

## Of Pain: The Gift of Language and the Promise of Time

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### ABSTRACT

*This essay attempts to think anew the relationship of pain with finitude and language. If man is that finite, mortal being whose being is essentially linguistic and being-in-communication, where language is not seen as mere attribute, property, or instrumental means of appropriation, then language cannot be understood in its cognitive disposal as categorical grasp of the “entities presently given,” but must be understood in a more originary manner as opening of the coming into presence, as the event of this coming itself. If a certain dominant ontology, in its innermost ground, understands pain as the very grounding work of logos, then it is necessary to open up the closure of this logos of metaphysics to another, more originary experience of pain in relation to mortality that disappropriates us beforehand, and thereby grants us language itself as gift and promise which welcomes the incalculable event of the “not yet.” This essay reads Heidegger, Schelling and Benjamin to think of the promise of this redemptive, messianic language in relation to an originary finitude, outside the metaphysics of subjectivity, insofar as this metaphysics subsumes language to its cognitive disposal, to its categorical grasp of entities’ “given present.”*

### Keywords

Continental Philosophy, Heidegger, Schelling, Benjamin, language, pain

## Work and Pain

To begin with, and thus provisionally, let us say that it is possible to think of pain in two different manners, entirely heterogeneous, in which neither is irreducible to the other. And we will see how this question of pain is essentially the question of language and communication, and above all, the question of the gift of language itself.

If the human is that mortal being who communicates, and speaks language, who is essentially, in the innermost manner, linguistic being (the linguistic being whose “essence” is this being-in-communication, the being whose beingness consists in this opening to itself in communication, first of all, and essentially, in language), then does this communication, this being-able-to-communicate enable one to bring *to* language that *there (da)*, the *facticity of language* itself, which first of all already always places one outside of oneself, that already always tears one apart from oneself, so that one may speak language?<sup>1</sup> Is it within the power and the possibility of the speaking mortal being to bring *to* language (of signification and meaning), *to* speaking, the very condition of the possibility, the very promise, the very donation of this speaking itself? If language alone enables the mortal to experience “death as death” by tearing one, distancing one, holding one apart from oneself so that one can be near to oneself, does one thereby bring *to* language this very experience of death itself, this very tearing, this trembling and seizure? If language is this tearing apart of being from oneself, *this abandonment of being by its foundation* in an originary manner, so that there be nearness of being to oneself and to the other, so that in speaking, the human addresses the other and herself, so that the human prays for the other on the basis of this language, do humans thereby bring *to* language this very distance and nearness on the basis of their power and capacity? Or is it

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1. What is here contested or rather put into question is the dominant metaphysics of the Subject. Language appears in this metaphysics of the Subject as immanent to the Subject's self-consciousness. Once the primacy of the Subject is questioned, language no longer appears as a grounding act of the Subject but an ‘already always’, an immemorial opening that arrives as pure donation, a given-ness, a gift. It is this immemoriality that is here opened up with the term ‘facticity’. Thus it is no longer the question of whether the human being arrives before language, or whether there is prior self-unity that is then torn apart by language. It is rather the question of an arrival which is yet ‘already always’: this paradox is nonetheless grasped with the notion of ‘facticity’. This facticity cannot be mastered by the self-grounding act of the Subject, but s/he must already always have been ungrounded; or rather, the gift already always un-grounds any immanent self-constitution. It is this (ur) phenomenon that is called here “tearing,” which has both a negative as well as affirmative sense: originary de-constituting of the Subject as well as arrival of the gift, the very gift of future as such.

rather that the human speaks on the basis of an originary *given-ness* and a *donation*, a gift outside all conditions, and that this basis, therefore, remains unconditionally unnamable, unspeakable outside, as the abyss of language itself? In what language of the mortals, is this language of language (this unconditional language before language, of signification and meaning) given? If the gift and the promise of language are always already marked by death, by the abyss, by the unconditional—the gift which first of all bestows upon the mortal the possibility to speak at all—is he thereby able to speak of death, to know death and even to make death the ground of a process whereby one comes to oneself, becomes oneself, becomes the origin and end of one's own becoming? Is one able thereby to make this very gift immanent to the process of one's own initiation, making death one's own, one's very own possibility and capacity, one's "proper" or property?

The following is our first step, our first consideration of thinking pain in relation to language and death. If language were the very site of mortals' power to bring *to* language one's own mortality, one's own (unconditional condition) death would then be the very power of the negative that yields the results of one's own becoming. The human would then be, primordially and essentially, that subjectivity whose metaphysical task, whose work of foundation—in so far as it is their possibility, their capacity, their power—is to make the beginning and end of his becoming his *own*; humans would then be that subjectivity which, in relation to their non-power, to their dissolution and their death, is the one to discover, at the very heart of their non-power, their power *to be*, which maintains their ground so that they can bring *to* the language they speak the very condition of this speaking itself. If the human is the one who names, whose essential being is that he is the name-giver, the descendent of Adam, then the human also must be the one who names first of all, before all names, what must be the unnamable. Only on the basis of this ability to name the unnamable, the capacity, the possibility, can the power to name at all be derived. In other words, the human would then be that possibility, or power of naming, first of all, nothing other than—death itself. The human would then be understood as this being, central amongst all others who, confronted with the horror of her own dissolution, names her own absence, and through this naming power, brings near this absence as the very proper essence of her presence. According to this conception, language is not that which shrinks from horror in its confrontation with its own condition; rather the horror of language consists in its being able to bring to humans who speak this absence into presence, through this being able to recount for themselves, the story of their own birth from an experience of their own (resurrected) dissolution.

