential to this deed: "It's not for him to keep me from my own" (Line 48). Antigone's declaration is contraposed to that of Ismene, who reminds of their proper place in the *polis* (Lines 59–60): "We'll perish terribly if we force law and try to cross the royal vote and power." Referring to acts that exceed their power [*perissa prassein*] Ismene adds (Lines 66–7): "for in these things I am forced, and shall obey the men in power." The contrast is patent: Antigone, not to be kept from her own, dares "the crime of piety" [*hosia panourgesas*] (Line 74), daring to "honor what the gods [*theon*] have honored"; sustaining her perspective, Ismene holds, "I shall do no dishonor. But to act against the citizens I cannot" (Line 79).

Antigone and Ismene manifest the deliberative dilemma, that is, what honor requires of them (indeed of any citizen). Antigone performs what is for her the honorable deed, an act of piety, thereby honoring what the gods have honored; Ismene seeks to perform the honorable deed that is

her act of honor to the citizens, not forcing the law or crossing the royal vote and power. The text opens, in short, with opposing claims from the two daughters. I take this contraposition to be central for Sophocles, in contrast to "the opposition of Creon and Antigone" most critics interpret to disclose the significance of the drama.⁹ Surely the dialogue between Antigone and Creon, as well as their respective actions, manifest consequences following from a ruler who "misconstrues the role of the rebel and his own as sovereign"—yet this interpretation prejudices and, so I submit, *misleads* us in our apprehension of what is essential to Antigone's act. Hers is not first and foremost that of a "rebel" against a sovereign, a view that characterizes Antigone in a negative light. Construed positively and essentially, Antigone's act is that of one who would be pious and honorable before the gods. More to the point, in being pious Antigone draws to our attention what is essential to her act, that is, the open region of her abode that allows what pertains to the human essence to appear, and what in thus arriving resides in nearness to her. Specifically, *Antigone dwells in the nearness of the gods*. Through her act Antigone insists on the primacy of dwelling in nearness to the gods, itself *the fitting guide to dwelling in nearness to mortals*, "mortals" literally and expressly brought to the fore by the dead brother Polyneices yet untombed and thus dishonored.

Antigone's intention and her act fly in the face of Creon's assertion that one "cannot learn of any man [*pantos andros*] the soul [*psuche*], the mind [*phronema*], and the intent [*gnomen*] until he shows his practise of the government [*archais*] and law [*nomoisin*]." Sophocles deliberately contraposes Antigone's act to Creon's utterance: Antigone discloses her soul, her mind, and her intent when she claims what is her own, namely, an act of piety despite what either ruler (*basileus/turannos*) or ruled (*polites*) construe to be proper "practice" (*prassein*) in the interest of government and law. Ismene and Creon conceive of friendship (*philia*) within the frame of such practice—Ismene as one who is ruled not wanting to dishonor the citizens with whom she has friendship and so refusing her sister's deed; Creon, in a similar vein, asserting that "he who counts another greater friend than his own fatherland" [*kai meizon hostis anti tes autou patras philon nomize*] is to be placed nowhere, i.e., to lack place in the *polis* and thus effectively to be exiled as "stranger" and thus as "enemy."

At issue is what conduct befits a citizen (*polites*). Creon holds that, "The man who is well-minded [*eunous*] to the state [*polei*] ... in death and life shall have his honor [*timesetai*]." For Creon as for Ismene, the well-minded citizen does not force the law (*nomos*), especially the law issuing from the power of the *basileus/turannos* on behalf of the fatherland (*patras*). Yet one need not concede to Creon this claim. One

must instead ask what it is to be "well-minded" to the polis *when faced with the claim of the gods* even as one is faced with the claim of ruler and ruled. That the gods may and do lay claim to an individual's act is a matter of some consequence, given the chorus's query ("Isn't this action possibly a god's?") when the guard reports the burial "all accomplished." Antigone's act elicits the question whether the polis is sustained in its essence primarily or only when one privileges the law (*nomos*) in deference to its provenance in the royal command. The chorus discloses the possibility that Antigone's act is related to an act of the god. Her "dwelling in the nearness of the god" through her act of piety itself elicits the drawing near of the god to her. Her act may then indeed be pious according to the judgment of the god, therefore veritably not a crime against either god or citizen—thus not an act against the polis conceived as *patras*—even though both ruler (Creon) and ruled (Ismene) deem Antigone's act to be a crime. That is why Antigone declares that she does "what the gods have honored."

Creon will not hear of such a possibility: "Unbearable, your saying that the gods take kindly forethought for this corpse" (Line 282). Creon claims to "revere great Zeus," yet it remains to be established whether he himself draws near to the gods so that the gods may draw near to him. The gods draw near in response to a deed of piety. Whether Creon himself dwells in nearness to the gods turns on whether he is attuned to their claim (e.g., that of Zeus). The question also is whether Creon is himself "well-minded" (*eunous*), Sophocles drawing the question obliquely in the guard's query as to what his unwelcome speech offends in Creon: "Does it annoy your hearing or your mind [*psuche*]?" For good reason the chorus signals what is fundamentally the enigma of the human, irrespective of his or her place in the polis as ruler or ruled: "Many the wonders but nothing walks stranger than man" [*polla ta deina kouden anthropou deinoteron tele*]. These words resonate what is essential to the Greek discernment of the human way to be, which is why Heidegger reflected on these words expressly.

In *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (IM, 146 ff), Heidegger turns to Sophocles' *Antigone* to learn of "the poetic project of being-human among the Greeks." Heidegger interprets, focusing on Sophocles' ascription: Nothing surpasses the human being in strangeness. Taking this in the superlative (*deinotaton*) rather than the comparative (*deinoteron*), Heidegger observes (IM, 149):

Man, in *one* word, is *deinotaton*, the strangest. This one word encompasses the extreme limits and abrupt abysses of his being. This aspect of the ultimate and abysmal can never be discerned through the mere description that establishes data, even though

thousands of eyes should examine man, searching for attributes and states. Such being is disclosed only in poetic insight.

Let us pause here. We noted Creon's claim to know of the soul, the mind, and the intent of a human disclosed in a person's practice of the government and law. Such practices lay forth the requisite evidence of "friendship to the fatherland," thus a person's manifest pious deeds and due honor in life and in death. Yet Sophocles' ascription of the human as *deinotaton* points to "the extreme limits and abrupt abysses of his being," Creon's or Ismene's practices (*prassein*) not disclosing what is essential. What is essential can be declared only if one apprehends that the human being is *to deinotaton*, the strangest. Thus Heidegger (IM, 149–150) would have us clarify the meaning of the Greek word *deinon*:

... *deinon* means the powerful in the sense of one who uses power, who not only disposes of power [*Gewalt*] but is violent [*gewalt-tätig*] insofar as the use of power is the basic trait not only of his action but also of his being-there.... Man is *deinon*, first because he remains exposed within this overpowering power, because by his essence he belongs to being. But at the same time man is *deinon* because he is the violent one in the sense designated above. (He gathers the power and brings it to manifestness.) Man is the violent one, not aside from and along with other attributes but solely in the sense that in his fundamental violence [*Gewalt-tätigkeit*] he uses power [*Gewalt*] against the overpowering [*Überwältigende*]. Because he is twice *deinon* in a sense that is originally one, he is *to deinotaton*, the most powerful: violent in the midst of the overpowering.

Heidegger points to what is essential to all who have share in the polis. Creon disposes his power as *basileus/turannos*, Ismene her delimited power as ruled *polites*, and Antigone as one who *takes her stand outside the ruler-ruled dichotomy by appropriating what is her own (to auto)*. Each is exposed within "the overpowering power" and acts in a way more fundamental than the conventional exercise of power that opposes "violence" and "peace" within the polis. Each is "strange" such that we, like Heidegger, should ask: "But why do we translate *deinon* as 'strange' [*unheimlich*]?" Heidegger (IM, 150) continues:

Not in order to hide or attenuate the meaning of powerful, overpowering, violent; quite on the contrary. Because this *deinon* is meant as the supreme limit and link of man's being, the essence of the being thus defined should from the first be seen in its

crucial aspect. But, in that case, is the designation of the powerful as the strange and uncanny [*unheimlich*] not a posterior notion derived from the impression that the powerful makes on us, whereas the essential here is to understand the *deinon* as what it intrinsically is? That is so, but we are not taking the strange in the sense of an impression on our states of feeling.

