




1-1-2011

# The Ister: Between the Documentary and Heidegger's Lecture Course Politics, Geographies, and Rivers

Babette Babich

Fordham University, babich@fordham.edu

Follow this and additional works at: [http://fordham.bepress.com/phil\\_babich](http://fordham.bepress.com/phil_babich)

 Part of the [Continental Philosophy Commons](#), [Eastern European Studies Commons](#), [Ethics and Political Philosophy Commons](#), [Film and Media Studies Commons](#), [Human Geography Commons](#), [International Relations Commons](#), and the [Political Theory Commons](#)

## Recommended Citation

Babich, Babette, "The Ister: Between the Documentary and Heidegger's Lecture Course Politics, Geographies, and Rivers" (2011).  
*Articles and Chapters in Academic Book Collections*. Paper 38.  
[http://fordham.bepress.com/phil\\_babich/38](http://fordham.bepress.com/phil_babich/38)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Philosophy at DigitalResearch@Fordham. It has been accepted for inclusion in Articles and Chapters in Academic Book Collections by an authorized administrator of DigitalResearch@Fordham. For more information, please contact [considine@fordham.edu](mailto:considine@fordham.edu).

*Babette Babich*

**«THE ISTER» DOCUMENTARY AND  
HEIDEGGER'S LECTURE COURSE:  
ON POLITICS, GEOGRAPHIES, AND RIVERS**

**Documentary Passages: On Journeying and Wandering**

*The Ister*, the 2004 documentary by the Australian scholars and videographers, David Barison, a political theorist, and Daniel Ross, a philosopher, appeals to Martin Heidegger's 1942 lecture course, *Hölderlins Hymne «Der Ister»*<sup>1</sup> and the video takes us «backward» as the river flows: beginning from the Danube's delta where it ends in the sea and «journeying» with it to its source in the Alps. In Heidegger's words: «Hölderlin names precisely the upper course of the Donau with the Greco-Roman name for the lower course of the river, just as if the lower Donau had returned to the upper, and thus turned back to its source».<sup>2</sup>

Heidegger scholars have had to be coaxed into speaking about this documentary, so hesitant were they to see it to begin with, an understandable reticence at more than three hours in a sitting.<sup>3</sup> And scholars who do address the video tend to focus, quite reasonably, on the things that speak to them: fashionable things, understanding fashion from the point of view of contemporary academia and mostly zeroing in on perceived 'big names,'<sup>4</sup> names of the caliber of the late Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe or else like Jean-Luc Nancy, and only rarely speaking about the documentary itself.<sup>5</sup> And, to be sure, the documentary itself spends little time on Heidegger per se. But just as Pierre Carles' 2002 documentary on Bourdieu (*Sociology is a Martial Art*)<sup>6</sup> may be used for courses in contemporary sociological theory beyond Bourdieu, the

Barison/Ross documentary may be used «tactically», as de Certeau might have suggested, for thinking and coursework on *Heidegger and the Political*.<sup>7</sup>

Theoretically speaking, the value of the Barison/Ross documentary for both political theory and philosophy is its illustration of the technological incursions or assaults on the river itself, that is to say: its representation of the ‘uses’ and hence of the changing aspects of the Danube in Eastern Europe beginning with the geographically stark landscape of Istria as the videographers map the drab poverty of the old political world contrasted with new construction sites and the discarded-sandwich-wrapping and ‘new’ poverty of a world of consumers<sup>8</sup> representing the globalized nationalism and eager capitalism (as well as that goes, and these days that is going less and less) of the post-socialist world order. Given the geographic contours of this journeying, this same vision of transition, along and with the river, also includes national conflicts and the mappings and re-mappings of war.

Beyond the problem of politicizing Heidegger’s political comments on the politicizing of the polis, there is the problem of *metaphysical thinking* matched only by (and just because it is the same as) *calculative thinking*. Metaphysical thinking is techno-scientific thinking. For Heidegger,

«Space and time comprise the framework for our calculative domination and ordering of the ‘world’ as nature and history. This pervasive measurement of the world in a calculative, discovering, and conquering manner is undertaken by modern human beings in a way whose distinctive metaphysical feature is modern machine technology.» (Heidegger 1996, §8, 48)

The common project of metaphysical and calculative (or modern techno-scientific) thought is representation.<sup>9</sup> But what is representation? a repetition, a ‘copy’ of a presentation? But a presentation is an appearance and philosophers know all about the disappointment of appearances and when it comes to a copy we are already immoderately — that is to say, in Heideggerian terms, echoing Hölderlin — *immeasurably* distant from whatever ‘original’ we imagine there may have been. Philosophers since Parmenides and Plato have been preoccupied with mourning this supposed separation as the loss of the ‘origin.’ Indeed, qua digital, one has today no more than *virtual* copies, lacking even the qualities of auratic origin, lacking the melancholy legacy of the shadow, negative image, photograph.

If the genealogical story of Barison’s and Ross’ documentary is all about at least two disciplinary concerns, namely philosophy and political science and including geography, classics, civic architecture, and engineering thereby making the documentary an ‘interdisciplinary’ affair, it has nonetheless and mostly been received

as philosophy.<sup>10</sup> The degree and kind of philosophy on offer in the documentary may be questioned and I have already noted the limits of its relevance to Heidegger's lecture course and to Hölderlin's poem itself, even given its conclusion with Heidegger's «voice-over» as we hear him reading Hölderlin.

Barison and Ross's documentary begins in Histria, referring to the ancient name of the Danube or the *Ister*, and moving on as the video progresses in search of the source of the *Donau* in Germany — here already we note the name of the river changes and there would be more if we added the river's Slavic names. If the Donauquelle or source of the Danube, is contested as dramatized towards the end of the film by the strife between Breg and Birganz, the Roman Emperor Tiberius had very conveniently allowed the tourist to sidestep a trip to either town by simply decreeing the source of the Donau at Donaueschingen, a tourist-accessible and aesthetically appealing locale: *ben trovato*.

Saving the “source” for the end, as it were, the documentary begins where the river ends, dividing at the Danube delta and splitting off into three branches, and the first frame features a mallard duck on riverbank, which one may suppose to have been an allusion to nature but which this viewer at least is pleased to parse in a Heideggerian context as a visual joke: the German *Ente* [duck] recalls Aquinas' *De ente et essentia*. Indeed, one can claim that the philosophical play of *Being and Essence* reflects the nature of the river as such, the nature of the river's flow in a landscape, and the «the roof from the rocks», as Hölderlin will speak of it, of the rivers' outline: «incisions of rock./ And furrows the earth».

The Romanian town of Histria as it appears in the documentary's first interview with Alexandru Suceveanu, a French-speaking Romanian classical archaeologist, had been colonized in ancient times, as Suceveanu observed, by Miletus, home to Thales: the first philosopher, and one who, as part of what he knew about water, also happened to have known about rivers like the Ister.

The chance for the average academic, student and teacher, to see a documentary about the Danube and tracing the sights along the river and its geography from Romania to Hungary as well as Slovenia and Croatia in addition to Austria and Germany to the edge of Switzerland is also a chance to review the last century's history of Eastern Europe, the Balkans, as of the conflict, the «pincers» of Russia or Asia and America as Heidegger also invokes these pincers in his *Introduction to Metaphysics* and the *Beiträge*.

Like the word-movement in Hölderlin's poem, like the river, like Sophocles' own turns and counterturns, as Heidegger reminds us of these poetic movements reading Parmenides on thinking and being and the political, and like Heidegger's lecture course, the *The Ister* which is also about the political, the documentary is itself a

political journey about journeying by river. As Heidegger writes, «The river is the journeying ...» (§6, 30) and again «The journeying that the river is prevails and does so essentially, in its vocation of attaining the earth as the ‘ground’ of the homely.» (Ibid.) «Journeying determines our coming to be at home upon the earth.» (Ibid., 31) Again we read: «The river is the locality of journeying. The river is the journeying of locality». (§7, 35)

In the case of the documentary’s depiction of such journeying from the side of a steamer, a ferry, etc., passages become repetitions. And this is a problem, like watching a vacation video. As a result following a video screening of this kind in its full length is like listening to a podcast or a recorded lecture — great moments, to paraphrase Rossini on Wagner, interrupted by awful quarter-hours which is why YouTube limits the majority of its video posts to segments under ten-minutes and it is the reason commercial advertising can be so successful with segments that last less than thirty seconds. I say this to emphasize the documentary’s achievements — spacing time, duration and distance, spanning worlds in the process. But, and again also not unlike Wagner: there is also a good deal of work for the viewer involved in viewing it. In part, this is the difference between a movie or a TV or internet commercial, which, so to speak, ‘do’ the work for us (or work upon us), and a documentary that requires work on our part. The difference may be illuminated with recourse to Rousseau, so important for Hölderlin, who wanted to persuade but not convince.<sup>11</sup> In our mediatized era, we expect to be converted or convinced: *μετάνοια*. A movie, a television commercial, even an internet advertisement, automatically moves or *turns* us. Indeed, both commercial advertisements and political propaganda are as effective as they are because we do not notice them.<sup>12</sup>