Language here assumes a terrible, magical power of conjuration that conjures absence into presence, death into birth; and through this very magical power, it inaugurates another beginning, which is the human's destinal history as subjectivity, as spirit. This power of language—which is at the same time the language of power—therefore, neither in itself is the work of presence, nor that of pure absence, but the movement of absence becoming presence as signification, as the sense of non-sense. In the word “cat,” for example, the cat has neither (empirical) presence nor its absence, but the absence (of the empirical) becoming presence (as Idea). It is this movement of conjuration and conversion, negation and preservation—of absence into presence—that Hegel captured with the notion of sublation (*Aufhebung*). It is the movement of power that has felt in its veins the pain and horror of dissolution and disappearance, “the path of despair” that Hegel speaks of; but this movement of pain and horror does not go in vain, since it simultaneously heralds the birth of man, and the beginning of man's destinal history as Spirit who does not merely scream with pain and ecstasy, but names this cry into discourse, into signification, into meaning. Hegel brings out this peculiar connection that language has in relation to power and death: language's power to inaugurate and accomplish history, because it is the very power of death, of that which Hegel dubs “the work of death” (Hegel 1998, 270).

Hegel's speculative dialectical process thus shows how this power of the negative constitutes for man his universal history, out of the labor man himself initiates without any transcendental ground given to him independently. According to this metaphysics of man's destinal history, the human is the one who suffers pain for his own result—the result of his becoming—and his result redeems his sufferings. Who more than Hegel has provided the tragic drama of this suffering in finitude and its atonement? Ultimately, for Hegel, this redemption or atonement consists of man's ability to assume the very origin of his history at the end of history, so that he appropriates, through the pain and horror of the negativity, his own beginning at his end; he arrives at the end, because he is already always there at the moment of inauguration, as the one confronting with horror his own death as the other's death (who is his *own*, his very other). As the coinciding of the beginning with the end, the atoned consciousness of man is spirit, and language is manifestation of this spirit, which is an externalized interiority, or an internalized exteriority, in so far as it is a presentation of sense, which is the very sense of absence itself. As a presentation of sense, language itself is the work of the negative that is attuned to pain, but, as accomplishment of sense, language is also the atonement of that grief, of that finitude, since it has subsumed within itself, and never given away to, that “way of despair” (Hegel 1998, 49).

As an accomplishment of sense, language is also an accomplishment of time into the eternity of the absolute idea, as ‘the infinite negativity’, as the sense of presence. As absolute presentation of sense, language is now co-incident with spirit, as it is co-incident with eternity that has now appropriated its own origin and end in a circular re-appropriation of its self-same difference. Hence Hegelian metaphysics is a metaphysics of immanence; it is the immanent metaphysics of the presentation of sense that seeks to bring into its sense its own origin and end, so that there is nothing originarily *given* as gift. In other words, language does not appear here as gift, in its given-ness, out of finitude, out of non-appropriable origin and non-appropriable end. Instead language here is the pain of bringing the origin into signification, as manifestation of the metaphysical subject that has appropriated its own origin and end. Pain would then be thought [of?] as a mode of the manifestation of the metaphysical subject in its pathway to this manifestation, in so far as the essence of manifestation has something to do with pain, as if manifestation already always is attuned to pain. In so far as this metaphysics of the subject manifests itself as laboring, and as being empowered as appropriating, appropriating subject, pain here is the pain of the violence that the subject inflicts upon itself, in the very othering, dirempting, sundering itself from itself so that through pain it can be beside itself, close itself unto itself. What Hegel sought to speak of here is the pain of the labor and the pain of the violence in the pathway of manifestation of the subject, which is also the pathway of the powering, appropriating metaphysical subject. Pain here is bound up with work and power in its gathering of Subject to itself, in its nearing of distance, in its presentation of absence, in its appropriating its own origin and end as *eigentlich*, its “proper,” its “own” origin. If for Hegel the essence of spirit is this manifestation, then pain is the pain of this manifestation—of the metaphysics of the subject, of the subject’s gathering into itself.