Heidegger points beyond what the chorus describes after declaring the human (*anthropos*) the most strange: Crossing seas ("excursion" [*Aufbruch*]), ploughing up the earth ("incursion" [*Einbruch*]), snaring birds and wild beasts, making shelter, contriving refuge from illness, etc., the human "can always help himself. He faces no future helpless." All of this is conventional, familiar enough to us as the human's "cleverness" in "inventive craft." But this is not what is essential to the human power as the "strangest." Heidegger (IM, 150–1) clarifies further:

We are taking the strange, the uncanny [*das Unheimliche*], as that which casts us out of the 'homely,' i.e., the customary, familiar, secure. The unhomely [*Unheimische*] prevents us from making ourselves at home and therein it is overpowering. But man is the strangest of all, not only because he passes his life amid the strange understood in this sense, but because he departs from his customary, familiar limits, because he is the violent one, who, tending toward the strange in the sense of the overpowering, surpasses the limit of the familiar [*das Heimliche*].

This sense of the human as "strange" immediately resonates with the act taken by Antigone. She dares to place herself outside the customary, familiar, and secure insofar as she (as Ismene anticipates) "forces the law." Polyneices being yet untombed brings to the fore for Antigone her being "unhomely" in Thebes. So long as she sustains the command of the *basileus/turannos* and does not depart from her customary, familiar limits, she is "unhomely." Appropriating her own, she unavoidably surpasses the limit of the familiar such as ruler and ruled construe it. Antigone "appears" to Ismene to be one who "craves what can't be done" (Line 90), her act "wrong from the start," Antigone chasing "what cannot be." Hence we have Creon's consonant attribution of shame, unholiness of deed, enmity to the fatherland, as he indicts—while not yet really knowing (or dissembling that he does not know?)—the doer of the deed we know to be that of Antigone. But appearance is ever subject to our vigilance if discernment is to find its way to the truth. Thus Heidegger writes (IM, 150): "We shall fully appreciate this phenomenon of

strangeness only if we experience the power of appearance and the struggle with it as an essential part of being-there."

All who have place in the *polis* experience "the power of appearance," which the Greeks understood as *phainomenon*, surely, but also as *eidolon*, semblance. Essential to the human's power is the power to unconceal, to disclose, to bring what is thus given "to stand," discriminating among being (*to on*), appearance (*phainomenon*), and semblance (*eidolon*). It is this discrimination among being, appearance, and semblance that for Heidegger is at the heart of the human being-there in the *polis*. Commenting on Line 370 of the *Antigone*, Heidegger (IM, 152) focuses on the Greek words "*hypsipolis apolis*" and instructs:

It speaks ... of *polis*; not of the paths to all the realms of the essent but of the foundation and scene of man's being-there, the point at which all these paths meet, the *polis*. *Polis* is usually translated as city or city-state. This does not capture the full meaning. *Polis* means, rather, the place, the there, wherein and as which historical being-there is. The *polis* is the historical place, the there in which, out of which, and for which history happens. To this place and scene of history belong the gods, the temples, the priests, the festivals, the games, the poets, the thinkers, the ruler, the council of elders, the assembly of the people, the army and the fleet.

All such elements are "part and parcel" of what is proper to "the political" (*ta politika*) in the Greek "city-state," including Thebes. All are political by having "jointure," i.e., a fitting-together or *con*-stitution, connoted by the word *politeuma*. The *politeuma* assigns to each its place within this jointure. But Heidegger (IM, 152–3) points otherwise:

All this does not first belong to the *polis*, does not become political by entering into a relation with a statesman and a general and the business of the state. No, it is political, i.e., at the site of history, provided there be (for example) poets *alone*, but then really poets, priests *alone*, but then really priests, rulers *alone*, but then really rulers. *Be*, but this means: as violent men to use power, to become pre-eminent in historical being-there as creators, as men of action. Pre-eminent in the historical place, they become at the same time *apolis*, without city and place, lonely, strange, and alien, without issue amid the essent as a whole, at the same time without statute and limit, without structure and order, because they themselves *as* creators must first create all this.

What is essential to the *polis* as the site (*topos*) of history and of human being-there (*Dasein*) is that men—and women (*qua anthropinos*, thus *gunaika* included even as *andras* is)—become preeminent through acts that are "without statute and limit." These acts are creative, manifesting initiative independent of (a) the "structure and order" that is the *politeuma* and (b) the directive that issues from "ruler and general." Pre-eminent acts create what is essential to the *polis*, challenging the structure and order of the *politeuma* and the command of the *basileus/turannos*. That is precisely what Antigone does; acting pre-eminently she "crosses" the royal vote and power, "forces" the law, transgressing both statute and limit set by *politeuma* and *basileus/turannos*. On this reading, Antigone is "well-minded" in virtue of her transgressive act.

In what sense is Antigone's act transgressive? In continuing its reflections on the strangeness of man, the chorus remarks (Lines 369–70): "When he honors the laws of the land and the gods' sworn right high indeed is his city; but stateless the man who dares to dwell with dishonor" [*nomous pareiron chthonos theon t' henorkon dikan hupsipolis. Apolis hoto to me kalon zunesti tolmas charin*]. Antigone's act illumines the primacy of dwelling in nearness to the gods, and links expressly with Heidegger's interpretation of "*hupsipolis apolis*." The human who "dwells with dishonor" is essentially stateless—better said, truly "homeless," displaced such that s/he does not truly "dwell" (i.e., is *apolis*). Through her pre-eminent act, Antigone may (from the perspective of appearance held by Ismene and Creon) be "stateless" in the sense of being transgressive of the royal vote and power, thereby acting against the citizens. Yet, her pre-eminent act, through which she is *hupsipolis*—"high indeed"—is her essential way of being-there. She seeks to dwell with honor before the gods, though others think her impious and dishonoring of the *polis*. Antigone, in contrast to Ismene and Creon, apprehends that in committing to her transgressive act she, like any human, "is always thrown back on the paths that he himself [she herself] has laid out." Everything that is the "ethical" (in the sense of fitting norms for living) or the "political" (as the established jointure of ruler and ruled) represents any number of "paths" all in the *polis* have laid out, wittingly or unwittingly, be they ruler or ruled. Thrown (recall Heidegger's discussion of *Geworfenheit* [BT, 174]) citizens generally—along with those of Thebes who must engage the unsettled question of Polyneices' lack of burial and rites—can seemingly act only in the context in which the human "becomes mired in his paths, caught in the beaten track, and thus caught he compasses the circle of his world, entangles himself in appearance, and so excludes himself from being" (IM, 157). Only one (like Antigone) pre-eminent in action overcomes entanglement in appearance (*phainomenon*). More important, only thus does one overcome entanglement in *semblance* (*eidolon*)—as

that which gives place to the false (*pseudos*) in the *polis*—thereby to bring forth being (*to on*). One achieves an overcoming (*die Überwindung*) of what otherwise would be the human's exclusion from being. Those like Ismene, who foreswear crossing the royal vote and power and withdraw from forcing the law, bar themselves "from reflection about the appearance" in which they move.

What is to be gained from reflection on appearance? Nothing less than transcendence [*Hinaussein*] of the familiar, the customary; that "knowledge" is gained that is a "persistent looking out beyond what is given at any given time." This "looking out" is precisely that "violence" [*Gewalt-tätigkeit*] that "wrests being from concealment into the manifest." Thus, comments Heidegger, "The *violent one*, the creative man, who sets forth into the un-said, who breaks into the un-thought, compels the unhappened to happen and makes the unseen appear—this violent one stands in all times in venture (*tolma*, line 371)." Antigone transgresses to "force" what is to happen according to her venture, her "daring" act. Her act is a "scene of disclosure." Thus Heidegger (IM, 163) adds: "The strangest (man) is what it is because, fundamentally, it cultivates and guards the familiar, only in order to break out of it and to let what overpowers it break in." Antigone breaks out of the familiar and lets what overpowers the customary "break in." What breaks in? The chorus had anticipated in its response to Creon: "Isn't this action possibly a god's?" That is, the god draws nigh to Antigone in her drawing near to the god, their reciprocal act of mutual appropriation bringing forth a deed. It is this deed that would have all in the *polis* of necessity discriminate how that deed either succumbs to the rule of appearance and semblance or manifests the deed for what it truly is.

