

# What Is Called Thinking? – According to Heidegger and Psychoanalysis

What has always struck me, ever since I first read *Being and Time* as a young student, is the congeniality between Heidegger and Lacan. First, I noted the seemingly analogous approaches of Heidegger's existentialia in *Being and Time*, these formal conditions of possibility for Dasein's being-in-the-world, and Lacan's formalistic, structuralist version of clinical categories<sup>1</sup>. Later, of course, I learned that Lacan had translated one of Heidegger's texts ("Logos"), and had even courted Heidegger – albeit with little success.<sup>2</sup>

In Heidegger's lectures on *What is called thinking?*, the congeniality between Heidegger and psychoanalysis, and in particular what it means to analyze in psychoanalysis, is even more striking. This article will focus on the congeniality rather than the differences between Heidegger and Lacan. Freud-Lacanian psychoanalysis can suggest a particular interpretation of Heidegger's thinking – and vice versa. I am especially thinking of the psychoanalytical concept of resistance to analysis, and the somewhat similar idea in Heidegger's concept of truth, *a-letheia* – i.e., truth, not as a question of correspondence and correctness, but as the un-concealed – and the concept of withdrawal as an event: "Entzug" as "Ereignis".

The title, *What is Called Thinking?*, might lead the reader to expect an answer, an exposition of what thinking is all about. Rather than providing answers, what we get, however, is just more questions; thinking is a question of what it means to question.

Thinkers or philosophers are also characterized by the concepts that they can do without. In Heidegger, the concepts of subject, consciousness, intentionality, ideas or representations are left behind. To think is without a subject in the sense of foundation: there is no subject of consciousness, of intentionality, of ideas or representations. These concepts are, if anything, an obstacle to thinking. In place of the subject, we get the existiale “Dasein”, this singular being without essence, identity or substance, this being which is “open” rather than representing.

Thought without a subject, thought without consciousness. How can this be congenial with Lacan’s thinking, considering that Lacanian psychoanalysis can be characterized as nothing but a theory of the subject? The answer, of course, lies in the Lacanian subject being “the subject of the unconscious”.

Thinking is not a meditative, reflective phenomenon; thinking is something that may occur, “ereignen”, and this event, “Ereignis”, concerns truth, and truth concerns “a-letheia” – the revealing of what is concealed – as opposed to truth conceived of as harmonious correspondence and correctness, “orthotes”, as in the root of orthodoxy and orthography. Truth is an event. But this event is not just something which you have to submit to, comparable to a revelation that overwhelms you. This un-concealment concerns *both* the event (“Ereignis”) *and* withdrawal (“Entzug”). I will say more about this withdrawal below. Given this, how can we learn to think and how, and in what sense, if it makes sense at all, can what we do as university teachers be thought of as teaching others to think?

#### WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE PROBLEM?

Why is it a problem that we do not think and what prevents us from thinking? First, a short summary of what thinking is *not*, according to Heidegger: Thinking is neither philosophy nor science. Nor is psychoanalysis. That thinking is neither philosophy nor science is something Heidegger points out repeatedly throughout his oeuvre, from *Being and Time* to the final works. Philosophy is metaphysics. Thinking neither concerns “Anschauungen” – perception or sense awareness – nor “Vorstellungen” – ideas or representations. Thinking is not a matter

of whether our ideas or representations correspond with an external reality, whether they are correct and can stand the test of reality.

Now, why is philosophy not thinking according to Heidegger? The problem with philosophy, conceived as metaphysics, is that metaphysics forgets the question of Being, and it does so by providing answers. Metaphysics is the answer to a question that has been forgotten; a question it no longer makes sense to ask. Metaphysics concerns forgetting; metaphysics concerns answers. Answers are the problem as far as thinking is concerned. Metaphysics has the answer to everything, to Being as a whole.

Forgetting and repressing are, arguably, not identical, but both concepts refer to something that we once knew. In metaphysics, the very meaning of the question (“der Sinn des Seins”) has been forgotten. The question of what is Being, the meaning of Being, is answered with something present; some or other entity (“Seiende”) is a stand-in. Metaphysics is a cover-up.

In distinction to sciences that ask and answer questions about a defined being, metaphysics provides answers to the question of the world as a whole (“das Seiende im Ganzen”). The answer to the question is conceived of as the universal: God, History, Atoms, Nature.