In his *The Question of Being*, Heidegger brings out this innermost connection between work and pain as the very motor force of the dominant metaphysics whose accomplishment arrives in Hegelian onto-theological dialectics. Heidegger writes:

To be able to trace more clearly the relations that sustain the connection between “work” and “pain,” nothing less would be necessary than to think through the fundamental trait of Hegel’s metaphysics, the unifying unity of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Science of Logic*. The fundamental trait is “absolute negativity” as the “infinite force” of actuality, i.e., of the “existing concept.” In the same (not the identical) belonging to the negation of negation, work and pain manifest their innermost metaphysical relatedness.... And if one ventured to think through the relations between “work” as the fundamental trait of be-

ings and “pain” by moving back via Hegel’s *Logic*, then the Greek word for pain, namely, *άλγος* would first come to speak for us. Presumably *άλγος* is related to *ἀλλξγω*, which is the *intensivum* of *λξγω* and means intimate gathering. In that case, pain would be that which gathers most intimately. Hegel’s concept of the “concept” and when correctly understood, the “strenuous effort,” it entails say the same on the transformed soil of the absolute metaphysics of subjectivity. (Heidegger 1998, 305–306)

Perhaps it is possible to think of pain another way, one that man does not suffer for the end result of a process which his own power of negativity initiates; it is not the pain of his *labor* that seeks atonement for its violence by means of violence, the very violence of positing with which the movement of the (Hegelian) concept begins. To think the redemption of this violence (which is the violence of positing as Concept), an outside of the concept must be thought, for it is not within the capacity of the concept to redeem itself on behalf of its own possibility and resources. If the way opens with the abyss, and not as the end result, it is so that it opens time itself *to come* beyond violence. *The question of the gift of language must thus be inseparable from the critique of violence.*

Therefore what comes *to come* does not end with death, but makes death the beginning point for the possibility of redemption. This redemption is redemption of violence. If here the question arises as to the possibility of thinking the promise of time that is not annihilated or made impossible by negativity, but that is opened up with mortality as its presupposition, then the question of mortality itself is to be thought anew, no longer as negative but in relation to what we are calling the question of “origin.” This origin is not what has become sublated unto concept, and thereby a mere past, but it is the origin to come that promises a time to come beyond violence. An origin to come is to be thought here that is beyond violence only in so far as it is outside even the opposition between violence and non-violence, in so far as the non-violence of the origin cannot even be posited in concept or in signification, as non-violent. Language is the site of this origin to come, outside any power of positing, and outside the pain of the concept, as if there is a more originary pain of language which is outside the labor and power of the concept, which does not allow the Subject to gather into itself in its metaphysical ground. It is to this second notion of pain of language that we come now.

### The Melancholic Gift

If it is from language alone that we experience death as death, know death as death, what kind of knowledge is it that language gives, knowledge that is so originary as to be the very origin of knowledge, the origin of the knowledge of

ourselves as such, of our essential mortality, of our intrinsic finitude? As if in an essential manner, one that is enigmatic, the relationship of the mortal existent to its intrinsic finitude and mortality is at once tied intimately to language. Therefore at the heart of a linguistic existence a lament, unappeased, resonates in an originary manner, in the very opening of existence *to* itself. It is the pain that inscribes itself at the heart of *an origin to come*, tearing this existence apart and exposing it to the outside as an un-enclosed immanence. *To speak is to be attuned to a fundamental mournfulness, given in very speaking itself. Pain is the originary opening of a linguistic existence beyond closure, beyond immanence. This originary pain of language, before the pain of the concept, first of all tears open the naming of the human to the nameless, to the absence of ground, and bestows upon man the gift of language itself. To name is to mourn.* Because openness to the gift of language demands renunciation of mastery, there always adheres a certain mournfulness. But this mourning is not to be understood exclusively in relation to past, but in relation to a radical future that is to be understood as *not yet* of the past.<sup>2</sup>

Thus mortality, instead of closing the mortal existence into an immanence whose limits would then be predicated and drawn out by the labor of language, rather exposes the mortal existence to its outside, to the transcendence of what is not yet arrived, to the future beyond the linguistic power of predication. It is to this transcendence that language, at the limit of predication and at the limit of the conceptual cognition of representative thinking, interminably points towards, pushes itself, as if towards the speech where speech itself falters, trembles and ruins itself. Language, instead of progressively realizing its own identity to its own limit—unlike the dialectical march of the concept, as in Hegelian metaphysical subject—falters into the dissonance in relation to itself, unto which language, as if in an unspeakable lament, abandons itself, delivers itself again and again, to the abyss of the unspeakable and unnamable from which language itself originates; it is as if there occurs, at the very origin of language, an *abandonment* that has already ruined language.

In other words, and this is the essential anachrony of language, language keeps open a relation to its own origin by interminably distancing from itself, by standing apart from itself, by incessantly exiling itself from itself, deviating and falling outside of itself, so that this essential dissonance, this ecstatic solitude of

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2. I am working here with a certain notion of messianicity that evokes the immemoriality of a promise that alone makes future a radical arriving. There is no radical future for mortals if there is no immemorial given. Therefore the messianic notion of hope and affirmation of joy in the future to come is inseparable from an immemorial promise, bound up with certain mournfulness.

language bears the marks of a cision that separates language from itself, separates language from the one who speaks. Therefore one who speaks is never a master of language. Nor does language originate in him or her as a power or a law. It is rather a fundamental mourning that attunes the speaking mortal to his or her non-power and non-mastery, outside the power of the concept, outside the labor of judgment.

