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The Disenchantment of the World and Ontological Wonder

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Religious Studies

by

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March 2019

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LANGUAGES

Spanish: fluent

German: fluent

French: reading ability

Latin: reading ability

Greek: elementary

ABSTRACT

The Disenchantment of the World and Ontological Wonder

by

Martin Becker Lorca

Only a hundred years ago, Max Weber argued that the process of rationalization has caused the disenchantment of the modern world. When rationalization eclipses all mystery and wonder, then what remains is a disenchanted world ready for exploitation. Recent authors have suggested that re-enchantment could prevent the exploitation of nature that is associated with rationalization. However, by challenging the notion that the modern “rational,” instrumental relation to nature is necessarily opposed to wonder, I develop an hermeneutic of enchantment that makes visible the implicit enchantment of modern rationalization. I argue that the experience of ontological wonder both reveals the modern invisible enchantment and yields care for all beings, thus challenging the domination of nature.

In Part I, I elucidate Weber’s disenchantment thesis and explore its contemporary interpretations in Jane Bennett’s *The Enchantment of Modern Life*, Jason Josephson-Storm’s *The Myth of Disenchantment*, and Joshua Landy and Michael Saler’s *The Re-Enchantment of the World*. Taking seriously Weber’s identification of value spheres as modern gods, I demonstrate that, contrary to the widespread interpretation, Weberian disenchantment does not

signal a lack of enchantment, but instead describes the struggle of competing forces of enchantment. Then, based on *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, I study the entanglement of enchantment and disenchantment, and use the notion of domination of nature as the standpoint from which I can assess these different sources of contemporary enchantment as they relate to the ecological crisis.

In Part II, I focus on Martin Heidegger's work in order to develop the concept of ontological wonder. When attuned by ontological wonder, we do not marvel at *what* something is, but are instead struck suddenly by the obvious but usually unrecognized fact *that* beings *are*. Contrary to Heidegger's doubts regarding wonder's capacity to reveal Being in modernity, I explore the capacity of wonder (articulated together with anxiety) to disclose beings in their concealed strangeness. Following Heidegger's counterintuitive logic according to which Being reveals itself in its refusal, I propose that modern nihilism makes the highest revelation of Being possible. Thus, reading Heidegger against himself, I articulate a "positive" reading of modernity in which the experience of Being is available precisely in its unavailability. Crucially, this "positive" reading deconstructs the simple oppositional structure with which I started. Rather than being opposed, ontological wonder and the rationalized domination of nature share the same root: Being.

To conclude, I define two functions of ontological wonder regarding modern enchantment. First, ontological wonder interrupts our implicit sense of worldhood; the disclosure of ontological thatness thus brings the world's otherwise invisible enchantment to the fore. Although there is no assurance that ontological wonder stops the enchantment of rationalization, it makes the latter patent thereby exposing it to possible critique. Second, I claim that wonder has an ethical role: the insight into the thatness of beings breaks the logic of

instrumental rationality. While there is no strictly necessary link between this insight and an ethical care for beings, I claim that this link is possible and is, in fact, a path frequently traveled. While ontological wonder happens often, the problem is that we lack a language for welcoming it and thus for recognizing its ethical possibilities. A crucial contribution of my dissertation is to make sense of these experiences in order to cultivate a readiness for them. Through my reading of the meaning of Being as the thatness of beings, I conclude my study of ontological wonder by distancing it from Heidegger's tendency to ontologize and mystify vulgar prejudices and geopolitical views.

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Introduction

Over the last centuries, human beings have become a force akin to a geological force, shaping, if not devastating, the natural world. We have the technological means to control the ways we shape the natural world, and yet we do not manage to stop the train of “progress” heading towards ecological collapse.¹ Is this a problem of knowledge? Are we just ignorant, so that a better understanding of our current condition would necessarily lead us to act accordingly? Or is this a problem within our hearts: a disorder in our way of loving that reveals a divided will, in which—in an Augustinian fashion—we know the truth but do the opposite of what is required?² Is the problem that we don’t know the ethical norms that would better guide our acts, or it is that we do not love the world and the patterns of conduct that would protect it? Or is it that norms are not enough to redirect human behavior? Ethical injunctions, without inspiring “mood”, leave us unmoved.

¹ In 2000, the atmospheric chemist Paul J. Crutzen popularized the concept of the Anthropocene, to describe a new geological epoch inaugurated by the irreversible alteration of biophysical and geological conditions on a planetary scale resulting from human activity. To illustrate what I mean throughout this dissertation when referring to an ecological crisis, let me quote the French philosopher Michel Serres, who already in 1990 wrote: “meanwhile the concentration of carbon dioxide has been growing in the atmosphere since the industrial revolution, a byproduct of fossil fuels; the propagation of toxic substances and acidifying products is increasing; the presence of other greenhouse gases is growing. The sun warms the earth, which in turn radiates part of that heat back out into space; an overly thick dome of carbon dioxide would allow the sun’s radiation to pass through but would trap the heat radiating back; normal cooling would then slow down, and evaporation would be modified, just as in a greenhouse. So is the earth’s atmosphere in danger of becoming more like that of Venus, unlivable?” (*The Natural Contract*, trans. by Elizabeth MacArthur and William Paulson, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995, 4).

² I am thinking here about what distinguishes the classic Greek approach to ethics from the Christian Augustinian one. While for the former, acting virtuously depends on knowledge (thus every misconduct depends on ignorance), the Christian experience—spelled out by Augustine—focuses on a human subject who knows good and yet acts in opposition to it. For instance, Augustine writes, “The mind orders itself to make an act of will, and it would not give this order unless it willed to do so; yet it does not carry out its own command” (*Confessions*, translated by R.S. Pine-Coffin, London: Penguin Books, 1961, book VIII, section 9, p. 172. About this paradox of the will in Augustine (i.e., the will is able “not to will what it wills”), see Jean-Luc Marion, *In the Self’s Place: The Approach of Saint Augustine*, translated by Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 65, 164, 169.

Recent studies have proposed *wonder* as the experience that ethics is calling for. Wonder guides our behavior towards the *good*—and away from our harmful or indifferent way of living in the world. Capable of both inspiring our understanding and moving us to act in the pursuit of the common good, wonder occupies a privileged middle ground between knowledge and will.

Debates concerning the ethical potential of wonder are central to the philosophy of religion today. Behind wonder is the question—crucial for religious studies as a whole—about the enchanted or disenchanted character of our world.³ Only a hundred years ago, Max Weber argued that modern disenchantment was caused by the process of rationalization, which emphasized calculation, instrumentalization, and bureaucratization. Today, the problem is formulated differently: Disenchantment is understood by environmental activists and people in general as the condition of possibility for the unstoppable exploitation of nature. An enchanted relationship with mother earth, in contrast, would prevent the exploitation that the earth is currently suffering. In crude terms, nobody would rape his/her mother. Excess of rationalization eclipses wonder, and when wonder is gone, a disenchanted world is ready for exploitation.⁴

³ The concept of wonder and disenchantment are not always studied together. For recent studies of wonder and/or the disenchantment of the world by authors that teach in religious studies departments, see Mary-Jane Rubenstein's *Strange Wonder: The Closure of Metaphysics and the Opening of Awe* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), in which she studies philosophically the concept of wonder without even mentioning Weber and the disenchantment of the world. In contrast, the point of departure of Jeffrey L. Kosky's *Arts of Wonder: Enchanting Secularity: Walter de Maria, Diller + Scofidio, James Turrell, Andy Goldsworthy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013) is Weber's disenchantment thesis. The third option is also possible: to study disenchantment without focusing on wonder. For instance, it is the category of magic and not wonder that drives Jason A. Josephson-Storm's *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Human Sciences* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017).

⁴ It seems that the immediate causes of the ecological crisis are easy to find. However, Serres writes: "In the economy, in industry, in all of technology, and in demography lie immediate reasons with which we are all familiar, though we are not able to act on them easily. We must also fear that the short-term solutions proposed by these disciplines would reproduce the cause of the problem by reinforcing them" (*The Natural Contract*, 6). While tackling immediate causes can merely reinforce the problem, authors like radical ecologists have tried to find solutions first evaluating the deeper roots of the ecological crisis. Radical ecologists, are therefore suspicious

Any normative attempt to solve the ecological crisis by redirecting rationalization is doomed to fail. A disenchanted world lacks precisely the enchanting mood that would inspire the ethical behavior necessary to get us out of the crisis. If rationalization eclipses wonder and disenchantments the world, disenchantment makes an ethical response to stop rationalization impossible. Ethics has its hands tied. Without wonder to inspire our ethics, we are powerless to lessen the damaging effects of rationalization. Real change requires a transformation in the very core of our disenchanted mode of dwelling in the world.

Wonder, for some, may re-enchant the world—healing our relation to and reconnecting with the earth. According to this narrative, only by being fascinated and enamored with the natural world, enchanted by a world populated with spirits and animas, will we be capable of blocking the disastrous project that reduces the entire earth into resources to exploit, into energy ready to be consumed.

Weber's thesis about the loss of enchantment after modern rationalization is in this context under intense scrutiny. It is not surprising that we have become disenchanted with the disenchantment of the world. Jeffrey L. Kosky, Jane Bennett, Joshua Landy and Michael Saler, among others, have explored experiences of modern wonder, to prove Weber wrong. Jeff Kosky, for example, writes that “however empowering the project of disenchantment and

of short-term solutions. Michael Zimmerman, a scholar of Heidegger and radical ecology, writes: “Despite a number of internal disputes, all radical ecologists attempt to distinguish themselves from ‘reform environmentalists,’ who seek to curb industrial pollution and to use natural resources more wisely, but who do not call for basic alternations in modernity’s instrumentalist view of nature” (*Contesting Earth’s Future: Radical Ecology and Postmodernity*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994, 3). For radical ecologists, an instrumentalist view of nature embodies modernity’s project of mastering nature, which is at the basis of the ecological crisis: “Many radical ecologists believe that the ecological crisis stems from the fact that modernity’s proponents have simply assumed that human emancipation and well-being can be achieved only by somehow ‘mastering’ the natural world (ibid, 7). While I will not study radical ecologists, I will focus, like them, on the deep or remote conditions of the ecological crisis that seem to be at the core of modernity. Thus, I will study the phenomenon of (dis)enchantment in its relation to what Weber called the process of rationalization (Chapter Two), to what Horkheimer and Adorno described as the project of domination of nature (Chapter Three), and to what Heidegger thought as the essence of technology (Chapter, Seven).

demystification might be, many today have grown disenchanted with modern disenchantment and are seeking a new story to tell about it.”⁵ Those affirming the weakness of Weber’s thesis either deny the reality of disenchantment or believe that the contemporary forces of technology, art, and religion can re-enchant the world by inspiring a wonder that overcomes the nihilism of a disenchanted world. They argue that rationalization does not dissolve enchantment, but rather generates new sources of wonder. The mood of wonder—which according to these authors grows alongside the process of rationalization and is capable of re-enchanting the world—may inspire our ethical conduct to readdress rationalization. In other words, it seems that the disease (rationalization) also offers the cure (wonder)—or in Hölderlin’s words: “But where danger threatens / That which saves from it also grows.”⁶

However, I critically ask: what should we make of the enchantment that itself operates in exploitation? Are we not bewitched when delightfully witnessing how “all that is solid melts into air”?⁷ Is the engineer really “disenchanted” when looking at the forest and reducing the biodiversity of life into “natural resources,” transforming life into profit? Are we not under a spell when we nurture this restless process of rationalization that is not going to stop “until the last ton of fossilized coal is burnt”?⁸ While often the “rational” profit-based relation to nature is assumed to be disenchanted and lacking any sense of wonder, this view precisely promotes the invisibility of our affective—I may say enchanted—involvement in the process of rationalization and domination of nature.

⁵ Jeff Kosky, *Arts of Wonder*, 16.

⁶ “Patmos: For the landgrave of Homburg,” in *Friedrich Hölderlin, Selected Poems and Fragments*, translated by Michael Hamburger, edited by Jeremy Adler (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 230.

⁷ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, introduction by Marshall Berman and translated by Samuel Moore (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), 68.

⁸ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, translated by Talcott Parsons (London: Routledge, 1992), 181. Cited parenthetically hereafter as *PE*.

The notion of wonder in the current re-enchantment discourses tends to overlook the unethical side of wonder, a side which has been extensively studied in the history of philosophy. Rather than defying the excessive exploitation of nature, wonder seems to be nurturing it. Thus, the contemporary hope concerning wonder, which strives to re-enchant the world and thus to overcome our ecological crisis, may be misleading. The narrative about wonder must be complicated. This study goes beyond the all-too-benign contemporary approach to enchantment and wonder.⁹ Rather, I interrogate the nature of the wonder and enchantment that seems to fuel the process of rationalization and the domination of nature. In short, I study a hermeneutic of modern enchantment. Once we gain a better understanding of the enchantment that sustains the domination of nature, I identify a specific type of wonder, namely ontological wonder, and ask whether it is capable of tackling the problems behind the current ecological crisis.

My project is divided into two parts. The first is dedicated to illuminating Weber's thesis on the disenchantment of the world in dialogue with some contemporary interpretations of it. In the second part, I elucidate the experience of ontological wonder, and explore whether the latter may challenge, stop, or readdress the enchantment of the current and damaging process of rationalization. How would Weber's thesis about the disenchantment of the world fare if it were juxtaposed with an ontological type of wonder? To examine this question, we have first to explore what disenchantment and "ontological wonder" mean.

The uprootedness of our modern way of dwelling is my point of departure. The experience of ontological wonder is not the experience of activists or farmers claiming to be

⁹ I refer here to Jane Bennett's *The Enchantment of Modern Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Jeffrey Kosky's *Arts of Wonder*; Joshua Landy and Michael Saler's *The Re-Enchantment of the World: Secular Magic in a Rational Age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009). An important exception is Mary-Jane Rubenstein's *Strange Wonder*, which deals extensively with the unethical side of wonder.

living “connected with nature.” It is not the idea of recovering a lost holistic unity with nature. For many, picking up fruits and vegetables at the grocery store is the closest experience to farming, for many others, fresh produce is a luxury. Nature itself, for most in urban areas around the world, is the luxury of a vacation trip or a weekend hike. Although I don’t search for an answer in nature, I do not assume that instrumental reasoning or new technical solutions will redirect the process of rationalization. Rather, I start from the anxiety and panic that are not rare guests in our modern and seemingly nihilistic world. Rather than dismissing or pathologizing, I assess whether we may find answers to our environmental predicament in these moods. I consider ontological wonder to be an experience that is available for many in our estranged relation to nature, an experience which holds the potential for a different mode of relating to all beings.

Part I

To avoid confusion, I would like to draw an analytical distinction between Weber’s *disenchantment thesis* in “Science as a Vocation” (1917) and the contemporary *disenchantment tale*, in which Weber’s thesis—or a watered-down version of it—is used either to mourn or to question the decline of enchantment. Although there are multiple versions of the tale, they all share a similar definition of disenchantment, namely, the decline of mystery or a sense of exile.

Currently the discourse of the re-enchantment of the world, as described by Jane Bennett, Joshua Landy and Michael Saler, is questioning the premise of the *decline* of mystery in the modern world. They claim that Weber’s thesis is based on a singular theological and teleological model, in which God, as the sole source of enchantment, has departed. Critics argue instead for a multi-faceted model of enchantment that makes conspicuous various

sources of mystery which were supposedly absent in Weber's thesis. Critics hope that the nihilism of the modern disenchanted world will be superseded in our postmodern, technologically re-enchanted world. They attack Weber either because the modern world has never been disenchanted (i.e., disenchantment is an illusion) or because new forms of technology, art, and religion have re-enchanted the world in various ways—Weber being right, but dated. However, I count these critics (along with supporters) as part of the disenchantment tale, since they do not question the definition of disenchantment.

In contrast to the tale, I argue that disenchantment meant for Weber primarily the decline of magic. In Weber's thesis, the decline of magic coexists with the lingering of mystery. The process of rationalization does not annul enchantment.¹⁰ To demonstrate that the specter of enchantment already haunted the modern (or is haunting our postmodern) world, does not contradict, but rather, confirms Weber's thesis. The current discourse of re-enchantment, by emphasizing multiple sources of mystery, is supplementing rather than contradicting Weber. The problem of disenchantment, from the start, is a problem of the struggle of competing forces of enchantment; in short, disenchantment is a mode of enchantment.

Once the understanding of disenchantment as lack of enchantment has shifted to disenchantment as the struggle of different sources of enchantment, the ethical nature of

¹⁰ Translating Weber's *Entzauberung* (demagicification) as disenchantment has led to some confusions, but also shown the process of rationalization in a different light. Although for Weber (and specialists on Weber's work), the word *Entzauberung* describes the specific phenomenon of the decline in *magic* (or if not "decline" as Josephson-Storm's *The Myth of Disenchantment* argues, at least this word does relate to magic); for the literature that came after Weber, which developed the "disenchantment tale," the word disenchantment refers primarily to the decline in *mystery* (and some others add the sense of *exile*). For instance, see Joshua Landy and Michael Saler edit., *The Re-Enchantment of the World: Secular Magic in a Rational Age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 7: "When Western intellectuals speak of the disenchantment of the world, what they have in mind, as often as not, is a gradual decline in mystery." By focusing on this "accident" of this translation and the ambiguity that it creates, in Chapter Two I argue that Weber's disenchantment thesis (i.e., the decline of magic) does not cancel enchantment (i.e., mystery). Moreover, it is the rendering of *Entzauberung* as disenchantment that makes possible this study on *wonder* in the context of the apparent disenchantment of the modern and re-enchantment of the postmodern world.

enchantment cannot be simply assumed. If there has been plenty of enchantment—because wonder has always already enchanted the world—and if that enchantment has not prevented the current ecological crisis from happening, hoping for the ethical function of wonder appears suspicious.

In Chapter One, I study how the thesis of the disenchantment of the world is currently depicted in two works, namely, Jane Bennett's *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics*, and Jason Josephson-Storm's *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Human Science*. They represent two different interpretations of Weber's disenchantment. Although both agree that enchantment has never left the world, they differ in what they mean by enchantment: for Bennett, it means wonder (enchanted materialism), for Josephson-Storm, it means magic. Moreover, while Bennett recognizes the ethical dimension, and Josephson-Storm demonstrates the political or ideological function of the thesis of disenchantment for the creation of the myth of modernity, both fall short in their insights: Bennett does not mention the unethical side of wonder, and Josephson-Storm does not consider that magic (and not the decline of magic), as a form of instrumental reason, may have played an essential role in the colonial and imperialistic European enterprise.

In Chapter Two, I study Weber's disenchantment thesis mainly as stated in his lecture "Science as a Vocation" (1917). Contrasting with the interpretation assigned to Weber by the authors of the tale, I propose a different reading that correlates Weber's idea of the decline of magic with his reference to the value spheres as modern gods. The result is pretty much an enchanted version of the disenchantment of the world. Thus, by taking seriously Weber's reference to the value spheres as modern polytheism, I aim to demonstrate that, already for

Weber, the problem of disenchantment turns out to be the problem of competing forces of enchantment fighting to dominate us.

I recognize that my interpretation slightly pushes Weber against himself. But my thesis is as follows: after we clarify what Weber really meant by the disenchantment of the world (decline of magic), we can still gain an important insight if we anachronistically project onto Weber the sense of (dis)enchantment that the tale developed. The category of enchantment (understood as mystery and wonder) developed in the disenchantment tale can illuminate Weber's mysterious dimension of the value spheres as modern gods.¹¹ Enchantment as mystery and wonder, though inaccurate to explain what Weber meant in his thesis of the disenchantment of the world, can illuminate what remains purely insinuated in Weber's reference to modern gods.

If I succeed in demonstrating that already for Weber there was plenty of enchantment within his account of a disenchanted modern world, the focus for the study of wonder in Part II is different from the focus adopted in other contemporary studies. When I don't have to fight against the shadow of Weber supposedly predicting a modern world lacking any source of mystery, the task becomes attaining a standpoint from which I can assess these different sources of contemporary enchantment as they relate to the ecological crisis.

In Chapter Three, with disenchantment now understood as the struggle of enchanting forces, I draw on Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* to clarify the

¹¹ In "Science as a Vocation," Weber famously considers the different values spheres (i.e., ethics, politics, religious, esthetic, erotics, science, etc.) as forming a type of polytheism, in which there is an ongoing "conflict between the gods of the different systems and values." He claims, "It is as it was in antiquity before the world had been divested of the magic of its gods and demons [*von ihren Göttern and Dämonen entzauberten Welt*], only in a different sense: Just as the Greek would bring a sacrifice at one time to Aphrodite and at another to Apollo, and above all, to the gods of his own city, people do likewise today. Only now the gods have been deprived of the magical [*entzaubert*] and mythical, but inwardly true qualities that gave them such vivid immediacy" (*The Vocation Lectures*, ed. by David Owen and Tracy B. Strong, tran. by Rodney Livingstone, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2004, 23).

dialectical entanglement of disenchantment (enlightenment) and enchantment (myth) within the process of rationalization.

In the first section, I introduce my reading of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, making reference to the introductory essay of Joshua Landy's and Michael Saler's edited volume *The Re-Enchantment of the World: Secular Magic in a Rational Age*. Since the authors of the essay want to "lay the Weberian and Adornian ghosts, with their seemingly endless binary and dialectic complaints, to rest once and for all," it is critical to explore this claim as a way to introduce the object of study for this chapter.¹² For Landy and Saler, their own type of *secular enchantment*—"which delights but does not delude"—is thought to overcome both the dialectical model and what they consider to be the too pessimistic tone of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.¹³

In the second section, while I start with *Dialectic of Enlightenment*'s first thesis of the opposition between enlightenment and myth, I then move to the more obscure and famous of its theses: "Myth is already enlightenment, and enlightenment reverts to mythology."¹⁴ In my reading I explore the entanglement of disenchantment and enchantment, and study the delightful and yet destructive (unethical) side of enchantment—when the modern gods behave less divinely and more demonically.

Dialectic of Enlightenment adds to the Weberian modern gods the notion of the domination of nature. From the point of view of the domination of nature, the different modern gods seem to be merely versions of the same theme—they are just one-sided regarding their

¹² Joshua Landy and Michael Saler, *The Re-Enchantment of the World: Secular Magic in a Rational Age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 7.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 3

¹⁴ Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, edited by Gunzelin Schmid Noerr and translated by Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), xviii.

project of dominating nature. This project seems to work like an unquestionable fate.¹⁵ The unethical and destructive side of enchantment correlates with this undisputed injunction for domination. It is by testing enchantment with the project of dominating nature that I can assess its ethical and unethical potential. The question arises, is there a type of enchantment, that does not dominate nature, and that could help to stop or readdress the process of rationalization?

According to *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, in this project of domination some reversal within human subjectivity occurs. Since the human subject is also part of nature, it becomes the victim of its own project to dominate it. Moreover, and with an emphasis on domination as the core of the process of rationalization, the question arises concerning who or what dominates. Since humans and even the gods (i.e., the values spheres) fall prey to the fate of rationalization, who or what sets the process of rationalization in movement? Are we facing a tragicomic contradiction of an all-powerful subject being subjected to its own creations? Or is it just the tragic destiny of facing nature as an untamable other? Facing this aporia we turn to Martin Heidegger's thinking in order to illuminate the enchantment of the process of rationalization and to elucidate the meaning of ontological wonder as a possible way out of this project of domination.

Part II

Since the question is not about the lack of enchantment, the issue is whether within the different sources of enchantment, there is some type of wonder that may help to lessen the

¹⁵ I recognize that this interpretation contradicts or eclipses Weber's claim regarding the truly conflicting and irreconcilable character of these modern gods. But since for Weber there are no modern gods (value spheres) outside the process of rationalization (regardless how conflictingly they participate in this process), I claim that their irreconcilable differences happen *within* the unquestionable fate of rationalization. To be clear, both subsuming the process of rationalization under the category of the domination of nature and interpreting the differences of the modern gods as merely nuances within the fate of domination nature, are not what Weber said, but are what *Dialectic of Enlightenment*—in my reading—is adding to the discussion.

damaging effects of the ongoing enchanted stupidity that grows alongside the process of rationalization.¹⁶

I claim that contemporary examinations of wonder in a potentially re-enchanted world restrict wonder to ontic wonder or marveling, namely, marveling at *what* things are and *how* they function. I argue that in both Weber's thesis and in those of his detractors—when wonder is limited to ontic wonder—enchantment and disenchantment are mutually entangled with rationality. Contrary to the hopes of some, (ontic) re-enchantment will not save us because it nourishes, rather than stifles, the process of rationalization. I thus explore another type of wonder: ontological wonder at the fact *that* something is instead of nothing. I ask how Weber's thesis about the disenchantment of the world would fare if it were juxtaposed, not with ontic, but ontological wonder. Ontological wonder may inaugurate a parallel reading of the disenchantment tale.

In Chapter Four, I start with the study of ontological wonder. Since the possibility of considering ontological wonder as an answer to the domination of nature depends on clarifying its meaning, I spend an important portion Part II (Chapters Four, Five, and Six) in bringing to the fore the experience of ontological wonder. I start by describing related moods (admiration, astonishment, awe, the holy, the sublime) in order to create the contrast that may illuminate the meaning of ontological wonder. Then I focus on Heidegger's list of the essence of wonder,

¹⁶ In relation to the idea of the reign of stupidity, the French philosopher Bernard Stiegler, writes: "In the Western industrial world, however, democracy has given way—and has done for quite some time—to consumerism... This consumerism is itself based on the liquidation of maturity through the *systemic generalization of minority and the industrial dilution of responsibility*, or in other words: based on the reign of stupidity [*bêtise*], and of what so often accompanies it, namely cowardice and viciousness" (*States of Shock: Stupidity and Knowledge in the 21st Century*, trans. by Daniel Ross, Cambridge UK: Polity Press, 2015, 3). Stiegler is referring here to Kant's notion of *Mündigkeit* (maturity or majority) understood as the exit from *Unmündigkeit* (immaturity or minority). Stupidity would entail our submission, infantilization and regression to minority (i.e., the inability to use one's own understanding without the guidance of another). Crucial, Stiegler relates stupidity to our lack of responsibility.

as developed in his *Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected "Problems" of "Logic"* (1937-38). While we marvel at something unusual in order to escape the boredom of the usual, we wonder at the usual itself that has turned unusual regarding its thatness. The meaning of ontological wonder resides in the insight into the thatness of beings.

While for Heidegger wonder is the basic dispositions of the Greek beginning of philosophy, for our modern time, when Being has become irrelevant, he dismisses wonder's ontological revelatory force. Instead of wonder, Heidegger proposes that Being can be disclosed by the basic disposition of restraint. In Chapter Five, I explore the few passages where Heidegger mentions the futural attunement of restraint.

While Chapters Four and Five deal with the essence of wonder, in Chapter Six, I focus on access to the experience of wonder. After the Holocaust, the atomic bomb, the genocides of the last century and our ongoing ecological crisis, it is not clear that we can still say with Socrates that it is in wondering (*thaumazein*) "where philosophy begins and nowhere else."¹⁷ Rather than dismissing wonder's capacity to reveal the thatness of beings, I question the idea that thinking *begins* in wonder. Following Heidegger's lecture "What is Metaphysics?" (1929), I explore the possibility that we begin thinking attuned by anxiety. If anxiety's sweep runs its full course, it elicits in us the wonder that things are instead of nothing. Focusing on the movement of anxiety, I articulate together anxiety and wonder in their capacity to disclose—in our modern world—beings in their concealed strangeness with respect to the nothing.

The second section of Chapter Six clarifies the notion of the nothing. This notion is crucial to understand both the meaning of ontological wonder and the counterintuitive mode in which Being reveals itself. According to Heidegger, in its refusal, Being is giving itself to

¹⁷ Plato, *Theaetetus*, ed. Williams and Burnyeat, trans. Levett (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992), 155d.

us. I argue that this obscure “inverted” logic has to be correlated with Heidegger’s idea that— from the perspective of beings—Being is experienced as nothing. In the next chapter, I read Heidegger’s account about modernity from the point of view of Being *as* nothing.

Although known for his negative and reactionary views about modernity, I explore in Chapter Seven an interpretation of modernity that was merely insinuated by Heidegger. In modernity—where there is nothing to Being—the highest and most austere disclosure of Being is possible.¹⁸ Helped by three concepts that Heidegger uses to clarify the essence of modernity, namely, machination, nihilism, and *Gestell* (as the essence of modern technology), I elucidate what this “highest” disclosure of Being in modernity may mean. By drawing the consequences of Being *as* nothing and correlating it with idea of Being’s “highest” disclosure in modernity, I articulate a “positive” reading of the essence of modernity.

This positive reading is crucial to my study of wonder and modern enchantment. This reading deconstructs the “Manichean” structure with which I started.¹⁹ Rather than merely opposed, the process of rationalization (and the domination of nature) and the experience of ontological wonder seem to share the same root: Being. What is the relation between our ecological and ethical crisis and ontological wonder? Does ontological wonder restrain or unleash rationalization? Does the disclosure of the Being of beings in ontological wonder translate into greater care for humans and non-human beings?

¹⁸ In “The Age of the World Picture” (1938), Heidegger suggests that the denial of Being could—paradoxically—be its *highest* and more *austere* revelation: “But suppose that denial itself had to become the highest and most austere revealing of Being? What then?” (*The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, translated by William Lovitt (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1977), 154). Part of my dissertation explores the consequences of this “what then?”

¹⁹ This “Manichean” structure is part of the tale of the disenchantment of the world that entered in my own study. While in the first part I criticize this tale and attack the idea of some all-too-benign enchantment, I inadvertently repeated the same structure but now by confronting the process of rationalization with ontological wonder. Crucial, the elucidation of the meaning of ontological wonder challenges this simple oppositional structure.

The Conclusion brings together Parts I and II. I begin using Heidegger's analysis of the worldhood of the world and his interpretation of the enchantment of machination in order to confirm my reading of Weber's thesis of disenchantment as a mode of enchantment. This illuminates the inconspicuous though pervasive enchantment in rationalization and in the domination of nature. I argue that the enchantment of the modern gods resides at the level of worldhood, i.e., the referential context of significance that discloses things as meaningful. At the level of worldhood, enchantment remains inconspicuous, the spell of rationalization is not perceived. If it cannot be perceived it cannot be resisted. What is more, it is possible that we think we are resisting the excesses of modern rationalization, while casting its spell even more widely. And yet, when we undergo a crisis in our world, when something breaks the normal flow of references and assignments that creates the net of meaning, we notice the world, the enchantment of the modern gods becomes patent.

What is the relation between the process of rationalization and ontological wonder in the context of the revelatory function of crisis? While there is no assurance that the experience of ontological wonder stops the enchantment of rationalization, it reveals the until then concealed enchantment. Through a negative mode of disclosure, when the world is revealed because meaning and significance have ceased to work well, anxiety and wonder bring to the fore the enchantment of the modern gods. Anxiety and wonder have the power to *reveal* the enchantment that possesses us. I call this first step for any possible critique of the process of rationalization, the "worldly" function of ontological wonder.

The possibility of slowing down rationalization arises at the moment of revelation. When the spell is broken, a question about the endless process of growth and domination arises: what for? While ontological wonder does not stop the process of rationalization, it may

indirectly slow down the enchanted stupidity that accompanies our modes of dwelling. Struck in ontological wonder we take the foot off the gas—as it were, and the process of rationalization and the domination of nature may slow down.

There is a second, potential ethical dimension (which I sketch out but not comprehensibly develop in this dissertation), to the relation between ontological wonder and rationalization. Care for other human and non-human beings may follow from the experience of the thatness of beings. The existential “function” of ontological wonder, to disclose the Being of beings, has an ethical role. While I do not argue that there is a necessary link between the insight into the thatness of beings and an ethical care for them, I do claim that the link is possible and a path between them frequent. With the experience of estrangement, we are surprised by the fact of existence. The insight of this experience, I claim, infuses a sense of gratitude and responsibility for all beings, for the sole reason that they *are*. The pure fact of existence breaks the logic of instrumental rationality. Rather than imposing our goals on beings, the pure fact of existence inaugurates a way of dealing in the world in which we let beings *be*. The indifference we experience in anxiety is refuted in wonder—by the insight of one remaining difference: things are, and they could have been nothing. A sense of care for beings arises when we are confronted with their mysterious and gratuitous existence.

Inspired to care for other beings, wonder, however, does not itself become an ethical principle. There is no ethics (i.e., lists of norms to direct our behavior) or community that can be built upon this ontological experience. There is no *profit* to make from the experience of the encounter with the nothing. The experience of wonder is useless. But in its uselessness it challenges the contemporary tendency to seek in nature only what we humans want or need from it. Ontological wonder brings us back to the sheer fact of nature’s existence, beyond our

interests or manipulation. Rather than a lack, the uselessness of ontological wonder signals an excess of another way of dwelling in the world, in which we stop shaping the world according to our image and we let beings be. Consequently, ontological wonder does not only disclose the enchantment of rationalization (“worldly” function), but also the insight into the thatness of beings (existential function) has the potential to *directly* challenge rationalization’s instrumental logic, its fascination with the useful, and its endless dialectic of marveling and boredom.

Whether these individual and unique experiences can confront a mass-cultural phenomenon like the process of rationalization, remains to be seen. My conclusions are therefore modest. Rather than stopping the process, wonder may only slow down the enchanted stupidity that feeds rationalization.

However, ontological wonder is an experience available in our modern world. It is not only a unique experience for the few, for the poets and thinkers, as Heidegger’s elitism seems to suggest, but also a common and open experience for the many. But, as an experience open to all, what prevents the realization of the ontological care for all beings? While these experiences happen more often than we expect, the problem is that we lack a language for welcoming them and recognizing their ethical possibilities. These experiences are mostly pathologized, or simply rejected with embarrassment or indifference. My dissertation, in contrast, offers a non-psychiatric (or non-psychoanalytic) narrative to make sense of these experiences. While open and available to all in our modern and technological world, the problem is that we are not welcoming ontological wonder. We should, instead, learn how to cultivate a readiness for the nothing. I regard this learning as the main contribution of my work.

I conclude my study addressing some potential critics of an exploration of the experience of ontological wonder. An austere interpretation of the meaning of Being as the thatness of beings, immunizes my study of ontological wonder from Heidegger's tendency to ontologize his vulgar prejudices and geopolitical views. From the point view of the insight of the thatness of beings, I can distance my work from both his tendency to use the logic of sacrifice to interpret the ontological difference and the dangers of mystification of Heidegger's history of Being. I argue that Heidegger's "ontological excesses" followed his failing to hold fast to the highest and most austere disclosure of Being offered in the context of machination, nihilism, and modern technology. He failed to keep the nothing (Being as nothing)—the austere insight into the thatness of beings—and replaced it instead with some tragic or apocalyptic history of "Being" in which he could project the content of the most banal ideological propaganda.

Chapter One: The Tale of the Disenchantment of the World

My aim in Chapters One and Two is to demonstrate that disenchantment—contrary to widespread interpretations—does not signal a lack of enchantment but, rather, refers to the struggle of various and competing forces of enchantment. Simply stated, disenchantment is a mode of enchantment. I argue that this conclusion is already Weber's. Thus, the three contemporary discourses of the re-enchantment of the world that I examine at some length here, namely, Jane Bennett's *The Enchantment of Modern Life*, Jason A. Josephson-Storm's *The Myth of Disenchantment*, and Joshua Landy and Michael Saler's *The Re-Enchantment of the World*, rather than contradicting Weber, merely supplement his own thesis.

I grant that these (aforementioned) contemporary studies of dis-re-enchantment have overcome the nostalgia of former studies that mourned the (Christian) enchantment that once upon a time dwelt in the world.²⁰ While these three books argue that enchantment is present (albeit forgotten, covered up by an illusionary disenchanting discourse), they are merely satisfied by both rescuing enchantment from oblivion and arguing that the discourse of disenchantment is a myth. However, when the presence of enchantment is not in question, and—more relevantly—when we recognize that enchantment did not prevent the current ecological crisis from happening, then we cannot be satisfied by just acknowledging enchantment's presence. Rather we must ask whether enchantment nourishes the current process of rationalization that seems to foster our ecological crisis. Simply put, what is unethical or possibly damaging for our environment is not necessarily the absence of

²⁰ As a recent example of this nostalgic approach to the disenchantment of the modern world, see Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 2007.

enchantment, but rather enchantment itself. To recognize that disenchantment is a mode of enchantment comes together with the insight that enchantment also has an unethical side.

I begin this chapter by studying how the thesis of the disenchantment of the world is currently depicted in the work of two scholars, namely, Jane Bennett and Jason Josephson-Storm. Although not necessarily specialists on Weber, a political scientist the former, and a religious studies scholar the latter, both build their arguments as a critical response to Weber's thesis of the disenchantment of the world. Crucial for my study, they represent two different interpretations of what Weber meant by disenchantment. Although both agree that enchantment has never left the world, they differ in what they mean by the "lingering" of enchantment. For Josephson-Storm, disenchantment is related to the seeming decline of magic, and he argues, instead, for the presence of magic in modern Europe. While, for Bennett disenchantment refers to a lack of wonder and, thus, argues for an enchanted materialism. By surveying both works, my aim is not only to gain a better understanding of the current use of Weber's disenchantment thesis, but also—by confronting enchantment as magic and enchantment as wonder—to be better equipped for my own study of wonder that I will carry out in Part II.

Regarding Bennett (section 1), I argue against both her hope in the ethical potential of wonder to resolve our global crisis, and her project of ethical energetics. Since wonder has always already been present but has failed to prevent the global crisis, I challenge her argument for recovering and instilling wonder (ethical energetics). Enchantment, it becomes clear, is part of the problem rather than its solution.

Regarding Josephson-Storm (section 2), while he acknowledges that the *myth* of disenchantment played an essential role in the projects of modernity and its colonial enterprise,

I argue that he fails to recognize the implications of his thesis: if the projects of modernity and its colonial enterprise were based on a *myth* (illusion) of disenchantment, then the project was really infused by the same enchantment that his study seems, uncritically, to want to preserve. If magic did not leave modern Europe, then magic (and not its decline) may also have pervaded the colonial project. While he may queer the *narrative* of modernity,²¹ he falls short of rendering strange its core. Furthermore, while Josephson-Storm’s erudite book focuses on the category of magic, I argue that only the category of wonder—rather than magic—is actually capable of illuminating the type of enchantment produced by the Weberian modern gods (i.e., the value spheres). Since magic names solely one god among others, it means that there is a non-magical type of enchantment through which the other gods possess us. The category of wonder may illuminate the “logic” of this non-magical type of enchantment.²²

In the next chapter, I turn to Weber’s “Science as a Vocation” to contrast his original thesis with Bennett’s and Josephson-Storm’s version of it. As I have said, I interpret Weber—the supposed father of the disenchantment thesis—as asserting different sources of enchantment of the value spheres, which he poetically (or maybe not so poetically) refers to as modern gods of a polytheistic pantheon. Enchantment does not name some god among others

²¹ Josephson-Storm writes: “The private lives of many theorists of disenchantment seemingly run contrary to their own models; by exposing this, I aim to disrupt the old master narratives to make way for new ones. By analogue to a similar move in gender studies, in part I am trying to ‘queer,’ or render strange, the hegemonic tradition” (*The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Human Science* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017, 7).

²² Other categories, like faith or belief, could also help to illuminate the non-magical enchantment of the Weberian modern gods. But I ask, what kind of enchantment happens at the mall, when one faces the showcases displaying the newest fashion? I claim that the emphasis on both the “cognitive” dimension of belief (i.e., belief understood as some definable set of ideas) and on the “objective” dimension of faith (i.e., faith seems to require some vague or definite object), covers up our primordially “pragmatic” being in the world; in which we are affected and fascinated by the world, but we cannot always thematize or define the object of this affection. It is at the level of this pre-understanding of our world that modern gods enchant us. Hence, the category of wonder does not oppose to faith and belief; rather, I claim that wonder may illuminate what remains understudied when we merely focus on them. For now, in Part I, I first must clarify what Weber meant by enchantment. In this chapter, I focus on mystery (wonder) and magic as two possible meanings. In Part II, I will assess whether the category of wonder can clarify the invisible enchantment that resides “below” the surface of beliefs and faith.

in the modern pantheon, but rather, it names what keeps the pantheon, as such, alive. In other words, enchantment does not refer merely to magic or religion as two value spheres next to law, economics, and erotics, etc., but rather through the category of enchantment we can illuminate and connect the “mystical foundation” of law (Derrida), the “commodity fetishism” in economics (Marx), and the libido or “*objet petit a*” in erotics (Lacan). However, when we see enchantment everywhere instead of lack of enchantment (Part I), the task becomes to articulate its different types and forms (Part II).²³

I) Jane Bennett’s Enchanted Materialism

Jane Bennett’s *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics* argues for overcoming the disenchantment thesis and develops its own project of an enchanted materialism. Here I want to study her description of the disenchantment thesis, her relation to it, her emphasis on ethics, the two models of enchantment that she distinguishes, and her view on Weber. My aim is to examine an example of the contemporary trend that argues for the enchantment of modern society, in which enchantment—understood as wonder—is imbued with some ethical force and endorsed to improve our global predicaments. Bennett’s emphasis on wonder will mark a contrast not only with Josephson-Storm’s approach focused on magic, but also her confidence in the ethical role of wonder will differ with Adorno and Horkheimer’s less positive view concerning enchantment (studied in Chapter Three). I argue that since Bennett does not distinguish between Weber’s thesis of the disenchantment of the world and

²³ While the dissertation describes in general terms the enchantment of the process of rationalization, this description should be supplemented (in future work) with the study of mystery shaping each value sphere—for instance, the mystical in law or the fetishism in economy.

the tale developed after him, her critique of the teleological single model of disenchantment is suitable to the tale, but not to Weber's thesis. Hence, she repeats and—regarding her enchanted materialism—supplements Weber's thesis rather than contradicting him. As we will see, the disenchantment of the world is really a problem of competing forces of enchantment. Bennett's enchanted materialism names only one of the gods within the modern polytheistic pantheon that Weber mentions in his "Science as a Vocation." More importantly, if wonder has always already enchanted the world without preventing global crisis from happening, Bennett's hope in the ethical function of wonder begins to appear suspicious. It is not the lack of wonder that leads to the global crisis and blocks any ethical response, but rather it is precisely the presence of wonder that promotes our enchanted stupidity. Contrary to Bennett's hope, to instill wonder may not necessarily produce ethical behavior because unethical behavior can also be suffused with wonder.

1) Bennett's Description of the Disenchantment of the World:

What does the disenchantment of the world mean? Jane Bennett summarizes the major elements of the disenchantment tale:²⁴

(1) our modern, highly rationalized world, characterized by calculation, stands in stark contrast to a magical or holistic cosmos, a cosmos toward which we have a double orientation of superiority and nostalgia; (2) although this world opens up a domain of freedom and mastery, we pay a psychic or emotional toll for demagification in the form of a lack of community and a deficit of meaning; (3) the idea of progress through science inspires both hope and despair; (4) even in societies in which rationalization has advanced

²⁴ Bennett does not distinguish between Weber's thesis and the tale that scholars have repeated after Weber. In order to avoid confusion, I will refer to Weber's argument of the disenchantment of the modern world as his *thesis*, and to the way that his thesis has been used after him (including Bennett's interpretation of it) as a *tale*.

the furthest, recalcitrant fugitives from rationalization persist, and these errant forces are understood through the categories of the mystical and the erotic.²⁵

For Bennett, the tale of the disenchantment of the world is based on a stark contrast between a magical or holistic cosmos and a highly-rationalized world. Moreover, she emphasizes the ambiguity of the double response to these two contrasted worlds: superiority or nostalgia; mastery or lack of communal meaning; hope or despair. This double response portrays the tension between an optimistic interpretation of enlightenment and a pessimistic one. As we will soon see, Bennett's two contrasted worlds with their double responses come together in a single model of disenchantment. In other words, the dichotomy between a magical and a rationalized world is based on a *single* "stark contrast" that juxtaposes the two terms of the dichotomy. It is against this single model of enchantment that Bennett opposes her own study of enchanted materialism (in which multiple sources of enchantment blur any "stark contrast"). However, this still-present single model works like a ghost: although an illusion, it has real consequences. Bennett's enchanted materialism will have to come to terms with this ghostly tale of the disenchantment of the world.

2) Bennett's Relationship with the Tale of Disenchantment

Explaining her relationship with the tale of disenchantment, Bennett writes, "although I want to weaken its hold, I am less its critic than its trash collector. With Kafka as my inspiration, I dust off and shine up what it discards, that is, the experience of wonder and surprise that endure alongside a cynical world of business as usual, nature as manmade, and affect as the effect of commercial strategy. The experiences that I recycle...are not invaders of

²⁵ Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 57. Cited parenthetically hereafter as *EM*.

the major tale but underground or background residents of it” (*EM*, 8). Thus, her “alter-tale” tries to dust off the experience of wonder that is already here, but which remains covered by the predicaments of our time: “My counterstory seeks to induce an experience of the contemporary world—a world of inequity, racism, pollution, poverty, violence of all kinds—as also enchanted—not a tale of re-enchantment but one that calls attention to magical sites already here” (*EM*, 8). Her project is not about re-enchantment because the world has never ceased to be enchanted.

But why is it necessary then to induce an enchanted experience when the world has never ceased to be enchanted? Bennett’s deconstructive or negative side of her project attacks the tale because the tale—even though inaccurate—has real consequences: “for that story has itself contributed to the condition it describes. Its rhetorical power has real effects” (*EM*, 4). This story repeated over and over makes us finally believe in it. Bennett elaborates on the ethical consequences of “believing” in the disenchantment tale: “in a world construed as disenchanted, it is easy for liberals and communitarians alike to lose faith in the distinction between power and legitimate authority. And when this happens, political cynicism is not likely to be far behind” (*EM*, 181, note 4). Although the modern world has always been enchanted, the tale confines wonder to the underground, which creates the conditions for political cynicism. Thus Bennett, despite her statements to the contrary, appears not just a “trash collector” or “background resident” of the disenchantment tale. Instead, by actively resisting and deconstructing the tale, she will aid wonder in coming to the fore and “shining out” once again.

Bennett thus traces experiences of wonder in the modern world that happen alongside our cynical world. She focuses on the ethical effects that these experiences have: “I weave the

moments of enchantment that I find into an alter-tale, and I imagine the impact on ethical relations that such an alternative narrative might have” (*EM*, 8).

3) Enchantment’s Ethical Role

By making clear the ethical role of enchantment,²⁶ Bennett goes beyond the psychological dimension and addresses why it is ethically important for contemporary society to protect experiences of enchantment:

I tell my alter-tale because it seems to me that presumptive generosity, as well as the will to social justice, are sustained by periodic bouts of being enamored with existence, and that it is too hard to love a disenchanting world. Affective fascination with a world thought to be worthy of it may help to ward off the existential resentment that plagues mortals, that is, the sense of victimization that recurrently descends upon the tragic (or absurd or incomplete) beings called human (*EM*, 12).

It is important to notice that the current trend of studies on wonder and the re-enchantment of the world is motivated by affect’s relevance to ethics.²⁷ Since norms and knowledge seem not enough to secure ethical behavior, different affects seem useful to inspire the right deeds.²⁸ For Bennett, both generosity and the will to social justice are not created from nothing. They result from the cultivation of a state of being enamored with existence. But to be enamored with existence, we must think existence is worthy of our love. Here, affects and thinking seem to work together in a (virtuous) circle. Either we think existence (or the world) worthy so that we

²⁶ “The mood of enchantment may be valuable for ethical life”; “the affective force of those moments might be deployed to propel ethical generosity” (*EM*, 3).

²⁷ On the current trend of Affect Theory, see, for instance, Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth ed, *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), and Donovan O. Schaeffer, *Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution, and Power* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

²⁸ *Affects* are the answer for her question: “what enables the jump from recognizing a moral code to living it out? How do oral injunctions become laudable acts? (*EM*, 133).

experience periodic bouts of love, or we experience periodic bouts of love that makes us think existence (or the world) worthy. Regardless of the causal order, what is relevant is that both thinking existence worthy and experiencing periodic bouts of love sustain the affective fascination that makes possible generosity and the will for social justice.

Additionally, according to Bennett, the disenchantment tale yields or is based on an existential resentment and sense of victimization that is encouraged by a view of humanity as tragic, absurd, and incomplete. Again, it is not clear if the sense of resentment and victimization leads to a tragic and absurd thinking about the human, or if it is the tragic thinking that fosters resentment and a sense of victimization. As a result, in order to cultivate love for existence, we have to both criticize the disenchantment tale that nourishes existential resentment and cultivate moments of affective fascination. While we may receive spontaneous “bouts of being enamored with existence,” enchantment can be also positively cultivated: “Enchantment is something that we encounter, that hits us, but it is also a comportment that can be fostered through deliberate strategies” (*EM*, 4).²⁹ To write about enchantment—as one of these deliberate strategies—becomes an academic duty: “For, if enchantment can foster an ethically laudable generosity of spirit, then the cultivation of an eye for the wonderful becomes something like an academic duty” (*EM*, 10). Our academic duty is to bring wonder from the background to the fore, which nourishes the generosity of spirit needed to recover the “faith in the distinction between power and legitimate authority,” which in turn is going to improve our current predicaments (“a world of inequity, racism, pollution, poverty, violence of all

²⁹ “I pursue a life with moments of enchantment rather than an enchanted way of life. Such moments can be cultivated and intensified by artful means. Enchantment, as I use the term, is an uneasy combination of artifice and spontaneity” (*EM*, 10).

kinds”). When one brings wonder to the fore, one pushes political cynicism to the back; the latter is for Bennett the affective sin that is keeping the world in a global crisis.

Finally, Bennett’s task of cultivating wonder to inspire ethics inaugurates what she calls *ethical energetics*. “I identify sites on the contemporary cultural landscape that are capable of inspiring wonder, even an energetic love of the world. I call the effect of visits to these sites *enchantment* and draw connections between the experience of enchantment and cultivation of an ethic of generosity toward others” (*EM*, 10). This ethical energetics is based on the dichotomy of fullness and lack; generosity is predicated upon fullness and resentment upon lack. Consequently, disenchantment signals a lack, and enchantment a sense of plenitude: “The overall effect of enchantment is a mood of fullness, plenitude, or liveliness, a sense of having had one’s nerves or circulation or concentration powers turned up or recharged” (*EM*, 5). It is not clear, however: we are recharged of what? We have plenty of what?

4) Two Models of Enchantment

Let me now focus on the models of enchantment that Bennett distinguishes. To carry on her project (of rejecting the disenchantment tale and disclosing this energetic of wonder), Bennett distinguishes her enchanted materialism from a cosmological (teleological) model of enchantment. Although the enchanted materialism that Bennett seeks to bring to the fore has never ceased to be here,³⁰ its presence has now become more conspicuous due to the current crisis of the cosmological model of enchantment. The disenchantment tale is not absolutely wrong when it declares the dissolution of enchantment in the modern world. It just mistakes

³⁰ “If you compare that cosmological image with teleology-resistant images drawn from Kant and Deleuze, it appears that a variety of wonders continue to live among us, that neither we nor the world is dis-enchanted” (*EM*, 34)

the crisis of a particular type of enchantment for the general norm—announcing the dissolution of enchantment as such.

What is the particular type of enchantment that is currently in crisis? Bennett writes, I examine the particular notion of enchantment that the dis-enchantment story employs. It is an enchantment that requires a world with a telos or intrinsic purpose, something like the world described by the Renaissance physician Paracelsus, for whom nature was to be read as divine prose and for whom the mood of enchantment was the sign of God’s presence. My contention is that this (Christian cosmological) kind of enchantment is but one possible kind, and that there are others that do not depend on a world construed as divine Creation (*EM*, 33).

The disenchantment tale is a Christian narrative. Bennett claims that this narrative can be told differently if the Christian God is taken out of the picture. By questioning the status of the world as creation and symbol of God, enchantment is released from its function as a sign of the divine. Bennett tries to “erode the belief that an undesigned universe calls above all for a cold-eyed instrumentalism” (*EM*, 34). Without a “why?” given by any divine design, *matter* can enchant us to feel bouts of love for existence, which for Bennett seems to be a condition for our ethical behavior beyond cold-eyed instrumentalism. Let us succinctly examine how—according to Bennett—Christianity is related to the disenchantment tale.

With the help of the historian of ideas Hans Blumenberg, she traces the modern (Christian) form of disenchantment to the debate within Christianity between Scholasticism and Nominalism. Adopting Blumenberg’s voice, Bennet writes: “Modern disenchantment is the unintended consequence of a *second* attempt to protect the doctrine of divine omnipotence, this time from the threat posed to it by the Scholastic idea of a teleological world” (*EM*, 67). For the nominalists, “an intrinsic purpose in the world, even one with which God was

identified, restrained His absolute freedom to create and recreate as He willed” (*EM*, 67).³¹ The nominalist attempt to defend God’s transcendence by releasing God from the limitation of any telos unintentionally made nature entirely devoid of God. Accidentally, however, when nature became devoid of God, human mastery took advantage of this new circumstances: “A nominalist God unrecognizable in nature turned out to be the psychological equivalent of a nature devoid of God—and thus fair game for human mastery” (*EM*, 68). The symbolic bond between the world and God (i.e., the world as a symbol of God) was broken. Since we could no longer recognize God in nature (i.e., nature devoid of God), our loneliness was satisfied with our human self-assertion. Unintentionally, human self-assertion was the only path left in a disenchanted world: “In a world experienced as disenchanted, humanity figures as the primary, if not the sole, locus of agency and vitality” (*EM*, 80).³²

Let me repeat, the tale of disenchantment that Bennett opposes is Christian and has (according to her reading of Blumenberg) a theological explanation for human self-assertion. Consequently, it works only from a Christian point of view. From the point of view of Bennett’s neo-pagan enchantment and having demonstrated that the tale of disenchantment has a Christian origin, she can attack the pretension of universality of the tale. Here, I concur with Bennett and argue that outside the Christian framework we may see that human self-assertion has never happened because we have been always already under the spell of a pantheon of

³¹ Nominalism’s more well-known doctrine, namely, that universals or general ideas are mere names without any corresponding reality, aims to protect God’s omnipotence: “There can be no universals precisely because it is unthinkable that an omnipotent God and His boundless creativity could be constrained, even by His own divine thought” (*EM*, 69).

³² Although it is true that the Middle Ages ended when divine providence ceased to be credible, “it is not true that providence was ‘secularized’ into a notion of progress” (as Karl Löwith believed). Rather, the active human self-assertion, as the unintentional consequence of nominalism (though supplemented with the reappearance of the Greek atomism of Epicurus), marks the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of a peculiarly modern stance. “This unhuman world is in principle unknowable in itself. Self-assertion is not a logically necessary response to this condition. But it does become the most credible response to those who seek to make something of their time on earth in a world now drained of any intrinsic purpose” (*EM*, 70).

polytheistic gods—or better, *human self-assertion* itself is a delusion transmitted by one of these gods. Since the world has never ceased to be enchanted, we may consider modern disenchantment as just a new reckoning of forces between gods. To sum up, according to Bennett’s historical argument, the disenchantment of the world is a narrative that has an unintentional origin in a theological dispute between Scholasticism and Nominalism—an enchanted origin for disenchantment. In contrast, a non-Christian approach, for instance Bennett’s neo pagan one, rejects the fact and the explanation of the disenchantment tale from the get-go.

5) Bennett and Weber

What about Bennett regarding Weber? According to Bennett, Weber follows the *single* divine model of enchantment—i.e., since God has left, there is no more enchantment in the world. But is that the case? In my reading of Weber’s “Science as a Vocation” (Chapter Two) I argue that Weber’s reference to the value spheres as modern gods inaugurates a multiple (polytheistic) model of enchantment. Although Weber explicitly describes the single divine model, there is a countercurrent in the text that sees in the crisis of the single divine model an opening for a multiple (polytheistic) model of enchantment. Since Bennett does not acknowledge Weber’s polytheistic model, she fails to distinguish between the thesis and the tale, and thus posits Weber within the single model of enchantment.³³ On my account, Weber’s viewpoint is closer to Bennett’s than she is willing to acknowledge. Accordingly, I argue that

³³ In her commentary on Weber’s thesis, Jane Bennett accurately identifies two different types of ambivalences towards disenchantment: First, one that we have amply discussed already, namely, the ambivalence of disenchantment being entangled with enchantment. Second, a moral ambivalence toward disenchantment (*EM*, 65). Although she identifies these two ambiguities, in most of her book, Weber’s ambiguity is somehow played down and Weber is described as solely arguing within the single model of enchantment.

the tale fails to follow the complexity of Weber's analysis of the process of rationalization, in which mysterious forces of enchantment are already haunting the modern disenchanted world. It is misleading to project onto Weber's thesis the limitation of this single model of enchantment.³⁴

My critique of Bennett is not merely that she misinterprets Weber's complex thesis. More importantly, once we agree that the problem of modern disenchantment relates to the task of coming to terms with competing forces of enchantment, I am claiming that her ethical energetics are misleading. In my reading, the problem is not about the lack of wonder and its missing capacity to enchant (which in turn would lead to ethical behavior), but rather the problem is both that there is already enough (or even too much) "energy" enchanting the world, and that precisely this enchanting energy is not necessarily ethical. Although she wants to shine up "the experience of wonder and surprise that endure alongside a cynical world of business as usual, nature as manmade, and affect as the effect of commercial strategy" (*EM*, 8), I wonder whether beliefs in a cynical world, nature as humanmade, and commercial strategy do not already need their own type of enchantment. It seems that they are not neutral; they are not instances of lack of wonder, but rather they are the effect of some type of wonder. Don't we think that one needs to be somehow bewitched to produce (or at least endure) the "cynical world of business as usual"?³⁵ Again, when Bennett writes, "my counterstory seeks to induce

³⁴ Although in my account both Weber and Bennett overcome the single model of disenchantment, they differ on where the multiplicity comes in. While Weber starts with the single model, which afterwards, results in modern polytheism, Bennett argues that the single model of disenchantment has been an illusion from the beginning and her quasi-pagan enchanted materialism has always been present.

³⁵ I interchangeably use the terms enchantment (wonder) and bewitchment. Since the goal in Part I is to elucidate the meaning of disenchantment and enchantment, the first step is to acknowledge that these concepts are ambiguous because various authors are using them to apprehend complex and different phenomena. In order to avoid unnecessary confusion, let me anticipate a crucial distinction. *That* which is present in enchantment is not necessarily the same as that which is absent in disenchantment—i.e., both terms underscore related but different things. On the one hand, often "enchantment" denotes a spell that bewitches; something at which we marvel (or wonder) and which stimulates our curiosity; some affective dimension that fascinates and binds us

an experience of the contemporary world—a world of inequity, racism, pollution, poverty, violence of all kinds—as also enchanted—not a tale of reenchancement but one that calls attention to magical sites already here” (*EM*, 8), she limits the notion of enchantment to those “magical sites.” Without dismissing Bennett’s “magical sites,” my study sees *also* in inequality, racism, pollution, poverty, and violence, instances of “magical sites.” For instance, one can think about Nazi Germany and their propaganda at rallies to identify the “magical sites” from which racism was grown.

Are we capable of distinguishing the types of wonder in these different “magical sites”? The wonder that sustains “periodic bouts of being enamored with existence,” and thus triggers “presumptive generosity” and “the will to social justice” (*EM*, 12) may be an instance, according to Bennett, of an ethical type of wonder. However, the people bewitched by money and power who directly or indirectly produce the inequality, pollution, and poverty of our world, seem to be pretty much enamored with existence also. Moreover, one should not be blind to the latent enchantment already working on those who suffer “existential resentment” (which Bennett denounces as the cause for the lack of care for our world). Resentment is not neutral; it is already a response to some beliefs that latently bewitch us—for instance, often the person who is unhappy has some pretty fixed ideas of what happiness should look like. Hence, in either case, if someone is enamored with existence or if someone has existential resentment, a type of wonder may already be enchanting her. Like Bennett, I do allocate to the experience of wonder the capacity to trigger generosity and the will to social justice; but, unlike her, I also

(mostly unaware) to our world. On the other hand, “disenchantment” denotes the condition (or attitude) in which we believe that we can know and control the world. Often, this sense of control relates to the decay of magic (as a mode of knowing and manipulating reality) and as a consequence produces the lack of wonder and the crisis in the highest values. Hence, as we are going to see, one can be *enchanted* (i.e., bewitched and fascinated by a spell) in an *disenchanted* world (i.e., believing that one can control everything).

acknowledge that the experience of wonder may produce the opposite. Hence, the task of my study is not to shine up any experience of wonder, but rather to engage in a hermeneutic of wonder to learn to stop the type of wonder that is blindly nourishing the global environmental crisis.

Summing up, to turn the issue from disenchantment understood as the lack of wonder towards disenchantment understood as a world enchanted by competing types of wonder, means that we cannot assume that wonder always has an absolutely benign nature. Simply stated, the problem is not that wonder is absent, but rather that its presence may enchant humanity into its annihilation.

II) Josephson-Storm's De-Mythologizing the Myth of Disenchantment

In his book *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Human Science*, Jason Josephson-Storm presents the genesis of the disenchantment thesis. He walks us through the works and private lives of a selection of eighteenth and nineteenth century European scholars (scientists, social theorists, and Religious Studies founders), showing how magic had not really left Europe, even for the very scholars who were developing the idea of magic's disappearance.

One part of Josephson-Storm's argument shows how the discourse of modernity and enlightenment was built on the exclusion of magic. Magic is at the founding of the discourse of modernity in its direct exclusion. But, more importantly, Josephson-Storm demonstrates that, although the *idea* of the exclusion of magic had a real effect in the construction of the discourse of modernity, its exclusion is a "myth" because it never actually happened.

Josephson-Storm thus questions the justification for considering modernity a separate epoch, insofar as modernity is defined in terms of the disappearance of magic. Hence, he engages in a work of demythologizing, in which he wants “to disrupt the old master narratives to make way for new ones.”³⁶ He questions the metanarrative of modernity that claims to be beyond every narrative and myth. Contrary to Jean-François Lyotard, Josephson-Storm sees “no end to metanarratives” (*MD*, 316). Thus, paradoxically, his project attempts to undo “*the myth that there is no myth*” (*MD*, 313).

In my reading of Josephson-Storm’s book, I focus on his description of the disenchantment tale’s genealogy, politics, and logic. Then I turn to the way he depicts magic and his account of Weber’s thesis of disenchantment. I take his book as an example of the current (re)enchantment discourse. By studying the genealogy and logic of the tale, my goal is to be better prepared to read Weber in the next chapter. Moreover, by examining the *political* consequences of the tale with Josephson-Storm, I will complement the *ethical* consequences studied with Bennett. But more importantly, my aim is to explore the ambiguities in the meaning of disenchantment: first, does the prefix “dis” really mean a “lack” of enchantment? Secondly, what is the meaning of enchantment: wonder, mystery, or magic? The different answers to these questions create the multiple versions of the tale (often in contradiction to Weber’s original thesis).

1) Josephson-Storm’s Description of the Disenchantment of the World

According to Josephson-Storm, the tale of the disenchantment of the world is constructed by inconsistent and semi-overlapping claims—“regarding the loss of wonder, the

³⁶ Jason Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Human Science* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), 7. Hereafter parenthetically cited as *MD*.

de-animation of the world, the progressive rationalization of superstition, and, of course, the end of magic”—which nevertheless all share a common root (*MD*, 6). As I mentioned, in his book disenchantment means primarily the end of magic and the de-animation (or despiritualization) of nature.³⁷ To begin the survey of Josephson-Storm’s far-reaching study of disenchantment and magic, we ask, what does the tale of the disenchantment of the world mean? He writes,

There is a narrative that scholars have repeated so often that it can sound like a fable. Although applied to different time periods, from the birth of Greek philosophy to the Renaissance to the scientific revolution to the Enlightenment, its outline is nearly always the same: that at a particular moment the darkness of superstition, myth, or religion began to give way to modern light, exchanging traditional unreason for technology and rationality. When told in a soaring tone, this is a tale of triumph; and when recounted in a different and descending emotional register, it can sound like the inauguration of our tragic alienation from an idealized past. To be clear, the absent myth has two significant components—that we have lost myth and that we need myth—and the celebratory version of this narrative omits the latter theme (*MD*, 65)

Unlike Bennett, Josephson-Storm distinguishes between Weber’s thesis and the fable or tale that scholars have repeated after Weber. Indeed, as we will see soon, he claims that Weber has been misunderstood and, as a result, we have been presented with an inaccurate version of Weber’s thesis. Moreover, and again contra Bennett, rather than just modern, this tale can be also applied to premodern times. Now, like Bennett, Josephson-Storm argues that the tale both juxtaposes traditional unreason to technology and rationality, and that the sense of the tale is ambiguous: either a “tale of triumph” or the “tragic alienation from an idealized past.” Like

³⁷ Josephson-Storm mentions—in passing—the word wonder no more than five times in his book. Clearly, he does not focus on the idea of “the loss of wonder” in order to explore the genealogy of the myth of disenchantment.

Bennett, Josephson-Storm's book attacks this version of the tale. His own work enchants not by cultivating enchanted energetics, but rather by arguing that the world has never ceased being enchanted—disenchantment is an illusion.

As has been noted, the biggest point of difference between Josephson-Storm and Bennett is the type of enchantment that they see lingering in modernity: for Josephson-Storm, it is not wonder, but rather magic that lingers in modernity. He uncovers the magic that lingers, not in the “periphery” of the world like South America, Africa, or Asia, where the Eurocentric discourse of modernity already acknowledges the presence of “primitive” beliefs in magic, but rather amid modern, secular Europe. Consequently, he must demonstrate not only that the demagification of the world was an illusion, but also—like Bennett—why this illusion was created, how this illusion had real effects, and what the consequences of demonstrating the fiction of the demagification of the world are. But first let us inquire about the historical antecedents of the tale.

2) The Genealogy of Disenchantment

According to Josephson-Storm, “it is tempting to imagine the narrative of disenchantment developing from the collective trauma of the Great War” (*MD*, 150). The version of the tale that sees in Max Weber's late work the origins of the tale falls to this temptation: “it would be easy to imagine a widespread loss of belief in magic caused by postwar nihilism. This is not merely a thought experiment, but might be an appealing argument if one mistakenly believed that Weber's version of disenchantment was popularized in the *The Protestant Ethic* (1920)” (*MD*, 151). The disenchantment tale was not born in the 20th century, but rather it has earlier beginnings.

Friedrich von Schiller's poem "The Gods of Greece" (*Die Götter Griechenlands*—written in 1788, revised 1800) is an important antecedent for the myth of the decline of magic. In his poem, Schiller begins nostalgically comparing the *there* (*Da*) of an ancient Greek world where everything served—for the initiated gaze—as the trace of the gods (*Alles wies den eingeweihten Blicken, /Alles eines Gottes Spur*), with the *now* (*Jetzt*) of Schiller's time, in which the scholars have reduced the majestic guide of Helios' golden chariot to the soulless rotation of a fire ball (*Wo jetzt nur, wie unsre Weisen sagen, /Seelenlos ein Feuerball sich dreht, /Lenkte damals seinen goldnen Wagen/ Helios in stiller Majestät*).³⁸ Permeating the poem is a sense of the alienation that results from having reduced nature to dead matter. Josephson-Storm writes, "where once humanity celebrated the wonders and beauty of the natural world, we are now numb to its majesty, and have reduced it to mere instrument" (*MD*, 83). Schiller identifies this sense of alienation with the departure of animating spirits, the vanishing of the gods, and the condition of a de-deified nature (*Die entgötterte Natur*). As we will see in Chapter Three in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, enlightenment's critique of animism is an essential part of the thesis of the disenchantment of the world—as it is in Schiller's earlier version of the thesis. Moreover, one should not blame these wise scholars for having de-deified nature, since they are just bringing to its last logical conclusion the old monotheistic banning

³⁸ Friedrich von Schiller, "Die Götter Griechenlands," in *Schillers Werke, Zweiter Band*, herausgegeben von Paul Stapf (Berlin: Deutsche Buch-Gemeinschaft, 1958), 100, 102. The nostalgic tone of the poem is obvious, for instance, in the twelfth strophe: *Schöne Welt, wo bist du? Kehre wieder, /Holdes Blütenalter der Natur! /Ach, nur in dem Feenland der Lieder/ Lebt noch deine falbelhafte Spur. /Ausgestorben trauert das Gefilde, Keine Gottheit zeigt sich meinem Blick, /Ach, von jenem lebenwarmen Bilde/ Blieb der Schatten nur zurück* (ibid). However, I read in the last two verses of the poem a final moment of higher synthesis that in some way questions the nostalgic tone: "What should be immortal in singing, / Must perish in life" (*Was unsterblich im Gesang soll leben, /Muß im Leben untergehen*—ibid., 103, my translation). If nostalgia deals with a lack, these final two verses insinuate that what one feels as a lack, in fact, turns into a way of preserving and gaining what is immortal. Moreover, the departure of the gods cannot be blamed on humanity. The gods themselves decide to return home (away from the human). Why? Because it seems that it is only by their departing that they remain ("What should be immortal in singing, / Must perish in life"). I claim that we can find something of Schiller's higher synthesis in Heidegger's history of Being that we will survey in Part II.

of all other gods: “To enrich *One* among all, / These worlds of gods must disappear (Einen *zu bereichern unter allen, / Mußte diese Götterwelt vergehn*).”³⁹ While Bennett sees the origin of disenchantment’s tale in Christian nominalism, for Schiller (like Weber following him), its origin is in the belief in monotheism. Either way, a theological enchantment leads to the “*Entgötterung der Natur*.”⁴⁰

For Josephson-Storm, however, the “canonical” version of disenchantment has its origins not in Schiller’s poetry, but in folklore. It is the Scottish social anthropologist James Frazer who “authored the most significant early formulation of the disenchantment narrative in terms of the death of magic” (*MD*, 126). According to Josephson-Storm, “while many sociologists understand the term *disenchantment* to refer to the classical theory that cultures evolve through successive stages from magic to religion to science, this claim is not formulated as such in Max Weber’s writings, but does appear in those terms in Frazer’s works. The common usage of *disenchantment* is a conflation of those two theorists and misses Frazer’s historical priority and influence” (*MD*, 127).⁴¹ As we will see, Weber’s thesis differs from the “common usage” of disenchantment (which I have referred as the *tale* of disenchantment). One way to explain this difference is the tale’s unrecognized source is Frazer, not Weber.

³⁹ Ibid., 102, my translation. But, as I said in the footnote above, maybe not even the monotheistic God should be blamed, because the gods themselves—following a paradoxical logic—have decided to leave in order to remain.

⁴⁰ The famous notion of the “death of God” should not be confused with the idea of the “*Die Entgötterte Natur*” (the de-deified nature) or the “death of the gods.” While the birth of God inaugurates the eclipse of the gods, the death of God correlates with the raising of the gods. Although both tropes share a historical origin, according to Josephson-Storm, it is the trope of the dying gods that serves “as a prototype for the disenchantment myth” (*MD*, 77). As we will see, for Josephson-Storm, the death of God (or the decline of the Christian Church) does not disenchant, it enchants.

⁴¹ For instance, Freud follows this theory of cultural evolution, where cultures move towards both disenchantment and secularization. Accordingly, “mature scientific civilization should outgrow childish magic” (*MD*, 194) Indeed, for Freud disenchantment has a therapeutic goal.

Frazer's canonical version claims that history evolves from magic through religion and on to science. But the passage from religion to science is neither inevitable nor unidirectional. Frazer saw the danger that society might slip back into magic, instead of achieving a sort of higher-order synthesis in science. About Frazer's work, Josephson-Storm writes, "in advocating his work as an antidote to this possible shift, we can see disenchantment as a political project, perhaps directed against popular or uneducated belief in magic" (*MD*, 146). The presence of the popular belief in magic that haunts modernity in Frazer's time, provides, on the one hand, the enemy against which the scientific project had to struggle. While, on the other hand, it also provides a magical version of the decline of magic: "fairytales themselves often provided an embryonic version of the myth of disenchantment" (*MD*, 136). To put it simply, the world was still not disenchanted, but it would become so later. The fairytale's trope of the departure of the fairies that Frazer recovers in his work on folklore, may have influenced him in the construction of the broader tale of the disenchantment of the world.