Thinking, on the other hand, is to ask the question of Being. Thinking is not to provide answers to the question; it is to see that there is a question that needs asking, to see the meaning of the question itself. Thinking is this interminable questioning; to question is the piety of thinking (“Das Fragen ist die Frömmigkeit des Denkens”).<sup>3</sup>

The question of Being is forgotten by being conceived of as the most self-evident: it needs no one or nothing else to justify itself, it needs no reference to anything or anyone, it needs no Other. It is what Lacan designates “the discourse of the master”.<sup>4</sup> Everything is . . . : numbers, God-given, natural, atoms, historically variable social constructions . . . A master discourse does not make sense, it puts to work. This work is an effort to make sense of the non-sensical first pre-supposition. A master signifier is the first, exceptional signifier that starts the chain of signifiers called knowledge. As such, a master discourse does not invite, it even precludes questions. You are not supposed to dispute a master signifier; you are supposed to submit to it. It goes without saying. Strictly speaking, disputing the master signifier does not *make* sense, it disrupts given sense: it unchains the chains of signifiers.

The question of Being points towards what we always already accept; what goes without saying; this pre-reflexive or pre-ontological understanding of Being, as Heidegger phrases it in *Being and Time*. Thereby, the meaning of Being remains concealed, and it is therefore necessary to raise the question.

Thinking is about the self-evident – the pre-ontological understanding – losing its status as self-evident. In Lacanian terms, the master signifier needs to be questioned. But who or what performs this questioning if there is neither a conscious nor an intentional subject to initiate it?

#### WHAT MAKES US THINK?

Thinking has to do with *loss* or *withdrawal*. When you think, you do not gain anything, be it knowledge, information, competences, skills or mastery. Provided it makes sense to speak about learning to think, we do not learn anything useful. Rather, we *lose* something when the self-evident, the first principle, the fundamental answer to everything is questioned. When you can question something, this very ‘thing’ is lost to you. This could be the beginning of an answer as to why thinking is no easy task, why there could be good reason to resist it.

Members of psychoanalytic societies are of course familiar with the idea of loss, even of a fundamental loss as a precondition for the subject. The M’Other does not become Other before we lose her; the object becomes an object when we have lost it. Reminiscing is the key to seeing the object as an object. You need to lose something and remember this loss in order to begin to think. Thinking is not about possessing, ‘grasping’ something present. You do not ‘get it’ when thinking; you ‘lose it’.

Now, the trick is that it is not up to you and me; it is not the subject who triggers this loss or withdrawal: it is the Other, the big Other. In *What is called thinking?*, Heidegger makes a significant remark about being religious and losing faith: “But nothing religious is ever destroyed by logic; it is destroyed only by the God’s withdrawal”.<sup>5</sup> [“Das Religiöse wird niemals durch die Logik zerstört, sondern immer nur dadurch, dass der Gott sich entzieht”.<sup>6</sup>]

It would probably be more accurate *not* to translate “God” with a capital “G”. “God” does not refer to the one and only, the monotheistic God, it refers to any god. In German, this is what “*der Gott*” refers to, in distinction to just “Gott” – analogous to the expression, “Gott sei dank”, and in distinction to Heidegger’s famous statement

in the posthumously published interview in *Der Spiegel* (September 23, 1966): “Nur noch ein Gott kann uns retten”, “Only a god can save us”.

This translation issue aside, what is important here is that it is the Other, *the* god or *a* god that withdraws. Logic does not make us lose faith; the power of the good argument in itself has seldom, if ever, convinced anyone – as Freud also remarks in his lecture on transference (Freud 1968). In Freud, the question of transference is a question of being able to love. Love is a condition of possibility for learning. You need faith in, even love for the Other in order to be able to learn. However, here, in Heidegger, the condition of possibility for thinking is loss: to lose faith in the Other. The equivalent, as far as the question of transference is concerned, could be the lifting of transference; i.e., when the Other loses his or her status as “the subject supposed to know”. In other words: when the matrix of how the unconscious subject relates to the Other loses its self-evidence, its necessity, and is seen as just one matrix among others: as the unconscious subject’s singular matrix.