For his own part, Heidegger warns us about taking «repetition» for granted and William J. Richardson has underlined his own notion of «errancy» in his *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought*<sup>13</sup> by explaining that errancy «signifies the whole entangled complex of ways and means by which There-being in its wandering can go astray». <sup>14</sup> Here Heidegger emphasizes that «we wander around in errancy if we proceed to bring together, in an extrinsic and disjointed manner, suitable ‘passages’ about rivers and waters from Hölderlin’s various poems in order then to construct for ourselves what Hölderlin might have ‘meant’ by ‘rivers’ and ‘waters’». (§2, 12)

Heidegger warns us against the tendency to allude to real rivers (like the Danube), reminding us in the end that «[w]e must first dismiss our allegedly natural ‘representations’ of allegedly geographical ‘actual’ rivers» (§26, 166) just as we are also meant to abstract from speculation regarding the «allegedly historiographically actual poets and human beings». (Ibid.) The reason for this *epoché* is what Heidegger elsewhere calls rigor need for the sake of the possibility gained from such a renunciation may allow us «to enter that free realm in which the poetic is». (§26, 167)

Heidegger also cautions us in a politically instructive commentary on what would at the time of the lecture course itself have been 'the' academical 'cutting edge', that historical readings of ancient Greece inform us (and today's readings do not depart from this) that «with the Greeks, 'everything' is 'politically' determined». (§14b, 80) For Heidegger as we should indeed expect from a thinker who informs us that the essence of technology is nothing technological, the polis is nothing political: «*The πόλις cannot be determined 'politically.'* The πόλις, and precisely it, is therefore not a 'political' concept». (Ibid.)

This is the kind of double talk that Heidegger's critics imagine to be an easy target. But if we take a step back from the temptations of mockery, Heidegger explicates (this is, after all, a lecture course) what philosophical precision requires:

«Evidently the 'political' is that which belongs to the πόλις and can therefore be determined only in terms of the πόλις. Yet the converse is not the case. But it is of little help to us to arm ourselves with any ideas whatsoever of the 'political' so as to delimit the essence of the πόλις. To proceed in this way would merely be to explain that which conditions in terms of the conditioned, the ground in terms of the consequence, that is, to explain nothing at all but rather merely to confuse the essence of explanation». (Ibid.)

### **From Thebes to Vukovar: The Politics of the Political**

The poetic works of Sophocles have been read politically from the start. There is no need to wait for the Nazis to frame the French resistance in the guise of Jean Anouilh's staging for a deliberately political aesthetic. Nor indeed, after Hegel but no less after Hölderlin's *Hyperion* or *Death of Empedocles*, can it be an accident that Heidegger's reading of Sophocles in both his *Introduction to Metaphysics* and in *The Ister* underscores this same political dynamic, highlights the same high pathos. It is not irrelevant that we also find the locus of Heidegger's discussion of the uncanny: «τα δεινά, το δεινόν. We translate: *das Unheimliche*, the uncanny...» (§12, 61), situating Heidegger's claims on his own behalf regarding philological correctness,<sup>15</sup> an issue more famously familiar to us in Heidegger's declaration: «Tell me what you think of translation, and I will tell you who you are». (Ibid., 65)<sup>16</sup>

If Sophocles' *Antigone* is overtly political, thematically so, one can argue that so too is Aeschylus's *Oresteia* and still more complex arguments might be made as Nietzsche seeks to do in his *The Birth of Tragedy* with reference to Aeschylus's *Prometheus Unbound* regarding the democratic or popular and hence political

relevance of the chorus in the tragic work of art in general, although for Nietzsche the allusion to Prometheus invokes Herakles — in the present context, this would be Hölderlin's guest — whom Nietzsche reads in connection with Chiron and hence together with music and the voice of a people's — rather than an individual's — art.<sup>17</sup>

Anouilh makes a clearly political statement, and does this (this would be the point of subversive indirection) in an aesthetically overt fashion. But what does it tell us that where we assume we understand Anouilh's indirection where we are not at all content to note that Heidegger's politics are similarly indirect, here that is to say: inseparable from his didacticism? It is, I believe in this spirit, that Reiner Schürmann refers to Herbert Marcuse's claim that Heidegger's particular «“philosophy attains its supreme meaning as an authentic practical science”»<sup>18</sup> and I hold that both Karl Jaspers and Hannah Arendt would concur — in some measure. As Heidegger pointedly argues (and in 1942, as we have already reminded ourselves, no one needed to 'invent' a political content),

« ... because the political is thus the technical and historiographical fundamental certainty of all action, the 'political' is marked by an unconditional failure to question itself. The failure to question the 'political' belongs together with its totality. Yet the grounds and subsistence of such belonging together do not rest, as some naïve minds think, on the arbitrary willfulness of dictators but in the metaphysical essence of modern actuality in general.». (§14, 94)

The point in question can be heightened with a contrast: «For the Greeks, the πόλις is that which is altogether worthy of question. For modern consciousness, the 'political' is that which is necessarily and unconditionally without question». (Ibid., 94-95) In the same way, we take Heidegger's point contra these other scholars (here in the case of Heidegger's Nazi classicists) who could «prove,» in Heidegger's words, via a «majority of 'research resultants'» that the Greeks were «the pure National Socialists» (ibid, 87).

The documentary, *The Ister*, raises the question of war as it also focuses on the aftermath of war in a devastated town that might well have been forgotten as one can easily imagine this oblivion as so many towns in this conflict were almost instantly forgotten: Vukovar. Here we are reminded not only of the insistent claim that is the question of the Holocaust, named as it often is as a word for a one and only tragedy, an exceptional horror. Here we ask: what transpires in the wake of such singularizing attention? What is left out? What of Novi Sad or all the other names I do not happen, as you will likely not happen, to know?<sup>19</sup> What remains to be, what can be said of Vukovar, or any «bombed-out town», to recollect Archibald MacLeish's poetical theater?<sup>20</sup>

When we focus, as the film itself later does, on Mauthausen as an *uncanny*, *unrepresentable* locus, one can 'see' and 'hear' why Lacoue-Labarthe talks about breath. Echoing Derrida, all of Europe seems to lose its breath. It is no accident, in Lacoue-Labarthe's usage now, that Jean-François Lyotard speaks in the same way, in his *Heidegger and the Jews*.

*Breath.*

Indeed, and this is the anxiety of contempt: we seem to fear, certainly scholars have complained, that Heidegger does not bother to waste his own breath: Heidegger does not say enough, he uses the wrong words (I am thinking here of his word to Jaspers, the word of "shame") and rather than and *not* the words we would have him say (this would be the admission of guilt, taking responsibility).<sup>21</sup> Instead, silent, with the silence of the master (and it is relevant, it is the defining characteristic of the acolyte that he — or *she*, it is more commonly and in everyday things a *she* — always seeks, implores, asks for a word), Heidegger bequeaths or leaves us no more than silence on this question.

Things are only made more problematic, and we will return to this at the end, if we note that Heidegger importantly counts silence as a mode of discourse.<sup>22</sup> Relevant here too is the question of voice, as Gadamer speaks of this,<sup>23</sup> but also as one's voice is always also a localization, placing the speaker, as noted above, referring to Rousseau and to the French (still) spoken in the Valais: our way of speaking "finds" us before the judgment of another. We can hear some of this place-setting when we listen to Heidegger's concluding reading of *Der Ister*: we hear his German and we hear mostly his age — but we also hear his origins, we say: his provinciality.<sup>24</sup> And such provincial tonalities matter if we mean to read/to hear Hölderlin, and we recall that Heidegger insisted on reading out a Greek text in order to have the resonance of the Greek in his *The Introduction to Metaphysics* as a lecture course in 1935.