But besides demonstrating the influence of Schiller and Frazer in the construction of this narrative, the core of *The Myth of Disenchantment* is showing that the most important figures who developed this myth (E.B. Tylor, James Frazer, Max Müller, Arthur Schopenhauer, Sigmund Freud, Adorno and Horkheimer, Walter Benjamin, Max Weber, Rudolf Carnap) had connections with magicians, mystics, or occult groups (Éliphas Lévi, Helena Blavatsky, Aleister Crowley, Carl du Prel, Ludwig Klages, Stefan George—among others).⁴² In short, magic influenced the sociological thesis of the decline of magic. Moreover, this influence ran in both directions. For instance, Frazer's *The Golden Bough* was used by

⁴² Depending on the case, this connection of scholars with the occult was more or less conspicuous. Josephson-Storm uses the concept of *occult disavowal* as a "shorthand for the regulative function of the myth of disenchantment that results in the simultaneous private embrace and public rejection of enchantment" (*MD*, 18).

“England’s most infamous magician” Aleister Crowley as a spell book; and the German poet and neo-pagan mystic Ludwig Klages used Weber’s sociological expression “*die Entzauberung der Welt*” to denote an ontological estrangement from nature and magic that he opposed with his “mystical orgy of matriarchal love intended to magically bring us back into communion with Mother Nature” (*MD*, 224).⁴³ Having shown that magic never withdrew from Europe even for the very scholars who were developing the idea of the disappearance of magic, Josephson-Storm then argues that this insight has great political consequences.

3) Disenchantment’s Politics

According to Josephson-Storm, “the myth of disenchantment has two divergent effects—first, it functions as a regime of truth, embedding the paradigm of modernity in the core of the sciences and giving energy to various projects aiming to eliminate superstition; and second, it is self-refuting, giving life to the very thing it characterizes as expiring, stimulating magical revivals, paranormal research, and new attempts to spiritualize the sciences” (*MD*, 16). Let me first focus on disenchantment’s effect in embedding the paradigm of modernity. After that, I will address the “self-refuting” nature of disenchantment.

The tale of the disenchantment of the world was not merely descriptive of facts, but rather it played (and still plays) a relevant (geo)political role. The decline of magic, myth and

⁴³ According to Ludwig Klages, in the past, humans were in harmony with nature. But then Christianity crushed the gods and stripped nature of its animating forces. Since, for the modern Europeans the earth is nothing but dead matter, there is nothing to stop them “from plundering and polluting until all that remains is desolation” (*MD*, 216). “That we do not feel at one with the cosmos is evidence that we have become estranged from Being” (*MD*, 218). This estrangement is due to having overemphasized our logos or Geist: “The rise of the logos or *Geist* was therefore first and foremost a displacement of this older way of looking at the world, a kind of matricide against primordial rulers and the earth” (*MD*, 219). Not Derrida, but Ludwig Klages, is the first one to use the expression “logocentrism” as the name for the negative mode of thinking that is devastating the earth. Moreover, it is not from Weber, rather from Klages, through his influence on Walter Benjamin, that the Frankfurt School got the idea of the *domination of nature* as the cause of the crisis in the world.

spirits was utilized to mark a rupture with a previous magical epoch and to inaugurate the Enlightenment. In Kant's words: "Liberation from superstition (*Aberglauben*) is called enlightenment."⁴⁴ To be modern meant to dwell in a new time free of superstition. This was not just a new time, but rather a new way of experiencing temporality—one that was shaped by its relation to a promising future. But only a few belonged to this avant-garde mode of temporality; compared to the few, everyone else became "ontologically" dated, delayed, passé. In short, everyone else simply became "not yet" modern. But modernity inaugurates not only a new experience of time, but also a new sense of space: Europe and North America became the center, and everything else the periphery. Hence, modernity as a master paradigm or episteme, "represented a historical and cultural rupture decisively demarcating contemporary Europe from both its past and its non-European other" (*MD*, 62). The thesis of the decline of magic became the mark for the unique temporal and spatial mode of European culture, which then was also projected as "the blueprint for universal history that all cultures were supposed to follow" (*MD*, 62). In short, the lingering of enchantment marks the backwardness of non-European others, and it is assumed that the progress of history requires following the European disenchantment model.

According to Josephson-Storm, modernity, "when described in terms of the de-animation of the world, the end of superstition, the decay of myth, or even the domination of instrumental reason...signals a societal fissure that never occurred" (*MD*, 306). The temporal and spatial rupture of modernity is a myth.⁴⁵ Modernity is a false paradigm. For Josephson-

⁴⁴ Immanuel Kant, translated by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, *Critique of the Power of Judgement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 174.

⁴⁵ At an empirical level, "roughly an amazing three-quarters of Americans hold at least one supernatural belief" (*MD*, 34); currently, "anthropologists have argued that acceptance of some form of the paranormal—and especially belief in spirits—is the contemporary *global norm* rather than the exception" (*MD*, 34).

Storm, what is at stake is not whether, from a postcolonial critique of modernity, the lingering of enchantment is now regarded as evidence that the disenchantment model does not fit outside Europe and North America, but rather that the model of disenchantment does not fit even “in the so-called heartland of modernity” (*MD*, 23).⁴⁶ “The majority of people in the heartland of disenchantment believe in magic or spirits today, and it appears that they did so at the high point of modernity” (*MD*, 304).⁴⁷ This poses a problem because Europe appears not to fit with the features that are supposed to define Europe as Europe. Since Europe starts to look like the rest of the world, in this respect, “Europe is not Europe” (*MD*, 17, 308).

Moreover, if the ground of modernity trembles, the more debated notion of *postmodernity* shakes along with it. Any discourse that argues for a *return* (of the supernatural, of enchantment, of religion) and that modernity is *over* necessarily presupposes “the old-fashioned modernization thesis by granting modernity’s myth even while suggesting we have moved beyond it” (*MD*, 35). The modern myth is about a rupture that the postmodern version of a happy or anomalous “return of the repressed” repeats precisely when it claims to have overcome it. Simply put, modernity cannot be overcome because “overcoming” is the gesture that defines modernity. Josephson-Storm writes: “*postmodernism* and *modernism* would seem

⁴⁶ Josephson-Storm’s project joins different groups of dissenters: postcolonialists, on the one hand, and historians of enchantment, on the other: “postcolonialists and other social theorists have been working to fracture the reflexive linkage between Westernization and modernization, while historians of enchantment have demonstrated the importance of magic and spirits in American and European history” (*MD*, 308). Further, Josephson-Storm is also aware of a third dissident group: the new materialists. They are currently attacking the disenchantment tale by supporting a vibrant ontology. I already introduced a version of this through the above-mentioned work of Jane Bennett (see also her *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010). For these three groups of dissenters, the disclosure of enchantment is used to question the myth of modernity.

⁴⁷ An obvious rebuttal to Josephson-Storm’s argument is that the thesis of disenchantment is primarily concerned with the status of magic in the public sphere and not with people’s private believe in magic now (or at the high point of modernity). Although a change in the status of magic in the public sphere is irrefutable, the question is whether the geo-political force of the discourse of modernity (i.e., the myth of not having a myth) is predicated on the private or public status of magic. For Josephson-Storm, the former is the case: by demonstrating the lingering of magic in the private sphere of the modern European individual is enough to question the entire narrative of the disappearance of magic.

to have the same meaning insofar as they both aim to transcend the current moment, often by looking forward. Accordingly, both periodizations rest on the idea of a fundamental rupture from the past, which, while inflected differently, often rests on the very disenchantment narrative I have been working to dispel” (*MD*, 307). Again, Josephson-Storm does not want to call the current discourse of late-stage capitalism a return of enchantment, because then one could assume that early capitalism was less bewitched (*MD*, 36).

To recap, what seems to be a very limited and modest project of demonstrating that magic has never withdrawn from Europe has great consequences. By questioning the thesis of the decline of magic, the ideas of Enlightenment, Modernity, and Postmodernity are undermined. The continuation of magic in modernity disrupts the conventional stories of both modernity and Enlightenment. Consequently, the task of de-mythologizing the myth of disenchantment is not only descriptive, but also follows a political agenda against the all too European narrative of (post)modernity.

Strangely, Josephson-Storm fails to arrive at an important conclusion: if the decay of magic is a myth, and Europe has always been bewitched, that means that its colonial project may also have been infused by magic. The European conquistadors and colonists were not disenchanted nihilists, but were enchanted by the same magic that Josephson-Storm’s book defends. Accordingly, although his historical work is descriptive and not normative, it seems pertinent that Josephson-Storm would have at least acknowledged magic’s deadlier side. Let me clarify this point further.

An interesting tension appears if Bennett’s ethical discussion is brought together with Josephson-Storm’s argument about the tale’s political implications. According to Bennett, disenchantment is grounded on a sense of existential resentment, of victimization, and of a

tragic, absurd, or incomplete vision of the human being. But it seems unlikely that it was this existential resentment that forged the temporal and spatial sense of Europe's superiority, that would have encouraged and justified its colonial enterprises. Hence, Josephson-Storm is right, disenchantment is a myth: the paradigm of disenchantment imposed on the periphery is not even accurate at the center of the globe. But, this also means—regardless of Josephson-Storm's silence on this point—that it is enchantment rather than disenchantment that gives the sense of superiority and will to power to the colonial project. Now, what kind of enchantment characterizes and still expresses the colonial project?⁴⁸ If we agree with Bennett, can we identify the enchanted world of the conquistador as being “sustained by periodic bouts of being enamored with existence”? Or is it rather the colonized world of the periphery that is enchanted by being enamored with existence? It seems to me that by juxtaposing Bennet's portrayal of enchantment with Josephson-Storm's political insights of the tale, both the need to complicate Bennet's too benign version of enchantment (wonder), and also acknowledge the political function of enchantment become conspicuous. Enchantment is also unethical, and the colonial project was enchanted by the same magic that Josephson-Storm's book—if not promotes, at

⁴⁸ For the authors who engage with decoloniality, the colonial project is still present even when most of the former colonies have gained their independence a long time ago (for instance, two centuries ago in South America). In other words, the end of the colonial dependency on a metropolis (colonialism), does not necessarily ends either the coloniality at the level of episteme (Aníbal Quijano) or the coloniality of being (Walter D. Mignolo, Nelson Maldonado-Torres). For instance, Nelson Maldonado-Torres writes, “Coloniality is different from colonialism. Colonialism denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such nation an empire. Coloniality, instead, refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. Thus, coloniality survives colonialism” (“On the Coloniality of Being,” in *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 21:2-3, March/May 2007, 240-270). Hence, my question about the type of enchantment that drives the colonial project is not merely directed at the past, but rather with the present conditions of countries that have their way of thinking and *being* still colonized. Even the US that often is only identified with the side of the colonizer, may reflect its status as a colony when confronted with Stanley Cavell's reflections on Thoreau: “America's revolution never happened. The colonists fought a war against England all right, and they won it. But it was not a war of independence that was won, because we are not free; nor was even secession the outcome, because we have not departed from the conditions England lives under, either in our literature or in our political and economic lives” (*The Senses of Walden*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992, 7).

least—value-neutrally describes. To understand the project of modernity in Europe, one should not disentangle it from Europe’s enterprise in the “new world.” When Josephson-Storm demonstrates that Europe has never been Europe, and that people at the center and the periphery dwell in an enchanted world, what remains to be done is to distinguish different types of enchantment and the way they work within the center-periphery global order. Furthermore, the juxtaposition of Bennett with Josephson-Storms shows we do not clearly understand the meaning of enchantment and, thus, cannot distinguish between different types of it.

4) Disenchantment’s Logic

With Bennett we saw that the tale “has itself contributed to the condition it describes. Its rhetorical power has real effects” (*EM*, 4). But it is still not clear how the tale of disenchantment was created when enchantment has always already been there. While for Bennett the tale of disenchantment covers up (always partially) the enchantment that endures, for Josephson-Storm, it is precisely the tale of disenchantment that itself gives life to its opposite. Because of space constraints, I will focus on just two mechanisms of the seemingly paradoxical logic of the enchantment of disenchantment.

First, there is the *dialectical mechanism*. According to Josephson-Storm, “enchantment and disenchantment can be brought in a paradoxical unity, if unstably or dialectically so” (*MD*, 41). Why does enchantment require disenchantment for its revival? For Josephson-Storm, “one of the issues with many dialectical accounts of the dis-/re-enchantment of the world is that they presume that magic had to be lost in order for someone to petition for its return” (*MD*, 176). Furthermore, another reason is that “disenchantment taken to its extreme is hard to distinguish from enchantment.” Or, in Ludwig Wittgenstein’s words: “the

elimination of magic has itself the character of magic” (quoted in *MD*, 268). I acknowledge that this dialectical movement of enchantment through disenchantment is still obscure. Indeed, the attempt to illuminate this dialectic guides both the engagement with *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in Chapter Three and the study of wonder in Part II. Hitherto, it is enough to keep in mind that the fixed opposition between disenchantment and enchantment fails to capture their entanglement.

The dialectical mechanism also relates to what Josephson-Storm calls the *romantic spiral*, in which the narrative of the despiritualization of nature (the death of the gods) and even the death of God become a stage in a process moving toward a higher-order-return. Hence, the dialectic of disenchantment and re-enchantment moves in a spiral upwards (and not downwards) towards a higher mode. According to Josephson-Storm, “the key for many of these thinkers was not how to get back to a nostalgic past, but how to produce the union of opposites or reconcile humanity and nature, subject and object” (*MD*, 88). For the German romantics, and as insinuated in Schiller’s poem, the goal is to reconcile oneself with nature in a higher synthesis. In short, God’s departure already determines its eventual higher return.

Secondly, there is the *religious mechanism* that also explains this paradox of how disenchantment enchants. However, our interpretation of this religious mechanism differs depending on our definition of disenchantment. An entirely different picture appears depending on whether disenchantment is understood as the loss of wonder (Bennett) or the decline of magic (Josephson-Storm). In the former case, the decline of religion may correlate with the crisis of wonder. In this case, there is no paradox since *religious disenchantment just disenchants*. In short, the death of God leads to the decline of mystery and wonder. Things get complicated, however, when we ask why the decline of religion happened. Following

Bennett's interpretation of the Christian origin of the single teleological model of disenchantment, one can say: enchantment (a theological attempt to secure the transcendence of the divine) disenchantments (religion and wonder's decay). In this case, *religious enchantment disenchantments*, or the one God eclipses the gods.

But what happens when disenchantment is understood as the decline of magic? According to Josephson-Storm, the decline of magic does not correlate with the philosophical trope of the death of god, the sociological phenomenon of secularization, or an increasing atheism. Stated simply, the decay of religion does not produce the decay of magic. Consequently, for Josephson-Storm, although "the loss of faith in divinely inspired wonders is often taken to be a hallmark of the grand trajectory of disenchantment," he argues that "the death of God does not necessitate the death of magic, and if anything, secularization seems to amplify enchantment" (*MD*, 29, 34).⁴⁹ Since magic and religion are not the same, the alleged decline of the latter does not prevent the flourishing of the former. Confusion arises when one adopts a broader definition of disenchantment (as the decay of wonder), which does relate with the death of god, or the decline of church attendance. But if one keeps to disenchantment's literal senses (i.e. the decline of magic), Josephson-Storm's affirmation seems to be fair: "secularization enchants" (*MD*, 35). In brief, in this case, *religious disenchantment enchants*.

The dialectical and the religious mechanisms are ways that the tale produces the enchantment that it itself seems to negate. In Chapter Three, in my reading of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, I will pay special attention to how disenchantment and enchantment are entangled to such a degree that it seems that even the common view of a dialectical

⁴⁹ This correlates with Landy and Saler's secular enchantment, which we are going to study in the next chapter, which is supposed to fill the void that the death of God created, and Bennett's quasi-pagan enchanted materialism that becomes more conspicuous precisely after the crisis of Christian cosmology.

movement—often understood as the *succession* of opposite terms—does not apprehend the entanglement in its radical *simultaneity*.

Considering that “religious disenchantment disenchants” (the death of God correlates with the decline of mystery and wonder), “religious enchantment disenchants” (the one God eclipses the gods), and “religious disenchantment enchants” (the death of God correlates with the growth of magic), I suspect the reader may be growing frustrated with the category of disenchantment. Since it can be adapted to fit any situation, is it even worth still using it? I do think that it is worth keeping, but one should carefully distinguish both related phenomena (like death of God, death of gods, wonder/mystery, magic, religion, science) and the different types of enchantment. It is precisely the nature of enchantment that permeates (and simultaneously questions the clear boundaries of) different disciplines (religion, economy, politics, sociology, etc.), which makes it appropriate philosophically: it addresses the world as a whole. However, its pervasive nature carries also hermeneutic challenges.

Since it may still not be clear enough why I am emphasizing the need for distinguishing between wonder and magic, let me now focus on how Josephson-Storm’s book describes the nature of magic.

5) Magic

Often magic is associated with religion as a manifestation of superstition and in opposition to science. Differently, according to Josephson-Storm, Frazer postulates that magic opposes religion and resembles science. He draws a sharp distinction between religion (defined as the belief in spirits) and magic (as natural and materialistic). Frazer speculates that in the remotest human past, instead of a religious belief in spirits, there was a primitive form of

magic, which was the predecessor of science. According to Josephson-Storm, “Frazer was pushing the parallels between magic and science further than he has generally been given credit for doing. Like science, magic is based on calculation and repetition and presumes the regularity of nature and natural laws” (*MD*, 145). Magic seems to be essentially connected with the longing for power, manipulation, and the human will.⁵⁰ For instance, Crowley defines his own version of magic, i.e., Magick, as: “the Science and Art of causing Change to occur in conformity with Will” (*MD*, 173).⁵¹

Granting the resemblance of magic and science, and the correlation between magic, power, and the will, we can concur with Crowley that magic, like science, reduces mystery. According to Josephson-Storm’s interpretation of Crowley’s Magick, “Crowley argued that this approach would strip the mystery and miracle from magic while simultaneously granting its systematic practitioners access to new powers” (*MD*, 173). Here we seem to contradict Weber’s thesis of the decay of magic. It seems that the historical moment in which “we are not ruled by mysterious, unpredictable forces, but that, on the contrary, we can in principle *control everything by means of calculation*,” should not be called—as Weber did—disenchantment of the world (*Die Entzueberung der Welt*), but rather enchantment (magicification) of the world.⁵²

⁵⁰ On the connection on magic and will, see Josephson-Storm account on Arthur Schopenhauer (*MD*, 188); on the association of magic with manipulation, see his interpretation on Freud (*MD*, 194); on magic and power, see—besides his reports on Frazer and Crowley—his account on the group of Munich-based poets, mystics, and neo-pagans known as the Cosmic Circle (*MD*, 212). Although magic and science are alike in their emphasis on calculation, repetition, manipulation, and the prominence of the human will, they differ in that sympathetic magic is “rooted in the perception of false connections or analogues,” often working as a kind of “savage idolatry or savage semiotics that mistakes the symbol for the object it refers to” (*MD*, 145).

⁵¹ At the core of Crowley’s magic is Thelema (will): “the organizing term for this revelation was the Greek word for ‘will’ (θέλημα, thelema) and its central commandment was ‘Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law’” (*MD*, 158).

⁵² Max Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” in *The Vocation Lectures*, edit. by David Owen and Tracy B. Strong, trans. by Rodney Livingstone (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2004), 13. Cited parenthetically hereafter as *SV*.

To sum up, according to Josephson-Storm's interpretation, magic differs from religion, in that the former is based on a materialist and the latter on an animistic worldview; magic resembles science in that both are based on calculation, repetition, and the regularity of nature; magic is functional to the will to power, and it reduces mystery. My decision to explore enchantment through the category of wonder is not motivated by any disagreement with the nature of magic described by Josephson-Storm. Rather, it is by agreeing with his interpretation of magic (as a form of instrumental rationality) that I confirm my intention to look elsewhere. Josephson-Storm's version of magic, however, is controversial.⁵³

Regarding Weber's thesis of the disenchantment of the world, we don't have to decide at this point whether magic decreases mystery (Josephson-Storm), or whether disenchantment means properly the decay of wonder (Bennett) or the decay of magic (Josephson-Storm), or whether disenchantment actually refers to a decline of enchantment or rather to enchantment's endurance as a background resident (Bennett) or enchantment's endurance by some paradoxical mechanism (Josephson-Storm).

6) Josephson-Storm and Weber

About the growing process of intellectualization and rationalization, Weber writes in "Science as a Vocation,"

It means that in principle, then, we are not ruled by mysterious, unpredictable forces, but that, on the contrary, we can in principle *control everything by means of calculation*. That in turn means the disenchantment (*Entzauberung*) of the world. Unlike the savage for whom

⁵³ See, for instance, Gilbert G. Germain's *A Discourse on Disenchantment: Reflections on Politics and Technology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993). For Germain, although magic is an expression of human will to control nature, it is also an expression of something that overpowers the human will. By presuming nature to be alive and to have its own mind, magic keeps a mysterious halo that checks and overpowers the human will to dominate. Hence, and in opposition to Josephson-Storm, Germain relates magic to mystery rather than to the overcoming of mystery.

such forces existed, we need no longer have recourse to magic in order to control the spirits or pray to them. Instead, technology and calculation achieve our ends. This is the primary meaning of the process of intellectualization (*SV*, 12-13).

I will comment thoroughly on this passage in the next chapter. Here, I want to study how Josephson-Storm interprets Weber's thesis of the disenchantment of the world. One would expect to see Josephson-Storm explicitly contradicting Weber. To argue that magic has never left Europe seems to challenge Weber's basic idea of the decline of magic in modern Europe.⁵⁴ Moreover, and as a second objection, the idea that magic—as instrumentally rational—annuls mystery, contradicts Weber's seeming correlation between magic and mystery (*Entzauberung* [decline of magic] as the consequence of rationalization means that “we are not ruled by mysterious and unpredictable forces”). However, Josephson-Storm finds the way to square the first objection and rejects the second as a misinterpretation of Weber. But first let us see how Josephson-Storm clarifies Weber's thesis and distinguishes it from some secondary literature that misreads Weber.

Josephson-Storm is well aware that Weber's notion of disenchantment is commonly understood as the decline of mystery: “A certain amount of the secondary literature promotes the idea that disenchantment means banishing the ‘mysterious’ or a sense of wonder” (*MD*, 282, 298).⁵⁵ Disenchantment would correlate with a greater confidence in the power of

⁵⁴ For Weber, magic still happens in China and India, which marks a difference from the disenchanted Occident. Asian religions keep together meaning and empirical knowledge—for instance, in teachings of karmic causality or the path toward illumination. “By contrast, this route was closed to monotheistic religions that encountered the ‘absolute paradox’ of ‘an imperfect world created by a perfect God’” (*MD*, 284).

⁵⁵ Beside Bennett, and Landy and Saler (whose work I will explore in the third chapter), let me quote here—as an example among others of the emphasis on mystery in the interpretation of Weber's thesis—Richard Jenkins's scholarly work on Weber: disenchantment “is the historical process by which the natural world and all areas of human experience become experienced and understood as less mysterious; defined, at least in principle, as knowable, predictable and manipulable by humans; conquered by and incorporated into the interpretative schema of science and rational government. In a disenchanted world, everything becomes understandable and

science.⁵⁶ Of course, the often quoted and above-mentioned passage in “Science as Vocation,” one identifying rationalization with disenchantment, would support this view.⁵⁷ If disenchantment means the eclipse of mystery, then, conversely, magic or enchantment would refer to a sense of mystery. However, Josephson-Storm dismisses that interpretation of Weber’s thesis. In fact, he aims “to put pressure on a common reading of Weberian disenchantment—namely, the idea that a central feature of modernity is increasing epistemic confidence” (*MD*, 181). To understand why he dismisses the correlation of the decline of magic with the decline of mystery (or increasing epistemic confidence), we must focus on how Weber understands magic.

Josephson-Storm shows that Weber’s notion of *Zauber* (magic, enchantment)⁵⁸ follows the pattern that we have just studied in the previous section (5). Magic, based on the manipulation of the pre-animistic *mana*, is an instrumentally rational, this-worldly practice directed towards world-mastery: “Weber thought that early magic was founded on neither irrationality, nor a belief in the ability to violate the laws of nature. Instead, as he elaborated, belief in magic was rooted in the sense that some objects and people possess ‘extraordinary powers,’ often referred to as ‘*mana*, *orenda*, and the Iranian *maga* (which became *magic*), and which we will henceforth call charisma” (*MD*, 279).⁵⁹ Part of the reason why both specialists

tamable, even if not, for the moment, understood and tamed” (“Disenchantment, Enchantment and Re-Enchantment: Max Weber at the Millennium” in *Max Weber Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (November 2000), 12).

⁵⁶ “Some interpretations of Weberian disenchantment describe not the death of magic, but instead a vanishing sense of mystery and a greater confidence that everything has a scientific explanation” (*MD*, 33).

⁵⁷ See *SV*, 13. Correctly, Josephson-Storm explains that for Weber, it is not actual knowledge of the world that strips it of its mysterious forces, “but a subjective sense that the world is predictable or rational” (*MD*, 283).

⁵⁸ According to Josephson-Storm, the closest that Weber came to formulating a definition of magic is in a footnote in his *The Economic Ethics of the World Religions*: “A strict separation between what is ‘enchantment’ (*Zauber*) and what is not is impossible in the world of pre-animistic and animistic ideas. Even plowing and other everyday achievement-oriented activities were ‘enchantment’ in the sense of employing specific ‘forces’ and later ‘spirits’” (*Max Weber Gesamtausgabe*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1984-2012, section I, band 19, page 175; quoted from *MD*, 278).

⁵⁹ Josephson-Storm is quoting Weber from *Max Weber Gesamtausgabe* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1984-2012), section I, band 22, volume 2, page 122. Although one can see Frazer’s influence on Weber’s understanding

and non-specialists misunderstand Weber's conception of disenchantment is that they often assume as a given "an anachronistic opposition between rationality and magic" (*MD*, 274). Josephson-Storm cautions against anachronistically approaching the past from our point of view and assuming that magic is irrational.

According to Josephson-Storm's reading of Weber, magic does not correlate with skepticism, and the decline of magic with science's absolute knowledge. Rather, magic is already an attempt to achieve absolute knowledge and to overcome skepticism. Magic tries to explain the world in order to dominate it; magic tries to reduce rather than to increase the sense of mystery that becomes an obstacle to achieving absolute mastery.⁶⁰

We seem to arrive here at an aporia. Since magic is part of the calculative and instrumental way of thinking that characterizes rationalization, then what does Weber mean when he affirms that the process of rationalization leads to the de-magicification of the world? If it is magic—and not its decline—that eclipses the sense of mystery, then disenchantment cannot mean the vanishing of the sense of mystery. In fact, the passage of "Science as Vocation" that identifies disenchantment with the decline of mystery seems to be the exception compared to other texts where Weber identifies magic (and not the decline of magic) with rationalization.

Conceding to Josephson-Storm that disenchantment does not mean the vanishing of the sense of mystery, then what does it mean? If disenchantment means the decline of magic, and

of magic (as instrumentally rational), Weber does not follow Frazer's evolutionary pattern (from magic to religion to science). Further, it is relevant to underline that magic and charisma are equivalent, especially when one notices the influence that the notion of charisma had in sociology.

⁶⁰ By underscoring the rational and instrumental nature of magic, the connection between magic and technology becomes conspicuous: "At the very least, early magic was not different from practical technologies except insofar as it was connected to the notion of spirits and pre-animistic occult forces. That Weber saw a connection between (at least early) enchantment and technology is worth underscoring because multitudes of contemporary theorists think they are contravening Weber when they point to enchanting technology" (*MD*, 278).

Josephson-Storm demonstrates that in Weber's time there was a revival of magic, then it seems that Weber would have been totally wrong.

One way that Josephson-Storm resolves this aporia is by claiming that Weber's thesis is not about disenchantment, but rather about *disenchanting*: "As I interpret Max Weber, we live in a *disenchanting* world in which magic is embattled and intermittently contained within its own cultural sphere, but not a disenchanted one in which magic is gone. Restated, magic never truly vanished" (*MD*, 305). Disenchanting implies both the decline of magic and the presence of it. With this emphasis on both an ongoing process and program, Josephson-Storm tries to square Weber's thesis with the insight that magic has never left Europe.

Up to now in my account of Josephson-Storm's reading of Weber, I have related magic to the sphere of science to demonstrate how magic seems to follow the logic of instrumental reason. But magic in itself names a specific cultural sphere. In short, magic may be one god among others. Like the other spheres, magic participates in the process of rationalization where there is a struggle of different types of magic. The magic that loses the struggle is just one side of another magic that wins the right to enchant the world. Disenchantment (decline of magic) is always already the outcome of enchantment (magic).

Moreover, magic can also relate to the sphere of religion. While in the sphere of science, magic is part of the instrumental and theoretical rationality, when it relates to religion it becomes part of the pursuit of salvation. Unlike Frazer, for whom religion and magic are essentially different, for Weber religion and magic often coincide in the goal of salvation. Within the sphere of religion, there has been a decline of magic as a means for salvation.

To sum up, according to Josephson-Storm, magic participates in the scientific and religious spheres, and forms its own sphere. The process of rationalization is different in each

sphere. Consequently, the phenomenon of demagicification also looks different depending on the sphere that we are studying. The fate of magic in each sphere is unclear. For instance, within the scientific sphere, one can see that rationalization is *initially* brought about through magic, but magic may be ultimately left behind in the later stages of the process. Similar in the religious sphere, where magic—as the rationalization of the means for salvation—is overcome in the later stages of the process. Regardless of the sphere, however, Josephson-Storm’s point is that demagicification is a process (disenchanting rather than disenchantment) in which—though in decline—there is still plenty of magic lingering in the world. We will come back to Weber’s process of rationalization in the next chapter.

Having discarded (for Josephson-Storm) the interpretation of disenchantment as the decline of mystery, and revised Weber’s description of magic as instrumentally rational and as part of the salvific mission of the religious sphere, I think we are ready to address Josephson-Storm’s list of common misinterpretations of Weber’s thesis:

It is important to underscore what the “disenchantment of the world” is not. It is not the end of belief in magic. It is not the end of belief in some types of animating spirits. It is not a new pessimistic mood, nor is it the fragmentation of social cohesion. It is not the rise of instrumental reason, because magic is itself instrumental. It is not yet secularization insofar as disenchantment happens earlier and is first and foremost internal to religion. It is not the evolution of magic into religion, and religion in turn, into science à la Frazer, because Weber repeatedly reminds his readers that magic and religion often coincide (*MD*, 281).

First, the belief in magic and in some types of animating spirits remain in a disenchanting world; the vanishing of some forms of magic is internal to the process of rationalization within the sphere of magic. Secondly, the “pessimistic mood” and the idea of the “fragmentation of social cohesion” is usually related to the trope of the death of god and the decline of religion. But, as we saw earlier, the decline of religion does not cause the vanishing of magic. Indeed,

the reverse seems to be more accurate: the death of god causes the thriving of magic. Secularization enchants. Thirdly, instrumental reason does not abolish magic because magic is, as such, a manifestation of the instrumental reason. To think magic as irrational (rather than instrumentally rational) indicates that one holds anachronistically an opposition between rationality and magic. Although that opposition may be currently valid, it was not the case—according to Josephson-Storm—in Weber’s time. Fourthly, since the decline in magic can also have a religious cause, it cannot be identified with the process of secularization. Demagification can be the symptom of the boosting of religion. In short, religion disenchants.

III) Conclusion

Let me mark some points of disagreement with Josephson-Storm’s book, which will also guide my reading of Weber’s “Science as a Vocation” in the next chapter. First, Josephson-Storm’s interpretation of Weber’s thesis emphasizes *disenchanting* as a process (where magic and the sense of decline of magic coexist), rather than *disenchantment* as a finished event in which magic has disappeared. Thus, he acknowledges—like me—that within Weber’s thesis of disenchantment there is plenty of space for enchantment. But, since he does not take seriously Weber’s polytheistic references, he limits magic to the type of enchantment that lingers in the modern world. In my account, in contrast, since magic names one god among others in the struggle of polytheistic pantheon, it implies that enchantment cannot be limited to magic. Magical and non-magical enchantment coexist. Instead of focusing on the level of a dialectic of disenchantment or enchantment within the magical sphere, in the second part of my study I try to trace the dialectic at the general level of the different value spheres. It is at this level that

the category of wonder—rather than magic—may be helpful to illuminate how these gods enchant, dominate, and ask for our sacrifice. Hence, my own study does not contradict Josephson-Storm’s, but rather opens a different space of inquiry dismissed by Josephson-Storm’s accent on magic.⁶¹

Second, we have some differences regarding the category of mystery. Although it is disputed whether we can disentangle mystery from magic, Josephson-Storm clearly separates both terms. Differently, I link mystery to the category of wonder. Thus, when focusing on the category of mystery, my interpretation of enchantment qua (mysterious) wonder differs considerably with Josephson-Storm’s version of enchantment qua (non-mysterious) magic.

Third, if disenchantment had a political or ideological role in supporting the modern European colonial enterprise, and Josephson-Storm shows that this narrative is a myth (because magic never withdrew from Europe), then Josephson-Storm fails to draw the conclusion that the European colonial project was bewitched—it was infused by the same magic that his own work seems to defend. Although his historical work is descriptive and not normative, and thus he is happy demonstrating the fact that magic was and is still present in Europe, it seems to me that he should account for magic’s deadlier (colonial) side. In any case, since my study sees magic (qua instrumental rationality) as part of the problem, once we agree that magic still lingers (among other forms of enchantment) in our modern world, the task does not end here, but rather the task becomes to develop a hermeneutic of different sources of enchantment with the aim of lessening their destructive side.

⁶¹ As I mentioned in the Introduction, one strategy of the dissertation is to illuminate the Weberian “polytheism” (studied next chapter) through the concept of enchantment. Although Weber made use of enchantment and disenchantment, he never applied them to clarify his obscure comparison of the value spheres as modern gods. With this linkage between “polytheism” and “enchantment,” however, I am not limiting only to enchantment the way how the gods relate to us. A comprehensive study of the different media through which modern gods communicate is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Chapter Two: Weber's Disenchantment Thesis

Max Weber is usually seen as the prophet of the disenchantment of the modern world. But did Weber actually predict the dissolution of enchantment as a result of the process of rationalization? Often, a simplistic reading of his thesis is used as a straw man that is later knocked down by showing various sources of enchantment in the modern world.⁶² Previously in my reading of Bennett and Josephson-Storm, I offered their more sophisticated readings of Weber's thesis: for Bennett, although the disenchantment thesis is an illusion, it has real consequences; differently, for Josephson-Storm, Weber never claimed that magic had disappeared, but rather that it was still present though slowly disappearing. For both authors, there is plenty of enchantment within the modern disenchanted world—though they differ in what they mean by enchantment. My aim in this chapter is not to argue against the detractors' idea of enchantment as being part of the modern world, but rather to show that their conclusion is already part of Weber's thesis. In other words, they are repeating or supplementing instead of contradicting Weber. Since there is plenty of enchantment, I want to demonstrate that the problem of disenchantment turns out to be the problem of competing forces of enchantment fighting to dominate us.

⁶² For instance, "Weber's account was, however, incomplete. What he neglected to mention is that each time religion reluctantly withdrew from a particular area of experience, a new, thoroughly secular strategy for re-enchantment cheerfully emerged to fill the void" (Joshua Landy and Michael Saler ed., *The Re-Enchantment of the World: Secular Magic in a Rational Age*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009, 1. Or, Jeffrey L. Kosky, *Arts of Wonder: Enchanting Secularity*, 17: "Taking its point of departure from Weber's thesis, *Arts of Wonder* looks to significant artwork of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries to stage intimate encounters with modern disenchantment. The works of art I encounter are most often thought to be representative of secular modernity and therefore to share in the disenchantment of the world, but listening to the appeal of these appealing works, I was surprised to find myself invoking a vocabulary that I had long kept at a distance. These works of art, I found, make places where we might encounter mystery and wonder, hopes for redemption and revelation, transcendence and creation—longings traditionally cultivated and addressed in religious traditions, but that, when developed through the encounter with these works of art, are nevertheless crucial aspects of enchanting secularity."

I will focus on Weber's description of disenchantment and rationalization in his lecture "Science as a Vocation" (1917). Since Weber's discussion of disenchantment relates to the process of rationalization, I organize this chapter, first, studying the process of rationalization in science, and then the process of rationalization in religion.⁶³ In both cases, I focus on how disenchantment relates to the crisis of values and meaning.

I argue that contemporary scholars' apparent difficulty in acknowledging the different sources of enchantment is the result of two factors: 1) the translation of Weber's *Entzauberung* as disenchantment, which renders ambiguous whether disenchantment refers to magic or mystery; 2) the complex tension in Weber's account between disenchantment as the consequence of the process of rationalization in science or as the consequence of the process of rationalization in religion. Both this ambiguity and this tension impede our awareness of the ongoing enchanted forces within modernity.

If I succeed in demonstrating that already for Weber there was plenty of enchantment within his account of a disenchanted modern world, this fact is going to determine my larger argument about wonder (developed in Part II) in a way that marks a difference with other contemporary accounts on wonder. The challenge changes when I don't have to fight against the shadow of Weber supposedly predicting a modern world lacking any source of mystery.

⁶³ There is no simple definition for Weber's notion of the process of rationalization. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills describe the direction of this process negatively "in terms of the degree to which magical elements of thought are displaced, or positively by the extent to which ideas gain in systematic coherence and naturalistic consistence" (Introduction to *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, New York: Oxford University Press, 1958, 51). Moreover, since I follow mainly Weber's lecture about science, I start with rationalization in science and then I supplement it with a shorter discussion of rationalization in religion. By following this sequence in my discussion, I hope that the logical and historical primacy of the process of rationalization in religion vis-à-vis science does not get obscured. According to the specialist in Weber's oeuvre, Wolfgang Schluchter, in Weber's thesis of the disenchantment of the world, "There are two processes that can be well distinguished. Although they are interlocked, one follows the other in a certain sense: first the disenchantment of the world by religion, then by science. But in this second process, religion itself is disenchanted" (*Die Entzauberung der Welt: Sechs Studien zu Max Weber*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009, 2-3, my translation).

As we will see, Weber compares the different value spheres in a modern society with gods of a polytheistic pantheon. Thus, and being faithful to Weber's legacy, the task becomes to come to terms with the plentitude (rather than lack) of mystery of these modern polytheistic gods.⁶⁴ Again, if there is plenty of wonder in our modern world, rather than to spend too much time demonstrating this fact, the task becomes to attain a standpoint that allows me to assess these different sources of wonder (artistic, religious, material, etc.) regarding the global crisis. Differently than, for instance, Jeffrey L. Kosky's *Arts of Wonder: Enchanting Secularity*, which wants to show that wonder lingers in contemporary art; Bennett, who wants to make conspicuous the wonder that already dwells in vibrant matter; Josephson-Storm, who is happy to queer the myth of modernity by showing that magic has never withdrawn modern Europe; and Landy and Saler, who are content with just describing the different sources of modern enchantment; I start where they end their studies. My aim is to assess wonder regarding the process of rationalization that seems to be causing the global environmental crisis. Simply put, I am suspicious of the type of wonder that according to these scholars is enchanting our modern world—a type of wonder that seems to collaborate with rather than combat the process of rationalization.

Before I begin, let me anticipate an important interpretative problem. The English word disenchantment that translates Weber's *Entzauberung* allows semantic connotations that are not so evident in the original German. While in German *Zauber* means magic and *die Entzauberung* denotes the decline of magic, the English "enchantment"—beside the idea of exerting "magical influence upon" someone—conveys also the idea of "charm, delight,

⁶⁴ In relation to the connection between modern gods and mystery, see above page 77-78.

enrapture.”⁶⁵ Wonder and mystery seem to be part of a chanting (*cantare*) that charms, which is not always restricted to what we usually understand by magic.⁶⁶ While Weber understood *Entzauberung* literally as the decline of magic, the tale that came after Weber was produced thanks to a more figurative sense of disenchantment as the decline of mystery and wonder. Hence the *tale* misunderstood Weber as supposedly saying that in modernity there was no more mystery and wonder. They retrospectively projected back onto Weber the connotations of the word disenchantment that were—if not absent—at least not so conspicuous in the German *Entzauberung*. Even specialists in Weber forget that for Weber, *Zauber*—and consequently also *Entzauberung*—has a technical sense. Tellingly, Weber’s sentence “the disenchantment of the world” has itself, for specialists and tellers of the tale, enchanting powers.

However, this “confusion” in the translation opened new and fruitful interpretations. My point is the following: after we clarify what Weber really meant by the disenchantment of the world (decline of magic), we can still gain an important insight if we anachronistically project onto Weber the sense of (dis)enchantment that the tale developed. My strategy is to impose onto Weber a sense of enchantment that was not his. Why? Because one can illuminate some dimensions of Weber’s thought that often stay in the shadows. One can make explicit what for Weber was solely insinuated. While Weber’s reference to the value spheres as

⁶⁵ See, “enchant,” in Oxford English Dictionary: “Etymology: <French *enchante-r* < Latin *incantāre*, < *in-* upon, against + *cantāre* to sing; compare chant v., incantation n.” In Spanish, the semantic possibilities that *encantamiento* offers are even more vast: *Me encantas* (I like you); *encantado de conocerlo* (nice to meet you); *qué encantador* (what a charmer), *estoy desencantado* (I am disappointed). In all these examples, the sense of magic does not even appear. Consequently, when in English, French, and in Spanish *die Entzauberung der Welt* was translated as the disenchantment of the world, *le disenchantment du monde*, and as *el desencantamiento del mundo*, new semantic possibilities were opened that were not part of the meaning of Weber’s thesis.

⁶⁶ For instance, Bennett writes: “As I’m using the term, *enchantment* is a peculiar kind of mood, often induced by sound (the *chant* in enchantment). To be enchanted is to be both charmed and disturbed: charmed by a fascinating repetition of sounds or images, disturbed to find that, although your sense-perception has become intensified, your background sense of order has flown out the door” (*EM*, 34). The idea of magic, as a form of instrumental rationality, is absent in her definition of enchantment.

polytheistic gods is often interpreted as being merely a rhetorical tool to engage his listeners, I claim that the category of enchantment developed in the tale can help to bring to the fore Weber's mysterious dimension of these modern gods. Did Weber take the reference of the modern polytheistic gods literally? Of course not, but maybe with this reference he was saying more than he was aware of. Am I taking the reference of the modern polytheistic gods literally? I can't answer because that answer would imply knowing what the gods are. In any case, both the ancient and the Weberian modern gods *enchant*. Hence, enchantment (a sense of mystery and wonder) seems to be a useful category to illuminate Weber's thought and our modern world. Restated, my task in this chapter is twofold: on the one hand I clarify the meaning of disenchantment for Weber as stated in his "Science as a Vocation." I attack the authors of the tale for having misunderstood Weber, and I argue that those who are happy defending the (re)enchantment of the modern world are repeating or supplementing Weber—rather than contradicting him. On the other hand, I read Weber slightly against himself. Through the concept of enchantment developed in the tale, I search for sources of mystery and wonder in his lecture. I move beyond Weber's more literal definition of disenchantment and explore how the meaning of enchantment developed by the tale—though inaccurate to explain what Weber meant in his thesis—can illuminate what he only insinuated.

D) Science and the Process of Rationalization

Let me quote at length again this important passage in Max Weber's lecture "Science as a Vocation,"

Thus the growing process of intellectualization and rationalization does *not* imply a growing understanding of the conditions under which we live. It means that in principle, then, we

are not ruled by mysterious, unpredictable forces, but that, on the contrary, we can in principle *control everything by means of calculation*. That in turn means the disenchantment (*Entzauberung*) of the world. Unlike the savage for whom such forces existed, we need no longer have recourse to magic in order to control the spirits or pray to them. Instead, technology and calculation achieve our ends. This is the primary meaning of the process of intellectualization (*SV*, 12-13).⁶⁷

The scientific process of intellectualization and rationalization, the principle by which everything can be controlled by means of calculation, has led to the disenchantment or “demagification” (*Entzauberung*) of the world. For Weber, the meaning of disenchantment (keeping together both meanings: the German literal sense of decline of magic and the English broader sense of lack of mystery) is essentially related to the process of intellectualization and rationalization.⁶⁸ Weber’s concept of rationalization is complex, so I will clarify its meaning by steps. First, Weber identifies the process of rationalization with a relentless calculative type of thinking, in which magic and mystery, as reliable modes of knowledge of the world, have been overcome. Although we dominate our world through our capacity for calculation, it does

⁶⁷ Weber does not use the term *Entzauberung* before 1913. The four instances of *Entzauberung* in his famous book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (which both Talcott Parsons and Stephen Kalberg translate with phrases like: “elimination of magic”—rather than disenchantment) were added in Weber’s revised version of the book (Winter 1919/1920), thus they were absent in his original version (1905). The lecture “Science as a Vocation”—delivered on November 7, 1917—is part of Weber’s late work (he died three years later—1920). It is in this lecture where we find the longer exposition of this concept. For more on the use of *Entzauberung* in Weber’s oeuvre see the following works: Hartmut Lehmann, “Max Weber and the Dialectics of Disenchantment and Re-enchantment in Modern History” in Frank Adloff and Manuel Borutta (eds.), *Max Weber in the 21st Century: Transdisciplinarity within the Social Sciences*. EUI Working Papers MWP 2008/35. Accessed May 14, 2017. <http://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/91110>; Friedrich H. Tenbruck, “Das Werk Max Webers” in *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, Vol. 27, 1975, 669-671; Johannes Winckelmann, “Die Herkunft von Max Webers, Entzauberungs’-Konzept” in *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, Vol. 32, 1980, 12-53; Wolfgang Schluchter, *Die Entzauberung der Welt: Sechs Studien zu Max Weber*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009; Richard Jenkins, “Disenchantment, Enchantment and Re-Enchantment: Max Weber at the Millennium” in *Max Weber Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1 (November 2000), 11-32; Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Human Sciences*, 269-301.

⁶⁸ On Weber’s notion of magic, see Stefan Breuer, “Magie, Zauber, Entzauberung” in Hans Kippenberg and Martin Riesebrodt (eds.), *Max Webers “Religionssystematik”* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 2001, 119-30); Josephson-Storm’s *The Myth of Disenchantment*, 269-301.

not mean that we understand better the conditions under which we live: “Unless we happen to be physicists, those of us who travel by streetcar have not the faintest idea how that streetcar works” (*SV*, 12). Rather, rationalization means that we assume “that if *only we wished* to understand” these conditions under which we live “we *could* do so at any time” (*SV*, 12). Depending on our wish, we could get rid of every absolute mystery or unpredictable force. However, Weber seems also to be saying that we live surrounded by relative wonders—relative depending on our wish to spell out their mysteries. Thus, we live in a state of ambiguity: deprived of absolute mysteries while being simultaneously haunted by *relative mysteries*. Paradoxically, precisely in a world in which someone may explain everything through calculation, she can normally live without understanding both the conditions under which she lives, and the conditions that privilege the calculative mode of thinking among other modes. Indeed, it seems that our power to control the world—at least for *us* who are not physicists—exceeds, or better, does not even require, our capability to understand the world. Do these *relative mysteries* (i.e., the unknown conditions under which we live) somehow enchant us? Our familiarity with cars has precisely eclipsed any sense of magic and wonder that the car may have triggered in the people who first used it; and yet this sense of familiarity coexists with our ignorance of how the car functions. While the relationship of *enchantment* with *mystery* is still unclear, I link this type of ignorance with a sense of mystery that somehow enchant us. Although I grant that each particular relative mystery, due to its familiarity, does not enchant; I may ask: does the world as a whole, in which we efficiently live precisely ignoring the conditions under which we live, signal the effect of some kind of enchantment? It would be the effect of an inconspicuous type of enchantment. Is it a contradiction in terms to argue for an inconspicuous type of enchantment, i.e., one that is not clearly felt by us? Since

we need first to have a better understanding about what we mean by enchantment, I postpone the answer until Part II. Here, however, I suggest that these relative mysteries (as a whole) indicate a source of enchantment within our calculative mode of living. The process of rationalization, in which we believe we can control everything by means of calculation, creates a world in which we live inconspicuously enchanted by these relative mysteries.

According to Weber, by stripping the world of every mysterious and unpredictable force, science unexpectedly also deprived European society of its ultimate values, inaugurating a crisis of meaning:

Our age is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization, and above all, by the disenchantment of the world. Its resulting fate is that precisely the ultimate and most sublime values have withdrawn from the public life. They have retreated either into the abstract realm of mystical life or into the fraternal feeling of personal relations between individuals (*SV*, 30).

Science embodies the calculative mode of thinking that characterizes the process of rationalization. Unintendedly, the resulting fate of the process of rationalization driven by science leads to the values' withdrawal from the public life: the sublime values have lost their objectivity.⁶⁹ Hence, the thesis of disenchantment is essentially linked to the crisis of the ultimate and most sublime values. But this essential link—which would explain how this “resulting fate” comes about—remains unclear.

This crisis of meaning, in which there is no longer an objective guideline to know what to do, is commonly understood as nihilism. Roughly thirty years before Weber gave his lecture, Friedrich Nietzsche, whose work heavily influenced Weber's, defined nihilism as the process

⁶⁹ Weber mentions the “greatest art” and religion as examples of most sublime values that have withdrawn from public life. According to Weber, art has become “intimate rather than monumental,” and religion—in the absence of authentic prophecy—should stay at the level of small groups and avoid the temptation to form new religious movements, which would have monstrous effects (*SV*, 30).

in which the highest values in society devalued themselves and the purpose of life became uncertain.⁷⁰ If God is the custodian of the highest values in society, then, according to Nietzsche, nihilism means that “God is dead.”⁷¹ Reading Weber and Nietzsche together, one could say that the growing process of rationalization has the unintended outcome of killing God. But I would like to emphasize here that the process of rationalization is not an alien force attacking the divine from elsewhere. Rather, according to Nietzsche, the highest values devalue *themselves*: God is already part of the process of rationalization that in modernity has arrived at this (auto-immune) stage in which it attacks its own earlier forms of rationalization.⁷² From the modern point of view, God as an earlier rational form appears to be irrational. The aggressor, the victim, and the mode of attack are all immanent to the process of rationalization.

⁷⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 9. On Nietzsche’s influence on Weber, see (among the immense literature on this topic): Peter Lassman and Irving Veloy, “Max Weber on Science, Disenchantment and the Search for Meaning” in *Max Weber’s ‘Science as a Vocation’* (London: Routledge, 1989, 159-204); Georg Stauth, “Nietzsche, Weber, and the Affirmative Sociology of Culture” in *European Journal of Sociology*, vol. 33, n. 2, 1992, 219-247; Lawrence A. Scaff, *Fleeing the Iron Cage: Culture, Politics, and Modernity in the Thought of Max Weber* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989, 127-134).

⁷¹ For the dictum “God is dead,” see Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, translated by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), §125; and *Zarathustra* in *The Portable Nietzsche*, translated and edited by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1954), 124. For the connection between nihilism and the death of God, see, for instance, *The Will to Power*, §69, note 39.

⁷² For Weber, although disenchantment and the crisis of the objectivity of values are experienced in modern Europe, rationalization as their cause is not just a modern phenomenon. Rationalization names a long process in history that goes way back into the past. Indeed, by reading Weber, one has sometimes the impression that rather than *in* history rationalization names history as such. On how rationalization and disenchantment convey Weber’s sense of history, see Gilbert G. Germain’s *A Discourse on Disenchantment: Reflections on Politics and Technology*. According to Germain, “*Die Entzauberung der Welt*—the disenchantment of the world—is the expression Weber uses most frequently to convey his vision or philosophy of history. As such, it bears a certain surface resemblance to Hegel’s ‘phenomenology of spirit’ or Marx’s ‘dialectic materialism.’ However, for Weber the movement of Occidental history is best accounted for not in terms of a protracted struggle for political freedom and equality or for proletarian ownership of the means of production, but as a progressive emptying of magic from the world. Differently put, the history of the West is characterized by the world’s ‘de-magification,’ a term which better captures the essence of *Entzauberung* than the commonly accepted English translation ‘disenchantment’” (28).

As our previous discussion has suggested, depending on the definition of disenchantment, the relation of disenchantment to the tropes of the death of God and nihilism changes. On the one hand, disenchantment as the decline of mystery and wonder may be identified with the trope of the death of God: the absence of the divine and the decline of religion mark the withdrawal of mystery from the world. This interpretation suggests a link between God (as the highest value—Nietzsche) and the objectivity of the sublime values (as integral part of the public life—Weber); thus, the death of God correlates with the crisis of these values. On the other hand, disenchantment as the decline of magic differs from the phenomenon of the death of God. Indeed, the decline of the divine seems to increase the belief in magic. According to Josephson-Storm, “the death of God does not necessitate the death of magic, and if anything, secularization seems to amplify enchantment” (*MD*, 31-32). But, how then does Josephson-Storm account for the crisis of the objectivity of the ultimate values? Or, is this crisis also part of the myth of disenchantment? Since we know that for Weber the thesis of disenchantment is essentially linked to the sense of crisis in values and meaning, I may ask: what is the relation between magic, on the one hand, and the creation and sustenance of the objectivity of the sublime values, on the other? Can the decline of magic lead to the crisis of ultimate values? These questions help us to illuminate the meaning of enchantment in Weber’s text—deciding between Bennett’s and Josephson-Storm’s interpretations.

For Weber, in the process of rationalization there is a shift from value rationality (concerned with meaning and ultimate values) to instrumental rationality (blind to meaning and ultimate values).⁷³ Since we seem to live in the modern world under the tyranny of

⁷³ According to Weber, while instrumental purpose-rationality (*Zweckrationalität*, translated also as means-ends rationality or purpose-rationality) cares for the consequences or results of social action, value rationality (*Wertrationalität*) is determined by the intrinsic meaning of the action—regardless of its consequences. This distinction resembles Kant’s distinction between hypothetical and categorical imperatives (which in turn

instrumental rationality, this would explain the crisis of legitimacy of ultimate values. Since, according to Josephson-Storm's version of Weber's definition of magic, magic is a form of instrumental rationality, we can infer that magic contributes to the crisis of ultimate values. Thus, it is enchantment (magic)—rather than disenchantment (decline of magic)—that leads to the crisis of values. Restated, not only does the death of God not produce the decline of magic, it seems that it is magic (as a form of instrumental rationality) that actually leads to the death of God. However, this interpretation contradicts Weber's thesis as formulated in the passage quoted above. Weber explicitly relates the *disenchantment of the world* to the "resulting fate" that "the ultimate and most sublime values have withdrawn from the public life." Of course, as we saw in the last chapter, Josephson-Storm resolves this contradiction by arguing for the processual nature of *disenchanting*; arguing that there is plenty of magic at the

resembles Aristoteles's distinction between *kineseis* and *energeiai*). A hypothetical imperative "represents the practical necessity of a possible action as a means to achieving something else that one is willing." In contrast, "the categorical imperative would be that which represented an action as objectively necessary of itself, without reference to another end" (Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, translated by M. Gregor, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, 25). About Weber's distinction and his (neo-) Kantian influence, see Mark R. Rutgers and Petra Schreurs, "The Morality of Value- and Purpose- Rationality: The Kantian Roots of Weber's Foundational Distinction" in *Administration & Society*, Vol. 38, No. 4, September 2006, 403-421. On the complexity and multiple types of rationality and rationalization in Weber, see, Donald Levine, "Rationality and Freedom: Weber and Beyond" in *Sociological Inquiry*, Vol. 51, No. 1, 1981, 5-25; Stephen Kalberg, "Max Weber's Types of Rationality: Cornerstones for the Analysis of Rationalization Processes in History" in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 85, No. 5, 1980, 1145-1179. Also helpful is Josephson-Storm's classification of Weber's conception of social action into four ideal types of rationality (instrumental rationality, value rationality, theoretical rationality or intellectualization, and formalized rationality) and two ideal types of irrationality (habitual irrationality, and affectual irrationality) (*The Myth of Disenchantment*, 272-74). Since "Science as a Vocation" explicitly refers to intellectualization, and the secondary literature often focuses instead on instrumental and formal (bureaucratic) rationalization, let me quote Josephson-Storm's explanation of the distinction between instrumental rationality and intellectualization: "The core of the difference is rooted in an intellectualization process that aims toward increasing abstraction, while instrumental rationality is based in pragmatic decision-making" (ibid, 273). Nowadays, people are no more *subjectively* instrumentally rational than people in the past, but they differ in the theoretical rationality (intellectualization) that is *potentially* available for them. I underline the *potentiality* because this growing process of intellectualization does not mean that we understand better the conditions under which we live: "Unless we happen to be physicists, those of us who travel by streetcar have not the faintest idea how that streetcar works" (*SV*, 12). Theoretical rationalization or intellectualization means rather "that if *only we wished* to understand" these conditions under which we live "we *could* do so at any time" (*SV*, 12). Objectively we know more about the world, but subjectively each of us know proportionally less about the world around us than the "savage."

same moment of its decay. For Josephson-Storm, the prefix “dis” is misleading: there is still plenty of magic within modern disenchantment that explains the crisis of values.

Either way, what I want to emphasize here is the connection between what Weber called *disenchantment* and the crisis of values and meaning or, inversely, the connection between enchantment and the creation of values and meaning. Relevantly, the categories of wonder (mystery) and magic relate *differently* to values and meaning. While wonder seems to support value and meaning, magic seems to weaken them. Thus, for Bennett, disenchantment signals a real *lack* of wonder that results in the crisis of the ultimate values, while for Josephson-Storm, disenchantment does not signal a lack, but rather denotes the existence of enough magic that participates (as a form of instrumental rationality) in the crisis of the ultimate values. While Bennett explains the *real* lack of wonder by the rhetorical power of the disenchantment thesis (i.e., although wonder is present, the discourse of disenchantment makes wonder invisible), for Josephson-Storm, there is *no* real lack of magic at all: disenchantment is a myth.⁷⁴ My own position moves somewhere in between: Like Josephson-Storm, I contend that there has been no real lack of enchantment; but unlike him, I argue that what flourishes is wonder instead of magic. But, if there has not been any lack of wonder (mystery), how can I explain the crisis of values and meaning? I argue that more than lack, the crisis denotes the struggle and new reconfiguration of different sources of enchantment. The crisis of values does not happen because of the lack of wonder, nor because of the instrumentally rational work of magic, but rather because of the different and abundant sources of wonder struggling to impose

⁷⁴ Although Bennett’s and Josephson-Storm’s interpretations are opposed in many ways, none of them question Weber’s link between mystery (“mysterious and unpredictable forces”) and values and meaning. Mystery seems to be the clue regarding the connection between enchantment and values. In other words, it is the opposite relationship that wonder and magic maintain regarding mystery, which explains their different relationship to value and meaning.

their values and meaning. The old supreme values—e.g., the beautiful-representational art, the true-Christian religion, the good-European morals—have not *willingly* retreated from public life into either “the abstract realm of mystical life or into the fraternal feeling of personal relations between individuals,” but rather they have been *pushed away* by other forces and their values. There is no empty space in the realm of values. The illusion of an empty space happens because our lenses are still colonized by the former sublime values. We must learn to adjust our lenses to see the enchantment of the new gods. We are already under their spell, but we still must do some work to bring the latent spell into the fore. To justify my position, however, I first must demonstrate that there is plenty of enchantment in Weber’s disenchantment thesis.

To sum up, the process of rationalization is first characterized by its calculative mode of thinking, which does not mean that we understand better the conditions under we live. This lack of understanding in the midst of the potentiality of understanding everything produces what I call relative mysteries. Moreover, the process of rationalization, by stripping the world of every mysterious and unpredictable force, somehow leads to the crisis of sublime values. It is still unclear, however, how the lack of a mysterious and unpredictable force should affect the objectivity of the sublime values. Finally, confusion arises when one does not distinguish the two competing definitions of enchantment and their opposite relationships to values and meaning. While wonder (mystery) supports meaning because it somehow relates positively to value rationality, magic weakens meaning because it is a form of instrumental rationality.

If we grant that science has—unintentionally—destroyed the objectivity of the former supreme values and that both science and the old supreme values are part of the same process of rationalization, is it possible that science may help to create new values? Can science

counteract the tendency of values to retreat into the private realm of “mystical life” and “fraternal feelings” between individuals, and to bring new (scientifically supported) values into public life?⁷⁵ Simply stated, can science assign a new ultimate meaning for life?⁷⁶ It seems crucial first to clarify how Weber describes the relationship between science and meaning in “Science as a Vocation.”

Speaking to young university students who were expecting to devote themselves to science, Weber asks whether committing oneself to a scientific life “has any meaning over and above its practical and technical implications?” (*SV*, 12). To our contemporary pragmatic and utilitarian ears, it may sound odd to ask about science’s meaning *beyond* its practical implications. Currently, either we treat *meaning* and *use* as interchangeable terms, or we just dismiss meaning in the name of science’s practical efficacy to transform the world. The airplane flies and the internet works, but the meaning of the change they effect on our relation to distance—spatial and temporal—often cannot even be raised as a significant question. Scientists know, for instance that, to fund any scientific project, they are not asked to justify

⁷⁵ Relevantly, for Weber disenchantment does not eclipse mysticism. Indeed, disenchantment nourishes the “abstract realm of mystical life” and “the fraternal feeling of personal relations between individuals.” If mysticism is historically and etymologically linked to *mystery*, then Weber’s description of modern disenchantment is far from being disenchanted. Hence, to translate *Enztauberung* as demystification (e.g., S.N. Eisenstadt, *Max Weber, On Charisma and Institution Building*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968, xviii) seems inappropriate. Furthermore, for Weber, mysticism is “abstract” because it rejects (i.e., abstracts) every concrete form: “The most irrational form of religious behavior, the mystic experience, is in its innermost being not only alien but hostile to all forms. Form is unfortunate and inexpressible to the mystic because he believes precisely in the experience of exploding all forms, and hopes by this to be absorbed into the ‘All-oneness’ which lies beyond any kind of determination and form” (“Religious Rejection of the World and their Directions” in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, 342).

⁷⁶ I assume here that the idea of an ultimate meaning for life—i.e., a final goal or a sense of totality or unity of which one feels oneself to be an integral part—must be objective and part of the public sphere. Hence, I am not addressing here other ways of predicating meaning. For instance, one may imagine that by questioning this assumption, the meaning of life can be founded on the multiplicity of non-objective and still ultimate values; or, by giving up the idea of an ultimate value all together (and not just its objectivity), one may find the “meaning of life” precisely in the impossibility on applying to life the categories of goal, unity, or totality.

its meaning; they must merely demonstrate its practical *impact*.⁷⁷ The goal is—of course—to “change the world!”⁷⁸

Since the fate of every scientific theory is to be scientifically superseded and thus to generate endless progress, Weber asks, “what meaningful achievement can [the scientist] hope for from activities that are always doomed to obsolescence?” (*SV*, 12). In this context, Weber mentions Leo Tolstoy’s discussion on the impossibility for modern people to have a meaningful death and, consequently, a meaningful life. Since “the individualized civilized life was situated within ‘progress’ and infinity, it could not have an intrinsically meaningful end.” A civilized person “may become ‘tired of life,’ but not fulfilled by it” (*SV*, 13). In this tension between endless progress and the possibility of meaning, Tolstoy presupposes both an equivalence of meaning and fulfillment as well as an equivalence of fulfillment and stability. In other words, because in modern life nothing remains stable and we are caught up in a chain of progress, always having a goal a further step ahead, it seems impossible for us to achieve fulfillment. Without fulfillment, there is no way to live and die meaningfully.⁷⁹ But, why isn’t

⁷⁷ The difficulty of even raising the question on meaning without confusing it with utility can be rendered in Weber’s language as the privilege of instrumental rationality over value rationality.

⁷⁸ Allow me here a short digression. The all-pervading injunction to utility, impact, and transformation is in tension with *curiosity* as the alleged historical origin of science. While useless, curiosity may have been the origin of modern science that fought its way against the useful salvific knowledge preserved by the medieval church, nowadays things seems to be inverted: “useless” curiosity has fled the laboratories where now the purely useful practical purpose seems to guide scientific research, and, paradoxically, curiosity seems now to have landed at the theology departments with their useless discussions on salvation.

⁷⁹ The concept of *fulfillment* plays an important role in the contemporary discussion on disenchantment and wonder as a mood that re-enchants the world. For instance, let me quote Charles Taylor’s description—full of fullness—of the “lived experience” of living as a believer: “Somewhere, in some activity, or condition, lies a fullness, a richness; that is, in the place (activity or condition), life is fuller, richer, deeper, more worthwhile, more admirable, more what it should be. This is perhaps a place of power: we often experience this as deeply moving, as inspiring. Perhaps this sense of fullness is something we just catch glimpses of from afar off; we have the powerful intuition of what fullness would be, were we to be in that condition, e.g., of peace or wholeness; or able to act on that level, of integrity or generosity or abandonment or self-forgetfulness. But sometimes there will be moments of experienced fullness, of joy and fulfillment, where we feel ourselves there” (*A Secular Age*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 2007, 5). However, after the contemporary revival of Gregory of Nyssa’s notion of *epektasis* and Derrida’s critique of metaphysics of presence, it would seem that a meaningful life need not necessarily be linked to fulfillment.

it possible to predicate meaning upon the experience of emptiness? Or, why can't we be fulfilled amid the unstable flow of becoming?

Putting aside for a moment the tension between science's endless progress and the possibility of meaning, Weber explores and then dismisses different historical justifications for science's meaning—science as “the path to true existence,” “the path to true art,” “the path to true nature,”⁸⁰ “the path to true God,”⁸¹ and the path to true happiness”⁸² (*SV*, 17). Finally, Weber quotes Tolstoy: “Science is meaningless because it has no answer to the only questions that matter to us: ‘What should we do? How shall we live?’” (*SV*, 17). Although Weber agrees with Tolstoy that science cannot answer those type of questions, he does not negate that science is meaningful.⁸³ Science presupposes that the object of its research is worth knowing. This presupposition, however, cannot be proved scientifically. Science already works within a sphere of meaning that the scientific method cannot itself justify. Whatever the meaning of science is, it cannot be grounded on a science of meaning: “We cannot provide a university teacher with scientific proof of where his duty lies” (*SV*, 20). The teacher's duty is already given from elsewhere. From where does this duty come?

⁸⁰ “‘Science as the path to nature’—that would be blasphemy in the modern youth. No, it is the other way around. Young people today want release from the intellectualism of science in order to return to their own nature and hence to nature as such!” (*SV*, 15)

⁸¹ “Who can still be found in the natural sciences, who imagines nowadays that a knowledge of astronomy or biology or physics or chemistry could teach us anything about the *meaning* [*Sinn*] of the world?... If anything at all, the natural sciences are more likely to ensure that the belief *that* the world has a ‘meaning’ will wither at the root! And in particular, what about the idea of science as the path ‘to God’? Science, which is specifically alien to God? And today no one can really doubt in his heart of hearts that science is alien to God—whether or not he admits it to himself” (*SV*, 16).

⁸² Harshly dismissing the naïve optimism of some people that glorify science as a path to happiness, Weber writes, “I can probably ignore this completely. After all, who believes it—apart from some overgrown children in their professional chairs or editorial office?” (*SV*, 17). Nowadays, this naïve optimism survives in the notion that science has the capacity to master all of the problems of life.

⁸³ The ambiguity resides in our understanding of meaning. On the one hand, if meaning is predicated upon that which answers Tolstoy's questions (“What should we do? How shall we live?”), then science is meaningless. On the other hand, science is meaningful if we understand meaning as that which is important and worth knowing—which, for Weber, “cannot be proved by scientific methods” (*SV*, 18).

The discussion of the relation between meaning and science yields Weber's essential distinction between different spheres of value (or final ends) and the value-neutral vocation of science as merely a means towards an already given end.⁸⁴ Hence, there are two heterogeneous problems: On the one hand, there is the issue of the value of culture and its institutions and how one should act as a member of a civilized community. On the other hand, there is the "establishing of factual knowledge, the determining of mathematical or logical relations or the internal structure of cultural values" (*SV*, 20). People are mistaken when they project onto science something else beyond just the analysis and statements of facts. The teaching of science has to focus on clear examinations of facts and avoid any intromission about how shall we live our lives. For Weber, "the error they are guilty of is that they look to the professor to be something other than he is: they are looking for a *leader* [*Führer*] and not a *teacher*. But we are put in front of a class only as *teachers*" (*SV*, 24).

Weber describes the nature and struggle of the value spheres as a kind of polytheism:

It is as it was in antiquity before the world had been divested of the magic of its gods and demons [*von ihren Göttern and Dämonen entzauberten Welt*], only in a different sense: Just as the Greek would bring a sacrifice at one time to Aphrodite and at another to Apollo, and above all, to the gods of his own city, people do likewise today. Only now the gods have been deprived of the magical [*entzaubert*] and mythical, but inwardly true qualities that gave them such vivid immediacy. These gods and their struggles are ruled over by fate, and certainly not by 'science.' We cannot go beyond understanding *what* the divine means for this or that system or within this or that system (*SV*, 23).

This quotation requires a few comments. First, the different values are caught up in an endless struggle. Since rationality works always already within a value sphere, there is no rational

⁸⁴ This "value-neutrality" of science is in tension with the value of science described in the previous paragraph. In other words, science's "value-neutrality" is grounded on values, which are not themselves scientifically provable.

justification for deciding among supreme values, and thus no way to step out and to assess values from a privileged, neutral place. Anticipating the existentialist and Schmittian understanding of *decision*, only an “authentic”—i.e., groundless—decision can decide among gods.⁸⁵ Weber writes, “The conflict between these gods is never-ending. Or, in nonfigurative language, life is about the incompatibility of ultimate *possible* attitudes and hence the inability ever to resolve the conflicts between them. Hence the necessity of *deciding* between them” (*SV*, 27). To decide requires a leap of faith, or better, a leap in *fate*.

Second, although the world of ancient polytheism and our modern world have “different sense[s],” Weber is here emphasizing the continuity of both worlds in terms of a shared “fate.” At the core of Weber’s work is the tension between the controlling power gained by humans through the process of rationalization and the fact that this process as a whole is controlled by fate—a fate that has become an “iron cage,” which will not let us alone until “the last ton of fossilized coal is burnt.”⁸⁶ In other words, the drive to control is controlling us, and what is worse, the drive to control is, in itself, out of control.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ On the notion of *decision* in Weber, in which one decides to possess and—simultaneously—one is being chosen or possessed by the godlike (or demon-like) values, see Roger Friedland, “Divine Institution: Max Weber’s Value Sphere and Institutional Theory” in *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*, Volume 41, 2014, 12. On the “logic” of possession, Friedland writes: “If values are as gods and we imagine them as gods whom one wishes to be an instrument, then the dynamic is not to possess the value as though it were an object, but to be possessed by the value as though it were a subject. We seek to be beloved by the world, a love that is given to us, even though we act as though we have taken it. If an institutional value is a transcendental god that cannot be reduced to the practices that enact it or the words that name it, that means that one can never have the value, only make oneself ready for its reception” (21). Specifically, on the contrast between Weber’s and Carl Schmitt’s notion of decision, see *ibid*, 15, 32 note 8.

⁸⁶ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 181: “This order is now bound to technical and economic conditions of machine production which to-day determine the lives of all individuals who are born into this mechanism, not only those directly concerned with economic conditions of machine acquisition, with irresistible force. Perhaps it will so determine them until the last ton for fossilized coal is burnt. In Baxter’s view the care for external goods should only lie on the shoulders of the ‘saint like a light cloak, which can be thrown aside at any moment.’ But fate decreed that the cloak should become an iron cage.” Cited parenthetically hereafter as *PE*.

⁸⁷ On the importance of the category of *fate* in Weber, see Peter Lassman and Irving Veloy, “Max Weber on Science, Disenchantment and the Search for Meaning” in *Max Weber’s ‘Science as a Vocation’* (London: Routledge: 1989, 159-204): “The seemingly obvious, but rarely asked, question is this: what kind of disenchantment is this if ‘fate’ still holds sway in the world?”; Anthony T. Kronman’s *Max Weber* (London:

Third, although our modern world shares with ancient polytheism a similar sense of fate, Weber uses the idea of the disenchantment of the world to mark the difference between then and now. In other words, instead of the absence of an imposed fate, disenchantment signals a “different sense” of how one is being ruled by gods and demons. I hope that it starts to become apparent that Weber’s thesis of disenchantment does not cancel enchantment per se, but names a change in the mode of being ruled by enchantment. Weber’s technical meaning of *Entzauberung*, namely, the phenomenon of the decline of magic, marks the “different sense” of how someone is brought to sacrifice now in contrast to ancient times. But, the logic of sacrifice remains regardless of the de-magicification of it. I consider fate and the idea of sacrificing for fate to be mysterious. If I grant Weber that fate and sacrifice still take place in modern times, I can conclude that there are still sources of mystery in our current world. In short, there is a disenchanted enchantment, i.e., a non-magical type of fate and sacrifice.⁸⁸ Magic names one mode—among others—to engage with fate and sacrifice. Once magic is in decline, other non-magical ways to participate in fate and sacrifice become prominent. Precisely the study of wonder examines these non-magical ways of being dominated by fate within the immemorial logic of sacrifice.