Heraclitus, Parmenides, and Sophocles know "the unconcealment [*die Unverborgenheit, aletheia*] of being is not simply given. Unconcealment occurs only when it is achieved by work [in the Greek sense of *érgon*]," including "the work of the *polis* as the historical place" in which word, thought, and deed are "grounded and preserved" (IM, 191). We who witness Antigone apprehend that her deed—though it "shatter against being" in her death according to the command of Creon—is precisely this kind of work. It is a work of unconcealment, "a combat against concealment, disguise, false appearance," thus "a struggle *against pseudos*, distortion and perversion" (IM, 192), even when that distortion is engendered by and given in the royal command. In her creative act, then, Antigone preserves the *ethos*—her act of unconcealment *builds the world anew*, her act of "world-building" thereby "history in the authentic sense" (IM, 62). As one who is "creator" in virtue of a world-building deed, Antigone sustains the ineradicable conflict (*polemos*) that makes the

polis the site of history, the site of disclosure in the primordial conflict of being, appearance, and semblance (IM, 63):

When the creators vanish from the nation, when they are barely tolerated as an irrelevant curiosity, an ornament, as eccentrics having nothing to do with real life; when authentic conflict ceases, converted into mere polemics, into the machinations and intrigues of man within the realm of the given, then the decline has set in. For even if an epoch still strives to maintain the inherited level and dignity of its being-there, the level falls. It can be maintained only if it is at all times creatively transcended.

Antigone acts, then, to transcend her time, preserving the *ethos* against the prospect of decline, a consequence of ruler and ruled being dispossessed of "authentic conflict" because of their thrownness onto the paths of the customary. Thus, when Antigone is brought before Creon and the chorus declares (Line 383), "It cannot be you that they bring for breaking the royal law, caught in open shame," Antigone has transgressed the command of the *turannos* and forced "the law," thereby to contest the "royal law." What remains to be decided, the chorus anticipating with us, even for us, is whether *in reality* (in contrast to in appearance) Antigone is caught not in "open shame" but instead in open honor according to the claim of the god.

This matter of shame or honor is what is essentially to be "proved" by Creon, though the surface question is whether Antigone has buried the dead and performed the due ritual of threefold libation. Even the guard manifests his superintendence by the familiar, his own movement upon the beaten paths, when he says, "bringing friends to trouble is hard grief. Still, I care less for all these second thoughts than for the fact that I myself am safe." The guard, in short, surrenders, even refuses, the possibility of authentic conflict between him and Antigone and between him and the royal command he serves. His safety (*soterias*) matters most to him.¹⁰ This concern for personal safety is manifestly deficient in *tolma*, that "venture" or "daring" such as Antigone discloses, admitting she dared (*etolmas*) to transgress (*huperbainen*) the laws (*nomous*). Antigone's justification for her deed cannot be more clear as it pits the royal law of the *basileus/turannos* against the law of the gods that claimed Antigone for her creative deed (Lines 450–9):

For me it was not Zeus who made that order.
Nor did that Justice who lives with the gods below
mark out such laws to hold among mankind.
Nor did I think your orders were so strong

that you, a mortal man, would over-run
the gods' unwritten and unfailing laws.
Not now, nor yesterday's, they always live,
and no one knows their origin in time.
So not through fear of any man's proud spirit
would I be likely to neglect these laws,
draw on myself the gods' sure punishment.

Antigone preserves the *ethos* thereby: attuned to the claim of the gods, attuned to the "unwritten" (*agrapta*) and "unfailing" (*kasphale*) laws, she apprehends the written law—Creon's proclamation (*ho keruxas*)—may not "over-rule" though Creon be ruler (*turannos*). She herself will abide in the nearness of the gods according to what the unwritten yet unfailing law claims from her. As witnesses to her act our task is to discern whether she is caught in "open shame" as it *appears*, thus Antigone's telling words to Creon: "And if you think my acts are foolishness the foolishness may be in a fool's eye" (otherwise translated as, "And if you think my actions foolish, that amounts to a charge of folly by a fool"). One must ask: What is it that Antigone wrests from concealment through her pre-eminent act? One must answer: Antigone struggles with appearance (*phainomenon*), even with semblance (*eidolon*), given the charge of folly against her, to disclose not only her act as one of piety (thus, one of honor) before the claim of the gods; but also to disclose again *as if anew* both (a) the presence of the gods and (b) the rule of their unwritten yet unfailing law as an authentic polemos with the royal law of the *turannos*—all of this yet properly to occur in and for the *polis* as the site (*topos*) of the human being-there (*Dasein*) as each human being qua citizen (*polites*) either takes up (appropriates as his or her own) or prescind from that essential task of discriminating his and her "way" or "path" among being, appearance, and semblance.

Creon, privileging the royal law, not yielding to the claim of the unwritten yet unfailing laws of the gods, characterizes Antigone's deed *hubris* ("insolence"). Antigone's reply clarifies for all who would hear that Creon remains out of attunement to the claim of the gods: "Nothing that you say fits with my thought.... Nor will you ever like to hear my words." Attuned to the claim of Hades even as she has been attuned to the claim of Zeus and Dike, Antigone insists (Line 519), "Death yearns for equal law for all the dead" [*homos ho g' Haidēs tous nomous toutous pothei*].

Ismene at the outset stood contraposed to the intent of Antigone, unwilling to cross the royal vote and power or act against the citizens. Once implicated by Creon, Ismene (in stark contrast to Creon) manifests her turn of mind, understood essentially as a turn from "appearance" to "being" as she properly discerns Antigone's deed: "Sister, I pray, don't

fence me out from honor, from death with you, and honor done the dead." Ismene perceives that she stands to be "fenced out" from honor (*atimases*). Antigone is not satisfied: the gods (*Zeus, Dike, Hades*) will not permit Ismene a share in honor; for, as Antigone declares, Ismene wished no part in the deed and did not make the deed her own (*poiou seautes*). Hence, Antigone indicts her: "I cannot love a friend whose love is words" (Line 542). Here again we find voiced the contraposition of Antigone and Ismene, each as citizen, each as ruled, in relation to the *basileus/turannos* and the *politeia*. Whereas Antigone transgresses to become *hupsipolis*, making the venture (*tolma*) her own and thus her act an "authentic" (*eigentlich*) conflict (*polemos*) on behalf of that *nomos* which is unwritten yet unfailing, Ismene remains thrown upon the familiar and customary path. Antigone wins an authentic self [*eigentlich Selbst*]; she does so having from the outset apprehended her act in view of her uttermost possibility-of-being, i.e., her death. Ismene—as do all in the city—acquiesces in Creon's faulty reason as he asserts, "The man the state has put in place must have obedient hearing to his least command when it is right, *and even when it's not*" [italics mine]; said otherwise, "in justice and its opposite" (*diakaia kai tanantia*). Antigone rightly discerns the matter to be otherwise, for no human can *dwell* with dishonor in a human deed contraposed to the unfailing law of the gods.

In short, Antigone's pre-eminent act discloses that she is a citizen alone even as she is really (in contraposition to "apparently") a citizen in virtue of her singular act; for her act preserves the *polis* in its essence by preserving the primacy of the unwritten law of the gods that ever has its place (*topos*) in that jointure within which the deeds of men qua citizens are brought to light. Yet as Haemon tells, there is the "unsaid," the unspoken undercurrent—what occurs "under cover" (*hupo skotou*)—among many Thebans who grieve for Antigone. They bear witness in their silence, as well as in their murmuring, to this citizen "unjustly doomed" for a "glorious action done" (*ergon eukleestaton phthine*). Counseling Creon, Haemon warns him of being of "one mind" only.