The idea of including Heidegger's voice as epilogue to the video was suggested to the videographers by Hans-Jürgen Syberberg, a filmmaker whose aesthetically political *Hitler* happened, 'tactically' enough, to have been filmed in English, then and still, the language of victory.<sup>25</sup> It is key to his suggestion here that Syberberg also *staged* enactments, performances, of Hölderlin, more voice-theater than poetry readings as such — where breath is everything. Thus we note that Paul Celan's influential definition of poetry as *Atemwende*,<sup>26</sup> reversal of breath, draws on or evokes Hölderlin's *Caesura*» and *Wechsel der Töne* echoing in turn — and this is what initially caught Nietzsche's eye, or should I say as he would say, his eye *as* his ear — Hölderlin's relation to Pindar.<sup>27</sup>



A turning of the breath, «breathturn», as Pierre Joris renders *Atemwende*, is only part of it. Those who write on Celan and Heidegger remain entangled by Celan's strangely alchemical *Todtnauberg*, beginning with the words, "Arnika, Augentrost" [*Arnica, Eyebright*] and its central musing on the vulgarity of leaving a poet's name in a visitor's book of names at Heidegger's hut, inscribed among other names, along with and not less about the poet's own words, words offered to the thinker:

«die in dies Buch  
geschriebene Zeile von  
einer Hoffnung, heute,  
auf eines Denkenden  
kommendes  
Wort  
im Herzen.»<sup>28</sup>

### Technology and Technical Interventions: From Bernard Stiegler to Walter Biemel

Long before our documentary makers happened upon him «by chance» (as reviewers have implied), Bernard Stiegler<sup>29</sup> had already made a name for himself in the philosophy of technology, following a tradition already established not only by Heidegger but many others such as Siegfried Giedion<sup>30</sup> but also Günther Anders who continues, alas!, to be unread<sup>31</sup> and but above all — and because Stiegler is French, and Frenchness is what matters most for the French — by Jacques Ellul (who is still too little read)<sup>32</sup> but also by Henri Lefebvre who, like Gilbert Simondon and like Stiegler happens to be (more so in the case of Lefebvre and Simondon) *read* by today's readers rather exactly *instead* of either Ellul or Anders.<sup>33</sup>

It is as a philosopher of technology rather than as commentator on Heidegger's question concerning technology, despite the striking significance of technological concerns throughout Heidegger's lecture course on *The Ister*, that Stiegler offers his own interventions on the tragic-comic or Promethean/Epimethean theme of technology.

But if some have expressed regrets that Stiegler does not take us to a discussion of Heidegger's own writing on technology, the doubling of the representative subject matter of *The Ister* qua video makes it a useful aid for students of Heidegger's *The Question Concerning Technology* inasmuch as Heidegger poses this question in the after-world of modern technology. I have for argued, for some time, that Heidegger's essay, especially as placed in its original context,<sup>34</sup> does not only incidentally raise the complex question of questioning itself and as such. The destiny of questioning preoccupies Heidegger as *incipit*, framing the question as such. Thus Heidegger

begins (and ends) «The Question Concerning Technology» by emphasizing questioning — just as he begins *Being and Time* with a specifically hermeneutic phenomenology of questioning in itself and as such. (SZ, Einf. 1: §2, cf. §1)

The question of the question, posed as Heidegger poses the question concerning questioning regarding technology (or Being) is difficult — even Heideggerians find the notion elusive. We suppose we have enough problems with technology as a problem (and no one doubts that it is a problem) without bothering to question questioning along the way. But even there we give ourselves away. For whether we *complain* about technology, à la ‘straw’ or empty characterizations of Heidegger, or we *celebrate* technology, à la Bruno Latour, to take one admirable example, it remains the case and as Heidegger already observed (and this is where Heidegger should be read not only together with or across Jünger), it is never technology that is really in question for us. What we want to explore is never the fate of questioning in the wake of technology, that is: we do not ask how it fares with questioning in today's technological world nor and indeed how to put technology as such in question (as if it could be) but and much rather we are concerned with the *how*, the practical *know-how*, of remedying or fixing whatever may be the untoward consequences of technology and just so that we can continue along as we are and have been. As Heidegger notes «The only thing that is ever questionable is how we can measure and fathom and exploit the world as quickly as possible, as securely as possible, as completely as possible». (§ 7, 41-42)

The thing about technology, the reason we insist on reading Heidegger's *The Question Concerning Technology* as an essay about the «danger» as about the self-same locus of «the saving-power», is that there are always untoward consequences. One can only plan for anticipated advantages (be it of nuclear power or nanotechnology or stem-cell research) but, as Kant reminds us, we cannot be sure in-advance-‘in practice’ whether the most patent of benefits may not be deleterious in effect. The language of ‘side-effects’ emphasizes the obliquity of our vision.

But and arguably in the same measure, the fate of the philosophy of technology, even for tool-Heideggerians as I like to call them, is likewise conflicted mostly because (as Nietzsche would say) we are, or we remain, much too pious. Our piety with respect to technology is not the piety of thought (that would be the question of Heidegger's questioning) but, as noted above, the everyday affair of assuming, hoping, that science and technology will bail us out, if not immediately, at least in the end, when we do finally figure out how to fix side effects as they present themselves.<sup>35</sup> Technology is not the problem it is the preferred medium of salvation.

Suggesting that Heidegger's *Die Frage nach der Technik* would/could be better translated as a concern with questioning as such, that is, as *The Question in the Wake*

of *Technology*,<sup>36</sup> it can be easier to take account of Heidegger's invocation of modern science and technology in the context of a lecture course on Hölderlin's poetry. As *The Question Concerning Technology* takes up the fate of questioning in a modern techno-scientific era, Heidegger explains the signal transform that is the achievement of nothing but modernity in his course on *The Ister*, as conceived by the calculative mindset of «the unfolding of the modern world picture, that is, in terms of the mathematical and technical projection of inanimate nature» (*The Ister*, §7, 40). What matters in such a calculative projection is limited to what functions or works. Ergo «what is actual», Heidegger writes, «is no longer what resides and rests within itself, namely substance, but rather function». (Ibid., 50) In this sense, and again, «the legacy of the modern era gives rise to the calculation of flux and function, a calculating that, metaphysically speaking, is ordered in relation to the actuality of nature as a function and nexus of natural effects in space and time». (Ibid.) The science Heidegger is speaking of is modern physics, that is: Einstein's physics and Bohr's physics, Heisenberg's physics.

Referring to modern science, Heidegger can name Einstein in the same breath along with Nietzsche and Leibniz and Newton and Plato, as ineluctably metaphysical thinkers along with the entirety of philosophy. The point Heidegger means to make is a claim with an immediate contemporary relevance as he argues that «both space and time and their coupling, belong to what is unquestioned». (Ibid., 41) For Heidegger, once again: «the only thing that is ever questionable is how we can measure and fathom and exploit the world as quickly as possible, as securely as possible, as completely as possible». (Ibid., 42) I have repeated this because this same goes-without-saying conception of technology is also the point of Heidegger's invocation of modern science. To this extent we fail to raise the question concerning technology just because «we accept without question precisely that which underpins it, namely the spatio-temporal order and the unity of space and time». (Ibid., 45)

Nor can one think of *The Ister* apart from the question of the political if what we usually mean by 'the political' concerns matters of politically determined weight: not what Heidegger makes of the political (and its own lack of questioning) but much rather the very politically (here: academically, historically speaking) established judgment concerning Heidegger's guilt or responsibility, his words of shame. Hence Lacoue-Labarthe does keep us on point, echoing the absent personal presences: ah, but what a thing it would have been had even one of these been present, as they were not, of Jacques Derrida and his *Of Spirit*, recalling as we have Celan's breathturn or Jean Baudrillard or Paul Virilio and not to mention the difference it might have made if had we heard in the film the voices of Dominique Janicaud — a voice since lost to us on the question of Heidegger *and* Hölderlin *and* the Greeks — or Jacques Taminiaux or Ute Guzzoni and so on.

As I am doing here, so too have other viewers faulted the documentary for its choice of interlocutors (and in this case the bootlessness of such complaints ought to be clear — hence most popular reviews begin with Stiegler) and the nostalgia for the famous.<sup>37</sup> Thus we complain that we miss the more famous names, and we think, *per impossibile*, of those interlocutors one personally might have wanted to see on screen. To return the question of the coordinate engagement with Heidegger's course on *Hölderlin's Hymn «The Ister»* and the video itself, what was to me most regrettable, if we are allowed to have regrets (we are not, but we have them anyway), inasmuch as it was a manifestly corrigible omission, was the absence of a scholar who would have been “worth a journey”.