We should not confuse mystery and magic. The overcoming of magic does not necessarily cancel mystery. The latter seems to remain even when magic has disappeared. The discontinuity between antiquity and modernity implies that the modern world—unlike the

Edward Arnold, 1983), 182: Weber’s “description of the rationalization process as a fateful destiny seems to be a contradiction in terms: reason means understanding and controlling, while fate implies domination by uncontrollable powers. How can reason itself be fate? This is the fundamental question that any reader of Weber is eventually led to ask” (cited in “Max Weber on Science, Disenchantment and the Search for Meaning,” 187). Precisely this uncanny Weberian connection between reason and fate is the point of departure for Horkheimer and Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the subject of the next chapter.

⁸⁸ For instance, a market-based economy does not call for magic to justify its fate and ask for our sacrifice: the forces of supply and demand guide the decisions regarding investment, production, and distribution of goods. And yet, experienced by the individual as an “invisible hand,” these decisions seem mysterious.

ancient one—has been “deprived of the magical [*entzaubert*] and the mythical.” However, as I said, this does not prevent our world—like antiquity—from being governed by a mysterious fate.⁸⁹ By playing with the two meanings of *Entzauberung*, one can say that a disenchanted world (i.e., a world without magic) can be totally enchanted (i.e., a world in which we are possessed by the gods of the value spheres). Hence, also the meaning of the prefix “dis” in “disenchantment” also becomes ambiguous: while it may mark the *decline* of magic, at the same time, it signals the *lingering* of mystery.

Beside the *relative mysteries* that I mentioned above, I take the godlike value spheres as a second source of enchantment in the modern world. “Mysterious” describes the way a person becomes a devotee of one modern god instead of another. There is no science to guide the decision on which of the gods to serve. The awareness of our devotion is always delayed: one finds oneself already sacrificing oneself to the god. “Mysterious” also describes the designs of the gods. Their fate, which in the name of *controlling* nature, possess us through instrumental rationality, seems to be out of control. Finally, mysterious is the logic of sacrifice that remains after the decline of magic.

Up to this point, my study has been concerned with opening a space of inquiry on two fronts: on the first front, I challenge the *tale* of disenchantment that identifies disenchantment with the decline of mystery. Finding that mystery has not vanished, both supporters and critics of the tale (like Kosky, Bennett, Landy and Saler) take Weber to be wrong or dated. Against this tale, I am arguing that Weberian disenchantment has a narrowed meaning, in which

⁸⁹ So far, I have argued that, for Weber, the decline of “the magical and mythical” does not cancel other forms of mystery that enchant the modern world. Thus, I correlate the fate that haunts our modern world with mystery, and I dissociate it from ancient magic and myth. However (and anticipating the discussion from the next chapter) in Horkheimer’s and Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, myth, magic, and fate are so closed-related that when this text acknowledges (like Weber) that fate permeates the modern enlightened world, Horkheimer and Adorno conclude (unlike Weber) that myth and magic are also part of the enlightened modern world. Modernity has its own myth, magic, and fate.

Entzauberung (decline of magic) does not prevent the mystery of the polytheistic value spheres from thriving. Demonstrating the existence of contemporary sources of mystery does not contradict Weber. On the second front, I encounter another group of scholars (for instance, Josephson-Storm) that rightly assume a narrow reading of Weber's thesis. Against them, I do go beyond *Entzauberung qua* decline of magic, in order to explore the mysterious but not necessarily magical enchantment of the value spheres, which Weber mentions but does not analyze through the category of enchantment.⁹⁰ In this regard, the task is to take seriously the "metaphor" of polytheistic gods. Hence, I focus on magic to defend Weber against the tale, and I emphasize mystery against the second group of scholars. Having done so, I can illuminate the obscured enchantment of the polytheistic value spheres within the modern disenchanted world.

Disappointingly, Josephson-Storm does not take seriously Weber's polytheistic references.⁹¹ In contrast, I see these polytheistic gods as the Weberian source of mystery in the

⁹⁰ I use the redundant expression "magical enchantment" to describe the pre-modern type of enchantment—for instance, in practices of sacrifice to Aphrodite, Apollo, or the gods of the city (*SV*, 23), or in practices for the sake of awakening charismatic qualities or for preventing evil charms ("Religious Rejection of the World and Their Directions," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, 327). I use "non-magical enchantment," in contrast, to describe the mode in which the modern gods, having been "deprived of the magical and mythical," engage with us through *sacrifice* and *fate*. The difference between these two modes of enchantment does not reside in their different relation to mystery and instrumental rationality: unlike Josephson-Storm, I claim that the enchantment of magic is mysterious (i.e., magic requires mystery to carry out its mode of instrumental rationality); and the "non-magical enchantment" also embodies the logic of instrumental rationality. Instead, I claim that they differ in that the "non-magical enchantment" of the values spheres has become inconspicuous. It operates in our daily routines in a way that is barely noticed. This is not merely the phenomenon of the gods' departure from the public into the private realm. Rather, the gods have become altogether invisible, and in their invisibility they continue enchanting. I come back to the inconspicuous nature of modern enchantment in Part II.

⁹¹ Since the gods and demons of "Science as a Vocation" are not mentioned in other texts, Josephson-Storm downplays Weber's polytheistic reference. About these references in "Science as a Vocation": he writes: "but in the parallel writings to this speech (such as the *Kategorien* essay that largely covers the same ground), these disenchanted gods are not mentioned. Indeed, the most straightforward interpretation of them is in the context of the First World War, unfolding at that moment. These gods are just the nation-states warring with each other, calling on us to sacrifice ourselves for nations instead of cities" (*MD*, 298). But, it is precisely the godlike nature of the nation-state that asks to be thought. In fact, I want to focus on the mode of enchantment of these gods that have the power to call for sacrifice. Although I agree with Josephson-Storm that Weber may have been expecting a "higher-order synthesis, a return of enchantment or value in a higher key" (*MD*, 298), or that he had a messianic expectation of the birth of a new religion, these expectations do not prevent us from asking about the mode of

modern world. Regardless of the decline or flourishing of magic in modernity, I see modernity as haunted by these mysterious polytheistic gods. Hence, while we both disentangle disenchantment from mystery, he disregards mystery by emphasizing the lingering of magic, and I disregard magic by emphasizing the lingering of mystery (of the polytheistic gods). More importantly, my point is not whether there is magic or mystery in the modern world, but rather that both seem to be functional to the ongoing (ecologically) damaging process of rationalization.

Moreover, if magic names one god among others in the struggle of the polytheistic pantheon, it implies that enchantment cannot be limited to magic. In brief, alongside magical enchantment there are also enchantments other than magical. In his study, Josephson-Storm convincingly demonstrates that the discourse of the decline of magic has an enchanted or magical origin; but he does not study how modern disenchantment also denotes a new constellation of forces that struggle to dominate us through their non-magical enchanting. If he had taken seriously the description of the value spheres as gods, he would have engaged with the enchanting powers of these gods that go beyond magic. In other words, I am not tracing how in modern capitalism or in the modern secular state there is still a place for magic, but rather how capitalism or the modern state in themselves have an enchanting power.

Josephson-Storm focuses on a type of magical or paranormal enchantment. Although he questions the binary of disenchantment-enchantment or science-religion, and focuses on a third term, namely magic or superstition, he assumes that this third term denotes the

enchantment of these “nationalistic” gods. Contrary to Josephson-Storm, I do not want to investigate how magic lingers in modern Europe when it is supposed to have vanished, but rather how in an epoch described as disenchanted, each value sphere (economy, medicine, religion, nation, etc.) enacts such a powerful enchantment upon us that they call us to devote ourselves on behalf of them even—sometimes—to the extreme of our own annihilation.

supernatural (paranormal, occult). While he wants to show that the enchantment of the paranormal happens also in Europe (and of course around the world), I want to explore the enchantment *in* and *of* the normal. Instead of studying the lingering of enchantment that comes from believing in ghosts, psychic powers, witches (*MD*, 24), angels, and demons (*MD*, 25), I want to see how enchantment is present in the normal, familiar, and self-evident of our everyday routines; for instance, the one that happens at the bureaucrat's office or in front of a showcase at the mall. While some of the Weberian modern gods may be glamorous to enchant us, others in contrast perform this pretty inconspicuous type of enchantment. Although it is easier to see the re-enchantment of religion that asks for our devotion in rituals, churches, or bomb attacks, or the enchantment of the sphere of art as manifested in land art, or in technology in new apps, etc., it is more difficult to perceive the power of this inconspicuous enchantment in our daily routines.

Granting that magic may not be mysterious (i.e., as part of instrumental rationality, magic cancels rather than infuses mystery), the enchanting struggle of the different godlike value spheres do behave in mysterious ways. Hence, a more general level for an inquiry opens. Instead of focusing on the level of a dialectic of disenchantment and enchantment within the magical sphere, my study tries to trace the dialectic at the general level of the different value spheres. Although mystery and wonder seem unhelpful for clarifying magic's logic (as Josephson-Storms's study demonstrates), they may be helpful in shedding light on the enchanting struggle of the value spheres. In short, although the notion of *wonder* may not help to illuminate what magicians do, it may illuminate how consumers in the market buy or how the authority of the state rules.

II) Religious Rationalization

Since we are following Weber's lecture on science, his thesis of the disenchantment of the world might appear to be merely a problem of scientific knowledge. But scientific knowledge is just one god among others imposing their fate on us. Next to science, there is also the religious sphere. According to Weber, the essence of the religious sphere is not to acquire knowledge about the world but to pursue salvation.⁹² The process of rationalization and the consequent disenchantment of the world have also (beside the scientific) a religious origin and progression, in which the decline of magic and mystery is the result of the religious logic of salvation. In short, disenchantment's origin is not just epistemological but also soteriological.⁹³

Rationalization is not a uniform process.⁹⁴ Each value sphere embodies the process of rationalization differently. In relation to the different phenomena included under this notion, Weber writes:

There is, for example, rationalization of mystical contemplation, that is of an attitude which, viewed from other departments of life, is specifically irrational, just as much as

⁹² According to Weber, "the question of *certitudo salutis* ... has been the origin of all psychological drives of a purely religious character" (*PE*, 228 note 38).

⁹³ According to Friedrich Tenbruck, the religious process of rationalization is the clue to understanding rationalization as such. The rationalization of modern technology and science is preceded by the rationalization in religion, in which magic is discarded as a means to salvation. Thus, the clue to understanding Weberian rationalization is his sociology of religion—specially the texts on economic ethics of universal religions. See Friedrich H. Tenbruck, "Das Werk Max Webers" in *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, Vol. 27, 1975, 669-671. See also Wolfgang Schluchter's commentary in the footnote 63 above.

⁹⁴ A common misunderstanding is to identify rationalization with science. Maybe the latter is the most faithful expression of the former, but rationalization exceeds the sphere of science. Weber cautions, "one may—this simple proposition, which is often forgotten, should be placed at the beginning of every study which essays to deal with rationalism—rationalize life from fundamentally different basic points of view and in very different directions. Rationalism is an historical concept which covers a whole world of different things" (*PE*, 77-78). Moreover, the theme of rationalization seems to be at the core of Weber's oeuvre. For instance, according to Rogers Brubaker, "rationality is an *idée-maîtresse* in Weber's work, one that links his empirical and methodological investigations with his political and moral reflections" (*The Limits of Rationality: An Essay on the Social and Moral Thought of Max Weber*, London: Routledge, 1984). On the debate on Weber's main theme and his *Hauptwerk* (*Economy and Society* or the *Collected Essays on the Sociology of Religion*), see Friedrich Tenbruck, "Das Werk Max Webers."

there are rationalizations of economic life, of technique, of scientific research, of military training, of law and administration. Furthermore, each one of these fields may be rationalized in terms of very different ultimate values and ends, and what is rational from one point of view may well be irrational from another. Hence rationalizations of the most varied character have existed in various departments of life and in all areas of culture (*PE*, 26).

Although abstraction, calculation, bureaucratization and depersonalization are common tendencies, each sphere struggles with other spheres in carrying out the process of rationalization. Something that is rational in one “department of life” can be seen as irrational in another department. What is experienced as disenchanting from one point of view, can be seen as enchanting from another point of view. Disenchantment does not mean the disappearance of enchanting gods, but rather disenchantment is caused by gods, with each contributing in different ways to the rationalization of different value spheres.

Religion, as one among other departments of life, has its own process of rationalization. In other words, besides other forms, legal, economic, technologic, esthetic, erotic, etc., the growing process of rationalization takes also a religious form.⁹⁵ According to Weber, the Puritan form of disenchantment that led to modern capitalism is just one stage in a broader religious rationalization process:

That great historic process in the development of religions, the elimination of magic from the world [*Entzauberung der Welt*] which had begun with the old Hebrew prophets and, in conjunction with Hellenistic scientific thought, had repudiated all magical means to

⁹⁵ Within the religious sphere, according to Weber, mysticism, asceticism and theology are manifestations of rationalization (thus of de-magicification). For instance, Weber writes, “all theology is the intellectual *rationalization* of sacred religious beliefs” (*SV*, 28). Although theology is a manifestation of rationalization, it differs from other sciences in that it adds a few more assumptions (e.g., “the assumption that the world must have a *meaning*” [*SV*, 28]) and in some cases, it is limited to some specific revelation that is vital for salvation. For Weber, revelations are not “knowledge,” but rather they are a “form of ‘having’” (*SV*, 29). To be able to “have” a revelation, one has to follow the logic affirmed by Tertullian (attributed to Augustine by Weber): “Credo non quod, sed *quia* absurdum est” (*SV*, 29). According to Weber, the rationalized religious virtuoso requires achieving the point of the “sacrificing the intellect” (*ibid*, 29).

salvation as superstition and sin, came here to its logical conclusion. The genuine Puritan even rejected all signs of religious ceremony at the grave and buried his nearest and dearest without song or ritual in order that no superstition, no trust in the effects of magical and sacramental forces on salvation, should creep in (*PE*, 105).

In the religious context, disenchantment eliminates all magical and ritual means to salvation. The Protestant conception of grace—i.e., that salvation is solely due to God’s grace (*sola gratia*)—is the logical conclusion of a long path that ends by eliminating any magical means to attain the divine grace needed to be saved. There is nothing that a person can do to influence God’s decision. Ultimately, this doctrine of *sola gratia* changes the meaning of action in this world—and *finally* the world as such becomes meaningless for salvation.⁹⁶ Nihilism, or the crisis in the highest values, has the longing for salvation and the doctrine of *sola gratia* as its often-unrecognized cause.

What happens with religion when the religious process of rationalization reaches its “logical conclusion”? On the one hand, one can read it as a religious autoimmune annihilation. At the outset of modern times, the Puritan ascetic spirit infuses the spirit of capitalism, but then, in our current stage of capitalism, the unfolding of this spirit has de-spiritualized itself. According to Weber, capitalism “no longer needs the support of any religious forces, and feels the attempts of religion to influence economic life, in so far as they can still be felt at all, to be as much an unjustified interference as its regulation by the State” (*PE*, 72). In this reading,

⁹⁶ With the *sola gratia* doctrine, Luther tries to secure a place for an absolute and unconditional love for the neighbor. When our salvation does not depend on our deeds, neighborly love can no longer be subsumed within an “economical” or instrumental calculation in the pursuit of our own salvation. Hence, in Weberian language, the doctrine of *sola gratia* limits instrumental rationality, and allows for the development of value rationality. However, the paradox seems to be that value rationality, when developed into its “logical conclusion” (or under the influence of Calvin’s interpretation), devaluates itself and turns into instrumental rationality. Paradoxically, Luther’s opening a dimension of meaning (different than utility) ends up eclipsing meaning and forging the tyranny of utility.

Weber seems to be predicting the decline of religion. In Nietzschean language, the highest values devalue themselves. “God is dead, and remains dead.” God has committed suicide.⁹⁷

On the other hand, when religion achieves its “logical conclusion,” the *spiritual* source of disenchantment does not disappear. Rather, a new spirituality enchants the world, a spirituality that—from the point of view of the previous spirituality—is experienced as being disenchanted. Thus, even if “religion” would be in decline—which seems far from being the case—there would still be other gods enchanting our world.⁹⁸ The devaluation of the highest values leads to a new revaluation: “God is dead, long live God.”⁹⁹

To sum up, Weber’s understanding of the process of rationalization offers two different (but related) versions of the disenchantment (*qua* de-magicification) of the world. First, if one studies rationalization through the lenses of technology and science, where—at least in principle—we may “control everything by means of calculation” (*SV*, 13), then disenchantment describes the decline of magic as an explanation of the world and as a means

⁹⁷ There are different versions of the idea that some of the great religions deconstruct themselves up to the point of their self-annihilation. For instance, depending on how atheism is defined, one can argue that Christianity has an atheist core. See, for example, Jean-Luc Nancy’s *Adoration: The Deconstruction of Christianity II* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013): “The possibility of atheism, if by this we mean at least the denial of any kind of afterworld extending this world in order to console it, is inscribed at the source of Christianity...” “I am therefore calling ‘Christianity’ the posture of thought whereby ‘God’ demands to be effaced or to efface himself” (28, 29).

⁹⁸ In this discussion, I am just assuming a common agreement on what religion is. I am not questioning here either Weber’s emphasis on salvation or his underestimation of religious ritual. Of course, “religion” is a contested category with an intricate genealogy that I will not pursue here. See, for example, Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); Jonathan Z. Smith, “Religion, Religions, Religious” in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, edited by Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998). For instance, depending on how “religion” is defined one can argue that it was expected to disappear in a secular world (from August Comte to Sigmund Freud), or that it did not disappear and is haunting our modern public sphere (from Jürgen Habermas to José Casanova), or that it has not returned to the modern world because it has never existed (from Timothy Fitzgerald to Peter Sloterdijk—both for very different reasons though).

⁹⁹ While the Christian God may not animate late capitalism, one can argue that today capitalism as such has become a religion. See, for instance, Walter Benjamin, “Capitalism as Religion” in *Walter Benjamin, Selected Writings, Volume 1, 1913-1926*, edited by Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996); Marc C. Taylor, *Confidence Games: Money and Markets in a World without Redemption* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004); Philip Goodchild, *Capitalism and Religion: The price of piety* (London: Routledge: 2002) and *Theology of Money* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).

of controlling nature. Second, if the process of rationalization is studied from the point of view of religion, then disenchantment describes a historical process of global dimensions during which all magical means for granting salvation were overcome. This process began within ancient Judaism, it was supported by Hellenistic science, and achieved its “logical conclusion” with the Puritans who set the foundations for modernity.

This religious process of rationalization enters in conflict with the rationalization process of other value spheres—in particular, with the rationalization that occurs in science.¹⁰⁰ For instance, from the point of view of the process of rationalization in science, rationalization of the salvific religious process appears to be irrational. Weber writes in his “Religious Rejections of the World and their Directions” (1916):

The tension between religion and intellectual knowledge definitely comes to the fore wherever rational, empirical knowledge has consistently worked through to the disenchantment of the world and its transformation into a causal mechanism. For then science encounters the claims of the ethical postulate that the world is a God-ordained, and hence somehow *meaningfully* and ethically oriented, cosmos. In principle, the empirical as well as the mathematically oriented view of the world develops refutations of every intellectual approach which in any way asks for ‘meaning’ of inner-worldly occurrences. Every increase of rationalism in empirical science increasingly pushes religion from the rational into the irrational realm.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ The ambiguous relation to the world (of abnegation or/and mastery) involved in the rationalization of salvation and the injunction for the religious virtuoso to “sacrifice the intellect” reveals that “the tension between the value spheres of ‘science’ and religious salvation cannot be overcome” (*SV*, 29). To study how the rationalization process within the religious sphere enters into tension with the economic, political, esthetic, and erotic spheres, see Weber’s “Religious Rejections of the World and their Directions” in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. by H.H. Gerth and C.Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958). Even though rationalization is characterized by the process of depersonalization, the latter is carried out differently according to each value sphere. For instance, “the religions of salvation have had a tendency to depersonalize and objectify love in the unique sense of acosmism. Yet these same religions have watched with profound suspicion the deployment of economic forces which, in a different sense, have likewise been impersonal” (*ibid.*, 331).

¹⁰¹ “Religious Rejections of the World and their Directions,” 350.

Before exploring the tension between the religious demand for a meaningful cosmos and the scientific refutations of everything that asks for meaning, I want to emphasize the place that the religious devaluation of the world has in Weber's argument. Rationalization in the *scientific* sphere—that is, disenchantment understood as the world transformed into a causal mechanism—is ultimately the *consequence* of the religious devaluation of the world. Scientific disenchantment is the consequence of the religious disenchantment of the world. From the point of view of the process of rationalization in religion, the world transformed into a causal mechanism is part of the “logical conclusion” of the global religious path that repudiates all magical means to salvation. Thus, my aim is not to propose a genealogy of science by showing how modern science has Protestantism as one of its causes, but to underline that Weber's account has religious rationalization at the basis of the process of rationalization as a whole.¹⁰²

To recapitulate, there are at least two ambiguities that affect the interpretation of disenchantment as the outcome of rationalization. On the one hand, there is the ambiguity of the type of rationality that the process of rationalization may privilege: theoretical rationality (intellectualization), instrumental rationality, or formalized rationality (bureaucratization).¹⁰³ On the other hand, the process of rationalization has a different character depending on the

¹⁰² I claim that for Weber both the inner-worldly active asceticism and the other-worldly contemplative mysticism end up devaluating the world. While the asceticism of the latter is already patent from the beginning, it is the “logical conclusion” of the latter (its Puritan version) that leads to the devaluation of the world. “Puritanism accepted the routinization of the economic cosmos, which, with the whole world, it devalued as creaturely and depraved... In the last resort, this meant in principle to renounce salvation as a goal attainable by man, that is, by everybody. It meant to renounce salvation in favor of the groundless and always only particularized grace. In truth, this standpoint of unbrotherliness was no longer a genuine ‘religion of salvation.’ A genuine religion of salvation can exaggerate brotherliness to the height of the mystic's asceticism of love” (“Religious Rejection of the World and their Directions,” in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, 332-333). It seems that both the “mystic's asceticism of love” and the Puritan renunciation of salvation as a goal attainable by humans, end up devaluating the world. The “worldly” emphasis of asceticism does not prevent that, at the end, the assumption of the world as “creaturely” and “depraved” prevails.

¹⁰³ The question regarding enchantment as wonder or magic, can be subsumed under the ambiguities of the different types of rationality guiding the process of rationalization. While wonder relates to value rationality, magic is a form of instrumental rationality.

various departments of life that it shapes. What may be seem rational within one department of life, may be irrational within another.

Having elucidated a more nuanced understanding of rationalization, we may return to the “Science as Vocation” and answer the question raised above: Can science help to create new values and assign a new ultimate meaning for life?¹⁰⁴ Can science render the cosmos meaningful? First, grounded in the dichotomy between value spheres and science’s value-neutrality, science passively receives its meaning from the polytheistic and nonscientific value sphere. Given that science does not create its own value, it is clear that science is incapable of creating new sublime values. Thus, for Weber, ethical value cannot be drawn from scientific or calculative activity. Second, science is not just neutral regarding meaning, science vehemently rejects meaning. Science “develops refutations of every intellectual approach which in any way asks for ‘meaning’ of inner-worldly occurrences.”¹⁰⁵

The disenchantment of the world makes us face a world without ethical foundation. On the one hand, religious rationalization—while seeking to understand the world as meaningful—ultimately renders it meaningless.¹⁰⁶ On the other hand, scientific rationalization cannot offer a new meaningful foundation.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, both the religious and scientific

¹⁰⁴ See pages 71-72 above.

¹⁰⁵ “Religious Rejections of the World and their Directions,” 350.

¹⁰⁶ According to Weber, for the Puritans, ethical action in the world is relevant as a *sign* of God’s grace (i.e., good works do not create but proves the salvific state of grace). This explains the systematic method of rational conduct effected by their inner worldly asceticism. However, I claim that for Weber the “depravation” of the world that this inner worldly asceticism assumes causes—when carry out to its logical conclusion—the world becoming meaningless (and thus the crisis of the ultimate values).

¹⁰⁷ Since Weber believed that ethical values and meaning cannot be determined on the basis of scientific rationality, and since redemptive charisma and authentic prophecy seem not to be available in the near future, Josephson-Storm suggests “that Weber sometimes imagined a way out of this impasse via a kind mystical experience that allows for a retrieval of values outside the frame of the purely rational. The route back from a world that has been de-deified might appear to be self-deification” (*MD*, 297). Although most specialists do not think Weber had a positive solution for the disenchantment of the world, Weber may have considered mystical self-deification as a way out of the disenchanted iron cage. Influenced by the protestant theologian Ernst Troeltsch, the philosopher Ludwig Klages, and the poet and mystic Stefan George, it is possible that Weber came to see mysticism as a cross-cultural phenomenon based on a common human experience, which, on the one hand,

version of the iron cage suppresses irrational life impulses. Both the Protestant and the scientific versions embody a systematic method of rational conduct that aims to overcome basic life impulses.

Weber knows that his description of science will not satisfy his audience. At the time of crisis in European culture, young students were looking to science for spiritual experience and for awakening to fulfill their lives. “What is so hard for us today, and is hardest of all for the young generation, is to meet the challenge of such an *everyday life*. All chasing after ‘experience’ arises from this weakness. For weakness it is to be unable to look the fate of the age full in the face” (*SV*, 24). Weber anticipates that some of the young students, who are religiously minded, will react against the fate of a world in which God is alien. Due to their weakness, they will try to religiously re-enchant their disenchanting everyday life. Weber responds to this reactionary re-enchantment depending on how it is carried out. On the one hand, Weber accepts that some, unable to look at the fate of the age, will take refuge in the church. He only demands acknowledgement of the fate of living in an age alienated from God and of the “sacrifice of the intellect” that reclaiming the security of the church entails. On the

was compatible with rational attitudes and on the other hand, was diverse enough from scientific rationality to ground ethical values. Weber’s engagement with mysticism can be read in *The Protestant Ethic*, where he links the origins of the notion of the calling (*Beruf*) to the German mysticism of Johannes Tauler. According to Weber, parallel to how the divine calling became the name for the person’s mundane profession, the other-worldly mysticism was secularized and became this-worldly. But then, according to Weber’s narrative, secular asceticism superseded secular mysticism: “having given birth to the notion of a calling, the mysticism (of Luther or Tauler) was effectively suppressed by a Calvinism that allowed for a practical, this-worldly religiosity to come to the fore” (*MD*, 295). The relation between secular asceticism and secular mysticism may be the clue to understanding the future of capitalism. According to Josephson-Storm, it is relevant to see in Weber’s *Protestant Ethic* the thread that connects mysticism and capitalism: “Although this argument is never made explicitly, we might see the whole narrative of *The Protestant Ethic* as charting the gradual domestication and eventual rationalization of the original spirit of mysticism” (*MD*, 295). Since mysticism was present in the origins of capitalism, the former may also be the way to transforming the latter: “mysticism seems to be both the distant progenitor of capitalist modernity and perhaps one of its last remaining options” (*MD*, 298). Hence, according to Josephson-Storm’s controversial interpretation, in Weber’s later works, mysticism is not just an anachronistic survival, but it began to emerge as both source and paradoxical counter-weight to rationalization. However, according to Josephson-Storm, Weber seems at the end to have replaced the mystical solution for a messianic expectation: “In my reading, Weber toyed with the idea of mysticism as a solution, but never fully committed to it, perhaps for good reason. Instead, Weber hinted at a messianic expectation or a longing for ‘genuine prophecy’ in a prophetless age” (*MD*, 301).

other hand, Weber strongly rejects professorial prophecy, searching in science a prophet or savior. The integrity of the religious sensibility of those seeking refuge in the church should rise in rebellion against professorial prophecy. The religious way of living in a world alien to God is to acknowledge alienation and not to cover it up with fraudulent surrogates.¹⁰⁸

New religious movements without new authentic prophecies have consequences as monstrous as new academic prophecies. The choice is for Weber clear: either we go back to church in silence, enacting the “sacrifice of the intellect,” or we commit to science, meeting “the challenges of the day” preserving intellectual integrity, and thus in pursuit of facts we reject deception by prophetic illusions.

III) Conclusion: Disenchantment as Enchantment

Modern disenchantment, in Weber’s thesis, coexists with enchantment.¹⁰⁹ Rather than opposed, enchantment and disenchantment are entangled in at least five ways. First, although the process of rationalization eclipses every absolute (e.g., divine, magical) mystery, inaugurating a crisis in the highest values of society, disenchantment nourishes simultaneously a kind of *relative technological enchantment*. We know that the streetcar is not moved by

¹⁰⁸ Weber writes, “I believe that the inner needs of a human being with the ‘music’ of religion in his veins will never be served if the fundamental fact that his fate is to live in an age alien to God and bereft of prophets is hidden from him and others by surrogates in the shape of all these professorial prophets. The integrity of his religious sensibility must surely rise up in rebellion against this” (*SV*, 28).

¹⁰⁹ I am not alone in emphasizing the enchanted dimension of Weber’s disenchantment thesis. See, for example Richard Jenkins’s “Disenchantment, Enchantment and Re-enchantment: Max Weber at the Millennium” in *Max Weber Studies* Vol. 1, No. 1 (November 2000), 11-32. Since “bureaucracies are themselves constitutive of a broad panoply of collective enchantment, in the form of rituals, symbols, legends, traditions and so on,” and “legitimate domination is often, perhaps even always, underwritten by at least a modicum of enchantment,” Richard Jenkins argues that “(re)enchantment must, perhaps, be recognized as an integral element of modernity” (14, 18, 22).

divine or magical forces, and yet—for us, the uninitiated—how electricity, passing from cable to wagon, turns into movement, remains a mystery.

Second, working as means towards ends, science is a neutral tool. The meaning and value of tools of scientific research are given from elsewhere, they cannot itself be scientifically justified. Science analyzes facts and assumptions within a particular value sphere, but science is incapable to assess and order value spheres. Moreover, while science has historically destroyed the formerly highest values, it is not able to generate new ultimate values. And yet, valuation happens anyway, even if the process cannot be scientifically guided. Values are not created under the secured conditions of the laboratory. Even if personal gods are dead, values are imposed on us like divine commands. Even if we cannot create values, we are possessed by new values. The crisis within the highest values of European society discloses a kind of *enchantment of the value spheres*. While our rational, modern civilization destroys one kind of divinity, it has transformed the entire world into a battleground of impersonal forces: “Today the routine of everyday life challenges religion. Many old gods ascend from their graves; they are disenchanting and hence take the form of impersonal forces. They strive to gain power over our lives and again they resume their eternal struggle with one another.”¹¹⁰ The disenchantment of personal gods has led to the enchantment of impersonal forces (value spheres).¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ I use here Gerth and Mills translation of “Science as a Vocation” in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 149.

¹¹¹ In the process of rationalization, the shift from personal to impersonal forces usually renders invisible the divine or enchanted nature of the impersonal forces. According to Roger Friedland’s “Divine Institution: Max Weber’s Value Sphere and Institutional Theory” (*Research in the Sociology of Organizations*, Volume 41, 2014, 217-258), “we moderns fail to recognize that the ‘routines of everyday life’ are likewise grounded in their respective ‘gods’... Weber is here arguing that disenchanting domains of modernity appear as impersonal forces, but in reality, operate as immanent divinities, animating the causal order of the social world” (10). Our incapacity to see the enchantment that animates our “routines of everyday,” I argue, leads to the interpretation of disenchantment as the decline of mystery. However, Weber’s own work, by disclosing the struggle between value spheres, is bringing enchantment back to the fore—not by creating it, but rather by making conspicuous what was

Third, a world without personal gods may foster *reactionary religious re-enchantment*. Without “authentic” prophecy, Weber thinks that any grand religious movement will have monstrous consequences. However, it does not follow from this that Weber is predicting the disappearance of religion in secular societies. What is left for those who accept sacrificing their intellect is to live their religiosity in smaller groups—religiosity *in pianissimo*.

Fourth, in addition to the three above-mentioned sources of modern enchantment discussed in “Science as Vocation,” we should not forget Weber’s use of the notion of *spirit* to capture the essence of capitalism. In his most famous book, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber shows how a type of this-worldly asceticism, the ethic of Protestantism was the spiritual force behind the emergence of modern capitalism.¹¹² According to this spirit, the Puritans followed the call to become God’s “tool” working in a unified system,¹¹³ profiting, but not consuming what they had produced for his glory, where the wealth produced through work does not create but *proves* the salvific state of grace. Released from the moral limitations of usury as conceptualized in the Catholic Church, Puritans struggled not “against the rational acquisition, but against the irrational use of wealth” (*PE*, 171). As an

already there. To study this enchantment of our “routines of everyday,” requires taking its invisibility into account. As I said, the danger is to misunderstand this invisibility for nonexistence, and to consider as disenchantment what has been enchanted differently. In Part II, I develop a phenomenological description of this inconspicuous enchantment in contraposition to the more conspicuous and extraordinary enchantment of the supernatural (the holy) and the exceptional (marveling and the sublime).

¹¹² On asceticism in the context of *The Protestant Ethic*, see 170-171, 235 note 79. On Weber’s difference between active asceticism (where one is a “tool” of a supra-mundane and personal Lord of Creation) and passive mysticism (where one is a vessel, through an inward and contemplative surrender, to a god who is an impersonal supreme being), see Weber’s “The Social Psychology of the World Religions” in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, 285; see also Weber’s discussion on “Sociology of Religion” in his *Economy and Society*, edit. by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 546. Moreover, for Weber the various social strata differ—in general terms—in their conceptions of god and their experience of salvation. For instance, mysticism is related to the strata of the “genteel intellectuals,” whereas asceticism is more common among the civic strata (ibid, 282-285).

¹¹³ On a life of good works ordered in a unified system, see *PE*, 117.

unforeseen consequence of the Reformation,¹¹⁴ the Protestant work ethic evolved into the capitalistic “conception of money-making as an end in itself, end to which people were bound as a calling” (*PE*, 73). Consequently, disenchantment in capitalistic society has its origin in a spiritual transformation, and this enchanting force that shapes the capitalist worldview in its essence can accurately be named a *spirit*.

Fifth, Weber’s own sociology of religion seems to have been influenced by the subject of study in such a way that we can speak of an *enchanted sociology*.¹¹⁵ According to Roger Friedland’s analysis, “the paradox is that by examining the religious modalities of worldly abnegation Weber not only developed an institutional portrait of the world, he conceptualized that world as religious.”¹¹⁶ For Weber, religion does not only reflect society (as in Durkheim or Marx),¹¹⁷ society also reflects religion.¹¹⁸ The way in which society’s institutions seem to

¹¹⁴ Like Nietzsche before and Foucault after him, for Weber history moves through contradictions and unforeseen consequences: For the Protestants, “the salvation of the soul and that alone was the center of their life and work. Their ethical ideals and the practical results of their doctrines were all based on that alone, and were the consequences of purely religious motives. We shall thus have to admit that the cultural consequences of the Reformation were to a great extent, perhaps in the particular aspects with which we are dealing predominantly, unforeseen and even unwished-for results of the labours of the reformers. They were often far removed from or even in contradiction to all that they themselves thought to attain” (*PE*, 90).

¹¹⁵ See Roger Friedland, “Divine Institution: Max Weber’s Value Sphere and Institutional Theory” in *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*, Volume 41, 2014, 217-258. He develops a polytheistic religious sociology of institutional life based on Weber’s theory of value spheres. In other words, he takes seriously Weber’s idea that values “behave” like gods of a polytheistic pantheon. Thus, science (sociology in particular) is shaped by the godlike nature of values.

¹¹⁶ Roger Friedland, “Divine Institution: Max Weber’s Value Sphere and Institutional Theory,” 5.

¹¹⁷ About religion being an image of society, Emile Durkheim writes: “Far from ignoring and disregarding the real society, religion is its image, reflecting all its features, even the most vulgar and repellent” (*The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, translated by Karen E. Fields, New York: The Free Press, 1995, 423). When society is the substrate of religious life, then god is “only a figurative representation of the society” (*ibid*, 227). Similar, for Marx, who following Feuerbach’s projection theory of religion, writes: “The basis of irreligious criticism is this: *man makes religion*; religion does not make man. Religion is indeed man’s self-consciousness and self-awareness so long as he has not found himself or has lost himself again... This state, this society, produce religion which is an inverted world *consciousness*, because they are an *inverted world*” (“Contribution to the Critique of *Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*: Introduction” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, edited by Robert C. Tucker, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978, 53).

¹¹⁸ According to Friedland, “Weber saw divinity in the social, unlike Durkheim, who saw the social in divinity. For both Durkheim and Weber, the sacred and value were understood respectively as involving an irrational passion beyond reason, exceeding, indeed undoing, the autonomous and instrumental individual” (“Divine Institution,” 11).

interact *as* gods in Weber's analysis cannot be explained as mere figurative use of language. Through the seemingly inconspicuous use of the word "as," Weber opens the door for the mystery to enter rational sociological discourse.

There are many sources of enchantment within Weber's thesis of disenchantment—as our reading of "Science as Vocation," Weber's notion of *spirit*, and his enchanted sociology suggest. Disenchantment of the world (decline of magic) does not cancel enchantment (mysterious power enacted upon us by modern gods).

Let me conclude by bringing together the argumentative threads raised in the exploration of Bennet and Josephson-Storm, with the threads arising from Weber's "Science a Vocation."

1) I suggest that there is plenty of enchantment within modern disenchantment. Weber's disenchantment thesis does not get rid of enchantment, but fosters a different kind of enchantment. In Weber's century-old lecture, there is awareness that enlightened rationality does not dispel mystery. Mystery is like energy: it can neither be created nor destroyed; it can rather only be transformed from one to another form. In modernity, a new form of mystery takes place. To understand the disenchantment of the modern world as the disappearing of mystery mistakes transformation for destruction. Accordingly, since there are sources of enchantment already in Weber's thesis, critics are missing the point by demonstrating the presence of enchantment: Weber knew it already.

The problem of disenchantment seems to have changed today. One cannot still blame disenchantment for the problem of nihilism (i.e., the crisis in the objectivity of supreme values and the sense of meaninglessness). If the modern world is always already enchanted, disenchantment cannot be the source of "all evil." Can we still talk about nihilism, when the

simple dichotomy of enchantment and disenchantment cannot any longer be maintained? On the contrary, we need to deepen our understanding of rationalization, thus study how enchantment and disenchantment are entangled. Likewise, the simple dichotomy of meaning and nihilism is untenable. Under the surface of nihilism there is always some meaning disturbing the nihilist. There is in fact plenty of meaning enchanting our world, and it is its presence, rather than its absence, which enchants our stupidity and blindness to the urgency of our ecological crisis.

The problem of a disenchanting world seems to have become the opposite: the problem of the world's "*horror vacui*" where the world prefers to be enchanted by anything rather than to be disenchanting.¹¹⁹ Modern disenchantment therefore refers to the transformation from personal (magical) to impersonal forces of enchantment. The problem is about the nature and relationship of different and competing modes of enchantment.

It may be pointed out against my thesis that in "Science as a Vocation," Weber neither uses "*Wiederzauberung*," nor any similar term to refer to enchantment. I would agree, for demagification is for Weber irreversible.¹²⁰ Hence, to talk of *Wiederzauberung* would be chronologically wrong. However, there are passages where Weber discusses the rise of new prophets who may in the future bring magic back. Close to the end of his *Protestant Ethic*, Weber writes:

¹¹⁹ Here I am playing with Nietzsche's famous dictum of the *horror vacui* of the will, which affirms that the human will "needs a goal—and it will rather will *nothingness* than *not will*" (*Genealogy of Morals*, Third Essay, 97). Nietzsche in turn is playing with an old idea of nature's *horror vacui* that can be traced back—through Plato and Aristotle—to Parmenides. The idea of enchantment filling the void can also be read in the edited volume *The Re-Enchantment of the World*: "The thesis of this volume, then, is that there is a variety of secular and conscious strategies for re-enchantment, held together by their common aim of filling a God-shaped void" (2). The world seems incapable of facing the void of disenchantment, and when a personal enchanted God is dead, new secular forms of enchantment appear to fill the God-shaped void.

¹²⁰ For a different interpretation (studied Chapter One above), see Josephson-Storm's *The Myth of Disenchantment*, specially chapter 10 "The World of Enchantment; or, Max Weber at the End of History."

No one knows who will live in this cage in the future, or whether at the end of this tremendous development entirely new prophets will arise, or there will be a great rebirth of old ideas and ideals, or, if neither, mechanized petrification, embellished with a sort of convulsive self-importance (*PE*, 182).

However, my point is that by translating *Entzauberung* as disenchantment a different reading is possible. I am not arguing for a re-enchantment *qua* magic happening in the modern world but rather for an enchantment *qua* mystery. Although the decline of magic cannot be reversed, the decline of magic does not eclipse mystery. As I argued, the reference to gods and fate are names for these impersonal and mysterious forces that ‘strive for power’ over our lives:

The numerous gods of yore, divested of their magic [*entzaubert*] and hence assuming the shape of impersonal forces, arise from their graves, strive for power over our lives, and resume [*beginnen . . . wieder*] their eternal struggle among themselves (*SV*, 24).¹²¹

Although a new revelation of prophetic *Wiederzauberung* (re-magification) is uncertain, the impersonal forces are already “resuming” or “renewing” to enchant our modern world. Therefore, on the one hand, to expect Weber to have used re-enchantment (*Wiederzauberung*), mistakes the technical meaning that magic has in the concept of *Entzauberung der Welt* (the decline of magic in the world). On the other hand, to blame him for having described a modern world deprived of any source of enchantment, mistakenly reads the *Entzauberung der Welt* as the decline of mystery, thus failing to acknowledge the influence of the godlike value spheres striving for power over our lives.

¹²¹ “Die alten vielen Götter, entzaubert und daher in Gestalt unpersönlicher Mächte, entsteigen ihren Gräbern, streben nach Gewalt über unser Leben und beginnen untereinander wieder ihren ewigen Kampf” (Wissenschaft als Beruf, Politik als Beruf, ed. by Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Wolfgang Schluchter, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1992, 101).

In a first reading of “Science as a Vocation,” one may assert that the nature of disenchantment is the decline of magic; its consequence is the withdrawal of the sublime values, and its cause is the process of rationalization. But, if we accept the abovementioned conclusion that the problem is not about the decay of enchantment but rather the world’s incapability of *not* being enchanted, we may conclude, first, that mystery (embodied in the idea of fate) remains after the decline of magic. Thus, disenchantment not only cancels but also creates enchantment. Second, the devaluation or withdrawal of sublime values is followed by a mysterious revaluation that cannot be controlled by scientific means. Indeed, the value of science is itself affected by this revaluation. The value of science and technology in our present society is already the sign of a constellation of forces that struggle to dominate us. In short, the withdrawal of some values is followed (or rather, pushed) by the arrival of other values. Weber describes this process of devaluation and revaluation as the struggle between polytheistic gods. Third, not only disenchantment but also re-enchantment is caused by the process of rationalization, which—carried out by the struggle of different forces—is not a uniform process.

2) The connection between the decline of enchantment and the loss of the objectivity of ultimate values (in the sense that they have withdrawn from the public life) and meaning suggests that already for Weber, the category of enchantment was connected to a sense of mystery. Mystery is the hinge that joints enchantment and the creation of values and meaning, which is not part of the category of magic as a form of instrumental rationality. I therefore propose using the category of mystery as a way to illuminate the type of non-magical and not-

supernatural type of enchantment of the godlike value spheres, though I acknowledge that I am reading Weber against himself.¹²²

3) Weber's explicit correlation between disenchantment and the crisis of the objectivity of the ultimate values may confirm Bennett's view of the ethical dimension of enchantment. In other words, it seems plausible to imagine Weber agreeing that a new dispensation of enchantment in the world would secure a new ethical order. But, although I have shown how mystery persists in Weber's description of the modern disenchanted world (when magic has disappeared), it is not at all clear how mystery works as a producer of value. What remains vague is the assumed causal connection between mystery and the creation of values. Why does the loss of absolute mysteries (i.e., disenchantment of the world) lead to the crisis of the highest values? Or inversely, how does enchantment (i.e., mystery, wonder) found values and meaning? Why would mystery or wonder have an ethical potential to inspire our behavior?

Regarding the negative or unethical side of enchantment, which I criticize Bennett for not accounting for, it seems that Weber can only partially help us to think it through. Although Weber sowed the seeds for a critique of the process of rationalization, he did not carry out the critique. Maybe the destruction of Europe during the two world wars had to happen in order that the destructive side of the process of rationalization could come to the fore. While giving his "Science as a Vocation" lecture during World War I to a war-weary but still undefeated German audience, he could still justify a merely descriptive and neutral stand for his scientific

¹²² I mentioned in passing that Weber's concept of charisma (one of Weber's legitimations for domination) relates to the category of magic. Thus, it may be seen accurate to replace enchantment with charisma in different moments in the previous discussion. That would lead to the impression that I am suggesting the existence of a sort of a latent charisma (enchantment) at the level of all godlike value spheres. However, that is not the case. Since I am projecting anachronistically to Weber the meaning of enchantment developed in the tale, I argue for a non-magical, and thus *non-charismatic* form of enchantment. While there are priests, magicians, artists, politicians, etc., who may enchant us through their personal charisma, the category of charisma does not help to clarify the ways that impersonal forces enchant our familiar routines of everyday life.

work.¹²³ His aim was to understand the combination of circumstances that made it possible that some cultural phenomena (modern science, rational harmonious music, rational architecture, the press, capitalism, etc.) appeared in Western civilization only.¹²⁴ Since Europe had not yet turned itself into ashes, he was not compelled by history to ask whether something in Western civilization should be amended. The task of reflecting upon the destructive side of the process of rationalization was assigned by history to some thinkers that came after him. And yet, as I said, the seed for this critique was already in Weber's thesis. Contrasting common interpretations, disenchantment qua lack of mystery was not the proposition that Weber offered to the reflection to come, but rather, it was the idea that the process of rationalization is subsumed under the fate of some modern irrational gods. There is a short distance from a figurative struggle of the modern impersonal gods to possess us, to the literal annihilation of women, men and children in the two world wars. Even before officials (embodying the banality of evil) built concentration camps, Weber already insinuated how instrumental and bureaucratic rationality could be used to advance values and ends that could not be themselves justified by the same instrumental and bureaucratic rationality. To ripen the seed and thus

¹²³ Let me add two points regarding Weber's defense of the value neutrality of science. First, Weber engaged deeply in politics during his lifetime. Thus, while he defended the neutrality of the Professor in the lecture room, he did not reject that the same Professor may engage in politics outside her academic duties. That he may not keep that separation of spheres for which he argued, does not refute his ideal. About how Weber's political positions *shaped* his scientific work, see Andrew Zimmerman, "Decolonizing Weber," in *Postcolonial Studies*, vol. 9, No. 1, 2006. Second, although the lecture "Science as a Vocation" speaks about the neutrality of science, the text itself is not neutral. Rather than a scientific text, the lecture is a philosophical piece *about* the practice and pre-conditions for science. The lecture discusses value and meaning, precisely the topics that are beyond science's jurisdiction. Its philosophical nature is (performatively) demonstrated in the fact that we are still reading it a century later—contrary to what he would have expected from a scientific work. According to Weber, in science "we all know that what we have achieved will be obsolete in ten, twenty, or fifty years. That is the fate, indeed, that is the very meaning (*Sinn*) of scientific work" (*SV*, 11).

¹²⁴ In the author's introduction added to the revised version of *The Protestant Ethic*, Weber writes: "A product of modern Europe civilization, studying any problem of universal history, is bound to ask himself to what combination of circumstances the fact should be attributed that in Western civilization, and in Western civilization only, cultural phenomena have appeared which (as we like to think) lie in a line of development having *universal* significance and value" (*PE*, 13).

develop the negative and destructive side of enchantment, I turn in the next chapter to *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

Chapter Three: The Dialectic of Disenchantment

Through my discussion in the previous chapters, the meaning of the thesis of the disenchantment of the world has been changed. By taking seriously Weber's reference to the value spheres as modern gods, I have argued that disenchantment is a mode of enchantment produced by these modern gods. At stake is the struggle of multiple forces of enchantment: disenchantment names the decline of some forces in response to competing forces of enchantment. By focusing merely on the decline of magic or religion, one misses the correlated phenomenon of the growth of some other source of enchantment. Weber did not, however, explicitly associate the notion of enchantment with the value spheres. Since *Entzauberung* meant for him the decline of magic, he associated the process of rationalization (in the various values spheres) only with the continuous decline of magic. Hence, the enchanting part of the process of rationalization remained understudied. My own task of reading Weber beyond himself opens space for an inquiry about Weber's modern gods from the perspective of the category of enchantment. Consequently, I need to look elsewhere to illuminate the logic of enchantment and disenchantment. In this chapter, I focus on Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* to further clarify the entanglement of disenchantment (enlightenment) and enchantment (myth), and to clarify why *both* seem to share the same aim of *dominating nature*.

In a previous chapter I criticized Bennett's overly benign version of enchantment, and I claimed that even Weber does not help us consider the unethical side of enchantment. A glimpse into the destructive side of enchantment is what we can gain from *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Perhaps the different historical context of Horkheimer and Adorno explains

why they were able to explore the darker side of enchantment. While Weber during World War I gave his “Science as a Vocation” lecture to a war-weary but still undefeated German audience, Horkheimer and Adorno worked together on *Dialectic of Enlightenment* during their World War II exile in California. The brightness of the Southern Californian skies contrasted with the task of explaining the somber horror of Nazi Germany. They reflected on several topics: the inherent tendency of Enlightenment reason to self-destruct; how reason regresses into unreason; and how progress leads not to freedom but to domination. Thus, in this text I search for clues about both the entanglement of enchantment and disenchantment and the unethical role of enchantment in the domination of nature. *Dialectic of Enlightenment* explores the less divine and more demonic behavior of the modern gods.

This chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section, I study Joshua Landy and Michael Saler’s introduction to their edited volume *The Re-Enchantment of the World: Secular Magic in a Rational Age*. They articulate what they call *secular enchantment* in opposition to both the dialectical model and the overly pessimistic tone of Horkheimer and Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. I argue that the entanglement of enchantment and disenchantment on which their own *secular enchantment* is based resembles—more than Landy and Saler are willing to acknowledge—the dialectic movement affirmed in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. More importantly, Landy and Saler’s secular enchantment (like Weber’s, Bennett’s, and Josephson-Storm’s) avoids any reference to a negative side of enchantment. They want to reject enchantment’s delusionary part and keep its delightful part. I argue that this rejection is already delusionary.

In the second section, I study Horkheimer and Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment* with the goal of exploring the delightfully destructive part of enchantment. My goal is to further

clarify Weber's modern gods and the process of rationalization. For that purpose, I focus in my reading of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* on some key concepts: *domination of nature*, extirpation of *animism*, *fate*, *repetition*, *sacrifice*, the *incommensurable*, and the *reversal* within human subjectivity. I argue that although the modern gods differ considerably from one another, they are one-sided when it comes to their project of dominating nature—this project seems to work like an unquestionable fate.

By giving such importance to the notion of *domination* as the core of the process of rationalization, my reading raises the question, who or what dominates? Since even the gods (i.e., the values spheres) fall prey to the fate of rationalization, who or what sets the process of rationalization in movement? Are we facing a tragicomic contradiction in which an all-powerful subject is subjected to its own creations? Or is it just the tragic destiny of facing *nature* as an untamable *other*?

The reversal that occurs in the human subject that *Dialectic of Enlightenment* studies is essential to one who wishes to think his way out of the process of rationalization. While the text tries to clarify the reversal of Enlightenment, in which the courageous resolution to be mature and use one's own understanding leads to an undesired end (i.e., immaturity and proletarianization), I must also acknowledge that any attempt to criticize enlightenment's critical approach (a paradoxical critique of critique) enacts another reversal—as if both critiques cancel one another, and we regress to a pre-critical stage. It seems that the process of rationalization grows stronger despite all attempts to overcome it: the critique of the critique gets absorbed within the process.

My aim in studying the entanglement of enchantment and disenchantment and the unethical side of this process, as these are stated in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, is to complicate

the overly simplistic reading of Weber's thesis of the disenchantment of the world (what I have called the *tale*). Why is it relevant to complicate the tale? Because from the point of view of Weber's thesis, after having complicated it through *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the apparent solutions to the "simplistic" readings of the tale (Bennett's enchanted materialism, Josephson-Storm's magic, and Landy and Saler's secular enchantment) turn out to be part of the problem. The process of rationalization subsumes what the "simplistic" readings regard as a way out of this process.

The attempt to find some way out the process of rationalization begins by finding some type of enchantment that is useless to the process of rationalization. Since the process of rationalization—as we will see—is permeated with the project of dominating nature, the question becomes whether there is a type of enchantment that is useless in dominating nature. I propose that by confronting enchantment (mystery and wonder) with the project of dominating nature I can evaluate enchantment's ethical and unethical conditions. Indeed, it is through this confrontation that the darker side of enchantment comes to the fore. In my study of the category of wonder, which I present in Part II, awareness of this darker side of enchantment helps me avoid the frequent naïveté of contemporary studies of wonder, which are satisfied simply by enumerating the essential elements of every experience of wonder.

D) Secular Enchantment

In their introduction to the edited volume *The Re-Enchantment of the World: Secular Magic in a Rational Age*, Joshua Landy and Michael Saler distinguish three forms of modern re-enchantment. The first corresponds to an anachronistic survival of old modes of enchantment:

the “periodic resurgence of traditional ideas and practices (for example, the survival in some quarters of exorcism rites), or again the sporadic generation of new creeds, such as spiritualism, that have sought to replace the old.”¹²⁵ This old-fashioned mode of enchantment is based on a *binary approach*. According to Landy and Saler, “ever since the seventeenth century, elites have tended to define enchantment as the residual, subordinate ‘other’ to modernity’s rational, secular, and progressive side, as a form of duplicity associated with the ‘superstitions’ of organized religion and the dogmatic authority of monarchic rule” (*RW*, 3). In this binary model, enchantment did not disappear completely but was marginalized as “residual phenomena both subordinate to and explicable by secular rationality” (*RW*, 3).¹²⁶ Whoever defended this residual enchantment was labeled by its critics as a reactionary anti-modernist. Both the reactionary anti-modernists and their critics accepted the binary distinction between the rational disenchanting modernity and its “other”—the irrational enchanted pre-modernity.¹²⁷

The second form of modern re-enchantment is what Landy and Saler call “insidious re-enchantment.” According to them, this form is discussed at length by Theodor Adorno and others and involves “the purported exploitation, that is, of a helpless population’s unwitting tendency to invest media and markets with a mystical aura, in order to keep the capitalistic system in place” (*RW*, 4). Instead of being binary, the insidious re-enchantment is based on a *dialectical approach*. Here modernity itself, and not premodern reactionary forces, is posited as irrational; it is “a mythic construct no less enchanted than the myths it sought to overcome”

¹²⁵ Joshua Landy and Michael Saler, *The Re-Enchantment of the World: Secular Magic in a Rational Age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 2. Hereafter parenthetically cited as *RW*.

¹²⁶ This form of modern re-enchantment correlates to the fourth element in Bennett’s summary, mentioned in Chapter One. Bennett writes, “even in societies in which rationalization has advanced the furthest, recalcitrant fugitives from rationalization persist, and these errant forces are understood through the categories of the mystical and the erotic” (*EM*, 57).

¹²⁷ For instance, the text identifies George Bataille as a reactionary anti-modernist who “contrasted ‘primitive’ cultures of enchanted energies and irrational expenditures with ‘modern cultures’ distorted by a desiccated form of rationality” (*RW*, 4).

(*RW*, 4). Modernity itself is enchanted, but in this context enchantment means deception. While the binary approach grants merit to modernity, the dialectical approach views “modernity as uniformly oppressive and inhumane, a condition exacerbated by its hypocritical claims to reason, progress, and freedom” (*RW*, 4).¹²⁸

The third form—which is the object of the edited volume—is the fully *secular enchantment*. Instead of being binary or dialectical, this form follows an *antinomial approach*. For Landy and Saler, modernity embraces seeming contraries, “such as rationality and wonder, secularism and faith.” Thus, this modern fully secular enchantment is the one that “simultaneously enchants and disenchants, which delights but does not delude” (*RW*, 3). While the binary and dialectical approaches follow the logic of the “either/or,” this antinomial approach explores the “fruitful tensions between seemingly irreconcilable forces and ideas,” and it defines modernity less by “binaries arranged in an implicit hierarchy, or by the dialectical transformation of one term into its opposite, than by contradictions, oppositions, and antinomies: modernity is messy” (*RW*, 6-7).

Secular enchantment is supposed to fill the void that the death of God created. It fills the void neither with new versions of old creeds (the first form) nor with demons disguised as angels (the second form). Since it fills God’s empty space, the secular strategies of re-enchantment assume the role in society that God used to have:

If the world is to be re-enchanted, it must accordingly be reimbued not only with *mystery* and *wonder* but also with *order*, perhaps even with *purpose*; there must be a hierarchy of *significance* attaching to objects and events encountered; individual lives, and moments within those lives, must be susceptible again to *redemption*; there must be a new, intelligible locus for the *infinite*; there must be a way of carving out, within the fully profane world, a set of spaces which somehow possess the allure of the *sacred*; there must be everyday

¹²⁸ The text declares that those affiliated with this dialectical approach include Marx, Nietzsche, Weber, Freud, Horkheimer, and Adorno.

miracles, exceptional events which go against (and perhaps even alter) the accepted order of things; and there must be secular *epiphanies*, moments of being in which, for a brief instant, the center appears to hold, and the promise is held out of a quasi-mystical union with something larger than oneself (*RW*, 2).

With a list of features like order, purpose, hierarchy of significance, redemption, infinity, the sacred, miracles, and quasi-mystical epiphanies, I wonder, what kind of definition of *secularity* are the editors using in this supposedly “fully secularized” version of enchantment? Indeed, the clear boundaries between this too-godlike “secular” third form of enchantment and the first relic-like form of enchantment start to blur. Beside minor differences both forms look alike, which makes me question the justification to keep them apart.

There is, however, a relevant difference between the old religious and the secular forms of enchantment. To fill the vast void produced by the flight of the *One* (Christian) God, a *multiplicity* of secular enchanted strategies are needed: “diversity is a positive requirement, since as Nietzsche understood so well, the God to be replaced served multiple functions simultaneously” (*RW*, 2). Both the tale of disenchantment and the residual form of modern enchantment (the first form) are grounded in a single religious model of enchantment: God, the only source of enchantment, is currently absent (disenchantment) or barely present (the residual form of enchantment). In other words, secular enchantment gathers *multiple* and *diverse* sources of enchantment to replace the former singular one. While secular enchantment does not necessarily reject the tale (based on this divine single model of disenchantment), it supplements the tale by describing a new historical constellation that fosters multiple forms of enchantments.

Where does Weber fit in this classification? According to Landy and Saler, “Max Weber’s thought could be interpreted as straddling the binary and dialectic approaches” (*RW*,

5). Their introduction to this volume argues vehemently against Weber's and the *Dialectic of Enlightenment's* binary and dialectic views on disenchantment, which seek to

lay the Weberian and Adornian ghosts, with their seemingly endless binary and dialectic complaints, to rest once and for all. Freed from the sinister specters of *Kulturkritik*, antinomial theorists of modernity are at last able to put on display a set of enchantments that are *voluntary*, being chosen (*pace* Adorno) by autonomous agents rather than insidiously imposed by power structures, *respectable*, compatible as they are (*pace* Weber) with secular rationality, and *multiple*, being replacements, each one in its own, for a polymorphous God (*RW*, 7).

My previous analysis of "Science as a Vocation" confirms that the binary approach—construed on the fixed opposition of enchantment and disenchantment—does not entirely apprehend Weber's thesis. The binary approach may explain the type of *reactionary religious re-enchantment* of Weber's religiosity in *pianissimo*. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Weber believed that in a world that lacks any "authentic" prophecy, those who decide to sacrifice their intellect and are incapable of the heroic acceptance of science find it suitable to live their religiosity in smaller groups. Thus, religious enchantment did not completely disappear; it became marginalized and subordinated to secular rationality. But Weber's thesis cannot be reduced to the binary model of this marginalized religious enchantment. As we have seen, the decline of magic and the crisis of the Christian God do not cancel other sources of mystery. For Weber, plenty of enchantment within modern disenchantment is neither residual nor merely subordinated to secular rationality because secular rationality itself is already stimulated by some type of non-residual enchantment. This non-residual and non-binary enchantment cannot be subordinated to secular rationality because the former produces the latter—and the cause (enchantment) cannot be subordinated to its effect (secular rationality). Moreover, displaying a set of enchantments that are respectable and compatible with secular

rationality does not require Weber's "peace," since he himself already insinuated it in his reference to the modern gods.

Indeed, to my eyes Landy and Saler's too-godlike type of secular enchantment looks "residual." I turn their critique against them. It is not Weber who seems entrapped in the binomial or dialectical approach; rather, Landy and Saler's supposedly antimomial model seems to be covertly binomial. For instance, must capitalism always fill the void that the death of God created? While capitalism may indeed enchant us with promises of redemption, miracles and quasi-mystical epiphanies, capitalism should not be reduced to these manifestations of enchantment. There is also a non-religious and non-magical type of enchantment that enchants the financial market. The task is to explore a type of "secular" enchantment that lies beyond modern versions of magicians and priests. As Nietzsche knew, following the death of God, we will continue to live in God's shadow. A definition of secular enchantment that is satisfied by becoming God's shadow (i.e., replacing the role formerly occupied by God) seems to fail to live up to its promise. Since Landy and Saler's secular enchantment cannot escape God's shadow, they cannot apprehend some enchanted phenomena beyond God and its shadow.¹²⁹

¹²⁹ As noted in Chapter Two, I use the concept of enchantment to study how the modern gods possess us. Since religion names only one god among others, among these other (non-religious) gods there are types of enchantment that differ from the religious and residual modes of enchantment. And yet, I acknowledge that by taking seriously Weber's analogy of the value spheres as polytheistic gods, we may think that all dimensions of our life (economic, political, law, erotic, etc.) are just versions of the religious. Again, it would seem that if I call the economic sphere a god, then it is valid to think of the economy as a mere variation of theology. But that conclusion confuses religion (one sphere among others) with the idea of modern gods (which denotes the different value spheres). If I do not want to project onto the different spheres the connotations associated with the divine, what do I gain by calling them gods? Why not consider the spheres as systems (Luhman) that interact with one another without any reference to the divine (keeping the divine as just one system among others)? Currently, the economic sphere is colonizing other spheres; by calling the spheres gods, am I not promoting a different—in this case, religious—form of colonization? For two reasons I advocate for Weber's reference to modern gods and for use of the category of enchantment at the level of these gods (moving here beyond Weber). First, the notion of gods conveys some element of mystery, which concepts like spheres or systems do not. I do not want to call this element of mystery irrational because what *Dialectic of Enlightenment* shows is precisely the entanglement of the rational and irrational—which makes it impossible to keep them apart. Because I want to explore this

If we now compare the dialectical approach (into which Horkheimer, Adorno, and even Weber seem to fit) to the antinomial, do we see a clear difference? According to *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, enlightenment turns into its *seeming* opposite (myth) because myth has never been enlightenment's opposite. The concept of opposition—construed either in a binary or “dialectical” fashion—misleads us as we attempt to apprehend the entanglement of enlightenment (disenchantment) and myth (enchantment). The entanglement explored in depth in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* seems to be closer to Landy and Saler's antinomial—i.e., simultaneous—embracing of seeming contraries than the authors are willing to acknowledge.

Granted that the oppositional structure does not define the dialectic of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, what is the difference, then, between, on the one hand, Weber's and the *Dialectic of Enlightenment's* kind of enchantment, and, on the other hand, the secular enchantment of this volume? Is it enough difference to affirm that enchantment deludes according to the former, whereas it delights according to the latter?¹³⁰ The difference seems to be important: while secular enchantment delights some with its modernity, it is hard to imagine Horkheimer and Adorno delighted by modernity. But it is precisely *Dialectic of*

entanglement, I also want to avoid categories that pretend to be neutral or that seem to privilege only the rational side. As in every analogy, similarities and differences link the analogy's two terms. On the one hand, the values spheres and the gods are similar in the respect that they enchant us by asking for our absolute devotion (there is no rationality to discern between gods). On the other hand, they differ in their mode or type of enchantment. While, properly speaking, gods enchant in a religious way, when the term gods is analogically applied to the values spheres, the gods enchant in a non-religious way. At this point I affirm that the divine does not have a monopoly on the sources of mystery. Second, the notions of gods and their enchantment convey the idea of an experience between the enchanted devotee and the enchanting god. It is at this “subjective” or “experiential” level that I want to place my study. The concept of wonder—through which I am going to deepen the concept of enchantment—denotes both the emotional response and the object of wonder that triggered that response. While the object of wonder may have changed considerably in modernity relative to the past, the experience and the function of wonder for the construction of society may not have changed. For instance, economy can be studied through numbers that render behaviors into probabilistic tendencies that are applied to equations in order to make predictable patterns. But enchantment helps to clarify what happens to the consumer who contemplates the vitrine (think here about the initial sequence of the movie “Breakfast at Tiffany's”). The numbers are based on what happens before the vitrine, but they cannot explain everything that happens there. The enchantment of the modern gods may help to explain what happens in front of the vitrine.

¹³⁰ “There remains a third type of enchantment, unjustly overlooked, which is the modern enchantment par excellence: one which simultaneously enchants and disenchants, which delights but does not delude” (*RW*, 3).

Enlightenment's refusal to sharply distinguish between delusion and delight that causes me to remain under the spell of Weber's and *Dialectic of Enlightenment's* specters and to listen to the "pessimistic tone." To think modern enchantment is to face the difficulty of separating delusion from delight. Hideous is when the delight masks a delusion (i.e., a delightful delusion or a delusionary delight) that helps keep the exploitation in place. To only focus on the delightful part of enchantment is itself delusional.

In my study of wonder, I adopt Weber's and *Dialectic of Enlightenment's* diagnosis that the growing process of rationalization, with its restless thirst to dominate nature, is turning the world into an iron cage, while it is transforming nature, to use Heidegger's famous expression, into a gigantic gasoline station.¹³¹ The process of rationalization has become an organism with a life of its own, and it potentially is swallowing us up. The problem is not that the secular modern world simultaneously enchants and disenchants, or that it both delights and deludes us. Rather, both enchantment and disenchantment—delight and delusion—seem to nourish rather than stop (or at least readdress) the process of rationalization.¹³² While I agree that it may feel good to experience wonder, my approach is not directly concerned with the pleasure that wonder can cause. A world rich in wonder and delight does not prevent (and maybe even nourishes) social and economic injustice or our current ecological catastrophe. My goal is to correlate wonder not with delight or displeasure but with wonder's capacity to stop

¹³¹ "The world now appears as an object open to the attacks of calculative thought, attacks that nothing is believed able any longer to resist. Nature becomes a gigantic gasoline station, an energy source for modern technology and industry" (Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, translated by John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund, New York: Harper Perennial, 1966, 50).

¹³² The Brazilian photographer Sebastiao Salgado reported that at the end of the Gulf war, people were struck by wonder when they saw hundreds of Kuwait's oil wells on fire—which the Iraqi forces burned before they left Kuwait. Although I agree that such a scene can trigger wonder, this is not the kind of wonder that I want to study. And yet, at this point, I recognize that I may fail. Perhaps there is no way to keep apart the wonder that stops turning the planet into a gigantic gasoline station (which I want to study) from the wonder that wonders at the spectacle of the world turned into flames.

or readdress the Weberian process of rationalization and *Dialectic of Enlightenment's* domination of nature.¹³³

To close this part of my discussion I summarize my critique of Landy and Saler's classification of three forms of modern re-enchantment. First, their description of secular enchantment is so religious in tone and vocabulary that it becomes a new version of the first religious form of enchantment. In the first form, religious enchantment is residual and subordinated to secular rationality, while in the third form, secular rationality as such becomes religious. Unintentionally, Landy and Saler have rendered secular enchantment as a whole residual.¹³⁴ Second, the concept of *opposition* does not apprehend the dialectical approach of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Indeed, as we will see in the next section, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* seems to be closer to the simultaneous embracing of the seeming contraries of Landy and Saler's secular enchantment than these authors are willing to acknowledge. Third, Landy and Saler's volume argues that secular enchantment's antinomial approach gathers the fruitful tensions between contradictory elements together, but it excludes from the antinomy

¹³³ Perhaps I will be accused of engaging in an overly pessimistic and even "Manichaeic" reading of the process of rationalization and the related category of the domination of nature (as being the embodiments of the principle of evil in confrontation with the principle of good, revealed in an experience of ontological wonder). My point, however, is that we must start by gaining a position from which we can reflect upon the process of rationalization. The language of stopping or readdressing this process is not meant to convey the idea of abolishing the process; instead, it is meant to stop the mindless flow of the process and allow us to reflect on it. Ontological wonder may put a stop to our fascination and absorption with this process. Hence, ontological wonder is not going to save us, but it could open a fissure in this automated movement so that reflection can occur. Moreover, as we will see in Part II, the experience of ontological wonder challenges this "Manichean" structure that I have adopted in Part I.

¹³⁴ I am not opposed to the idea of an indistinction or indiscretion that would blur the boundaries between the secular and the religious. However, I am suspicious of this particular attempt because the religious seems to subsume the secular; the dialogue turns into a monologue, and what is indistinct becomes a covered—very much—"distinct" religious discourse. While I acknowledge that the first form treats religion and secularity as binary oppositions and that the third form seems to blur that binary opposition, I claim that the blurring hides the supremacy of the religious. By turning the secular into a manifestation of God's shadow, Landy and Saler are actually blocking the possibility of thinking about a place of religious and secular indiscretion. For a different version of religious and secular indiscretion, in which both manifest their enigmatic nature without being reduced to each other, see Thomas Carlson's *Indiscretion: Finitude and the Naming of God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), and *The Indiscrete Image: Infinitude and Creation of the Human* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

the tension between delight and deception—falling into the temptation of keeping only the delightful part. Hence, from the beginning the volume excludes an essential element that should call for thought. From our ancient and modern teachers, we have learned that delusion can result in destruction, but what is monstrous and, thus, meaningful to consider is the destruction driven by delight.

II) Dialectic of Enlightenment

The most common interpretation argues—as do Landy and Saler—that an oppositional or binary structure supports the arguments in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. For instance, Josephson-Storm confesses: “I see myself as a disciple of critical theory, and I find *Dialectic* intensely useful and have returned to it repeatedly; yet it is effectively a late expression of an old myth. It rests on a set of basically mythical binaries (myth/enlightenment, nature/human) whose breaches it stages, but nevertheless maintains” (*MD*, 10). Differently, I will argue that not only are the breaches staged, but through them the binary structure falls apart—though it is not clear where it goes. I start with passages in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* that seem to corroborate the common interpretation.