Language, then, instead of being the predicative power of representing our finitude for us, and giving us cognition of death, itself is *finite* in an essential sense. This is why a touch of melancholy or pain always resonates at the very heart of a linguistic being even where there is a joy to be expressed, even when a plenitude of being present to oneself is affirmed, and even when the *being-with* all of existence is experienced. This coming together of joy and mournfulness is the moment of becoming in perishing that Hölderlin speaks of (Hölderlin 1988, 96–100), the moment of epochal rupture, which is the very monstrous site of history. It is not because the possibility of sadness is always there for a finite existence, which at any occasion, at any instant of one's life presents itself. It is rather that a more originary melancholy lies at the very source of a finite existence, because it belongs to the originary *opening*, or originary *transcendence* that first of all opens us to *time to come*, and enables the experience of mortality as mortality, death as death, and existence as existence. "To come" here is to be understood as future, not as a particular modality of time in the succession of instants (nows), but as what is always *to come*, that will not come to pass away. In this sense "to come" is a messianic affirmation of a radical future, that is, fulfillment of the immemorial, that which is already always given as promise.

It is in this essential sense that Schelling speaks of a source of melancholy even in God. For created existence to be possible where alone there be revelation of himself—there has to be an *opening*, or *transcendence*, and that means an opening of an *outside* of himself. Hence there must be in God himself an outside of oneself, a transcendence of himself, a rendering of himself as past—which means at the same time an opening of a future<sup>3</sup> through an originary cut (*Scheidung*) or a primordial separation, a tearing disjunction, an anachronic

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3. Thus in *The Ages of the World* Schelling writes, "There is no past without a determinate and decisive present. How many take pleasure in such a present? The person who does not overcome himself or herself has no past, or rather never comes out of the past and lives constantly in the past. It is charitable and beneficial to a person to have, as one says, gotten something over and done with, that is, to have posited it as the past. Only on account of the future is one cheerful and is it easy to get something done. Only the person who has the power to tear themselves loose from themselves ... is capable of creating a past for themselves. This is also the only person who enjoys a true present and who anticipates an actual future" (Schelling 2000, 42).



tune—which is an essential finitude of God’s relation to the created existence and to himself. But this veil of sadness, while remaining as mere *possibility* in God, becomes *actual* in mortal, human existence, since for the mortal the condition of one’s being remains one’s outside as an unground, as a non-appropriable abyss, a *being-there* that remains an outside. Since for mortals one’s being-present-to-oneself is a “loan” gifted to one as *non-appropriable* gift, one never gains control of one’s own (unconditional) condition without an “irreducible remainder.”<sup>4</sup> This is the “unappeasable melancholy of all life,” not being able to actualize oneself completely; for *possibility* marks one’s *limit*, and thereby, at the same instant, *limitlessly* exposes one to infinite possibilities, frees and releases one to one’s unnamable possibilities, the very possibilities of the joyous acts of creation out of this essential freedom that is given to one “independently of oneself.” Schelling writes,

In God, too, there would be a depth of darkness if he did not make the condition his own and unite it to him as one and as absolute personality. Man never gains control over the condition even though in evil he strives to do so; it is only *loaned* to him independent of him; hence his personality and selfhood can never be raised to complete actuality. This is the sadness which adheres to all finite life, and inasmuch as there is even in God himself a condition at least relatively independent, there is in him, too, a source of sadness which, however, never attains actuality but rather serves for the eternal joy of triumph. Thence the veil of sadness, which is spread over all nature, the deep unappeasable melancholy of all life. (Schelling 1936, 79)

This originary melancholy inscribes itself in this very gift that forever remains outside of his mastery and appropriation. Therefore in this sense both sadness and joy belong in their own way to a melancholy. The human, in speaking and thus being endowed with language, is also endowed with this “unappeasable melancholy” that adheres itself in the gift, a gift that bears the mark of death, a gift that bears the traces the sufferings of unmasterable difference and the pain of separation. Schelling calls this pain the pain of “cision [*Scheidung*],” the cut that while separating calls the separated to be together. Language, enabling and gifting humans to speak, endowing humans to present to themselves, to reveal themselves to themselves, forever and first of all excludes the human from the mastery of this gift. Henceforth the human can only speak in a language that is borrowed, loaned to the human, gifted to the human from elsewhere, from another time, from another destination, which precedes the human, and in preceding the human follows the human.

What precedes one and what follows one—that means what remains outside

4. I have dwelt on this question of a fundamental attunement of melancholy that adheres in the very gift of language itself. (Das 2007, 111–123)

of one—this alone, this possibility of an outside, enables the human to be in the open space, that opening where the human is exposed to his outside, that free opening where darkness and light play the originary co-belonging, where one finds oneself exposed and open in relation to the entirety of created existence. *It is, in this sense one says that language reveals to the human his own mortality.* The human is the one to whom mortality reveals itself in language as an unapparent appearing (phenomenon that is outside the cognitive grasp of any phenomenological ontology, and in which that is yet precisely the condition of the possibility of “experience [*Erfahrung*]” itself as such. It is the very phenomenality of phenomenon that each time exceeds thematization in objective terms); it is this mortal who is thus thrown to be, to what Schelling names “central existence” (Schelling 1936, 79).