The missing scholar is Walter Biemel,<sup>38</sup> a man of an underplayed brilliance who not only edited the German edition of the published text of Heidegger's *Hölderlin's Hymne »Der Ister«* but participated in the protocols of the seminar itself. It should, one imagines, have mattered to the videographers — given the geographic context of the production of the video itself — that Biemel, although himself a Romanian scholar, also happened to have translated Heidegger into French. Hence some reviewers argue that the videographers' language skills entailed limiting their philosophic interviews to France (a country where the Danube, superficially, as we shall see, happens *not* to flow), for a documentary on Heidegger's and Hölderlin's very non-French *Ister*. If the videographers were evidently unable to interview anyone who spoke German (Syberburg, interviewed at the end speaks to the interviewers in English, and in outtakes we also get to hear from Werner Hamacher but Hamacher's English is just as elegant as one might expect of a Germanist who spent long years at Johns Hopkins), they might still have interviewed Biemel who in addition speaks both French and English.

In his exposition of Heidegger's published lecture course (and the course as published is intermixed with Biemel's contributions), Biemel takes it upon himself to remonstrate with those of us who speak in Heidegger's place (and nearly all Heidegger scholars tend to do this) without being willing to undertake the very *journeying*, the very task of *being underway*, in questioning, in what I have spoken of as authentic, disruptive, unsettling or dissonant questioning as opposed to the more patent assumption (routine in most scholars) that one already knows.<sup>39</sup>

### Hölderlin and Milton

Here to articulate the question of translation and of breath — as I have already recalled Celan in order to get to Hölderlin — but also to explore the question of the

journeying surge of the river, I draw a parallel with John Milton's 1637 poem, *Lycidas*.

I am inclined to think of Milton's poem inasmuch as it shares some of Hölderlin's references but also for very topographic, geographical reasons. Milton's poem begins with a source:<sup>40</sup>

Begin then, Sisters of the sacred well  
that from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring,  
begin and somewhat loudly sweep the string.

Noting the play of language, we reflect on the mischief of translation, even as we read Heidegger's own reflections on translation — in translation. Speaking English, Milton's rhymes sing for English-speaking (Irish, North American, Australian, etc.) ears, but with different resonances in each case. Here Milton laments a friend «drown'd» in the Irish sea as he also invokes a particular river, a specific and local reference. Just so Hölderlin refers to the exactly non-local but paragon locus of Alpheus,<sup>41</sup> a marvelous Arcadian stream (not far from Olympia in true Greece, that is, on the Greek Peloponnesian peninsula) that *vanishes* underground, only to rise again, so the hearsay of the myth, in Magna Graeca, the colony, that is: Sicily.

Alphaeus is named for the river god who, as gods tended to do, "pursued" — and here we need to translate: to pursue means to rape — the nymph Arethusa who fled and was, as nymphs so often were, transformed after her sufferings, metamorphosed into a miraculous (and because miraculous, miraculously pure) fountain detailed in Strabo (*Geography* 6. 2. 4).<sup>42</sup>

What follows in Milton's *Lycidas* recounts a beautiful poet's catalogue of flowers,<sup>43</sup> and includes the words that are well-known even for those who have never managed to read this poem or who have forgotten this poet's name,<sup>44</sup> «Look homeward Angel now, and melt with ruth. / And, O ye Dolphins, waft the haples youth».

Here, I quote from Milton to illuminate Hölderlin's esoteric poetry because the theme of transfiguration is crucial to both and because Milton is nearly as syncretistic as Hölderlin. Crying «Weep no more, woful Shepherds weep no more, / For Lycidas your sorrow is not dead, / Sunk though he be beneath the watry floor», Milton's comparison to the Sun god, «the day-star», corresponds to the same Sun god Hölderlin also invokes.<sup>45</sup>

And we may hear Hölderlin's language of fire, «*Jetzt komme, Feuer*» as «Flames in the forehead of the morning sky», especially where we can also hear the reference at the beginning of Milton to the leafy immortality of «ivy never sere».

Hölderlin writes

*Man nennet aber diesen den Ister.  
Schön wohnt er. Es brennet der Säulen Laub,*

*Und reget sich. Wild stehn  
Sie aufgerichtet, untereinander; ...*

*One names however this the Ister.  
Beautiful he dwells. It burns, the  
columns' leaves,*

*And fret themselves. Wild stand  
They upright, one amongst the  
other; ...*

With and after the poem's inception, «*Jetzt komme, Feuer*», we find that know the time of the year and the day, just as we know Milton's time of day, the time of year, and time always matters for Hölderlin.

We are speaking of morning: of gold on the waters, and of the seasons of the year, the burning gold of autumn. Speaking indirectly of the sun, speaking of the passage of the day and the season, poets count time with words.

Can we still tell time the way the poets do? with words, as Heidegger does?

We have seen that Barison and Ross's *The Ister* frames technology and time, the that is the political in our day, telling a story in time and datedness punctuated by the look of the technological form itself. Thus the video maps the passage from the land of the morning, from the east, to the land of the evening, the west.<sup>46</sup> We have underscored the difference between antiquity and the modern era, as it is this difference, this lack or eclipse that haunts our poet's language and as it has become a mystery that scholars unravel and untangle again and again just because, as Nietzsche always emphasized for us (not that we have heard it): the Greeks remain utterly alien, utterly foreign to us.

The poets bring this back, to recall the extraordinary encomium for that same task proposed by Hölderlin, a proposal Heidegger recalls for his own part in writing of the foreign. At the start of Part Three of his lecture course, «Hölderlin's Poetizing of the Essence of the Poet as Demigod», Heidegger claims that «The choral ode from Sophocles and the river poems of Hölderlin poetize the Same». (*The Ister*, §21, 123) Sophocles and Hölderlin are able to «poetize the same» only because «the Same is truly the Same only in that which is different» (*Ibid.*), recalling Hölderlin's letter to Böhlendorff on the reciprocal dynamic of the relation between what is one's own and what is foreign. Thus Heidegger reads Hölderlin's invocation of Herakles (always, always for Hölderlin to be thought together with Dionysus and the Syrian, that is to say with Christ, if we recall that for the Nietzsche of *The Birth of Tragedy*, we are

meant to think of music with the same Herakles as of the Dionysian and the Syrian — and this is just one part of what syncretism can do for you —) as «invited by the Ister only as a guest. He remains the one he is and yet, as a foreigner ‘from the Sultry Isthmus,’ from the land of the ‘fire,’ [i.e., Greek fire], is present [*holds sway*, other translators might have said] in the German land». (Ibid., §23a; 141) For Heidegger and this was the substance of the political in his day as it is in ours, Hölderlin’s invocation of Herakles underscores the poet’s «readiness to acknowledge the foreigner and his foreignness... that is to acknowledge the fire from heaven that Germans lack». (Ibid.)

Heidegger’s acknowledgment of the foreign and the foreigner here is nothing if it is not a letting be. For Nazi ears, for our ears attuned to this, this is/would have been a reference to racial purity as Heidegger goes on to say: «In guest-friendship, however, there also lies the resolve not to mix what is one’s own, as one’s own, with the foreign». (Ibid.) Heidegger’s however refers to correspondence, to dependency: «to let the foreigner be the one he is. Only thus is a learning possible ...» and what is to be learned is nothing but «the ‘calling’ of the German poet and his essence». (Ibid.)

Such «Greek fire» was brought by the Ister: «The river must remain in the realm of its source in such a way that it flows toward it from out of the foreign». (Ibid., §23a, 142) Here there is a further *geological* reversal: real or literal or physical. This is so especially if we recall the key beginning of the third strophe

*Der scheint aber fast  
Rückwärts zu gehen und  
ich mein, er müsse kommen  
Von Osten. Vieles wäre  
Zu sagen davon.*

This apparent «seeming» is ambiguous, curious, on several levels. As Biemel notes, the «wandering [*Wanderung*]» — that is to say, as Bill Richardson would say, as Heidegger would say, the errancy, *die Irre, die Irreweg* — «of the Ister is odd, puzzling». <sup>47</sup> Biemel explains that the landscape through which the river wanders, the locale in question, is the landscape Hölderlin knew as directly as he might, having grown up in the «Donautal zwische Beuron und Gutenstein», <sup>48</sup> a precision Biemel has already offered us on the basis of Heidegger’s own and similarly local familiarity.

Born in Lauffen and Nürtingen and thence to Tübingen, Hölderlin on his Neckar is still a child of the Danube valley — whether praying at the edge of the Neckar as a young man with his brother or, in the «second half» of his life, as he waited and he watched on its banks. It is this landscape that occasioned for me a further reason for invoking Milton’s *Lycidas* and his Ovidian reference to Alpheus.