The Greek words are revealing: *me nun hen ethos mounon hen sauto phorei*. Creon, Haemon discerns, is of "one mind" (*hen ethos*) in "manner" and "habit," thus his "outward bearing," i.e., his outward *appearance* (*phainomenon*). "*Ethos*" refers in other, more essential, words to "an accustomed seat," an "abode," one takes up.¹¹ The question here is whether Creon's outward bearing—the way *he shows himself* to the citizens who dare not cross his royal vote and power—is merely or always in this manner of self-presentation. At issue is whether Creon's outward bearing gives evidence of one who dwells in the *polis* even as he "abides" in the secondary, more mundane, sense of having his "seat" of power. At issue is whether Creon truly preserves the *ethos* through his

word (command), his thought (opinion), and his deed (in this case, *contra* Antigone).

The murmuring among the citizens *hupo skotou* makes Creon's accustomed seat suspect (note the double-entendre here insofar as he holds "the seat" of power even as his "seat" is his accustomed path). Creon may not be "correct" (*orthos*) in word, thought, and deed, though he believes himself to "be" so. With his telling warning, Haemon elicits our reflection: is Creon himself "well-minded" (*eunous*), even as Creon expects others within the *polis* to "be" (and not merely "appear" to be) well-minded? Haemon counsels: no man should ever be ashamed to "unbend his mind" (Line 711), permit a change (*metastasin*), meaning *to go beyond where he stands*, in his way to be *to transcend* (*Hin-aus-sein*) the customary, the familiar, his manner and habit, his apparent but perhaps not real *ethos*. Creon may learn (*mathein*) the lesson (*didaxomestha*) manifest first in Antigone's deed and then in Haemon's good counsel and just word, but only if he takes leave of his "seat," his "customary" and "familiar" path.¹²

Haemon's counsel is just insofar as he too perceives what is essential to the *polis* in its jointure: "No city is property of a single man" [*polis gar ouk esth hetis andros est henos*] (Line 737). The *polis* belongs to no man though the human belongs to the *polis* as the site (*topos*) of his being-there (*Dasein*). Creon is correct: "custom gives possession to the ruler" (*ou tou kratountos he polis nomizetai*). But custom does not disclose the essential. A ruler is really a ruler only when he ventures beyond the customary, thereby to be a ruler alone, in so ruling preserving the *ethos* of the *polis* via a venture that "stands out" (*metastasin*), transcends, the customary. Creon, in short, misperceives his deed, though Haemon informs him: "You tread down the gods' due. Respect is gone" [*ou gar sebeis, timas ge tas theon paton*]. Misperceiving, Creon "speaks" (*legein*) but does not "hear" (*kluein*). He refuses "attunement" to the claim of the gods, though their unfailing law superintends even the ruler, whether he act "in justice and its opposite."

Antigone, by contrast, having drawn nigh to the gods, shows herself to be *theogenes*. As "offspring" of the gods, she remains attuned to their presence in the *polis* and shows her respect (*eusebeia*) in her deed, even to the point (as the chorus observes) of "the furthest verge of daring" (*eschaton*), there to find "the high foundation of justice" (*hupselon es dikas bathron*). We, like those among the Thebans who may succeed in discriminating among being, appearance, and semblance, can concur with Antigone when she declares, "And yet the wise will know my choice was right," the "evidence" plain of her "pious duty done" though she stand "convicted of impiety." No justice of the gods (*daimonon diken*) has she transgressed in deed.¹³ Creon, in contrast, sees justice

(*ten diken idein*) too late, his own deed one of "error" (*hamartia*) before the claim of the gods rather than one of "wickedness" (*moxtheria*).¹⁴ We, like the chorus, see: "Concealment is all over," and the lesson is clear: "The gods must have their due."

Heidegger's Omission?

Our excursus within the text of Sophocles' *Antigone* has illuminated how his saga preserves the *ethos* such as Heidegger construes it, but also—and more to the point—how concretely a citizen such as Antigone preserves the *ethos* through her pre-eminent act in the scene of disclosure that is her "being-with" (*Mitsein*) others in the *polis*. Of course, we must keep forefront Mary Blundell's observation: "A special virtue of dramatic form is the opportunity it provides for the persuasive presentation of various points of view without obliging the author to commit himself to any of them or provide any systematic answers" (HF, 10). Thus, one may reasonably suspend judgment that merely concurs with the chorus when it declares "concealment" is all over. Heidegger will readily tell us concealment (*die Verborgenheit*) never ceases. Instead, all who abide in the *polis* struggle daily to wrest being from concealment into unconcealment (*die Unverborgenheit*); such is the unceasing claim of being, appearance, and semblance upon human being-there. The "illumination" I have provided has its "positive" hermeneutic prejudice, of course, given the conceptual frame of Heidegger's Dasein analytic, including here both the early "fundamental ontology" articulated in *Being and Time* and his later efforts at "originary" (*anfängliche, ursprüngliche*) and "essential" (*wesentliche*) thinking (*Denken*).¹⁵ Yet one may well have to consider a genealogical, even architectonic, movement at play here. Heidegger's Dasein analytic, his attention to the Fourfold (*das Geviert*) of dwelling, etc., may well have its prior "ground" (*Grund*) in what he has discovered in Sophocles' sagas, not to mention the fragments of Heraclitus, Parmenides, and others who precede Plato in "thinking." Heidegger's thought, then, itself works to preserve the *ethos* in his authentic *polemos* with (a) the Platonist-Aristotelian and modern metaphysics of presence, and thus (b) "first philosophy's" superintendence of "practical" philosophy such as ethics (*ethike*) as a movement within the domain of *theoretike*.

Scholars, of course, tend to find in Heidegger's thought a serious "omission": his corpus articulates no normative ethics.¹⁶ Frank Schalow claims there is an "assumption governing Heidegger's formulation of an 'original ethics' in the 'Letter on Humanism,' namely, that thought (as ontology) provides the initial access to the *ethos* prior to any subsequent attempt to prescribe normative guidelines for action."¹⁷ Topi Heikkerö claims, "Heidegger was careful to note that his philosophy had nothing to

do with ethics," that Heidegger "did not attempt to describe how ethics could be thought in an ontologically proper way."¹⁸ Lawrence Hatab remarks, "Heidegger subordinated the question of ethics to the question of Being. Like other ontical matters, ethics could not be addressed adequately until the ontological question of Dasein's general mode of Being was given priority."¹⁹ Herman Philipse complains Heidegger issues a "heteronomous doctrine" that is "destructive with regard to moral theory," that "exterminates ethics by investing a transcendent non-entity (Being) with a moral monopoly, but without specifying moral rules so authorized," Heidegger's "ontological analysis of human existence" lacking "a substantial moral dimension."²⁰ Christopher Long opines, "ontology has never been merely theoretical; it is always born out of and determined by the historico-ethico-political conditions under which it is developed."²¹ Yet one may assert confidently that the whole of Heidegger's thought is "ethical" because his *Denken* points to what is essential to preserving the *ethos* in our day (understood as "the destitution of modernity," modernity's "loss of the gods," "homelessness" insofar as we lack a proper discernment/discrimination among being, appearance, and semblance so as to preserve a "dwelling thinking").²²

Daniel Dahlstrom may be correct: if there is to be a "turn" (*Kehre*) such as Heidegger understands is requisite in the face of the planetary domination of technology, "the turn must take place primarily in human beings; after all, the gods are always already there and only the hardness of the metaphysical heart prevents the community from appropriating them."²³ Yet Dahlstrom may correctly counsel, "If the grounding that Heidegger allegedly gives to ethics cannot provide principles for this discrimination [between the ethical and the unethical], e.g., for determining that certain courses of action are generally right and some even enforcibly so, then talk about an 'ethics of dwelling' seems to be a bit of hyperbole." Schalow comments that, "weaving its way silently through [Heidegger's] entire corpus is the enigma of how Being, through its correspondence with us, can yield the directives necessary for our concrete interaction with others." He asks, "how do the allegedly more 'generic,' ontological concerns of such an 'attunement' translate into singular responses toward the 'other' (person)?"²⁴

The foregoing questions may elicit responses having systematic articulation according to the demands of normative theory. But because Heidegger refers us to the poets such as Sophocles, one must not prematurely force the issue of theoretical disquisition and demonstration (as when one concludes, *quod erat demonstrandum*), especially when reminded to differentiate the philosophical focus of Socrates and Plato from that of the poet: "Moral conflict was not a notion congenial to Plato or most Greek philosophers, but it is the life blood of tragedy.... The

essence of the tragedy in such cases is often precisely that moral conflict is insoluble or soluble only at enormous cost" (HF, 11). In other words, one must beware a "naive view of the didactic function of poetry"—"the poets' own aims were not didactic," providing no "factual or categorical wisdom" (HF, 12, 13).