If man alone speaks language, it is not because language is the accomplishment of the metaphysical Subject at the service of its cognitive disposal; nor because language is the gathering of being to itself. Language rather throws being in the midst of, at the center of, created existence. This means: he is placed at the limit, at the line that disjoins him from the others and, in disjoining, calls the others to his or her nearness. The line, as the *undecidable difference*, as tearing disjunction, as the chasm of a cision, belongs to the experience of abyss as abyss. If man is central existence, it means that he is the one who experiences abyss as abyss, to whom mortality reveals itself as the unapparent apparition and thus places him in relation to what is outside his power and labor. Mortality, thus revealing itself to the human, must already have seized him with a tremor and an awe, with what Kierkegaard (1980) called “anxiety.” Thus Schelling speaks of the human as constantly fleeing from this center, withdrawing from this central fire (the fire that Moses and Heraclitus and Hölderlin (1988) also speak of), only because he is called forth towards it—how to say this?—by the attraction of a “divine violence.”

Thus experiencing his or her death as death in this Open in a lightning flash, the human also experiences eternity as eternity—the entirety of created existence—as what is outside of the human, precedes the human and remains after the human. This eternity is the non-appropriable gift of experience which must first of all be there in order for the human to speak language. Experience is here not to be understood in the sense of the subject’s mastery of itself; it is not the self-gathering of the subject that traverses the path of its self-diremption only to return to itself. Experience is here not the representational act of a given phenomenon in its predicative grasp, but an opening to an excess that is not saturated in any act of predication. This originary non-appropriation of the human’s own condition, since it is gift, makes language resonate with that “unappeasable melancholy,” or an unspeakable anguish. This melancholy of language is the

originary transcendence, or originary opening of existence, finite and mortal, as that which ex-sists; which means that language in its essential melancholy, for the first time, opens existence to its coming to presence, to the transcendence of the coming. If human existence is essentially transcendence, that is in so far as existence is opened up, first of all, in language to the coming time, to that which is yet to arrive, then this constitutes the messianic promise of language, intimated with finitude, and holding towards transcendence, incalculable and infinite beyond any closure.

It is here that the question of history and its ground (or, rather “origin”) in relation to language is to be thought. The “origin” of history holds itself open in the poetics of the messianic promise of language, which for that matter, does not itself completely belong to the dialectical-historical immanence. It is this originary exposure of existence in a lightning flash to the Open—*where history itself comes to presence*— that makes the mortal existence and its historicity an *un-saturated* phenomenon, a *hetero-affected* phenomenon, wholly torn from within, exposed to the outside. Language in its sudden lightning advent origi- narily places the human *outside* of himself or herself and exposes the human to the otherwise of their history, to an other origin that is *to come*. Language is thus not simply the property of the one who speaks, nor is language primarily the source from which one derives the power of domination to the rest akin to oneself and others. Language is neither the medium through which humans grasp their own existence and existence as such, as if the human is the origin and the end result of his or her own existence, nor does language enable the human to be the one who is saturated by and in speech. Language, rather, already always placing mortals outside<sup>5</sup> of themselves (or rather displacing them, tearing them, exposing them to the opening), endows them with the intimation of their mortality and thereby renders them open to the historical character of their existence, or, makes their existence *historical* for the first time, which means before the first, the first before any first.

The human neither possesses his or her death like any other possession, nor possesses the ground on the basis of which he or she possesses his or her historical world; for the ground of his possession lies in the promise that *grants* one beforehand one’s history, one’s revelation to oneself, one’s being able to be present to oneself as the one who is finite and mortal. The human knows, whatever one knows of the world and one’s self-knowledge, on the basis of a lightning flash

5. Here the notion of “outside” is not understood in the sense opposite to “inside” or to any “reflexivity,” but as outside of any outside and inside, as pure exteriority. It is this pure exteriority that I am also calling here as “the open,” which is not a topological or ontological site, but the very opening of site as such. See my essay, “The Open” (Das 2009).

that already places the human outside of themselves, outside of all his or her possession, outside the claim that henceforth he or she makes as the maker or creator of the “world,” this historical-discursive world which in being produced also posits the producer. That this is one’s finitude attunes him to the lament of language that holds him or her open, like an open wound, to his historical existence that comes to presence. Henceforth, that means in a time before time, history will bear traces of this melancholy of language, rendering his historical existence *unfinished, incomplete, unaccomplished*, which means, also the promise of its redemption in the coming time. This promise—given in language—arises in an originary dis-possession of the human on the basis of which alone something like the origin of history happens to the human. The poetics of the origin traces itself as the un-fulfillment of history, which thereby points towards a fulfillment outside any dialectical-historical closure, in what Ernst Bloch (1995) calls the “not yet.”

Therefore language does not completely belong to the world of works and to the works of the world. At the limit of the world, unsaturated and in infinite excess, or at the limit of the state of the affairs of the world, language is the vanishing point of the indiscernible, where language turns the prose of the world into the lament of music. There language unsays itself in a lament, in the melancholy turned to music. Or, rather, the one who speaks is touched by the essential melancholy to which language is thoroughly attuned at the limit of the world of objects and possessions. In being touched by this unspeakable lament of language, the one who speaks is intimated by the intrinsic non-appropriation of language. The non-appropriable ground of existence itself, as if, precedes the speaking mortal something like a past and follows him something like a future as unfinished, unaccomplished existence. This finitude is the essential non-appropriation or non-conditional limit, the outside that ecstatically calls the power of the negative to the ‘non-power’, the originary experience of non-power on the basis of which we make claim of our historical existence, the non-power outside the dialectical-historical violence.