For it is the myth of Alpheus that illuminates the river's most puzzling, *rätselhaft*, variety of *wandering*, speaking geographically, geologically. The reference has the advantage of echoing, if I can do more than allude to this here, the marvelous combination of πόλις and «πόλος, — that is the pole, the swirl [*Wirbel*], in which and around which everything turns». (§14, 81)

Commentators love the political play between πόλις and πόλος, the axis and the center, but here I am captivated by the stasis of the pelagic surge. Said otherwise, both Milton and Hölderlin were talking about whirlpools or sink holes. This is a river that also flows underground, like Coleridge's charmingly «sacred Alph».

As an old river, as a meandering river, the Danube's flow and the journey it takes, with its bends and turns, is as indirect as we see in the documentary *The Ister*. This is the beauty of all of its boats and its passages, its bridges and transitions. Watching the video again, we journey again, along with the river's journeying. As Sophocles' «tragedy sways back and forth and yet stands» (52), so Heidegger writes of the pelagic with reference to the old word πέλειν, as it «means to stir, to come forth, to find and abide in one's locale and site». (71) Like the surging sea, «πέλειν does not mean empty presencing of what is merely present at hand, but means that remaining that is what it is precisely in journeying and in flowing». (72)

At the start, we noted Suceveanu's reference to Thales and Miletus (and so too Anaximander and Anaximenes). And it is precisely relevant to this detail of the pelagic flow of the rivers course, as cut into the earth, to note that the original Meander itself flows through Miletus, the first of Thales' rivers.<sup>49</sup>

As we know, and as Thales already knew: meandering rivers are rivers destined to vanish.

In Hölderlin's day and still today in the summer, the Donau gurgles into the so-called *Donauversickerung* in the Suabian Alps. Like the mythical (and the real) Alpheus, the Donau disappears underground. So Hölderlin tells us that both the Rhein and the Donau, as we now recall that Heidegger emphasizes this at the start, «are said to be both 'full of intimation' and 'vanishing'». (*The Ister*, §2, 12)

This is the physically geographical «enigma» of the river.

Heidegger contends that «the path to one's own is most difficult and the path to one's ownmost is the longest and most difficult» (ibid., §23b, 143) in the same locus where he emphasizes the very Hegelian and Hölderlinian and indeed because this is the very point of the second half of *Being and Time*, the very Heideggerian contention that «Nature is ahistorical». (Ibid.) Immediately Heidegger offers the clarifying distinction between the ahistorical and the unhistorical as it is the latter that is «catastrophic in a way that no nature can ever be» (ibid.), and offering American



readers the discomfiting illustration he calls «Americanism». (Ibid.) This same «Americanism» is evident in Eastern Europe: Romania, Hungary, Serbia, Croatia, etc. Badly «Americanized», we may say (if only to pretend that there is a good and bad style of this sort of thing), but even so, one is hell-bent on getting up to fully industrialized speed. Thus becoming «Americanized,» once again: for good or for ill, has for a long time been interchangeable with globalization and with *economic* — always only economic — *development* and it is in evidence in our response to Barison and Ross's recurrent focus, again and again, on workers traveling on hydrofoils and ferries but also to the landscapes seen in passing along the river and when we are tempted to indulge an aesthetico-technological sense of superiority in comparing the bridges of Romania and Hungary with the bridges of the West (an unjustified comparison given the level of exactly provisional engineering that went into building most such bridges: for none were built to last forever and to imagine that a bridge — or that a dam — might be permanent is also to miss the parable of Thales bridging or diverting the Halys) what is illuminated is the ideological ideal of a fully globalized, fully coordinated, and homogenized modern, technological world. Barison and Ross's *The Ister* maps a fully technological river: the Danube is an EU certified *industrial* river.

As they made their documentary, simply by making their documentary, it can seem that Barison and Ross deliberately disregard Heidegger's warning towards the end of the lecture course, a warning that is a part of his remonstrations against the metaphysical, against any recourse to «'actual' rivers and allegedly historiographical poets and human beings». (*The Ister*, §26, 166)

I would seem to have done as much or worse, indeed and to the very physical measure to which I have brought in the cheaply ontic details of geology and mineralogy and geographical history together with the poetic fortunes of the same. All seemingly in spite of Heidegger's reminder that «We must altogether let go the actuality of such actual things as providing our supposed measure of truth, so as to enter that free realm which the poetic is». (Ibid., §26, 166-167)

The documentary's mapping of the political and geographical history of technology from East to West also maps the politics of our own Western and very Northern civilization (it is significant that the Danube is roughly equidistant between Pole and equator). And there would be much more to say about North and South (as opposed to the polarity of East and West) in the political context of the question concerning technology, that is, the fate of the question, that is the ever increasingly unquestioning character of reflection (or non-reflection) in our currently technologized world.<sup>50</sup>

For his part, Heidegger asks us to try something else.

What this something else is we hear again from Walter Biemel not only in his several discussions of Heidegger's river poems, but throughout his work. For Biemel, Heidegger's thinking is an exchange, a discourse, *ein Gespräch*, as Hölderlin would say, and Biemel means this gently enough against the ordinary academic interpreter for seemingly posing «as Heidegger», for claiming, as most academics do claim, to know «what this or that concept means and can spare himself, so to speak, the trouble of traveling for himself the toilsome path on which Heidegger had set out».<sup>51</sup>

Hans-Georg Gadamer, who held (here in opposition to Heidegger) that the essence of language is conversation, denies this very capacity for conversation or discourse as a quality in Heidegger — in order, to be sure, to distinguish his own path on language from Heidegger's.<sup>52</sup> The importance of Gadamer's point cannot be overemphasized, especially for an understanding of what Gadamer means by 'conversation' as distinct from Heidegger's emphasis on language.<sup>53</sup> But it makes a difference that for Heidegger and with respect to language, as Biemel shows, conversation, to be conversation, always also attends or waits for the response of the other and listens for this response in what is said as well as *in what is unsaid*.<sup>54</sup>

Attention to what is unsaid is also a needed attention to those silenced until now, which means that we need to learn to listen to those other than those we do hear, simply to the extent that as creatures of a commercial, media world, we are eager only for the famous or the new. Here to attend to the unsaid is also to bring "other" interlocutors into the sphere of philosophy, a sphere that is as political as anything ordinarily supposed as 'the' political. These are the silenced because unheard, unread, uncited authors, including (there are so many of these): women, blacks, Jews and Arabs, Slavs, etc, and by this I mean those other than the isolated women, blacks, Jews, Arabs, Slavs, whose names we happen to know and cite. Above all, perhaps, including those unheard because dismissed in advance as not worth hearing from: 'unimportant' or 'bad' thinkers, older colleagues, the old in general. And there are those who cannot speak because we cannot hear their voices. These are the animals, the trees, the land, the rivers and the oceans of the earth.

In the context of the video documentary itself, these are also those not heard from, thinkers whose work is not invoked but also those we see but do not hear from, those whose voices are not invited in: voices reduced as unpaid acoustic extras, background noise: *people*. All those passed over, everyone we pass by in our journey along the shores of the Danube: the workers on the ferries, the celebrants dancing for joy in the square, celebrating what many still suppose to have been the birth of freedom, or commemorating their dead, and so on, *all* excluded voices.

Nor, but this is to think of the beginning of another set of reflection, will it be enough to attend to read those who insist that they alone are *the* excluded. *The Other*.

Cutting others out of consideration has many modes and none better than that driven by *ressentiment* as Nietzsche's Zarathustra cautions us: everywhere, I found will to power. We have yet to begin to think this through.

The task for Heidegger, that is, the task here for those who read Heidegger is to go the way oneself: really to be underway to language, poetry, thought.

**Notes**

---

<sup>1</sup> Heidegger 1984b.

<sup>2</sup> Heidegger 1996, §1, 10. Hereafter cited in the text by section and page number.

<sup>3</sup> The members of the Heidegger Circle in the United State were offered a collective request for feedback on the documentary (a request made when the documentary was still a “new,” i.e., the latest thing in a world of fading latest things, and which only a small number of those queried managed to answer). See on this still further: Monaghan 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Here Don Ihde is partly correct in characterizing “generic continental philosophy” as a “dominantly scholarly activity which cites only European giants. ... It's only that the newcomers now tend to replace the godfathers in the frequency of papers and publications.” Ihde 1993, 1-2. But Ihde is wrong where he supposes things to be different in analytic philosophy (here the only relevant distinction would be that the “giants” are not European — though they may, although this is less and less true, sometimes be British).