#### BEING AS LOGOS

Thinking in psychoanalysis is not logic in the sense of being concerned with consistency and non-contradiction, or in the form of valid inference, reason and rationality. The psychoanalytic concept of the unconscious does not respect the law of non-contradiction and time.

According to Heidegger, “logos”, etymologically, means “speech” (“Rede”), “what is spoken”, discourse. This is not restricted to propositional sentences, judgements to which we can ascribe truth or falsity. “Speaking is being with the world, it is something originary and situated before judgement.”<sup>7</sup> Speaking constitutes the existence of man.<sup>8</sup>

In Heidegger’s article on Heraclitus’ so-called Fragments, entitled “Logos”, which Lacan translated into French, the question of Being is interpreted as “logos”. Furthermore, logos is referred to its root in “legein”, talking and saying.<sup>9</sup> The question of speech refers Heidegger to the question of hearing and what it means to listen [“Hören”] to this logos.<sup>10</sup> “Logos is *in itself and at the same time* a revealing and a concealing. It is a-letheia”.<sup>11</sup> In speech it all comes together: Being, truth, and logos. One can see why this article has been of particular interest to Lacan: psychoanalysis does not analyze the psyche but speech; an analyst is someone who can listen, and man is according to Lacan a “parlêtre”.

Those, who can listen, hear the effects of the unconscious in the spoken word, and these seemingly accidental and senseless, illogical speech acts do have a 'logic' in the sense of a form. Freud speaks about "Gedanken", thoughts, as far as the unconscious is concerned. These are thoughts in the sense of not being without sense; there is something to be interpreted. The psychoanalyst's interpretations are often called interventions because they are neither propositions – true or false – nor convincing explanations of what the problem and situation is all about: an interpretation of the meaning of the symptom in order to provide a diagnosis. Interventions do not make the situation understandable or restore meaning; rather, they are supposed to highlight the 'logic' of the unconscious in order to create the possibility of changing the situation and meaning.

Self-appointed representatives of reason, rationality and consistent, non-contradictory logic can rage against believers and others lost in sad irrationalism by using logic and so-called rational argumentation. The pressing question is, however, why the power of the good argument is powerless, why rationality is often ineffectual, why the believer can – in good faith, so to speak – shake off rationality as the proverbial duck does to water. Of course, this is the *raison d'être* of psychoanalysis. To repeat, the unconscious is a way of thinking that ignores rules of non-contradiction and time, and psychoanalysis is an analysis of this other 'logic'.

You can lose faith, though. Your god may no longer be with you. Your god can withdraw from you. You can lose any faith, any belief, any conviction. Disillusionment can be likened to a mourning process, even be a melancholic affair. The self-evidence of the Other is lost. The Other is lost *as* Other. You have lost a cherished belief. If the belief in a god is translated into any kind of self-evidence, it is the self-evident itself that withdraws; it is no longer there *not* to demand a question.

#### THE NON-SENSICAL 'NO'

An example: When teaching, I have often found occasion to speak about Lévi-Strauss' approach to kinship relations and, in particular, the incest taboo. According to Lévi-Strauss, this taboo is *the* fundamental taboo; it is an axiom of culture, a fundamental law, a precondition for culture, an irreversible break between culture and nature<sup>12</sup>.

I have always strived to present the arguments, based on anthropologists' analysis of various empirical kinship relations, as to why the incest taboo cannot be explained by natural, functional causes:

that it cannot be explained by some kind of biological, instinct-driven repulsion against sexual relations with next of kin in order to prevent inbreeding.

Biology can neither explain why incest is, in fact, committed rather frequently nor why it is punished when committed. Why would you need to prohibit and punish something that nobody was inclined to do?

In Lévi-Strauss, culture is defined as “the exchange of women among men”. Marriage is fundamentally not a relation between a man and a woman, but a transaction that forges alliances between two men or two social groups of men. The law against incest prevents a father or brother from keeping his daughter or sister to himself and forces him to hand her over to his future son-in-*law* or brother-in-*law*. Daughters and sisters are the fundamental ‘good’ whose purpose is to be exchanged among men that are not blood-related and thereby create obligations among these men. This is no less than the very definition of culture. In order to exchange a good, in order for a good to be such, you need to give it up, you cannot keep it to yourself and enjoy it all by yourself. Women are the fundamental good.