1) Opposition between Enlightenment and Myth

Dialectic of Enlightenment begins by showing its inheritance of Weber’s thesis: “Enlightenment’s program was the disenchantment of the world. It wanted to dispel myths, to overthrow fantasy with knowledge.”¹³⁵ The text’s first thesis is the opposition between

¹³⁵ Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, edited by Gunzelin Schmid Noerr and translated by Edmund Jephcott, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 1. Cited parenthetically

enlightenment and myth. Given that myth is understood (in this early passage of the text) as fantasy and mystery, enlightenment dispels myths by replacing mystery with knowledge: “there shall be neither mystery nor any desire to reveal mystery” (*DE*, 2). As suggested by a (arguably superficial) reading of Weber, the dissolution of mystery (myth) at the hands of enlightened knowledge yields the disenchantment of the world.¹³⁶

Moreover, like Weber, the text places this opposition of enlightenment and myth within a broad historical process of rationalization.¹³⁷ Different historical events become instances or moments in the growing process of rationalization. For example, both the birth of Greek philosophy as a rational overcoming of the immorality of Greek mythology and the dawn of modern science as a rational surmounting of the mythological remnants of scholastic philosophy are moments within the process of rationalization. The plot in this process of rationalization describes different historical moments in which enlightenment opposes and supersedes myth.

hereafter as *DE*. As a starting point, the reader should have in mind Immanuel Kant’s definition of enlightenment: “*Enlightenment is man’s emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one’s own understanding without the guidance of another. This immaturity is self-incurred if its cause is not lack of understanding, but lack of resolution and courage to use it without the guidance of another. The motto of enlightenment is therefore: Sapere aude! Have courage to use your own understanding*” (“An answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?” in *Kant’s Political Writings*, trans. H.B. Nisbel, ed. Hans Reiss, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970, 54). About the notion of dialectic, and negative dialectic in particular, Adorno declares to his students: “what I mean by [negative dialectic] is not this superficial, skeletal format, but the very fibre of thought, its inner structure, the way in which, as Hegel used to express it, the concept moves towards its opposite, the non-conceptual” (*Lectures on Negative Dialectics*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008, 6). At stake is understanding how it is possible that the courageous resolution to be mature and the use of our own understanding leads to the opposite: immaturity (lack of understanding, or an understanding that is guided by the drive for domination, which signals some heteronomy at the core of our seemingly autonomous understanding).

¹³⁶ After the previous chapters, I hope that the reader can better qualify the ambiguity of that sentence. For Weber, it is true that enlightened knowledge yields to the disenchantment of the world. But it would be a mistake to think that the disenchantment of the world means the dissolution of mystery. As I have said, there is for Weber plenty of enchantment within the idea of modern disenchantment.

¹³⁷ Here *Dialectic of Enlightenment* follows Weber’s insight that the process of intellectualization (which I take here as a synonym of rationalization) cannot only be a modern phenomenon. According to Weber, “scientific progress is a fraction, and indeed the most important fraction, of the process of intellectualization to which we have been subjected for thousands of years and which normally provokes extremely negative reactions nowadays” (*SV*, 12).

I focus on the nature of enlightened knowledge. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, the knowledge that dispels myths is technological: “Technology is the essence of this knowledge. It aims to produce neither concepts nor images, nor the joy of understanding, but method, exploitation of the labor of others, capital” (*DE*, 2). At the core of technology is the idea of “exploitation of the labor of others,” which has the domination of nature as its aim: “What human beings seek to learn from nature is how to use it to dominate wholly both it and human beings” (*DE*, 2). At this stage in the text, domination seems to have two distinct objects: nature and human beings.

Following the Nietzschean insight of the will to power, Horkheimer and Adorno subsume enlightened knowledge under the drive for domination: “enlightenment stands in the same relationship to things as the dictator to human beings. He knows them to the extent that he can manipulate them” (*DE*, 6). But to dominate nature the latter must become an object. To know an *object* means that one knows how to dominate or manipulate it. The pragmatic aim of exploitation correlates with an epistemological change. Domination requires *and* nourishes the objectification of nature; objectification is both what allows domination *and* an effect of domination.¹³⁸

To manipulate something is to know how to produce it; in other words, knowing how to produce something renders a thing into an object.¹³⁹ But this knowledge is far from being

¹³⁸ On the category of domination and its classification as a legal, traditional, or charismatic form of legitimation, see Max Weber’s *Economy and Society*, edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), specially volume II.

¹³⁹ The idea that links knowledge to production can be traced to Lukács and, further back, to Giambattista Vico’s *verum-factum* principle. According to Martin Jay, this principle states that “knowledge of the true was itself dependent on the making of the objects of that knowledge. That is, ultimate knowledge of seemingly hidden realities, essences behind appearances such as Kant’s elusive ‘thing-in-itself,’ was given only to those who had fabricated that reality (in the way an artist can understand the work he or she has created)” (Introduction to Axel Honneth’s *Reification: A New Look at an Old Idea*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, 5). See also, Martin Jay, “Vico and Western Marxism,” in *Fin-de-siècle Socialism and Other Essays* (New York: Routledge, 1988).

inoffensive: to know how to produce something changes that thing's essence. In other words, the epistemological condition of knowing *objects*, i.e., to know how to produce things, has an ontological effect: things are not anymore in themselves, but rather they are for us. "The man of science knows things to the extent that he can make them. Their 'in-itself' becomes 'for him.' In their transformation, the essence of things is revealed as always the same, a substrate of domination" (*DE*, 6). The thing "in-itself" becomes—as a produced object ready for manipulation—a thing "for-us." For my reading what is relevant is not whether the text implies that at some point *things* were in themselves and then were converted into things for us but that the "for-us" as the essence of things reveals itself as always the same: a substrate of domination. Again, I emphasize not that things are "for us" but that the "for us" is identified with *domination*.

Moreover, while manipulation—knowing how to make things—transforms nature into objects, the process of manipulation also extricates the *subject* from nature: "human beings purchase the increase in their power with estrangement from that over which it is exerted" (*DE*, 6). This estrangement from nature simultaneously creates the subject. Thus, both subject and object are generated in this process of domination. Instead of a subject dominating an object, *domination* "creates" both subjects and objects out of nature. At the core of subjects and objects is the same force: domination. How should we conceptualize domination? Clearly, it cannot be understood solely as a habit or human activity (nor the outcome of this activity) because the human subject seems to be the consequence of domination. Weber's sociological classification of domination in terms of its legitimization (as legal, traditional, or charismatic) already assumes what domination is. By underlining the relevant and obscure nature of domination as described in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, I move dangerously close to erroneously

hypostasizing it (as a new version of the old ontological category of substance, *hypokeimenon*). And yet, our personal and individual thirst for domination seems to be the manifestation or “instantiation” of domination as the substrate—as that which gives unity before the bifurcation of subject and object—of the world.¹⁴⁰ Can the human subject be blamed for enacting its substrate?

Still within the first thesis of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*—i.e., the opposition between enlightenment and myth—the text further qualifies the idea of disenchantment: “The disenchantment of the world means the extirpation of animism” (*DE*, 2). Since myth and animism seem to be essentially linked, enlightenment opposes both. The attack of myth becomes the extirpation of animism. Schiller’s poem “The Greek Gods” comes to mind. Interestingly, disenchantment is not described as the *outcome* of enlightened knowledge; rather, it is identified with it: disenchantment is enlightened knowledge. Disenchantment is not a state (the decline of magic) but a project (to extirpate myth, animism, magic, fantasy, mystery). It seems safe to deduce that when disenchantment is identified with enlightenment,

¹⁴⁰ The ontological relevance that I attribute to the category of domination in my reading of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* can be illuminated through Lukács’s neo-Kantian concept of *Gegenstandlichkeitform* (form of objectivity). The form of objectivity is the neo-Kantian version of Kant’s a priori preconditions of experience. It names the underlying cognitive pattern, a quasi-transcendental precondition of every fact and value, which in itself is not a fact. Rather, the facts are facts in their relation to this form. But unlike Kant, who attributed the transcendental forms and categories to the sensibility and intellect of the subject, these quasi-transcendental forms are independent of the subject’s mind; indeed, they are part of the world, disclosed in our practical engagement in the world. In other words, the form of objectivity refers to cultural structures or contextual preconditions of meaning that are not eternal principles disconnected from the contingency in history. For Lukács, rather than domination (as in my reading of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*) or the structure of consciousness (as in Kant), the structure of commodity-relations functions as the paradigmatic model for the *form of objectivity* in a capitalist society. While in precapitalist societies the economy does not determine social or symbolic meanings, in capitalism cultural patterns are derived from the economic system. Lukács’s influence on *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is patent: “On its own account, even in advance of total planning, the economic apparatus endows commodities with the values which decide the behavior of people” (*DE*, 21). However, according to my interpretation, Horkheimer and Adorno posit that the category of *domination* (and not the category of commodity-relations) functions as the *form of objectivity* and is the basis for *reification*. For the concept of the form of objectivity, see: Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, translated by Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1971); Andrew Feenberg, *The Philosophy of Praxis* (London: Verso, 2014), 73.

myth and animism can be identified with enchantment. Disenchantment as a program aims to dispel enchantment.

The attack on animism has two legitimizations. First, animism is attacked because it fosters multiplicity. Against multiplicity, the process of rationalization and domination is driven by the longing for synthesis and unity: “The world becomes chaos, and synthesis salvation” (*DE*, 3); “formal logic was the high school of unification. It offered Enlightenment thinkers a schema for making the world calculable” (*DE*, 4). By reducing something into “one,” the thing is calculable, and what is calculable, in turn, can be used (becomes a means) to make profit. Indeed, profit depends on having rendered multiple things into calculable unities. Calculability and utility are the standards to count anything as real: “For enlightenment, anything which does not conform to the standard of calculability and utility must be viewed with suspicion” (*DE*, 3). Only what can be encompassed by unity through numbers exists: “For the Enlightenment, anything which cannot be resolved into numbers, and ultimately into one, is illusion” (*DE*, 5).

While the gods and animas infuse nature with qualities, the domination of nature—through the power of synthesis—reduces the qualitative multiplicity of animism into the uniformity of quantity: “all gods and qualities must be destroyed” (*DE*, 5). Domination mediates everything, making dissimilar things comparable by reducing them to abstract quantities: it “subdues the abundance of qualities. Nature, stripped of qualities, becomes the chaotic stuff of mere classification, and the all-powerful self becomes a mere having, an abstract identity” (*DE*, 6).¹⁴¹ Nature stripped of the qualities of spirits and transformed into

¹⁴¹ In the final analysis, Horkheimer and Adorno conclude that the impoverishing of nature’s rich qualitative multiplicity is due to the old philosophical thesis of the correlation between logos and being (or mind and things): “It is the identity of mind and its correlative, the unity of nature, which subdues the abundance of qualities” (*DE*, 6). Adorno accuses this correlation of idealism, in which the otherness of nature is tamed and shaped according

quantitative chaotic stuff ready to be classified (i.e., nature reduced to object) is, as I have said, the outcome of the power of domination, and, in turn, it reinforces the process of domination.¹⁴²

Second, and linked to the drive for synthesis, animism, too, is accused of being an anthropomorphic projection—i.e., the human subject projects itself into nature: “Enlightenment has always regarded anthropomorphism, the projection of subjective properties onto nature, as the basis of myth” (*DE*, 4). The multiplicity of spirits and demons that populate the world are reduced, according to the enlightened interpretation of myth, to mere projections of the human subject onto the world. Hence, the desire for synthesis and the accusation of anthropomorphism reduces the multiplicity of animism into numbers, and it makes the former qualitative multiplicity of animism appear to be illusion created by the human subject. What counts (i.e., matters) for the enlightened mind is what can be counted (calculated). And, of course, you cannot count (calculate) spirits because you cannot count on (trust) them.¹⁴³

to the human subject. But a reversal happens within this “abstract identity,” in which at the end of this correlation the all-powerful self turns into “a mere having.”

¹⁴² I return to the ambiguous nature of domination as stated in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. One can interpret the domination of nature from the viewpoint of an all-powerful and self-determined human subject, who, as the agent of domination, has first rendered nature into an object—stripping it of any animistic autonomy: “The manifold affinities between existing things are supplanted by the single relationship between the subject who confers meaning and the meaningless object, between rational significance and its accidental bearer” (*DE*, 7). The process of unification and the objectification of nature (through utility and calculability) triggers and reinforces the subject’s capacity for domination. However, we should not stop the analysis here. As I have already demonstrated, the subject also is a consequence of domination. In other words, the prominence of domination questions the privilege of a self-determined human subject. Since domination is the substrate of both subject and object, the strong autonomous subject loses its privilege, and it becomes the manifestation of the substrate that both constitutes and transcends the human subject. Within the logic of manipulation, although the thing “in-itself” becomes an object “for-us,” at the core of the “for-us” we find some drive that transcends the limits of the human subject: the “for-us” turns out to be “for-something-else.” Accordingly, we may ask, is the human subject really autonomous when it subjugates the world according to its thirst for domination? Or is it heteronomous when, under the spell of domination, it is subjugated by something above itself? Or is it the case that the concepts of autonomy and heteronomy cannot apprehend the relation between domination and the subject? I return later to the paradox of a subject that is dominated by domination.

¹⁴³ Despite the fact that Enlightenment criticizes animism’s anthropomorphism, I ask: Is Enlightenment itself free from anthropomorphism? A widespread interpretation of enlightenment and modernity ascribes their origin and development to the certainty of the Cartesian ego. According to this interpretation, the certainty achieved by the human subject replaces the empty place formerly occupied by God. The process of rationalization—grounded

To recap, the disenchantment of the world is identified with the program of enlightened knowledge that dispels the fantasy and mystery of myth. Enlightenment is part of the growing process of rationalization, which, being essentially technological, drives to dominate nature. Domination—as our substrate—implies and instills an epistemological (objectification of nature) and ontological change (things are essentially for us, but the “for-us” turns out to be for “something-else”). While mystery or mythological enchantment is characterized by multiplicity and anthropomorphic spirits (animism), disenchantment longs for unity and synthesis, which dissolve animism into a quantitative and calculable stuff ready to be manipulated.

in the certainty achieved by the human subject as the measurement of the world—eventually leads to the *humanization* of the entire world. For instance, Jane Bennett writes about Frederic Jameson’s interpretation of Weber: “For Jameson, Weber’s tale of rationalization and de-magification is the tale of the increasing humanization of the world” (*EM*, 187, note 25). Thus, if we assume that the human subject is in charge in the process of rationalization and domination (see the previous footnote), we face the paradox that Enlightenment’s attack on animism’s anthropomorphism induces the humanization of the world. Restated, the attempt to divest the world of the human shape (the attack on anthropomorphism) is driven by the task of reshaping the world according to the human shape (humanization). If the process of rationalization is interpreted as the “increasing humanization of the world,” then anthropomorphism was not canceled, it was transformed: an old version of the humanization of the world (animism) was replaced by a new version of the same humanization (enlightenment). Furthermore, is a critique of Enlightenment that comes from the same fountain of the ego cogito just another version of the humanization of the world? Or can we criticize enlightenment by defending animism on the grounds that it was not created by the human capacity to project itself onto nature? In this version, the critique would comprise a non-anthropomorphic animism that does not expand the enlightened humanization of the world. Could Horkheimer’s and Adorno’s critique of enlightenment embrace this latter version (a critique of animism that somehow keeps animism by getting rid of the anthropomorphic side)? In other words, could Horkheimer and Adorno envisage an animism that is *not* created by the human subject’s projection? And yet, by emphasizing the concept of *domination* in my reading of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, I question the privilege of a self-determined human subject. What seems to be the self-possession of the human subject dominating nature reverses to its own dispossession—indeed, we should not even refer here to a *reversal* because from the start the human subject has never been in charge. According to this interpretation, in which both animism and enlightenment have *domination* as their substrate, the privilege of the self-determined human being within the anthropomorphism of animism and the humanization of enlightenment is questioned, or at least their meaning becomes problematic. What kind of *humanization* are we talking about when the human subject, rather than being the agent, is a mere passive instrument of the “fateful” logic of domination, and when the human subject is annihilated precisely in the name of its self-preservation? According to this reading of domination, there is no paradox of an attack of anthropomorphism that aims to humanize the world because both animism and enlightenment are driven by “something” beyond the human. However, having conceded this de-centralized force in the midst of animism and enlightenment, I do not gain too much. Whether a self-determined but contradictory humanity drives domination or a passive humanity is driven by *domination*, the outcome seems the same: the process of rationalization is out of control. Thus, regardless of whether animism is anthropomorphic or non-anthropomorphic or whether enlightenment involves a humanization or non-humanization of the world, all seem to fuel the process of the domination of nature.

At our current stage in the process of rationalization, however, the technological knowledge that seeks to rule over nature by dispelling animism fails to reflect on itself: “on the way from mythology to logistics, thought has lost the element of reflection on itself, and machinery mutilates people today, even if it also feeds them” (*DE*, 29). The fight against animism also has finally removed any movement of self-awareness: “ruthless toward itself, the Enlightenment has eradicated the last remnant of its self-awareness. Only thought which does violence to itself is hard enough to shatter myths” (*DE*, 2). It is not clear whether reflection was once upon a time an integral part of myths that disappeared from myths through the influence of Enlightenment. Further, what does it mean that Enlightenment does violence to itself when it dispels myths? Is enlightenment free from any mythological remnant?

So far, Horkheimer and Adorno’s account seems to participate in the disenchantment tale: mystery has withdrawn because of the power of domination and calculation. Moreover, Horkheimer and Adorno’s idea that the process of rationalization has lost self-awareness suggests that their view differs from Weber’s view of science. Both agree that reflection and self-awareness currently lie outside science’s scope, but they evaluate this fact differently. Weber posits that reflection about the meaning of science should be kept outside science. Adorno and Horkheimer, in contrast, contend, first, that such moments are part of science and, second, that their current absence from science is indicative of the current crisis. Science’s lack of reflection and self-awareness signals a retreat of enlightenment back to mythology.

2) Entanglement of Enlightenment and Myth

The simple opposition between myth and Enlightenment is misleading because it apprehends only the surface of their relation. The text starts with that opposition but does not

end with it. *Dialectic of Enlightenment's* reputation comes from another more controversial thesis: "Myth is already enlightenment, and enlightenment reverts to mythology" (*DE*, xviii). The thesis of the entanglement of myth and enlightenment can be studied from two perspectives: from that of myth and its enlightened nature; and from that of enlightenment and its mythological essence. In this second approach, the text speaks of *reversion*. Here Josephson-Storm as well as Landy and Saler seem to correctly associate the text with binary and dialectic structures (humanity vis-a-vis nature and enlightenment vis-a-vis myth). In contrast, and instead of *reversion*, I want to get to the *already* of the first formulation. Because there is no binary structure we cannot distinguish enlightenment from mythology or postulate the reversion of one to the other; from the start there are no distinct terms. The text starts by claiming that "Enlightenment's program was the disenchantment of the world" (*DE*, 1), but if enlightenment cannot be distinguished from myth (enchantment), enlightenment, too, is enchanted. I now examine how this program was itself enchanted.

With this controversial thesis, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* moves beyond Weber. For Weber, the modern gods "have been deprived of the magical and mythical" (*SV*, 23). In contrast, in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the mythical has not disappeared because myths themselves constitute enlightenment. Of course, as I argue below, in this second thesis the meaning of these concepts changes. Moreover, since for Weber the modern world is disenchanted, I had to read Weber against himself when I applied the category of enchantment to the Weberian modern gods. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, however, this hermeneutical violence is not necessary. The text explicitly focuses on the mythological enchantment at the core of the seemingly disenchanted enlightenment.

a) *Myth is Enlightenment*

Myths are already products of Enlightenment: “the myths which fell victim to the Enlightenment were themselves its products” (*DE*, 5). Two points clarify this thesis. First, Enlightenment’s emphasis on the human domination of nature is already part of the mythological narrative. For example, in both the Jewish story of creation and in the Olympian religion, “without regard for differences, the world is made subject to man” (*DE*, 5). Although humans are outstripped by the infinite power of the gods, humans and gods are alike in their right to dominate nature: “The awakening of the subject is brought with the recognition of power as the principle of all relationships. In face of the unity of such reason the distinction between God and man is reduced to an irrelevance... In their mastery of nature, the creative God and the ordering mind [*Geist*] are alike. Man’s likeness to God consists in sovereignty over existence, in the lordly gaze, in the command” (*DE*, 6). To become masters of nature, humans need to have gods as their masters. Gods function like an echo chamber that amplifies and justifies the lordly gaze of humans over nature.

Second, in myths we find an early stage of the creation of the subject and the objectification of nature.¹⁴⁴ For instance, Odysseus is an early prototype of a type of enlightened bourgeois subjectivity.¹⁴⁵ His adventures depict “the path of the subject’s flight from the mythical powers” (*DE*, 38), in which the subject in the process of becoming self-

¹⁴⁴ See *Dialectic of Enlightenment’s* first excursus “Odysseus or Myth and Enlightenment,” in which Horkheimer and Adorno study how the enlightened spirit is depicted in Homer’s reformulation of the myths: “no work bears more eloquent witness to the intertwining of enlightenment and myth than that of Homer, the basic text of European civilization” (*DE*, 37). While there is a difference between the myths and Homer’s epical reformulation of them, they both have in common the themes of “power and exploitation” (*DE*, 37).

¹⁴⁵ “The hero of the adventures turns out to be the prototype of the bourgeois individual, whose concept originates in the unwavering self-assertion of which the protagonist driven to wander the earth is the primeval model” (*DE*, 35).

conscious opposes the fate of the mythical powers. I examine in greater detail the obscure logic of the hero's flight from the mythical towards self-consciousness.

There is a first moment of opposition between the achievement of the hero's self-consciousness (of having a self and become a self-determined subject) and the danger of losing "himself" in mythical unconsciousness (i.e., failing to achieve the status of being or having a self): "All the adventures Odysseus survives are dangerous temptations deflecting the self from the path of its logic" (*DE*, 38). In this patriarchal model, the male hero must overcome female temptations—Circe, Calypso, Sirens, the female as the embodiment of nature's unconsciousness—to become the master of nature.

But this opposition signals a deeper entanglement of the hero's subjectivity and the tempting mythical powers.¹⁴⁶ The logic that describes this entanglement is far from being simple. The hero sees himself confronted by an alien force. By fighting and cheating this seemingly alien force, the hero gains his identity and subjectivity. But the identity and subjectivity that the hero forges have as their substance these mythical forces that he tries to negate. In other words, to create his identity as non-*nature*, the hero unwillingly carries with it the content of *nature* that was negated. Again, the hero becomes a self in the antithesis to that which through negation also constitutes him: "That is the secret underlying the conflict between epic and myth: the self does not exist simply in rigid antithesis to adventure but takes on its solidity only through this antithesis, and its unity through the very multiplicity which myth in its oneness denies. Odysseus, like the heroes of all true novels after him, throws himself away, so to speak, in order to win himself; he achieves his estrangement from nature

¹⁴⁶ The *Odyssey* and *Dialectic of Enlightenment* share the same structure: both move from an oppositional structure (the opposition between Odysseus's consciousness and the dangers of losing himself in mythical unconsciousness, and *Dialectic of Enlightenment's* opposition between Enlightenment and myth) towards the awareness of the entanglement of seemingly opposed terms.

by abandoning himself to nature” (*DE*, 38).¹⁴⁷ The hero achieves estrangement from nature (he becomes a self by negating nature as his antithesis), but in this negation—since a lot of what has been negated becomes the hero’s subjectivity—the hero abandons himself to nature. Why is the hero trapped by what he precisely negates? Why does departing nature become staying in nature? Because it seems that there is no outside-of-nature. To negate nature is already within nature. In other words, it is not *we* who negate nature as an alien other; rather, nature negates itself through us, and the outcome is always already within nature. Furthermore, the hero’s departing nature becomes staying in nature because *negation* is the essence of nature: precisely by negating itself, nature survives.

The hero’s conflict marks an entanglement in which the substance of the subject (its nature) is not totally subjugated. Instead, the substance of the subject strikes back and dominates the supposedly autonomous behavior of the subject. About Odysseus, Horkheimer and Adorno write, “ironically, it is implacable nature that he now commands, which triumphs on his return home as the implacable judge, avenging the heritage of the very powers he has escaped” (*DE*, 39). The implacable nature possesses Odysseus precisely at the end of his journey when he supposedly has achieved self-possession.¹⁴⁸

The obscurity of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* correlates with the obscurity of this logic. Depending on where one enters this logic, one can see a heroic, autonomous, self-determined,

¹⁴⁷ For instance, and by way of comparison, when the atheist negates God, the theistic and dogmatic point of view of what God means is unwillingly carried within and maintained in the negation of God. Of course, the atheist is not the same as the theist, but both share the same view of what God is.

¹⁴⁸ The consequences of the moment of opposition between nature and the hero’s self-assertion is well captured by Gilbert G. Germain, “...Odysseus’ disassociation from nature and from his natural passions is a foreshadowing of the loss of meaning which is endemic to modernity and which expresses itself ultimately in the usurpation of ends by means. The preservation of the self has been secured at the cost of disenchantment” (*A Discourse On Disenchantment: Reflections on Politics and Technology*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1993, 49). But if we add the second moment, when nature strikes back and dominates the seemingly self-asserted subject, then what at the surface can be referred to as “the cost of disenchantment” turns out to be driven by an unconscious enchantment, which has nature as its source.

and disenchanted human subject dominating nature or a mythical, dependent, nature-determined, and enchanted human subject (subjected) who is dominated by nature in its domination of nature. In a point relevant to my study, this logic shows why disenchantment is a mode of enchantment (and not the other way around). Enlightenment (i.e., the project of disenchantment) has myth (nature, enchantment) as its substrate. Of course, Enlightenment is not the same as myth, but they share the same essence, which manifests itself in the logic studied above. Although this essence is still obscure, we know that it refers somehow to what has been called *nature* and that it manifests itself through its *negation*.

What is now less obscure is why the human subject in its path to autonomy becomes its opposite (i.e., it is dependent on nature). What is not clear, however, is whether this is a problem. For those who do not share Kant's dream of autonomy, being nature's vessel is not necessarily a bad thing.

b) Enlightenment Reverts to Mythology

Enlightenment is mythological, which in the context of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* means that "enlightenment is totalitarian" (*DE*, 4). The problem with enlightenment being mythological is that the latter is related to the excesses of totalitarianism: one becomes the vessel of a totalitarian system. The controversial thesis that enlightenment is totalitarian gives *Dialectic of Enlightenment* both its fame and its obscurity. Rather than enlightenment failing to rise to its mission so that it then relapses into its opposite, enlightenment's mission is always already entangled with mythical—totalitarian—tendencies. In other words, when it relapses into myth enlightenment succeeds rather than fails. If these terms are not opposites, what is their relationship to one another? Myths are already a manifestation of rationalization, but the

reverse also seems to be true: “mythology itself set in motion the endless process of enlightenment by which, with ineluctable necessity, every definite theoretical view is subjected to the annihilating criticism that it is only a belief, until even the concepts of mind, truth, and, indeed, enlightenment itself have been reduced to animistic magic” (*DE*, 7). How can we understand that the criticism of animism turns criticism into animism? And why is this animism totalitarian? In an attempt to answer, I explore four concepts or issues crucial for *Dialectic of Enlightenment*: fate, retribution, incommensurability, and regression.

First, what is totalitarian or mythological is the idea of a *fate* or *ineluctable necessity* that enlightenment paradoxically reinforces. The power of critique, which appears to be the essence of enlightenment (the vehicle for maturity and its best arm against totalitarianism), already is entangled with this mythical necessity (fate). I understand this entanglement of the power of critique and mythological fate in two different (but related) ways. On the one hand, there is a *formal* entanglement. By turning all things into mere beliefs (their naturalized status is questioned), the form of the process of criticism destroys every theory, norm, or institution that has been naturalized. But then the process is not satisfied until enlightenment itself—i.e., the power of critique—also is reduced to belief. When everything becomes a belief, belief itself is naturalized. The critique of naturalization ends up, paradoxically, naturalizing itself. Critique annihilates itself. Having lost the ground for a critique, a new status quo (fate) arises: restless in its questioning but without going anywhere—static in its liquidity. The form of the power of critique has its own “ineluctable necessity” that entangles criticism with a type of fated necessity that the process of enlightenment was supposed to eradicate. On the other hand, there is an entanglement of the power of critique and mythological fate that happens through the *content* of what is criticized: “Just as myths already entail enlightenment, with every step

enlightenment entangles itself more deeply in mythology. Receiving all its subject matter from myths, in order to destroy them, it falls as judge under the spell of myth. It seeks to escape the trial of fate and retribution by itself exacting retribution on that trial” (*DE*, 8). Hence, fate (ineluctable necessity) and retribution are the marks of the mythological that haunt enlightened criticism. Like the logic described in *Dialectic of Enlightenment’s* analysis of the *Odyssey*, since enlightenment receives all its subject matter from myths, it falls under the spell of myth.

The thesis of the entanglement of enlightenment and myth assumes a meaning for the word “myth” that differs from the meaning assigned to it in the first thesis that opposed the two terms. Hence, in the text there is a shift in the meaning of myth. While at the beginning of the text myth is understood as fantasy (as opposed to enlightened knowledge), here myth signifies obedient trust in the given, objective, or actual reality that appears as unchangeable *fate*. Myth explains reality, but in doing so it reifies the reality that it is supposed to explain: “The mythical scientific respect of peoples for the given reality, which they themselves constantly create, finally becomes itself a positive fact, a fortress before which even the revolutionary imagination feels shamed as utopianism, and degenerates to a compliant trust in the objective tendency of history” (*DE*, 33). Myth *naturalizes*, i.e., it makes what has been historically constructed seem natural.¹⁴⁹ By taking reality as a positive fact, myth (or the mythical-scientific) misses the insight into the social and historical constructedness of the world.¹⁵⁰ While people take as a positive fact or as eternally actual what they “constantly

¹⁴⁹ For a discussion of how myth makes the historical seem natural, see: Roland Barthes, “Myth Today,” in *Mythologies*, trans Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1984), 109-159. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, with a new preface of the author (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), ix.

¹⁵⁰ The idea that the human subject produces her reality permeates German Philosophy, and is part of a long story that moves from Kant’s “Copernican Revolution” through Schiller, Fichte, Hegel, Marx, and Lukács, in whose work Kant’s concept of synthesis is turned into a metaphysical principle of world constitution (implied but ultimately rejected by Kant). Relevant here is the issue of the scope of the power of the human subject to produce its world. On the one hand, the Fichtean subject has total power to shape its world; on the other hand, the

create,” they lose the capacity to change what they first created: “For mythology had reflected in its forms the essence of the existing order—cyclical motion, fate, domination of the world as truth—and had renounced hope”; “...the eternity of the actual is confirmed and mere existence is pronounced as the meaning it obstructs” (*DE*, 20). Enlightenment is mythological not because the former is a fantasy like myth but because enlightenment, like myth, reifies the status-quo; it ossifies the existing order by presenting as a given fact—as a second nature—what has been socially constructed.¹⁵¹

If people lose the capacity to change what they first created, the task of de-mythologizing (i.e., de-naturalizing) is awakening people to their (ignored) agency. Again, questioning the fixed status quo would require bringing to the fore the constructed nature of the status quo. The problem is, how can this be done? Enlightenment cannot de-mythologize the world because enlightenment itself is mythological. According to *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, in criticism what is criticized somehow survives and reflects in its “forms the essence of the existing order—cyclical motion, fate, domination of the world as truth,” and the “eternity of the actual” survives by its cosmetic reinvention through criticism. It is not only

Hegelian subject, who does not posit or create the object, mediates a moment of objectivity in which the subject determines and is determined by the object.

¹⁵¹ Fate as a reified, autonomous, and predetermined order is experienced by the worker who faces an autonomous machine, the capitalist who faces the autonomous “laws of the market,” and the scientist who confronts the laws of nature. Workers, capitalists and scientists are confronted with—i.e., suffer or benefit from—the reification of society, which, according to Lukács, can be attributed to the reign of commodity-relations as the form of objectivity. The work process is transformed in such a way that the reification of labor becomes the model of reification of the whole society. The process of commodification, and thus reification—where people and their activities are seen and treated as predictable and thus manipulable things (*res*)—has three dimensions: the reification of nature (objective), of other persons (intersubjective), and of our own person (subjective). According to Alex Honneth, “Subjects in commodity exchange are mutually urged (a) to perceive given objects solely as ‘things’ that one can potentially make a profit on, (b) to regard each other solely as ‘objects’ of a profitable transaction, and finally (c) to regard their own abilities as nothing but supplemental ‘resources’ in the calculation of profit opportunities” (*Reification: A New Look at an Old Idea*, 22). Consequently, reification is both a mental attitude and a cultural pattern that determines institutions, technologies, and practices. When people confront the objective—intersubjective and subjective—modes of reification, they lose their hope of changing the status quo as well as their ability to think in a manner that does not have the calculation of profit as its focus.

scientific positivism that ends up being mythological, but also critical power as such. The problem—that criticism (as the essence of enlightenment) reifies anew the status quo—is essential for a text that is part of Critical Theory. What happens, then, with the project of Critical Theory, if critique seems to be part of the problem?

The idea of awakening people to their sleeping agency seems contrary to my contention that the utter pervasiveness of *domination* is the substrate of reality. Is this interpretation of the pervasiveness of *domination* just a new version of mythology? Does it mystify the human agency and block the insight into the social and historical constructedness of the world? In the name of domination, is it not the case that a “pessimistic” status quo is naturalized? I return to these issues later.

A second issue that I focus on in my reading of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* relates to the idea of *repetition* or *retribution* (i.e., the doctrine that action equals reaction). The mythological notion of repetition—that there is “nothing new under the sun”—finds its place in the guise of the regularity of the scientific laws of nature: “the more the illusion of magic vanishes, the more implacably repetition, in the guise of regularity, imprisons human beings in the cycle now objectified in the laws of nature, to which they believe they owe their security as free subjects” (*DE*, 8). One of the instruments of enlightenment, namely abstraction, functions as a leveling tool that makes everything in nature repeatable.

The principle that every phenomenon can be explained by subsuming it under a law of nature, which renders every event a repetition, is itself a mythological principle. This enlightened principle “merely reproduces the fantastic doctrine it rejects: the sanction of fate which, through retribution, incessantly reinstates what always was. Whatever might be different is made the same” (*DE*, 8). The paradox is that both the total incomprehensibility of

mythological fate and the total comprehensibility of natural laws function similarly. In both cases, human beings are condemned to live a reality that cannot be changed.¹⁵² And even the critique of this determinism becomes itself a new manifestation of determinism.

The third issue is that necessity and repetition eclipse any *incommensurability*. Although enlightenment dissolves the “injustice of the old inequality of unmediated mastery,” it also perpetuates this injustice in universal mediation (*DE*, 8). When through the obsession with measurement everything can be related (mediated) to something else, that which is incommensurable disappears. Like navigating between Scylla and Charybdis, the overcoming of the tyranny of unmediated mastery can lead to the tyranny of universal mediation. Human beings—made commensurable under the laws of the market—are forced into conformity.¹⁵³ However, the “commensurability” of human beings under the laws of the market is not straightforward. Indeed, it occurs precisely when the market promotes the uniqueness and singularity of the self: “Each human being has been endowed with a self of his or her own, different from all others, so that it could all the more surely be made the same” (*DE*, 9). Hence, one can make the subject commensurable precisely by promoting its “incommensurability.” Individualism ends paradoxically in the dissolution of the individual in the masses.

Fourth, the ineluctable necessity that repeats and reifies the status-quo, rendering everything commensurable, leads to human *regression*. Under the tyranny of universal

¹⁵² *Dialectic of Enlightenment* traces both differences in and the similarities of the pre-historic and modern stages of the process of rationalization. Although the text acknowledges the differences between the pre-historic and the modern versions of fate, its lucidity lies in the fact that it shows how the ancient determinism of “incomprehensible death” continues in a disguised form in the modern determinism of a “utterly comprehensible life”: “The fatalism by which incomprehensible death was sanctioned in primeval times has now passed over into utterly comprehensible life” (*DE*, 22).

¹⁵³ As in Lukács, subjectification (i.e., how the subject becomes a subject) is ruled by the market. The subject is molded to fit the market: “The blessing that the market does not ask about birth is paid for in the exchange society by the fact that the possibilities conferred by birth are molded to fit the production of goods that can be bought on the market” (*DE*, 9).

mediation, “human beings are being turned back into precisely what the developmental law of society, the principle of the self, had opposed: mere examples of the species, identical to one another through isolation within the compulsively controlled collectivity” (*DE*, 29). Hence, the logic of the horde arrives when the singularity of the incommensurable retreats and everybody must conform to measurable standards.

To sum up, I repeat some of the mythological features of enlightenment. 1) The process of rationalization in its various forms—for instance, myth, Hegelian philosophy,¹⁵⁴ or positivism—leads to *determinism* (ineluctable necessity). 2) Ineluctable necessity is based on *reification*: on the one hand, the reification of “objective” facts that ossifies the existing order; on the other hand, on the reification of thinking. “Thought is reified as an autonomous, automatic process, aping the machine it has itself produced, so that it can finally be replaced by the machine” (*DE*, 19). Through reification, we take as a given fact (fate) what we have helped to create. 3) Rationalization is governed by *repetition* that makes impossible the disclosure of the new. Even when in modernity the new is intended, the reduction of reality to what is calculable and useful makes everything “new” a version of something old. “The subsumption of the actual, whether under mythical prehistory or under mathematical formalism, the symbolic relating of the present to the mythical in the rite or to the abstract category in science, makes the new appear as something predetermined which therefore is really the old” (*DE*, 21).¹⁵⁵ 4) The necessity of conformity leads to *dismissing differences* (herd mentality) and the disappearance of the *incommensurable*: “Everything which is different, from the idea to criminality, is exposed to the force of the collective, which keeps watch from

¹⁵⁴ On Hegel and fate see *DE*, 18.

¹⁵⁵ According to *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, this mythical tendency for repetition can be found in Kant’s critical philosophy: “Philosophical judgment, according to Kant, aims at the new yet recognizes nothing new, since it always merely repeats what reason has placed into objects beforehand” (*DE*, 20).

the classroom to the trade union” (*DE*, 22). 5) There is a *reversal* at the level of subjectivity. While the *self*-preservation is the aim of the process of rationalization, the process leads paradoxically to the annihilation of the self: “finally, the transcendental subject of knowledge, as the last reminder of subjectivity, is itself seemingly abolished and replaced by the operations of the automatic mechanisms of order... Subjectivity has volatilized itself into the logic of supposedly optional rules, to gain more absolute control” (*DE*, 23).

But why does the regression occur? Why does *self*-preservation paradoxically conclude with the annihilation of the self? As we saw in the previous analysis of the *Odyssey*, the category of *nature* is the clue to the core of this regression. As I mentioned above, the logic of domination extricates the subject—and alienates it—from nature, and it renders what is left from nature into an object. The subject, faced by nature as an alien other, feels threatened by nature. But “any attempt to break the compulsion of nature by breaking nature only succumbs more deeply to that compulsion” (*DE*, 9). Why? Because we are part of nature. Although alienated from nature and struggling to break nature’s compulsion as if it were to us another alien, we fail to see our body and our subjective-internal-nature as part of the objectified external nature. Nature cannot merely be the object of the human subject because the subject is itself a natural object. As part of nature, we become dominated precisely through our attempt to dominate nature.¹⁵⁶ The domination over an objectified external nature results in the repression of our internal nature.

¹⁵⁶ In relation to labor, which usually is defined as a means of controlling nature, Adorno and Horkheimer write: “Under the compulsion of power [*Zwang der Herrschaft*], human labor always led away from myth and, under power [*Herrschaft*], has always fallen back under its spell” (*DE*, 25). Is there a way to think labor other than as a compulsion to control nature? Can we relate to nature—i.e., to ourselves—beyond our desire to dominate it?

This essential connection between enlightenment and *nature* is captured by this definition: “Enlightenment is more than enlightenment, it is nature made audible in its estrangement” (*DE*, 31). Does this mean that nature is the only character in this story—that even though nature is disguised by different costumes, the entire story is really a monologue?¹⁵⁷ Enlightenment and Myth are names for the different modes through which nature understands itself through us. At the bottom, we are more than a “we”; we are *another* made audible through us. In its essence, the enlightened human subject is nature made audible in its estrangement. The thirst for domination (which creates the subject and objects) is the “sound” of nature made audible in its estrangement through us. But, is it possible that we—as subjects—become the site where nature is made audible without the “sound” of estrangement? Is it possible to dissolve estrangement and give birth to the human subject out of nature in such a way that the human subject is nature made audible in its reconciliation? Can we have a subject without paying such a high price for being subjected to the same violence that brought the subject to the fore? To fail to see a way out of this violence seems just another version of mythological fate-necessity and its endless and violent repetition.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ This interpretation may be in agreement with Marx’s conception of the interdependence between human and nature: “[that] the physical and mental life of man, and nature, are interdependent means simply that nature is interdependent with itself, for man is a part of nature” (Marx, “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts,” in *Karl Marx: Early Writings*, translated and edited by T.B. Bottomore, London: C.A. Watts, 1963, 127). This interpretation is the opposite of the enlightened version of an egological monologue, in which nature is part of the human. According to Gilbert G. Germain, “whereas mythic consciousness alleviated its fear of nature as ‘other’ by attributing to nature a reflection of its own essence, modern consciousness realizes a similar end by disenchanting nature. In each instances the result is the same, the putative ‘human-nature’ dialogue reveals itself to be an egological monologue” (*A Discourse On Disenchantment*, 51).

¹⁵⁸ So far, I have described two seemingly absolute “logics.” On the one hand, there is the logic of nature, in which the bourgeois hero is possessed by nature precisely when he attempts to deny its nature and become an autonomous subject. On the other hand, there is the logic of domination, in which the human agent of domination becomes the dominated victim. Logically, there cannot be two absolutes (a second absolute renders both relative). Either the inescapable logic of nature relates somehow to the human logic of the domination of nature, or they do not relate because there is just one logic that has been misleadingly understood as being two. It seems that *Dialectic of Enlightenment* follows the second perspective. The interdependence of human and nature renders the human domination of nature an instance of nature’s relating to itself. As I said, this tragedy turns out to be a monologue. There is no way out from the mimetic or representative relation of the human and nature (enacted in

What sets the dialectic of enlightenment in motion? Is the desire for domination the first and last word? It seems that domination—as the common ground of mythology and science—is itself a response to the fear of nature: “The doubling of nature into appearance and essence, effect and force, made possible by myth no less than by science, springs from human fear, the expression of which becomes its explanation” (*DE*, 10). Unlike the Gospel, for *Dialectic of Enlightenment* at the beginning was not the word, but rather “terror for mana” (*DE*, 15). The compulsion for power and domination springs from human fear. But to fear nature and to want to dominate it requires that we perceive nature as a threatening other—i.e., it requires the objectification of nature. This objectification is the consequence of domination. Hence, it seems that fear and domination are equiprimordial. As we will see in Part II, while Plato and Aristotle assert that *wonder* is the beginning of philosophy and science, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* seems to regard human fear as the true origin. What is the relation between fear and wonder? Can the logic of domination be stopped by a new—less fearful—beginning?

3) Dialectic of Enchantment

Here I remark on five points in my reading of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* that shape my understanding of Weber’s thesis and define my approach to how *Dialectic of Enlightenment* has been read within the tale of the disenchantment of the world.

First, how far from Weber’s account of the disenchantment of the world has this reading of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* carried us? Enlightenment dispels myths and disenchants the world (first thesis); but since Enlightenment is already mythological-enchanted (second thesis), the disenchantment of the world rests upon enchantment. This conclusion remains

sacrifice). “The reason that represses mimesis is not merely its opposite. It is itself mimesis: death” (*DE*, 44). Are we facing the paradox of nature denying itself through us—in short, of nature’s self-destruction?

under Weber's influence. According to Jürgen Habermas's commentary on the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, "Horkheimer and Adorno play a variation on the well-known theme of Max Weber, who sees the ancient, disenchanted gods rising from their graves in the guise of depersonalized forces to resume the irreconcilable struggles between the demons."¹⁵⁹ The meaning of disenchantment in both "Science as a Vocation" and *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is far from being disenchanted: the irreconcilable struggle between demons defines the modern "disenchanted" world. In Habermas's words, "the modern, fully rationalized world is only seemingly disenchanted; there rests upon it the curse of demonic reification and deadly isolation. In the paralyzing effects of an idling emancipation is expressed the revenge of primordial forces upon those who had to emancipate themselves and yet could not escape..."¹⁶⁰ *Dialectic of Enlightenment* confirms that disenchantment is a mode of enchantment, but what kind of enchantment we are talking about remains unclear.

Second, the idea of enchantment as "the revenge of primordial forces" seems to be inconsistent with Bennett's definition of enchantment as "periodic bouts of being enamored with existence" (*EM*, 12) and with Landy and Saler's enchantment, which "simultaneously enchants and disenchants, which delights but does not delude" (*RW*, 3). Bennett, Josephson-Storm, Landy and Saler, and even Weber do not account for the negative or unethical side of enchantment. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, in contrast, clarifies the less explored unethical side of enchantment. Indeed, the often-unethical revenge of primordial forces comes *alongside* the rational and ethical project of disenchantment. In other words, the vehicles of destruction are the same bouts of being enamored and delighted with existence. The revenge of the primordial

¹⁵⁹ Jürgen Habermas, translated by Frederick G. Lawrence, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1993), 110.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

forces is performed by people enamored and delighted—rather than repulsed—by existence. In the final analysis, there is no *reversal* of the process of being dominated through the domination of nature or in the subject’s attempts for survival that annihilates itself because domination and subjectification—or better, the subjectification through domination—are vicious from the get-go.

Third, as I noted at the beginning of this section, the most common interpretation argues that *Dialectic of Enlightenment* supports an oppositional or binary structure.¹⁶¹ The dialectic model would break the pretended autonomy of each binary term, bringing both terms together within a meta-narrative in which one term turns into the other. Josephson-Storm writes, “the primal form of critical theory’s master narrative is that autonomous reason (or freedom or science or enlightenment), once yoked to the domination of nature, turns into its opposite—namely, the domination of humanity” (*MD*, 9). He explains “how Horkheimer and Adorno (and the legacy of thinkers they draw on) came to the idea that enlightenment was fundamentally disenchanting and thus bequeathed their left-Weberianism to our generation” (*MD*, 10). It is not clear, however, how Josephson-Storm harmonizes the dialectical insight with the idea that “enlightenment was fundamentally disenchanting,” given that the dialectical movement prevents any fixed identity (e.g., enlightenment as disenchantment), and, instead, sets enlightenment within a process of disenchantment *and* enchantment. While *Dialectic of Enlightenment* may start with the oppositional thesis that clearly identifies Enlightenment with the project of disenchantment, the rest of the text struggles to show how that oppositional structure misleads: disenchanting enlightenment turns into enchanted myths, and so on.

¹⁶¹ See page 113 above.

More importantly, I argue that reading *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as reinforcing a binary structure misses the insight that this text is trying to convey. It is not the case that Enlightenment turns dialectically into its opposite, myth; rather, we must fundamentally re-think both terms. The entanglement of enlightenment and myth (or of disenchantment and enchantment) cannot be secured within the metanarrative of a dialectical movement. Indeed, myth/enlightenment and nature/human are not opposed terms. Disenchantment is a mode of enchantment not only in a sequential sense (i.e., enchantment turns into disenchantment, and the latter turns into enchantment, and so on), but also in the sense that disenchantment simultaneously rests upon enchantment.

Fourth, there is another important difference between Josephson-Storm's reading of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and mine. To clarify this difference, I need first to clarify his use of the notion of myth.

The European society that constructed the idea of disenchantment believed that it had overcome myths. Paradoxically, according to Josephson-Storm, European intellectuals "gave birth to the *myth of a mythless society*" (*MD*, 7). It was the idea of being a "myth-of-the-end-of-myth" (*MD*, 66) that allowed modernity to perform its myth while going unnoticed. To clarify this paradox, Josephson-Storm explains what he means by "myth":

The term *myth* is often used either polemically to indicate an erroneous belief or romantically to suggest an archaic or even sacred mode of narrative discourse. Although I admit to willfully evoking the polemical usage, by 'myth' I mainly mean to gesture toward those repeated narrative symbols (e.g., the death of God, Achilles's heel, the naked truth) that are adopted as prefabricated tropes or metaphors and whose transposition carries unconscious meaning from one domain to another. The prefabricated trope I am most interested in is 'the myth of modernity' itself, by which I mean not the stories from a

particular epoch, but the very fable that there was such an age as ‘modernity’ and that it had certain features (*MD*, 7).

I would like to bring to the fore, however, another meaning of myth. In my study of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, I see a shift in the meaning of myth. As we saw, although the text begins with a version of myth that correlates with what Josephson-Storm regards as a polemical use (“enlightenment opposes myth because the latter is understood as an erroneous belief”), in the most important thesis of the text, namely, “enlightenment reverts to mythology,” the meaning of myth changes in a way that does not entirely match either the romantic use (“to suggest an archaic or even sacred mode of narrative discourse”) or Josephson-Storm’s own restricted polemical use (“as prefabricated tropes or metaphors,” which when transposed they carry “unconscious meaning from one domain to another”). According to Horkheimer and Adorno, *myth* refers to any discourse that infuses people with such respect for the *given reality* that they become blind to the fact that they constantly create it. *Given reality* becomes a myth, “itself a positive fact, a fortress before which even the revolutionary imagination feels shamed as utopianism, and degenerates to a compliant trust in the objective tendency of history” (*DE*, 33). Along these lines, I can argue—like Josephson-Storm—that the tale of disenchantment is a myth, not because it is an erroneous belief, nor because it is a prefabricated trope with unconscious meaning, but because it nourishes—rather than questions—the damaging status quo of our current predicaments. This narrow meaning of myth gives me a perspective from which I can assess the outcome of Josephson-Storm’s project of demythologizing the myth that there is no myth. After sobering up from the Enlightened liquor that made us drunkenly believe in a sober world without magic, we can ask whether our modern enchanted and magical world questions the “compliant trust” in the *given reality*? Of course, the notion of *given reality*

is too vague. But if you grant—for a moment—that at the root of this *given reality* there is the incessant human drive for the domination of nature, I can ask: Does Josephson-Storm's description of magic offer the possibility of a world that is not entrapped in the domination of human and nature? Thanks to Josephson-Storm's thorough analysis, it is now clear that magic does not stop but expands the instrumental rationality that aims to master the world. While he succeeds in deconstructing the illusion of not having a myth, he fails to deconstruct the myth that he has helped to uncover, and which enchants us into the current environmental crisis.

An important critique of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is that its own definition of myth can be applied to itself. According to Habermas, the text “holds out scarcely any prospect for the escape from the myth of purposive rationality, that has turned into objective violence.”¹⁶² The pessimistic tone that bothered Habermas because of its inability to provide a way out of the destructive dialectic of Enlightenment suggests that Horkheimer and Adorno have failed to escape from the mythological logic of repetition that shapes enlightenment. Like Odysseus, they would be entrapped in what they tried to oppose. The dialectic described in the text would be a myth condemning us to repetition and sacrifice—without any escape. But is there a way out of the myth of purposive rationality? Is a type of knowledge other than technical utility possible? Attuned by this “pessimistic tone,” in Part II of this study I search the history of wonder for a way out of the seemingly inescapable myth of purposive rationality.

Finally, in my reading of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, I have emphasized the ambiguity of the status of the human subject in relation to the process of domination. The text describes the *barbaric* outcome of the enlightened pursuit of the domination of nature, but it is unclear who or what the agent in this process. It seems sometimes that the agent is *domination* itself.

¹⁶² Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 114.

The interpretation and possible answer to this problem shifts depending on the status of the human subject in the process. I sketch out three different explanations for the *barbaric* outcome of the domination of nature, each of which is based on a different way of articulating the relationship of the human subject to this process.

1) Barbarism is the imperfect outcome of a still insufficient process of domination of nature. Barbarism may be overcome by increasing and perfecting the program of domination. Domination and the human subject—as the powerful agent of this process—are not doubted. The human subject should increase its power to control this process.

2) Barbarism is the outcome of a contradiction that lies at the core of the process of domination: the contradiction of an all-powerful subject that is subjected to its own creations. This option assumes an originally powerful human subject (like the first option),¹⁶³ and it requires an explanation of why this subject alienates itself. The Marxist critique of alienation

¹⁶³ For instance, Lukács writes that “we have...made our own history and if we are able to regard the whole of reality as history (i.e., as *our* history, for there is no other), we shall have raised ourselves in fact to the position from which reality can be understood as our ‘action.’” (*History and Class Consciousness*, 145). When we understand that reality is the outcome of our action, we are likely to ask: In the constitution of the world, who counts as subject? Although the privilege of the human subject can be grasped in more individualistic terms (e.g., the Cartesian *cogito* or Kant’s transcendental ego), the human subject also can be identified as a *species* or *class*. For instance, according to Lukács, before it can revolt against the Bourgeoisie, the Proletariat class must achieve consciousness of its own historical agency. In other words, after one demonstrates the sociality of knowledge—i.e., rather than being subjects who represent we participate in various historically determinate social practices that “create” the world—the question becomes, who is the *we*? Indeed, in history there is a struggle to determine who will be the agent of history. Andrew Feenberg writes, “But what if the social ‘we’ of knowledge is divided by class and enters into conflict not only over particular material stakes but over those ‘historically determinate social practices?’ In that case both appearances and the self-consciousness behind them take on practical functions in a struggle over meaning” (*The Philosophy of Praxis*, 87). Although the preeminence of the human subject is not questioned, what is at stake is the individualistic or collective interpretation of that preeminence. In a Marxist interpretation, the illusion of individualism casts into obscurity and unconsciousness the social and collective practices that “create” the world. This social and collective basis appears—according to the individualistic framework—to be beyond the domain of choice, and thus we do not see it as the consequence of our actions. “It is the unconsciousness of their collective social practice that condemns these subjects to actively reproduce a world foreign to themselves and to their aims” (*The Philosophy of Praxis*, 99). Since the individualistic framework is blind to collective practice, the world appears to be governed by alien, impersonal, and autonomous laws that preexist and predetermine social behavior.

and commodity fetishism follows this option.¹⁶⁴ Assuming the absolute agency of a Marxist *Homo faber* (in the tradition of the Vichian *verum-factum* principle), for whom objects are produced by the subject, the modern world appears contradictory.¹⁶⁵ Although the subject is the creator of the world, the constructedness of the world remains hidden and, thus, the subject is subjected by the naturalization of its creations. Barbarism is the outcome of this alienation.¹⁶⁶

The explanation of this alienation in terms of a contradiction secures the assumption of the all-powerful agency of the subject. Both the origin of and the solution to this contradiction reinforces the privileged status of the human subject. Regarding the origin, the subject alienates

¹⁶⁴ Commodity fetishism refers to the substitution of relations between objects for relations between human subjects who produce the objects (which happens when use value turns into exchange value). The process of transferring independent agency to things by covering up the human origin of them works mysteriously. According to Marx, “the mysterious character of the commodity-form consists therefore simply in the fact that the commodity reflects the social characteristics of men’s own labour as objective characteristics of the products of labour themselves. . . . It is nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things. In order, therefore, to find an analogy we must take flight into the misty realm of religion. There the products of the human brain appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own” (Karl Marx, *Capital*, Volume I, London: Penguin Classics, 1990, 164-165). Although human relations become things that have “real” properties by themselves, their imaginary status sometimes still comes to the fore. According to Marx, “Real talers have the same existence that the imagined gods have. Has a real taler any existence except in the imagination, if only in the general or rather common imagination of man? Bring paper money into a country where this use of paper is unknown, and everyone will laugh at your subjective imagination” (“The Difference Between the Democratic and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature: Fragment from Appendix,” in *Marx and Engels: Collected Works*, Vol. 1, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975, 104). That talers and commodities function like mysterious gods signals how much of god’s shadow is cast on the capitalist economy, and it proves how enchanted is our supposedly disenchanted market economy.

¹⁶⁵ Identity philosophy demands that the object must appear to be produced by the subject. In this context, alienation names the splitting of the object from the subject, wherein objects turn around and dominate their creators instead of serving them. But identity philosophy has two versions. According to the early Marx of the “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts,” while Hegel’s overcoming of alienation occurs in the philosopher’s head through a speculative construction (i.e., alienation and its overcoming is a problem of self-consciousness), for Marx alienation demands a practical reversal in the relations between humans and the product of their labor. See Andrew Feenberg, *Philosophy of Praxis*, 38-39. Although Hegel and Marx express differing views about the overcoming of alienation, both views exemplify an identity philosophy in which the subject “creates” the object.

¹⁶⁶ Weber’s analysis in “Science as a Vocation” touches tangentially on the problem of what I call the *relative (technological) enchantment*, i.e., the ambiguity of how the modern person lives without absolute mysteries in a relatively mysterious technological world. For the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* this “ambiguity” turns into a paradox: the relative technological mysteries are disclosed to us as if they were absolute (fate necessity). In its longing for self-subsistence, the self-determined subject reifies, regresses, and destroys itself. However, as mentioned above, and in contrast to the Hegelian or Marxist versions of identity philosophy that I am exploring here, one can interpret *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as challenging the privilege of the modern human subject. Because domination—as the substrate of the world—creates the subject, we do not own our thirst for domination. Although we dominate nature, we are dominated by nature in our estrangement to it and (because we are part of nature) in nature’s estrangement to itself.

itself. This is like an autoimmune reaction that lacks a “real” pathogen. The illusion that regards the world as an alien and fixed given is like a threatening pathogen that triggers a voracious thirst for domination. Like every autoimmune disease, the real damage is not occasioned by the pathogen but by the excessive autoimmune reaction. Paradoxically, the excess of domination (the autoimmune reaction) is triggered precisely by the mistaken perception of our sense of powerlessness. Regarding the solution, the de-alienation and de-reification happens through self-consciousness (Hegel) and by changing the world (Marx).¹⁶⁷ The human subject gains the consciousness of being the agent responsible for its deplorable condition. Hence, like the first option, this second option, too, follows the enlightened call to emerge from our self-incurred immaturity. Blaming others for our situation would betray that we have failed to understand that alienation, reification, and contradiction lie at the origin of our deplorable circumstances.

3) Barbarism is one of the many possible outcomes of facing *nature* as an untamable *other*. The human subject is not the agent of the process of domination; rather, she passively interacts with an all-powerful nature. The world is experienced as a *given* to which one should

¹⁶⁷ When all reality is part of history and history, in turn, is the outcome of our action (a self-reflected and self-developed process of mediation, not a product of unmediated egoistic inclinations), traditional philosophy changes and becomes a philosophy of praxis. As Marx famously states in his eleventh thesis on Feuerbach: “The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point is to *change* it” (Karl Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach,” in *The German Ideology*, edited, with an introduction by C.J. Arthur, New York: International Publishers, 1970, 123). But philosophy is not “applied” to reality in order to change the world; rather, social *change* resolves the antinomies of traditional philosophy. According to Andrew Feenberg, “the defining trait of philosophy of praxis is the claim that the ‘antinomies’ of philosophy can only be resolved in history” (*Philosophy of Praxis*, 3). In words of young Marx: “It is only in a social context that subjectivism and objectivism, spiritualism and materialism, activity and passivity, cease to be antinomies and thus cease to exist as such antinomies. The resolution of the theoretical contradictions is possible only through practical means, only through the practical energy of man. Their resolution is not by any means, therefore, only a problem of knowledge, but is a real problem of life which philosophy was unable to solve precisely because it saw there a purely philosophical problem (Karl Marx, “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts,” in *Karl Marx: Early Writings*, translated and edited by T.B. Bottomore, London: C.A. Watts, 1963, 162).

learn to adapt oneself. Here barbarism is not the outcome of a contradiction or paradox because the subject has never been in charge.

The other side of the critique of the autonomous human subject is the defense of the incommensurable. To reduce the privilege of the human subject allows a totally other—human or non-human—to appear. This wholly other becomes the guard against the totalizing tendencies of the subject. Mystery and enchantment are marshaled in the impossible task of describing what can never be described—the incommensurable. Authors like Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida aim to liberate the “other” from the chains of the “same.” A mysterious “other” has to be faced without taming it and reducing it to an other-for-us. A sort of enchantment of the “other” becomes medicine prescribed to a subject who is ill after reducing everything to itself.¹⁶⁸ However, this mysterious “other” seems always to deconstruct, to destroy grand narratives, to let us remain passive in front of the challenges of our global world. The medicine for the destructive agency of the enlightened subject turned into a new destructive passivity of the poststructuralist “subject.” Unintentionally, poststructuralism’s emphasis on the incommensurable that aims to prevent totalitarian systems (which are

¹⁶⁸ What for Hegel was the ideal of freedom, that a person is “at home with itself in its other,” later became the definition of a totalitarian system (Hegel, *The Logic of Hegel*, translated by W. Wallace, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968, 175). For Levinas, when freedom denotes the mode of remaining the same in the midst of the other, there is no “relation with the other as such but the reduction of the other to the same. Such is the definition of freedom: to maintain oneself against the other, despite every relation with the other to ensure the autarchy of an I.” Against this definition of freedom, Levinas’s work is “directed toward apperceiving in discourse a non-allergic relation with alterity” (Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969, 46, 47). Similarly, for the contemporary German-Korean philosopher Byung-Chul Han, it is this (Hegelian) subject—who sees itself in the other—who experiences the melancholia of a narcissistic society that merely reflects the subject back, until it drowns in itself: “The narcissistic subject, on the other hand, cannot clearly define its boundaries. So the border between him and the other blurs. To him the world appears only in shadows of itself. It is not able to recognize the other in its otherness and to recognize this otherness. There are meanings only where it recognizes itself somehow. It wades everywhere in the shadow of itself until it drowns in itself” (*Agonie des Eros*, Berlin: Matthes & Seitz, 2012, 11, my translation).

grounded in the reduction of everything to what is commensurable) seems to have facilitated neo-liberalism's expansion and its insatiable logic in which everything "solid melts into air."¹⁶⁹

Which of these options does *Dialectic of Enlightenment* follow? Clearly it rejects the first option. Like the second option, the text argues that the seemingly all-powerful human subject ends up as an object of its own thirst for domination. But does the critical attempt to de-reify the status quo, and, thus, to overcome the passivity of confronting fixed and given facts, necessarily entail supporting the absolute agency of a powerful subject? Since reification subjugates the subject, does de-reification seek to enthrone the subject again?

Since the mythological in enlightenment is a sense of being condemned to an unchangeable reality, it is easy to grant the attack on positivism and existentialism's fetishism of the *given* that renders helpless any human attempt to change its reality. More difficult to elucidate is why even the Marxist critique—for instance, Lukács's de-reification enacted by the revolutionary Proletariat¹⁷⁰—also relapses into mythology. At the core of *Dialectic of*

¹⁶⁹ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, introduction by Marshall Berman, (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), 68. According to contemporary French philosopher Bernard Stiegler, poststructuralism unintentionally allowed conservative reactionary ideology to bring capitalism to the entire world without any strong opposition. See Bernard Stiegler, *States of Shock: Stupidity and Knowledge in the 21st Century*, translated by Daniel Ross (Cambridge UK: Polity Press, 2015). Stiegler does not dismiss the different poststructuralist projects, but rather he rereads them from the point of view of the current situation of education, politics and economics.

¹⁷⁰ Lukács's goal is to de-reify the world by becoming aware of the unintended consequences of our actions so that we can recognize the social practice behind the reified appearance. This should lead to the creation of a new basis for controlling objects: "not individual manipulation in conformity with laws but conscious collective decision about the laws themselves." By coming together and consciously deciding, individuals would be "interrupting the feedback mechanism that claims them to the perpetual reproduction of their alienated condition" (Andrew Feenberg, *The Philosophy of Praxis*, 99, 100). For Lukács, the antinomies of value and fact, subject and object, theory and practice, freedom and necessity, would finally be overcome for a self-conscious collective subject of history. This is socialism as human control of history. With the proletariat, the identity of thought and existence occurs, but not in the sense that the subject creates the object; rather, both are aspects of a single historical and dialectical process. In other words, the proletariat as the subject of history is determined as much as it is determining the course of history. Society appears not as a "second nature" alien to subjectivity but as a *mediated* product of subjectivity—a mediation that recognizes the remainder of the reification that still has to be overcome, or revolution as an ongoing process.

Enlightenment is an attempt to show that even de-reification, when carried out by the human subject, ends up reifying itself.

While Lukács addresses the issue of social domination, Horkheimer and Adorno identify the central problem as the domination of nature. By exploring the interdependence of the human being and nature, they criticize the productivist attitude of the human subject towards nature (i.e., nature is a product of the human being) found in both capitalism and traditional Marxism. Along these lines, Andrew Feenberg writes, “as a natural being, the conqueror of nature is himself among the conquered. Marx promises a completely humanized nature but that project culminates in the atomic bomb, not utopia. Lukács promises a ‘totality’ in which objectivity is transparent to the social subject, but the outcome is totalitarianism.”¹⁷¹ It seems that when the task of de-reification follows the logic of domination, it dissolves nature into a humanized nature—with the bad consequences that we already know. “The perpetual charge against reification,” Adorno writes, “is itself reified.”¹⁷² In short, both reification and de-reification, when intended to increase the domination of nature, end up annihilating the human subject in the name of its subsistence. Of course, it is still possible to imagine de-reification free of the logic of domination. To found a “non-dominating-dereification,” one has to enter into relation with an unreconciled nature (*unversöhnte Natur*). Andrew Feenberg writes: “Domination can only be dissolved when it is recognized as ‘unreconciled nature.’ This unreconciled nature cannot be conquered and absorbed but must be accepted through a process of reflection.”¹⁷³ Since “all reification is forgetting” (*DE*, 191), one should through reflection

¹⁷¹ Andrew Feenberg, *The Philosophy of Praxis*, 152.

¹⁷² Theodor Adorno. *The Jargon of Authenticity*, translated by Knut Tarnowski and Frederic Will, (London: Routledge, 2003), 42.

¹⁷³ Andrew Feenberg, *The Philosophy of Praxis*, 158. Confronting the project of a completely humanized and totally transparent nature that leads to the atomic bomb and totalitarianism, Adorno rejects any version of identity philosophy that attempts to do away with the nonidentical. While nonidentity or the “unreconciled nature” threatens identity philosophy’s dream of self-constitution, for Adorno, nonidentity is the main category that his

learn to *remember* nature: “Through this remembrance [*Eingedenken*] of nature within the subject, a remembrance which contains the unrecognized truth of all culture, enlightenment is opposed in principle to power [*Herrschaft*, domination]” (*DE*, 32). But are we here falling back to the third option of a subject who faces nature as an untamable other?

I interpret *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as trying to find a place *in between* the extremes of the human subject’s total agency and total passivity. The question becomes who (or what) is going to de-reify the ossified status quo, since when we undertake that task we enslave ourselves precisely while dominating nature (or nature enslaves itself through us). For Horkheimer and Adorno, neither the Proletariat (Lukács) nor Being as such (Heidegger) seem to be able to hold on to this *in between*. Their suggestion—that to de-reify one must remember an unreconciled nature through reflection—could mark a direction to follow, but it is still too obscure to provide a solution.

The link between the processes of domination, subjectivity, and the incommensurable is far from resolved, nor is it dated. Both the auto-immune interpretation of the crisis of rationalization (i.e., the subject is attacked by its own creations) and the immune interpretation (i.e., the subject faces an alien “other” that can destroy it) try to resolve the still unresolved irrational regression within rationalization. Although *Dialectic of Enlightenment* mentions the incommensurable as a force that revolts against the process of universal mediation (which renders everything a repetition of something past), it also tries to avoid the mystification of the incommensurable. Nowadays, we seem to be deaf to *Dialectic of Enlightenment’s* cautions

negative dialectic—by negating the identity that negates nonidentity—hinges on. Hence, reflection can never close the gap between the subject and its world—there is always a remainder. Peter E. Gordon writes, “Adorno’s philosophical criticism always conceives of the relation between mind and world as an unresolved tension that forbids to the mind any confidence in its own transcendence even as it resists the demand that it conforms to the world” (*Adorno and Existence*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2016, 5).

about the mystification of the incommensurable, and often the discourse of wonder collaborates with rather than impeding contemporary enchanted stupidity.

III) Conclusion

The aim of my first three chapters has been to clarify Weber's thesis of the disenchantment of the world. The meaning of the thesis and the tale of the disenchantment is neither simple nor straightforward. I sketch out some final remarks that apply to the whole of Part I.

1) Rationalization

The disenchantment of the world relates to the process of rationalization. Weber's complex notion of rationalization, in which each value sphere is rationalized differently, identifies multiple causes of and possible pathways for the disenchantment of the world. In particular, the mode of rationalization within the spheres of science, religion, and magic are relevant for Weber's disenchantment of the world. Moreover, I have presented *Dialectic of Enlightenment's* argument in order to clarify both the paradox of the irrationality that seems to emerge from the process of rationalization and the dialectical entanglement of disenchantment and enchantment that guides this process. In Part II, I explore whether the category of wonder illuminates both the paradox of destructive irrationality amid rationality and the dialectic of disenchantment and enchantment. By juxtaposing the experience of wonder with the process of rationalization, I aim to follow a clue: that some experience of wonder can call into question the ongoing process of rationalization.

2) Disenchantment as a Mode of Enchantment

Drawing on Weber's "Science as a Vocation" and Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the problem under study shifts from modern disenchantment understood as lack of enchantment to modern disenchantment understood as the competing struggle of different modes of enchantment. Rather than opposing enchantment, rationalization generates different forms of it. By taking seriously Weber's reference to the value spheres as modern gods, I have argued that disenchantment is a mode of the enchantment of these modern gods. The iron of the iron cage is forged by gods. Thus, our current ecological crisis is played out at the level of the struggle amongst these impersonal forces.

A problem raised by *Dialectic of Enlightenment's* "pessimistic tone" is that enchantment does not look always benign. The different modes of enchantment (the mythological tendencies of enlightenment) both reify the status quo (fate, necessity, repetition, and the decline of the incommensurable) and prompt the *regression* of the human subject. In other words, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* examines how the Weberian gods regress into demons and how this regression is linked to the task of dominating nature. Is there a way to prevent this regression that, in the name of self-subsistence, paradoxically annihilates the human subject?¹⁷⁴

I agree with *Dialectic of Enlightenment* that the notions of the *domination of nature* and *fate* offer a way to assess whether the enchanting forces contribute to the process of

¹⁷⁴ More than an indisputable statement, I take the idea of the Weberian gods regressing into demons as a guiding question for my study of ontological wonder in Part II (thus avoiding the naivete of other works on wonder). It is from the point of view of the domination of nature that I will assess whether ontological wonder can awaken us from our enchanted stupidity. In other words, when all the gods are subsumed under the fate of dominating nature, polytheism is eclipsed. While the conclusions of this dissertation are modest and I do not present a god that would reside outside the process of rationalization, I do move in that direction by exploring a mode to make the gods reveal themselves. This seems to be a crucial first step for encountering other possible gods.

rationalization. To understand the dialectic of enchantment we must clarify the logic of the domination of nature. According to my reading of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the irreconcilable gods are not as different from one another as they appear. The different forces of enchantment seem to share a goal: to reinforce—rather than challenge—the injunction to dominate nature. The logic that further specializes each individual value sphere seems to enact different versions of the same theme. The gods that rule the legal, economic, religious, or erotic use different altars, but in the name of domination they all ask for the same type of sacrifices.¹⁷⁵

Because magic participates in a pursuit of the domination of nature that fuels the process of rationalization, I discard it as a category that can challenge the enchanting forces that maintain the hegemonic status quo. The problem is not that the world is viewed as alive with personal spirits (animism), or alive with the manifestation of an impersonal force (mana), or created and supported by one transcendent God or by different immanent polytheistic forces. The problem is that all these personal or impersonal forces are one-sided: they all share the logic of world-domination. Yet I do not dismiss their differences. There are clear differences between the person who compels gods and the person who worships gods, just as there are differences between becoming god's vessel (mysticism) and becoming god's tool (asceticism).¹⁷⁶ But from the point of view of domination, they look like variations of a single theme.

¹⁷⁵ I recognize that this interpretation contradicts Weber's claim regarding the truly conflicting and irreconcilable character of the modern gods. Both subsuming the process of rationalization under the category of the domination of nature and interpreting the differences of the modern gods as merely nuances within the fate of domination nature, are not what Weber said, but are what *Dialectic of Enlightenment*—in my reading—is adding to the discussion.

¹⁷⁶ On the difference between asceticism as tool (*Werkzeug*) and mysticism as vessel (*Gefäß*), see Weber's discussion on "Sociology of Religion" in his *Economy and Society*, edit. by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 546.

3) Techno-science and Proletarianization

Is it true that today we could understand our technological world if only we *wished* to? Unlike Weber, it seems that our *wish* to understand the world is no longer enough. Rather than being capable of understanding the world as our wish, we experience the global environmental crisis with a tragic necessity: we are merely stupid witnesses to how we devastate our natural world. Our wish is already enchanted by the technological thirst to dominate nature.