Of course, ethical theory—*ethike* as scientific knowledge, *episteme*—does not rest comfortably with unresolved moral conflict. Blundell (HF, 20) reminds us, "It was partly the manifest inadequacy of tragic characters as uplifting moral exemplars which led Plato to banish them from his ideal state." Plato "censures the tragic poets for pandering to the masses by portraying 'the fretful and varied *ethos*' instead of 'the wise and calm *ethos*, always consistent with itself' (*Rep.* 604e–605a)." Someone may hypothesize, as Blundell does, "that Sophoclean stage figures may be treated as bearers of a broadly consistent Aristotelian *ethos*, or moral and intellectual character." Yet, I submit, Heidegger directs us to the tragedies of Sophocles rather than to Aristotle's treatise on ethics because Sophocles illuminates the authentic *polemos* ineradicably essential to the *polis*, a *polemos* always more than the sum of the "rational" (*nous*) and "emotional" (*pathos*) possibilities of engagement manifest as a citizen's "character." In short, what Plato finds deficient in Sophocles's tragedies is precisely what is essential to the poet's illumination—a fretful and varied *ethos* that is the "scene" of disclosure, what is unavoidably the "abode" of human "authentic conflict."²⁵

Perhaps because Sophocles represents this *ethos* as fretful and varied we can be instructed by Aristotle's theoretical criterion: "actions performed in ignorance of a relevant particular are not open to moral evaluation in the same way as those that result from fully informed decisions (*EN* 1109b30–11b3)." Sophocles' sagas make us aware that the site of human being-there ever discloses "confusion" of good (*esthlos*) and bad (*kakos*) that may or may not be dissipated in an individual's act of discrimination among being, appearance, and semblance. Essential here is the human *Seinsverständnis* (understanding of being) within which moral discernment occurs; for, as Heidegger wrote in *Being and Time* (Macquarrie/Robinson, §58, 332), there is an "existential condition for the possibility of the 'morally' good and for that of the 'morally' evil—that is, for morality in general and for the possible forms which this may take factually" [*die Existenziale Bedingung der Möglichkeit für das "moralisch" Gute und Böse, das heisst für die Moralität überhaupt und deren faktisch mögliche Ausformungen*].

Morality may take many forms, yet "Freedom ... is only in the choice of one possibility—that is, in tolerating one's not having chosen the others and one's not being able to choose them" (BT, 331). This freedom is ever "uncanny"; the human disclosure or unconcealment may be that

of being, appearance, even that of semblance and the false. In this freedom as the choice of one possibility, one can, and often does, choose "the common sense" of "the 'they,'" which is nothing other than "the satisfying of manipulable rules and public norms and [i.e., as well as] the failure to satisfy them" (BT, 334). Sophoclean *tragodia*, in contrast to Aristotelian *ethike*, leads Heidegger not to the explication of moral norms to be satisfied (preferred, justified), but to consider first of all whether philosophers have "arrived at the right ontological horizon" for the interpretation of ethics.

In sorting through the existential condition of "conscience" [*Gewissen*], Heidegger takes notice of the criticism that he "takes no account of the basic forms of the phenomenon—'evil' conscience and 'good,' that which 'reproves' and that which 'warns'" (BT, 336). Why not? Heidegger is concerned with how a human responds to the summons to ownmost (*eigentlich*) possibilities of being. To understand "conscience" in the ordinary way is to understand the "experience of conscience ... after the deed has been done or left undone. The voice follows the transgression and points back to that event which has befallen and by which Dasein has loaded itself with guilt." This happens, e.g., with Creon when he, too late, admits his error. Heidegger emphasizes the import of the *summoning* to a deed, as opposed to *remembering* a deed. One has the freedom to choose one possibility of *being*, or, as the case may be, one possibility of being as *appearance* or *semblance*: "If conscience makes known a 'Being-guilty' [*Schuldigsein*], then it cannot do this by summoning us to something, but it does so by remembering the guilt which has been incurred and referring to it" (BT, 336–7). Heidegger adds, "neither the call, nor the deed which has happened, nor the guilt with which one is laden, is an occurrence with the character of something present-at-hand which runs its course."

What obtains when moral judgment is rendered—by the philosopher, by the ethicist, each with her *theoretike*, by the lay person with his *doxa* (said to be deficient relative to the *episteme* of those who theorize), by the dramatist such as Sophocles with his theater of *tragodia*? When one has a moral principle, applies a moral rule, evaluates according to a moral rule, or evaluates according to what appears, does one speak of acts as "something present-at-hand" which have "run their course" and in their presentation subject to our comprehension? This seems to be so in heteronomous judgment, i.e., when "the other" is judged, in contrast to when autonomous self-assessing judgment is rendered (though duplicity and error occur here as well). Yet whether the evaluation is one's own or another's, every act "calls beyond the deed which has happened, and back to the Being-guilty into which one has been thrown, which is 'earlier' than any indebtedness" (BT, 337). Heidegger hesitates

to be guided by "experience" only, since experience is readily governed by a comportment according to which a deed is something present-at-hand that can be "regulated" and "evaluated."

Given human being-there as a freedom in which only one possibility is chosen with each act undertaken, regulation and evaluation are both subject to the reign of "uncanniness." Positively expressed, uncanniness elicits an individual's resoluteness (*die Entschlossenheit*). Says Heidegger, "One would completely misunderstand the phenomenon of resoluteness if one should want to suppose that this consists simply in taking up possibilities which have been proposed and recommended, and seizing hold of them" (BT, 345). Antigone, Ismene, Creon, Haemon, each has one or another possibility of action proposed and recommended as if the possibility may be "seized" directly (e.g., Antigone calling Ismene to share her deed; Ismene seeking to restrain Antigone from her seeming insolence; Creon insisting on Haemon's filial loyalty; Haemon seeking Creon's critical self-reflection and turn of mind). But in each case there remains to the individual the task of resolution [*Entschluss*], which is not determined in advance but manifest only in the particular moment of the chosen deed. That is why morality as a system of injunctions or set of maxims is always "provisional." At any particular time, it is not a maxim that authorizes or decides the matter at hand; rather, "Only the resolution itself can give the answer" to the question 'On what is it [*Dasein*] to resolve?'" So it was with Antigone in her pre-eminent act.

If only the resolution itself discloses the answer, we are faced with a question for which Heidegger commentators expect an answer if Heidegger's thought is to commend itself in the domain of normative ethics: If choice is "in every case the choice of an individual human being," is that choice "ultimately arbitrary and unjustifiable by the procedures of reason" (a consequence of Heidegger's "moral decisionism," says Frederick Olafson)?²⁶ This question, to be clear, is distinct from the question whether Heidegger's *Dasein* analytic qua fundamental ontology "contain[s] or [implies] substantial moral rules, ideas, or ideals" (HP, 445). To answer the former question provisionally (thus to keep it in question), I turn to Heidegger's thinking on the need for "dwelling thinking."