When lecturing on this topic I am made acutely aware of my powerlessness as a teacher. I, invariably, meet resistance. When I question the self-evidence of the incest taboo, the students protest by saying that, yes, nature must offer an explanation: genetics and their function, their purpose, is in fact some kind of natural, biological instinct to prevent inbreeding. Biology and nature are the prime movers. I then proceed to repeat anthropologists’ arguments as to why a biological explanation is insufficient: if it is an instinct that prevents us from inbreeding, why does it in fact happen rather often in human communities, and why do other mammals not abide by this law. And why, in some cultures, are cousins on the maternal side taboo but not cousins on the paternal side, or vice versa? Why is the incest taboo not restricted to the biological family? Why can it prevent an individual from one clan from marrying an individual who is not blood-related but belongs to another, prohibited clan. And why does the taboo include adopted children, brothers and sisters?

The incest taboo is simply a fundamental and universal ‘no’, I argue. Strictly speaking, it does not make sense; it is a non-sensical condition of possibility for culture. It has no other ‘function’ than to state that not everything is possible. Not everybody – literally – is accessible and enjoyable. A human being, in order to become a man,

simply has to submit to this law. What is important is not what we are prevented from enjoying, but the very prohibition itself. This is what the concept of castration refers to in psychoanalysis. Castration – this brutal concept with painful connotations – means preventing the subject from enjoying simply by saying No: a no that has no sense in itself. The foundation of culture is a fundamental non-sensical ‘No’.

My point, however, is *not* that Lévi-Strauss was right about the universality of the incest taboo in the correspondence and correctness sense of truth. After all, this question is debated among anthropologists even today; it is far from a settled matter. My point is that the very questioning of the naturalness, and hence the self-evidence, of the incest taboo meets heavy resistance. I claim here that reference to biological, functional causes for the taboo on incest does not provide an explanation. Rather, it represents a resistance to the loss of self-evidence; it represents a resistance to the loss of *a* god. Biology, the natural, is a cover-up, a metaphysical cover-up.

I cannot convince the students by presenting arguments against the explanatory force of biology, at least not exclusively. They need to *lose faith* in genetics, biology, the natural order, in order to be able to think through this question *as* a question. And what do you do as a teacher when you meet resistance; how do you teach students to question what seems to them to be self-evident? This is the question of how to learn to think and how to teach others to learn to think.

There are at least two points to be made here. First, the powerlessness of logic, rationality and arguments that refer to “falsification” of beliefs. I can present all the empirical evidence that falsifies the explanatory force of biology. However, it is not ‘my’ arguments that make anyone lose faith. My arguments against the incest taboo being natural are impotent as far as *some* students are concerned, but not as far as *all* students are concerned.

More importantly, as we have learned from psychoanalysis, there needs to be resistance in order to claim that what we analyze has anything to do with analysis of the effects of the unconscious. No resistance, no repression, means nothing to analyze. And *some* students see the point – that natural causes are no longer self-evident – *precisely by contesting* my arguments, protesting, ‘trying out’ their preconceived notions on me. They see that it can be discussed, it can be questioned.

Why not simply stop bringing up the incest taboo? Why this obsessive contestation of natural causes being self-evident? After all, I do not take any pleasure in being contested; at least that is what I



think; I am probably as narcissistic as the next professor. What kind of enjoyment (as distinguished from pleasure) is at play here? An answer as to what might justify my, no doubt, obsessive question about the incest taboo defying natural causes is also that it hits a nerve with students; to repeat my point, it provokes resistance. The students do not just shrug their shoulders; they do not just yawn and consider my questions irrelevant: they stop taking notes. They protest.

The students' loss of self-evidence is not caused, at least not exclusively, by my arguments. And, to repeat, the universality of the incest taboo is by no means a question that has been settled in anthropological circles. Rather, it is the big Other that withdraws when some students lose faith. In other words, one implication of Heidegger's concept of withdrawal is that if you, as a teacher, do not meet resistance, you do not teach students to think. Thinking is not just an add-on, like when you accumulate more knowledge about a particular subject. Thinking is not about knowledge. Thinking concerns losing what you thought you knew.

If one's ambition is to teach others to think, it might be a good idea to remind oneself of Freud's reflections on his own powerlessness when his analysands responded to his interventions with denial and even walked out on him.