Can we, like Weber, still endorse the value neutrality of science in our techno-scientific world? At the current stage of our techno-scientific world, we cannot be blind to the presuppositions upon which science is based, many of which cannot be scientifically demonstrated. Since science names one modern god among others, the value-neutrality of science is already the outcome of the struggle between values. Science's value neutrality is not neutral; rather, its value neutrality is already a value.

According to the French philosopher Bernard Stiegler, the process of the exteriorization of knowledge in machines and apparatuses has led to a dangerous loss of our *savoir-faire* and *savoir-vivre*. If for Karl Marx the process of proletarianization was limited to the wage-worker who, by being subjected to machines and division of labor, is no longer the master of her skills (losing her *savoir-faire*), then, according to Stiegler, we currently are confronting the phenomenon of the proletarianization of the *entire* society: “the intellectual workers of cognitive capitalism, the functions of which are increasingly confined within the parameters of information systems, whose principles they cannot modify—because they are usually not aware of them—also suffer a proletarianization of the higher cognitive functions in which what is lost is that which constitutes the life of spirit as a critical, that is, rational instance, capable

of theoretical self-formalizing, and therefore of self-critique.”¹⁷⁷ No person understands what he or she does—neither the worker in his manual labor nor the CEO in her critical higher cognitive functions. In addition to destroying our *savoir-faire*, our contemporary society of consumption turns our capacity to care for ourselves and others (*savoir-vivre*) into a frenetic fulfillment of drives. This inability to theoretically self-formalize and self-critique generates what Stiegler calls systemic stupidity (*bêtise*): the loss of maturity (*Mündigkeit*) and responsibility caused by a system that is run by the drive-based behaviors of consumers and speculators. If for Weber an authentic vocation in science is required to prevent us from behaving like “overgrown children,” and— “like a man”—thus meet the challenges of the day without sacrificing the intellect, then the mature and “virile” path of sciences currently is heading right towards a kind of immature stupidity.¹⁷⁸

As we will see, through history wonder often has been associated with stupidity. Consequently, to raise the question of an ontological wonder in relation to Weber’s thesis of the disenchantment of the world, I will in Part II explore whether ontological wonder is part of the growing process of proletarianization and systemic stupidity.

¹⁷⁷ Bernard Stiegler, *The Re-Enchantment of the World: The Value of Spirit against Industrial Populism*, translated by Trevor Arthur (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 59. The contemporary phenomenon of proletarianization does not contradict Weber’s thesis of the disenchantment of the world, rather it signals a destructive side of the growing process of rationalization that was already latent in Weber’s analysis.

¹⁷⁸ *SV*, 17, 30. According to Stiegler, the huge amount of available information seems not to be helping to educate people. What is becoming conspicuous is that information does not amount to knowledge. Information names the necessary process of exteriorization of knowledge in apparatuses (books, internet, etc.). Through this exteriorization, knowledge is stored and can be communicated outstripping the limits of space and time. However, information needs to be internalized to become knowledge. There is an imbalance between the technological advances in gathering information and the human capacity to internalize this information. We are stupid but surrounded by endless resources of information. We are enchanted by the amount of information precisely because we don’t know how to internalize it. A dark side of technological enchantment is haunting our current world, namely, stupidity.

Chapter Four: Marveling and Wonder

The aim of Part II is to study the category of wonder in relation to the discussion of the disenchantment of the modern world. Although Weber does not equate enchantment with wonder, often the authors of the tale of the disenchantment of the world do equate these two terms.¹⁷⁹ Thanks to this connection, I can link the tradition that comes from Weber and his heirs to the rich history of philosophical reflection on wonder that traditionally goes back to Plato's and Aristotle's claims that philosophy begins in wonder. I use the philosophical reflection on wonder to illuminate the dialectic of enchantment that we studied in Part I.

My aim is to get closer to the first-person experience of being enchanted by modern gods. I address a simple question: How does it feel to be enchanted in our modern world? The category of wonder permits a phenomenological description of our enchantment, through which we can zoom into the experience of being devotees of modern gods.

The category of wonder also illuminates the specific type of enchantment of the modern gods. Although all gods seem to demand our sacrifice, the modern gods do not enchant us in the same way as the gods of past epochs. The medium of enchantment has changed; it has become subtler and more hidden—in Part I we called it inconspicuous enchantment. While magic or the belief in a set of truths may have been the mode of enchanting people in the past, there is currently a nonmagical and belief-less mode of enchantment. What unites theists and atheists is a mode of enchantment that is not primarily about carrying out the right magical formula or believing the right set of beliefs; rather it is an enchantment that compels us through the materiality of our bodies and the world. I do not have to believe in the market to let myself

¹⁷⁹ In Part I, I mentioned authors like Jeffrey L. Kosky, Jane Bennett, Joshua Landy, and Michael Saler.

be enchanted by the products in the mall, or the patriot does not have to believe in a list of beliefs that define the nation to feel compelled to give her life in the name of the nation. If the traditional gods inhabit churches and temples, the modern gods swarm secretly in speculations within the financial markets, in disputes between the nation-states, in the fetishism of goods that encourage our consumption, or in the spell of wanting to transform our entire planet into a large gas station.

My use of the category of wonder, however, is not only descriptive—that is, it does not solely clarify the experience of modern enchantment. It is also prescriptive. How so?

Until now, I have studied Weber’s disenchantment thesis and some versions of its use by scholars who succeeded him. By focusing on Weber’s reference to a pantheon of modern gods, I hope to challenge the idea of disenchantment as lack of mystery and wonder. But if the lack of enchantment is not the problem, then the search for new sources of enchantment is not necessarily the solution. A different problem arises that has nothing to do with demonstrating how art sparks wonder (Kosky) or how vibrant matter enchants (Bennett). Rather, the question is to assess how the wonder of art or the enchantment of matter relate to the process of rationalization and the enchanted stupidity that nourishes it. I do not claim that wonder and enchantment are necessarily going to save the world. Instead, I ask whether within the different sources of wonder and enchantment, there is some type of wonder, which I obscurely call “ontological,” that distrusts the logic of domination and growing stupidity, or, instead, whether this ontological wonder is simply another version of the postmodern reverence for a mysterious other.

Since the meaning of the ontological wonder is far from evident, and the possibility of proving my thesis depends on successfully clarifying its meaning, in Part II of my dissertation

I will use Martin Heidegger's description of wonder and related moods to elucidate the meaning of ontological wonder. There is no possible shortcut: to be surprised by ontological wonder we have to go through the ordeal of anxiety and the nothing. As a strategy to reduce part of the complexity and ambiguity of these terms, I introduce Heidegger's description of other related moods so that we can grasp the meaning of the ontological wonder in contrast to these moods. Next I describe some of wonder's essential features. Finally, I explore the mode of accessing to the experience of ontological wonder.

Let me be clear: although I use Heidegger to clarify the meaning of ontological wonder, the three chapters of Part II do not systematically survey Heidegger's understanding of wonder (*Erstaunen*). Rather, I examine some of Heidegger's themes and texts to show what ontological wonder may mean in contrast to ontic wonder. Indeed, the distinction between thatness and whatness, upon which I base the distinction between ontological and ontic wonder, may appear to be too simplistic for a Heideggerian scholar.¹⁸⁰ My aim, however, is not to explain the depth and complexity of Heidegger's thinking but to explain ontological wonder through the aid of Heidegger.

After three chapters evoking and elucidating ontological wonder, in Chapter Seven I study Heidegger's views of modernity through the lenses of three concepts: machination, nihilism, and the essence of technology. Based on Heidegger's description of what he calls the enchantment of machination, I clarify further Weber's reference to the modern gods as enchanting the process of rationalization, and I explore the relationship between this enchantment of machination and ontological wonder.

¹⁸⁰ See my commentary on Thomas Sheehan below, p. 177 note 203.

In the Conclusion, I finally ask what motivates this work: How would Weber's thesis about the disenchantment of the world fare if it were juxtaposed with an ontological type of wonder? Here I examine how ontological wonder relates to the process of rationalization and whether ontological wonder signals an alternative to the domination of nature. In the last part of the Conclusion, I argue that the experience of ontological wonder can yield care for beings (human and other-than-human). Since I am writing during the time that Heidegger's *Black Notebooks* are being published, and since I closely follow Heidegger's description of ontological wonder, I conclude by succinctly addressing some ethical concerns regarding the pertinence of ontological wonder to Heidegger's commitment to Nazism.

I) Ontic Wonder (Marveling): Wondering at the Unusual

In his lecture course during the Winter Semester of 1937–1938 entitled *Basic Questions of Philosophy*, Heidegger spent considerable time describing several related moods: amazement (*Sichverwundern*), admiration (*Bewundern*), astonishment (*Staunen*), awe (*Bestaunen*), and wonder (*Erstaunen*). For Heidegger, only wonder translates the Greek θαυμάζειν, which, according to Plato and Aristotle, attunes the beginning of philosophy.¹⁸¹ My goal here is to

¹⁸¹ Plato names (*Theaetetus*, 155d) the πάθος that is characteristic of a philosopher θαυμάζειν. Heidegger translates πάθος as *Stimmung* and θαυμάζειν as *Erstaunen*. In English Heidegger's *Stimmung* is translated indistinctly as mood, attunement, and disposition (and *Grundstimmung* is translated as fundamental attunement or basic disposition), while *Erstaunen* is translated as wonder or astonishment. While I am going to indistinctly translate *Stimmung* as disposition, attunement, and mood, I always translate *Erstaunen* as wonder. In "What is Philosophy?" Heidegger defends his translation of πάθος as *Stimmung*: "We usually translate *pathos* with passion [*passion, Leidenschaft*], ebullition of emotion [*Gefühlswallung*]. But *pathos* is connected with *paschein*, to suffer [*leiden*], endure, undergo, to be borne along by, to be determined by [*sich be-stimmen lassen durch*]. It is risky, as it always is in such cases, if we translate *pathos* with tuning [*Stimmung*], by which we mean dis-position and determination [*Ge-stimmtheit und Be-stimmtheit meinen*]. But we must risk this translation because it alone protects us from conceiving *pathos* in a very modern psychological sense. Only if we understand *pathos* as being attuned to, can we also characterize *thaumazein*, wonder, more exactly" (*What is Philosophy?*, translated and introduced by Jean T. Wilde and William Kluback, Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003, 83,84,

approach *Erstaunen* step by step, moving negatively—i.e., saying first what wonder is not, or like a sculptor, advancing by taking away. I refer to *Erstaunen* as ontological wonder, which I contrast with the other moods that I gather under the category of ontic wonder or marveling.¹⁸² At the core of this chapter is the task of clarifying and justifying this distinction between ontological and ontic wonder (marveling).

Marveling is an emotional response to a sudden change of states. This general feature, which creates a family resemblance between the aforementioned moods, says something about our own human constitution. Sigmund Freud, while explaining the pleasure principle in his *Civilization and Its Discontents*, observes, “We are so made that we can derive intense enjoyment only from a contrast and very little from a state of things.”¹⁸³ Hence, “What we call happiness in the strict sense comes from the (preferably sudden) satisfaction of needs which have been dammed up to a high degree, and it is from its nature only possible as an episodic event.”¹⁸⁴ The pursuit of happiness is limited by our own constitution. A prolonged pleasure is a contradiction in terms; a desired and pleasurable situation that is prolonged turns into a feeling of mild contentment. We need a *contrast* to make us feel good. According to our constitution, we crave “the sudden” to makes us feel alive. The *intensity* of our feelings does not depend on only the content of our feelings but also the contrast between different feelings. In summary, the greater the contrast between states, the higher the intensity of marveling that the person feels.

translation modified). While *Stimmung* originally means the tuning of a musical instrument, we can also hear in it the word *Stimme* (voice).

¹⁸² I would like to add to this list three moods: curiosity (*die Neugier*), the sublime (*das Erhabene*), and the holy (*das Heilige*). While there are differences between them, for the sake of clarity I refer to them interchangeably as marveling or ontic wonder.

¹⁸³ Freud, Sigmund. *Civilization and Its Discontents*, translated by James Strachey with a biographical introduction by Peter Gay (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1961), 25–26.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

Although the notions of *contrast* and *intensity* are part of the experience of marveling, I regard them as formal features shared by many other affects or emotions.¹⁸⁵ Often physiological and affect-theoretical research on wonder and marveling remain at this formal (or quantitative) level, but a phenomenological inquiry, which pretends to ascertain meaning, cannot be satisfied by measuring contrasts and intensities. Again, the intensity of the emotional response felt in the body is certainly crucial for the person struck by wonder; indeed, the intensity may determine the value that the person assigns in the aftermath to the experience. And yet, for my study, the analysis cannot stop at this formal level. The meaning of the

¹⁸⁵ Clear distinctions between moods, feelings, emotions, and affects are not easy to draw. As we have seen, Heidegger uses “mood” (*Stimmung*) to avoid the modern psychological connotations of emotion and feeling. The distinction between mood and affect, however, seems to mark the allegiance to a particular school of thought. Affects have become the object of study of a whole ‘new’ discipline called affect theory, which is even making relevant contributions in religious studies (see, for instance, Donovan O. Schaefer’s *Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution, and Power*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2015). Although affect theory has a dual genealogy, namely, the Deleuzian and the phenomenological streams, the Deleuzian current seems to be the more powerful of the two. Thus, the Heideggerian phenomenological description of moods has no place in affect theory. The Deleuzian affect theorist Eric Shouse, following Brian Massumi’s definition of affect in his introduction to Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus*, distinguishes between feeling, emotion, and affect: “Feelings are *personal* and *biographical*, emotions are *social*, and affects are *prepersonal*.” Because affects are prepersonal, they move always prior to and/or outside of consciousness and language, and they are sensed in terms of power and intensity. “An affect is a non-conscious experience of intensity; it is a moment of unformed and unstructured potential.” Because affects are prepersonal, it is not “I” who sense them but a body that is moved by them: “Affect is the body’s way of preparing itself for action in a given circumstance by adding a quantitative dimension of intensity to the quality of an experience. The body has a grammar of its own that cannot be fully captured in language because it ‘doesn’t just absorb pulses or discrete stimulations; it infolds contexts...’” (“Feeling, Emotion, Affect.” *M/C Journal* 8.6 (2005). Retrieved from: <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/0512/03-shouse.php>). Contrasting the prepersonal dimension of affects, feelings and emotions are personal, and in the case of emotions, they are also social. Corroborating Shouse definition and commenting on Aristotle’s definition of anger, Daniel M. Gross writes: “Anger is a deeply social passion provoked by perceived, unjustified slights, and it presupposes a public stage where social status is always insecure. Concretely what does this mean?...It means that anger is constituted not in the biology nor even in the dignity all humans are supposed to share equally, but rather in relationships of inequity... Anger presumes a *public stage* rather than private feeling. Alone on a desert, the king would not be subject to anger, because he would lack any social standing that might be concretely challenged” (*The Secret History of Emotion: From Aristotle’s Rhetoric to Modern Brain Science*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006, 2). So far, we cannot decide whether moods are personal, social, or prepersonal. More importantly, we have to be willing to give up some categories in order to see the “same” phenomena differently. In short, from the perspective of ontology—i.e., the study of Being as such—the differences between the personal and prepersonal, the individual and the social, and the biological and the historical may become secondary when confronted by the difference between beings and the Being of beings. While there is a direct connection between Heidegger’s *Stimmung* and Aristotle’s study of *pathe* in the second book of *Rhetoric*—a connection that connects Heidegger’s work with the long tradition of studying feelings and emotions—we have to keep open the possible confrontation with the Deleuzian current of affect theory. In Part I we entered the fray when we examined Jane Bennett’s enchanted materialism and her project of ethical energetics.

experience may come through the vehicle of contrast and intensity, but the meaning differs from them. We can draw some qualitative distinctions depending on the specific nature of the things that create the contrast. Simply stated, to be surprised by an angel differs qualitatively (not merely with regards to the degrees of intensity) from being surprised by a rainbow. But before drawing some distinctions in terms of content between the aforementioned moods, let me sketch the dialectical movement between the familiar and unfamiliar (or the usual and the unusual) that our constitution—eager for experiencing the contrast of states—seems to favor.

Since we derive intense enjoyment only from a contrast, we long for the unfamiliar. But we do not always notice that our longing for the unfamiliar is already a response to our tendency to reduce everything new and strange into something familiar.¹⁸⁶ It is because everything moves toward boredom that we long for the unfamiliar, the unknown, which promises to take us out of the routine and to make us feel good. In other words, the thirst for the unfamiliar is already a reaction to our tendency to render what is unfamiliar into something familiar.

The experience of marveling occurs within this dialectic of the familiar and unfamiliar. In short, a person feels wonder when encountering something unfamiliar. Along these lines, Philip Fisher, in his book about aesthetics of rare experiences, defines wonder as “a sudden experience of an extraordinary object that produces delight.”¹⁸⁷ The emotional intensity felt by

¹⁸⁶ In its extremes, when we turn every “otherness” into our sameness, this tendency becomes totalitarian. See Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. by Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969).

¹⁸⁷ Philip Fisher, *Wonder, the Rainbow, and the Aesthetics of Rare Experiences* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 55. Fisher’s definition is the point of departure for Sophia Vasalou’s *Wonder: a Grammar* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015). Vasalou is looking for wonder’s physiognomy. From Fisher’s definition she extracts five grammars of wonder, but then in her book she supplements each grammar with its opposite, thus complicating the definition of wonder. In her introduction, she writes: “For the SUDDEN we might ask: And does wonder always *strike* or might not wonder also need to be *hunted* or *stoked*? With EXTRAORDINARY we might ask: And is the extraordinary something that reveals itself or something that may also need to be discovered? And if we twice converge on the notion of a hunt, or a quest, aren’t we also querying

a wondering person correlates with the contrast between the familiar state and the new unfamiliar state brought by the irruption of the extraordinary object. Philip's emphasis on delight as the effect in us produced by the extraordinary object is consistent with Freud's commentary that enjoyment is possible only in a contrast. But the movement does not stop here: amazement and marveling bring excitement to our cognition, and then boredom seizes us, which triggers again the longing for amazement, and so on.

To sum up, ontic wonder is a response to the encounter of something unfamiliar. The intensity of wonder felt in our body depends on the contrast between the familiar state and the new unfamiliar condition brought after encountering the unfamiliar thing. If, on the one hand, we derive enjoyment only from the contrast produced by something unfamiliar, and, on the other hand, we have the tendency to render what is unfamiliar into something familiar, then marveling's intensity is destined to fade away, leading to an endless search for new marvels.

Now, let us draw a distinction in terms of content. Depending on its nature, the unfamiliar thing can be something wholly extraordinary—some exceptional thing or event that ruptures the previous state of affairs—or something merely ordinary that suddenly becomes extraordinary.¹⁸⁸ While the former type of wonder is often studied by the disciplines of

whether wonder PRODUCES or whether it may not also itself demand to be produced? That, in the same breath, is to consider: What would be the OBJECT—not only in the sense of *content* but the more valorized notion of *objective* or *intent*—of such wonder? And is DELIGHT the self-sufficient answer? And what, finally, probing deeper into the unobtrusiveness of grammar, is the meaning of the present tense which relates delight to wonder as its cause (producES) with all the stability of the eternal that grammar places at its disposal?" (3). Her book is the latest most exhaustive work on wonder after Mary-Jane Rubenstein's *Strange Wonder* (2008). Although mapping the different aspects of wonder's grammar is helpful for my research, the listing and classifying features of experiences (similar to some—and lamentably common—approaches to mysticism) assumes wonder is an object in front of us ready to be examined. As important as it is to describe the features of some moods, the task is to secure its access. While I can make wonder the object of my study, I have to acknowledge that wonder is precisely not an object. Indeed, the way of accessing wonder becomes the best description of what wonder may be. Although in this chapter I will closely follow Heidegger's list of the essence of wonder, in Chapter Six I focus on the mode of accessing (encountering) ontological wonder.

¹⁸⁸ Here I am distinguishing between marveling at the unfamiliar and wondering at the familiar that has turned somehow into something unfamiliar (commonly referred to as the *unheimlich*). But a third line of inquiry is also possible—which I do not pursue here, but which could be traced from Emerson to Wallace Stevens to Cavell: to

religion, aesthetics, history, and anthropology, the latter type is the object for philosophical inquiry. Let me first focus on the wholly extraordinary type of wonder, which, in spite of being extraordinary, is more commonly studied.

Wondering at the Unusual (Ontic Wonder)

Since the rule is to be surrounded by what is familiar, the exception is to be wonderfully surprised by what is extraordinary. Now, within what is extraordinary, I distinguish, in turn, what is preternatural from what is supernatural.

In Fisher's aesthetic investigation, he explicitly mentions that both wonder and the sublime, although rare experiences, happen *within nature*: "The experience of wonder no less than that of the sublime makes up part of the aesthetics of rare experiences. Each depends on moments in which we find ourselves struck by effects within nature whose power over us depends on their not being common or everyday."¹⁸⁹ In contrast, Rudolf Otto's classical investigation of the holy illustrates this supernatural wonder. In his analysis of *mysterium*, when we—if capable—are confronted by the numinous as *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, Otto writes, "That which is 'mysterious' is—to give it perhaps the most striking expression—the 'wholly other' (*thateron, anyad, alienum*), that which is quite beyond the sphere of the usual [*des Gewohnten*], the intelligible, and the familiar, which therefore falls quite outside the limits of the 'canny' [*Heimlichen*], and is contrasted with it, filling the mind [*das Gemüt*] with blank wonder and astonishment [*starren Staunen*]."¹⁹⁰

marvel as something familiar *as familiar*. This type of marveling seems to even question my reference to Freud regarding the correlation between contrast and intensity. I thank Thomas Carlson for this suggestion.

¹⁸⁹ Philip Fisher, *Wonder, the Rainbow, and the Aesthetics of Rare Experiences*, 1.

¹⁹⁰ Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, 26. According to Otto, mysticism follows the extreme tendency to contrast the numinous object (i.e., the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*), understood as the "wholly other," with this world; and "not content with contrasting it with all that is of nature or this world, mysticism concludes by contrasting it with Being itself and all that 'is,' and finally actually calls it 'that which is nothing.' By this 'nothing'

While the distinction between natural and supernatural may be important, it distracts us from our inquiry into the feeling of marveling. We should remain at the level of how moods appear rather than speculate about their natural or supernatural origins. We need first to describe the experience of marveling, and only then—if we think it is relevant—can we explore the origin of extraordinary and marvelous things. So far, we have the common denominator that creates the family resemblance of amazement, admiration, astonishment, awe, curiosity, the sublime, and the holy, namely, the fact that all of them occur when we face something or someone extraordinary (regardless their origin). Let us move to Heidegger’s description of some of these moods in his lecture course *Basic Questions of Philosophy*.

a) *Amazement (das Sichwundern) and marveling (Verwundern)*

Leaving wonder (*Erstaunen*) for later, Heidegger begins with the wondrous (*das Erstaunliche*):

The wondrous [*das Erstaunliche*] is for us in the first place something that stands out [*Auffallende*] and therefore remarkable [*Merkwürdige*]; for the most part it also has the character of the exceptional [*Absonderliche*], unexpected [*Ausgefallenen*], surprising [*Überraschenden*], and therefore exciting [*Er-regenden*]. A better name for this would be the curious [*Wunderliche*] or the marvelous [*Verwunderliche*], something that arouses the desire for amazement [*Sichwundern*], engages it, and sustains it, specifically in such a way that it makes the search [*Sucht*] for ever new things of this kind more ardent [*süchtiger*].

is meant not only that of which nothing can be predicated, but that which is absolutely and intrinsically other than and opposite of everything that is and can be thought” (29). For Otto, mysticism’s negation of all that “is” has to be correlated with the “*positive quality* of the ‘wholly other’ that is felt in the religious emotion. Hence, the negation of this world articulated in concepts such as the “supernatural” and “transcendent” is linked to the positive feeling-content of the “wholly other.” About these two concepts, Otto writes: “...it is obvious that the two terms in question are merely negative and exclusive attributes with reference to ‘nature’ and the world or cosmos, respectively. But on the side of the feeling-content it is otherwise... It is through this positive feeling-content that the concepts of the ‘transcendent’ and ‘supernatural’ become forthwith designations for a unique ‘wholly other’ reality and quality, something of whose special character we can *feel*, without being able to give it clear conceptual expression” (30). We see how the logic of wondering at the unusual achieves its more extreme version with the holy as the “wholly other,” who is nothing in comparison to our world.

The marveling [*Verwundern*] and the amazement [*das Sichwundern*] always adhere to something conspicuously unusual [*auffallendes Ungewöhnliches*]; this is extracted from the usual and set over against it.¹⁹¹

The wondrous is what stands out, the exceptional; it is exciting because it surprises us. This description agrees with both Freud's comment that we derive intense enjoyment only from a contrast and with Fisher's definition of wonder as "a sudden experience of an extraordinary object that produces delight." We can also consider the lists of medieval mirabilia and the modern cabinets of curiosity described by Daston and Park's *Wonders and the Order of Nature* as instances of the wondrous.¹⁹² As I said, and following Heidegger, I will avoid referring to them as wonders and rather call them marvelous (or curious), and the type of mood triggered and nourished by these things, marveling (or amazement).

Heidegger places the endless and ardent desire, which compels us to move from one marvelous thing to the other, within the dialectic of the familiar and the unfamiliar. We search for something conspicuously unusual in order to abandon the boredom of the usual and feel the excitement of the unusual. In the experience of marveling and amazement, the categories of the usual and the unusual are experienced as being opposed. One is dealing with either the usual or the unusual but never both together. On the one hand, our natural constitution predisposes us to the search (*die Suche*) for the unusual, which explains our addiction (*die Sucht*) to marveling and amazement; on the other hand, our natural predisposition for adapting

¹⁹¹ *Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected "Problems" of "Logic,"* translated by Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 136. Cited parenthetically hereafter as *BQP*. Unfortunately the translator is not always consistent with the translation of these moods: He translates *Wunderliche* sometimes as curious and other times as amazing; and *Verwunderliche* variously as marvelous or curious. This may not be a big issue, because for Heidegger, the wondrous, the curious, marveling, and amazement, have similar meanings. But by using "curious" to translate both *Wunderliche* and *Verwunderliche*, one may confuse it with the relevant concept of curiosity (*Neugier*).

¹⁹² See Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature: 1150–1750* (New York: Zone Books, 2001).

and taming everything into something usual explains why the addiction has no end. Any possible way out of this endless and addictive movement would require a third possibility beyond the either/or relation of the usual and the unusual.

So far we have paid attention to the fact that something *unusual* produces amazement, but Heidegger emphasizes also that the experience of marveling and amazement requires some *determinate* thing or event to stand out: “Amazement [*Wunderliche*] is always a determinate and singular event [*bestimmtes einzelnes Vorkommnis*], a particular occurrence, a unique circumstance, and is always set off against a dominating determinate background of what is precisely familiar [*Bekanntes*] and ordinary [*Geläufige*]” (*BQP*, 137). Both the amazing thing and the background against which it is set are determinate in a way that the determinate thing is acknowledged to be external to the determinate background: “For that is what distinguishes something curious [*Verwunderliche*]: as a determinate, individual ‘this,’ it falls outside of every determinate, individual sphere of the familiar and known [*Bekanntes*]” (*BQP*, 141).

Some of Heidegger’s remarks on amazement can illuminate the enchanted stupidity mentioned in Part I:

Amazement [*das Sichverwundern*] is a certain inability to explain [*Nicht-erklären-können*] and ignorance of reason [*Grund-nicht-kennen*]. This inability to explain, however, is not by any means equivalent to a determination and a declaration that the explanation and the reason are not available. On the contrary, the not being able to explain is first and essentially a kind of being caught up [*Sich-Befindens*] in the inexplicable [*Unerklärlichen*], being struck by it and upon closer inspection the amazement does precisely not want to have the marvelous explained but instead wants to be teased [*bedrängt*] and fascinated [*gefesselt*] by the inexplicable as what is other [*das Unerklärliche als das Andere*], surprising [*Überraschende*], and uncommon [*Ungewohnte*] in opposition to what is commonly known, boring, and empty [*Leeren*] (*BQP*, 137).

The one who is struck in amazement does not want to have the marvelous and curious explained away. The hunger for overcoming boredom is so “acute” that we prefer not knowing in order to preserve our marveling and avoid dealing again with the boredom built into our nature.¹⁹³ The process of proletarianization resembles Heidegger’s description of amazement: in both cases there is an inability to explain and an ignorance of reason. So far, we are still not ready to say whether the process of proletarianization (what I have called enchanted stupidity) is based on our incapacity or on our unwillingness. In amazement one is caught up in fascination by the inexplicable, which appears as the way out of the boredom and emptiness of what is commonly known. Tellingly, Heidegger’s uses words like fascination, bewitchment, and encharming:

The more arbitrary, changeable, and even unessential, though indeed striking, the marvelous [*Verwunderliche*] happens to be, the more does it satisfy amazement, which is always vigilant for opportunities and desires them so as to be stimulated in its very own passion. Being struck by what is uncommon comes to pass here in such a way that what is customary is set aside and the uncommon itself becomes something familiar that bewitches [*behext*] and encharms [*verzaubert*] (*BQP*, 137).

Is it possible that one of the reasons for the process of proletarianization is our enjoyment—our desire to be stimulated—in not knowing? The question about the relation of this process of proletarianization and marveling remains open.

One would like to stay forever in amazement, to keep the inexplicable as inexplicable: “To be amazed [*Sichwundern*] is to find oneself in face of the inexplicable [*Unerklärliche*], and indeed in such a way that in this disposition the inexplicability is sustained” (*BQP*, 141).

¹⁹³ The use of the word “acute” may be misleading. This is a senseless form of acuteness. What bothers is that one feels nothing; it is not something painful to be alleviated, but rather the pain of the painless absence of any stimulus.

But, inferring from what we have already ascertained about the dialectic of the familiar and unfamiliar, we can imagine what comes after amazement: “What is new every day and never happened before becomes something habitual and always the same” (*BQP*, 137).

To sum up, in amazement and marveling the person faces something unusual set off against the usual. What she faces is something particular and determinate. She does not want to have the marvelous and curious explained away. She prefers to stay carried away, bewitched, and enchanted by the unusual away from the boredom of the usual. Since the next two moods that we are going to study also share this same core, let me focus on the differences.

b) Admiration (das Bewundern)

In contrast to amazement and marveling, admiration differs in that the admirer maintains a freedom from the admired: “No matter how wholly and genuinely admiration may be carried away by what fulfills it, yet it always involves a certain freedom over and against what is admired” (*BQP*, 142). In contrast to the fascination (*gefesselt*, which literally means, “in shackles”) produced by the inexplicable in the experience of amazement, who admires feels a sort of self-affirmation—even superiority—over and against what is admired. In admiration occurs a concealed inversion: the admirer feels superior to the admired and the admired feels judged as inferior by the admirer. According to Heidegger, “Therefore, conversely, everyone who allows himself to be admired, and precisely if the admiration is justified, is of a lower rank. For he subordinates [*unterstellt*] himself to the viewpoint and to the norms of his admirer. To the truly noble person [*Edlen*], on the contrary, every admiration is an offense.” (*BQP*, 142). Besides the logic of admiration that Heidegger nicely sketches out, I want to notice the passion for distance and rank that permeates this passage. Although Heidegger in his later

works may overcome Nietzsche's will to power, both share the critique of what is average, and the glorification of rankings.

c) *Astonishment* (das Staunen) and *Awe* (Bestaunen)

In contrast to admiration, the person who is struck in astonishment and awe does not affirm herself and judge herself superior (or equal in rank) to the extraordinary. According to Heidegger, in astonishment

we find here, as in the case of admiration, a characteristic retreating [*eigentümliche Zurücktreten*] in face of the awesome [*Bestaunten*], up to what is called dumbfoundedness [*Erschlagensein*]. But in astonishment this retreating in face of the extraordinary [*Ungewöhnlichen*] no longer postures as that fundamentally arrogant and self-referential evaluation [*Wertschätzung*] and patronization [*Begönnerung*] found well- or ill-concealed in all admiration. . . . Astonishment includes a decisive suspension of position-taking [*Stellungnahme*] (*BQP*, 143).

In astonishment, what confronts us with the face of the unusual is so extraordinary that the one who is in awe suffers a sense of wretchedness and inadequacy regarding the awesome. The one who is in awe is incapable of taming the unusual and faces the unusual as extraordinary: "Astonishment rather allows the unusual [*Ungewöhnliche*] to grow, precisely as what is extraordinary [*Außergewöhnliche*], into what overgrows all usual powers and bears in itself a claim to a rank all its own. Astonishment is imbued with the awareness of being excluded from what exists in the awesome" (*BQP*, 143).¹⁹⁴ Since there is a suspension of position-taking, in astonishment we may think that the "passion for distance" would become contested. The

¹⁹⁴ The religious experience described by Otto fits well with this description of the feeling of inadequacy regarding the extraordinary of the awesome: "The truly 'mysterious' object is beyond our apprehension and comprehension, not only because our knowledge has certain irremovable limits, but because in it we come upon something inherently 'wholly other,' whose kind and character are incommensurable with our own, and before which we therefore recoil in a wonder that strikes us chill and numb" (Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, 28).

person who is astonished feels an insurmountable gap that separates her from the extraordinary. And yet, I claim, the ranking is not destroyed but reinforced. The person may feel herself at the bottom rank—even below the bottom—but at the same time the rank is negatively affirmed as that from which one is excluded.¹⁹⁵

The sense of inadequacy regarding the awesome also occurs in Kant's discussion of the sublime. In the experience of the sublime there is a movement in which the meaning of this inadequacy changes. When facing something great and powerful in nature, we may first experience our inadequacy—because we are too small—in light of the magnitude of the awesome. But then, through some internal movement of the mind, we discover within ourselves a capacity for resistance of quite another kind, in which we experience our vocation for the supra-sensible that itself becomes inadequate with respect to even the greatest in nature. Of course, all this is possible if we can still keep some sense of security when confronting the sublime:

Bold, overhanging, as it were threatening cliffs, thunder clouds towering up into the heavens, bringing with them flashes of lightning and crashes of thunder, volcanoes with their all-destroying violence, hurricanes with the devastation they leave behind, the boundless ocean set into a rage, a lofty waterfall on a mighty river, etc., make our capacity to resist into an insignificant trifle in comparison with their power. But the sight of them only becomes all the more attractive the more fearful it is, as long as we find ourselves in safety, and we gladly call these objects sublime because they elevate the strength of our soul above its usual level, and allow us to discover within ourselves a capacity for resistance of quite another kind, which gives us the courage to measure ourselves against the apparent all-powerfulness of nature (*CPJ*, §28, 145).

¹⁹⁵ The fact that the ranking remains is relevant with respect to the obscure link between mystery and values and meaning that I mentioned in Part I. Why do we need the unusual and extraordinary to frame our values? Why does our ability to judge values hang on what exceeds evaluation? Tellingly, the historical figure who created the word hierarchy, namely, Pseudo Dionysius, is precisely the one who carried out one of the most extreme exercises of negative theology in order to let the divine free in its infinitude and avoid any idolatrous attempt to capture it in our concepts. The question remains: What is the connection between something that is so extraordinary that it exceeds any predicate (even the predicate “extraordinary”) and the creation of ranks and hierarchies?

What is sublime, by its greatness and powerfulness, makes us feel a sense of infinitude and the pain and frustration of expanding our imagination as we try to apprehend it. But the sublime reveals our own mysterious vocation for the infinite and the supra-sensible. Properly speaking, what is sublime is not the object in nature. The awesome object of nature merely triggers the inadequacy, which, in turn, discloses that which is properly sublime, namely, the lawful vocation of our reason for the infinite and totality.

It is also evident from this that true sublimity must be sought only in the mind of the one who judges, not in the object in nature, the judging of which occasions this disposition [*Stimmung*] in it. And who would want to call sublime shapeless mountain masses towering above one another in wild disorder with their pyramids of ice, or the dark and raging sea, etc.? But the mind feels itself elevated in its own judging if, in the consideration of such things, without regard to their form, abandoning itself to the imagination and to a reason which, although it is associated with it entirely without any determinate end, merely extends it, it nevertheless finds the entire power of the imagination inadequate to its ideas (*CPJ*, §26, 139–140).

The movement that happens in the sublime regarding the meaning of the inadequacy can be traced through the mingled sense of pleasure and displeasure:

The feeling of the sublime is thus a feeling of displeasure from the inadequacy of the imagination in the aesthetic estimation of magnitude for the estimation by means of reason, and a pleasure that is thereby aroused at the same time from the correspondence of this very judgment of the inadequacy of the greatest sensible faculty in comparison with ideas of reason, insofar as striving for them is nevertheless a law for us. (*CPJ*, §27, 141).

We feel the deprivation of the freedom of our imagination in accordance with its empirical use. But this deprivation enlarges our imagination and makes it aware of its supersensible vocation. Thus, already residing within the displeasure of not been capable through the standard of our sensibility and the ideas of our understanding to measure some awesome object of nature is a

sense of pleasure for the law of reason and its supersensible vocation. Hence, in this displeasure we also feel some ambiguous sense of pleasure in finding every standard of sensibility and understanding inadequate for the ideas of reason.

Although in the experience of the sublime we do not acquire knowledge about nature, this experience discloses *us* in our mysterious vocation for the infinite. In short, the sense of inadequacy *reveals*—it is a mode of disclosure. Our incapacity to measure the sensible reveals negatively our vocation for the supersensible. In other words, the negativity (i.e., our incapacity and inadequacy) has a positive origin (i.e., our vocation for the supersensible). Our vocation for the supersensible can be palpable for us only as inadequacy in the sensible world.¹⁹⁶

Recalling Heidegger's definition of astonishment and admiration, we can assert that with regard to the object of nature that triggers the sublime in us, we begin experiencing it as something awesome, but then we admire it, keeping a certain freedom and feeling a sort of self-affirmation—even superiority—over and against what is admired. What makes this change from astonishment to admiration possible is the discovery in us of the sublime, namely, the idea of infinity in our reason. Kant writes:

For just as we found our own limitation in the immeasurability of nature and the insufficiency of our capacity to adopt a standard proportionate to the aesthetic estimation of the magnitude of its *domain*, but nevertheless at the same time found in our own faculty of reason another, nonsensible standard, which has that very infinity under itself as a unit against which everything in nature is small, and thus found in our own mind a superiority over nature itself even in its immeasurability: likewise the irresistibility of its power certainly makes us, considered as natural beings, recognize our physical powerlessness, but at the same time it reveals a capacity for judging ourselves as independent of it and a superiority over nature on which is grounded a self-preservation of quite another kind than that which can be threatened and endangered by nature outside us, whereby the humanity

¹⁹⁶ Similar to this “negative” disclosure of the sublime, as we are going to see later, the disclosure of ontological wonder also happens in a moment of crisis, when anxiety is turning everything into nothing.

in our person remains undemeaned even though the human being must submit to that dominion. In this way, in our aesthetic judgment nature is judged as sublime not insofar as it arouses fear, but rather because it calls forth our power (which is not part of nature) to regard those things about which we are concerned (goods, health and life) as trivial, and hence to regard its power (to which we are, to be sure, subjected in regard to these things) as not the sort of dominion over ourselves and our authority to which we would have to bow if it came down to our highest principles and their affirmation or abandonment. Thus nature is here called sublime merely because it raises the imagination to the point of presenting those cases in which the mind can make palpable to itself the sublimity of its own vocation even over nature. (CPJ, §28, 145)

We may admire nature, and in this admiration we secure our sense of superiority over it. Precisely in the moment in which we are able to judge the greatest in nature, we affirm our superiority over nature. This reversal in which we assert our superiority over nature depends on our becoming aware of our vocation to infinity and our knowing ourselves to be the proper sublime: “Thus sublimity is not contained in anything in nature, but only in our mind, insofar as we can become conscious of being superior to nature within us and thus also to nature outside us” (CPJ, §28, 147).

As a clear sign of the emphasis on the human subject in modernity, we can see how for Kant solely the human subject deserves to be called sublime. Moreover, through the experience of the sublime, we can overcome our fear of nature and thus assert our superiority over it. The modern subject is now ready to throw itself into the process of rationalization and the domination of nature. We supported this process in the name of endless progress, but now we have discarded progress while retaining the endless—the endless for the sake of the endless is the only satisfying answer for us, who have the infinite enchanting our mind.

To sum up, we are studying different modes of ontic wonder or marveling. Each mode sets off a determinate, individual object from a determinate sphere of the usual. Since the

unusual is experienced as other and opposed to the usual, we abandon the sphere of the usual because of our bewitchment with the unusual. The differences among these moods depend on the relation that the attuned person has to the unusual: In amazement, the unusual is merely what is other, the exciting opposite of the usual, so that we are captured by the amazing and get lost in it. In admiration, the unusual is made equal in rank to the admirer so that the admirer may posit herself to be free in relation to the admired. In astonishment, the unusual creates a sense of inadequacy in the astonished vis-à-vis the awesome so that she may submit to the awesome by holding herself back.

II) Ontological Wonder: Wondering at the Usual

The discussion of marveling, by way of contrast, brings this philosophical type of wonder to the fore. Here I describe some of ontological wonder's essential features; in Chapter Six I focus on access to this experience. While it might seem better to start with access to this phenomenon and then describe its essence, I instead first provide a general description of what ontological wonder may mean and then try to concretize this general meaning by addressing the access to the experience of wonder.

Wondering at the Usual

After describing marveling, Heidegger continues his lecture course *Basic Questions of Philosophy* by offering thirteen points about the essence of wonder (*Erstaunen*), some of which I will comment upon (and rearrange) in what follows.

a) *In wonder the usual becomes unusual*

In contrast to all of the moods that we have studied so far, “in wonder what is most usual itself becomes the most unusual [*Im Er-staunen wird das Gewöhnlichste selbst zum Ungewöhnlichsten*].”¹⁹⁷ This first point immediately puts wonder at odds with the moods studied above. Since we do not wonder at the most unusual in order to escape the usual, we are presented here with the possibility of inhabiting differently the dialectic of the usual and the unusual.

According to Heidegger, “Precisely the most usual whose usualness goes so far that it is not even known or noticed (*bekannt und beachtet*) in its usualness—this most usual itself becomes in wonder what is most unusual” (*BQP*, 144).¹⁹⁸ But how can it trigger wonder when it is so usual that it is not even noticed? How does it happen that the invisible (because of its usualness) becomes patent and wonderful?

¹⁹⁷ Inaugurating the philosophical reflection on wonder, the young Theaetetus, having been divested of all his arguments and surrounded by aporia, says: “By the gods, Socrates, I am lost in wonder when I think of all these things, and sometimes when I regard them it really makes my head swim.” Socrates responds, “It seems that Theodorus was not far from the truth when he guessed what kind of person you are. For this is an experience which is characteristic of a philosopher, this wondering [*thaumazein*]: this is where philosophy begins and nowhere else.” (Plato, *Theaetetus*, trans. Fowler, 155c–155d, as quoted in Mary-Jane Rubenstein, *Strange Wonder. The Closure of Metaphysics and the opening of Awe*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008, p. 3). Theaetetus’s head swims not because he has encountered the “wholly other,” nor because he has faced something so great that in his inadequacy he can sense his own vocation for the infinite, nor because he is surprised by the sudden experience of an extraordinary object. Instead, he is surprised by the fact that he does not know what he thought he knew, namely, what knowledge really is. The familiar experience of “knowing” becomes suddenly unfamiliar, which causes Theaetetus to be lost in wonder. Rubenstein says of this passage, “What is astonishing is that an everyday assumption has suddenly become untenable: the familiar has become strange, throwing even the unquestionable into question” (*Strange Wonder*, 4). For a discussion of philosophical wonder as the experience of the most usual becoming itself unusual, see also Jeff Malpas, “Beginning in Wonder” in *Philosophical Romanticism*, edited by Nikolas Kompridis (New York: Routledge, 2006), 285; Sophia Vasalou, *Wonder: a Grammar*, 82; John Sallis, “A Wonder that one could never aspire to surpass,” in *The Path of Archaic Thinking*, 258; Jerome A. Miller, A. *In the Throe of Wonder: Intimations of the Sacred In a Post-Modern World* (Albany: State University Press, 1992), 3.

¹⁹⁸ The thesis that philosophizing attuned by wonder focuses on the most usual is not always maintained by Heidegger or by other philosophers. For instance, in his *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger writes the opposite: “Philosophizing, we can now say, is extra-ordinary questioning about the extra-ordinary” (*IM*, 14). And he cites Nietzsche to support his argument: “A philosopher: that is a human being who constantly experiences, sees, hears, suspects, hopes, dreams extraordinary things...” (Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, § 292, quoted in *IM*, 13).

In psychoanalysis and philosophy, this experience has been often called the *unheimlich* (uncanny). And yet, that something is *unheimlich* does not necessarily mean that we are going to welcome it in wonder—we may react with fear, panic, or just indifference. Furthermore, the “cause” of the *unheimlich* is not always ontological (i.e., related somehow to the Being of beings). Since we are studying ontological wonder, we still must clarify how and when the experience of the *unheimlich* is welcomed in wonder and triggered by our encounter with Being. In other words, regarding the experience of the *unheimlich* (when the usual becomes unusual), we have to clarify its access (how can what is not even noticed become patent), its effect (why wonder), and its origin (why ontological).

b) Wonder and the ontological difference

According to Heidegger, in wonder “what is most usual of all and in all, i.e., *everything* [*Alles*], becomes the most unusual. Everything has in everything at first the most usual to which attention [*achtet*] is not paid and which, if it is glimpsed, is not explicitly heeded” (*BQP*, 144). But what does this “everything” mean? Heidegger answers: “Everything in what is most usual (beings) becomes in wonder [*Er-staunen*] the most unusual in this one respect: that it is what it is [*daß es ist, was es ist*]” (*BQP*, 144). Heidegger names the most usual of all: *beings*, which suddenly become the most unusual, with regard to the fact *that* they are *what* they are. We have to move slowly here, for the matter at stake is not simple at all. Indeed, the entire discussion about ontological wonder hovers around the issue of understanding these three notions: *beings* as the most usual, *thatness* and *whatness* as the most unusual, and the movement from the former to the latter.

For Heidegger, “The basic disposition of wonder displaces man into the realm where the most usual [*Gewöhnlichste*], yet still as such unthought (beings), are established in their most proper unusualness [*eigenste Ungewöhnlichkeit*], namely the one of their Being [*Seins*], and where beings as such then become the most worthy of questioning [*Fragwürdigste*]” (*BQP*, 147). This experience of the *unheimlich* is ontological when in it we face the ontological difference—i.e., the difference between beings as the most usual and the Being of beings as their most proper unusualness. While our dealings with beings are part of the ontic, when we experience the fact *that* those beings are, we dwell in the ontological.¹⁹⁹ By way of shorthand, I use the term *ontological wonder* to refer to the wonder that wonders at the unusualness of the *that is* of beings—the wonder that beings are, the wonder of the bare thatness.²⁰⁰

However, already in this second point in Heidegger’s list, the religious studies scholar Mary-Jane Rubenstein sees how Heidegger is limiting wonder’s ontological power of disclosure and explaining it away as a mere ontic attunement (i.e., concerned with beings). For Rubenstein, what is really astonishing is how Heidegger renders the inexplicability of wonder into thirteen bullet points: “Almost immediately after naming wonder in the 1937–38 lecture

¹⁹⁹ Grammatically, a being or an entity (*das Seiende*) is the substantive form of the present participle (*seiend*) of the verb *to be* (*sein*). Literally means that which is or something that is. A being (*das Seiende*) has to be distinguished from the substantive Being (*das Sein*), i.e., the substantive form of the infinitive to be (*sein*). We can understand Being as “that which determines entities as entities (*Seiendes als Seiendes*), that on the basis of which entities are already understood” (*BT*, 26). Moreover, and paramount in Heidegger’s thinking, “The Being of entities ‘is’ not itself an entity (*Das Sein des Seienden ‘ist’ nicht selbst ein Seiendes*)” (*ibid.*). Hence, in order to conserve the difference explicitly visible (in German), I will use the capitalize version Being to render the German word *Sein*, marking thus the difference with a being (*das Seiende*). This translation, however, can lead us to reify Being (the fact that something is) as a higher entity, as a supreme being, i.e. a being (something that is); thus falling in the same confusion that I was trying to avoid. Although grammatically “clear,” *that* what is said when we utter the word Being remains for Heidegger *the* question. Covered up by the most familiar and usually taken for granted, it is not clear at all what we mean when we call something a being.

²⁰⁰ With the “wonder of the bare thatness” I am not suggesting some pre- or extra hermeneutic experience. I claim that this “thatness” is the senseless blind spot *within* our world of meaning. Rather than being beyond hermeneutics, it signals the senseless core that renders our making sense possible. Furthermore, my writing itself aims to develop the hermeneutical context required to welcome these experiences and to decipher their meaning. Lacking this hermeneutical ground, these experiences are often merely dismissed, and their possible ethical effects, lost. Finally, in what follows I explain the reason for highlighting the “thatness” of beings (as the mark of the ontological) and to play down their “whatness.”

series as the mark of philosophy's fundamental 'inexplicability,' Heidegger goes on, astonishingly, to explain wonder. In thirteen bullet points, he lists wonder's various attributes, eventually abandoning it as an unregenerately ontic attunement."²⁰¹ We still have to assess whether the bullet points that I comment upon here reduce or increase wonder's inexplicability. Silence is not the only mode that we have to relate with the inexplicable. In this case, whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must say why not.

According to Rubenstein, we can find the specific place where Heidegger reduces wonder to an ontic attunement. The clue appears when Heidegger affirms that beings become in wonder the most unusual in "this one respect: that it is *what* it is." It is this *whatness* that betrays the ontic jurisdiction of wonder. Rubenstein writes,

With this 'what,' however, Heidegger reigns in the uncanniness he had unleashed in the first point. For in his writings on the 'end' of metaphysics, Heidegger locates its beginning in the ancient and artificial rift between that-ness (existence) and what-ness (essence). Along with the ascendancy of adequation over unconcealment, beings over being, and the human will over every other force comes the increasing privilege of essence over existence—of the supposedly measurable 'what' of a being over the immeasurable 'that' of being's very event. By saying, then, that wonder wonders at the whatness of the most usual, Heidegger swiftly confines wonder to ontic determinations, declaring it ultimately incapable of opening onto the ontological thatness to which genuine thinking must be attuned.²⁰²

The distinction that Rubenstein draws between the ontological thatness and the ontic whatness is not unproblematic.²⁰³ As we move forward the distinction between ontological thatness and

²⁰¹ Mary-Jane Rubenstein, *Strange Wonder*, 30.

²⁰² Mary-Jane Rubenstein, *Strange Wonder*, 31.

²⁰³ With the writings on the "end" of metaphysics, Rubenstein is referring, I think, to Heidegger's "Metaphysics as History of Being: Whatness and Thatness in the Essential Beginning of Metaphysics: idea and Energeia" in *The End of Philosophy*, trans. and introduction by Joan Stambaugh (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003). Although central in the history of metaphysics, the thatness or existence has not been thought through in depth. Indeed, the distinction (the artificial rift) between that-ness (existence) and what-ness (essence) still has to be thought anew. While the *essence* has been exhaustively studied, *existence* remains

ontic whatness will become clearer.²⁰⁴ So far, however, we are not ready to address in depth this distinction. My final justification for considering thatness as the proper meaning for the

understudied because it is often assumed to be self-evident. Heidegger, in his lecture course *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (summer 1927) (translated by Albert Hofstadter, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), writes: “It is striking that the concept *existentia* has for long time not been as clearly comprehended and terminologically demarcated as that of *essentia*, although *essentia* and *quidditas* become intelligible exactly in terms of *esse*. *Esse*, *existere*, is basically more original. The opaqueness of the concept of existence and being (*Seinsbegriffes*) is not an accident, because this concept is in part taken to be self-evident” (86). While I concur with Rubenstein on the centrality of the thatness of beings, Thomas Sheehan, an important scholar of Heidegger, dismisses the thatness as Heidegger’s main matter of thinking. For Sheehan, Heidegger’s final topic was not Being but the whence of Being (*das Woher des Seins*); thus Heidegger’s endeavors “were to bring to light this intrinsically hidden ‘whence’ that classical ontology had overlooked and forgotten. Being (*Sein*) in *all* its incarnations is the topic of metaphysics. Heidegger, on the other hand, is after the essence or source of being and thus the ground of metaphysics” (*Making Sense of Heidegger*, London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015, 9, 10). In turn, Sheehan interprets this whence, source, or ground of Being as the intelligibility of Being (*der Sinn von Sein*): “what he *did* mean by *Sein* was the intelligibility of things” (*ibid.*, 12). I agree with Sheehan that Heidegger, as a phenomenologist, is always concerned with meaning; his concepts are not of some naïve realism; instead, they are always within the phenomenological correlation between things and the apprehension of them (noema and noesis—as it were). Rather than encountering independent substances, we encounter phenomena: that which shows up within the field of our human comportment and interpretation, always in correlation with our concerns and interests. In other words, we encounter things that are always already meaningful. Heidegger writes in the *Zollikon Seminars* (trans. by Franz Mayr and Richard Askay, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001): “Therefore, there cannot be the being of beings at all without the human being (*Also kann es Sein von Seienden ohne den Menschen gar nicht geben*)” (176). This phenomenological emphasis on meaning, however, does not cancel the thatness of beings; rather, it inaugurates a way of understanding it that differs from the Greek *energeia* or the scholastic *existentia*. While metaphysics begins with the distinction between essence and existence, the path of overcoming metaphysics is not found by dismissing this dichotomy and thinking the “whence” or the ground of Being (indeed, there is nothing more “metaphysical” than thinking in terms of ground and whence—i.e., transcendently). Instead, the path is found precisely through the meditation of the thatness or existence. Again, metaphysics is overcome not by dismissing this dichotomy but by unveiling the thatness of beings in its heretofore concealed uncanniness that most of the time remains hidden because it is too familiar. Moreover, for a critique of Sheehan’s interpretation of Being as intelligibility, see Richard Capobianco, *Heidegger’s Way of Being* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014) 102 note 7.

²⁰⁴ As for Rubenstein, so for Jeff Malpas it is the thatness that marks the ontological dimension of wonder: “Wonder is thus not so much a response to any particular appearance or set of appearances, although it always requires some such appearance as its focus and its immediate cause, as it is the response that is evoked in us by the very recognition of appearance as such (whether or not that recognition is well or clearly articulated)... One is brought to halt by the appearance, and forced to attend it, not because of anything that explains how it is (the processes or conditions that give rise to it), but merely by the fact *that* it is. The wondrousness of the rainbow thus resides in the very fact of its being; the wonder we experience in the face of someone we love in the simple fact of their existence and our encounter with them” (“Beginning in Wonder,” 285). Rather than the mode of the appearance (howness), or who or what appears (whatness), this ontological wonder discloses the fact that the appearance occurs (thatness). Thus, there is “the doubling up of the thing that appears with the appearing itself—what Heidegger refers to as ‘the twofoldness of what is present and of presence.’ Properly then, it is this double ‘appearance’—of that which appears along with the appearing—that is the stimulus to wonder as well as its focus” (289). The doubling of that which appears (how/what) and appearing as such (the fact that appears) correlates with “a doubling of two modes of strangeness that correspond to these. The strangeness of that which appears leads on to explanation, or may already be satisfied by an existing explanation, but the strangeness of the appearing is amenable to no such resolution” (*ibid.*, 290). While the strangeness of the thing that appears is ontic and can be explained away, the strangeness of the fact of appearance cannot be outstripped by any explanation—because every explanation is clueless about its own thatness.

ontological, and to defend—against Heidegger—wonder’s ontological capacity, will have to wait.

Granting for a moment that ontological wonder discloses the thatness of beings, we may ask, *What* does this thatness mean? And yet, by asking the question in this way, we may have already lapsed into the whatness. The question about the *what* takes for granted and covers up the thatness. The thatness has not disappeared: in the what question—even if we do not notice it—the thatness is already there. Discussing wonder, John Sallis writes: “But what is wonder? The question comes too late. For when one comes to ask the philosophical question ‘What is...?’ (‘τί ἐστὶ...?’), one moves already within the opening: and wonder has already come into play in prompting that opening. The operation of wonder belongs to the very condition of the question ‘What is wonder?,’ and one will never be able simply to disengage that question from the wonder about which it would ask.”²⁰⁵ We come back to the importance of questioning. I want to underline here the ambiguity inherent in addressing the thatness: often it seems to be canceled by our form of questioning, and yet it always is already giving itself and opening the place for the question.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵ John Sallis, “A Wonder that one could never aspire to surpass,” 255. Along these lines, the question of wonder as the beginning of philosophy is not mainly about the past. If we are now philosophizing, wonder is already in play—and if it is not, we are not philosophizing or that philosophy no longer begins in wonder. Now the question about wonder recoils into the questioning itself. Questioning about the beginning comes always too late, and it reflects upon its own beginning that is already permeating the questioning about the beginning. John Sallis writes: “When one comes to pose a question of the beginning, that beginning will already, long since, have been in play, depriving the question of its privilege. One will not have been able to begin without engaged in the beginning, engaged by it, and when one comes to question it, one only returns differently to it, interrogatively, turning toward what already determines the question” (ibid. 245).

²⁰⁶ Concepts like the *open* or the *opening*, *givenness*, the *there*, and *existence* can help to elucidate the meaning of this ontological thatness. For instance, the concept of givenness shares the same sense of primordially of the thatness. About the givenness Jeff Malpas writes: “There is no way in which one can get behind the simple fact of appearance or encounter, the simple ‘given-ness’ of things, in order to find something more basic from the standpoint of which such encounter, such given-ness, might itself be investigated” (“Beginning in Wonder,” 290). For a critique of Heidegger from the point of view of the phenomenon of the Given, see Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, translated by Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

According to Rubenstein, the privilege of essence (whatness) over existence (thatness), which signals the eclipse of Being by beings, is also expressed in the concept of truth as the privilege of adequation over unconcealment and in the concept of *techne* as the privilege of the human will over other forces. In the following points about the essence of wonder, I examine how the privilege of beings over their Being is articulated in the concept of truth and in the imbalance of *techne* vis-à-vis *physis*.²⁰⁷ Moreover, I must still clarify what is meant when we say that this experience of the unheimlich is ontological rather than ontic.

c) *Indeterminacy of ontological wonder*

About this most extreme wonder, Heidegger writes that it “no longer adheres to this or that, from which it could still explain the unusualness of the usual [*Ungewöhnlichkeit des Gewöhnlichen*] and thereby could dispel its unusualness and turn it into something ordinary [*Geläufiges*]” (*BQP*, 144). In all the moods that we have already examined, there is always some particular and determinate this or that showing up, which produces amazement, admiration, or awe. In contrast, in ontological wonder we pay attention to the whole (all in all, everything) with respect to its thatness. So far the meanings of this whole and its thatness are still obscure. But we can already concede that, logically, both the whole and thatness are not determinate things. *What is all in all* is not a thing among other things; the thatness is not a this or a that.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ Note that later in this dissertation I question this Heideggerian motive of an ontological decay in which Being has been covered up by beings, or in Rubenstein’s formulation, as the privilege of essence (whatness) over existence (thatness). By reading Heidegger against himself, I will use his notion of Being as nothing to question his own narrative of an ontological decay.

²⁰⁸ The indeterminacy of both terms reminds us of Heidegger’s (and Freud’s) interpretation of anxiety. As I will demonstrate in Chapter Six, the fundamental attunement of anxiety has no determined object. That in the face of which and that about which we are anxious are both indeterminate. In contrast to fear (which has a

But let me be clear. Although ontological wonder no longer adheres to this or that thing, we should not conclude that it is awakened in the absence of particular things. The thatness of this or that thing, in itself, is nothing like this or that; but without particular things, the insight into that which is not particular could not occur. Jeff Malpas explains, “It is . . . through the part—through the particular thing or event—that the whole is brought to light; it is through the particular encounter or appearance that the fact of encounter or appearance as such is brought into view.”²⁰⁹ And I may add, without the particular encounter or appearance of something, the fact of encounter or appearance as such could not be brought into view.²¹⁰ While a being (e.g., a table) is particular and determinate, the point of view in which we are seeing it as a being (i.e., its thatness) is neither determinate nor particular. The Being of the table is not something behind, below, or above the table, but rather it is the table in respect to its thatness.

d) The belonging together of Being and beings

In a common misinterpretation of the ontological difference, the difference is taken to denote a separation of beings and Being. This difference is counterintuitive because it simultaneously involves the more intimate belonging together of beings and their Being—

determined object), in anxiety we are impotent to trigger or avoid the experience of anxiety. What could we do and where could we escape to?—when there is nobody attacking us and there is nothing specific about that which makes us feel threatened. And yet we feel as if “something” should be squeezing our throats. Similarly, the person in wonder “no longer encounters anything that could offer it an escape [*Ausweg*]. It no longer knows the way out but knows itself solely as being relegated to the most unusual of the usual in everything and anything: beings as beings [*Seiendes als seined*]” (BQP, 145).

²⁰⁹ Jeff Malpas, “Beginning in Wonder: Placing the Origin of Thinking,” in *Philosophical Romanticism*, edited by Nikolas Kompridis (New York: Routledge, 2006), 289.

²¹⁰ Heidegger’s language may be obscure, but it is not abstract (for instance, how pure mathematics are). Even his most “wild” concepts like, such as the fourfold (i.e., the gathering of earth, sky, divinities, and mortals) is encountered in our relation to a jug. Either the sheet of paper in front of us discloses its thatness or the thatness remains hidden—but the thatness is not going to appear as the consequence of some process of abstractive thinking (except the thatness of the process of abstract thinking itself). About the fourfold, see Heidegger, “The Thing,” in *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures*, translated by Andrew J. Mitchell (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012).

which our logical notion of *relation* (functioning within the sphere of beings) cannot apprehend.²¹¹

Accordingly, the insight into the Being of beings does not entail turning away from beings. Heidegger writes, “Wonder does not divert [*abwenden*] itself from the usual but on the contrary adverts to it [*zuwenden*], precisely as what is the most unusual of everything and in everything. Insofar as this disposition turns to the whole and stands in the whole, it is called a basic disposition [*Grundstimmung*]” (*BQP*, 145). Often we misunderstand the ontological difference, thinking that the disclosure of Being requires the rejection of beings.²¹² But the path to Being is found by turning towards beings and not the opposite. Since Being is not a being among beings, negating beings does not get us closer to Being. If Being were a being, I could get closer to the former by negating the latter. For example, when I negate this tree, I may have a wood table or a wood computer chip. By not having a tree, I am brought closer to other beings. But that is not the case with Being. There is no negation of beings that could bring me closer to Being. Why not? Because Being is precisely every being seen from the point of view of its thatness. While the insight into the ontological thatness requires some struggle to break

²¹¹ To avoid that common misinterpretation, Heidegger, for instance, in “The Question of Being” (*Zur Seinsfrage*), decides to cross out the word Being. He explains: “The crossing out of this word initially has only a preventive role, namely, that of preventing the almost ineradicable habit of representing ‘being’ as something standing somewhere on its own that then on occasion first comes face-to-face with human beings. In accordance with this way of representing matters, it appears as though the human being is excepted from ‘being.’ However, he is not only not excepted, i.e. not only included in ‘being,’ but ‘being,’ in needing the human being, is obligated to relinquish this appearance of independence” (“On the Question of Being,” in *Pathmarks*, edited by William McNeill, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 310)

²¹² I emphasize that there is no experience of Being without beings, because often Being has been interpreted as some “wholly other” supreme being that can be absolutely detached from beings. From the point of view of Being as the thatness of beings, this interpretation does not make sense. In 1943, while trying to maintain the difference between the ontological and the ontic, Heidegger fell into this temptation when, paradoxically, he turned Being into a being. While the corrected fifth edition of the “Postscript to ‘What is Metaphysics’” (1949) reads, “...the truth of being entails that being [*Sein*] never prevails in its essence without beings, that a being never is without being,” the previous fourth edition of (1943) reads, “...the truth of being entails that being presumably prevails in its essence without beings, that a being never, however, is without being” (*Pathmarks*, 233).

free from our ordinary mode of concerned dealing with beings, we should not confuse the change in our stance to beings with their negation.²¹³

Since in wonder there is a movement towards (and not away from) the usual, it is possible to step out of the endless dialectic of the familiar and the unfamiliar. While in marveling the usual and the unusual stand in an either/or relation, in wonder the latter becomes a simultaneous both/and. In wonder we do not crave the unusual, and we do not try to escape boredom. Instead, what is usual and boring turns around and suddenly faces us with a different and uncanny look. At stake is the unusualness of what is most usual. It is important to notice that the experience of ontological wonder precisely questions the logic of curiosity and our common reaction to escape boredom. If the process of rationalizing and dominating nature enchants in a way that resembles curiosity and marveling, then the experience of wonder may be a way of challenging the current mode of enchantment.²¹⁴

Contrary to what is often thought, beings and Being are, properly speaking, experienced together. In wonder the usualness of the usual is disclosed next to its unusualness. Heidegger writes:

It seems as if the most usual were already somehow experienced in advance and known [*erfahren und gewußt*] in its usualness. But that is precisely not the case, for then what is most usual would indeed no longer be the most usual. The usualness of the most usual first erupts [*die Gewöhnlichkeit des Gewöhnlichste bricht erst aus*] the moment the most usual becomes the most unusual. In this transition [*Übergang*] the most usual first steps forth separately in its usualness *and* in its unusualness, such that these then appear [*Vor-schein*] precisely as such (BQP, 146).

²¹³ See Conclusion, page 360, where I criticize Heidegger's connection of the logic of sacrifice to the ontological difference.

²¹⁴ We should avoid immediately concluding that ontological wonder opposes the ontic mode of enchantment (marveling and curiosity). In the final chapters of this dissertation, I focus on the relation between ontological wonder and modern enchantment.

To “properly” call something a being (and not a thing, object, or phenomenon), one has to have encountered the unusual fact of its thatness. Since only from the point of view of Being does it make sense to call something a being, we can say that in the ontological difference we encounter beings for the first time.

e) *Wonder and unconcealment*

There is still one more important concept to join to the list of names that constitutes the constellation of wonder: *truth*. While Heidegger does not reject the classical definition of truth as correctness (i.e., as the agreement or correspondence of things to our propositions—*veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus*), he argues that truth as correctness derives from a more primordial experience of truth.²¹⁵ Simply put, for my propositions to correspond to some state of affairs, I must previously have encountered things and words. The experience of wonder moves or displaces the wondering person to the point that she acknowledges that things and words have been erupted or disclosed from an inscrutable ground. Rather than (or before) correctness, truth denotes this moment of disclosure or unconcealedness of beings.

Wondering man [*der er-staunende Mensch*] is the one *moved* by wonder, i.e., displaced [*versetzt*] by this basic disposition into an essence determined by it. Wonder displaces man out of the confusing irresolvability of the usual and the unusual into the first resolution [*Entschiedenheit*] of his essence. As disposed in wonder [*im Er-staunen gestimmt*], he can perceive nothing else than beings as beings. That is to say, as moved by wonder, man must gain a foothold in the acknowledgment of what has erupted [*Anerkenntnis dieses Ausgebrochenen*], and he must see it in a productive seeing [*er-sehen*] of its inscrutable disclosure [*unergründlichen Enthüllung*], and must experience and sustain ἀλήθεια, unconcealedness [*Unverborgenheit*], as the primordial essence of beings (*BQP*, 146).

²¹⁵ See Heidegger, “On the Essence of Truth,” in *Pathmarks*, 138.

But again, what does unconcealment mean, or what does the notion of eruption denote? According to Heidegger, “Unconcealedness [*Unverborgenheit*] means an emergent coming forth [*aufgehende Hervortreten*], a coming to presence in the open [*die Anwesenung ins Offene*]” (*BQP*, 146). We would err if we expect something—a “this” or “that”—to break through or erupt next to things. What erupts is the fact of eruption; what erupts is the insight that everything erupts from concealment. Suddenly the usual—everything surrounding us and ourselves as part of it—is felt as erupting out of concealment. The usual as usual, seen from the point of view of its unconcealment, becomes the most unusual. Through wonder’s displacement we perceive both beings as what has been unconcealed and the Being of beings as the hidden fact of unconcealment as such. This is, according to Heidegger, the Greek experience of truth as *aletheia*, which is linked essentially with the Greek experience of Being as *physis*.

Although something of this Greek experience of truth remains in our modern world, more than two thousand years have not passed in vain. For Heidegger, we may be still determined by the form of the ancient Greek experience of truth and being, but the path to explicitly experience it is blocked. Simply stated, most of us are no longer receptive to *physis*—i.e. the emergent coming forth to presence, out of concealment and into the open. Since we are blind to concealment (out of which all comes to presence), the unfolding of unconcealment remains covered. The presence of things replaces the mystery of their presencing; the latter turns into something obvious and self-evident. In short, in our modern world, *physis* remains hidden.²¹⁶

²¹⁶ That *physis* remains hidden is consistent with its nature. According to Heraclitus, “*physis kruptesthai philei*.” While traditionally translated by the formula “Nature loves to hide” (*The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*, translation and commentaries by Charles H. Kahn, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979, fragment 10, 33), for Pierre Hadot, “in all likelihood this meaning never occurred to Heraclitus.” Hadot offers five possible

Note that there is some ambiguity in Heidegger's contrast of philosophy's seemingly pristine Greek inception and our modern oblivion of physis. On the one hand, and as I will demonstrate below in more detail, Heidegger develops a narrative of the decline of Being through history. When truth means correctness and Being is confused with beings (or it is taken for granted and thus is forgotten), the modern person seems to lose the comparatively more original insight of the Greeks. Modern ontology is just a degenerate version of what the pre-Socratic encountered at the beginning of philosophy.²¹⁷ But according to Heidegger, even in the case of the Greek experience of unconcealment, something was missing. Hence, the history of decay of Being has to confront both the fact that in its Greek origin something was missing and the promise that what was missing then can be retrieved in the new beginning called for in Heidegger's philosophy.

To elaborate his narrative of decay and futural retrieval of what was missing in the first beginning of philosophy, Heidegger examines the relation between wonder and unconcealment. Even though wonder discloses truth as unconcealment, it cannot reveal the concealment within unconcealment. This is another sign of Heidegger's attempt to limit wonder to some ontic attunement. About wonder's blindness and its confinement to the first Greek beginning, Rubenstein writes: "Heidegger limits the wonder he calls *Erstaunen* to the first beginning when he limits its 'object' to the 'being of beings.'" Focused as it is on beings

translations of this enigmatic saying. "The constitution of each thing tends to hide (i.e., is hard to know). The constitution of each thing wants to be hidden (i.e., does not want to be revealed). The origin tends to hide itself (i.e., the origin of things is hard to know). What causes things to appear tends to make them disappear (i.e., what causes birth tends to cause death). Form (or appearance) tends to disappear (i.e., what is born wants to die)" (*The Veil of Isis*, translated by Michael Chase, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2006, 1,9–10).

²¹⁷ Another way to understand this ontological decline is to regard modern metaphysics as the completion of all possibilities that the ancient Greek beginning of philosophy opened. In this scenario, modern metaphysics is not just a degenerate version; rather, it brings to consummation what in the Greek beginning was merely latent. Accordingly, Nietzsche's philosophy, for instance, would not only invert Plato, it also would bring his philosophy to its completion.

as they appear, Erstaunen overlooks the event of appearance itself; that is, the event of being. This seems a strange failure to attribute to wonder, inasmuch as Heidegger holds *thaumazein* to be the disposition attuned to the unconcealment that adequation obscures. If wonder wonders at unconcealment itself, then how can wonder possibly miss the truth of being?”²¹⁸ Although wonder wonders at the presencing of beings in the open, it fails to reflect on what is concealed within the open: “What unconcealment presupposes, and for this reason cannot see, is the *concealment* to which it is perpetually bound.”²¹⁹

As I will show in the next chapters, my reading of Heidegger questions his metanarrative of the decay of Being.²²⁰ While I play down his narrative of a first and a new beginning of philosophy, I dismiss the seeming blindness to concealment that would confine wonder to the ancient Greek past. For now, it is enough to keep in mind the connection between wonder and the truth as unconcealment: wonder displaces us to the perception that all beings emerge out of concealment.

f) Wonder and questioning

While philosophy happens in wonder, it is not equivalent to wonder. According to Plato and Aristotle, philosophizing is a mode of questioning that is attuned by wonder. Thus, we have to add to this description of the essence of wonder its relation to the practice of questioning. According to Heidegger, “the basic disposition of *θαυμάζειν* compels us to a pure

²¹⁸ Mary-Jane Rubenstein, *Strange Wonder*, 35-36.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 36.