<sup>5</sup> I'd think this essay departs from that convention but this departure is inevitably limited. Thus when one of the directors of *The Ister* documentary, heard that I'd given a version of this essay as a lecture in Bill Richardson's class at Boston College, he expressed his disappointment that I did not say enough about the video. Others have found too much said much about the video but too little about other themes in which they were for their part own interested. So it goes.

<sup>6</sup> As Bourdieu explains the title of Carles' documentary: “*I often say sociology is a martial art, a means of self-defense. Basically, you use it to defend yourself, without having the right to use it for unfair attacks.*”

<sup>7</sup> I refer to de Certeau 1984. It is relevant to note, as I refer to these courses below, that I have given such courses under two disciplinary species and on two sides of the North American continent: addressed to a sprinkling of grad students and colleagues in political theory at the La Jolla campus of the University of California in San Diego and for grad students in philosophy (including Bruno Gulli's participation as well as a gracious guest lecture given by Stuart Elden) at the Bronx campus of Fordham University in New York City.

<sup>8</sup> See for a sustained discussion of this kind of induced poverty, Illich 2000 and his, to date unmatched reading of water as sourced and resource, Illich 1985. For a discussion, see Babich 2011a, esp. 125–130.

<sup>9</sup> And the technology of representation presents its own challenges even on the ontic level. So if we add to the manifold variety of Isters, as it were, the particular DVD of the *The Ister* documentary, it turns out to be handy to have the version I have (ordered for 25 Euros directly from Australia) but not so handy when it comes to playing it on US equipment (the woes of PAL/SECAM vs. NTSC). The professional copy at the official price of more than \$500 is still *worse* in terms of quality. In the case of today's media we have to do with un-auratic, non-auratic Benjaminian world of the world of art in the age of mechanical reproduction. It matters too that in the age of today's electro-mechanical era of reproduction, the work of art, especially those of a digital kind, is under siege. Every "save," as we ironically call it, costs us. See Olson and Zheng 2007.

<sup>10</sup> Of course philosophy is so very rare in the filmic context that very little seems to go a very long way and journalists and theorists alike characterize Allen's work as "philosophical." In one of his earlier films, Woody Allen included a full-screen shot of Heidegger's *Introduction to Metaphysics*, featuring the cover of Ralph Manheim's translation in the original Yale University Press edition. Allen also muses on Nietzsche's eternal return, imagining the eternal recurrence on the model of watching shows again and again, a film-goers' hell (or heaven), but this would be Allen's fantasy rather than Nietzsche's.

<sup>11</sup> In his "Essay on the Origin of Languages," Rousseau describes the ideal possibility of a language that would "instead of arguments, would have aphorisms; it would persuade without convincing and depict without reasoning [*raisonner*]." Rousseau 1995, 383. I am grateful to Tracy B. Strong for drawing my attention to this passage and think it important to add that considering Rousseau's original claim in context, [*Elle auroit beaucoup d'irrégularités et d'anomalies, elle négligerait l'analogie grammaticale pour s'attacher à l'euphonie, au nombre, à harmonie, et à la beauté des sons; au lieu d'arguments elle auroit des sentences, elle persuaderait sans convaincre et peindroit sans raisonner*], the language of the argument highlights for the reader nothing other than the musicality of language. And this is more than a metaphor inasmuch as this same musicality may still be heard in the antiphonal cadences of Swiss French in the mountains above Geneva, as I can confirm through personal experience. Strong's 2002, 25 ff. would seem to call for a phenomenological supplement, attending to spoken exchanges in those same mountains, even today, if we listen to them. And see too Kelly 1987 as well as more broadly in the wide historical discussion of linguistic philosophy, Joseph 1995.

<sup>12</sup> See on this point: Ellul 1973. See for further discussion, Babich 2011b.

<sup>13</sup> Richardson 1974, 222ff. Richardson translates Heidegger's "die Irre" as "errance" and emphasizes Heidegger's foregrounding of *die Irre* in the context of its inclusion in Heidegger's *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit*: "Errance may be conceived as itself an open area wherein every modality by which truth is corrupted or contaminated may have free play." Heidegger, 1988, 225]). See too on the issue of *die Irre* or errancy, my editor's preface to Babich 1995, ix-xiii.

<sup>14</sup> Richardson 1974, 224.

<sup>15</sup> Remarking that "this translation is initially alien to us, violent, or, in 'philological' terms, 'wrong,'" Heidegger goes on to articulate the determinative question of decision as the question of standards (and in a Schmittian modality of exceptions): "who decides, and how does one decide, concerning the correctness of a translation? We 'get' our knowledge of the meaning of words in a foreign language from a dictionary or 'wordbook.' Yet we too readily forget that the information in a dictionary must always be based upon a preceding interpretation of linguistic contexts from which particular words and word usages are taken." (Heidegger 1996, 61).

<sup>16</sup> We can add here that this is also an allusion to Feuerbach and Brillat-Savarin as well as Nietzsche.

<sup>17</sup> See Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*, §10 in: Nietzsche 1980, Vol. 1. For discussion, see: Babich 2006b.

<sup>18</sup> Schürmann 1987, 244.

<sup>19</sup> When I showed selections from the video at intervals throughout my 2007 course on *Heidegger and the Political* at UCSD, Ivo Gatzinski, a political science graduate student from Bulgaria who sat in on the course, could point out the river's *other* side, a side the videographers did not show. Focus is necessarily directional and that means, as Heidegger also emphasized, that it also excludes.

<sup>20</sup> The phrase I borrow from MacLeish's play, *J.B.*

<sup>21</sup> There is, as I have elsewhere and more than once reviewed it, an entire scholarly debate on this issue. See Babich 2009.

<sup>22</sup> See Babich, 1992 and my "The Ethical Alpha and Heidegger's Linguistic Omega: On the Inner Affinity Between Germany and Greece" in Babich 2006b, 199–226.

<sup>23</sup> Gadamer 1994, 19.

<sup>24</sup> Walter Biemel refers to point in his explanation both of the relevance of Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin as a specifically German poet for the ears of non-Germans and the very idea of the politics of place for academics. Thus Biemel follows one of Heidegger's own didactic strategies, a strategy I have described as an intensification in reply to Theodor Adorno's mockery of Heidegger's "provincialism" (and Adorno was as much attuned to the ear as Heidegger or Nietzsche) to consider the advantages of a certain commonality, just where as Hegel remarks, that there is in philosophy "no room for the particular" by which of course Biemel means to allude to the local: "Dazu käme noch, daß Hölderlin auch als Schwabe angesehen werden kann,

was bedeuten würde, daß selbst im deutschen Bereich die berührte Thematik eine sehr regionale begrenzte bleibe." Biemel, "Zu Heidegger's Deutung der Ister-Hymne." In: Biemel, (1987/1988), 56. Biemel makes some of the same hermeneutic points, speaking of Heidegger's elective affinities with Hölderlin, in his very introductory but insightful 1976.

<sup>25</sup> Syberberg's film has more than a few cognitively dissonant similarities with another film by Mel Brooks, now transposed to stage, in the reversal of what was once a movement from the theatre to Hollywood.

<sup>26</sup> Celan 1967.

<sup>27</sup> See the chapter, "Songs of the Sun: Hölderlin in Venice," in: Babich 2006b, 117-134.

<sup>28</sup> [the into this book/ written line of / a hope, today, / for one thinker's / coming / word / in the heart,]

<sup>29</sup> Bernard Stiegler is perhaps the most dominant feature of the documentary. Before *The Ister* made him internationally recognizable, he was known for his 1998 book.

<sup>30</sup> Giedion 1948, 169–208. In the context of industrial or modern machine technology, we should not fail to note, as Jacques Ellul underscores for his own part, the Swiss Giedion's classic and classically French example of the Lyonnaise Silk factory and thereby his reference to the French, if Giedion does in fact always bring his Swiss background with him. One cannot read his discussion of the mechanization of bread without it, for the Swiss Giedion both the French baguette, baked fresh every day *and* American Wonder Bread, baked to "stay fresh" for weeks and months, are in an uncannily Heideggerian sense, *the same*, as in the more ordinary sense of the same, compared with rustic Swiss bread: the kind of bread that is not only meant to be chewed but baked to be stored on the rafters for months.