In order to think, you need to be unshackled – like the poor fellows in Plato's cave who needed someone to unshackle them and drag them out into the, at first, blinding sunlight, where they were thrown into a state of indecision, if not confusion, unable to 'see' anything.

#### TO LET LEARN

Heidegger's contempt for conferences is well known. However, he did not hold teaching in contempt. As the introduction to the English translation of *Was heisst Denken?* correctly points out, most of Heidegger's publications after *Being and Time* were *first* written and came into being as lectures, often addressed to students (that is, not conference papers addressing academic peers), *then* as written publications. Lecturing and teaching students seemed to provoke Heidegger to think. This is worth pointing out because the idea that teaching is something that contributes to research is alien to contemporary discussions about the purpose of university education. Goals for learning objectives are stipulated, and goals imply that the teacher already knows what the students are supposed to learn. Teaching is supposed to be research-based, but what 'research' and 'based' mean is rarely discussed. When

we ask this question, we also ask the question: Is thinking something we can learn and is it something we can teach others to do? Provided it makes sense at all to say that any of us think – and it does have a fundamentally presumptuous ring to it – is this something that we can teach others? Is thinking something you can be ‘capable of’ and decide to do or is thinking something that happens to you – both as teacher and as student? According to Heidegger, teaching (“Lehren”) is “to let learn”.

Teaching is even more difficult than learning. [...] Not because the teacher must have a larger store of information and have it always ready. Teaching is more difficult than learning because what teaching calls for is this: to let learn. [...] The teacher is far less assured of his ground than those who learn are of theirs. If the relation between the teacher and the taught is genuine, therefore, there is never a place in it for the authority of the-know-it-all or the authoritative sway of the official.<sup>13</sup>

This presupposes Heidegger’s discussion of thinking in connection with his concept of truth – a-letheia.

#### TRUTH

Heidegger’s exposition on the concept of truth is no doubt one of his most original contributions to philosophy. In *Being and Time*, the idea of truth as propositional truth, as a question of correspondence between statement and matter, rests on a pre-predicative concept of truth that founds all predicative truth. This pre-predicative truth has to do with the mode of man’s being, or *Dasein*. Man’s being is to be ‘there’—the “Da” of *Dasein*—in the world, open to the world (*Erschlossenheit*). And the way the world is open to *Dasein* is truth. Truth is here no longer a question of cognition, but of how man’s way of being is (in contradistinction to first being a subject and then having) an understanding and interpretation, an openness, an unconcealedness. Truth means the same as matter (*Sache*) and that which reveals itself (*Sichselbstzeigendes*). Truth is thus used terminologically to determine the difference between beings and Being. Truth stands in an original connection to Being.<sup>14</sup> Contrary to the modern idea that the place of truth rests in the proposition, Heideggerian truth stands in an original relation to Being. Heidegger hereby unties the knot between truth and knowledge.<sup>15</sup>

Heidegger sticks to this “revelatory” definition of truth throughout his work, but after the famous *Kehre* – that is, after *Being and Time* and his turning away from phenomenology – a shift toward a conflictual conception of truth can be detected. Now truth is no longer just a question of *Dasein*’s “openness” and “being-in-the-world”; now “the essence of truth” becomes a conflict between revealing and concealing. This point is made in Heidegger’s reading of Plato, and it is here that the influence on psychoanalysis is obvious, for the symptom is defined as an effect of the unconscious – the symptom *qua* symptom is a failed repression, a compromise that both reveals and conceals the truth of the subject. The idea of truth as correspondence implies harmony, correctness or identity between two entities. Truth conceived as “event,” by contrast, implies disruption, conflict, or at least dynamics.

Instead of truth being a question of correspondence, perhaps even harmony, between an idea and an external reality, the dynamic perspective highlights truth as what happens when something is un-covered, un-concealed. Heidegger interprets it in connection with his concept of “Ereignis”, which is usually translated as “event”. The unveiling of what is covered up is an event. It is something that happens to us. We do not hold the truth, truth is something that happens, and something to which we have to listen. To repeat, rather than correspondence, correctness, adequacy, identity, truth as *orthotes*, orthodoxy, there is conflict between what is covered and what gets uncovered.