Language appears, for that matter, enigmatic to us, at once originating in our non-power in relation to it; and, for that matter, it keeps the historical existence open to redemption without violence, which is its promise; and at the same time it is the very ground on the basis of which the power of the world originates where the promise of language may turn into the violence of judgment, and the originary non-appropriation may turn into the evil of appropriation. Language thus appears often to us in its utter poverty and fragility, whenever it is a matter of speaking the extremes; and yet it is all too excessive in relation to any presently given world, so that language itself does not appear within it as

presently given (*Vorhandenheit*); for it is itself the more originary *offering* on the basis of which any givenness presently arises, on the basis of which historicity makes manifests to us, reveals to us in its *already* holding sway of the lightning flash. Language itself is not saturated or exhausted in being spoken, or in our being able to speak. We neither exhaust the world in speaking about it, nor do we exhaust language in being able to speak a language. Rather, being able to speak is the *trace* of the future, which is the inexhaustible *offering* of language of itself, already open in its poetics of the origin. This *offering* is experienced by mortals in that lightning flash that precedes our predication and our cognition of the world and of existence. Unimpaired by the cognitive function, it is the originary opening, attuned to us in a lament of language, because it is intimated with our essential finitude, which holds us open to history's coming to presence.

Therefore it is necessary to think of an originary language as *promise*, as *donation* beyond any presently given existence, in its relation to a past to arrive, instead of as a representation of the presently given world in the conceptual system of cognition and predication. This originary language, as the very poetic *origin* of history, this pre-predicative language of opening, in excess of any cognitive and predicative function, *traces future in the past*, because it carries the promise of redemption. There is no redemption if it is not *already always* given in the originary lightning flash of the opening, which is *already always* given as an *offering*, or *gift*. This however does not mean that it is presently given. What is given *in advance* as the originary *offering* of language may not be for that reason be presently given. The *coming into presence*, rather than presently given, is the eternal renewal of this *offering*—and thus it endows language itself with the gift of time, a time of future.

Such a gift or offering of language—an offering or gift of time itself, a time to come, the promise of redemption, or promise of future—must already be given in the already always of the originary opening. This means to say that *language traces the future in the past*, which means that future is already given in the originary opening as an opening to the coming future—as *not-presently-given*. To speak is never merely to speak the presently given entities of the world, nor to make the world as the system of predicated objects and cognitive relations, but to keep the promise of time that is given with the *offering* of language itself by the incessant renewal of the promise in presence, which is experienced by the mortal as an originary experience of *finitude*, disclosed to him in the lightning flash, and which is attuned in him with an unspeakable lament turning to music. *This offering lies at the very origin of history* as ungrounded and unfounded poetic ground; or this is to say that *history begins with the offering of language*. The question of history in relation to language is thus to be connected with the question

of origin and *offering* that offers *each time* the time to come. Each time one opens her lips, each time history begins, it is time itself that is opened up, each time is a time to come and each time she keeps this original promise of language by transferring its past into future. This transference that happens is itself nothing but the passage of time that defines the temporality of time as presencing, the transference of past into future through renewal of time, for the passage renews what it transfers. What is renewed is the hope that makes the transference grow in strength and intensity. This hope is the messianic hope for the *coming time*.<sup>6</sup>

If the task of thinking pursued here is to think the coming time, it must keep the promise of time given in language. Language neither predicates death, nor enables us to cognize it. But rather language *attunes* us to our mortality, to our essential finitude, in the pre-predicative lightning flash, in the poetic Saying, as the very fundamental attunement of mournfulness. This mournfulness is not sadness due to a lack of a particular thing or object in the world, but this mournfulness, touching us at the limit, alone enables our mortality be experienced as mortality, as an un-appropriable limit, at the limit of our mastery and at the limit of violence that the world of cognition posits. By delineating the limit of violence and the limit of our mastery, touching us at the limit of power, the melancholy of language keeps alive the promise of redemption, the promise of a time to come beyond and without violence, where the violence will be redeemed. Then melancholy will not be melancholic anymore. It will, then, be transfigured into the redemptive joy when the eternity of time presents itself as simultaneity of past, presence and future.