<sup>31</sup> And Don Ihde who complains about citation frequency also tells me that he played a role in assuring this oblivion in the case of English translation of Anders which is still to date not available for English readers. Anders was too negative, as Ihde saw it to have been worth reading on technology. See Anders 2002a; originally published in 1956), as well as the later-published second volume 2002b as well as Anders' uncompromising indictment of our modern civilization, Anders 2001. On the value of Anders' contributions to the philosophy of technology, see van Dijk 2000. It is important to note that Anders completed his doctorate under Husserl (Anders 1928) and had been Scheler's assistant in addition to going on to work with the then-members of the Frankfurt School, including Theodor Adorno and Paul Tillich, in what would turn out to be an unsuccessful effort at completing his habilitation. Ihde's judgment seems to have been shared by others for few of Anders' works are available in English (and those few that are, are for the most part, under Anders own initiative). Translation efforts are always political, one way or another, and this is especially so

when it comes to “professional” translations. The point applies not only to Anders but to such “giants” as Heidegger himself and a valuable component of Maier-Katkin’s recent book (2010) on the relationship between Heidegger and Hannah Arendt details the necessary interventions Arendt was required to make on Heidegger behalf in order to facilitate the publication of his works in English.

<sup>32</sup> Among his many books, see Ellul 1964 and 1990.

<sup>33</sup> Among other texts, as increasingly, more and more are available in English, see Lefebvre 1995. Bruno Latour has also been reminding us that we should read forgotten authors, such as Gabriel Tarde, for just one example (and others, such as Etienne Souriau, cf., Latour 2010). Tarde who was “the major figure of sociology in France” before being, seemingly, utterly eclipsed by Durkheim. See Latour 2002, 117–32. Likewise Peter Sloterdijk has (for a while) been reminding us of a range of ‘forgotten’ theorists of technology including Walter Rathenau (Sloterdijk 1987, 436f) and although mocking him, Adrien Turel (ibid., 458f) and again, more recently, Gotthard Günther in his interview with Alliez 2007, 319. I take this up in Babich 2012.

<sup>34</sup> See Heidegger 1994.

<sup>35</sup> See the final chapter of Babich 2006b, 243–264.

<sup>36</sup> See Babich 1999 as well as Babich 2006a.

<sup>37</sup> This is a problem in continental philosophy as most of its names seem to be as busy dying as continental philosophy is vanishing or, if Ihde is right, turning into what analytic philosophy always claimed it was, namely the “same” as analytic philosophy and hence a distinction not worth making. Thus, many scholars with analytic backgrounds or formations claim to be ‘continental’ but exclude the bits they do not like.

<sup>38</sup> Biemel to be sure is over 90, but I am not automatically convinced that his age should have excluded him (and in any case, he would have been “merely” in his eighties when it would have mattered for making the documentary).

<sup>39</sup> See Biemel 2000 as well as his 1987/1988.

<sup>40</sup> “Yet once more, O ye Laurels, and once more / Ye Myrtles brown, with Ivy never-sear / I com to pluck your Berries harsh and crude, / And with forc’d fingers rude, / Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year. [ 5 ] /Bitter constraint, and sad occasion dear, / Compels me to disturb your season due: ...” Milton, *Lycidas*.

<sup>41</sup> “Return Alpheus, the dread voice is past, / That shrunk thy streams.” *Lycidas*. See further Allen 1956 and Brown 2001.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 5. 407 & 487 as well as Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 5. 7. 2 but also “Not even the Adriatic could check its flowing onwards, but passing through it, so large and stormy a sea, it shows in Ortygia, before Syrakouse, that it is the Alpheios, and unites its water with Arethousa.” 8. 54. 3 In addition to Strabo’s reference the allusion to Alphaeus and the Syracusan Arethusa is also invoked by

Hölderlin when he writes „Kolonie liebt, und tapfer Vergessen, der Geist.“ For another, see Derrida 1991 and of course Lacoue-Labarthe, who knew more than a little about spirit or breath (even if as a life-long smoker in the French fashion) he would be undone by his own habits of the same. See Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1975.

<sup>43</sup> “And purple all the ground with vernal flowres./Bring the rathe Primrose that forsaken dies./The tufted Crow-toe, and pale Jasmine,/The white Pink, and the Pansie freakt with jeat,/The glowing Violet. [ 145 ] The Musk-rose, and the well attir'd Woodbine,/With Cowslips wan that hang the pensive hed,/ And every flower that sad embroidery wears:/Bid Amaranthus all his beauty shed,/ And Daffadillies fill their cups with tears,...” Milton, *Lycidas*, 150.

<sup>44</sup> Milton tells of th—ose who are lost (‘drown’d’) as *Lycidas* was: “In this Monody the Author bewails a / learned Friend, unfortunately drown'd in his Passage / from Chester on the Irish Seas, 1637. And by / occasion fortels the ruine of our corrupted /Clergy then in their height.”

<sup>45</sup> See again for a discussion of this in Hölderlin, including further references, Babich 2006b, 117–134.

<sup>46</sup> Hence the tracking of the film begins dissonantly as we note again and again at the Danube's end, the Danube delta, where the Ister has its name and from the same ancient Illyria from which my family likes to trace its origins in the once-upon imagined time of family memory.

<sup>47</sup> Biemel 1987/1988, 48.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Thales is famed to have, in his old age, aided Croesus, the Lydian king in the course of a political invasion to cross the river Halys in modern day Capadoccia. Thales was reputed to have succeeded in bridging the river (not, indeed, that this would make a difference for Croesus campaign and Cyrus famously had him burnt alive, enthroned on his own pyre, which may, or may not, have been rained out in the end). Thales' achievement has been disputed for millennia beginning with Herodotus (Hdt. I.75). See for a historical discussion, Hegel 1843, Vol. 13, 194 and Mott Greene, drawing upon physical geology as much as meteorology, argues not for the certainty of the achievement but only and at least for its possibility. See “Thales and the Halys” in Greene 1992, 89–105 and 171–183.

<sup>50</sup> Heidegger notes here (and we can extend his parallel to the email and texting) that “we need mention only the airplane and the radio in order to see at once that not only are both machines devices that have arisen in the context of modern natural science, but that they are also determining the course of the most recent history of the modern era. For it is by no means the case that it is simply the same processes previously introduced and dealt with by means of the rural postman and the mail coach that are



now being accomplished using other means. Rather, the airplane and the radio are intrinsically, that is, in terms of their machine essence and in terms of the extensive scope of their essence, determining the leeway for playing out possibilities that can be planned and accomplished through human willpower and for its putting things into effect.” (44) And speaking of the ahistoricism or presentism of contemporary historiography which “predicts what is to come with images of the past determined by the present,” Heidegger indicts the “technical organization of communications throughout the world by radio and by a press already limping after it.” Heidegger 1975, 17.

<sup>51</sup> Biemel 1976, 151. For a useful explication see Dallmayr 1990.

<sup>52</sup> In response to the question posed to him by Ansgar Kemmann „*Was hieß es für Heidegger konkret, zu Anderen zu sprechen?*” Gadamer gave the complex and qualified reply: „Es war sehr schwer, mit Heidegger zu sprechen. Denn er wollte schrittweise verstehen.” According to Gadamer just this entailed that Heidegger was a much greater thinker, than he was himself „daß er immerfort noch Zwischenschritte sah.” But the on the subject of conversation Gadamer could also reflect: „Bei meinem letzten Besuch bei ihm, ich wußte, daß er nicht mehr lange leben würde, das war schon so zu spüren, da fragte er mich: Ja, Sie sagen, Sprache ist nur im Gespräch? Ja, sage ich. Und dann kamen wir auf Gott weiß was, es war absolut nichts, es hatte gar keinen Zweck.” Cited here from the unpublished original transcript (with thanks to Lawrence Schmidt). The English version of the interview appears in Gross and Kemmann 2005, 47–64.

<sup>53</sup> Though it is relevant that in a television interview given in the early nineteen sixties, during the time of just such conversations with Heidegger and likely indeed and also with Arendt and others, Heidegger does emphasize the value of direct, person to person conversation and exchange while also highlighting the rarity of the same.

<sup>54</sup> Biemel 2000. This Heideggerian and Hölderlinian point is known even to those of us who do not attend to Heidegger, and Biemel’s emphasis can be noted in the quintessentially Heideggerian trope Bill Richardson has taken care to underline for us in his reading of Heidegger. Richardson 1974, 22.

### Literature

- Alliez, Erik, 2007, «Living Hot, Thinking Coldly: An Interview with Peter Sloterdijk», *Cultural Politics*, Vol. 3, Issue 3, 307–326.
- Allen, D. C. 1956, «Milton’s Alpheus», *Modern Language Notes*, Vol. 71, No. 3 (Mar.): 172–173.
- Anders, Günther, 2002, *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen: 1: Über die Seele im Zeitalter der zweiten industriellen Revolution*, Munich: Beck. [1956]
- Anders, Günther, 2002, *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen: 2: Über die Zerstörung des Lebens im Zeitalter der dritten industriellen Revolution*, Munich: Beck.