But let us return to the question of what it means to learn. Heidegger asks:

Man learns when he disposes everything he does so that it answers to whatever essentials are addressed to him at any given moment. We learn to think by giving our mind to what there is to think about.”<sup>16</sup>

[“Der Mensch lernt, insofern er sein Tun und Lassen zu dem in die Entsprechung bringt, was ihm jeweils an Wesenhaftem zugesprochen wird. Das Denken lernen wir, indem wir auf das achten, was es zu bedenken gibt”].<sup>17</sup>

“Entsprechung” is translated as “answer to”, which is not a bad translation given that what is essential is something that is one “zugesprochen”. Heidegger usually phrases it in the passive form. Thinking is not something we can decide that it is now time to set out to do:

thinking happens. We need to pay attention to it – “achten, was es zu bedenken gibt”. It is “es” that gives us something to think about. Not “das Ich”, but “das Es”. Members of psychoanalytic societies are again on familiar turf. It thinks. And we just need to go into it, as in Lacan’s ethical imperative concerning the unconscious; i.e., rather than a question of what the unconscious is, of how it exists, the unconscious is ethical.<sup>18</sup> “Achten” does not only mean “giving our mind to”, it also means ‘to honor’. We need to “pay attention”, literally “pay” when we are in analysis. Something is going on; a work is being done that is not just worth paying for but that you have to pay for.

Why these rather pompous formulations? To repeat, they stress the passive voice of thinking, rather than the active “Vorstellung” or “Anschauung”. They stress that we have to listen to, submit to, honor something that is other to us. “Most thought-provoking is that we are still not thinking”,<sup>19</sup> [“Das Bedenklichste ist, dass wir noch nicht denken”].<sup>20</sup> Heidegger even repeats this one page later, also in italics. It sounds dramatic, perhaps even overdramatic. He proceeds to consider the possibility that what we need is action rather than thought:

True, this course of events seems to demand rather that man should act, without delay, instead of making speeches at conferences and international conventions and never getting beyond proposing ideas on what ought to be, and how it ought to be done. What is lacking, then, is action, not thought. And yet – it could be that prevailing man has for centuries now acted too much and thought too little.<sup>21</sup>

Maybe philosophers can save us from this misery? Alas:

On the contrary – preoccupation with philosophy more than anything else may give us the stubborn illusion that we are thinking just because we are incessantly ‘philosophizing’.<sup>22</sup>

Philosophers offer no hope, leading us to Heidegger’s obsessive questions:

#### TO QUESTION THE QUESTIONING

“Questioning is the piety of thought.” (p. 70) [“Das Fragen ist die Frömmigkeit des Denkens”].<sup>23</sup> *Being and Time* ends with no less than three questions. When Heidegger asks *What is Metaphysics?*, he an-

swers himself that it “remains a question” [“Es bleibt eine Frage”]. “Denn das Fragen ist die Frömmigkeit des Denkens” And in *Unterwegs zur Sprache* it goes:

Was erfahren wir, wenn wir dies genügend bedenken? Dass das Fragen nicht die eigentliche Gebärde des Denkens ist, sondern – das Hören der Zusage dessen, was in die Frage kommen soll [...].<sup>24</sup>

Heidegger also questions to question. Now, this obviously lends itself to caricature. That aside, what could he be trying to say? “Zusage” normally means, according to *Wahrig deutsches Wörterbuch*, “bejahende zustimmende Antwort”, to answer in the affirmative, and “versprechen”, to promise. In this context, and in accordance with what Heidegger usually does, it can also be interpreted so-called literally as something that speaks to you, “Zusage”, and as something you need to hear. We need to listen. Throughout Heidegger’s text we find these phrases that carefully avoid any idea of a subject of ideas, a subject of “Anschauungen” and “Vorstellungen”, a subject of perception, ideas and knowledge, and – of course – one of his most seminal achievements: no subject of truth in the sense of correspondence.

The question of listening, the passive listening position is not foreign to members of psychoanalytic societies. An analyst could be described as someone who needs to be able to this “Hören der Zusage dessen, was in die Frage kommen soll ...”. Analogously, the unconscious, according to Freud, is like an “index”, comparable to the index found at the end of academic books, sending the reader off in different directions. The symptom is overdetermined. When an occurrence or event in speech is overdetermined, it does not point to a latent content, but to various dynamic displacements of “Wortvorstellungen”, of signifiers, and this is what an analyst is supposed to be able to hear.