²²⁰ Stated differently, I accept his premise of a history of Being, and analyzing his own analysis of anxiety, nothing, and wonder developed during the 1920s I question some of the conclusions of his narrative. Paradoxically (through a logic that I explain in Chapter Six and prove in Chapter Seven), modernity is simultaneously the epoch of ontological decay and the epoch of the highest disclosure of Being. It seems that his reactionary beliefs about modernity often prevented him from seeing the ontological possibilities of modernity that his own thinking had opened.

acknowledgment [*reine Anerkenntnis*] of the unusualness of the usual. The purest acknowledgment of what is most unusual is fulfilled, however, in the questioning that asks what the most usual itself might be, such that it can reveal itself as what is most unusual” (*BQP*, 148). While the experience of the *unheimlich* can be explored by psychology or poetry, philosophical questioning asks about the meaning of this most unusual of the usual.

But philosophy does not merely occur after the *unheimlich*; rather, it often precedes it. We need to question the usual regarding its usualness in order that it may reveal its concealed unusualness. In other words, the disclosure of the most unusual happens by questioning everything (the whole) from the point of view of what is most usual—i.e., their beingness. Beings are, and yet, what does it mean that they are? Through this basic—we would say even obvious and stupid—questioning we may break through the taken for grantedness of the usual so that the unusual of the usual may come to the fore.

Certainly, the distinction between basic disposition and questioning is merely analytical. Most of the time there is no basic attunement without questioning—and conversely. They unfold together. But what kind of questioning is this philosophical questioning that seems to go side by side with the basic attunement? Heidegger writes that “thoughtful questioning [*denkerische Fragen*] is not the intrusive and rash curiosity of the search for explanations [*Neugier des Erklärenwollens*]; it is the tolerating and sustaining of the unexplainable [*Unerklärbaren*] as such, despite being overwhelmed by the pressure of what reveals itself [*Andrang des Sichenthüllenden*]” (*BQP*, 148–149). Rather than canceling, this questioning sustains the mystery of the thatness of beings. It is this dimension of questioning that sets Heidegger’s description of wonder at odds with a mere philosophy of feelings. Wonder does not eclipse the cognitive power of questioning; on the contrary, wonder offers the ground for

this questioning, and, in turn, this questioning sustains the basic disposition: “The sustaining [*das Aushalten*] of the basic disposition is not a melting into or a vague and empty wallowing in ‘feelings’; on the contrary, it is the carrying out [*Vollzug*] of the necessity of the question of beings as such in their region” (*BQP*, 149).

The essential link between wonder and questioning is crucial for any response to the critique that sees in wonder the danger of being exposed to manipulation—a danger that relates to the enchanted stupidity that I commented on in Part I. We still have to address whether wonder stops or nourishes the enchanted stupidity that in the name of rationalization is turning the earth into a gas station. When in wonder the familiar ground on which we stand becomes uncanny, and we are exposed to what we cannot master, two different responses—or two ways to interpret the link between wonder and questioning—are possible. On the one hand, there is wonder that leads the philosopher to a tireless critical inquiry. It keeps her/him restless, facing an open question. Wonder does not cancel questioning; instead, questioning sustains and preserves wonder. The tireless critical inquiry of wonder may become a defense against a status quo that is complacent with the domination of nature. Yet according to Mary-Jane Rubenstein, there is the “perilous nature of *thaumazein*”: the one who wonders can be susceptible to a kind of “dumb or misplaced reverence.”²²¹ Wonder can make the wondrous philosopher vulnerable to manipulation. Sophists know how to use wonder by “divesting their pupils of all they thought they knew, and then filling in that wondrous openness with unquestionable doctrines and dicta.”²²² The pupils can be chained and stupefied by wonder. Rather than sustaining wonder, the questioning is eclipsed by wonder, so that the pupil—stupidly enchanted—is ready to be indoctrinated. Wonder would name one of the different spells through which the modern

²²¹ Rubenstein, *Strange Wonder*, 4.

²²² *Ibid.*, 5.

gods possess us, making us incapable of critical resistance and vulnerable to all the different ways that capitalism justifies the domination of nature.

Since Aristotle, the association of wonder with intellectual complacency, philo-sociopolitical manipulation, and, we may add, the Weberian type of “sacrifice of the intellect” has inaugurated a negative and suspicious attitude towards wonder. With Aristotle—and later with Thomas Aquinas and Descartes—causal knowledge gradually replaces the very wonder that sets it in motion. Although science begins in wonder, it does not end there because it replaces the wonder that makes it possible with the certainty of causes and reasons. Science becomes the medicine for the excesses of the perilous nature of *thaumazein*.

According to Rubenstein, however, the latter response to wonder is not wonder at all; rather, “such uncritical discipleship clings to inviolable theories in order to take *refuge* from wonder's open sea of endless questioning, strangeness, and impossibility.”²²³ Consequently, there is wonder as the openness and exposure to that which cannot be mastered, and there is the retreat from wonder, which shuts wonder down and shields itself against all uncertainty within the comfortable confines of the certain and familiar.

Following Heidegger, therefore I assert not only that ontological wonder requires constant questioning in order to be sustained and preserved, but also, as Rubenstein notes, that it does not eclipse the questioning that sustains it. When the importance of questioning is lost, then philosophizing can turn into a “vague and empty wallowing in ‘feelings’,” and “wonder” may be just another instance of an enchanted stupidity that is useful to fanatic indoctrination. Without questioning, ontological wonder remains concealed. Thus, wonder cannot be blamed

²²³ Ibid., 5.

for these excesses, which, in fact, are caused by the absence of wonder and our addiction to marveling and curiosity.

That to sustain ontological wonder we need to constantly question reveals something about ontological strangeness. While the strangeness of the thing that appears (regarding *what* it is and *how* it works) triggers the search for reasons and can be satisfied by explanations, the strangeness of the appearing as such—i.e., the thatness of the appearing thing—is amenable to no such resolution.²²⁴ While science cancels the ontic strangeness (i.e., marveling and curiosity) that sets it in motion, the scientific causal explanation cannot dissipate the ontological strangeness.²²⁵ Thus, I claim that ontological wonder moves on a different track

²²⁴ In wonder the experience of our ordinary involvement with things changes. What is ordinarily unquestioned turns questionable, and what is ordinarily familiar becomes strange. According to Jeff Malpas, "...the questionability and strangeness at issue here cannot be dispelled by any solution, since what is at issue—what is rendered strange—is the very fact of appearance and of encounter" ("Beginning in Wonder," 290). About how explanations do not affect ontological wonder, Malpas writes, an explanation "does not touch that which is the underlying source of wonder, namely, appearance or encounter as such. Indeed, the fact that the surprise and questionability that seem so closely associated with wonder may be present, even when the phenomenon at issue is apparently well understood, can itself be most readily explained by pointing to the distinction between a particular phenomenon (say, the rainbow) and its phenomenal character as such (its appearing or being encountered). To elucidate the former is not to elucidate the latter" (ibid, 290).

²²⁵ Some religious soul or romantic artist can replay the same regarding the strangeness of the holy and the sublime, namely, that science cannot explain away religious or artistic strangeness. Like ontological wonder, religious and aesthetic astonishment are immune to causal explanations; but the reasons for this differ. Unlike awe (experienced, for instance, in the encounter with the holy or the sublime), in ontological wonder we do not find an unusual object that we cannot explain away because it is "wholly other," too great, or too intense. Rather, it is precisely the usual table in front of us, the usual person in the street that we barely notice, or our own self in its absolute familiarity that turn strange and inexplicable in regard to their thatness. While in awe we may face something that is "not of this world," in wonder we face precisely the world in its heretofore concealed strangeness, namely, in its thatness. In awe, what is at stake is the exceptionality of the being that we encounter (the wholly other, or the sublimity of ourselves). In contrast, in wonder what is at stake is not the being that we encounter (it may be the most trivial and common) but that we encounter it in its thatness. Again, although awe and ontological wonder share an immunity to causal explanation, the greatest being and the thatness of beings differ, and we should not confuse them. Their confusion can be traced back to what Heidegger calls the onto-theo-logical constitution of metaphysics, i.e., the fact that since its Greek origins, metaphysics has been both an ontology and a theology. According to Heidegger, "The essential constitution of metaphysics is based on the unity of beings as such in the universal and that which is highest" (Heidegger, "The Onto-theo-logical constitution of Metaphysics," in *Identity and Difference*, translated by Joan Stambaugh, New York: Harper & Row, 1969, 61). No wonder then that it is easy to utter Being and yet mean "that which is the highest" in its religious version ("wholly other") or in its aesthetic version (the sublime). What is problematic for my study, however, is that compared to the "wholly other" and the sublime, the "austere" insight of the thatness of beings is easily glossed over. Who is going to pay attention to the table in front of us, if, as a religious soul, one "cannot be content unless he praises you, because you made us for yourself and our hearts find no peace until they rest in you" (Augustine, *Confessions*, translated with an Introduction by R. S. Pine-Coffin, New York: Penguin Books, 1961, §1, 21). How

than science's parricidal relation to marveling—as it were. Science may kill marveling, but it is defenseless before the thatness of beings.

Allow me to make a brief observation about science's seemingly parricidal relation to marveling and curiosity. Science seems to begin with the unusual, which then transforms into something usual by means of causal explanations. Science kills one marvelous thing in order to jump immediately to the next unusual thing. The canceling of marveling furthers the endless dialectic of the usual and the unusual. Indeed, we may imagine a moment in which every marveling has been eclipsed by science's causal explanation. However, and in line with what we explored in Part I, in this narrative we forget that science is itself a modern god with its own mode of enchantment. This narrative mistakenly assumes that science (enlightenment) is the opposite of enchantment (myth), without noticing the entanglement of the two. Causal explanation may cancel some type of marveling, but it does so by casting its own type of marvelous spell.

Now, my claim that marveling/curiosity and ontological wonder move on different tracks seems to contradict both Heidegger's narrative of an ontological decay (in which our curious absorption in beings has covered up the insight into their Being) and Rubenstein's idea that uncritical discipleship seeks to take *refuge* from wonder's open sea of endless questioning. It

can the wonder that things *are* "compete" with this divine dissatisfaction that longs for such a divine peace? Who is going to pay attention to his fellow ordinary human in the crowded busy street if, gazing at the immensity of the universe and at the vastness of his heart, he has said: "Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing wonder [*Bewunderung*] and reverence, the more often and more steadily one reflects on them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me" (Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 161). And yet, maybe for some people the thatness of beings is the only gift still left for them. When nihilism sweeps away the holy and our religious feeling of inadequacy; it turns the starry heavens into a new place to conquer and a profitable market to exploit; it uncovers the moral law as some introjection of the hegemonic discourse that pleases the capitalist who does not need to externally police us because we already have the master within—in this context, we may be still surprised by the thatness of beings.

seems that the logic of marveling and curiosity precludes the experience of ontological wonder, and that one can take refuge from ontological wonder by fleeing into marveling and curiosity.

Along these lines, for instance, within the search for causal knowledge, the public exhibition in early modern times of marvels in form of the “cabinet of curiosities” (*Wunderkammern*) was an attempt to neutralize wonder by understanding every object that might provoke it. Science and the “cabinet of curiosities” would not be solely examples of curiosity and marveling; they also offered a refuge and retreat from ontological wonder.

As I argue later in this thesis, science (in its rash curiosity for explanations) does not eclipse ontological wonder. The two simply move along different tracks. If they interfere with each other, it is not science that eclipses ontological wonder. Rather (and in a way that still needs to be clarified), science promotes ontological wonder. Science—by focusing only on beings, and beyond that, nothing—precisely opens up the possibility of the highest and most austere revelation of Being (see Chapter Seven). In short, science may kill marveling²²⁶ at the moment when it is no longer possible to escape into the marvelous and the curious because everything has been explained away by science. But precisely then the disclosure of ontological wonder becomes even more available. In the midst of nihilism and technoscience ontological wonder may blossom.

Having defended the claim that ontological wonder does not cancel the questioning that supports it, I examine more closely the type of questioning that preserves ontological wonder.

²²⁶ As implied in our discussion of Kant’s sublime, the will toward mastering the source of the wondrous and the progressive eclipse of the marveling leads to the *self* as the source of wonder. Since the self becomes the source of wonder, “Western philosophical tradition does not so much as do away with wonder as it does *internalize* it, presenting itself as the agent, rather than the patient, of wonder” (*Strange Wonder*, 16). Hence, every suggestion that science has eclipsed wonder and marveling has to account for the scientist, who herself now seems to be the only source of wonder.

g) *The carrying out of wonder as suffering*

Heidegger writes, “To sustain the basic disposition means to carry out [*vollziehen*] the necessity of such questioning...” Often the carrying out is understood as an activity of one’s own action, “but the carrying out of *the* necessity into which the need of the basic disposition compels [*dies Not der Grundstimmung nötigt*], the thoughtful questioning of beings as such, is essentially suffering [*Leiden*]” (BQP, 151).²²⁷ We have to think about the link between the will and philosophical questioning. While a person passively experiences a basic disposition, the questioning that supports the disposition seems to be active. And yet for Heidegger, this questioning is essentially a form of suffering. But, what is suffering? Let us start with what suffering is not. Verbalizing what he considers a common misinterpretation of suffering, Heidegger writes:

We will think in a Christian-moralistic-psychological way of a submissive acceptance [*demütige Hinnehmen*], a mere bearing patiently [*bloße Dulden*], a renunciation of all pride. Or else we will identify this suffering with inactivity [*Tatenlosigkeit*] and oppose it to action. The latter immediately refers to the field of the imperial [*Herrischen*], especially if action is set against mere thought. But even if we bring reflective thinking [*denkerische Denken*] into this distorted opposition to action, for us thinking always remains a performance and by no means something suffered. So suffering has to mean here something other than mere submission to woes [*das bloße Übersichergehenlassen einer Trübsal*] (BQP, 151).

If suffering is not some sort of inactive acceptance or renunciation, what does it mean?

According to Heidegger, suffering

refers to the acceptance of what overgrows [*überwächst*] man and in that way transforms [*verwandelt*] him and makes him ever more tolerant [*ertragsamer*] for what he is supposed to grasp when he has to grasp beings as such and as a whole. The carrying out of the

²²⁷ Regarding Heidegger’s understanding of philosophizing and its relation to basic dispositions, he makes a significant connection between *Not* (need), *Notwendigkeit* (necessity), and *nötigen* (compelling). When philosophizing one has to be attuned to some need (*Not*) that compels (*nötigt*) our questioning as a necessity (*Notwendigkeit*). When the need is lacking, philosophy loses its heart.

necessity is here a suffering in the sense of this kind of creative tolerance [*schaffenden Ertragsamkeit*] for the unconditioned. This suffering is beyond activity and passivity as commonly understood (*BQP*, 151).

What makes these passages abstruse is the confusion that results from the use of the word “suffering” to describe two different sets of issues. First is the issue of whether suffering relates to activity or passivity. Since questioning (i.e., thinking) is a mode of performance (an action), it cannot be understood as something suffered—in the sense of passively experienced. If Heidegger wants to link questioning to suffering, he has to find a mode of suffering that is not passively experienced. Thus, Heidegger places questioning as suffering beyond—or better still, in between—the binary opposition between acceptance and renunciation (as forms of inactivity), on the one hand, and action as the realm of domination and what is against mere thinking, on the other hand. In other words, this type of suffering embodies both a passivity that is not necessarily inactive and an activity that is not always linked to the realm of the imperial. Accordingly, this questioning as suffering is active: it is defined as a *creative* tolerance for the unconditioned in which activity does not oppose thinking (as in the common distinction between theory and praxis). Instead, thinking is a mode of acting. And this questioning as suffering is passive: it is a creative *tolerance* for the unconditioned and it is an acceptance of what surpasses the human. There is a sense that something that exceeds our powers has been received. While passivity refers to what cannot be produced or controlled by us, it does not mean inactivity—there is a lot of action involved in being tolerant and accepting what transcends us. Moreover, this questioning as suffering sheds light on Heidegger’s frequent theme of human transformation. This questioning as suffering is an acceptance of what surpasses and transforms [*verwandelt*] the human and makes her more tolerant.

Second is the issue of whether suffering entails a mere submission to woes. Here the same Christian-moralistic tradition that Heidegger criticizes helps explain the point. According to the Spanish friar, poet, and mystic John of the Cross (1542), the experience of compunction or dereliction is the sign either that we are falling deeper into our sinful condition or that we are “ascending” and getting closer to the divine, who, because of His perfection, causes our imperfect soul to be in pain when we are in His proximity. For John of the Cross, God signals an excess that renders everything else a nothing compared to Him. In other words, if God *is*, creatures are nothing (lack).²²⁸ Or if creatures *are*, God is nothing (excess). When the soul makes progress, its proximity to God is painful—because He is like nothing for us, or because He turns us into nothing in comparison to Him. Thus, suffering does not necessarily mean “submission to woes” or merely “renunciation of all pride.” In this context suffering means precisely the painful “acceptance of what overgrows man and in that way transforms him.” Rather than suffering because of our lack, we suffer our transformation into what absolutely exceeds us: God as nothing. Indeed, the task of John, as spiritual guide, is to help afflicted souls discern the different senses of the experience of the nothing in the dark night. If the night refers to the soul’s imperfections, John can provide reasons that the soul can understand so that she can find the way out from suffering. However, if the night refers to God’s excess, the soul has to learn to let God work on herself. There is neither a reason to justify the pain nor methods to alleviate it. In this case, to “comfort” the soul with reasons and narratives, according to John, adds more pain to the already afflicted soul. For John, the soul in the night of the spirit has to suffer without a why.²²⁹

²²⁸ “All creatures of heaven and earth are nothing compared to God” (*Todas las cosas de la tierra y del cielo, comparadas con dios, nada son*) (John of the Cross, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, in *John of the Cross: Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 66.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, Prologue, 57–60.

Similarly—and returning to Heidegger’s question of Being—questioning as suffering does not mean a “mere submission to woes,” but rather the painful transformation towards that which surpasses the human. But let us avoid going astray—especially after discussing Saint John of the Cross’s logic of suffering. It is easy to mystify *that* which surpasses the human and turn it into a new surrogate for the divine—a new shade of God’s shadow. In this ontological suffering, that which surpasses the human and transforms her is the grasping of “beings as such and as a whole.” But if we grasp “beings as such and as a whole” as what surpasses us, why will this grasping inflict suffering on us?

Heidegger’s tries to clarify the meaning of this kind of creative suffering through a fragment of the hymns of Hölderlin’s later poetry. I quote this whole fragment because confronting Heidegger’s interpretation of it helps me clarify my own project. Moreover, his interpretation betrays the political-historical dimension that the question of the Being of beings took for Heidegger during the thirties:

For tremendous powers wander over the earth, / And their destiny [*Schicksal*] touches [*ergreiffet*] the one / Who suffers [*leidet*] it and looks upon it, / And it also touches the hearts of the peoples. // For a demigod must grasp everything, / Or a man, in suffering, / Insofar as he hears, alone, or is himself / Transformed, surmising from afar the steed of the lord (*BQP*, 152).

From these two stanzas, Heidegger deduces the logic of the kind of suffering that supports wonder through questioning, and which cannot be rendered merely active or passive:

The suffering is twofold: hearing, looking, perception, and letting oneself be transformed, whereby the distant surmising of the steed of the lord, the coming of the god, is opened up. Suffering: a perception or a transformation [*Vernehmen oder Verwandeltwerden*]; the essential is the advertence in hearing [*hörende Zu-wendung*] and, together with that, a readiness [*Bereitschaft*] for the transition into another Being [*anderes Seyn*]. In hearing, we project [*werfen wir uns*] and extend ourselves over and into broad expanses, though in such

a way that, complying with what is heard, we bring ourselves back into the gathering of our essence. Perception [*das Ver-nehmen*] is something suffered in the sense of the most expansive [*ausbreitsamsten*], and at the same time the most intimate, passion [*Leidenschaft*] (*BQP*, 152).

While the active side of suffering entails hearing and perceiving, the passive side involves letting oneself be transformed by what has been heard and perceived. The way that the transformation happens is nicely described by the occurrence of hearing and perceiving: we are transformed in hearing when we throw ourselves ahead and bring ourselves back by conformity with what is heard, and we are transformed in perception because perceiving is both the most expansive and the most intimate activity. There is a correspondence of the perceiver to what it perceives, so that the perceiver suffers the expansion and transformation of its boundaries: “In such suffering [*Leiden*] there occurs a correspondence to what has to be grasped, while the one who grasps is transformed [*sich verwandelt*] according to it. ‘According to it’: that means that what is to be grasped (here, beings as such in their beingness) constrains [*zwingt*] the one who is grasping, constrains him to a basic position, in virtue of which the pure acknowledgment of the unconcealedness of beings can unfurl” (*BQP*, 153). Given that “the grasping is a suffering [*das Fassen ein Leiden ist*]” that transforms man, in understanding suffering and human transformation one should not lose sight of what is grasped, namely, beings as such in their beingness. In this grasping “the pure acknowledgment of the unconcealedness of beings can unfurl.” Since the constraint comes from what is grasped, I ask, what kind of constraint comes from grasping the unconcealedness of beings—beings in their thatness? Can this form of constraint be called a destiny?

In other words, and coming back to the poem and Heidegger’s interpretation of it, who or what calls and makes our hearing possible? Heidegger answers: the steed of the lord, the

coming god. Here the poetic language seems to dangerously mystify the ontological insight.²³⁰ Why should the hearing of the “beings as such and as a whole,” as the most unusual of the usual, be apprehended with the poetic images of the steed of the lord and the coming god? Do beings as a whole resemble a divine lord still to come?

Allow me two more comments. First, the first stanza brings us back to our discussion of Part I, which concerns modern disenchantment as a mode of enchantment. My interpretation of Weber’s “disenchantment” points to the struggling of modern gods to possess us. Hölderlin’s poetic images of these wandering powers and Weber’s reference to the value spheres as modern gods are nicely correlated. In the context of studying the essence of wonder, however, Heidegger’s use of Hölderlin’s poetic images seems to be misleading. Given that, according to Heidegger, wonder discloses beings as beings, we may ask, is it legitimate to correlate beings as beings with these wandering powers? Or, rendering it in Weberian language, do the terms value spheres and the disclosure of beings as beings describe the same thing? If they are the same, ontological wonder would name a modern god next to the fetishism of capital, the bewitchment of technology, and the aura of the national state. Ontological wonder would be incapable of stopping the process of rationalization because it would name just another force among others that nourish this process. And yet the ontological difference seems to hinder this association. These powers, regardless of their power and sublimity, *are*—hence they are beings and precisely not the Being of beings. To confuse them with Being as such is to remain entrapped within the onto-theo-logical constitution of metaphysics.²³¹ Below

²³⁰ By mystification or reification, I mean the covering up of the ontological difference, so that Being as such is understood as a being—regardless whether it is the highest and most sublime. At the end of the day it is a being among others. Being as such is reified (understood as a being) and mystified (understood as the highest, the first cause, the source of all love and care). On the notion of “demythologizing” that John D. Caputo uses in his *Demythologizing Heidegger* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), see below the Conclusion, page 358, note 384.

²³¹ See the reference to onto-theo-logy in page 190, note 225 above.

I will return to the crucial issue of the relationship between the enchantment of the modern gods (or the wandering powers) and ontological wonder.

Secondly, to render Being as such as a power that has a destiny that seizes us means falling prey—according to my reading of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*—to what I have called the mythological and its inescapable fate. So far, we have granted that in wonder everything that is most usual (beings) becomes the most unusual in one respect: that it is what it is (*daß es ist, was es ist*). In this phrasing, wonder discloses the thatness and the whatness of everything. In my interpretation, I sharply separate the thatness from the whatness. Thus, I limit the insight into the ontological to the experience of the thatness of beings and inquire about the whatness at the level of the ontic. One reason to impose this limitation is precisely to undermine possible readings that use Being as such as a source of some inescapable fate. While there is an aura of inescapable destiny in the expression “that things are *what* they are,” I ask, what type of destiny touches the person who faces the most unusual of everything, namely, the fact *that* things are?

We can suffer the ontological realm that exceeds us, which wonder makes us ready to perceive. But this same type of suffering becomes misleading when it is applied to the ontic realm of these powers, which wander over the earth. Although I will examine this issue in greater detail below, I want to mention here that one of the most questionable moments in Heidegger’s path of thinking happened during the thirties, when he analyzed the ontic geopolitical situation using his ontological categories.²³² The history of Being became his own version of *Star Wars*: with metaphysical people fighting within a metaphysical history in the name of a metaphysical destiny. I see here the danger of mystification, which is difficult to

²³² For a discussion of Heidegger’s excesses in his history of Being, see the Conclusion (part 2, number 3).

avoid due to the elusiveness of the disclosure of Being. While wonder may disclose Being, it is not clear whether we are capable of sustaining this austere disclosure without falling into the temptation of mystification.

Rubenstein precisely attacks Heidegger because he was not able to sustain the wonder that he talked about. Although Rubenstein recognizes that the openness of wonder is nearly impossible to sustain because of the unpleasant and terrifying aspects of wonder, her study searches for the persistence of wonder: “And it is the suggestion of this study, because it attends to the strangeness of the most familiar, that such wakeful thinking might finally endure, rather than close down, the perilous openness of wonder.”²³³ Attempting to dwell in the dizzying ground of wonder, she wants “to begin to think through the possibility of a philosophically sustained *thaumazein*, that is, a wonder that neither neglects particular beings nor collapses into frenzied curiosity about them.”²³⁴ But the question arises, does the possibility of keeping wonder open depend on us?

To conclude my critique of Heidegger’s interpretation of Hölderlin’s poem, my study of wonder seeks to assess whether this ontological wonder can help to bring about a world without lords. The task is difficult because the ontological thatness amounts to absolute foolishness from the point of view of our calculative and instrumental thinking and our common sense. Indeed, for someone struck in ontological wonder, the wandering powers and the lord, the tiny fly and the ant, are all beings—they all are similarly clueless about their thatness. The goal is not to downplay this ontological foolishness and shyly discard it as unworthy subject matter for academic study. Rather, we must contrast this ontological

²³³ Rubenstein, Mary-Jane. *Strange Wonder: The Closure of Metaphysics and the Opening of Awe* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 19.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

foolishness with the enchanted stupidity of the process of proletarianization that our calculative thinking and our common sense defend in the name of “reason.”

h) Wonder, physis, and techne

As noted above, Heidegger insinuates in his reading of Hölderlin’s two stanzas a likeness between truth as unconcealment (or the disclosure of beings as beings) and these tremendous powers wandering over the earth. As I have said, this likeness is not irrelevant. Because the person in wonder who grasps the most unusual is transformed according to it, it is crucial to define the referent of the most unusual. In Heidegger’s reading of the Greeks, the most unusual within the usual is called physis.²³⁵ “Being, which the Greeks call φύσις, must stand in ἀλήθεια. Here we again touch what is most concealed: that the grasping is a suffering [*das Fassen ein Leiden ist*]” (*BQP*, 153). How is the human transformed by the grasping of physis? In this transformative suffering of the human, where in our grasping we correspond to what has to be grasped, there is no identification or assimilation of the human and physis. Heidegger writes:

Accord with [*Gemäßwerden*] what is original is therefore precisely not an assimilation [*Angleichung*] in the sense that man would simply *be* φύσις. On the contrary, he is to be distinguished from it, but in a way that accords with it, i.e., in a way that adheres to its measure [*Maß*] (adheres to φύσις), comports itself accordingly, and orders this

²³⁵ In his *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger offers a thorough definition of physis: “It says what emerges from itself (for example, the emergence, the blossoming, of a rose), the unfolding that opens itself up, the coming-into-appearance in such unfolding, and holding itself and persisting in appearance—in short, the emerging-abiding-sway” (*IM*, 15). According to Heidegger’s interpretation, it was not in the observation of the natural processes that the Greeks first experienced this emerging and “standing-out-in-itself-from-itself” (*ibid*). Instead, it occurred the other way around: “on the basis of a fundamental experience of Being in poetry and thought, what they had to call *phusis* disclosed itself to them” (*IM*, 15, 16). Consequently, physis cannot be limited to what we currently call nature. Instead, it also means “both heaven and earth, both the stone and the plant, both the animal and the human, and human history as the work of humans and gods; and finally and first of all, it means the gods who themselves stand under destiny” (*IM*, 16). During the first Greek beginning there arose some contrasting phenomena that narrowed down the meaning of physis, namely, *thesis* (positing, ordinance, or *nomos*—law), *techne*, and the historical (*IM*, 17, 18). Here I focus on the relationship between wonder, *techne*, and physis.

comportment. Even if man himself is precisely not beings as a whole, nevertheless he is the one who is displaced [*Versetzte*] into the midst of beings as the preserver of their unconcealedness. So this perceiving [*Vernehmen*] and preserving [*Bewahren*] cannot be determined as φύσις but must be other: in accord [*gemäß*] with φύσις releasing it [*freigebende*], and yet grasping it [*fassende*] (*BQP*, 154).

Heidegger defines *techne* as the human basic attitude [*Grundhaltung*] that perceives, sustains, and comports itself according to the sway of *physis*. *Techne* names the suffering questioning that sustains the experience of wonder. While in *techne* we are not totally assimilated to *physis*; we enter into a relationship in accord with it, and in this harmony *techne* can preserve *physis* in its truth as unconcealment. *Techne* means

to grasp beings as emerging out of themselves in the way they show themselves, in their outward look, εἶδος, ἰδέα, and, in accord with this, to care [*zu pflegen*] for beings themselves and to let them grow, i.e., to order oneself within beings as a whole through productions and institutions [*durch Herstellung und Aufstellung von Entsprechendem innerhalb des Seienden im Ganzen sich einzurichten*]. Τέχνη is a mode of proceeding *against* [*gegen*] φύσις, though not yet in order to overpower it [*überwältigen*] or exploit it [*auszunutzen*], and above all not in order to turn use [*Nutzung*] and calculation [*Berechnung*] into principles, but, on the contrary, to retain the holding sway of φύσις in unconcealedness. Therefore, because the pure acknowledgment [*reine Anerkenntnis*] of beings as such, the perception [*Vernehmen*] of φύσις in its ἀλήθεια, is the disposing need [*die stimmende Not*] in the basic disposition of wonder, τέχνη and its carrying out becomes necessary as what is wholly other than φύσις —wholly other [*ganz Andere*] yet belonging to φύσις in the most essential way (*BQP*, 155).

Employing a “technical” attitude, people can grasp how beings emerge out of themselves and how they show themselves as they truly appear. But *techne* is not merely contemplative (i.e., keeping a safe distance from what is perceived). In *techne*, *physis* orders our way of dealing with beings.

For Heidegger, *techne* proceeds against *physis*. Hence, in the “technical” attitude we have *physis* somehow in front of us—it faces us. If we face *physis*, it means that we are not one with it. Having departed from a sense of continuity or fusion with *physis*, in *techne* we can work a relation in accord with it. This relation is fragile: *techne*’s capacity to overpower, exploit, use, and calculate *physis* is always possible.²³⁶

What does *techne*’s “holding sway of *physis* in unconcealedness” mean? Does *physis* have a rhythm that *techne* has to follow—as dancers follow the rhythm of the music or the rhythm of their partners in order not to step on their feet? Or is *physis* like a lawmaker; i.e., when we order ourselves according to it, do we follow its laws? Or is it like a father who tells us what to do? Or is it like a mother who nourishes us with her own body—as when the mother breastfeeds her baby? Regardless of the way we may imagine the holding sway of *physis*, it has a content that our attitude has to retain or abandon. Is Heidegger proposing a sort of

²³⁶ Robert P. Harrison, inheriting some of Heidegger’s insights, similarly articulates the relation of the human and nature, wherein our relation to nature precisely prevents any continuity or union with nature. Remarking on Thoreau’s *Walden*, Harrison writes: “What he discovers is that this relation remains opaque. We are in relation to nature because we are not within nature. We do not intrinsically belong to the natural order... but find in our relation the terms of our destiny as excursioners on the earth” (*Forests: The Shadow of Civilization*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992, 222). To nature in its opacity we go to get lost, and in so doing we can regain our own strangeness: “Nature is the setting of this exteriority, if only because it is that to which we remain external. It is only in our relation to what we are not that what we are may finally become the ground of our dwelling. Nature is where we go to get lost, so that we may find again that which in us is irrevocable” (ibid, 227). Although nature recalls us to our estrangement, in the end we must overcome it; going into nature requires that we get out of it: “What can it mean, then, the phrase ‘return to nature’? Thoreau goes into nature to be brought out of nature... The purpose of the excursion was to defamiliarize his life so as to return to the irreducible loss at the heart of it” (ibid, 230). For Harrison, the “irreducible loss”—correlated with our essential longing—is something essential to our humanity that cannot be found in nature, and it is precisely because our inability to find it in nature that we can come out from nature having regained our strangeness: “What nature cannot provide is an image for the longing that pervades human finitude. It is this longing that seeks an abode on the earth, but the only thing that can house it are the words in which it confesses its longing for closure” (ibid, 228). After having regained our strangeness, we can, according to Harrison, confront our death equipped with the solid fact that we have awakened to existence as such: “As it concludes a mortal career, a fact of life awakens to the fact there is something rather than nothing, that nature *is* without a human reason for being, and that we dwell in the givenness of loss. This knowledge, this self-knowledge alone, is freedom” (ibid, 231). Harrison evidently sees Thoreau’s type of excursions into the opacity of nature as a way to awaken the fact of existence. Similarly, but through an inversion, my work explores ontological wonder (in which we are awakened to the fact of existence) as a way to discover nature.

mimetic relationship between *techne* and *physis*? Is it merely a new version of the old natural law, with commandments that *physis* asks us to follow?

Physis asks us to follow its form. But what is the form of *physis*? For instance, we know that the *will* likes to grow (Nietzsche) and that *spirit* likes to know itself through dividing and later reconciling itself to itself (Hegel). But what does *physis* like to do? We know that *physis* loves to hide (Heraclitus), and it manifests itself as unconcealment (*aletheia*). *Physis* is not a “thing”; rather, it is the mode of things emerging from concealment and going back to it. Accordingly, *techne* is not a “thing”; it is our mode of proceeding and carrying out the emerging of things in *physis*. Our “technical” dealing with beings has to adhere to (be measured by) the emergent coming forth to presence in the open. We are not *physis*, but we have to learn to comport ourselves according to it, to learn to live between the coming forth and the fading away, ready to wonder at both the open and what has erupted into the open, acknowledging both what arises into the light and the darkness from which it comes and to which it goes.

For our modern sensibility, Heidegger’s reading of *techne* as what preserves *physis*—by letting beings show themselves from themselves—seems totally at odds with what we currently mean by technology. While the modern sense of technology has to be divorced from the Greek word *techne*, the former derives from the latter:

To be sure, that modern and contemporary technology could emerge, and had to emerge, has its ground in the beginning [*im Anfang*] and has its foundation in an unavoidable incapacity to hold fast to the beginning. That means that contemporary technology—as a form of ‘total mobilization’ (Ernst Jünger)—can only be understood on the basis of the beginning of the basic Western position toward beings as such and as a whole, assuming that we are striving for a ‘metaphysical’ understanding and are not satisfied with integrating technology into the goals of politics (*BQP*, 154).

What does this “unavoidable incapacity to hold fast to the beginning” mean? Is it the history that narrates this incapacity to hold the Greek beginning, which in itself is a Greek tragedy? Furthermore, knowing Heidegger’s attempt to overcome metaphysics, what does this “metaphysical” understanding—what Heidegger assumes that we are striving for—mean? Why does he put the term in quotation marks and what is its relation to “the goals of politics”? Is this “metaphysical” understanding the same as the one that interprets the Being of beings in terms of Hölderlin’s tremendous powers wandering over the earth? In the Conclusion I come back to Heidegger’s account of the history of Being, in which politics and metaphysics seem to belong together.

The history that progresses (or better, regresses) from techne to modern technology is the last point of Heidegger’s list of the essence of wonder, and it is a good entrance to Heidegger’s seemingly tragic narrative of the history of Being.

i) Decadence: the danger of disturbing the basic disposition

In Heidegger’s narrative of the history of Being, a few characters—if not just one—determine the different epochs: Being, the human, the highest entity or God, and truth. In each epoch within the history of Being, these terms are defined differently. The plot of the narrative seems to be tragic. It describes an innocent descent from the more proper definition of these terms at the Greek beginning down to the current ending of this history, where degenerated versions of these terms subsist. In this course lecture, Heidegger shows how already in physis (i.e., the proper Greek version of Being) and its articulation by wonder and techne (i.e., the proper Greek version of the human relation to Being) there is the seed for the eclipse of aletheia

(i.e., the proper Greek experience of truth) into ὁμοίωσις (truth as correctness of propositions, a diminished version of truth). Heidegger writes:

The basic attitude [*Grundhaltung*] toward φύσις, τέχνη, as the carrying out [*Vollzug*] of the necessity and need of wonder, is at the same time, however, the ground upon which arises ὁμοίωσις, the transformation of ἀλήθεια as unconcealedness into correctness [*Richtigkeit*]. In other words, in carrying out the basic disposition itself there resides the *danger* [*Gefahr*] of its disturbance and destruction [*Verstörung und Zerstörung*]. For in the essence of τέχνη, as required by φύσις itself, as the occurrence and establishment of the unconcealedness of beings, there lies the possibility of arbitrariness [*Eigenmächtigen*], of an unbridled positing of goals [*losgebundenen Zwecksetzung*] and thereby the possibility of escape out [*Heraustretens*] of the necessity of the primordial need. If this happens, then in place of the basic disposition of wonder, the avidity for learning and calculation enters in (*BQP*, 155).

Techne, as the sustaining of wonder, includes the danger of its disturbance and destruction in which techne, instead of according to physis and adhering to the measure and order of physis, uninhibitedly posits arbitrary goals. Techne escapes the order of physis, and wonder—which should have grasped physis and let the human be transformed by this grasping—becomes the avidity for learning and calculation. Differently stated, although techne should compellingly (*nötigt*) carry out the necessity (*Notwendigkeit*) and need (*Not*) of wonder, it can arbitrarily escape this necessity of the primordial need. The narrative seems to have a tragic flavor:

In this way, the beginning [*der Anfang*] contains in itself the unavoidable necessity [*unumgängliche Notwendigkeit*] that, in unfolding, it must surrender its originality. This does not speak against the greatness [*Größe*] of the beginning but in favor of it. For, would what is great ever be great if it did not have to face up to the danger of collapse [*Gefahr des Stürzen*] and did not have to succumb in its historical consequences to this danger, only to remain all the more illuminating in its initial singularity [*erstmaligen Einzigkeit*] (*BQP*, 156).

But are we talking about a possible danger of collapse or the unavoidable necessity of it? Indeed, the latter cancels the sense of danger of the former—more than danger it would be a sense of resignation or *amor fati*. Further, beside the unavoidable necessity of the beginning to surrender its originality, there is a second dimension of this unavoidable necessity. Even at the beginning, with all its originality, something remains unquestioned: “In the beginning, the question of beings stays within the clarity of ἀλήθεια as the character of beings. ἀλήθεια itself, however, remains by necessity [*notwendig*] unquestioned” (*BQP*, 156). Here we see how Heidegger’s “another beginning” is not meant to merely come back to the original experience of the Greek first beginning; instead, he wants to repeat the original in an even more original way. This gesture recalls Schiller’s poem in which the withdrawal of the gods seems to inaugurate a higher epoch; similarly, the history of the falling away from the first beginning opens up possibilities that were not even possible in antiquity.

However, where does this unavoidable necessity come from—the necessity of the beginning having to surrender its originality and the necessity of aletheia to remain unquestioned? If Being is not a who or a what, how can we understand this type of necessity, which lies at the core of Heidegger’s account of the history of Being? Whether or not this story has tragic, comic, or salvific underpinnings, is it justified to take Being as such as a driving agent of history?

More generally, is it legitimate to use concepts like tragedy or destiny at the ontological level? Is it not an intrusion from the ontic to the ontological when Heidegger complains about the oblivion of Being, wherein people utter Being but mean beings? Authors such as the French philosopher Jacques Derrida question the clear separation of the ontic and the ontological that I am trying to draw, which even Heidegger himself seems to have neglected. When we

acknowledge how many of Heidegger's concepts have a theological origin,²³⁷ can we really still make a clear-cut distinction between the ontic and the ontological?

The idea of a tragic history of Being, in which we are determined by an unavoidable necessity to undergo the decay of Being's originality, conflicts with the goal of my study, which is to find the way out of the process of rationalization. After my reading of *Dialectic of Enlightenment's* interpretation of myth as the fate that justifies the unchangeability of the status quo, I have to approach with suspicion any version of destiny that has been mystified through the use of ontological clothing.

While Heidegger in his narrative of the decay of Being confined wonder to the Greek beginning of philosophy, he vaguely mentioned *restraint* as the basic attunement for other beginnings of philosophy. The last step in this study of the essence of wonder is to contrast it to restraint, and to study whether it retains in our current modern time (against Heidegger's claim) its capacity to disclose the thatness of beings.

²³⁷ See, for instance, Ryan Coyne, *Heidegger's Confessions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015); Noreen Khawaja, *The Religion of Existence: Asceticism in Philosophy from Kierkegaard to Sartre* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016).

Chapter Five: Restraint as the Basic Disposition of the Other Beginning

So far in Part II, and following Heidegger's lecture course *Basic Questions of Philosophy*, I have examined the essence of ontological wonder. As a first strategy to illuminate its essence, I have contrasted wonder with different types of marveling. While marveling relates to something determinate and unusual that has been set off against the usual (thus nourishing the endless dialectic of the familiar and unfamiliar), wonder wonders at the most usual that has become the most unusual: everything from the point of view of its thatness. Wonder simultaneously discloses beings (the most usual) and the Being of beings (the most unusual).

My task has been to clarify why this experience of the *unheimlich* is ontological rather than ontic. In an attempt to answer this, I got entrapped in Heidegger's narrative of two beginnings of philosophy that are linked to one another by a history of ontological decay. To recap: in the Greek first beginning of philosophy, the truth of beings as beings is experienced as *aletheia*—the unconcealment of *physis*. Wonder's capacity for disclosure has to be sustained by a questioning that is a type of suffering. For the Greeks this suffered questioning is a *techne*. The sustaining of the beginning in wonder through *techne*, however, leads with unavoidable necessity to a falling away from the originality of the beginning (*Abfall vom Anfang*). At the moment of the end of the history of the first beginning, a possibility of another—even more original—beginning arises. Since wonder cannot attune us for this new beginning, Heidegger vaguely speaks about restraint as the disposition of the futural thinking.

Departing from the references to the ancient Greek world of the last chapter, here I enter into Heidegger's bleak description of our current world (to which I will return in Chapter Seven), which seems to need a new beginning. My intention is not to adopt Heidegger's tragic

view; rather, I explore his account of our modern condition in order to assess whether in modernity wonder is still able to reveal the thatness of beings. Anticipating the argument that I develop in Chapters Six and Seven, I do not play down Heidegger's negative view on modernity but show that what seems to be an ontological decay in fact is Being's mode of disclosure. This insight has consequences for my examination of modern enchantment.

Rather than replacing wonder with restraint, I argue (Chapter Six) that ontological wonder in conjunction with anxiety works much like restraint's articulation of shock and diffidence. I claim that the sort of *movement* from shock to diffidence—which happens in restraint and which Heidegger articulated during the 1930s—resembles his description of the movement from anxiety to wonder, which he articulated during the late 1920s. Hence, I here succinctly study Heidegger's description of restraint not in order to replace wonder but to clarify the movement in restraint and the current situation in which—according to Heidegger—we would need restraint as the futural disposition for our thinking.

Crucially, the discussion of restraint introduces us to what I will call the negative mode of the revelation of Being, in which Being's refusal, withdrawal, and abandonment become its mode of revelation. After studying Heidegger's complex notion of Being as nothing, I will attempt to explain this counterintuitive mode of revelation in Chapter Six.

To start, what has happened in the world that would cause us to expect a new beginning? As in our discussion in Part I regarding rationalization as the domination of nature, Heidegger describes the time when wonder loses its capacity for disclosure as a time when the domination of everything has replaced wonder:

The primordial questioning knowledge [*das anfänglich fragende Wissen*] and the holding firm before the concealed have been replaced by a domination [*Beherrschung*] over everything, since everything has become obvious [*selbstverständlich*]. That first luminosity

of wonder [*Er-staunens*], which had knowledge only of the darkness, has become the transparency [*Durchsichtigkeit*] of all knowing and doing, accessible to everyone and satisfying everyone. Beings are [*Daß Seiende ist*]*—*that is not worth a question, indeed it is not even worth mentioning...For everyone knows what ‘Being’ means, especially since it is the most general and most empty determination of everything. In this wasteland of utter indifference [*Gleichgültigsten*], what in the beginning produced the highest wonder [*höchstes Er-staunen*] has been lost (*BQP*, 168, supplement).

Domination over everything is predicated on a world that has become obvious, in which everyone knows what Being means. The light of wonder that illuminates the opacity of thatness, which has knowledge about what essentially remains in darkness, has been replaced by the light of all knowing (whatness), and that renders everything transparent. The wonder that the questioning as suffering sustains, namely, the wonder that beings are (*daß Seiende ist*), is not worth mentioning and questioning, nor should it become the subject-matter of an academic work. The question of Being, rather than being too obscure and complicated, is too obvious to be asked. Instead of ontological wonder, we live in utter ontological indifference.

For these circumstances, in a world where everybody seems illuminated and knows everything about everything, wonder cannot illuminate the darkness that makes light possible. Heidegger shows how far we have come from the time when wonder was the basic disposition:

For centuries the Being of beings [*das Sein des Seienden*], which was for the Greeks the most wondrous [*Erstaunlichste*], has passed as the most obvious of everything obvious [*Selbstverständlichste alles Selbstverständlichen*] and is for us the most common [*Geläufigste*]: what everybody always knows. For who is supposed not to know what he means when he says the stone *is*, the sky *is* overcast [*der Stein ist; der Himmel ist bedeckt*]? (*BQP*, 159).²³⁸

²³⁸ Similarly, at the beginning of *Being and Time*, Heidegger calls attention to the lack of perplexity regarding the meaning of Being: “But are we nowadays even perplexed at our inability to understand the expression ‘Being’? Not at all” (*BT*, 1). This lack of perplexity is not necessarily our failure. Instead, it signals our familiarity (*Vertrautheit*) with Being. We have an essential inclination to familiarity. As I argue below, what Heidegger calls the forgetting of the question of Being essentially characterizes Dasein's mode of Being. Hence, our *chance* to be

According to Heidegger, the insight into *aletheia* and *physis* has faded away. When the insight into the obscure presencing is dismissed, the wonder that the stone *is* turns into the truth of what I can correctly predicate about the stone. The look of the stone (*idea*) catches our attention in such a way that the mysterious insight of unconcealment starts to recede. The obscure existential meaning of *being*, as in the sentence, “the stone *is*,” is forgotten and replaced by the meaning of *being* as copula, as in the sentence, “the stone *is* hard.” With the copula we link subjects with predicates.²³⁹ Truth becomes correctness: we have to prove whether what we predicate about the stone may be correct. From the point of view of correctness, thinking becomes a matter of *how* and *what* things are—about which predications are adequate for my propositions about things. And yet, by the same token, the thatness of things becomes something too obvious to be asked about—only suitable for the questioning of children, teenagers, and the elderly. From the point of view of correctness, there is no truth in facing unconcealment. Even if unconcealment were recognized (the unconcealment of the stone, of the place where the stone rests, of myself as the one who faces the stone, and of the intentionality that gathers these different unconcealments), it would be precisely glossed over or taken for granted. Thus, Heidegger claims that wonder, as the basic disposition that reveals

awakened or reawakened in wonder to the question of the meaning of Being and the *danger* of forgetting Being have the same root; both are essential possibilities of our mode of being-in-the-world.

²³⁹ For a discussion of the difference between Being as copula (as a linking concept) and Being in the sense of existence, see Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans., introduction, and lexicon by Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 39. Of course, the function of *being* as copula is far from clear: it entails its own mystery. Indeed German Idealism can be understood as a long and rich meditation on the mystery of being as copula. For a literary example of the moment when the existential meaning of Being is revealed and turns its common meaning as copula into something *unheimlich*, see Jean-Paul Sartre’s novel *Nausea*. In the park, when surprised by the roots of the chestnut tree, the protagonist writes, “It left me breathless. Never, until these last few days, had I understood the meaning of ‘existence.’ I was like the others, like the ones walking along the seashore, all dressed in their spring finery. I said, like them, ‘The ocean *is* green; that white speck up there is a seagull,’ but I didn’t feel that it existed or that the seagull was a ‘existing seagull’; usually existence hides itself” (*Nausea*, trans. by Lloyd Alexander, New York: New Directions Paperbook, 1959, 1959). I am still clarifying when the *unheimlich* is ontological, but I have not addressed why and how our response to this ontological *unheimlich* is in wonder, rather than in nausea, despair, boredom, or deep joy.

unconcealment, remains outdated in a world where truth is a game of propositions and knowledge is information.

Before turning to examine Heidegger's description of restraint as the basic disposition fitting for these circumstances, I underscore a crucial point for my study. By asserting with Heidegger the current crisis of ontological wonder,²⁴⁰ I do not mean to affirm the crisis of wonder as such. Ontological indifference correlates precisely with the abundance and vitality of different versions of marveling and experiences of the holy and the sublime. The crisis in ontological wonder parallels the profusion of different forms of ontic wonder: today technology and arts enchant, and religions are back in the midst of the public sphere. And yet this largely enchanted modern world is at the same time indifferent to the unusual in the usual—to everything regarding its thatness. Consequently, my position vis-à-vis other works about the apparent re-enchantment of the world depends on the type of wonder that they discuss. Wonder is often understood as marveling (ontic wonder).²⁴¹ I am opposed to the works that consider the modern world as lacking wonder and a postmodern world in which wonder would return. In short, I challenge the tale of disenchantment. Ontic wonder, in all its different versions of marveling, has never withdrawn from the modern or any pre- or postmodern world. By correlating ontic wonder with enchantment, I challenge the narrative of the tale of disenchantment and assert that the world cannot survive without ontic wonder. The problem, however, as I argue in Part I, is that enchantment and ontic wonder did not prevent the

²⁴⁰ As clarified in greater detail below, I do not reject the whole of Heidegger's bleak description of modernity. Indeed, I agree with Heidegger's claim of a current crisis of ontological wonder, but I will show—by elucidating Being's negative mode of disclosure (Chapter Six)—that the "crisis" simultaneously becomes Being's highest mode of disclosure. The complexity of my argument resides in the notion of crisis, where to acknowledge the crisis (of ontological indifference) implies simultaneously that the crisis is cancelled. I will return to this theme later.

²⁴¹ The exception are the works on wonder written by experts on Heidegger—for instance, John Sallis's "A Wonder that one could never aspire to surpass", Mary-Jane Rubenstein's *Strange Wonder*, and Jeff Malpas's "Beginning in Wonder."

environmental global crisis from happening. Thus, it is misleading to merely support and celebrate every new or old source of ontic wonder, as if this would counteract an apparent lack of (ontic) wonder, and as if by essence, ontic wonder may be benign. In contrast, and as argued in Part I, what is at stake is the assessment of modern enchantment and wonder in light of the project of rationalization and the domination of nature. My hypothesis is that ontological wonder may relate differently than ontic wonder to the project of the domination of nature. Thus, I confront the simultaneous phenomena of ontological indifference (and its possible awakening) with the profusion of sources of ontic wonder.²⁴²

I) Restraint in *Basic Questions of Philosophy*

In the beginning of his course *Basic Questions of Philosophy*, Heidegger mentions a mysterious and futural basic disposition. His intent is to clarify the seemingly contradictory relation between philosophy—“the most rigorous thinking in the purest dispassion [*reinsten Nüchternheit*]”—and disposition. Arguing for this relation, Heidegger writes,

Pure dispassion is not nothing, certainly not the absence of disposition [*Fehlen der Stimmung*], and not the sheer coldness of the stark concept. On the contrary, the pure dispassion of thought is at bottom only the most rigorous maintenance of the highest disposition, the one open to the uniquely uncanny fact [*einzigem Ungeheuren*]: that there are beings, rather than not [*daß Seiendes ist und nicht vielmehr nicht ist*]. If we had to say

²⁴² Although I am still working towards clarifying the distinction between ontic and ontological wonder, it is useful to think about how these relate to each other. If I argue that ontological indifference correlates with the abundance and vitality of different sources of marveling, we can ask if the reverse is also the case: Does some possible crisis in ontic wonder correlate with the awakening of ontological wonder? Are the two connected? To be ready for ontological wonder must we first be detached from the sources of marveling? Or is it the case that ontic wonder has no influence on the disclosure of ontological wonder. In the previous chapter, I insinuated that if science cancels (with its causal explanations) all sources of marveling, then ontological wonder may blossom. Although I am not yet ready to answer these questions, I note that they point right to the core of the issue: If we are absorbed because of enchantment by the marveling of the modern gods, and if Being is totally taken for granted, how is it possible to experience ontological wonder?

something immediately about this basic disposition of philosophy, i.e., of futural philosophy, we might call it ‘restraint’ [*Verhaltenheit*] (*BQP*, 3–4)

In the futural philosophy, restraint rather than wonder is the highest disposition, and this attunes us to an uncanny fact: “that there *are* beings, rather than not.” Does this “uncanny fact” differ from the most unusual in the usual: “that beings are what they are,” grasped in wonder? By comparing these two phrases, I underscore two differences. First, in the case of the definition of restraint, there is no reference to whatness. The uncanny fact makes us attentive to the fact of thatness: that there *are* beings, rather than not. Secondly, thatness is contrasted to what seems to be a negation: rather than not (*nicht vielmehr nicht ist*). And yet the uncanny fact opened up in restraint seems very similar to the experience of wonder studied above.

According to Heidegger, two other dispositions belong together with—and are articulated by—restraint. About restraint, Heidegger writes:

In it, two elements originally belong together and are as one: shock in the face of what is closest and most obtrusive [*das Erschrecken vor diesem Nächsten und Aufdringlichsten*],²⁴³ namely that beings are [*daß Seiendes ist*], and diffidence in the face of what is remotest [*die Scheu vor dem Fernsten*],²⁴⁴ namely that in beings, and before each being, Being holds sway [*daß im Seienden und vor jedem Seienden das Seyn west*]. Restraint is the disposition in which this shock is not overcome and set aside but is precisely preserved and conserved through diffidence. Restraint is the basic disposition of the relation to Being [*bezuges zum Seyn*], and in it the concealment of the essence of Being becomes what is most worthy of

²⁴³ I translate *das Erschrecken* as “shock” instead of “terror” (its translation by Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer in *Basic Questions of Philosophy*). “Shock” is consistent with Rojcewicz and Daniela Vallega-Neu’s translation of the term in Heidegger’s *Contributions to Philosophy* (which Heidegger wrote when he was delivering this course), and “shock” strikes me the more accurate translation. Although someone can be afraid (*sich fürchten*) of something that could occur in the future, *das Erschrecken* denotes some fearful shock that happens suddenly in the present. The logic of expectation does not work for *Erschrecken*; what triggers *Erschrecken* is the terror that would strike if a ghost breathed lightly on our neck.

²⁴⁴ I translate *die Scheu* as diffidence rather than awe. Again, I follow the translation of *Contributions*. The word “awe” does not translate into the common or specific connotations that Heidegger gives to *Scheu*. Moreover, in *Basic Questions of Philosophy* Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer translate *Bestauen* as awe, which confuses the two different terms, cloaking the conceptual (ontological) distinction between *Scheu* as part of restraint and *Bestauen* as a type of marveling.

questioning. Only one who throws himself into the all-consuming fire of the questioning of what is most worthy of questioning has the right to say more of the basic disposition than its allusive name. Yet once he has wrested for himself this right, he will not employ it but will keep silent (*BQP*, 4, translation modified).

On the one hand, there is shock in the face of what is closest: that beings are (*daß Seiendes ist*). Shock opens up the thatness of what is most usual and obtrusive. On the other hand, there is diffidence in the face of what is remotest: that Being holds sway in beings; diffidence grasps the most unusual in the usual, the Being in beings. It is not clear, however, why that is the case and why shock is preserved through diffidence. How are these two elements articulated by restraint? Is there a movement implied here from shock to diffidence? Moreover, consistent with his advocating for silence, Heidegger does not again mention restraint in his lecture. However, there are some passages that do mention it, which he wrote for the lecture but did not read during the winter semester of 1937–1938. Let us see whether with the help of these removed pages we can illuminate the notion of restraint and determine how it differs from wonder.

Heidegger clearly distinguishes between wonder and shock. He writes,

In wonder [*Er-staunen*], the basic disposition of the first beginning, beings first come to stand in their form. Shock, the basic disposition of the other beginning, reveals behind all progress [*Fortschrittlichkeit*] and all domination [*Beherrschung*] over beings a dark emptiness [*dunkle Leere*] of aimlessness [*Ziellosigkeit*] and a shrinking back [*Ausweichen*] in face of the first and last decisions (*BQP*, 169, supplement, translation modified).

Let me highlight three key points. First, the distinction between wonder and shock is based on Heidegger's distinction between the first Greek beginning and Heidegger's attempt to establish another beginning of philosophy. Of course, the latter distinction, if it is not clear, will not clarify the former. Thus, rather than illuminate the two dispositions by pointing to the

distinction between the two beginnings, I focus on Heidegger's description of the two dispositions themselves.

Second, wonder and shock seem to disclose very different things. In wonder, "beings first come to stand in their form." We recall from our previous discussion how in wonder we face the most unusual in the usual, namely, that beings are what they are. But for Heidegger, under modernity, beings—which are the most usual—are not worthy of being questioned because people already think they know the meaning of the Being of beings. Under modernity, what wonder used to disclose is not wrong; rather, it is irrelevant for a world obsessed with progress and domination. Even if wonder were available for us, we are not available for wonder.

In shock, in contrast, we face some dark emptiness of aimlessness that appears behind progress and the pursuit of total domination. While wonder's ontological role is clear (although impotent for our age), it is not clear what ontological meaning this dark emptiness of aimlessness has. We already know that restraint, as the highest disposition of the futural philosophy, reveals an uncanny fact: there *are* beings rather than not. But it is not clear how shock's revelation of the dark emptiness behind progress and domination relates to the uncanny fact revealed by restraint.

Third, there is some—let us say formal—ambiguity in Heidegger's version of shock. How can restraint turn this indifference into shock? Given that indifference seemingly cannot make us feel shock, we ask, what triggers this shock? What transforms this dark emptiness of aimlessness into a shock capable of revealing the fact that beings are (thatness), which previously was wonder's ontological role and now—according to Heidegger—is restraint's ontological labor? In short, a thing that is indifferent is unlikely to be shocking.

To clarify the shift from the *dark* emptiness of aimlessness to shock, it may be helpful to focus on the counterintuitive notion of “darkness” implied here. This type of darkness is not the opposite or absence of light nor the darkness that joining light forms the chiaroscuro where figures can appear. Rather, this is a type of darkness that comes when there is too much light. Paradoxically, when light seems to illuminate everything, some darkness of the absence of darkness arises. This is the “darkness” at noon.²⁴⁵ Following the “analogy” between light and reason in a world obsessed with progress and domination (in which everything is calculable), things are transparent and obvious to the light of our reason. Indeed, reason has often thought of itself as transparent to itself: its light even illuminates the source of the light itself—without blind spots. The darkness implied in this passage is not the absence of the light of reason but rather the excess of light that turns light into darkness. Closely related to the question, “How does something indifferent become shocking?” is another question: “How does the absence of darkness become dark?”

Let me add a third paradox: the absence of need that turns into a need. For Heidegger, philosophical questioning has to be grounded—in order to be philosophy and not merely curiosity—in some need (*Not*). Starting from this need there arises some necessity (*Notwendigkeit*) that compels (*nötig*) our thinking in some direction. Without this need we can

²⁴⁵ Robert P. Harrison has explored the important role that opaqueness plays in the construing of selfhood and its relation to nature. Showing how darkness and light essentially belong together, Harrison comments on Constable’s notion of the “chiaroscuro of nature”: “light attains its reality only in degrees of opacity... opacity and illumination are inseparable, or irreducible to a dichotomy, and that beyond the chiaroscuro of nature there is no ‘reality’” (*Forests: The Shadow of Civilization*, 204). While Harrison’s work is helpful as a critique of *some* version of technology that dreams to “eclipse” every source of darkness (which would entail to destroy the chiaroscuro that constitutes us), it seems less capable—in my understanding—of clarifying Heidegger’s logic in which pure light (absence of darkness) turns somehow into a form of darkness. In other words, although this might be implied by his notion of the “chiaroscuro of nature,” I do not see Harrison drawing the conclusion that technology’s fascination with light already yields opacity. Rather, his book urgently calls our attention to the possible technological eclipsing of the opacity that makes us human, which, in my reading, never is successful because every eclipsing is already opaque.

engage in scientific research or a journalistic investigation but not in philosophy. And yet, in our modern world all needs seem to be solved. Similar to how indifference becomes somehow shocking and the absence of darkness becomes a form of darkness and blindness in the midst of a day that has forgotten its night, the lack of need becomes a *need* in a world that has turned everything into something that is transparent and ready to be manipulated. Heidegger writes,

The other need, that is, if we may say so, *our* need, has this peculiarity that it is not experienced as a need. Everything has become calculable, and consequently everything is understandable. There are no longer any limits to our domination over beings [*es gibt keine Schranken mehr in der Beherrschung des Seienden*], if only our will is great enough and constant enough. Everything becomes obvious, without any impenetrable depths, and this transparency derives from a luminosity in which the eye of knowledge is dazzled to the verge of blindness (*BQP*, 169, supplements).

Our question, however, remains: How can we experience the need of the absence of need? How can we feel a need that “has this peculiarity that it is not experienced as a need?” How do we step from the verge of blindness and fall into the abyss so that we can feel the darkness of being blind in the midst of the light?²⁴⁶

To recap, I am studying the differences between wonder and shock (as part of restraint). While wonder reveals the most unusual in the usual—that beings are—shock reveals the dark emptiness of aimlessness behind all progress and domination over beings. I am trying to

²⁴⁶ This logic has strings analogues with the logic of alienation in the tradition of Augustine, Luther, and Kierkegaard, which deeply influenced Heidegger. According to this tradition, at the moment that we feel most secure and at home, we are most alienated from ourselves. We fall deep in sin precisely when we think we are immune to it. This logic is slippery: our sense of familiarity and security precisely covers up our original strangeness, i.e., the fact that we received our self from God; and so when we think that we are in charge and self-possessed, we are precisely estranged from our original strangeness. In contrast, to be truly ourselves we must stand out from ourselves in relation to God as the transcendent other that constitutes us. For Augustine, the seeming absence of sin turns out to be our greatest sin, while for Heidegger (as we have seen), the lack of need in our technological world becomes *the* need. In both cases, the disclosure of our (invisible) alienation to our original strangeness happens in a moment of crisis. To further examine this logic of alienation in Augustine and Heidegger, but also in contemporary authors like Robert P. Harrison and Jean-Luc Nancy, see Thomas Carlson’s forthcoming book, *With the World at the Heart: Studies in the Secular Today* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019).

evaluate the ontological role of shock's revelation. But I am stuck in the problem of clarifying how something indifferent can become shocking because what is indifferent escapes our attention and, thus, it is the least capable of shocking us. Complicating matters further, according to Heidegger's account of our world under the injunction of domination that has rendered everything known and obvious for everybody, the absence of darkness becomes dark and the absence of needs turns itself into a need.

Heidegger relates the need caused by the absence of need to the theme of the abandonment of beings by Being. The "logic" of the latter should clarify the former. The *need* from which currently philosophizing compels us (*nötigt*) and gains its necessity (*Notwendigkeit*) comes from the experience of the abandonment by Being:

What if the abandonment of beings by Being, that beings still 'are' and yet Being and its truth remain denied [*verweigert*] to beings and consequently to man (the denial itself understood as the essence of Being [*Wesen des Seyns*]), what if this event which proceeds out of beings as a whole were the concealed ground of the still veiled basic disposition [*der noch verhüllten Grundstimmung*] which compels us into another necessity of another original questioning and beginning? ... What if the need arising from the lack of need [*die Not der Notlosigkeit*] and, on account of its hidden domination, the age of complete questionlessness, had its ground in the abandonment of beings by Being? (*BQP*, 160)

Here Heidegger clearly defines what he means by the abandonment of beings by Being: "that beings still 'are' and yet Being and its truth remain denied to beings and consequently to man."

For him, the revelation of wonder does not work anymore in a world that Being has abandoned.

How could wonder reveal Being when Being itself has abandoned us? Heidegger explains,

Beings are now taken for all that is, as if there were no such thing as Being and the truth of Being. Beings strut as beings and yet are abandoned by Being [*Das Seiende macht sich als das Seiende breit und ist vom Seyn doch verlassen*]. The nearly unacknowledged need arising from the abandonment by Being becomes compelling in the basic disposition of shock [*Grundstimmung Erschreckens*]. One can no longer be struck by the miracle

[*Wunder*] of beings: that they are [*daß as ist*]. For, quite to the contrary, this has become obvious long ago. And it is a gaping abyss [*Abgrund*] that beings, apparently closer to reality than ever before, can be taken for all that is, while Being and the truth of Being are forgotten (*BQP*, 169, supplements).

In the second to last quotation, Heidegger affirms in parenthesis and in the conditional “what if”: “the denial itself [is] understood as the essence of Being.” What does this mean? Is the *denial* of Being—i.e., the event of the abandonment of beings by Being—part of the essence of Being, or is it a moment in the history of Being that, while characterized by the abandonment by Being, may in the future be overcome by the “returning” of Being? In short, is the denial essential or accidental? This is not Heidegger’s only passage that insinuates that this “denial” is essential to Being. In a different passage he mentions the “withdrawal itself” and “self-concealment” as belonging to the essence of Being:

That access must proceed out of our need, our distress [*Not*], out of the abandonment of beings by Being [*der Seins-Verlassenheit des Seienden*], while we take it seriously that Being is withdrawing from beings [*dem Seienden entzieht*], whereby beings degenerate [*herabfällt*] into mere objects of human contrivance and lived experience [*bloßen Gegenstand der Machenschaft und des Erlebens*]. What if this withdrawal [*Entzug*] itself belonged to the essence of Being [*Wesen des Seyns*]? What if this were the still unrecognized truth, never to be experienced or expressed, of the whole metaphysics of the West: namely, that Being is in its essence self-concealing [*Sichverbergen*]? What if the openness [*die Offenheit*] were first and foremost the clearing [*die Lichtung*] in the midst of beings, in which clearing the self-concealment of Being would be manifest? (*BQP*, 163).

If Being in its essence is self-concealing, we can draw two consequences. Heidegger explicitly mentions the first. If Being is somehow accessible and if its essence is self-concealing, then access to Being means that we are able to face the manifestation of Being’s self-concealment—to see the opacity of Being—that happens in the midst of beings. Being is not “something” to

be accessed clearly and distinctly and independently of beings. Since Being denotes the unusual in beings when they are grasped from the point of view of their thatness, there is not “Being” outside of beings. To “see” Being means not being able to see it except as the opacity and mystery of every being. Suddenly the *openness* as such, the *clearing* itself in the midst of beings, turns unusual, and in the unusual experience of the clearing (in the midst of beings) the self-concealment of Being manifests and can be experienced by us in its inherent opacity.

The second consequence is related to the idea of degeneration quoted above. If withdrawal belongs to the essence of Being, then why does the history of this withdrawal amount to degeneration? Again, if in its essence Being withdraws from beings, or, in other words, if Being in its essence is self-concealing, why should we call the fact that beings turn into mere objects of human contrivance (*Machenschaft*) and lived experience a *degeneration*? When something happens according to its essence and this happening amounts to a degeneration from the point of view of a “higher” origin, then we can call this happening *tragic*. Moreover, we may ask about the agent of this abandonment. Who decides to abandon? Is it our fault and responsibility that Being abandons us? Heidegger clearly states that this event “proceeds out of beings as a whole.” It seems that we are condemned to a tragic degradation, driven by Being, for which we have no responsibility.²⁴⁷

And yet if Being in its essence is self-concealing, from where do we assess that beings “degenerate” into mere objects of human contrivance and lived experience? Where do we stand in order to talk about this history as a falling? If “denial” is essential for Being, it is against its

²⁴⁷ Along these lines, in *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*, trans. by Richard Rojcewicz and Daniela Vallega-Neu (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), Heidegger affirms that Being’s withdrawal, which is the cause of the historical uprootedness that he confronts, is grounded in the essence of Beyng: “The innermost ground of historical uprootedness [*geschichtlichen Entwurzelung*] is an essential ground, grounding in the essence of beyng: the fact that beyng is withdrawing from beings and yet lets them appear as what ‘is’ and even as what ‘is more eminently’” [*daß das Seyn sich dem Seienden entzieht und es dabei doch als ‘seiend’ und sogar ‘seiender’ erscheinen läßt*] (92). Cited parenthetically hereafter as *CP*.

own essence—at any moment in Being’s history (regardless of its origin, development, or end)—to claim that Being has given itself totally without residue, denial, withdrawal, or concealment. The idea of the absolute revelation of Being—Being stripped to the skin, as it were—is against its essence. How, then, can someone “measure” which disclosure of Being is more “original” than the other when Being loves to hide?²⁴⁸

We confront another paradox. The more original manifestation of Being seems to be precisely the one that acknowledges the impossibility of a more original manifestation understood as total disclosure. If we defend—as Heidegger does—a primordial disclosure of Being, after which all else counts as a degeneration from its higher origin, then Being’s primordial manifestation in the origin shows precisely its concealment—it unveils by preserving Being’s veils. Hence, the tragedy implied in this history of degeneration seems to be one of light increasing to the excessive moment of erasing any dark spot. It is the history of going blind because of an excess of light. The tragic component of this narrative, however, does not have the last word. Although this narrative may not be comical, the tragic, it seems to me, cancels itself out. When someone is blind because of too much light, darkness returns. At the end of the day, darkness cannot be erased because the erasure is already a manifestation of darkness.

Within the history of Being, whatever Heidegger’s other beginning and the overcoming of metaphysics may mean, I affirm that denial, abandonment, withdrawal, negation, and oblivion are for Being the rule and not exceptions, nor are they accidents to be overcome. *Being* loves shadow plays rather than striptease. The critique of machination, modern technology,

²⁴⁸ Similar to physis, Being loves to hide. Thus, what kind of truth measures the different disclosures of Being? Talking about the original manifestation is fraught with ambiguity because the type of truth implied here, namely truth as adequation (that can measure), is said to be degenerated.

and nihilism has to recognize “withdrawal” as essential to Being. For instance, when there is no expectation of Being’s “return,” what does the “overcoming” of nihilism look like?

Like the absence of darkness becoming a dark emptiness or the need of the lack becoming a need, we affirm that the absence of Being is the counterintuitive mode for its self-disclosure. The abandonment, the denial, and the withdrawal of Being are how Being gives itself. The absence of Being becomes its mode of manifestation.²⁴⁹

We know that shock has precisely the role of disclosing the abandonment by Being and the compelling need of the lack of need. But our question remains: How do we experience this shock? If Being has become obvious, then why would the acknowledgment of its absence be shocking? In other words, how do we know about the abandonment of Being when only objects and subjects are left? In the midst of the fullness of things around us, how do we feel the lack?