Building Dwelling Thinking

Heidegger's referral to Sophocles is positive; we may succeed in finding in his sagas how the *ethos* is preserved. Sophocles' *Antigone* elicits our thought, even and especially today, about the place of "the gods" in the contemporary epoch of *Seinsgeschichte* (the history of Being). Antigone's pre-eminent act manifests her attunement to the presence of the gods, thereby to the governing sway of their unwritten and unfailing *nomos* in

the *polis* as the site of history. One who would today act to preserve the *ethos* recalls and responds to a similar claim in which "the gods" and "mortals" are related and bound by the jointure of being. Yet in his *Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens*, translated as "The Thinker as Poet," Heidegger seemingly casts doubt on this possibility: "We are too late for the gods and too early for Being." We face a "double Not"—the "flight of the gods" and the "forgetfulness of Being" (*Seinsvergessenheit*). Our time "is defined by the god's failure to arrive, by the 'default of God.'"²⁷ This means "no god any longer gathers men and things unto himself, visibly and unequivocally, and by such gathering disposes the world's history and man's sojourn in it." Moreover—"grimmer" still—"the divine radiance has become extinguished in the world's history."

A "destitute" time nonetheless calls for both poets and thinkers. Poets such as Sophocles (and Hölderlin, who is thoroughly attuned to Sophocles) remind of the presence of the gods; thinkers such as Heidegger remind us, "The gods who 'were once there,' 'return' only at the 'right time'—that is, *when there has been a turn among men in the right place, in the right way*" (PLT, 92; italics added). There is "reason" for humans to take thought, to remember, and through remembrance to "turn." It remains for some "among mortals ... sooner than other mortals and otherwise than they" to turn, accomplished "when these find the way to their essential nature."

Heidegger tells us there is a "courage" that belongs to "thought;" it "stems from the bidding of Being." When manifest, "destiny's language thrives." This courage is "the echoing response to the first call of Being which gathers into the play of the world" (PLT, 9). Though we live today in the midst of a "double Not," we live at a time in which Being commissions itself in its "first call." Our task as historical being-there is to be attuned to this call; humanity is being gathered into "the play of the world" that includes gods and mortals. But we must *think*, and ours must be a "meditative" (*besinnlich*) rather than a "calculative" (*rechnendes*) thinking if it is to accomplish the requisite turn (*Kehre*). Thereby, thoughts come to us (PLT, 6).

In this thinking in which thoughts come to us, "The oldest of the old follows behind us in our thinking and yet it comes to meet us"—and, "That is why thinking holds to the coming of what has been, and is remembrance" (PLT, 10). We are given "traces of the fugitive gods." Poets in particular "sense the trace of the fugitive gods and so trace for their kindred mortals the way toward the turning" (PLT, 94). But not only poets, as Hölderlin beckons: "to each his own is allotted, too, each of us goes toward and reaches the place that he can." Each is allotted a *place*, but also the *path* to that place; s/he may move along that path and reach it. That path may be one among many paths customary and

familiar, made by others. One's allotment may be none other than customary and familiar paths. Surely they lead to places. But sometimes—and that does not mean "randomly" or "haphazardly"—one must "surpass the limit of the familiar," abandon the customary, venture out, breaking forth a new path entirely one's own. Such is meditative (*besinnlich*) thinking in its venture, surpassing the limit of calculative thinking. Abandoning the path of self-assertion and the path of self-assertive production, one finds one's "place" disclosing itself as a *site of gathering*, a site of self-discovery (*Selbstbefindlichkeit*). Taking upon oneself the venture that is meditative thinking, one gathers to oneself "one's own way of being."

The comportment that belongs to this meditation reveals to the human being his presence as one essential to the possibility of gathering. Beings (*das Seienden, Dasein*) are disclosed in the relation that belongs to gathering. Meditative thinking does not cause us to abandon "our stay among beings"; rather, we discern that stay more clearly. To gather is first and foremost "to preserve," to "take under our care"; "What we take under our care must be kept safe" (PLT, 151). But to keep things, beings, *including ourselves*, "safe" our stay—one having abandoned self-assertion and self-assertive production—must *let* things, beings, ourselves, *be* "in their presencing." Such is the comportment of releasement so as to preserve the *ethos*. They are acts of *dwelling*. As Heidegger understands, "the preserving that dwells is fourfold" in what is gathered, human beings as "mortals" (*thnetoi*) belonging together in one with "earth," "sky," and "divinities" (PLT, 149 ff.).

The comportment of meditative thinking discerns its time as a double-Not. Yet it yields positive and negative dispositions of action, resolute choices: Do not exploit the earth or wear it out; Do not subjugate the earth as if you were its master; Receive the sky as sky; Leave to the sun and moon their journey; Await the divinities as divinities; Do not mistake the signs of their absence; Do not make gods for yourself; Do not worship idols²⁸; Initiate your own nature as mortal; Be capable of death as death, so that there may be a good death; *Thereby*, preserve the *ethos*, the "abode," the "site," of your dwelling in thought, word, and deed.

Given the foregoing we can ask again: are resolute choices ultimately arbitrary and unjustifiable by the procedures of reason, as Olafson suggests? If by "reason" one means the rationality that is the metaphysics of presence, including here that *ethike* that as *episteme* provides us with atemporal first principles, then the answer is all too likely, yes. Here, a Heidegger commentator such as Philipse is perhaps entirely correct to see in Heidegger's thought "a skeptical position within a foundationalist framework in meta-ethics"²⁹; or, as Hodge argues, an

ethics so "radically transformed" that it "does not seek or pretend to provide universal truths."³⁰ Yet resolute choices have their "ground" in the sense of a "reach into the abyss" that is not a logical ground (hence, *der Abgrund*), in a human "turning" that is itself a response to the claim of Being as it commissions itself in and for historical *Dasein* called to surrender the calculative (*rechnendes*) mode of thinking, appropriate the meditative (*besinnlich*) mode, and so take a stand of preserving the unity of the fourfold site of his dwelling, thus to engage the planetary domination of Technology (*das Ge-Stell*). Do we have "certitude" of thought thereby? No:

[T]o the appeal of Being there also belongs the early uncovered has-been (*aletheia, logos, physis*) as well as the veiled advent of what announces itself in the possible turnabout of the oblivion of Being (in the keeping of its nature). The responding must take into account all of this, on the strength of long concentration and in constant testing of its hearing, if it is to hear an appeal of Being. But precisely here the response may hear wrongly. In this thinking, the chance of going astray is greatest. This thinking can never show credentials such as mathematical knowledge can. *But it is just as little a matter of arbitrariness* [my italics]; rather, it is rooted in the essential destiny of Being, though itself *never compelling as a proposition* [my italics]. On the contrary, it is only a possible occasion to follow the path of responding, and indeed to follow it in the complete concentration of care and caution toward Being that language has *already* come to (PLT, 184).

Thus, to ask for rational grounding, for a compelling proposition following from a deductive or inductive procedure of reason, is to ask from the perspective of—even to affirm the authority of—representational, calculative thinking. Heidegger's point instead is that we are to "follow the movement of showing" in his thought, to find one occasion of following a "path" even as in following there is the greatest chance of going astray.³¹ Such is the "venture" (*tolma*) if we are "courageous" enough, i.e., prepared for the authentic *polemos* of being, appearance, and semblance within which decision (*die Entscheidung*) is given and taken up.

It will not do today merely to ask, What ought we to do? and seek thereby directives from a normative ethics ever provisional and not concerned whether such *ethike* (as *episteme*) responds to the planetary domination of Technology. That is why Heidegger turned the question to, How must we think? Heidegger works to preserve the *ethos* in his "meditative" response to the planetary domination of Technology, directing us

from self-assertive calculative thinking to meditative thinking. His thinking provides "markers" along a way (*Wegmarken*), one way that is allotted to him, but also a way that is allotted to us if we too be mortals who gather. We too must "turn" if ethical and political responsibility is attuned to the directive of ontological obligation; for, only then and there does the "first" beginning that installed the Western tradition of metaphysics begin to yield to the "new" beginning heralded by the *Seinsfrage* as Being moves out of concealment (*die Verborgenheit*) and human being—there moves out of forgetfulness (*die Vergessenheit*).