#### WITHDRAWAL

Truth as the unconcealed. The event refers not just to the uncovering of truth, the a-letheia as an event. It also refers to withdrawal of what is to be thought, and this withdrawal is also an event:

What must be thought about, turns away from man. It withdraws from him [Es entzieht sich ihm. KH]. But how can we have the least knowledge of something that withdraws from the be-

ginning, how can we even give it a name? Whatever withdraws, refuses arrival. But – withdrawing is not nothing. Withdrawal is an event [Entzug ist Ereignis. KH]. In fact, what withdraws may even concern and claim man more essentially than anything present that strikes and touches him. Being struck by actuality is what we like to regard as constitutive of the actuality of the actual. However, in being struck by what is actual, man may be debarred precisely from what concerns and touches him – touches him in the surely mysterious way of escaping him by its withdrawal. The event of withdrawal could be what is most present in all our present, and so infinitely exceed the actuality of everything actual.<sup>25</sup>

This passage could also be a description of repression and the return of the repressed, the dynamic dimension of the unconscious. For example, denial is a symptom when, like all symptoms, it functions as a *failed* repression, a failed withdrawal. A-letheia is not only revelation; it is also withdrawal. Truth simultaneously is withheld and touches us, attracts us. Truth as *aletheia*, the un-veiled, the nonhidden, the un-forgotten, occurs (*ereignet*). The privative “a,” like the privative “un” in the unconscious, implies an oscillation between revelation or unveiling, on the one hand, and withdrawal, on the other. Thinking, in distinction to accumulating knowledge about the world, concerns itself with thinking this withdrawal.

You could easily get associations to the psychoanalytic cure as losing our symptoms, our cherished symptoms. Painful as they may be, we hold on to them because they at least provide us with some possibility of achieving enjoyment. A symptom, in the psychoanalytic sense of the concept, reveals itself – it is strange, painful, and foreign to us and thereby provokes thinking – but it also protects us, even prevents us from thinking what is to be thought by providing us with some kind of enjoyment (*jouissance*).

In conclusion: thinking needs resistance and loss in order to be called thinking. Could we interpret this in connection with Heidegger’s remark on “the god that withdraws” when the religious lose faith? I think so. This is a question of *a* god or *gods* in lower case, not God, the monotheistic God Almighty. The event is when the metaphysical answers to the question of Being withdraw; when we lose faith in our answers to the question of Being, then thinking might

happen. Withdrawal is like a symptom that raises a question that we would rather be without. To repeat, a condition of thinking is loss, to be at a loss for answers.

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- 1 Hyldgaard 1991, 2001
  - 2 Translated from *Festschrift für Hans Jantzen*.
  - 3 Heidegger 1988: 36
  - 4 Lacan 1991: 79
  - 5 Heidegger 1968: 10
  - 6 Heidegger 1997: 7
  - 7 Heidegger 1994: 20-21, Elden 2005
  - 8 Heidegger 1994: 21, Elden 2005
  - 9 Heidegger 1975: 60
  - 10 Heidegger 1975: 65-66
  - 11 Heidegger 1975: 71. Italics in the original
  - 12 Lévi-Strauss 1963, 1969
  - 13 Heidegger 1968: 15
  - 14 Heidegger 1984: 213
  - 15 Cf. "44. Dasein, disclosedness, and truth" in Heidegger 1962: 256"  
["§ 44. Dasein, Erschlossenheit und Wahrheit" in Heidegger 1984: 212]
  - 16 Heidegger 1968: 4
  - 17 Heidegger 1997: 1
  - 18 Lacan 1973: 34
  - 19 Heidegger 1968: 4
  - 20 Heidegger 1997: 2
  - 21 Heidegger 1968: 4
  - 22 Heidegger 1997: 5. Heidegger proceeds to refer this meaning back to  
"laying" ["legen"] and "gathering" ["lesen"]. This issue is beyond the  
scope of this article.
  - 23 Heidegger 1988: 36.
  - 24 Heidegger 1986: 175
  - 25 Heidegger 1969: 8-9

#### LITERATURE

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