We know that the impotence of wonder—our incapacity to be struck by the miracle (*Wunder*) of the thatness of beings—is due to our familiarity with it. Moreover, as we have seen, in our modern world this ontological indifference coexists with the abundance of ontic wonder. Thus, it is not difficult to draw some causal relation (rather than a correlation) between ontological indifference and the flourishing of marveling. Even Heidegger in his reactionary moments seems to follow this interpretation of ontological decay and, thus, assume that some

²⁴⁹ I have two comments about Heidegger’s notion of the abandonment of beings by Being. First, according to the previous chapter, the experience of the Being of beings opened up in wonder makes us see—for the first time—beings. But when we grant that the insight into Being and beings come *together*, what does it mean that “beings strut as beings and yet are abandoned by Being”? Is it not misleading to say that in the abandonment of Being, “beings are now taken for all that is” (*BQP*, 169)? I claim that the situation is even worse: Beings are not taken for all that is because they also disappear when they are abandoned by Being. What is left are things to be manipulated, phenomena for a consciousness, and objects for a subject, but beings disclosed by Dasein are gone when Being has abandoned us. We may utter beings and Being, but we mean things, phenomena, or objects. Second, the language of *Being* abandoning us gives the impression that Being and the human are two different things: they sometimes come together, but often they are separated. And yet, there are not two “things,” there is one: the human being. While the human being is a being among others, Being as such is not a being or a thing. Consequently, we have to be very careful with the language of Being’s withdrawing and abandoning. I return to this theme below.

humans (some philosophers or even ethnic people) are to blame for the ontological indifference. In other words, as mentioned above, it is possible that ontic wonder, by promoting and sustaining the project of total calculability and transparency, occludes and makes obvious the insight about the thatness of beings. According to this interpretation, curious or marveling individuals consume the unusual in order to feel alive, but this action only renders the unusual into something usual and pushes forward the endless dialectic of the familiar and the unfamiliar. While this dialectic moves in circles, it promises a goal: ontic wonder enchants with the melody of endless progress and the domination of everything. Can we explain the call for endless progress and the domination of all merely through the logic of curiosity and marveling? Does our boredom and hunger for emotional satiation (i.e., the need for feeling alive) explain the force behind the process of total domination?

However, this interpretation, into which Heidegger seems sometimes to have relapsed, renders even more problematic the ontological function of shock. Since this interpretation suggests that the logic of curiosity and marveling lies behind all progress and all domination, how do we arrive at Heidegger's insight that behind all progress and domination over beings is some dark emptiness of aimlessness? How can I be shocked at the logic of curiosity and marveling? In other words, in the fullness of living surrounded by objects, how can I notice that beings have been abandoned by Being?

II) Restraint in *Contribution to Philosophy (of the Event)*

At roughly at same time that Heidegger was delivering his lecture *Basic Questions of Philosophy*, he was writing his obscure and posthumously published masterpiece

Contributions to Philosophy. In the first part of the text, called “Prospect,” Heidegger presents the following diagram:

The basic disposition of thinking in the other beginning oscillates [*schwingt*] within dispositions which can only be named distantly as

shock [<i>das Erschrecken</i>]	}	presentiment	[<i>die Ahnung</i>]
restraint [<i>die Verhaltenheit</i>]	}		
diffidence [<i>die Scheu</i>]			” (CP, 14).

As in *Basic Questions of Philosophy*, Heidegger in *Contributions* contrasts wonder and shock. Shock “can best be clarified in contrast to the basic disposition of the first beginning, namely, wonder [*Erstaunen*]. Yet the clarification of a disposition is never a guarantee that it is actually disposing [*stimmt*] instead of merely being represented” (CP, 14). In spite of this contrast between wonder and shock, in *Contributions* Heidegger describes shock in a way that recalls his description of wonder: it reveals the most unusual within the usual. As noted in my previous discussion, in wonder the most usual refers to *beings*, and the most “unusual of the usual” denotes the same beings but confronted from the viewpoint of their thatness.²⁵⁰ Heidegger’s description of shock keeps the same form of the relation between usual and unusual, but he changes the content of the terms involved in this relation. He writes,

To be shocked [*das Erschrecken*] is to be taken aback [*Zurückfahren*], i.e., back from the familiarity of customary behavior [*der Geläufigkeit des Verhaltens im Vertrauten*] and into the openness of the pressing forth of what is self-concealed [*in die Offenheit des Andrangs des Sichverbergenden*]. In this openness, what was hitherto familiar, shows itself as what alienates and also fetters [*das Befremdliche und die Fesselung*]. What is most familiar,

²⁵⁰ To keep the logic of wonder fresh in our minds, I quote again this passage: “The basic disposition of wonder displaces man into the realm where the most usual, yet still as such unthought (beings), are established in their most proper unusualness, namely the one of their Being, and where beings as such then become the most worthy of questioning” (BQP, 147).

however, and therefore most unknown, is the abandonment by being [*die Seinsverlassenheit*]. Shock lets us be taken aback by the very fact that beings *are* [*daß das Seiende ist*] (whereas, previously, beings were to us simply beings), i.e., by the fact that beings *are* and that being has abandoned and withdrawn itself from all ‘beings’ and from whatever appeared as a being [*Das Erschrecken läßt den Menschen zurückfahren vor dem, daß das Seiende ist, während zuvor ihm das Seiende eben das Seiende war: daß das Seiende ist und daß dieses—das Seyn—alles ‘Seiende’ und was so schien verlassen, sich ihm entzogen hat*] (CP, 14).²⁵¹

In shock, the most usual or familiar, which remains invisible in its familiarity, is the abandonment by Being—and not *beings* as in the case of wonder. But what about the most “unusual of the usual,” when we are attuned by shock? “Shock lets us be taken aback by the very fact that beings *are* (whereas, previously, beings were to us simply beings).” The insight revealed by shock (i.e., the very fact that beings *are*) seems very similar to the insight revealed by wonder (i.e., that it is what it is). We can see the difference, however, in the explicative clause that Heidegger adds to this sentence: “i.e., by the fact that beings *are* and that being has abandoned and withdrawn itself from all ‘beings’ and from whatever appeared as a being.” While for wonder the most unusual is Being (i.e., the fact that beings *are*), in shock the most unusual is also Being, but seen in its absence, or better said, seen *because* of its absence. Instead of “and” (coordinating conjunction), the type of causality that I am suggesting here could be better shown by replacing the “and” with “because” (subordinating conjunction). In shock, the very “fact that beings *are*” is revealed *because* of the fact that “being has abandoned and withdrawn itself from all ‘beings’ and from whatever appeared as a being.” The withdrawal of Being is the “negative” mode of revelation, which in shock we can “see.” Anticipating what I will clarify below, in shock we “see” the *not*—i.e., we are suddenly awakened by Being

²⁵¹ I will indistinctly use the word *Sein* (Being) or its archaic form *Seyn* (being).

precisely in its having withdrawn. So far the question remains, how do we feel the absence of Being if we have never experienced it? In other words, at the ontic level, I can be in pain for the absence of the beloved one, provided that I have previously experienced and loved her. Have we experienced Being so that its withdrawal can be experienced as such?

Let me underscore the type of movement implied in shock: to be shocked is to be taken aback [*Zurückfahren*], back from the usual of the customary behavior and into the unusual of the usual—the pressing forth of what is self-concealed. The movement implied in shock helps to clarify its connection to restraint: “Yet *this* shock is neither a mere shrinking back [*bloßes Zurückweichen*] nor the bewildered surrender of the ‘will.’ Instead, because in this shock it is precisely the self-concealing of being that opens up, and because beings themselves as well as the relation to them want to be preserved, this shock is joined from within by its own most proper ‘will,’ and that is what is here called *restraint*” (CP, 14). Rather than a “mere shrinking back,” in shock we are “taken aback” and sustained by restraint to what is self-concealed. But how? How, in shock joined by restraint, does the self-concealing of being open up? What type of revelation is here implied?

Shock’s being *taken aback* is joined by restraint’s *turning toward*. According to Heidegger, restraint is “the pre-disposition [*Vor-stimmung*] of readiness for the refusal as gift [*für die Verweigerung als Schenkung*]. In restraint, there reigns (though one is still taken aback) a turn toward [*die Zukehr*] the hesitant self-withholding [*zögernden Sichversagen*] as the essential occurrence of being [*Wesung des Seyns*]. Restraint is the *center* for shock and diffidence. These latter merely characterize with more explicitness what *originally* belongs to

restraint” (*CP*, 14, 15).²⁵² What does the “refusal as a gift” that restraint makes us be ready for mean? The aforementioned expression—“the self-concealing of beyng”—that shock reveals, is described in this passage as “the hesitant self-withholding as the essential occurrence of beyng,” which reigns in restraint. How should we understand these negative expressions: refusal as a gift, self-concealing that opens up, and the hesitant self-withholding as the essential occurrence of beyng? These seem to be variations of the logic that we also saw applied to darkness, need, and abandonment. So far we may grant the point that Being reveals itself negatively, but it is still not clear how.

Diffidence, which Heidegger links to reticence rather than shyness (*CP*, 15), names a mode of relation to what is most remote: “Diffidence is the way of drawing near and remaining near to what is most remote as such. Yet the most remote, in its intimations [*Winken*], provided these are held fast in diffidence, becomes the closest and gathers up into itself all relations of beyng” (*CP*, 15). In diffidence, we can draw the intimations of what is most remote (beyng) closer to ourselves. In other words, we can experience what is most remote without canceling out its remoteness, without taming the remoteness of what is most remote. Diffidence opposes the modern phenomenon of the shrinking of distance and the uniformly distanceless.²⁵³

The question raised—by Mary-Jane Rubenstein, for example—is whether this readiness for the most remote (i.e., beyng) eclipses what is closest (beings). Does ontological

²⁵² As I show below, there is a similarity between shock’s *taken aback* and restraint’s *turning toward*, on the one hand, and Heidegger’s description of anxiety in “What is Metaphysics?” as a repelling that refers (*abweisende Verweisung*), on the other.

²⁵³ At his first speaking engagement after the Second World War, Heidegger opened his Bremen lectures, *Insight into That Which Is* (1949), by asking: “What is happening when, through the removal of the great distances, everything stands equally near and far? What is this uniformity wherein everything is neither far nor near and, as it were, without distance? Everything washes together into the uniformly distanceless” (*Bremen and Freiburg Lectures*, translated by Andrew J. Mitchell, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012, 3,4).

wonder offer ethical comportments to beings?²⁵⁴ Acknowledging the possible indifference and even opposition between the question of Being and our daily comportments to beings, and implying a possible connection with Heidegger's blindness to Nazism's monstrous excesses, Mary-Jane Rubenstein writes: "With his eyes trained on the cosmic departure and arrivals of last gods and 'events of being,' how could Heidegger have possibly noticed the arrivals and departures of everyday people on everyday train cars? Yet neglecting beings for the sake of being—or the actual for the sake of the possible, or the usual for the sake of the unusual—is *not* a function of *thaumazein* as Heidegger understands it."²⁵⁵

Along these lines, Heidegger insists that someone attuned to restraint, shock, and diffidence does not turn away from beings:

Yet who is able to let this basic disposition of shocked and diffident restraint [*der erschreckend-scheuen Verhaltenheit*] resonate in the essential human being? And how many will judge that *this* disposedness through being establishes no turning away from beings. Instead, it establishes the opposite: the opening of the simplicity and greatness of beings and the originally compelled necessity [*genötigte Notwendigkeit*] of securing in beings the truth of being so as to give the historical human being a goal once again, namely, *to become the one who grounds and preserves the truth of being*, to be the 'there' as the ground required by the very essence of being, or, in other words, to care. That is what *care* means, neither a trivial fussing over just anything [*als kleine Bekümmernis um Beliebiges*]

²⁵⁴ So far, I have studied the essence of wonder (in this chapter, by comparing it to restraint). In other words, my guiding question is: When does the *unheimlich* or wonder become ontological? Another question that I am not yet ready to ask is whether this ontological wonder would tend to yield care for beings. This ethical issue is crucial because my study seeks to assess whether wonder can offer an answer to our ecological crisis.

²⁵⁵ Mary-Jane Rubenstein, *Strange Wonder*, 38, 39. She continues: "Somehow, Heidegger suggests, genuine attention to beings is only possible in and through a genuine attunement to the being that gives them to be; and, conversely, only a relation to being can restore beings to themselves (that is, out of 'subjectivity' and 'objectivity'). But how? This is the seeming *aporia* with which Heidegger consistently leaves us—both philosophically and autobiographically. How is thinking to stay attuned to being *and* the beings it abandons, the clouds *and* the trains, the stars *and* the well, at the same time?" (39). In mentioning the stars and the well, Rubenstein is referencing the legend of Thales of Miletus, who fell into a well while staring at the stars. At this point I am not ready to assess the possible opposition between Being and beings. Does the question of Being endorse our negligence for beings and stupidity in our human affairs? As I have said, this question is crucial because I want to explore whether ontological wonder can help stop the ongoing process of the domination of nature.

nor a renunciation of joy and power [*Verleugnung des Jubels und der Kraft*] but something more original than all that, because care is uniquely ‘for the sake of beyng’—not of the beyng of the human being but of the beyng of beings as a whole [*des Seyns des Seienden im Ganzen*] (*CP*, 15).

The movement implied in these dispositions, namely, the *taken aback* of the customary behavior and of *turning toward* the self-concealing of Being, has to be correlated to our comportment to beings. Simply stated, what happens with our comportment to beings when we are taken aback from them into the self-concealment of Being? Does it become necessary to dismiss them in the name of Being? What happens to beings when we see them from the viewpoint of their thatness—i.e., from the point of view of the ontological difference? In this passage, Heidegger is very clear: when someone is disposed by Being, the “opening of the simplicity and greatness of beings” occurs. By securing *in* beings the truth of Being, the historical human being receives its goal: to care.

But what does *care* mean in this context? For Heidegger, to care means “*to become the one who grounds and preserves the truth of beyng*, to be the ‘there’ as the ground required by the very essence of beyng.” Thus, one cares for Being (beyng)—i.e., care is predicated on Being. It is not care for beings but rather care for the truth of Being; we become the ground for and the preserver of the truth of Being. Thus, it seems strange to justify the “tuning towards beings” by claiming that one becomes the preserver of the truth of Being. What then is the connection between beings and the truth of Being, so that when we (a being among others) care for Being, the opening of the simplicity and greatness of beings occurs? Is it the case that

our “center” lies not in us but in the most remote—i.e., Being as such? In other words, when we care for Being, we at the same time care for what is “more intimate than ourselves.”²⁵⁶

It is precisely *diffidence* that articulates both our “ethical” comportment to beings and the ontological role of becoming the one that grounds and preserves the truth of Being. We are going to study the ethical consequences of ontological wonder in the Conclusion. At this moment I want to notice how diffidence keeps the ontic-ethical and the ontological dimensions together. Because beings and Being are not two separated things, saying that someone cares for Being is not a dismissal of beings. However, caring for beings does eclipse the goal of becoming the ground for the essential occurrence of being. Why? Again, because the essence of beings (our essence) is not “in” beings (in us) but “in” being as the most intimately remote.

²⁵⁶ I want to use two ideas to illuminate the “relation” between beings and Being (being)—a relation in which the disclosure of Being establishes no turning away from beings, and, more importantly, opens up the simplicity and greatness of beings. First, the relation between Being and beings resembles the one between God and the soul that is described in Augustine’s *Confessions*. God is “*interior intimo meo et superior summo meo*” [you were deeper than my inmost understanding and higher than the topmost height that I could reach] (Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin [New York: Penguin Books, 1961], 3.6.11). A more literal translation would be: “more inward than my innermost and higher than my uppermost.” The essential dissimilarity of God (as a “wholly other”) has to be correlated with such a nearness that He is “more intimate to me than I am to myself.” Similarly, the ontological difference implies such a sameness that the word “relation” cannot capture it. This difference led Heidegger in 1955 to cross out the word Being in order to avoid the common misrepresentation of “Being” as something that stands independently somewhere, returning or abandoning beings. To turn towards Being means simultaneously to turn towards the being that we *are* in our concealed strangeness. But what about the other beings? This Augustinian formula can mislead us if we do not keep in mind that Dasein is not a soul but a being-in-the-world, for whom other beings are a part of its self. Second, the type of “self” of Dasein (or the soul) that has Being (or God) as “*interior intimo meo et superior summo meo*” is illuminated by Peter Sloterdijk’s concept of biunity. In Sloterdijk’s *Bubbles* (the first volume of his trilogy *Spheres*), he explains his notion of spheres and biunity: “What is here termed a sphere is, in a first and provisional understanding, an orb in two halves, polarized and differentiated from the start, yet nonetheless intimately joined, subjective and subject to experience—a biune shared space of present and past experience... In its basic form the sphere appears as a twin bubble, an ellipsoid space of spirit and experience with at least two inhabitants facing one another in polar kinship. Living in spheres thus means inhabiting a shared subtlety” (45). Similarly, we as Dasein inhabit our own ellipsoid selves by occupying one pole. The other pole, which is more intimate to ourselves than we are to ourselves, is Being, or the thatness of beings. Hence the care for Being simultaneously becomes the care of the being that we are (as being-in-the-world). Indeed, the care for other beings (beside ourselves) can be clearly shown by the fact that the biune unity is really a dyadic *triad*; i.e., there are always already three terms involved. For instance, “1fetus—2 placental blood/mother’s blood—3 mother” (319). Although neither Augustine’s nor Sloterdijk’s notions can accurately render the “relation” between Dasein and Being (because God or all co-subjects mentioned by Sloterdijk are entities—and not the Being of entities), they at least help us represent a mode of relation in which the turning into Being entails simultaneously a turning into ourselves, such that we do not dwell alone.

But let me be clear: beyng does not denote some higher being or any type of being, and at the same time it does not denote anything other than every being. Being refers to any being whatsoever from the point of view of their thatness. The tiny ant and the huge whale, the pedophile and the saint, my love and my hate, birth and death, are obviously totally different beings, and yet, from the point of view of their thatness, they all may become Da-seins—i.e., places where their thatness may become conspicuous. The “ontological danger” is to reify this thatness and to treat it as a being. At some level that danger is inevitable because our language moves at the level of beings. By uttering Being, its reification necessarily occurs and beyng seems to be a subject that withdraws, denies, abandons, appears, reveals, etc.²⁵⁷ The same language, however, is the vehicle for Being’s manifestation. For instance, I cannot show you the thatness of this table standing next to me. Its thatness is not a characteristic that I can point out: it is not like its color and form, which I can see; nor is it like the sound of the coffee cup set down on it, which I can hear; nor is it its wooden texture, scent, or flavor, which I can touch, smell, and taste; nor is it its geometrical form, which I can see in the mind’s eye; nor is it equations and proportions that I can calculate. Although the thatness cannot be shown, the same language that often betrays it also can say it. Being can be “shown” by saying it. To say beyng one has to struggle with language; one has to do with language “what spring does with the cherry trees.”²⁵⁸

²⁵⁷ Thomas Sheehan writes about the danger of hypostasizing Being “into ‘Big Being,’ a metaphysical ‘Something’ (however ethereal) that lies somewhere beyond entities and that we can allegedly ‘pursue’ and ‘relate to.’ In this aggrandized and reified form, Big Being ends up performing a host of extraordinary activities (all in the middle voice, we are told): it conceals itself and reveals itself, withdraws itself yet dispenses epochs of being, calls out to us while abandoning us to technology, wraps itself in mystery and yet occasion—ally pulls aside the veil to show Itself to select human beings—nowadays only to paid-up Heideggerians” (“A paradigm shift in Heidegger research,” in *Continental Philosophy Review* 34, 2001, 189).

²⁵⁸ Pablo Neruda, “Poem XIV: Every Day You Play,” in *Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair*.

We let beings be in their simplicity and greatness when we are *taken aback* from the customary behavior and *turn toward* the self-concealing of Being. Rather than turning away from beings, we turn away from our *customary behavior* to beings. It is our behavior towards beings that changes when we turn toward the self-concealing of Being. Diffidence seems to be the attunement that articulates the turning toward being without turning away from beings. It allows the essential occurrence of being to happen, and at the same time it disposes our comportment to beings. In diffidence, we start to *care* so that our caring for being becomes precisely the path for caring for beings.

In conclusion, having described some aspects of wonder and contrasted it with marveling (Chapter Four) and restraint (Chapter Five), we have gained a sense of the essence of ontological wonder. We possess—at least—some idea of what it means to say that the experience of the *unheimlich* could be ontological rather than ontic. And yet, by merely enumerating aspects and comparing wonder to marveling and restraint, have I not fallen into the trap of merely representing these dispositions? But how can I encounter them otherwise than in my representation?

The goal of the next chapter is to work out the access for experiencing ontological wonder. I will focus on the movement from anxiety to wonder, which I claim—against Heidegger’s view of his *Basic Questions of Philosophy*—discloses Being precisely for our modern time. Moreover, I will try to explain the logic behind the obscure negative mode of disclosure, in which the absence of darkness becomes dark and the abandonment of Being becomes its mode of giving itself to us.

Chapter Six: Anxiety and the Nothing

In the last chapter we studied Heidegger's opinion that philosophy begins in wonder and that this *beginning* does not work for the age of the abandonment of beings by Being. But what if *wonder* is not about beginnings? What if wonder is the consequence of something else?

In my survey of Heidegger's mid-1930s course *Basic Concepts of Philosophy* and his book *Contributions to Philosophy*, I paid attention to the movement implied between shock and diffidence. This articulation of dispositions made by Heidegger in the thirties is not unique in his oeuvre. Heidegger makes a similar gesture, in the late twenties, in his book *Being and Time*, and especially in his lecture "What is Metaphysics?" I argue that what in the thirties Heidegger described as the movement within restraint between shock and diffidence was in the twenties articulated as a movement between anxiety (*die Angst*) and wonder. In what follows, I am going to show how for Heidegger's "What is Metaphysics?," philosophy begins in anxiety, with the possibility of turning into ontological wonder. Instead of sharpening the contrast between wonder and restraint, I intend here to show that both denote a similar experience, in which someone experiences ontological wonder after having traversed the night of anxiety or the sudden shock of the absence of Being. Based on the belonging together of anxiety and wonder, I argue that ontological wonder—despite Heidegger's own doubts—is available in modernity.

This chapter is divided in two parts. In the first part, focusing on the access to wonder, I follow Heidegger's advice for philosophizing while anxious, in which we have to first allow space for beings as a whole, then release ourselves into the nothing so that we may finally experience the swinging back or recoil that reveals the meaning of Being.

In the second part, I directly address the issue of the nothing. First, I examine *Being and Time*'s passage on the missing hammer as a way to provide an accessible example for the type of negative logic that we have encountered many times in this study, which the notion of the nothing—I suggest—may illuminate. Then, I review the clear night of the nothing of anxiety in three sections: (1) nihilation, (2) beings as radically other with respect to nothing, and (3) Being as nothing.

With these three chapters (Four, Five, and Six) I aim to gain a sufficient understanding of ontological wonder. Whether it is feasible even to raise the question of how Weber's thesis about the disenchantment of the world would fare if it were juxtaposed to an ontological type of wonder depends on understanding what is meant by ontological wonder and its differences with ontic wonder. I engage with some difficult passages about Heidegger's notion of the nothing in order to bring ontological wonder to the fore. I also seek to establish an understanding of the nothing and the negative logic of disclosure that will ground my interpretation of Heidegger's view on modernity in the next chapter.

I) Anxiety and Ontological Wonder

Since it is not possible to objectivize wonder as a basic disposition without distorting its nature, we have to discover it in the midst of our own practice. It is our philosophizing that we have to address in order to see whether it is determined by some disposition. We can discern in "What is Metaphysics?" some specific steps that capture the work of anxiety as a basic disposition that attunes our philosophizing. Let us begin our reading of this text with its ending. Here Heidegger gives us concise guidance for experiencing anxiety and philosophizing:

First, that we allow space for beings as a whole; second, that we release ourselves into the nothing, which is to say, that we liberate ourselves from those idols [*Götzen*] everyone has and to which they are wont to go cringing; and finally, that we let the sweep of our suspense take its full course, so that it swings back into the fundamental question of metaphysics which the nothing itself compels: Why are there beings at all, and why not rather Nothing? (*WM*, 96).

Following Heidegger's advice, I structure the next commentary in three parts: (1) allowing space for beings as a whole, (2) releasing ourselves into the nothing, and (3) swinging back—the countermovement or recoil.

1) Allowing Space for Beings as a Whole.

“We allow space for beings as a whole”

Although Heidegger uses often the expression “beings as a whole,” it is not always clear that this seemingly abstract expression denotes some concrete experience that is made possible by basic dispositions. Heidegger distinguishes this expression from the similar the “whole of beings”: “As surely as we can never comprehend absolutely the whole of beings in themselves we certainly do find ourselves stationed in the midst of beings that are unveiled somehow as a whole. In the end an essential distinction prevails between comprehending the whole of beings in themselves [*Ganzen des Seienden an sich*] and finding oneself [*Sichbefinden*] in the midst of beings as a whole [*Seienden im Ganzen*]. The former is impossible in principle. The latter happens all the time in our *Dasein*” (*WM*, 87). Although we humans experience beings as a whole all the time, most of the time we overlook them. We seem to be absorbed in some particular being with some specific concern. And yet, at the background of the particularity and specificity of our everyday comportments to beings, we always behave within some understanding of beings as a whole: “No matter how fragmented

our everyday existence may appear to be, however, it always deals with beings in a unity of the ‘whole,’ if only in a shadowy way” (*WM*, 87). Every basic disposition brings to the fore this background understanding of the whole, which, unnoticed, determines our attitudes towards beings.

Conspicuously experiencing this wholeness is what distinguishes a basic disposition from some other type of dispositions.²⁵⁹ When blinded by rage or having lost our mind by jealousy, some singular being, and some specific concern, captures all our attention. While the understanding of beings as a whole is operative, it is obscured by our rage or jealousy. This is not a moral distinction: basic dispositions are not morally better than other dispositions. The distinction is relevant from a phenomenological point of view: basic dispositions offer a far-reaching disclosure of the phenomenon of the world.²⁶⁰

The notion of beings as a whole is intimately related to some sense of *indifference*. Heidegger says: “Profound boredom [*tiefe Langeweile*], drifting here and there in the abysses of our existence like a muffling fog [*schweigender Nebel*], removes [*rückt*] all things and human beings and oneself along with them into a remarkable indifference [*merkwürdige Gleichgültigkeit*]. This boredom manifests beings as a whole” (*WM*, 87).²⁶¹ “Indifference” can thus refer not only to a feeling almost everyone has experienced, but to the undifferentiated whole it enables us to perceive.

That kind of indifference is also involved in the experience of wonder that we examined in Chapter Four. In that context, Heidegger mentioned it as a sort of indeterminate “everything”

²⁵⁹ In “What is Metaphysics?”, Heidegger mentions joy as another mood (beside anxiety and boredom) that manifests beings as a whole: “Another possibility of such manifestation [*Offenbarung*] is concealed in our joy in the presence of the Dasein—and not simply of the person—of a human being whom we love” (*WM*, 87).

²⁶⁰ About the phenomenon of the world, see below page 249, note 272.

²⁶¹ These few sentences about boredom are nicely developed in almost a hundred pages in Heidegger’s lecture course *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, translated by William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 1995.

[*Alles*]. In wonder “what is most usual of all and in all, i.e., *everything*, becomes the most unusual. Everything has in everything at first the most usual to which attention is not paid and which, if it is glimpsed, is not explicitly heeded” (*BQP*, 144). Instead of some particular being that has shown itself as objective and determinate in some specific activity, in wonder being’s “determinateness” dissolves in some indeterminate sense of everything as the most usual. But how can one pay attention in order to relate explicitly to the *everything* as the most usual?

Much as Heidegger bestows on shock and diffidence some specific ontological functions and articulates them in a movement within restraint, I want to articulate anxiety and wonder within a movement of ontological revelation. In my interpretation, and keeping for analytical purposes some division of labor, it is anxiety’s function to open up for us the sense of beings as a whole and its related sense of indifference.

Both in *Being and Time* and in “What is Metaphysics?,” Heidegger shows how anxiety discloses beings as a whole, in an experience in which Dasein sinks into indifference.²⁶² In “What is Metaphysics?,” Heidegger writes about anxiety: “The indeterminateness (*Unbestimmtheit*) of that in the face of which [*wovor*] and concerning which [*worum*] we become anxious is no mere lack of determination but rather the essential impossibility of determining it” (*WM*, 88). As a basic disposition, anxiety has no particular object. I can’t point out some singular being as the one making me anxious.

Parallel to how anxiety has no object, the pole of the subject also appears uncannily indeterminate: “In anxiety, we say, ‘one feels uncanny’ [*es ist einem unheimlich*]. What is ‘it’ [‘es’] that makes ‘one’ [‘einem’] feel uncanny? We cannot say what it is before which one feels uncanny. As a whole it is so for one. All things and we ourselves sink into indifference”

²⁶² On anxiety and its differences to falling (*Verfallen*) and fear (*Furcht*), see *Being and Time*, ¶ 40, page 228.

(*WM*, 88). My character and personality—i.e., the story that I tell about myself—sinks into indifference. What is left is an uncanny “one,” who (or maybe “that”) correlates with the uncanny “it.” According to Heidegger, “In the altogether unsettling experience of this hovering [*Schwebens*] where there is nothing to hold on to, pure Dasein is all that is still there” (*WM*, 89). Pure Dasein is not a “you” nor an “I” but rather some indeterminate “one” that has nothing to hold on to in order to create and secure a story about itself that could provide a sense of “I.” Of course, since two indeterminations are involved—the indeterminate “one” in correlation to the indeterminate “it”—it is possible that the two are really just one. Indeed, this is precisely the insight that anxiety reveals in the context of *Being and Time*. It is the experience of anxiety that discloses the structure of Dasein as a being-in-the-world. The latter abstract formula has in anxiety its experienced testimony.

In anxiety there is nothing to hold on to, and yet, the sense of pure Dasein—which even though *mine* cannot be ascribed to the interiority of my ego as opposed to the exteriority of a world—is as obtrusive as ever. Attuned to anxiety and armed with the only tool that philosophy offers (i.e., questioning), one can philosophize. Of course, the temptation to draw conclusions as soon as possible and to escape toward specific beings in order to reduce anxiety is strong and common.²⁶³

²⁶³ Descartes’ *Meditations on first Philosophy* can be seen as an example of this escape. At the verge of Descartes’s madness led by the hyperbolic doubt, the anxious “one feels uncanny” turns into the secure insight that distinguishes the *res cogitans* and the *res extensa* it faces. The structure of subject and object comes to soothe the insight into the pure existence. The anxiety of the *sum* is tamed by the clear and distinct boundaries fashioned by the *cogito*. The ontological breakthrough made possible by Descartes’s meditation led by his doubting (questioning), was immediately closed up by the epistemological ground offered by the *cogito*, and the practical ground for domination offered by the *ego conquiro* (See Enrique Dussel, *1492. El encubrimiento del otro. Hacia el origen del ‘mito de la Modernidad,’* La Paz: Plural, 1994). The crack of the ontic prompted by the ontological thatness (pure Dasein, the pure *sum*), was immediately reconducted back to the ontic as the ground for science. If it is true that modern philosophy begins with Descartes, then its force comes from this sudden breakthrough and its immediate closing off.

2) Releasing Ourselves into the Nothing

“We release ourselves into the nothing, which is to say, that we liberate ourselves from those idols [*Götzen*] everyone has and to which they are wont to go cringing”

According to Heidegger, in anxiety, when we allow space for the sense of indeterminacy and becoming superfluous that allows beings as a whole to become manifest to us, we may encounter—what is still a pretty obscure notion—the nothing. “Anxiety makes manifest the nothing” (*WM*, 88). Heidegger writes,

In anxiety beings as a whole become superfluous [*hinfällig*]. . . . Beings are not annihilated by anxiety, so that nothing is left. How could they be, when anxiety finds itself precisely in utter impotence with regard to beings as a whole. Rather, the nothing makes itself known with beings and in beings expressly as a slipping away [*entgleitenden*] of the whole (*WM*, 90).

The “peculiar calm” (*WM*, 88) that pervades Dasein in anxiety strips Dasein off from its familiar power to manipulate and control particular beings, and brings it before beings as a whole in an utter and unfamiliar impotence. Indeed, anxiety robs our speech: “All utterance of the ‘is’ falls silent in the face of the nothing” (*WM*, 89). In this silent impotence there is no thing that could rescue us. “We ‘hover’ in anxiety,” and “we can get no hold on things. In the slipping away of beings only this ‘no hold on things’ comes over us and remains” (*WM*, 88). This utter impotence with regard to beings as a whole is crucial for my answer to the domination of nature within the process of rationalization. I am not interested, however, in some form of apology for weakness and impotence. At stake is the revelatory power that happens in anxiety. In other words, impotence is not in itself “good” because it could subvert the process of domination of nature, but rather it helps us to see more, which may be a condition of possibility—of course, not sufficient—for amending the process of rationalization.

In the second part of this chapter, I will explore and distinguish different meanings of the nothing. At this point, let me clarify one thing with respect to the nothing and beings as a whole. The nothing is not the outcome of a negation. Heidegger writes: “No kind of annihilation of the whole of beings in themselves takes place in anxiety; just as little do we produce a negation of beings as a whole in order to attain the nothing for the first time” (*WM*, 90). The notion of the nothing tries to push our reflection further in the direction of the impossibility of objectivity and representation that happens in anxiety. Rather than turning away from anxiety’s indeterminacy, we have to explore it through the notion of the nothing. Of course, to try to clarify anxiety’s indeterminacy using the obscure notion of the nothing seems very problematic.

3) Swinging Back—the Countermovement or Recoil

“We let the sweep of our suspense take its full course, so that it swings back into the fundamental question of metaphysics which the nothing itself compels: Why are there beings at all, and why not rather Nothing?” (*WM*, 96).

What can be said of the *sweep* about which Heidegger is speaking? So far, we know that in anxiety, when one feels uncanny and faces the nothing, the disclosure of beings as a whole happens. At stake is not this or that being (not even my own being) but rather everything—beings as a whole. But, what do I mean with the expression *at stake*? Did I not say that the disclosure of beings as a whole carries a sense of indifference and superfluity, which seems to contradict the idea that *everything* (the whole) is at stake? And yet, although in anxiety everything sinks into indifference, we are not indifferent about our indifference. Indeed, we care the most in the midst of this anxious moment of indifference. Hence, it is

crucial here not to miss the *countermovement*—i.e., a difference that happens simultaneously at the moment of indifference, or “something” approaching us that happens simultaneously at the moment all beings receding:

All things and we ourselves sink into indifference. This however, not in the sense of mere disappearance [*Verschwindens*]. Rather, in their very receding [*Wegrücken*], things turn toward us [*kehren sie sich uns zu*]. The receding of beings as a whole, closing in on us [*umdrängt*] in anxiety, oppresses [*bedrängt*] us. We can get no hold on things [*Es bleibt kein Halt*]. In the slipping away of beings [*Entgleiten des Seienden*] only this “no hold on things” comes over us and remains (*WM*, 88).

For analytical purposes it is helpful to distinguish between two movements (or moments of one movement) occurring in anxiety. Here I am trying to illuminate the “sweep” that Heidegger advises us to let run its course. In order to clarify the span of this sweeping, we have to define the poles between which the sweep occurs.

We have two movements: On the one hand, beings recede: “All things and we ourselves sink into indifference”; beings as a whole become superfluous. On the other hand, in the very receding, beings turn toward us. There is here a sort of countermovement. Instead of feeling liberated or released from things due to their withdrawing, we feel the opposite: their withdrawal oppresses us because they are present while they withdraw. Heidegger describes this “oppression” in terms of beings turning around toward us. While in the first movement “we can get no hold on things,” in the countermovement this “no hold on things” itself holds us. But, while one pole in this span seems to be beings as a whole, it is not clear what the other one is.

At this point I expect that the reader may become frustrated. When things sink and recede but simultaneously turn toward us, are we not dealing with a new version of Heidegger’s weird—and often used—logic of the absence of darkness becoming dark, the lack of need

turning into a need, and the abandonment and refusal of beings by Being as Being's mode of revelation? I ask the reader for some patience as I am going to make my best effort to illuminate this logic soon. So far, it seems that this negative logic of disclosure happens at the core of our experience of anxiety.²⁶⁴ Let us clarify the countermovement further.

In anxiety we can get “no hold on things,” which in turn holds us up oppressively. Why does it oppress us? What happens when the receding beings turn toward us? To answer these questions, let us study in more detail how Heidegger describes the movement in anxiety:

In anxiety there occurs a shrinking back before . . . that is surely not any sort of flight but rather a kind of entranced calm. This ‘back before’ takes its departure from the nothing. The nothing itself does not attract; it is essentially repelling (*abweisend*). But this repulsion (*Abweisung*) is itself as such a parting gesture toward (*entgleitenlassende Verweisen*) beings that are submerging as a whole. This wholly repelling gesture (*abweisende Verweisung*) toward beings that are slipping away as a whole, which is the action of the nothing that closes in on Dasein in anxiety, is the essence of the nothing: nihilation (*die Nichtung*). It is neither an annihilation of beings nor does it spring from a negation. . . . The nothing itself nihilates (*WM*, 90)

Let us look at the movement. On the one hand, the oppressive “presence” of the nothing that makes us anxious dissipates the differences among beings. The nothing is encountered at one with beings as a whole which are *slipping away* (*entgleitenden*). According to Heidegger, this slipping away or *shrinking back before* (*Zuruckweichen vor*) is a departure from the nothing. Therefore, the nothing functions essentially as *repelling* (*abweisend*): “the nothing itself does not attract; it is essentially repelling.” This repelling annihilates the differences among beings, so that it manifests beings as a whole in its withdrawing. But, on the other hand, this repelling

²⁶⁴ I claim that this “negative” logic is at the base of (or, better, nourishes) the different swings and movements that I have mentioned so far: the movement between the usual and the unusual in wonder (Chapter Four), the movement of shock and diffidence in restraint (Chapter Five), and the movement between anxiety and wonder (Chapter Six).

is also a kind of *reference* (*Verweisung*) that plays the most essential ontological-phenomenological function. It is crucial to pay attention to the recoiling or countermovement happening within the repelling. The possible access to the ontological thatness is displayed in this recoil. Heidegger writes:

As the repelling gesture [*abweisende Verweisung*] toward the retreating whole of beings, it discloses these beings in their full but heretofore concealed strangeness as what is radically other—with respect to nothing (*WM*, 90).²⁶⁵

Nihilation (*Die Nichtung*), as the essence of the nothing “acts” as a *repelling gesture* or *parting gesture* (*entgleitenlassende Verweisen*) from beings that are sinking as a whole toward the Being of beings. In other words, in anxiety we can experience the ontological difference. The repelling that manifests beings as a whole (as the most usual) discloses beings (as the most unusual) in their concealed strangeness: as what is radically other—with respect to nothing. But how does the most usual turn into the most unusual? The clue is in the phrase “with respect to nothing.” Heidegger, in what may be the climax of his lecture, continues:

In the clear night of the nothing of anxiety the original openness of beings as such arises: that they are beings—and not nothing. But this ‘and not nothing’ we add in our talk is not some kind of appended clarification. Rather, it makes possible in advance the manifestness of beings in general. The essence of the originally nihilating nothing lies in this, that it brings Da-sein for the first time before beings as such” (*WM*, 90).

Strictly speaking, there is no Da-sein before the “clear night of the nothing of anxiety.” Dasein becomes Da-sein in and through this experience. Before having been brought for the first time before beings as such, some person may be, for instance, a *homo religiosus* in an absolute

²⁶⁵ In Heidegger’s note from the fifth edition, he explains the *repelling gesture*: “repelling: beings by themselves; gesturing toward: the being of beings” (*WM*, 90). Departing from *Being and Time*, in “What is Metaphysics?” the *repelling* of beings which are slipping away as a whole does not bring Dasein before its Being-in-the-world, but rather *gestures* Dasein towards Being as such.

relation to the absolute, a psychoanalytic subject constituted by its desire, an animal *rationale* enchanted by its calculative or instrumental rationality, or a *Mapuche* dwelling in the *mapu*,²⁶⁶ but not a Da-sein—i.e., someone who is the *there* for Being, the place where Being can be said and experienced.

It is the double movement of nihilation that discloses beings in their strangeness as “what is radically other—with respect to nothing.” Regardless of the mode of being,²⁶⁷ and no matter how banal some being may be, when we see it with respect—or in contrast—to nothing, it turns into something strange. Everything—including oneself—is experienced as what is radically other—with respect to nothing. Consequently, every being can be defined as “not-nothing.” Instead of calling this table in front of me a being, I can call it “not-nothing,” and I can call myself “not-nothing” too.²⁶⁸ Anxiety enables me to see that the most obvious and familiar insight, namely, that beings are, is worth affirming as what is evident but not at all obvious: they are beings—and not nothing. At this point, anxiety turns into wonder:

²⁶⁶ *Mapuches* are the indigenous inhabitants of what is today south-central Chile and southwestern Argentina. *Mapu* means earth, land, soil; *Che* means people. I use this notion freely in order to denote a type of people that lives in a biune shared space, in which its polar co-subject is the earth (land, soil, *physis*). In this context, a *Mapuche* would be the one who is still awake to the emergent coming forth to presence within the rhythm of “nature,” who is sensitive for the bursting forth of life out from earth. About biunity see Peter Sloterdijk, *Bubbles: Microspherology*, and Chapter Five, p. 232, note 256, above.

²⁶⁷ *Being and Time*, for instance, describes three different modes of beings: present-at-hand, ready-to-hand, and Dasein. From Heidegger’s lecture “The Origin of the Work of Art,” I should add the modes of being of the work of Art, of the world, and of the earth.

²⁶⁸ Someone might dismiss this moment of strangeness as just some gross abstraction. How is it possible, and if possible, what value can it have to reduce all the richness of the endless number of types of things and phenomena into just one formula: not nothing? While the “value” of this experience will be assessed at the end of this study, it may be relevant to know that such experiences are not exclusive to ontology. For instance, someone who is a *homo religiosus* understands well such type of experiences. For instance, let us recall here the powerful insight of the Dominican monk Meister Eckhart: “So therefore let us pray to God that we may be free of God, and that we may apprehend and rejoice in that everlasting truth in which the highest angel and the fly and the soul are equal” (“Sermon 48: Ein meister sprichet: alliu glichiu dinc minnent sich under einander,” in *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, translation and introduction by Edmund Colledge, O.S.A. and Bernard McGinn. New York: Paulist Press, 1981, 200). Similarly, everything is equal regarding the nothing: namely, each thing is equally not nothing. In this chapter I am trying to clarify this strange “democratic” experience.

Of all beings, only the human being, called upon by the voice of being, experiences the wonder of all wonders: *that beings are* (*PWM*, 234).

By encountering everything with respect to nothing, the anxious guiding question of philosophy, namely, “why are there beings at all, and why not rather Nothing?” turns into the affirmation that inspires wonder: they are beings—and not nothing. Hence, we hover in a sweep that moves from anxiety to wonder. In order that anxiety may disclose the wonder of all wonders, Heidegger advises us to “let the sweep of our suspense take its full course.”²⁶⁹

To sum up, first, anxiety manifests the nothing. Secondly, the nothing has a form of “acting” that Heidegger calls nihilation. Thirdly, in nihilation we can distinguish a double movement: the *repelling* of beings that manifests beings as a whole, and the movement that *refers* us to Being. Fourthly, within the double movement of nihilation, it is the recoil or countermovement that discloses Being as such; with respect to nothing, the meaning of Being arises as what is radically other than nothing; a being can be defined as not nothing. Fifthly, the “clear night of the nothing of anxiety” turns into the wonder *that beings are*; there is a sweep that moves from anxiety to wonder.²⁷⁰ Sixthly, the nothing has an ontological function—

²⁶⁹ The turning from anxiety to wonder is mysterious. First, the occurrence of this turning does not depend on us. It seems that when we remain in the experience of anxiety and avoid fleeing from it into the security and comfort of beings, the possibilities of experiencing ontological wonder somehow increases. Thus, Heidegger advises us to “let the sweep of our suspense take its full course.” Second, as I mentioned in Chapter 4, *questioning* is essential to trigger and support ontological wonder. Although questioning does not assure the disclosure of the thatness of beings, it makes the disclosure possible. Accordingly, my own writing about anxiety and wonder aims to create the hermeneutical context that promotes this questioning and welcomes these experiences. I offer a meaningful narrative of anxiety (without any pathological connotations), so that once we find ourselves anxious, we may value this experience differently—thus delaying our fleeing and letting ourselves experience what anxiety may disclose. Third, the goal to study the notion of the nothing (in the second part of this chapter) is to clarify the “not nothing,” which—at the core of this turning—divests the taken-for-grantedness of the meaning of Being. It is the negative mode of revelation that I want to clarify by the logic of the nothing, which may illuminate this mysterious turning from anxiety to wonder.

²⁷⁰ So far, I have argued that a movement or transfiguration from anxiety to wonder is possible. But there is a problem with this interpretation. Recall that according to *Basic Questions of Philosophy*, it is the insight into the thatness as the most unusual (Being) that makes also the insight into the most usual (beings) possible. Hence, it seems then that instead of anxiety leading to wonder, the movement is the other way around—i.e., wonder precedes rather than succeeds anxiety. It would seem that the wonder of thatness as the most unusual makes possible the anxiety of the most usual. But, I claim, there is no fixed sequence between them because both are

i.e., the mode of access for experiencing Being as such seems to require us to cross the night of the nothing. Since what the nothing is is obscure, I admit that this summary is still confusing.

II) The Nothing

We have slowly worked our way to the theme of the nothing. Since we are approaching this obscure theme from some specific question, we don't have to fear drowning in the vast ocean of the nothing.²⁷¹ The clue is that the nothing may illuminate the counterintuitive negative logic that we have encountered many times throughout this and the preceding two chapters, which seems also to be nourishing the different movements or sweeps that I described above. How is it possible that when beings are indifferent (absence of shock), this indifference becomes shocking; that when we illuminate everything with the light of our reason (absence of

always already there. A good reader may have noticed that the definition of a basic disposition does not allow for rankings or chronological orders. They are "basic" because at the base we humans are always already in wonder, anxiety, joy, or boredom. There is a difference, however, between what happens at the base and what gets manifested at the surface. At the level of the base, there are two aspects that I want to underscore. First, we are attuned by *all* of them; there is a sort of equiprimordiality between basic dispositions. Being gives itself in all these different tonalities, and to experience it in one or another tonality does not depend on us. Secondly, we are *always* already attuned by them. Since anxiety, for instance, is always present though usually disguised in its hidden "work," it can arise in the most innocuous situations. Heidegger writes, "It needs no unusual event [*ungewöhnliches Ereignis*] to rouse it. Its sway is as thoroughgoing as its possible occasionings are trivial. It is always ready, though it only seldom springs, and we are snatched away and left hanging" (*WM*, 93). In this Chapter and Chapters Four and Five, I have tried to clarify the manifestation of wonder, restraint (shock, diffidence), and anxiety, in regard to both their mysterious arising and our possible response to them by letting them take their full course. Although anxiety and shock do not monopolize the tone in which Being reveals itself, I do consider them as having a privileged role to play in our modern times. It seems that both are equipped to disclose Being precisely when Being has become irrelevant due to its familiarity.

²⁷¹ For studies of the notion of the nothing in the history of philosophy, see: Sergio Givone, *Storia del nulla*, translated from Italian to Spanish by Alejo González and Demian Orosz as *Historia de la nada* (Buenos Aires: Gius. Laterza & Figli, 2009); G. Kahl-Furthmann, *Das Problem des Nichts. Kritisch-Historische un Systematische Untersuchungen* (Meinheim am Glan: Verlag Anton Hain, 1968); Ludger Lütkehaus, *Nichts. Abschied vom Sein Ende der Angst* (Zürich: Haffmans Verlag, 1999); Richard Polt, "The Question of Nothing" in *A Companion to Heidegger's Introduction to Metaphysics*, ed. by Richard Polt and Gregory Fried (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 60. Specifically about the concept of nothing in modern times, see: Alessandro Bertinetto (ed.), *Nichts-Negation-Nihilismus. Die europäische Moderne als Erkenntnis und Erfahrung des Nichts* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2010); Markus Wirtz, *Geschichten des Nichts: Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger und das Problem der philosophischen Pluralität* (München: Verlag Karl Alber Freiburg, 2006).

darkness), this light turns into darkness; that when there is no need, the lack of need turns into the need that attunes our suffered questioning; that when there are just beings left (absence of Being), the absence—abandonment, withdrawal, forgetting, refusal—of Being turns into its mode of revelation? Or, in the case of the movement or sweep that we have just studied, how is it possible that the *receding* of beings may *refer* to Being?

Let me add one last example of this negative logic before I try to explain it through the inquiry about the notion of the nothing. It's an example that offers a concrete (and easy to imagine) example of the (negative) logic of disclosure that we have encountered so far. It also provides an opportunity to explain Heidegger's concept of the world as the referential context of significance, which is crucial for understanding the type of *inconspicuous enchantment* that I will explore in the next chapter.

1) The Missing Hammer in *Being and Time*

According to Heidegger, Dasein exists as Being-in-the-world.²⁷² The world is not added as a kind of environment to Dasein and Dasein is not a closed off substance floating with other substances within a world-as-container. Because Dasein is not *in* the world the way a stone can be *in* a box, Dasein's world is "part" of its being. There is neither a worldless Dasein nor a "Dasein-less" world.

²⁷² In the context of *Being and Time*, the notion of *Dasein* is Heidegger's name for the human being. Moreover, the *world* is not the sum of stuff nor some sort of container where the stuff is placed, but rather it is a referential context that gives significance and meaning to things. For instance, this table is a table within some context of significance that assigns or refers me and the table to a net of meaning, from which I project possibilities for being: the table is equipment "in order to" hold my computer, books, and notes "for the sake of" writing my dissertation, because as Dasein, I care for my own possibilities of being in the world. Thus, phenomenologically described, this table shows up at the level of my concern for my survival, as the equipment useful for writing my dissertation, which is a condition for receiving a PhD that, in turn, opens possibilities for jobs, which in a capitalist society, where people sell their work for a salary, become the means for survival. These references are active in my writing on this table—even though I am not consciously aware of them. The world of my writing permeates this table. Different tables embody different worlds, i.e., different referential contexts of significance.

Most of the time Dasein is absorbed in the familiarity of the world. Fascinated by the world, Dasein yields its existence to the world, surrendering the disclosure of its own possibilities to it. When absorbed in the familiarity of the world and turning away from its ownmost—but also most unfamiliar and uncanny—possibility of existence, Dasein’s self becomes the anonymous they-self: not an alien self, but rather itself as the familiar pole (the world) of its Being-in-the-world.

Dasein, in its absorption in the everydayness of its concerns, discovers beings by projecting them upon the context of assignments or references (*Verweisungen*). This referential context or *significance* is what constitutes the worldhood of the world. There is no isolated thing, but rather each thing is a being that is ready-to-hand (*Zuhanden*) and is assigned as equipment that is ready for projects that are meaningful within a context of significance. If we want to understand a thing as a thing, worldhood must already be *there*, which gives the referential totality within which things can be discovered by us.

However, when we are dealing with equipment, we understand the referential context of significance without grasping it thematically. Heidegger writes, “The less we just stare at the hammer-Thing, and the more we seize hold of it and use it, the more primordial does our relationship to it become, and the more unveiledly is it encountered as that which it is—as equipment” (*BT*, 98). According to Heidegger, the idea of a naked thing present-at-hand (*Vorhanden*)—i.e., isolated from any context of significance—is the product of an abstraction due to a theoretical way of knowing. Things are originally discovered as ready-to-hand and can only then become present-at-hand (i.e., a thing cut off from its context of significance).

But again, when we efficiently use tools, the world—i.e., the referential context of significance—has to remain veiled. Dasein’s absorption in the world is such that worldhood,

which makes equipment possible, remains invisible. In hammering, for instance, the world, as the referential context of significance, “functions” so well that it remains inconspicuously present; the world covers its own presence. How do we know then about the worldhood of the world, when it loves to hide? Heidegger asks, “Has Dasein itself, in the range of its concerned absorption in equipment ready-to-hand, a possibility of Being in which the worldhood of those entities within-the-world with which it is concerned is, in a certain way, lit up for it, *along with* those entities themselves?” (BT, 102). How can we explicitly grasp—while hammering—this sort of pre-understanding of the world operative in our concerned absorption in equipment?

We can't. The presence and positivity of hammering hides the world that makes both the hammer and the hammering make sense. However, and now getting to the issue that concerns me in this section, there is still a way to light up the world as if hammering but without necessarily falling into the derivative mode of (theoretical) knowing. It is here where a negative mode of disclosure plays a relevant role, bringing the world for the first time out from the background into the fore. Heidegger mentions three of these modes of disclosure: when a thing is unusable, when it is missing, or when something else stands in the way. For my study, it is the second mode of negative revelation that is relevant for clarifying the logic of how *absence* becomes a form of manifestation. I claim that the example of the missing thing can clarify Heidegger's idea that the abandonment of beings by Being is simultaneously the way Being gives itself to us. About a missing piece of equipment, Heidegger writes,

We also find things which are missing—which not only are not ‘handy’ [*handlich*] but are not ‘to hand’ [*zur Hand*] at all. Again, to miss something in this way amounts to coming across something un-ready-to-hand. When we notice what is un-ready-to-hand, that which is ready-to-hand enters the mode of *obtrusiveness*. The more urgently [*Je dringlicher*] we need what is missing, and the more authentically it is encountered in its un-readiness-to-hand, all the more obtrusive [*um so aufdringlicher*] does that which is ready-to-hand

become—so much so, indeed, that it seems to lose its character of readiness-to-hand. It reveals itself as something just present-at-hand and no more, which cannot be budged without the thing that is missing. The helpless way in which we stand before it is a deficient mode of concern, and as such it uncovers the Being-just-present-at-hand-and-no-more of something ready-to-hand (*BT*, 103).

When the hammer is missing, its formerly useful but inconspicuous presence turns, because we need it in order to act and it is not there, into something conspicuous and obtrusive: “The modes of conspicuousness, obtrusiveness, and obstinacy all have the function of bringing to the fore the characteristic of presence-at-hand in what is ready-to-hand” (*BT*, 104). But when the presence-at-hand of equipment is revealed, is the phenomenon of the world covered up? No. In order to understand how the world is lit up precisely in the moment when the tool has turned into a thing present at hand, we have to avoid immobilizing these terms; instead, we need to pay attention to the recoiling or countermovement when readiness-to-hand also comes explicitly to the fore.

In conspicuousness [Auffälligkeit], obtrusiveness [Aufdringlichkeit], and obstinacy [Aufsässigkeit], that which is ready-to-hand loses its readiness-to-hand in a certain way. But in our dealings with what is ready-to-hand, this readiness-to-hand is itself understood, though not thematically. It does not vanish simply, but takes its farewell, as it were, in the conspicuousness of the unusable. Readiness-to-hand still shows itself, and it is precisely here that the worldly character of the ready-to-hand shows itself too (*BT*, 104).

When the equipment is missing so that the structure of references and assignments (*Verweisungen*) of the “in-order-to” and “toward-this” is disturbed, the inconspicuousness of the assignment becomes—because disturbed—explicit. The workshop (the world), as that wherein our concern always dwells, and as that which makes the hammer a thing ready-to-hand, is lit up too: “The context of equipment is lit up, not as something never seen before, but

as a totality constantly sighted beforehand in circumspection. With this totality, however, the world announces itself” (*BT*, 105).

From the point of view of our experience, when we are hammering (and our concern is thus in its efficient mode) both the hammer and the world of references and assignments are invisible. Both are of course there efficiently making possible our daily dealings, but both are inconspicuous. In contrast, when we face, for instance, a missing hammer (and our concern is thus in its deficient mode) both the hammer in its former unnoticed presence and the referential context of significance are lit up. Hence, the phenomenological experience of dealing with equipment is precisely covered up in our dealing with it. The full experience of a thing ready-to-hand cannot be disclosed at the moment of its readiness-to-hand; it requires something that breaks the efficient mode of our dealings. Only from the point of view of the deficient mode of our concern, when the negative disclosure occurs, can we distinguish these three modes of being: present-at-hand, readiness-to-hand, and the world. This negative form of disclosure uses some opaqueness—in the mode of a missing thing—in order to see what we are constantly seeing and yet rarely notice. Thus, this is a counterintuitive form of “lighting up” through the means of some darkening.

Things get confused when we approach our concerned dealings with things from the point of view of our theoretical approach. When scientists remove themselves from “practical” concerns and stare at the hammer in a “neutral” and “objective” way, they face the hammer stripped away from a world, a world that has made itself invisible.²⁷³ “No matter how sharply we just look at the ‘outward appearance’ [*Aussehen*] of Things in whatever form this takes, we

²⁷³ Heidegger questions the “clear” boundaries between the *practical* (acting) and the *theoretical* (observing): “for the fact that observation is a kind of concern is just as primordial as the fact that action has its *own* kind of sight” (*BT*, 99).

cannot discover anything ready-to-hand” (*BT*, 98). By rejecting their concerned comportment to the world in the name of some objective distance, scientists see objects stripped away from their world. Of course, it is not their failure: the world loves to hide, so it makes itself invisible.

Let us see in more detail how the missing equipment breaks the referential context, making itself visible:

When something ready-to-hand is found missing, though its everyday presence [*Zugegensein*] has been so obvious that we have never taken any notice of it, this makes a *break* in those referential contexts which circumspection discovers. Our circumspection comes up against emptiness, and now sees for the first time *what* the missing article was ready-to-hand *with*, and *what* it was ready-to-hand *for*. The environment announces itself afresh. What is thus lit up is not itself just one thing ready-to-hand among others; still less is it something *present-at-hand* upon which equipment ready-to-hand is somehow founded: it is in the ‘there’ before anyone has observed or ascertained it. It is itself inaccessible to circumspection, so far as circumspection is always directed towards entities; but in each case it has already been disclosed for circumspection (*BT*, 105).

First, we see the “there” even (or precisely) when both the mode of seeing of theory and the mode of seeing of action (circumspection) are unable to see it. Both theory and circumspection always dwell in the “there,” but none of them is able to notice it. What type of seeing is neither theoretic nor practical? A third mode of seeing seems to occur during this deficient mode of concern.

Secondly, the terms involved may change, but the logic in this mode of disclosure can be found in different places in Heidegger’s oeuvre.²⁷⁴ The missing hammer *breaks* the flow of

²⁷⁴ Let me mention another example of this “negative” logic in Heidegger. It is the absence of some word, that discloses the nature of language: “But when does language speak itself as language? Curiously enough, when we cannot find the right word for something that concerns us, carries us away, oppresses or encourages us. Then we leave unspoken what we have in mind and, without rightly giving it thought, undergo moments in which language itself has distantly and fleetingly touched us with its essential being” (“The Nature of Language,” in *On the Way to Language*, translated by Peter D. Hertz. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1972, 59).

the referential context that circumspection discovers but cannot grasp. At stake is the moment when our seeing “comes up against emptiness.” This is not an abstract or indeterminate “emptiness.” We need the hammer, and with all our affective implications we face the “not-being-there” of the hammer—we face the place empty of the hammer. It is this “concrete” and “determinate” emptiness that makes us see “for the first time” the *whatness* of the hammer and the workshop. I argue that this is the same logic that Heidegger implies when he talks at an ontological level.²⁷⁵ Of course, to leap from the ontic to the ontological level implies big differences. But let me be clear, at the ontic and at the ontological level, the term involved in the first movement—i.e., from where we start—is always some being, regardless how banal or sophisticated it may be: a hammer, a tree, myself, or a jug. Even if Heidegger wants to leave behind the metaphysical question of beings as beings (Aristotle) and wants to ask the question for “another beginning” in terms of Being as Being, the latter question also starts from a being. What changes when we leap from the ontic to the ontological realm is the second term that the recoiling or countermovement of the sweeping discloses: workshop, worldhood, beingness, Being as such. In other words, while facing the emptiness of the missing hammer we may experience the whatness of the hammer in its environment (*Being and Time*); but the same emptiness of the missing hammer may reveal, for someone traversing “the clear night of the

²⁷⁵ While the indeterminacy of the experience of anxiety contrasts with the “determinate” emptiness of the missing hammer, I claim that the two experiences end up in the indeterminacy of ontological wonder (or ontological unheimlich). Of course, I am not affirming that they are the only two modes of accessing available for us; rather, they are the two modes that I have studied in this work. Heidegger’s description of anxiety in “What is Metaphysics?” (see the first section of this chapter) is a good description of the ontological unheimlich triggered by no determinate object. For the second mode, which I claim has the same logic as the experience of the missing hammer, a good example is when the doctor tells someone that she has cancer. Triggered by a determinate object (the threat of dying), the person faces beings as a whole—i.e., for the person there is no dimension in her life that is external to the threat of dying; in contrast with the determinate threat of dying, everything sinks into indifference. Suddenly familiarity with the world breaks, and everything as the most usual becomes the most unusual. The estrangement of these moments, when the patient is diagnosed with cancer and she experiences that beings slip away, have been nicely captured in movies by some fuzziness of the camera and distortion of the sound (*50/50*), or the total disappearance of sound (*Ikiru*).

nothing of anxiety” (“What is Metaphysics?”), the thatness of being as a whole. We face the empty place of something that should have been there but is not, so while our gaze is surprised by its absence, the not-seeing-the-thing discloses the formerly invisible background.

The world loves to hide itself in order that things may be; and it is because the world most of the time remains hidden that we take a thing as independent being-in-itself. To grasp the structure of reference or assignments requires some struggle to bring the world out from its hiding. As phenomenologists, our antagonist in trying to render the phenomenon of the world conspicuous is the nature of the world itself. We have to apply a sort of hermeneutical violence in order to be capable of seeing the world (which nonetheless is always invisibly there). The world’s strategy for hiding is our familiarity and fascination with “it” (which as beings-in-the-world means also that we are fascinated with ourselves).

The idea of familiarity and fascination with the world is crucial for the topic of enchantment and disenchantment. The strongest hold that the world has on us is precisely when it is invisible for us, namely, when we are actively engaged in something, e.g. hammering. In other words, while hammering we are absorbed and fascinated by the world without noticing. This is the type of modern enchantment that, I claim, entrances us. The modern enchantment happens at the level of worldhood. Rather than the strong emotional contrasts involved in marveling, it is in this invisible fascination and familiar absorption that the modern gods fight for our souls. Now, based on Heidegger’s description of anxiety, I claim that anxiety can reveal these forces of enchantment. At the movement of the break of the referential context of significance, familiarity and fascination stop. At this point, the world is lit up, which means that we are detached enough to be able to see the enchantment of the modern gods—we are able to see ourselves as faithful devotees of these forces. Rather than disenchantment as a

state—i.e., as a prolonged time without enchantment—I understand disenchantment as a moment (*Augenblick*) in which we are suddenly “disenchanted” enough to see the enchantment in which we already dwell. In other words, the moment of crisis in our world of significance discloses the forces of enchantment: they become conspicuous in their defective mode. Or, differently stated, in the moment of disenchantment—when we cease to be absorbed in the world—we are ready to see the world for the first time.²⁷⁶ In short, disenchantment is a mode of “negative” revelation of the world.

To recap, I am using the example of the missing hammer for two purposes. First, for what could be called an ontological purpose, I use this concrete example to describe the negative mode of revelation (which otherwise would seem too abstract), which I will try to explain, in the next section, with the help of the concept of the nothing. Secondly, I use this example to describe how the *world* discloses itself in a way that the inconspicuous forces of enchantment come to fore. I conclude this discussion of the example of the hammer with three issues the example raises.

First, the scenario of the hammer presents a good moment to raise a question regarding the value of these “negative” revelations. Simply stated, can I hammer with the hammer better once the workshop has been lit up? Why do I have to engage in this hermeneutical violence in order to illuminate the workshop, which indeed loves to hide itself and for which, according to Heidegger, the hiding is its mode of preservation?

²⁷⁶ The revelation of the world is not exclusively done by these negative modes. Indeed, for Heidegger, it is also the role of art to reveal the world. While art may also use “negative” or shocking ways to do it, often it uses other means. For instance, as an example of the revelatory power of poetry for Heidegger, see *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, 172, where he quotes from Reiner Maria Rilke’s *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* as testimony on this point. He introduces the passage by writing, “Poetry, creative literature, is nothing but the elementary emergence into words, the becoming-uncovered, of existence as being-in-the-world” (171–172). Also see Heidegger’s analysis in “The Origin of the Work of Art” (Poetry, Language, Thought, 32) of Van Gogh’s painting of a pair of peasant shoes. For still another example outside the European context, I suggest Pablo Neruda’s *Elementary Odes* (1954)—for instance the “Ode to Tomatoes.”

In order to make this question even more pertinent, allow me here a short digression on *Being and Time* regarding two modes of understanding Being, namely, the pre-reflective and the thematized understanding of Being. Dasein's understanding (*Verstehen*) of its Being is neither a theoretical grasping (*Erfassen*) nor comprehending (*Begreifen*). Dasein does not *know* about its Being, rather it *exists* in this ontological understanding (or better, in a kind of pre-understanding, in the sense of an implicit understanding though not yet thematized). Indeed, Heidegger questions the privilege of *knowing* as Dasein's primordial way of Being. Knowing is grounded beforehand (thus derivative) on Dasein's ecstatic understanding as Being-in-the-world (pre-reflective). Before objects are known, things show up as beings to live with. In order to reawaken the question of the meaning of Being, the philosophical task is to grasp this pre-understanding of Being in which we humans always already live. From within a hermeneutical circle, Heidegger starts from Dasein's pre-understanding of its Being, which is revealed in its everydayness, in order to make conspicuous what Dasein already understands implicitly. This hermeneutic task requires traversing from Dasein's pre-understanding of Being towards its grasping the meaning of Being. But for this traversing, Dasein has to undergo a revelatory experience in which Being itself is disclosed. In the context of *Being and Time*, this ontological revelation occurs for Dasein in its anticipation of death and the call of conscience. Similarly, so far in my discussion of wonder, I have sought to approach the perspective of this moment in which the pre-understanding of Being comes to the fore, and Dasein is transformed and becomes what its name says: the "there" of Being.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁷ The possibility to disclose the meaning of Being in wonder does not bring us back to the classic metaphysical privilege of knowing and theory that Heidegger explicitly tries to avoid. In contrast, ontological wonder does not create a new predicative knowledge *about* Being, but rather it transforms Dasein: it makes Dasein ready for its finite existence.

But the question arises: what are the differences between Dasein living in a pre-understanding of Being and Dasein as the “there” for Being? Does the latter simply bring the former to the fore? The example of the missing hammer does not prove that by having all the context of referential significance (i.e., the net of “in-order-to”—serviceability, conduciveness, usability, manipulability) illuminated, we may hammer better with the hammer. Moreover, having the meaning of Being thematized, does it yield to some ethical care for beings? I come back to this ethical question in the Conclusion. But I want to underline here that existential-phenomenological descriptions and ethical prescriptions may be running on separate tracks. Of course, both tracks cross each other in many places, so they are not truly parallel, yet they are different. Since my study of ontological wonder has also a prescriptive dimension (i.e., I will use it to argue against the domination of nature), I will claim that the tracks not only can but that they often cross. But what only *can* happen is not necessary. While there is evil that comes from blindness (i.e., ignorance), there may be also some evil that has seen the world in its depth—and the seeing has not prevented the evil from happening. It is this ethical ambiguity or neutrality of the ontological that we are going to address in the Conclusion.

Second, the example of the hammer raises the problem of using an ontic being as an instance of some negative logic that occurs also at an ontological level. Is it legitimate in regard to the ontological difference? Yes, the only access to the ontological difference is through beings (ontic). The ontic and the ontological are not like independent regions. There are only beings—i.e., there is only the ontic region. Now, beings can be seen regarding the fact that they *are*, that they are not nothing. The ontic turns into the ontological, in the same way that in wonder the usual manifests its full but heretofore concealed unusualness. The latter is not a new entity that replaces the usual (as in marveling); nor is it something that hovers somewhere

behind-above-beneath beings. Rather it is the same usual and trivial being viewed from the point of view of its thatness. The thatness, however, is nothing ontic, but to separate the “thatness” from the being (in which its thatness is experienced) is a mere abstraction that has turned—unwillingly—the “thatness” into a being, and, what is worse, blocked access to the experience of the thatness of beings. If Being as such does not disclose itself in the workshop, surrounded by hammers and nails, it is not going to be disclosed elsewhere. Now, to grasp the difference between the ontic and the ontological seems difficult. But, as I said, the difficulty is not at the level of the abstraction required to grasp a subtle idea but in the simplicity that asks us to grasp what is so near as to be invisible because so familiar. To access the ontological thatness in wonder, one needs to undergo an experience that overcomes the obviousness, familiarity, and taken-for-grantedness of this difference. In other words, one doesn’t need to be smart; rather, one needs to allow oneself to be in the right mood. Moreover, I claim that it is not rare to experience moments of the unheimlich in which we perceive a hint of this difference (between the ontic and the ontological), but in the absence of a hermeneutical framework we cannot decipher their ontological meaning. Without this framework we just dismiss these moments with embarrassment or indifference.

Third, we can also look at Heidegger’s account of equipment from the point of view of what we studied in Part I, with Weber and in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, regarding how instrumental rationality seems to permeate our way of dominating nature. Simply stated, it seems that we humans treat other people just as, in Heidegger’s account, we deal with equipment. Within our world of references or assignments, people are encountered (like tools) within our concerns that make use of them without noticing them explicitly. The familiarity and fascination that renders beings invisible (in their usefulness) is not just limited to beings-

ready-to-hand, but rather also our care for other fellow humans is determined by this mode of indifference. Thus, a form of breaking up this unnoticeability, especially as to other human beings, seems to be important. Although I am going to study the ethical dimension of ontological wonder in the Conclusion, I want to underline here the sort of “homeopathic” response that anxiety as the prelude to ontological wonder seems to suggest. It is the same indifference that discloses beings as a whole that, when it takes its full course, makes us encounter the sole difference that is left when the world of significance has faded away. In their very receding into indifference, things and persons turn toward and oppress us with the insight of that last difference: the difference between Being and nothing. The ontic indifference about the whatness of things is turned into the ontological difference about their thatness with respect to nothing. In the Conclusion, I will address the type of ethical comportment to beings that may arise by experiencing ontological wonder.

2) “The Clear Night of the Nothing of Anxiety”

For analytical purposes, I am going to divide my exposition of “the clear night of the nothing of anxiety” into three parts: nihilation; beings as what are radically other with respect to nothing; and Being as nothing. I begin by studying how the nothing is insinuated in the receding of being as a whole. Then, I focus on the nothing as the opposite of beings. Finally, I show that the opposition of nothing and beings implies the sameness of Being and the nothing. What is difficult is that in each of these three moments the meaning of the nothing changes. I claim that this change is not arbitrarily imposed by my analysis but happens in “the clear night of the nothing of anxiety” itself as the night advances, or better, as we (the reader or myself

while experiencing anxiety) let the sweep of our suspense take its full course. The aim here is to clarify two moments in which the nothing participates with two different meanings. First, there is the revelatory function of the nothing: in anxiety, we confront the *nihil negativum*, in contrast to which the meaning of Being loses its familiarity. Secondly, there is the nothing as the proper name of Being (i.e., Being *as* nothing): since from the perspective of beings, Being is experienced as nothing, Being and the nothing are the same. While the first meaning of the nothing helps to clarify the experience of ontological wonder, the second meaning of the nothing elucidates the inverted logic of Being that resides at the core of the negative mode of revelation. Decisive for my analysis is not to confuse these two different senses of the nothing.

a) Nihilation (Die Nichtung)

As we saw in our study of anxiety, Heidegger calls the action of the nothing nihilation. For him, nihilation is the essence of the nothing. Now, for analytical purposes, I give the name *nihilation* specifically to the first movement within anxiety, in which “we allow space for beings as a whole.”²⁷⁸ Thus, nihilation refers to the slipping away of beings as a whole that occurs when we experience anxiety. All things, including ourselves, sink into indifference; everything becomes superfluous. We may be in the midst of the madding crowd, but beings no longer speak to us. They do not disappear but, rather, ordinary things start to look different—as if we do not really know what they are. We recognize things and persons around us, and we still recognize ourselves, but the story that we tell about things, persons, and ourselves, starts to become strange.²⁷⁹ A crisis slowly arises in the referential context of significance. There is

²⁷⁸ See above section 1 in the first part of this chapter, page 237.

²⁷⁹ This can happen in, for example, mourning, depression, or the previously mentioned experience of being told you have cancer. It is not rare that children report having experienced moments of estrangement in which the world appears mysterious or absurd (e.g., that their life seems like the dream of someone else). For a poetical

no way to escape because there is no place to be saved from the fading away of meaning. Everything turns uncanny. Through this movement of nihilation, beings as a whole are disclosed precisely in the moment when the whole is in crisis.