"At this hour in the history of the world," Heidegger says, "we can and must ask where the Occident has finally arrived with its conception of truth." That includes the truth that belongs to *ethike* as a species of *episteme*. "Where do we stand today?" he continues (BQ, 23). "What and where is truth? In spite of everything correct, have we lost the truth? Has the West not fallen into a situation where all goals are dubious and where all bustle and bother merely aim at finding a means of escape? How else are we supposed to understand *metaphysically* that Western man is driven either to the complete destruction of what has been handed down or to warding off this destruction?" Heidegger (BQ, 23, 3) fathoms the significance of the venture: "Extreme decisions require the positing of goals that transcend all usefulness [thus, mere "utilitarian" appeals?] and every purpose [thus, mere "teleological" appeals?] and therefore are alone powerful enough to institute a new creating and founding," even as this implies surrender of the belief that "we possess our reputed truths," including the "truths" of ethics.

Heidegger (BQ, 24) apprehends that this task, insofar as it is "the question of truth," is not merely a "problem of logic." Insofar as anyone is concerned to elucidate "Heidegger's ethics," thereby to make it available for our inspection and evaluation, s/he misses Heidegger's way-markers if s/he insists Heidegger "must also be open to his fellows, so that, co-representing what is communicated to him in their assertions, he can, together with the others and out of a being-with them, conform to the same things and be in agreement with them about the correctness of the representing" (BQ, 18). Precisely this expectation depends on that conception of human being—there as *zoön logon echon*, as *animal rationale*—a conception "metaphysically conditioned" and made questionable by Heidegger not only because the unity of animality and rationality remains "as yet undetermined" (as Nietzsche claims), but because "the highest determinations of the essence of man in humanism still do not realize the proper dignity of man" (LH, 210). Indeed, "In the transition out of the first end of Western thinking into its other beginning, there has to be questioned, in a still *higher* necessity, with the carrying out of the question of truth, the question of who we are" (BQ, 163).

But then, that is none other than Sophocles' question, presented in his admonition: *gnothi sauton*, know thyself. Putting to one and all this task, Sophocles understood the power of *aletheia*, unconcealment, to which Heidegger returns us: "The experience of truth as unconcealment of being implies first of all that truth is—to say it quite indeterminately—a character of beings themselves, and not, as in the ordinary view of later times, a matter of assertions about beings. For the Greeks, but only for them, beings themselves are what can be true or untrue, i.e., unconcealed or dissembled" (BQ, 102). To apprehend the essence of ethics, then, is to apprehend the essence of the human as historical being—there, as one capable of and often being "true" or "untrue," "unconcealed" or "dissembled" (thus "appearing" yet "withholding"). This disclosure is a happening no assertion (as a proposition of logic) captures fully as it seeks to express the *homoiosis* of the *lógos* and the *pragmata* proper to "ethical judgment" (which the individual seemingly has before him according to the power of his *episteme*).³² Even with the power of discernment of the *theoretike* that is *ethike*, the human remains "strange," but therefore also something "wondrous," so that one can be "displaced," as Heidegger says, "out of the confusing irresolvability of the usual and the unusual into the first resolution of his essence" (BQ, 146). Hence Sophocles' admonition yet speaks to our day, so that Heidegger's referral to him is not so much an appeal to Sophocles' "authority" as it is "a directive to unmastered tasks" (BQ, 111)—above all, to the task of thinking through which self-discovery (*Selbstbefindlichkeit*) discloses what is essential to "authentic" historical *Dasein*. "Only if we know that we do not yet know who we are do we ground the one and only ground which may release the future of a simple, essential existence [*Dasein*] of historical man from himself" (BQ, 163).

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Notes

1. Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," *Basic Writings* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993). Hereafter LH.

2. Mary W. Blundell, in *Helping Friends and Harming Enemies: A Study in Sophocles and Greek Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), writes: "When Socrates quarrels with the poets (Pl., *Ap.* 22abc), and Plato treats them as fundamental enemies of philosophy (*Rep.* 607bc), they are not only reacting against a deeply ingrained traditional attitude, but acknowledging poetry as a serious competitor." In what sense might we understand a dramatist to be a "competitor"? Blundell

adds (7), "tragedy frequently dramatizes particular cases of the kind of problem that moral philosophy attempts to solve, and in doing so may help us to shed light on such issues by placing them in a new perspective." Hereafter HF.

3. Martin Heidegger, *Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected 'Problems of Logic'* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 60. Hereafter BQ.

4. Heidegger (BQ, 100) informs us: "the Greeks did indeed experience the essence of truth as unconcealedness, took it up, and always had it available to them, but did not question it explicitly and did not fathom it." More important, Heidegger remarks (BQ, 101): "The knowledge of the essence of truth as the unconcealedness of beings had originally, i.e., in its great epoch, this form, that all acting and creating, all thinking and speaking, all founding and proceeding were determined by and thoroughly in accord with the unconcealedness of beings as something ungrasped."

5. Mark Griffith, ed., *Sophocles: Antigone* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 28, writes: "It was widely believed in ancient Greece, and is still widely believed today, that a good tragedy (or epic) teaches a lesson of some kind, through the representation of good and bad 'examples' (paradeigmata, *exempla*) of human action and character, and through the exploration and revelation of ultimate truths about the world we live in." Blundell (op. cit., 2–3) asks: "can we expect an intellectually serious presentation of ethical issues from a dramatist such as Sophocles?" and remarks that "discussions of Sophocles' 'philosophy' usually focus on his view of the gods and their relation to mortals, often succumbing to the anachronistic temptation to tie morality too closely to religion." Blundell opines, "The attempt to ascertain Sophocles' religious and metaphysical views is no substitute for examining those questions of human choice and action that constitute the stuff of moral theory."

6. David Grene, "Introduction," in David Grene and Richmond Lattimore, eds., *Sophocles I* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954).

7. In *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), for example, Heidegger speaks of beginnings thus: "The beginning is the strangest and mightiest. What comes afterward is not development but the flattening that results from mere spreading out; it is the inability to retain the beginning; the beginning is emasculated and exaggerated into a caricature of greatness taken as purely numerical and

quantitative size and extension." Hereafter IM.

8. I shall be referencing the Loeb Classical Library edition for the Greek text: Hugh Lloyd-Jones, ed., *Sophocles* Vol. II (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994).

9. Grene, 2. Grene adds further (3): "Usually ... the *Antigone* is interpreted entirely as the conflict between Creon and Antigone. It has often been regarded as the classical statement of the struggle between the law of the individual conscience and the central power of the state." Grene sees in the saga something more: "it is the story of a ruler who makes a mistaken decision, though in good faith, and who then finds himself opposed in a fashion which he misunderstands and which induces him to persist in his mistake." Mark Griffith, op. cit., 16–7, identifies "three climactic confrontations" in the saga: "the first between Kreon and Ant[igone] (441–525), the second between Kreon and Haemon (631–765), and the third between Kreon and Teiresias (988–1090)."

10. Blundell, op. cit., 140, characterizes the guard as one with "acknowledged hedonistic egoism outweighing the ties of *philia*," and thus one who is "a paradigm of amoral humanity." On this I cannot concur, on Heideggerian grounds of interpretation. Here it is less a matter of amorality as it is one of the guard manifesting his being "thrown" upon the familiar and customary path such as he discerns it, his "throwness" (*Geworfenheit*) such that he exhibits the manner of the "they-self" (*das Man-selbst*) in a "deficient" mode of solicitude (*Fürsorge*) relative to Antigone.

11. As given in H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon Based on the German Work of Francis Passow* (New York: Harper and Brother, Publishers, 1846), 609.

12. It is to be noted that while Creon remains upon the customary path in one sense, he also transgresses what is the customary path for Thebans, though he does this by dissembling his purpose as he accuses Ismene along with Antigone. Rosenfield writes (114–5): "The more Creon ponders the possible causes of Thebes's misfortune and the more he seeks a solution that will benefit the state, the more he is led to a horrible understanding of the depth of disaster that awaits his son Haemon on a political, familial, and personal level. In this context the 'cold' resolve with which Creon enforces his decree precisely reflects what Hegel calls the 'tyrant's sacrilege,' the crime of a foundation hero for whom the only possibility of reestablishing human, social, and political

order is *to make a break with the former habits of Oedipus's descendants.*" (my italics)

13. Griffith, op. cit., 32, comments, "it remains unclear to what degree Ant[igone] personally has been justified ... nothing is said by Teiresias or anyone else to indicate that the gods approved of her actions; and it is debatable whether in fact she helped to correct the situation in any way."