- Anders, Günther, 2001, *Wir Eichmannsöhne Offener Brief an Klaus Eichmann*, Munich: Beck. [1964]
- Anders, Günther, 1928, *Über das Haben: Sieben Kapitel zur Ontologie der Erkenntnis*, Bonn: Cohen.
- Babich, Babette, 2012, «Sloterdijk's Cynicism: Diogenes in the Marketplace», in: Stuart Elden, ed., *Sloterdijk Now*, Oxford: Polity.
- Babich, Babette, 2011a, «Education and Exemplars: Learning to Doubt the Overman», in: P. Fairfield, ed., *Education, Dialogue and Hermeneutics*. London: Continuum, 125–149.
- Babich, Babette, 2011b, «Adorno on Science and Nihilism, Animals, and Jews», *Symposium: Canadian Journal of Continental Philosophy/Revue canadienne de philosophie continentale*, Vol. 14, No., 1, 1–36.
- Babich, Babette, 2009, «Jaspers, Heidegger, and Arendt: On Politics, Science, and Communication», *Existence*, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 1-19.
- Babich, Babette, 2006, «Heideggers Beiträge zwischen politische Kritik und die Frage nach der Technik», Harald Seubert, trans., with the author, in: Stefan Sorgner and Niklaus Knoepffler, eds., *Eugenik und die Zukunft*, Freiburg: Karl Alber Verlag, pp. 43-69.
- Babich, Babette, 2006, «The Ethical Alpha and Heidegger's Linguistic Omega: On the Inner Affinity between Germany and Greece» in: *Words in Blood, Like Flowers: Philosophy and Poetry, Music and Eros in Nietzsche, Heidegger, Hölderlin*, Albany: State University of New York Press, pp. 199-226.
- Babich, Babette, 2006, «Songs of the Sun: Hölderlin in Venice», in: *Words in Blood, Like Flowers*, pp. 117-134.
- Babich, Babette, 1999, «The Essence of Questioning after Technology: *Techné* as Constraint and Saving Power», *British Journal of Phenomenology*, 30/1: 106-124.
- Babich, Babette, ed., 1995, *From Phenomenology to Thought, Errancy, and Desire: Essays in Honor of William J. Richardson, S.J.* Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Babich, Babette, 1992, «Heidegger's Silence» in: Charles Scott and Arleen Dallery, eds., *Ethics and Danger: Currents in Continental Thought*, Albany: State University of New York Press, pp. 83-106.
- Biemel, Walter, 2000, «Die Bedeutung der Stromhymne Hölderlins für Heidegger», in: Peter Trawny, ed., *'Voll Verdienst, doch dichterisch wohnt der Mensch auf dieser Erde': Heidegger und Hölderlin*, Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, pp. 105-122.
- Biemel, Walter, 1987/1988, «Zu Heidegger's Deutung der Ister-Hymne», *Heidegger Studies*, Vol. 3/4, pp. 41-60.
- Biemel, Walter, 1976, *Heidegger: An Illustrated Study*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Brillat-Savarin, J.-A., 1825, *Physiologie du goût ou Méditations du gastronomie transcendante. Ouvrage théorique, historique, et à l'ordre du jour, dédié aux gastronomes parisiens*, Paris: Charpentier.
- Brown, Eric C., 2001, «Ovid's Rivers and the Naming of Milton's Lycidas», *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 7.2 (September): 5.1-3.
- Celan, Paul, 1967, *Atemwende*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- de Certeau, Michel, 1984, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, S. Rendall, trans., Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Dallmayr, Fred, 1990, «Rethinking the Political: Some Heideggerian Contributions», *The Review of Politics*, 52/4, 524-552.
- Derrida, Jacques, 1991, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, Geoff Bennington and Rachel Bowlby, trans., Chicago: University of Chicago Press [1987]
- Ellul, Jacques, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*, K. Kellen and J. Lerner, trans. New York: Knopf.
- Ellul, Jacques, 1964, *The Technological Society*, New York: Vintage.
- Ellul, Jacques, 1990, *The Technological Bluff*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Feuerbach, L. (1889): «Die Naturwissenschaft und die Revolution [Über: J. Moleshott, Lehre der Nahrungsmittel . Für das Volk. (Rezension) ]», in: *Gesammelte Werke*, W. Schuffenhauer und W. Harich, eds., Berlin: Akademie, Bd. 5, 347-368. [1858].
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg, 2005, «Heidegger as Rhetor: Interview with Ansgar Kemmann», Lawrence Schmidt, trans., in: D. Gross and A. Kemmann, eds., *Heidegger and Rhetoric*, Albany: State University of New York Press, pp. 47-64.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg, 1994, *Heidegger's Ways*, John W. Stanley, trans., Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Giedion, Siegfried, 1948, *Mechanization takes Command: A Contribution to Anonymous History*, New York: Norton.
- Greene, Mott, 1992, «Thales and the Halys» in: Greene, *Natural Knowledge in Preclassical Antiquity*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, pp. pp. 89-105.
- Heidegger, Martin, 1984, *Hölderlins Hymne «Der Ister»*, Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klosterman.
- Heidegger, Martin, 1996, *Hölderlin's Hymn «The Ister»*, William McNeill and Julia Davis, trans., Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Heidegger, Martin, 1976, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Ralph Manheim, trans., New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Heidegger, Martin, «The Anaximander Fragment,» trans. D. F. Krell, *Early Greek Thinking* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975 [1950]),
- Heidegger, Martin, 1988, *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit, Zu Platons Höhlengleichnis und Theätet*, Bd 34. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann.
- Ihde, Don, 1993, *Postphenomenology*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Illich, Ivan, 2000, *Deschooling Society*. London: Marion Boyars. [1970]
- Illich, Ivan, 1985, *H2O and the Waters of Forgetfulness*. Dallas: Institute of Humanities & Culture.
- Joseph, John E., 1995, «Natural Grammar, Arbitrary Lexicon: An Enduring Parallel in the History of Linguistic Thought», *Language & Communication*, 15/3: 213-225.
- Kelly, Christopher W., 1987, «'To Persuade without Convincing': The Language of Rousseau's Legislator», *American Journal of Political Science*, 31/2 (May): 321-35.
- Lacoue-Labarthe, Philippe, 1975, *Le Discours de la syncope. I. Logodaedalus*. Paris: Flammarion.
- Latour, Bruno, 2010, «Reflections on Etienne Souriau's *Les different modes d'existence*», In: G. Harman, L. Bryant, and N. Srnicek, eds., *The Speculative Turn*. Melbourne: re:press, 304-333.

- Latour, Bruno, 2002, «Gabriel Tarde and the End of the Social», in: P. Joyce, ed., *The Social in Question: New Bearings in the History and the Social Sciences*, London: Routledge, 117-132.
- Lefebvre, Henri, 1995, *Introduction to Modernity: Twelve Preludes September 1959-May 1961*, John Moore, trans., London: Verso.
- Liotard, Jean-François, 1990, *Heidegger and the Jews*, A. Michael and M. Roberts, trans. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- MacLeish, Archibald, 1989, *J.B.: A Play in Verse*, New York: Houghton Mifflin. [1958]
- Maier-Katkin, Daniel, 2010, *Stranger from Abroad: Hannah Arendt, Martin Heidegger, Friendship and Forgiveness*, New York: Norton.
- Monaghan, Peter, 2005, «Time and the River (and Heidegger)», *Chronicle of Higher Education*, June 10.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich, 1980, *Kritische Studienausgabe*, Berlin: de Gruyter. In 15 volumes.
- Olson, N. and J. Zheng, 2007, *NIST/Library of Congress Final Report to the Optical Disk Archive Test Committee (ODAT)*, Presentation to the 30 January 2007 meeting of the Government Information Preservation Working Group (GIPWoG).
- Richardson, William J., 1974, *Through Phenomenology to Thought*, The Hague: Nijhoff.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, 1995, *Oeuvres Complètes*, Vol. 5, Bernard Gagnebin & Marcel Raymond, eds., Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade.
- Schürmann, Reiner, 1987, *Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Sloterdijk, Peter, 1987, *Critique of Cynical Reason*, M. Eldred, trans., Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. [1983]
- Stiegler, Bernard, 1998, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, Stanford: Stanford University Press. [1994]
- Strong, Tracy B., 2002, *Jean Jacques Rousseau: The Politics of the Ordinary*, Lanham, MA: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Van Dijk, Paul, 2000, *Anthropology in the Age of Technology: The Philosophical Contribution of Günther Anders*, Rodopi: Amsterdam/Atlanta, GA.