This is what binds the attunement of joy, as the very experience of beatitude, with future: future makes one joyful, for the sake of which the mortal exists as an open existence, open to the time to come, open to redemption. Futural is seen here as eternity, again, not as a particular instant of a Now that is placed in the homogenous scale of succession. Here the question of the event is that of pure future that does not present itself as succession but as Moment where all modes of instants coalesce at the same time. For the mortals for whom the world is not yet finished, such an event of time can only appear as radical future, though it may have already always been, since eternity. The joy is the beatitude which the melancholy of language points towards as language finds fulfillment in the completed understanding of a silence, not the silence that mythically posits the law of history and the violence of appropriation, but a redemptive silence that fulfills the originary offering of language itself, the stillness of the event

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6. Ernst Bloch's great work, *The Principle of Hope* (1995), pursues, in a grand visionary manner, this messianic thought of affirmation that is given in our hope for the future.

which is divinely experienced in a joyous mourning. The beatitude of redemption then is experienced by mortals as silence—not the resolute silence of the mythic-tragic hero, nor the pure, Absolute Concept of the historically accomplished existence, bereft of language—but the silence of what Rosenzweig calls “completed understanding,” silence that arrives with the redemptive fulfillment of language, recognized in its nobility and dignity. It is language in its messianic happiness. Here “stillness” denominates the unapparent character of the event, a stillness that cannot be reduced to the phenomenology of the visible and audible. It is this excess that carries the promise, renews the promise, and opens up the future. It is not thus the denial of language, or the denial of promise, but precisely otherwise: it is that what opens up language to itself towards its very fulfillment and beatific redemption.

### Naming and Overnaming

In his essay *Language as Such and on the Language of Man*, Walter Benjamin thinks of a melancholy at the very paradisiacal, originary naming language of Adam which is the divine gift from God himself: a blissful melancholy, for it holds itself to the promise that comes with the gift of naming, for it promises redemption beyond and without violence. “To be named,” writes Benjamin, “even when the name is godlike and blissful—perhaps always remains an intimation of mourning” (Benjamin 1996, 73). There is thus a mourning, which is blissful and even divine. The joyous life of free creation and the experience of beatitude are not alien to this divine mourning, but partake of it. In a letter written after the death of Caroline, Schelling speaks of a divine mourning in which “all earthly pain is immersed”: “I now need friends who are not strangers to the real seriousness of pain and who feel that the single right and happy state of the soul is the divine mourning in which all earthly pain is immersed” (Schelling 1975). This is the mourning that is blissful and paradisiacal, because it does not yet know the thetic violence of the concept, the force and the gaze of the negative; it is not yet impaired by the violence of cognition, by the violence of the overnaming.

There is, however, other mourning—other than the mourning of the mute lament and other even than the mourning in being named, the name that redeems the speechlessness of the nameless. The other mourning is in relation to what Benjamin calls *overnaming*, when the name itself withers away, when the name becomes a mere *means* of communication which reduces the blissful pure naming into significance at the service of cognitive disposal, when the immediacy of the communication is lost in the mediacy of the significance, in the magic of judgment. There arises the mythic violence of the law:

There is, in the relation of human languages to that of things, something that can be approximately described as “over naming”—the deepest linguistic reason for all melancholy and [from the point of view of thing] for all deliberate muteness. (Benjamin 1996, 73)

Benjamin speaks of it as *fall*: the loss of the name in the language of judgment, in significance, when the name occurs as mere instrument, as mere cognitive means, as mere medium of communication. Language then becomes mediated in the language of judgment, and the name is hollowed inside out, becomes hollow and empty in the bubbling and prattling. Here the name also takes the mythic birth of law and *force* of it, the power of the positing act; the nameless is sought to be appropriated in over naming that now assumes the language of judgment and significance, in the name of law and its *force*, in the mythic violence of pure positing. The magic of the prattle is the very magic of evil, the magic of positing violence, which has to be differentiated from the magic of the pure naming which is the originary *donation* beyond violence. Before in the name, the name communicates nothing but that which communicates itself in the name; but now name becomes mere cognitive means of positing, and the name itself falls outside itself, it is made to signify what comes from outside of itself, namely, knowledge of good and evil, for “evil abandons the name” (Benjamin 1996, 71).

The abandonment of the name, that abandonment of the offering of language itself, the promise that is given with that offering, the abandonment of this originary promise for the sake of predicative use of language at cognitive disposal in which language is mere means: this is the birth of mythic law and its violence. This violence is the innermost reason of the lament of language, distinguished from the blissful melancholy of the paradisiacal naming beyond violence. Therefore a critique of violence assumes the form of a *remembrance* of that originary offering of language, the originary promise of redemption, that opening beyond any positing act, the essential non-appropriation that placed into man’s hand first of all the gift of the naming. To remember, which is otherwise than speculative-cognitive memory of a recuperative process, is to be permeated by a melancholy that comes with a renunciation of power, for all renunciation brings with it certain mournfulness.

### Thinking and Thanking

The mournfulness intimates the one who remembers his originary finitude—that is his originary non-appropriation of the gift—and thereby renounces any appropriation of the gift. This mournfulness is not any ordinary mournfulness about a particular loss, but what Martin Heidegger (1980) calls—with Hölderlin in mind—“the fundamental attunement [*Grundstimmung*]” of mourning.