14. Griffith, op. cit., 27, with reference to Aristotle's *Poetics*.

15. Griffith, op. cit., for example, writes: "*Antigone* continues to strike responsive chords in all kinds of audiences and readers.... [Its] readers may be coming to it with many different kinds of questions and expectations, and with correspondingly different preferences as to the *kinds* of help it should provide." For interesting commentary, see C. M. Bowra, *Sophoclean Tragedy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1944); Bernard M. W. Knox, *The Heroic Temper: Studies in Sophoclean Tragedy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964); and especially that of Kathrin Rosenfield, "Getting Inside Sophocles' Mind Through Hölderlin's *Antigone*," *New Literary History* Vol. 30, No. 1, 1999. Rosenfield hereafter KR.

16. I will take note of some of this commentary below. However, see also Charles E. Scott, "Heidegger and the Question of Ethics," *Research in Phenomenology* 28, 1988; John D. Caputo, "Heidegger's Original Ethics," *The New Scholasticism* Vol. 45, No. 1, Winter 1971; Bernard J. Boelen, "The Question of Ethics in the Thought of Martin Heidegger," in Manfred S. Frings, ed., *Heidegger and the Quest for Truth* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968); Charles Sherover, "Founding an Existential Ethics," *Human Studies* 4, 1982; Frank Schalow, *Imagination and Existence: Heidegger's Retrieval of the Kantian Ethic* (Lanham MD: University Press of America, 1986); R. Winslow, "On the Nature of Ethics in Heidegger," *Philosophy Today* 48, No. 4-5, Winter 2004; W. McNeill, "Care for the Self: Originary Ethics in Heidegger and Foucault," *Philosophy Today* Vol. 42, No. 1, Spring 1998; Fred Dallmayr, "Heidegger and Ethics," *Political Studies* Vol. 44, No. 5, December 1996; Joanna Hodge, *Heidegger and Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 1995); J. Hodge, "Heidegger and Ethics," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* Vol. 27, No. 1, January 1996; S. Benso, "On the Way to an Ontological Ethics—Ethical Suggestions in Reading Heidegger," *Research in Phenomenology* Vol. 24, 1994.

17. Frank Schalow, "The Temporality of an Original Ethics," *International Studies in Philosophy* Vol. 25, No. 1, 1993.

18. Topi Heikkerö, "The Question of Ethics in Technological Culture," Session 137: The Ground for Interdisciplinary Research: Technology, Ethics, and Politics," Science, Technology, and Democracy Joint 4S and EASST Conference, Paris, August 25-28, 2004.

19. Lawrence J. Hatab, "Ethics and Finitude: Heideggerian Contributions to Moral Philosophy," After Postmodernism Conference, University of Chicago, November 14-16, 1997.

20. Herman Philipse, "Heidegger and Ethics," *Inquiry* Vol. 42, No. 3-4, October 1999. Hereafter HP.

21. Christopher P. Long, "The Ontological Appropriation of Phronesis," *Continental Philosophy Review* Vol. 35, 2002.

22. See, for instance, Julian Young, *Heidegger's Later Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); and Norman K. Swazo, *Crisis Theory and World Order: Heideggerian Reflections* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002).

23. Daniel Dahlstrom, "Review of Julian Young, *Heidegger's Later Philosophy*," *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews* 2002.07.10. Dahlstrom adds, however, "But Heidegger insists that what must be thought through is not 'the return of the gods' so much as 'the passing-by of the last god or gods.'"

24. Schalow, op. cit., 55.

25. To acknowledge the ineradicable *polemos* and to give it its place in making sense of what is fitting in human conduct is not to conclude, as Philipse (443) opines, that "empirical and factual investigations of human morality are irrelevant to the ontology of Dasein." However, I do think Philipse is correct in surmising (444), "From the fact that specific moral norms occur in all human cultures, Heidegger would not infer that they belong to the ontological constitution of Dasein."

26. Frederick A. Olafson, *Heidegger and the Ground of Ethics: A Study of Mitsein* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1.

27. Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 91. Hereafter PLT.

28. Heidegger (*The Basic Problems of Philosophy*, 80–1) observes that both Hölderlin and Nietzsche point out that "Western man has, for the last two millennia, been unable to fashion himself a god. What is the meaning of this lack of the power to fashion a god? We do not know." However, he adds, "If there once were gods, who are now in flight from man, as they have been for ages, then this self-refusal of the gods must be a terrible occurrence, which surely sets in motion a singular event which we may hardly risk naming."

29. Philipse, op. cit., 441. Also see sections III through VI of his essay for the detail of his argument. I disagree with Philipse's argument, presented in Section VII (461 ff.), that Heidegger's decisionism—if that is what Heidegger's thought really is—is "a variety of moral skepticism, which dialectically implies a totalitarian ideology," in which case Philipse recommends we "disregard" Heidegger's "dichotomy between authenticity and *das Man*." My position moves away from totalitarian ideology entirely. See my *Crisis Theory and World Order: Heideggerian Reflections*.

30. Hodge, *Heidegger and Ethics*, 202–3: "Theories of morality attempt to provide derivations of judgments of good and evil from some set of principles. In the mode of formal ethical analysis there is a claim to the universal scope of such principles, concerned with all human beings and seeking to establish the universalisability of judgment.... [For Heidegger] [t]he possibility of ethics is conditional on the existence of an entity, for which being is an issue.... Heidegger is evidently not producing universalisable moral principles.... I suggest that the philosophy which has come to an end is that which pretends to provide a single authoritative answer for all human beings to the puzzlement of existence. The philosophy which remains is that which celebrates the other, multiple Kantian maxim: dare to think. Heidegger's enquiries disrupt the generality of universalisation in favour of this other Kantian imperative." Olafson, op. cit., who searches for a *via media* between foundationalism and nihilism/relativism, argues (96) there is need to revise the "conception of an ultimate authority for ethical principles," a conception the "effect" of which is "to disqualify as inadequate ... everything that does not derive from a truth that is universal and timeless." Olafson argues, "there is a ground *in re* for ethical distinctions" and thus for "a relationship among human beings that is preeminently realized in our capacity to acknowledge a common truth."

31. All too many have spoken of Heidegger's entanglement in National Socialism as an indictment of his person and as ample reason to reject his thinking as having beneficent guidance for politics and ethics. I shall not engage this matter here but direct the reader to two earlier essays, in which I addressed "the Heidegger affair," as well as to my book-length effort to show the positive implications of Heidegger's thought for world order thinking. See "*L'Affaire Heidegger*," *Human Studies: A Journal for Philosophy and the Social Sciences* 16:3, October 1993; "*Gnothi sauton: Heidegger's Problem Ours*," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 25:3, October 1994; and *Crisis Theory and World Order: Heideggerian Reflections*.

32. Rosenfield, op. cit., comments that "Aristotle makes the point that a hero is tragic precisely because his fate is inextricably linked to a set of circumstances that make it inevitable, not because he has a particular flaw or vice"—thus, "the tragic hero is not an example of a clearly defined ethical category." So it is with the characters in Sophocles' sagas, wherein he manifests the difficulty the individual has in appropriating his or her *identity* in the face of being thrown into the roles of ruler or ruled in the *polis* or member of a family (father, husband, wife, daughter, son, brother, etc.) through which one all too often loses one's identity, as Rosenfield (116) points out. All, at one time or another, in one way or another given the circumstances, are *amphilogon*—ambiguous as to "who" *really* one is: "everyone in Thebes is amphilogos, ambiguous, double—that is to say, both more and less than what they are." Theirs is the task of *anagnorisis*—"self-recognition"—"in the Aristotelian sense of the word," Rosenfield writes, of "grasping the true essence" of their being. What is meant by "essence," however, remains a matter of reflection, especially since the Aristotelian conception is itself "metaphysically conditioned" and not primordial in Heidegger's sense of determining the human essence according to the *Seinsfrage*.