With the welcoming of the coming to presence of the divine, Hölderlin's poetry keeps the remembrance of the originary gift and promise of language, which is none but the promise of the coming itself. Therefore the gift always is attuned to a certain tune of mournfulness; this tune and attunement of mournfulness is the very task of finite thinking at the end of philosophy. Thus in his lectures on Hölderlin's two poems "Germanien" and "Der Rhein," Heidegger thinks of this fundamental attunement (*Grundstimmung*) of mournfulness in Hölderlin's poetry as an essential endurance of the gift of language:

Real renouncement, in other words one which carries itself authentically, is a power of creation and engendering. By letting go of its old possessions it receives a gift, but not after the fact, as a reward: for within it the mournful endurance of necessary renouncement and giving away is a "receiving." (Heidegger 1980, 94)

What does it receive by renouncing the old possessions, by renouncing mastery and force? It receives the gift of the *advent*. This gift is welcomed in the naming. Poetic saying is naming that welcomes the coming and receives this gift of coming. Therefore poetic saying, like thinking, is thanks-giving activity. In his series of lectures called *What is Called Thinking?* Heidegger shows the essential affinity of thinking (*Denken*) with thanking (*Danken*) thus: thinking is thanks-giving for what *comes* to be thought, for "we never come to thoughts. They come to us" (Heidegger 2001, 6). What the gift of thought offers is the unthought, what is not presently given as thought but what is *to come*, the future of thinking outside all reductive totalization. What is thus *called* thinking is nothing but the *calling* to *come*, welcoming this coming:

To call is not originally to name, but the other way around: naming is a kind of calling, in the original sense of demanding and commending. It is not that the call has its being in the name; rather every name is a kind of call. Every call implies an approach. We might call a guest welcome. (Heidegger 1968, 125).

If the poets and creative artists, creative thinkers and philosophers are permeated by a melancholy—as Aristotle remarks—it is in so far as for the poets and the creative thinkers the naming maintains its relation to the originary non-appropriation, to the opening that opens with the gift and that is maintained by renunciation of the violence of all appropriation and the power of the positing law. Thus the poetic saying—unlike the predicative thinking that arrives at the thetic, categorial cognition of what is presently given on the basis of the result of a process—renounces such a claim to appropriation in order to announce, or welcome the *coming* to presence. Therefore each poetic Saying itself is renunciation, or rather to say with Heidegger "renunciation is in itself a saying" (1982, 150). Yet if this non-appropriation and renunciation alone enable the poetic

saying to welcome the future coming towards, this event of arriving, then a fundamental attunement of melancholy that permeates this poetic saying would be the very attunement of language itself that first dis-appropriating us, opens us to the event of language, to the event of coming, to which we owe thanks, our gratitude in recognition. Thus Heidegger says :

But the more joyful the joy, the more pure the sadness slumbering within it. The deeper the sadness, the more slumbering the joy resting within it. Sadness and joy play into each other. The play itself which attunes the two by letting the remote be near and near be remote is pain. This is why both, highest joy and deepest sadness, are painful each in its way. But pain so touches the spirit of mortals that the spirit receives its gravity from pain. That gravity keeps mortals with all their wavering at rest in their being. The spirit which answers to pain, the spirit attuned by pain and to pain, is melancholy. (1982,153)

If by the renunciation of the claim to appropriation a redemptive relation to the originary opening is maintained, to that promise and gift of redemption, it is precisely thereby that these creative poets and thinkers become those who are the excluded and exiled, the homeless and the lonely. Although the works of poets struggle to articulate the opening of the world and in this very articulation welcome the world, the world does not have a place for these poets. The poets, seeking to maintain the originary opening of the world forever open, thereby are excluded from the world that is opened in this opening. Poets are therefore strangers to the world, lonely, and homeless, for to keep the relation to the opening of the world is to renounce all appropriation and all power of the historical *polis*. Heidegger says in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*:

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 people, the army and the fleet. All this does not first belong to the *polis*, does not become political by entering into 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, this means: as violent men to use power, to become pre-eminent in historical being 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, alien and uncanny, without issue amid the beings as a whole, without stature and limit, without structure and order, because they themselves as creators must first create all this. (Heidegger 1999, 152)

This dense paragraph from Heidegger problematizes the complex relationship between the *poesis* of the opening, the originary promise that opens the

*polis* and the political ontology of the world, the political being of the *polis*, which must already have been opened by the opening falling outside the *polis*. This opening of *polis*, which cannot be posited within the *polis*, because it must already be there for there even to be positing, is the originary promise of redemption which language offers, and which the poets and creative thinkers, through renunciation of the mastery and all appropriation, keep open so that there remains the possibility of coming redemption above and beyond the given, beyond violence and beyond the law.

With the poets and creative thinkers, language, instead of being a mere means at our cognitive disposal, or being the mere language of judgment that overnames, is the remembrance of the originary naming. This naming is redemptive, for it renders the offering of language as an enduring presence for us, the gift of being present to us, and opens us to the eternity of the gift. The possibility of this redemptive gift given in language is the endowment of eternity. This is how the mortals, created and finite, experience eternity as eternity, as the mortal is the one who experiences death as death. If it is from language alone that we experience death as death, it is also from language alone, or in it, that we experience eternity as eternity, for it promises us redemption beyond violence. Therefore the poets and creative thinkers, in recognition of this gift, render the reception of this gift an occasion of thankfulness. Gratitude must mark the reception and recognition of this gift, which is none but the gift of eternity itself.

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