There is *nowhere* to go, and there is *nothing* that explains this fading away of our net of references and assignments. In these expressions, the nothing may be intuited, but we (who are experiencing anxiety) have not yet encountered it. If anxiety can be described as swinging or oscillating, this first movement of nihilation has not yet reached its entire span.

b) *Beings as what is radically Other—with respect to Nothing.*

When anxiety oscillates in its whole span and “we release ourselves into the nothing,” then anxiety itself refutes the nothing.²⁸⁰ Let us place ourselves again in the first movement of the oscillation of anxiety. Beings no longer speak to us; their singularity slips away, and they fall—and we with them—into what seems to be the abyss of nothing. This indifference does not make things disappear; rather, in the very slipping away, things turn toward us. In this turning, the most usual and familiar fact of their presence becomes totally strange. But—and here is the crux of the issue—together with this strangeness comes an insight: the nothing is not; there *are* beings and precisely not nothing. *The anxious experience of the nothing cancels*

version of children’s estrangement, let me quote Peter Handke’s “Song of Childhood,” from Wim Wenders’ film “Wings of Desire” (*Der Himmel über Berlin*): “When the child was a child, / It was the time for these questions: / Why am I me, and why not you? / Why am I here, and why not there? / When did time begin, and where does space end? / Is life under the sun not just a dream? / Is what I see and hear and smell / not just an illusion of a world before the world? / Given the facts of evil and people, / does evil really exist? / How can it be that I, who I am, / didn’t exist before I came to be, / and that, someday, I, who I am, / will no longer be who I am?” I claim that while these experiences of the unheimlich are common, they do not always find a discourse that could value them and give them a sense. In Western culture, often it is the discourse of psychoanalysis and psychiatry that offers some hermeneutical ground to make sense of these experiences. Indeed, when these experiences cannot be integrated, they can yield psychotic disorders. My study—following Heidegger—aims to create a hermeneutical ground for these experiences outside that of psychoanalysis and psychiatry.

²⁸⁰ See above section 2 in the first part of this chapter, page 241.

out the nothing of the experience. The strangeness becomes ontological; the heretofore concealed meaning of Being is manifested in the refutation of the nothing.²⁸¹

While things seem to be sinking into the abyss of the nothing, our own experiencing of the sinking cancels out the nothing: the sinking and the abyss are precisely *not nothing*. Everything becomes an instance of not nothing. The seemingly empty and indeterminate expression “being” acquires its concealed meaning: not nothing.²⁸²

The repelling (first movement) becomes a gesturing (countermovement, recoil) towards the Being of beings. The countermovement (the gesturing) discloses the receding

²⁸¹ Often the ontological role of the nothing is not even noticed in the vast secondary literature on Heidegger, and when it is noticed, it is not always accepted. In *Reduction and Givenness*, the French phenomenologist and Christian thinker Jean-Luc Marion treats explicitly the revelatory function of the nothing in Heidegger, just to dismiss it because of the essential ambiguity of the nothing that makes it fail to reveal Being as such: “The entrance of the Nothing into phenomenality is in no way sufficient for the manifestation of the ‘phenomenon of Being,’ since the Nothing itself still remains equivocal.” (*Reduction and Givenness: Investigations of Husserl, Heidegger, and Phenomenology*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson [Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998, 176]). In “Nothing and Nothing Else” in *The Ancients and the Moderns*, ed. by Reginald Lilly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), Marion attacks the referential capacity of the nothing: Nothingness “says nothing other than nothing. Nothingness does not mean anything; nor does it refer to anything, nor show anything—and being less than anything else. Nothingness opens no way to being, but proves a dead end or—which amounts to the same thing—refers to itself only” (188). According to Marion, Heidegger reduces nothingness by force to Being, as if “Heidegger himself was tempted to turn away from nothingness as soon as possible, as if he had been afraid of facing it too long” (ibid., 185). Sadly I don’t have space here to treat Marion’s own non-ontological or theological version of the nothing that he develops in this text. My effort in describing the movement within anxiety and the focus on the negative mode of disclosure, however, is my way of defending the “referential” capacity of the meaning of the nothing. Of course, the nothing is not, but precisely the meaning of this “not” can “refer” to the thatness of beings.

²⁸² As I said, the ontological unheimlich, and more specifically, the manifestation of the concealed meaning of Being, can be attuned to different moods, can be triggered by multiple circumstances, and can have various consequences. Hence, I do not claim that my description (focused on the meaning of the *nihil negativum*) is unique, nor that it is the model for every other one. For instance, rather than in wonder, Sartre’s protagonist is attuned by nausea at the moment of the unveiling of existence: “And then all of a sudden, there it was, clear as day: existence has suddenly unveiled itself. It had lost the harmless look of an abstract category: it was the very paste of things, this root was kneaded into existence. Or rather the root, the park gates, the bench, the sparse grass, all that had vanished: the diversity of things, their individuality, were only an appearance, a veneer. This veneer had melted, leaving soft, monstrous masses, all in disorder—naked, in a frightful, obscene nakedness” (*Nausea*, 172). Similar to Sartre, Edvard Munch’s experience that inspired *The Scream* is described in an anxious and less “wonderful” tone. In his literary sketch of *The Scream*, he writes: “I was walking along a road with two friends— / when the sun went down / The Sky suddenly / turned to blood / —and I felt a wave of sadness — / I paused — / leaned / against the fence tired to death / above the blue-black fjord and city / clouds hovered dripping / steaming blood / My friends walked on and / I stayed behind trembling with an open wound / in my breast — / and I felt as though a vast / endless scream passed through nature.” Available at https://www.emunch.no/TRANS_HYBRIDMM_N0615.xhtml (last access: 20 January, 2019).

beings (of the first movement) in “their full but heretofore concealed strangeness as what is radically other—with respect to nothing” (*WM*, 90). While I call the first movement “nihilation,” I can call the countermovement “original nihilation.” There are not two movements; rather, it is the same oscillation of anxiety that, by reaching its entire span, may reveal for the first time what it means to be. “The essence of the originally nihilating nothing lies in this, that it brings Da-sein for the first time before beings as such” (*WM*, 90).

The fact that they are beings and not nothing may be evident but not obvious at all. This revelation implies two things: (1) that the meaning of the nothing is clear and can be used to clarify the meaning of Being, and (2) that the meaning of Being is obscure and requires clarification. Contrary to our common sense, it seems that we know what the nothing means, and we do not know what Being means. Recognizing our knowledge of the nothing and our ignorance of Being is a crucial insight.

Now, the respective “clarity” and “obscurity” of the meaning of nothing and Being are counterintuitive. While the obscurity of Being is due to our familiarity with it, the clarity of the nothing is in itself something obscure. The revelatory strategy is to use the “clear obscurity” of the nothing in order to break through our familiarity with Being, which pushes its meaning into oblivion. How can the obscurity of the nothing be clear?

Here I depart from Heidegger’s explicit narrative in “What is Metaphysics?” Or better, my interpretation is trying to fill in what Heidegger merely insinuates. Here I am using the notion of nothing as *nihil negativum*²⁸³—i.e., the absolute and radical nothing, which

²⁸³ About the *nihil negativum* (in comparison to *nihil privativum*, *ens rationis*, and *ens imaginarium*) see Kant’s general classification of different kinds of nothings understood as *non-objects* of experience (*Critique of Pure Reason*, B 347–B 349).

Heidegger often dismisses.²⁸⁴ And yet, it is the nothing as the *nihil negativum* that strikes us at the moment when we let the sweep of our suspense in anxiety take its full course. There is no logically possible discourse about the *nihil negativum*; to merely mention it turns it into the opposite, namely, a being. The *nihil negativum* is an offense to our common sense and logic. Thus, it seems even less possible that we may have an understanding of the *nihil negativum* than that we could contrast it to beings. How could we understand the *nihil negativum* when it can never in principle appear? And yet, the *nihil negativum* is a proper signifier even though it has no signified: the signifier cancels out any possible signified. We may utter and understand the meaning of the word *nothing* even though its meaning prevents any possible denotation. The nothing can never be, and yet we keep its signification or meaning within us. We know what it would mean if nothing at all had ever existed. It is this impossible meaning that somehow dwells in us that functions as contrast to illuminate the heretofore concealed meaning of beings. The *nihil negativum* does not “appear” as in a mere thought experiment, but rather it appears in our concern in the midst of the swaying of nihilation (i.e., the first movement of anxiety where everything is sinking into indifference). The *nihil negativum* casts its shadow

²⁸⁴ Most of the time when Heidegger writes explicitly about the nothing, he tries to separate his own version of the nothing (i.e., Being as nothing, which we are going to study in the next section) from the nothing as *nihil negativum*. Thus, he usually accompanies his use of the nothing with some clarification that he is not referring to a “totally nothing” (i.e., *nihil negativum*). For instance, “that in the face of which anxiety is anxious is nothing ready-to-hand within-the-world. But this ‘nothing ready-to-hand,’ which only our everyday circumspective discourse understands, is not totally nothing [*totales Nichts*]. The ‘nothing’ of readiness-to-hand is grounded in the most primordial ‘something’—in the world” (*Being and Time*, 231–232). Although Heidegger may dismiss the *nihil negativum*, he implicitly uses it at most crucial moments of his writings. For instance, the nothing as *nihil negativum* appears in the guiding question of metaphysics: Why are there beings at all instead of nothing? In *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger, commenting about the scope of this question, writes: “The domain of this question is limited only by what simply is not and never is: by Nothing. All that is not Nothing comes into the question, and in the end even Nothing itself—not, as it were, because it is something, a being, for after all we are talking about it, but because it ‘is’ Nothing” (*IM*, 2). Heidegger also speaks of some recoil (*Rückstoß*) that happens in this question: “But *if* this question is posed, and provided that it is actually carried out, then this questioning necessarily recoils back from what is asked and what is interrogated, back upon itself” (*IM*, 6). The idea of a recoil is relevant for the notion of the nothing as *nihil negativum* that I explore—see above section 3 in the first part of this chapter, page 242.

over beings: with respect to nothing, the fact of existence has finally lost its taken-for-grantedness.

In the “clear night of the nothing of anxiety,” the meaning of the *nihil negativum* comes to the fore, and the *experience* of it precisely refutes the nothing—i.e., the experience of the nothing is precisely not the *nihil negativum*. Anxiety turns into wonder: rather than the *nihil negativum*, beings are. We welcome in wonder the fact that there is no ground to sustain the fact of existence; you may signal any ground for existence, and that ground would have still to account for its own existence. The anxiety of realizing that this groundless existence could have been nothing turns into wonder when we realize that nonetheless things are and precisely not nothing.²⁸⁵

It is the fact of existence—when experienced in its bare radicality and enlightened absurdity (i.e., everything could have been nothing and there is no ground to explain why it is not nothing)—that shakes the referential context of significance. Attuned by the nothing-that-is-not, things turn strange. Things are uncanny not in regard to what they are, or how they work, but rather in regard to *that* they are. Their thatness has lost its familiarity, and something from the uncanniness of thatness also permeates the *what* and *how* of things. The table is still in front of me, but seeing it as not-nothing makes me see it for the first time. Indeed, while I see the table, at the same time I don’t see “it,” because what is in front of me can no longer be

²⁸⁵ Allow me here a qualification: we fall into the abyss of nothing, but since we realize that the nothing is not, we understand, on the one hand, that there is no annihilation (becoming nothing). But, on the other hand, since the Being of beings is revealed as what is radically other to any being, we also understand that there is no stop to the falling. There is no being (ground) to hold us—to exist is to fall. With this insight, the abyss is neither tamed nor explained away, but our relation to it can change. The turn from anxiety to wonder does not negate the abyss, rather it signals a different way of falling. While the *nihil negativum* helps for the first insight (the nothing is not), it is useless for the second insight (existence is groundless). I come back to this in the next section.

called merely “a table” (its thatness cannot be tamed within the boundaries of any definition). Everything turns mysterious.²⁸⁶

We may have thought that the nothing was producing the sinking into indifference which we feel at the moment of nihilation. And yet, it is the opposite. Rather than the nothing, it is Being as such (the insight into the thatness) that insinuates itself in nihilation, which shatters our world of clear and distinct significance. From our point of view, however, Being as such is felt as nothing.²⁸⁷

c) *Being as Nothing*

At the same time that Heidegger wrote his lecture “What is Metaphysics?” (1928), he wrote the treatise *On the Essence of Ground*. In the preface to the third edition (1949) of this treatise, Heidegger writes:

The nothing is the “not” of beings, and is thus being [Sein], experienced from the perspective of beings. The ontological difference is the “not” between beings and being. Yet just as being, as the “not” in relation to beings, is by no means a nothing in the sense of

²⁸⁶ These experiences are also expressed in art. The French painter Rene Magritte writes: “What I constantly think about is the mystery of life. It’s something that cannot be represented, it can only be evoked. So in the last 40 years, I’ve only tried to evoke the mystery. I see it everywhere—in what you call the common-place. Is not the sky a mystery? (...) life and death, sun and moon, fire and water, all this is not a mystery? (...) I am not talking about God: this is a word that I don’t understand well. I’m talking about life: eating, sleeping, growing up, playing, dying. This is why I’m interested in everything, even banality, and that is why I find a union between the sky, a room, a coffer, a bed and a trumpet. I do not juxtapose strange objects with the purpose of impressing. I describe my thoughts about the mystery, which is the union of everything and everything we know (...) It is not history, nor the ephemeral geography of my time that impresses me: it is the fact of existing ... I do not get used to it easily” (René Magritte, in *Tutti gli Scritti da Rene Magritte*, edited by André Blavier, Milano: Feltrinelli, 1979, quoted from Ricardo Pulido and Edgardo Thumala ed., *Meditación, Mindfulness, y Psicoterapia: Ensayos sobre el Sufrimiento, la Sanación y el Despertar*, Santiago: JC Sáez Editor, 2016, 169).

²⁸⁷ While the ontological difference is usually understood as the difference between beings and Being, the problem is that most of the time we don’t know what each of these terms mean. We can pretend to understand this difference and take it as a mere logical distinction between species and its genre, or between elements and its set, or between the what is grounded and its ground. But in these logical representations the leap into the ontological has not happened. In order to understand the ontological difference, we have to encounter the difference between beings and the nothing. The latter reveals the former difference. Beings are that which is radically other with respect to nothing. By holding on to this insight that the ontological difference starts to dawn.

a *nihil negativum*, so too the difference, as the “not” between beings and being, is in no way merely the figment of a distinction made by our understanding (*ens rationis*).²⁸⁸

So far, we have studied the nothing as the radically other of beings. But, since the Being of beings is not a being among others, Being as such is also the radically other of beings. From the point of view of beings, Being is a not-being—it is a no-thing. Being as such is experienced from our perspective as a “not” that occurs in our world. Being can be defined as the “not” in relation to beings. Therefore, the nothing and Being—both as the “not” of beings—seem to be the same.²⁸⁹

To avoid misunderstandings, we have to carefully separate the meaning of the *nihil negativum* from the nothing as Being. According to the latter, since Being as such is not a being among others—i.e., it is a “not” in relation to beings—it is properly experienced by us as a nothing. The sense of the nothing as Being is essential to elucidating the negative mode of revelation that we have encountered so far. In short, since Being is like nothing, it reveals itself precisely as absence. Before I engage with this inverted logic of the nothing, let me first

²⁸⁸ Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, ed. by William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 97.

²⁸⁹ About the sameness of Being and nothing in Heidegger’s oeuvre, see: *Contributions to Philosophy* (1936-38): “belonging of nothingness to being” (*die Zugehörigkeit des Nichts zum Sein*) (80); *Die Geschichte des Seyns* (1938-40): “Being is Nothing / The Nothing nihilates / Nihilation refuses [*verweigert*] every explanation of beings on the basis of beings / But refusal provides the clearing within which beings can go in and out, can be revealed and concealed as beings” (GA 69, 168), quoted in Richard Polt, “The Question of Nothing,” in *A Companion to Heidegger’s Introduction to Metaphysics*, ed. by Richard Polt and Gregory Fried (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 73. And in the Seminar in Le Thor in 1969, Heidegger formulates the guiding statement for the seminar: “Being: Nothing: The Same” (*Four Seminars*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003, 58). Moreover, in “What is Metaphysics?” Heidegger agrees with Hegel about the sameness of Being and the nothing, but for different reasons: “‘Pure Being and pure Nothing are therefore the same.’ This proposition of Hegel’s (*Science of Logic*, 1.3:74) is correct. Being and the nothing do belong together, not because both—from the point of view of the Hegelian concept of thought—agree in their indeterminateness and immediacy, but rather because being [*Sein*] itself is essentially finite and manifests itself only in the transcendence of a Dasein that is held out into the nothing” (*WM*, 94–95). It is hard to understand how the predicate of finitude or infinitude may be applied to Being (to the thatness of beings). While beings may be finite or infinite, the Being of beings seems not be finite nor infinite. I interpret Heidegger’s expression the “finitude of Being” as underscoring the fact that Being uses (*braucht*) Dasein in order to be revealed: Being “manifests itself only in the transcendence of a Dasein.” Since Being and Dasein need each other to be *revealed* (the former) and to *be* (the latter), Being itself is essentially finite—it depends on Dasein.

examine the “not” that is at the core of every being. In the lecture course *Basic Concepts of Philosophy*, Heidegger qualifies the notion of the “not”:

If we speak of need as that which makes needful [*ernötigt*] the highest form of necessity [*Notwendige*], we are not referring to misery [*Elend*] and lack [*Mangel*]. Nevertheless, we are thinking of a *not* [*ein Nicht*], a negative [*ein Nichthaftes*]. But we know little enough of the negative and the ‘no’ [*Nein*], for example in forms of refusal [*Verweigerung*], deferment [*Verzögerung*], and failure [*Versagung*]. Yet all that is not nothingness [*nichts nichtiges*] but is at most (if not something higher still) its opposite. It never enters the field of view of our calculating reason [*rechnenden Verstandes*] that a no and a not may arise out of a surplus [*Übermaß*] or abundance [*Überfluses*], may be the highest gift, and as this not and no may infinitely, i.e., essentially, surpass every ordinary yes. And that is all to the good. For reason would ‘explain’ it according to the principles of logic, whereby both affirmation and denial exist, but the yes has the priority since it posits [*setzt*] and thus acknowledges something present at hand [*Vorliegende*]. What is present [*Anwesende*] and at hand [*Vorhandene*] counts as a being [*Seiende*]. Therefore it is difficult for us, wherever we encounter something apparently ‘negative,’ not only to see in it the ‘positive’ but also to conceive something more original, transcending that distinction” (*BQP*, 132).

Firstly, there seems to be a difference between a “not” that originates in misery and lack, and another “not” that originates in surplus or abundance. Rejecting the notion of *nihil negativum*, Heidegger affirms that this “not” is something higher than—or at least opposite to—“nothingness [*nichts nichtiges*]. In this “not” we are encountering Being as nothing. The ontological difference is both the condition of possibility of the referential context of significance (the world) and the cause of the fissure that leads to the collapse of meaning and significance.²⁹⁰ In the latter case, the collapse is not due to some imperfection or lack, but

²⁹⁰ There are epistemological consequences of having the nothing as the core of the world (i.e., as a groundless ground). At the core of the world there is no “proper” center that “arrests and grounds the play of substitutions,” as Derrida says (“Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences,” in *Writing and Difference*, trans. by Alan Bass, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978, 289). The absence of a center is primordial (not derivative from some lack or loss). Since the nothing is at the “center” of the world, or in other words, “Da-sein means: being held out into the nothing,” the play of dissemination of signifiers trying to apprehend and fulfil the nothing becomes endless, and the possibility of deconstruction necessary. Although not immediately evident,

rather it is due to the excess of the Being of beings that makes beings—when confronted with their thatness—indefinable. The world with all its meaning, significance, projects, and assignments is unable to keep beings at bay when insight into their thatness becomes conspicuous. The excess of the Being of beings creates the “space” to be filled in by significance and meaning, and yet the same excess makes the filling of the “space” impossible. But how do we discern whether the “not” comes from lack or surplus? Is there some clue to its origin at the level of our experiencing the “not”? Especially when the “not” inflicts on us so much pain—when it embodies a “refusal, deferment, and failure”—what does it mean that this painful “not” comes from an excess rather than a lack?

Secondly, when we limit our approach to beings (as logic does), affirmations have priority with respect to negations because they affirm beings that are present-at-hand. However, when we start with beings but—through anxiety—we reach the insight into the Being of beings, the priority of affirmations is challenged. Indeed, it is the “not” in the midst of the ontic positivity of beings present-at-hand that provides access to the ontological thatness. However, as in the tradition of negative theology, we cannot stay at the level of the denial. That would mean that we stopped merely at the deficient mode within the ontic level—i.e., at the level of the negation of beings. According to Heidegger, the aim is to “conceive something more original, transcending that distinction.” Although Being as such cannot be limited to affirmations and negations, from our point of view as beings—the only point available to us—Being is experienced as “not.” Thus, we have to traverse the night of the “not,” but without staying there, and, what is equally important, without turning the “not” into something. In other

according to Heidegger, it is the groundlessness of having nothing as a ground what makes the inquiry into grounds possible. In other words, the nothing makes Dasein capable for science—see *WM*, 95.

words, we have to avoid the danger of reifying or hypostatizing the “not,” turning the “not” into another name for a supreme being.²⁹¹

Thirdly, the “not” can be experienced in different forms: for example, as “refusal, deferment, and failure.” According to Heidegger, negations are one form of the “not” among others, and in turn, the “not” is one form—among others—of the nihilation of the nothing.²⁹² The nihilative compartments are “forces in which Dasein bears its thrownness without mastering it” (*WM*, 93). If the nothing is at the level of Being—i.e. Being as nothing—the nihilation of the nothing is primordial and cannot be overcome. In other words, since Dasein is defined by its thrownness that it cannot master, these nihilative compartments are essential to Dasein and not accidental occurrences that are caused by some specific constellation of circumstances at some moment in the history of Being.²⁹³ Accordingly, it seems that we are condemned to be visited constantly by antagonism, rebuke, failure, prohibition, and privation. In other words, all our ontic efforts for escaping them are going to fail, because existence itself exists as the nihilation of the nothing. Now, it seems feasible that when we acknowledge that the pain and suffering are not due to our lack, we can avoid a second and third layer of suffering.²⁹⁴ And yet, is it enough to recognize the excess of Being as the source of the “not” in order to soothe the pain?

²⁹¹ I will focus on reification and mystification in the last part of the Conclusion.

²⁹² There are many other forms of nihilation that are common guests in our life. In “What is Metaphysics?,” Heidegger mentions a few: unyielding antagonism, stinging rebuke, galling failure, merciless prohibition, and bitter privation (*WM*, 92–93). Of course, I cannot forget to mention the most famous of all: death.

²⁹³ In the next chapter I survey some of Heidegger’s interpretations of the modern world. Its negative tone is often assumed to be part of his narrative of decay in the history of Being. But acknowledging that these nihilative compartments are essential to existence (and for the revelation of existence), the view on modern nihilism and machination might change. Rather than signaling moments of decay in the history of Being, they would denote—despite their negativity, or precisely because of it—privileged sites for the disclosure of Being.

²⁹⁴ Following Nietzsche’s description of the ascetic ideal (i.e., that we prefer to negate life rather than to endure suffering without any reason) one can observe three levels of suffering. There is a first “original” suffering (suffering itself), i.e., the pain of being a finite animal. The ascetic ideal, however, does not offer an answer to suffering itself, but rather comes to fill the vacuum of a second (derivative) suffering: the suffering of not knowing why we suffer—a suffering *of* suffering. “The meaninglessness of suffering, not suffering itself, was the curse

Let me conclude this section on “Being as nothing” by focusing on the logic of the nothing and the thesis that this logic resides at the core of the negative mode of revelation.

From the point of view of our common sense, the logic of the nothing is totally upside-down: by not knowing it—we know it. The nothing “is” when it is not.²⁹⁵ As we saw in “What is Metaphysics?,” the nothing does not attract, but rather it pushes (repels) us into beings. We are held out into the nothing when the nothing remains hidden. Thus, in the midst of beings, when there is nothing of the nothing, the nothing is precisely there. The nothing is inconspicuously operative when it is covered up by beings. It “is” when there is not. Thus, when there are only beings left, precisely there the nothing is smoothly given to us. To negate the nothing—as when science “wishes to know nothing of the nothing” (*WM*, 84)—is a mode of “affirming” it. In short, when the nothing is not appearing, it appears. Conversely, every discourse or explicit affirmation of it, reifies and makes it into an idol—thus turning the nothing into precisely what is not, namely, a being. The nothing is not when there “is.” In short, if the nothing appears, it is not appearing. Someone may ask you: Do you know what the nothing means? I know nothing about the nothing, you may answer. In this answer the nothing is precisely giving itself. In the “no,” the “not,” the nothing lets itself be heard even though we do not pay attention to it. And in this *not* paying attention, again, the nothing is known by us.

that lay over mankind so far—and the ascetic ideal offered man meaning!” (Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 3, §28). The ascetic ideal interprets the first suffering in order to fill the void of the lack of *why* of the second suffering. But, paradoxically, the interpretation offered by the ascetic ideal adds a third “fresh suffering with it, deeper, more inward, more poisonous, more life-destructive suffering: it placed all suffering under the perspective of *guilt*.” (ibid.). The will is saved from the void of meaninglessness, but the cost is high. It seems that this ascetic “medicine” has too many side effects.

²⁹⁵ Jean-Luc Marion acknowledges this paradox of the nothing: “This paradox—to deny nothingness means to recognize nothingness—ought not to be dismissed. We ought to face it.” But, interestingly, he relates it to the divine: “Nothingness looks like a strange counterpart of God: both take advantage of an ontological argument. God is supposed to exist merely in consequence of the perfection of his essence, and nothingness claims to be thanks to the absolute imperfection of its essence. In both cases we are compelled to admit an item as given simply because we think of it.” “Exactly as God, to achieve existence, only needs to be possible, nothingness only needs to be impossible (as it is) to claim a quasi-existence” (“Nothing and Nothing Else” in *The Ancients and the Moderns*, ed. by Reginald Lilly, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996, 183, 184).

I claim that when Being is understood as nothing (from the point of view of beings), it means that Being discloses itself according to the logic of the nothing. In the next chapter I will find in Heidegger's work some evidence for this thesis.

Accordingly, I claim that the different instances of the "negative" logic that we have encountered in these three chapters display the logic of the nothing. Or, better, this mode of revelation is logical because Being is properly understood as nothing. Their negative form of manifestation is an effect of the ontological difference. Since the fact of the existence of beings (their thatness) is not itself a being among beings, this fact comes to the fore following the logic of the nothing.

When the light of our intellect illuminates every being (absence of darkness), the ontological darkness is right there ready to cast its shadows, because Being is like darkness in contrast to illuminated beings. When our calculative thinking controls everything (lack of needs), the ontological need is ready to attune us because Being is like an uncontrollable need in contrast to all our calculative thinking. When the manipulation of beings is the only relevant goal and Being as such is so obvious that it has become irrelevant (lack of shock), the ontological shock is ready to break through our fascination with the world (and awaken us to the wonder *that* there is a world instead of nothing) because Being is like a shocking obviousness in contrast to every relevant being. When in our daily life of concern there are just beings (abandonment of Being), Being as such is giving itself in its highest mode of disclosure—without idols—because Being is like no-being in contrast to every being. Again, since Being is like nothing from our point of view, the withdrawal of Being is its mode of giving itself to us. Being hides itself so that beings can be. Since Being is not a being among others, it cannot conspicuously appear next to other beings, but rather it is always already

“appearing” as nothing—i.e., in the mode of inconspicuousness, unobtrusiveness, and non-obstinacy. When the knowledge about the Being of beings remains covered up by the multitude of beings, then Being is preserved: it gives itself and lets beings be thanks to this covering up.

The logic of the nothing is slippery. Everything comes down to grasping this one turning that is at the core of Being as nothing: from “there is nothing to Being” to “Being as nothing.” Is it just a wordplay or some abstract formula that is difficult to understand? Not at all. We don’t need to be smart in order to understand this turning, but we do have to experience it when attuned by the right mood.

Why can the missing hammer reveal the world? Because both the hammer and the world are not limited to their positivity. The hammer cannot be limited to *what* it is and *how* it works. There is “something” that escapes the sum of the hammer’s positivity—its shape, color, size, weight, etc. Similarly, even when the world with all its reference of significance is lit up, there is one reference that remains opaque, which cannot appear, or, better, which constantly appears as not appearing. The *thatness* of the hammer and of the world is not something positive, a feature of their essences. Since this thatness is like nothing, it lights up when the hammer seems to become nothing (i.e., it is missing) and when the world seems to become nothing (i.e., when in anxiety beings as a whole are sinking into indifference). Only when we get as close as possible to nothing does that which is like nothing, namely Being, “show up.”

In the next chapter, I claim that the negative logic of revelation is also operative in Heidegger’s account of modernity. Although Heidegger is famous for his critical and reactionary views on modernity, the study of the “negative” revelation and its ground in the logic of the nothing has equipped us to offer a different answer to the question, How does the modern world look from the point of view of the negative logic of disclosure? Surrounded by

ontic wonder, when everybody is enchanted and fascinated about what beings are and how they function, the insight about the ontological thatness is covered up. And yet, according to the negative logic of disclosure, since this thatness is like nothing, at this precise moment of oblivion, it is preserved and giving itself to us. The turning from “the nothing to Being” towards “Being as nothing” is ready to occur. Attuned by Being as nothing, we have to come to terms with the ambiguous—but logical—conclusion that, since Being is like nothing, in modern times where there is nothing for Being, it seems to be the epoch of the highest possible revelation of Being.

Chapter Seven: Ontological Wonder and the Process of Rationalization

The last step to prepare the ground for the confronting Weber's thesis with Heidegger's notion of wonder is to study Heidegger's view on modernity. Does Heidegger's reactionary view toward modernity entail the decay of enchantment, such that we can only hope for a new god to rescue us from the nihilism of technoscience? Simply, does Heidegger concur with the tale of the disenchantment of the modern world?²⁹⁶ So far, we have not merely achieved a robust understanding of ontological wonder, but also gained a clue for reading Heidegger's writings on modernity differently—even against Heidegger himself.

We need to clarify Heidegger's notion of modernity for at least two reasons. First, we have to examine whether the modern world has—in Heidegger's account—its own type of enchantment, and if it has, we need to clarify the relation between modern enchantment and ontological wonder. Otherwise we could fail to see that the modern gods may also like to chant the melody of ontological wonder and that they disguise with ontological delights the road that is leading us into an ecological crisis.

Secondly, it is not enough to know what ontological wonder means; we also have to assess whether this type of wonder is available in our modern time. It could be the case that our time has eclipsed the possibility of experiencing ontological wonder, so that our study would be just some nostalgic or archeologic endeavor.

²⁹⁶ Often Heidegger is associated with the tale of the disenchantment of the world. For instance, Peter Trawny writes: "Heidegger's thought betrays what the philosopher was: the final and probably most vehement obstructor of modernity. The *Schwartze Hefte* are nothing other than the wild attempt to combat the project of the 'disenchantment of the world' by any philosophical and non-philosophical means available" (*Freedom to Fail: Heidegger's Anarchy*, 48). Unlike Trawny, in this chapter I argue that for Heidegger (like Weber) modernity itself enchants.

In our discussion of wonder, restraint, and anxiety, we focused on the capacity of these basic attunements to reveal Being as such. Since Being is experienced from our point of view as nothing, its disclosure follows an inverted logic: the abandonment of beings by Being is precisely Being's mode of giving itself to beings. Although ontological wonder as the gift of anxiety seems (logically) available for us in our time, I argue that Heidegger's reactionary views about the modern world blind him about his own insight into Being *as* nothing, and about how Being gives itself in and through its abandonment. His repulsion from the cosmopolitan uprootedness of modern life obligated him to postulate a future overcoming of Being's refusal, thus dismissing his own insight into Being's negative mode of revelation. In contrast, I not only argue that ontological wonder is available but also explore the thesis that in modernity the highest and most austere revelation of Being is possible.

This chapter is divided in two parts. First, I argue that Heidegger, like Weber, supports the idea that modernity is not disenchanted but that it suffers from a technological form of enchantment. In the second part, I explore Heidegger's understanding of machination, nihilism, and modern technology from the point of view of the logic of the nothing. I argue that Heidegger's critiques of modernity have to be supplemented with his understanding of the inverted logic of Being. Against Heidegger's own account of modernity as a time of decay and human spiritual poverty, I argue for the logical but monstrous conclusion that this time of ontic decay is also the time of the highest possible ontological disclosure. After I describe this tension, we will be better prepared to relate (in the Conclusion) ontological wonder to the peculiarly modern enchantment that permeates the process of rationalization and domination of nature. Since I argue, on the one hand, that for Heidegger (like Weber) the process of rationalization has its own type of enchantment and, on the other hand, that ontological wonder

is currently available, then what is still pending is to clarify the relation between ontological wonder and modern enchantment—because it could be the case that the medicine is just a disguised manifestation of the disease.

I) Heidegger and the Enchantment of Machination

Heidegger, like Weber, sees the process of rationalization permeating modern Europe. But, and unlike Weber who is more or less neutral regarding this process, Heidegger (at least on one level of his exposition) criticizes rationalization and takes it as a sign of nihilism. In his answer to Ernst Jünger, “On the Question of Being” (1955),²⁹⁷ Heidegger writes: “That the domination [*Herrschaft*] of *ratio* is erecting itself as the rationalization of all order [*Rationalisierung aller Ordnung*], as standardization [*Normung*], and as leveling out [*Nivellierung*] in the course of the unfolding of European nihilism, should give us just as much to think about as the accompanying attempts to flee into the irrational” (*QB*, 293). Writing after the two world wars, Heidegger not only is more critical than Weber of the process of rationalization but also rejects rationalization as the best category for understanding this phenomenon. Much as Horkheimer and Adorno did in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Heidegger sees rationalism and irrationalism as essentially entangled. In his view, if we try to understand this phenomenon from the point of view of reason (as Weber did)—whether as rationality or

²⁹⁷ Heidegger wrote this essay with the original title “Concerning ‘the Line’” (*Über ‘Die Linie’*), in response to Ernst Jünger’s “Across the Line” (*Über die Linie*). In that original title, Heidegger played with the ambiguity of the preposition “über.” If nihilism is on this side of the line and the overcoming of nihilism entails crossing over to the other side, then, with his quotation marks in the title of his essay, Heidegger puts into question the possibility of overcoming nihilism (*über* as crossing the line). Instead of overcoming, he first seeks to explore the locality of nihilism (*über* as concerning the line). In the second part of this chapter I will discuss succinctly Heidegger’s view on nihilism. The new title (“On the Question of Being”) shows that nihilism and the question of Being belong together.

irrationality—our point of departure precludes escaping those two alternatives, so that the analysis, rather than explaining the phenomenon, would in itself be merely another example of the domination of reason. Heidegger writes:

What is most thought-provoking, however, is the way in which rationalism and irrationalism become equally entwined in a reciprocal exchange from which they not only are unable to extricate themselves, but from which they no longer wish to escape. Thus, one denies any possibility that thinking might be brought before a call that maintains itself outside of the alternative [*Entweder-Oder*] of rational or irrational. Such thinking could nonetheless be prepared by the tentative steps [*tastende Schritte*] attempted in the manner of historical elucidation [*Erläuterung*], reflection [*Besinnung*], and discussion [*Erörterung*] (*QB*, 294).

Heidegger studies the “same” phenomenon that Weber called rationalization, but in order to secure access to it, he discards the category of reason in order to consider the phenomenon outside the alternative of rationalism and irrationalism.²⁹⁸ For Heidegger, the alternative of rational or irrational is already the consequence of the abandonment of beings by Being, which itself cannot be apprehended within the dichotomy of the former categories.

Moreover, in another resemblance to *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, in Heidegger’s review of Jünger’s notion of total mobilization, he sees that the project of human domination ultimately leads to the domination of the object over subjectivity: “Total mobilization has entered a stage whose threat exceeds that of the previous stage. For the German is no longer the subject of such mobilization, and the danger thereby grows that he will be conceived as its

²⁹⁸ Of course, while this is Heidegger’s intention, it is an entirely different question whether he successfully carries it out. For instance, while Adorno and Heidegger share similar sensibilities on various issues, Adorno criticizes Heidegger for the type of irrationality that his thinking promotes. According to Adorno, the seemingly rational bourgeois society needs irrationality to survive; this irrationality is supplemented by Heidegger’s jargon of authenticity: “The bourgeois form of rationality has always needed irrational supplements, in order to maintain itself as what it is, continuing injustice through justice. Such irrationality in the midst of the rational is the working atmosphere of authenticity” (Theodor Adorno. *The Jargon of Authenticity*, 98). Thus, for Adorno, Heidegger’s seemingly antimodern discourse is in itself a symptom of modernity, and his rhetoric works in service of the rationalized order that he seems to attack.

object” (*QB*, 297). The modern person may have started out as the strong Cartesian subject who found in the certainty of his ego an Archimedean point from which to dominate nature, but he ends up himself being dominated by his own project of domination.

Let us focus now on enchantment as related to the process of rationalization. In Part I, I offered a reading of Weber’s disenchantment thesis. By emphasizing his description of the value spheres as modern gods, and by allowing the use of the less technical meaning of “enchantment” to capture the mystery and wonder of these modern gods, I argued that rationalization requires its own type of enchantment.

In Part II, while examining Heidegger’s description of the essence of wonder, I reviewed Heidegger’s interpretation of some verses of Hölderlin. Heidegger agrees with the poet about some tremendous powers wandering over the earth. These tremendous powers closely resemble Weber’s modern gods. For Heidegger, the question of modern enchantment seems to be linked to the reference of these tremendous powers wandering our modern world.

In Heidegger’s *Guiding Thoughts for the emergence of the Metaphysics of Modern Science and Modern Technology*, which gathers texts from 1935-1955, he explicitly refers to disenchantment (*Entzauberung*). Consistently with my reading of Weber, Heidegger argues against the idea that modernity lacks enchantment:

Die Versetzung als Verzauberung in die Macht der Machenschaft (nur wenn schlecht metaphysisch gedacht und positivistisch, dann ‘Entzauberung’). Die Verzauberung als verhüllende Geworfenheit in das verborgene ‘Da’ (Wahrheit des Seyns) (296, 297).²⁹⁹

²⁹⁹ Volume 76 of Heidegger’s Complete Edition, *Leitgedanken zur Entstehung der Metaphysik der neuzeitlichen Wissenschaft und der modernen Technik*, edit. by Claudius Strube (Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, 2009). “The transposition as enchantment in the power of machination (only when badly metaphysically and positivistically thought, then ‘disenchantment’). The enchantment as veiled thrownness in the concealed ‘there’ (the truth of beyng)” (my translation).

According to Heidegger, only when badly understood (i.e., metaphysically and positivistically) is the phenomenon of enchantment (*Verzauberung*) misunderstood as disenchantment (*Entzauberung*). The categories that we use to interpret this phenomenon are not neutral. If for instance, we study it from the point of view of reason—whether rationality or irrationality—we are going to be blind to the enchantment of that which moves between the sides of the dichotomy, namely, the irrationality of rationality (or the rationality of irrationality), or in other words, the type of enchantment that itself constitutes rationality. To see this “in between,” we need the aid of another category.

The type of enchantment that Heidegger is implying here is still obscure. In Heidegger’s course *Basic Concepts of Philosophy*, we find passages about the type of enchantment occurring in machination. As we saw earlier, according to Heidegger, philosophy has to be attuned to some need or plight (*Not*), which in turn compels (*nötigt*) and gives it the necessity (*Notwendigkeit*) for its questioning. In modernity, however, where Being as such is irrelevant due to its obviousness, philosophy seems to lack a need. But what has rendered Being irrelevant? It is not only our very familiarity with it that has rendered it invisible; it is Being’s nature—i.e., a no-thing—that makes it easily forgotten. Now, if we delve more deeply into this “familiarity,” we see how we are enchanted in the midst of our machinations:

Is the need absent, or is contemporary man already so enchanted by his contrivances [*behext durch die Machenschaften*],³⁰⁰ and so carried away by his lived experiences [*so fortgerissen durch seine Erlebnisse*], that he is no longer equal to the need [*daß er der Not nicht mehr gewachsen ist*], assuming the essential need is not something miserable [*Kläglichkeit*], to which we could only be ill-disposed, but is precisely the greatest [*das Größte*]? (*BQP*, 158)

³⁰⁰ For Heidegger, *Machenschaft* denotes the modern emphasis on *making* and *doing* (*machen*) as a mode of *power* (*Macht*). Rather than “contrivances,” I am going to use “machination” to translate *Machenschaft* in order to be consistent with the translation in *Contributions to Philosophy*. In addition, this translation benefits from the fact that something of “making” (*machen*) can be heard in “machination.”

The modern person is enchanted (or bewitched) by his machinations and lived experiences. This enchantment by beings makes him no longer equal to the need that has the Being of beings as its source. We still have to clarify the meaning of machination and examine whether it can be linked to the Weberian enchantment of the modern gods. But we should not fall into the temptation of simply opposing machination and Being. We may ask, what is the origin of the enchantment of machination? What is the force behind our fascination with beings?

In Heidegger's *Contributions to Philosophy*, crucial passages deal with the type of enchantment of machination.

We are used to calling the era of 'civilization' the one that has *dispelled* all bewitchery [*Entzauberung*], and this dispelling seems more probably—indeed uniquely—connected to complete unquestionableness [*Fraglosigkeit*]. Yet it is just the reverse. We merely need to know where the bewitchery [*die Bezauberung*] comes from, namely, from the unbridled dominance of machination [*aus der schrankenlosen Herrschaft der Mächenschaft*]. When machination attains ultimate dominance, when it pervades everything, then there are no more circumstances whereby the bewitchery [*Verzauberung*] can be sensed explicitly and resisted. The hex cast [*die Behexung*] by technology [*die Technik*] and by its constantly self-surpassing progress [*ständig überholenden Fortschritte*] is only *one* sign of this bewitchery [*Verzauberung*] that directs [*drängt*] everything toward calculation [Berechnung], utility [Nutzung], breeding [Züchtung], manageability [Handlichkeit], and regulation [Regelung]. Even 'taste' [der Geschmack] now becomes subject to this regulating and is entirely a matter of being 'high class.' The average [der Durchschnitt] becomes better and better, and thanks to this betterment the average secures its dominance ever more irresistibly and unobtrusively" (CP, 98).

Consistent with the other texts, for Heidegger, what seems in a first glance to be disenchantment turns out to be the opposite: there is enchantment or bewitchery that comes

from the dominance of machination. The modern civilized world does not cancel enchantment, but rather itself consists in a type of bewitchment.

According to Heidegger, when machination pervades everything, we humans stop even feeling enchantment, and consequently it becomes impossible to resist it. This type of enchantment irresistibly dominates us the more it unobtrusively possesses us. Thanks to its invisibility, critiquing it becomes impossible. The modern civilized world looks so rational that its inhabitants think that to criticize it, we would have to either calculate a more accurate equation than the current one that would control everything better or nostalgically try to rescue past sources of enchantment in order to fight our supposedly disenchanted civilization. Since we do not feel the spell (because it is too pervasive), we do not understand that civilization as such enchants and that only some other spell may break it down. This whole study aims to interpret the process of rationalization in terms of enchantment, so that we can resist it in the way that we would resist some spell: by recognizing that we are under a spell and, since there is no way to live without spells, letting ourselves be enchanted by other, less destructive spells.

Although this type of enchantment has become invisible, Heidegger mentions one sign that proves its presence, namely, the spell that technology and its constantly self-surpassing progress casts upon us. Under the spell of technology, everything becomes ready for “calculation, utility, breeding, manageability, and regulation.” The scientific question about *what* something is gets subsumed in the technical question about *how* it works. Whatness is relevant only if it contributes to howness.

Heidegger draws some connection between “the average” and bewitchery. According to Heidegger, when the average becomes the platform for all activity, it constitutes “the most uncanny sign of the vanishing of the decisive places; it is a sign of the abandonment by being”

(CP, 99). Granting that Heidegger considers the enchantment of machination a sign of the abandonment of beings by Being, there are at least two things that remain obscure: first, what does Heidegger mean with these “decisive places,” and how do they relate to Being? In other words, is it clear why Being should secure a hierarchy of “decisive places”? Second, why is bewitchery determined by “the average”? Answering these questions, and thus qualifying further this type of inconspicuous enchantment, will require a better understanding of machination.

II) Machination, Nihilism, and Modern Technology

In this part, I study three related terms that, according to Heidegger, describe our modern world: machination (*Machenschaft*), nihilism, and the essence of modern technology (i.e., enframing [*Gestell*]).³⁰¹ My aim is to clarify the specifically modern enchantment that permeates our world, and to see how Heidegger’s interpretation of enchantment illuminates Weber’s reference to the modern gods. Additionally, I will test my reading of Being’s negative mode of revelation in Heidegger’s narrative of machination, nihilism, and modern technology, in order to assess whether ontological wonder can occur within our modern world. We will then be ready to put enchantment and wonder into direct dialogue in the Conclusion.

1) Machination

³⁰¹ While machination and nihilism are concepts that Heidegger, influenced by Nietzsche, uses during the 1930s and 1940s to capture the essence of modernity, these concepts disappear in the 1950s to give way to *Gestell*. See, Jeff Malpas’s “Assessing the significance of Heidegger’s *Black Notebooks*” (in *Geographica Helvetica*, 73, 2018, 109–114). For the purpose of this chapter, namely, to elucidate modernity’s type of enchantment, I will not delve into the differences of these three concepts.

In Heidegger's *Contributions to Philosophy*, there are various references to machination. Let us start with a passage that maps this term in relation to enchantment.

Heidegger writes:

What is called machination [*Machenschaft*]? Machination and constant presence [*beständige Anwesenheit*]; ποίησις ['making']— τέχνη ['know-how']. Whither does machination lead? To *lived experience* [*Erlebnis*]. How does that happen? (*ens creatum*—modern nature and history—technology) Through the disenchantment of beings [*die Entzauberung des Seienden*], which grants power to an enchantment [*Verzauberung*] that is carried out precisely by the disenchantment itself. Enchantment and lived experience (*CP*, 85).

The enchantment of machination is carried out by the “disenchantment of beings.” While in the first part of this chapter I showed that Heidegger rejects disenchantment as unable to apprehend the domination of *ratio* (i.e., the era of “civilization” does not dispel all enchantment, but rather itself enchants), here the same enchantment of reason seems to be based on the disenchantment of beings. I need to further clarify machination in order to elucidate the meaning of the “disenchantment of beings.” Before clarifying the relation between machination and lived experience, let us follow Heidegger's etymological and genealogical account of this concept. What does machination mean, and what does it have to do with constant presence, ποίησις (*poiesis*), τέχνη (*techne*), *ens creatum* (created being), and technology? Heidegger writes:

The name machination [*Machenschaft*] should immediately refer to *making* [*Machen*] (ποίησις, τέχνη), which we assuredly know as a human activity. This latter, however, is itself possible precisely only on the grounds of an interpretation of beings in which their makeability [*Machbarkeit*] comes to the fore, so much so that constancy and presence [*Beständigkeit und Anwesenheit*] become the specific determinations of beingness. The fact that *something makes itself by itself* [*daß sich etwas von selbst macht*] and consequently is makeable [*machbar*] in a corresponding operation: the *making itself by itself* [*Sich-von-*

selbst-machen] is the interpretation of φύσις carried out in terms of τέχνη and its outlook on things, in such a way that now already the emphasis falls on the makeable and the self-making [*Machbare und Sich-machende*], which is called, in brief, machination (*CP*, 100).

Machination refers to making—etymologically connected to both *machen* (to make or to do) and *Macht* (power). The genealogical account of machination starts with the Greek ποίησις and τέχνη. While *making* is commonly understood as a human activity, Heidegger wants to subsume the emphasis on making (as human activity) under some interpretation of Being. In other words, the emphasis on making implies that beingness is already understood as constancy and presence. When the emphasis is on presence (the outward appearance of something) and constancy (the persistence of the outward appearance), then precisely the event of presencing (the insight into unconcealment) is glossed over. While, according to Heidegger, the Greek term φύσις (understood in terms of *aletheia*) gathers both presence and presencing, there is already early in Greek thought a shift towards the emphasis on presence.

When φύσις is understood from the point of view of the interpretation of Being as constancy and presence (rather than denoting the mysterious coming forth out of the concealment into the open), then φύσις is subsumed under the notion of makeable and thus denotes “the making of itself by itself.” When everything is makeable, φύσις is identified with self-making. Machination names the domination of making, in which everything is makeable and self-making.³⁰² Again, this category does not merely describe human making; rather,

³⁰² The proper North American ideal of the self-made man embodies both ideas: everything is makeable and we make ourselves (self-making). But when you cannot *not* make yourself, the idea of *self*-making starts to tremble: our self-making is then revealed as imposed by something else; the “self” within self-making is not ours. Here the problem of agency that we encountered also in Part I returns: while we humans think we are dominating nature, domination dominates us—were we really the agents of domination, or has nature been dominating itself through us? Our relation to machination resembles the relation of domination. Heidegger describes this logic by juxtaposing “releasing” to “fettering.” By reducing everything to what is makeable and self-making, we think that we are releasing ourselves from any limitation, but we do not see how we get entrapped in this calculative making (i.e., the positing and reduction in advance of what is possible). Heidegger writes: “What does *machination* mean? That which is released to its own fettering [*die eigene Fesselung Losgelassene*]. What are the fetters? The schema

machination is the condition of possibility of the latter. In other words, machination is an ontological category—i.e., it names a specific truth of beings, a mode in which beings are disclosed as makeable. After the Greeks, the interpretation of machination enters a Judeo-Christian stage that propels machination towards its consummation in modernity:

The machinational now thrusts itself forward more clearly and that, through the coming into play of both the Judeo-Christian thought of creation and the corresponding representation of God, *ens* becomes *ens creatum*. Even if a crude interpretation of the idea of creation is foregone, the fact that beings are caused remains essential. The cause-effect connection comes to dominate everything (God as *causa sui*). That is an essential deviation from *φύσις* and is at the same time the transition to the emergence of *machination* as the essence of beingness in modern thought. The mechanistic *and* the biologicistic modes of thinking are always only consequences of the concealed machinational interpretation of beings” (*CP*, 100).

We have to be careful not to think of machination as the *cause* of diverse phenomena in the way Judeo-Christian versions of creation feature God as a cause, or as mechanistic or biologicistic worldviews conceive of causation.³⁰³ To think of machination in terms of causation means already falling prey to it. For Heidegger, the task is to think of these correlations differently. The truth of Being in each epoch is not the “cause” of anything; to think that way

of thorough and calculable explainability...” (*CP*, 104). Our own releasing to our fetters calls to mind the logic of self-exploitation (*die Ausbeutung*) studied by Byung-Chul Han: “Neo-liberalism is a very efficient, even intelligent system that exploits freedom itself (*die Freiheit selbst auszubeuten*). Everything that belongs to practices and expressions of freedom, such as emotion, play and communication, is exploited. It is not efficient to exploit someone against his will. In the case of external exploitation (*Fremdausbeutung*), the yield (*die Ausbeute*) is very low. Only the exploitation of freedom itself produces the highest yield” (Byung-Chul Han, *Psychopolitik - Neoliberalismus und die neuen Machttechniken*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 2015, 11, my translation).

³⁰³ Heidegger’s thinking gets behind the distinction between the religious and the secular. “Machination includes at the same time the *Christian-biblical* interpretation of every being as an *ens creatum*, whether this is now taken in a religious or secular sense” (*CP*, 104). If we grant that machination is the root of modes of being that permeate both the religious and the secular, then discussions about the secularization of religion, or the sacralization of the secular, lose their force. At stake is the place in between, which is neither religious nor secular but is, rather, the ground for both. In other words, the discussions about the secularization of previously religious terms (or the inverse) assume that we know clearly and distinctly what religious and the secular mean—they take for granted what precisely is the question.

means already understanding Being as cause (an interpretation of Being that has a long history going back to the Greek beginnings of philosophy).

So far we know that, according to Heidegger's narrative, machination refers properly to a specific truth or interpretation of Being as constancy and presence that has a long history. Human making is possible only on the basis of machination (as the truth of Being). Since there has been an essential deviation from φύσις and the collapse of truth as ἀλήθεια, everything becomes makeable and self-making. But it is still unclear, first, how machination enchants by disenchanting beings and, second, how this process leads to lived experience.

The disenchantment of beings is linked to an interpretation of beings as representable that the enchantment of machination seems to promote:

In this age, nothing essential—supposing this determination still makes sense—is any longer impossible or inaccessible. Everything 'is made' and 'can be made,' if only the 'will' to it is summoned up. Yet what is from the start unrecognized and not in the least questioned is that this 'will' is precisely what has in advance already posited and reduced that which may be possible and especially that which may be necessary. For, this will which makes everything has in advance pledged itself to *machination*, i.e., to that interpretation of beings as representable and represented [*Vor-stellbaren und Vor-gestellten*]. Representable means, on the one hand, accessible in opinion and calculation [*Meinen und Rechnen*] and, on the other hand, providable in production and implementation [*Her-stellung und Durchführung*]. All this is thought on the grounds that beings as such are the represented, and only the represented is a being. What seems to oppose and limit machination is, for machination itself, merely material for further work, an impetus to progress [*der Anstoß in den Fortschritt*], and an opportunity for expansion and augmentation (CP, 86).

Machination has no limits.³⁰⁴ What seems to be a limit becomes for machination just resources for further work towards progress. For our machinational sensibility, that sounds

³⁰⁴ According to Heidegger, "Machination and lived experience by essence know no limits and especially no impasses and utterly no shyness [*keine Scheu*]" (CP, 103). In our study of restraint (Chapter Five) we saw how

pretty good. Every obstacle is just a learning opportunity, a block for building towards endless progress. Although it may be true that where there is a will there is a way, we moderns do not ordinarily recognize that this “will” has in advance posited and reduced that which we count as possible—the will decides what counts as a way. When everything is made and can be made, what is outside the makeable and self-making is erased.

For Heidegger, machination is linked to this positing in advance that, without us even noticing it, erases our essential relation to the impossible and inaccessible.³⁰⁵ In machination we posit, set, or place (*stellen*) in advance what we want to encounter in presentation (*Vorstellung*), representation (*Darstellung*), and production (*Herstellung*). For Heidegger, opinion, calculation, production, and implementation are instances of machination as an interpretation of beings as representable—i.e., as positing in advance. Of course, we still have to clarify who or what posits in advance. We should not take for granted that the “will” is necessarily ours.³⁰⁶

What is the connection between machination and lived experience? Is not the boring tendency to calculate the total opposite of the searching for intense lived experiences? And yet, for Heidegger, much as machination posits everything in advance as what is makeable, lived experience reduces everything to what is experienceable for humans: “What can count as

diffidence or shyness (*Scheu*) is capable of drawing near to what is most remote as such (Being). Accordingly, we can infer that since machination has no sense of shyness, the experience of Being would be forgotten. Although this inference may agree with Heidegger’s reactionary views on modernity, in this chapter I will argue that in machination the highest disclosure of Being is possible.

³⁰⁵ Of course, to have a relation with the inaccessible is complex: the relation does not cancel the impossibility and inaccessibility of that to which one relates. The impossible is that which is outside the making and the self-making, which paradoxically is erased when everything becomes possible. But even simpler than relating to the impossible and the inaccessible, we humans constantly undergo multiple possibilities (some thoughts, feelings, dreams, bodily processes, etc.) that are outside the scope of our will.

³⁰⁶ Or following Nietzsche, we should avoid the error of false causality, i.e., thinking of our will as the cause of our acts. The will may just accompany the events, as a mere surface phenomenon of consciousness, “something alongside the deed that is more likely to cover up the antecedents of the deeds than to represent them” (*Twilight of the Idols*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, edited and translated by Walter Kaufmann, New York: Penguin Books, 1982, 495).

actually ‘being’ is only what is or can be the object of a lived experience [*nur das Er-lebte und Er-lebbare*], what presses forth in the realm of lived experience, what humans can bring to themselves and before themselves” (CP, 102). Since every mystery has to fit the frame of the representable and experienceable, “mystery” (or better, an amusing, healthy, and merchantable version of it) becomes accessible to everybody as what is exciting, provocative, stunning, and enchanting:

‘Lived experience,’ understood here as the basic form of representation belonging to the machinational and the basic form of abiding therein, is the publicness (accessibility to everyone) of the mysterious, i.e., the exciting, provocative, stunning, and enchanting [*Verzaubernden*]*—*all of which are made necessary by what is machinational (CP, 87).

Mystery becomes an adjective (mysterious) ready to qualify one more type of lived experience among others. Just as money mediates everything (making dissimilar things comparable through their prices), everything—traveling, playing, parenting, studying, having sex, etc.—has become an experience that can be measured in terms of intensity and personal “self-realization.”

At this point in the study, we can begin to see how the idea of the average relates to machination.³⁰⁷ The monopoly of the makeable and experienceable levels everything down to what is representable. In this regard machination and its correlate phenomenon of lived experience foster the unobtrusive dominance of the average.

We can now go back to the idea of the disenchantment of beings and its relation to the enchantment of machination. Heidegger uses the word enchantment ambiguously. On the one hand, the enchantment of machination denotes the spell that technology and its constantly self-

³⁰⁷ See pages 283-284 above.

surpassing progress casts upon us moderns. This enchantment prevents us from stepping outside the logic of calculation, utility, and manageability (or even from acknowledging that there is such an outside). On the other hand, with the expression “the disenchantment of beings,” Heidegger does not mean the lack of a spell, but rather the condition in which beings have reduced their possibilities to *be*. When in machination we believe that everything can be posited in advance, and we think that everything is “possible,” we fail to notice that the possible has become what is “makeable.” The “enchantment of beings” would not mean having more possibilities to make, but rather it would entail the disclosure of possibilities outside the realm of the will and the making.

Heidegger summarizes machination in three laws: First, “the more prescriptively machination unfolds ... all the more obstinately and machinationally does it conceal itself *as such*.” As I discussed above, in the same degree that machination permeates everything, it becomes more invisible—thus, almost impossible to resist. Secondly, “the more decisively machination conceals itself in this way, all the more does it press toward the predominance of that which seems completely opposed to its essence and yet is of its essence, i.e., toward *lived experience*” (CP, 100). Since machination and lived experience share the same root, namely, the interpretation of beings as objects of representation, any struggle between calculation and lived experience fosters machination even further. For example, it may be possible that the person who leaves her Wall Street office to search for her real self at some ashram in India may have not escaped machination. Finally, “the more lived experience is unconditionally prescriptive for correctness and truth (and thereby for ‘actuality’ and constancy), all the more hopeless does it become that from here a knowledge of machination as such could be acquired”

(CP, 101). Since machination loves to hide, how was Heidegger able to gain the distance for describing what remains too close to be seen?

At this point it should be clear that machination is not something that we moderns do; rather, “it” does us—i.e., our doing is already permeated by it. More exactly, for Heidegger, machination names the distorted essence of Being. Thus, Heidegger’s negative description of machination must be supplemented with his notion of truth, in which the essence and the un-essence (e.g., machination) belong together. Heidegger writes:

In the context of the question of being, it [machination] does not name a kind of human conduct but a mode of the essential occurrence of being. The pejorative connotation should also be avoided, even if machination does promote the distorted essence of being [*das Unwesen des Seins*]. Yet even this *distorted* essence itself, since it is essential to the essence, is never to be depreciated (CP, 99).

Observe the relation between the distorted essence and the “proper” essence. Heidegger’s warning not to dismiss machination as simply negative is crucial.³⁰⁸ The distorted essence is essential to the “proper” essence. Heidegger’s “practice” calls for turning towards machination and letting it resonate. Rather than “two” essences, there is just one that can be approached in different ways. In other words, machination names the essence of Being in which the refusal of Being has still not been acknowledged:

Machination itself withdraws, and thus beyng itself withdraws, since machination is the essential occurrence [*die Wesung*] of beyng.

³⁰⁸ Sometimes it seems as if Heidegger himself did not pay attention to his warnings about avoiding the pejorative connotations of machination; my survey above is a good example of his negative tone, which fits in the narrative of some ontological decay from the Greeks down to our age. In more positive undertones about machination, Heidegger writes: “For what matters is to know that here, on all barrenness and frightfulness [*Öde und Furchbarkeit*], something of the essence of beyng is resonating and the abandonment of beings (as machination and lived experience) by beyng is dawning. This age of the complete absence of questioning can be overcome only by an age of that simple solitude in which a readiness for the truth of beyng itself is prepared” (CP, 87).

Yet what if, out of all this (which is to every appearance merely adverse and deprivational), there arose a quite different insight into the essence of being and being itself unveiled as refusal or even brought itself to resonate (*CP*, 101).

Since machination is the essential occurrence of Being in which Being itself is disclosed as refusal, it seems that the enchantment of machination has an ontological origin: Being (as refusal) is behind the power that enchants machination and disenchants beings. We are already familiar with the idea that Being is disclosed in its refusal. Hence, since Being-as-nothing reveals itself according to the inverted logic of the nothing, rather than dismiss Heidegger's pejorative description of machination, I grant it—but I supplement it with the insight that Being's refusal is simultaneously the mode in which Being reveals itself. In our survey of nihilism in the next section, we will explore whether the concept of the nothing can illuminate this refusal that is at the core of machination.

At this point, I want to raise the question about the relation between the enchantment of machination and the experience of ontological wonder. I have asked whether ontological wonder can respond differently to the ecological crisis brought by the process of rationalization. The process of rationalization seems accurately described—in its essence—by Heidegger's notion of machination. And yet, it seems that both wonder and the enchantment of machination are heralds of Being. How is that possible? Aren't they opposites? Was not machination that which made Being irrelevant and the experience of ontological wonder almost impossible? Was not ontological wonder the medicine that would cure us from the process of rationalization?

In order to prepare the ground for the confrontation between the enchantment of machination and ontological wonder—especially now that they don't seem opposed to the

degree one might have expected—I will turn to another account of modernity. Heidegger’s account of nihilism can help clarify the enchantment of machination.

2) Nihilism

Although Heidegger’s treatment of nihilism, unlike his treatment of machination, does not explicitly reference enchantment, it gives clues for understanding the unseemly insight that the enchanting of machination and the experience of ontological wonder have the same root. In my reading, I oppose the common interpretation of nihilism as something negative to be overcome; regarding its ontological revelatory capacity, nihilism cannot and should not be overcome.

At the end of the previous chapter, I postulated some theses about Being as nothing. I argue here that this logic of the nothing is operative in Heidegger’s account of nihilism. Since from our point of view, Being is not a being among others, i.e., is like nothing; then first, every manifestation of Being that I can point out as “this” or “that” is an idol. Second, Being follows the inverted logic of the revelation of the nothing: not appearing, it appears; every attempt to negate it is already its affirmation (because every negation already betrays the nihilation of the nothing). According to this negative mode of disclosure, when we focus only on beings and the Being of beings becomes irrelevant, that is when the highest disclosure of Being becomes possible. Now let us examine Heidegger’s account of nihilism in light of this logic.

According to Heidegger, we have to carefully distinguish between a phenomenon’s manifestation and its essence. As we saw with respect to machination, calculation and lived experience may seem different, but if we trace their manifestations back to their essence (the interpretation of Being as presence and constancy), we see that both belong together. Similarly,

he writes, “[T]he essence of nihilism is nothing nihilistic [*das Wesen des Nihilismus nichts Nihilistische...ist*]” (QB, 296, also 313).

Recall Nietzsche’s definition of nihilism. According to Nietzsche’s *Will to Power*, nihilism means: “That the highest values devalue themselves. The aim is lacking; ‘why?’ finds no answer.”³⁰⁹ The highest values, through an act of self-overcoming (*Selbstaufhebung*), contain within themselves their own destruction.³¹⁰ Accordingly, for Heidegger at this first level, nihilism is “that historical process whereby the dominance of the ‘transcendent’ becomes null and void, so that all being loses its worth and meaning.”³¹¹ At the surface, a nihilist is someone who embraces or suffers the sense that everything is in vain, and that there are no more ultimate goals to follow and die for.

In analyzing nihilism, Heidegger starts at the level of its manifestation and then traces it back to its essence. Though nihilism manifests itself as a historical process in which all previous goals and values are undermined, understanding this loss in terms of a crisis of values is, according to Heidegger, part of the problem—it is a nihilistic mode of studying nihilism, so it cannot reveal its essence. To reduce Being to value is already nihilistic. Thus, for Heidegger, Nietzsche’s account of nihilism at the level of values fails to question nihilism in its essence.

³⁰⁹ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, edit. by Walter Kaufmann, trans. by Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1967), §2. The notion of nihilism refers both to its cause and to its symptoms or consequences. Nihilism’s symptoms are commonly mistaken for its cause. While the sense of meaninglessness, decadence, pessimism, depression, and disenchantment are nihilism’s symptoms, its cause, according to Nietzsche, is the previous positing of a transcendent, suprasensory, meta-physical world from which the sensory world gains its meaning. God, or any of God’s surrogates—i.e., “the authority of reason, progress, the happiness of the greatest number” (Heidegger, “The Word of Nietzsche” in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. by William Lovitt, New York: Harper Perennial, 1977, 65)—are names for the suprasensory world, or more precisely, are names for the fundamental structuring of the world through the difference between the sensory and the suprasensory. Nietzsche’s notion of the death of God marks the failure of the suprasensory world to support and determine this world. Once the suprasensory world loses its power, our world is experienced as valueless.

³¹⁰ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, third essay, §27. New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1989, p. 161.

³¹¹ Heidegger, “European Nihilism,” in vol. 4 of *Nietzsche*, trans. Frank A. Capuzzi. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991, 4.

The belief that the devaluation of values can be answered by a willful revaluation of them,³¹² is merely a symptom of the nihilistic reduction of Being to the will to power. Heidegger writes:

The will to power is that will which wills *itself*. As this will and within the orders established by it there appears, prefigured early on and prevailing in many different ways, that which, represented from the perspective of beings, surpasses [*übersteigt*] such beings and within such surpassing [*Überstiegs*] in turn has an effect on beings, whether as the ground of beings, or as their causation (*QB*, 312).

What Nietzsche misses, according to Heidegger, is that the *will* of the will to power is nothing human; it surpasses the level of beings. In short, the will names a specific truth of Being. The will that just wills itself, creating, destroying, and constantly surpassing every limitation for the sake of its endless growth—i.e., the will in which “all that is solid melts into air”—is simply how the Being of beings is interpreted in modern times.

For Heidegger, the will to will that grounds nihilistic disenchantment is ultimately grounded on the oblivion of Being: “The essence of nihilism, which finds its ultimate consummation in the domination of the will to will, resides in the oblivion of being” (*QB*, 319). As we saw in the previous chapter, the oblivion of Being, in turn, comes from the abandonment of beings by Being itself. Thus, the essence of nihilism is the abandonment by Being. When Heidegger translates Nietzsche’s account on nihilism (at the level of values) into an event in the history of Being, he finds the perspective from which to dismiss Nietzsche’s willful revaluation of all values as part of and not the solution for nihilism. For Heidegger, we can

³¹² A willful revaluation of all values is Nietzsche’s own attempt to overcome nihilism (what he called “accomplished nihilism”). According to him, if we criticize the faith in the transcendent and uncover its all-too-human nature, then there is no longer any necessity for devaluating the world. There is no longer a standard of comparison in relation to which our own actual world appears deficient. When reality is experienced as a fable without any transcendent world to police it, the accomplished nihilist can create new values like an artist. Recognizing that a piece of art is a fiction does not rob it of its value. Instead, the creative process embraces the bare immanent origin of these new values as part of an endless creative play.

change the source of valuation—e.g. from a divine transcendent to an artistic immanent source—but the problem remains because the will to will and its valuation have not been challenged. And yet, it is still not clear what we gain by defining the abandonment of Being as the essence of nihilism. Let us continue with Heidegger’s narrative.

In 1955, Heidegger thought that moderns were living in an age entirely permeated by nihilism, i.e., the age of the consummation of nihilism: “Nihilism is consummated [*vollendet*] when it has seized all subsisting resources and appears wherever nothing can assert itself as an exception anymore, insofar as such nihilism has become our normal condition” (*QB*, 297). The time in which nihilism becomes the normal condition inaugurates the final phase of nihilism: “Yet the consummation of nihilism is not already its end. With the consummation of nihilism there first *begins* the final phase of nihilism” (*QB*, 297). Nihilism, like machination, becomes inconspicuous when it becomes our normal condition. The problem is not merely that we cannot assert an exception to it, but also that when we believe ourselves to be asserting an exception, we are really sustaining its rule. This renders the overcoming of nihilism problematic. For instance, in *Contributions to Philosophy* (1936–1938), writing about some seemingly opposite groups of Christians (to whom he ascribed a fateful nihilism) and Bolsheviks (whom he described as embracing a crude nihilism), Heidegger affirms: “It also seems that nihilism, calculated as a whole and in a fundamental way, cannot be overcome. If the two extreme oppositional forms of nihilism battle each other, and indeed necessarily in the most strident manner, then this battle will lead in one way or another to the *victory* of nihilism” (*CP*, 110).

When nihilism has become our normal condition, so that there is nothing outside nihilism, our task cannot be to overcome it, but rather to turn towards its essence. According

to Heidegger, “the overcoming of nihilism demands a turning in [*Einkehr*] into its essence, a turning in whereby the desire to overcome becomes untenable” (*QB*, 320). Instead of overcoming (*Überwindung*) nihilism, Heidegger refers to the turning into its essence in terms of recovery (*Verwindung*)³¹³ of its essence: “Wherein does the overcoming of nihilism then consist? In the recovery [*Verwindung*] of metaphysics” (*QB*, 313). But this recovery is far from being easy, since, not surprisingly, “nihilism has the tendency to disassemble [*verstellen*] its own essence and thereby to withdraw from the all-decisive encounter and confrontation [*entscheidenden Auseinandersetzung*] with it” (*QB*, 307).

So how do we turn towards the essence of nihilism? First, we have to stop trying to willfully overcome nihilism, since any such attempt makes the will to will stronger. Second, we must avoid fleeing the sense of lack of goals by creating cultural surrogates for lost transcendence. Embracing the absence of goals, and ceasing to try to escape the angst, may lead to an openness that allows us to turn towards nihilism’s essence. For Heidegger, the greatest nihilism resides in

the unwillingness to acknowledge the lack of goals [*die Ziel-losigkeit*]. And so one suddenly “has goals” once again, even if merely what can possibly serve as a *means* for the erection and pursuit of goals is itself elevated into a goal: the people, for example. Therefore precisely where one believes one again has goals, where one is again “fortunate,” where one proceeds to making equally available to all “people” the “cultural assets” (movies and trips to the beach) that were closed off to “most”—precisely here, in this noisy intoxication

³¹³ The ambiguity of *Verwindung* becomes evident in its very different translations. Andrew J. Mitchell translates it in the lecture “The Turn” as “conversion”: “Thereby technology is not humanly overcome [*überwunden*], much to the contrary, the essence of technology is converted [*verwunden*] into its still-concealed truth” (*Bremen and Freiburg Lectures*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012, 65). William McNeill translates it as “recovery”: “Wherein does the overcoming of nihilism then consist? In the recovery [*Verwindung*] of metaphysics” (“On the Question of Being,” in *Pathmarks*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 313). Joan Stambaugh translates it as “incorporation”: “the overcoming of metaphysics occurs as the incorporation (*Verwindung*) of Being” (“Overcoming Metaphysics” in *The End of Philosophy*, New York: Harper & Row, 1973, 85). Jean-Luc Marion emphasizes how it derives from *verwinden*, which indicates a turning over or change of direction (“The ‘end of metaphysics’ as a possibility,” in *Religion after Metaphysics*, ed. by Mark A. Wrathall, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, 186, note 38).

with “lived experience” [*lärmenden ‘Erlebnis’-Trunkenboldigkeit*], resides the greatest nihilism, the deliberate turning of a blind eye to human goal-lessness, the “ready to wear” avoidance of any goal-setting decision, the dread of all decisive domains and of their opening. The dread of being [*die Angst vor dem Seyn*] was never as great as it is today. Proof: the gigantic arrangements aimed at out-screaming this dread (*CP*, 109).

Since anxiety, as already seen, has ontological revelatory power, what does it mean that anxiety is so great today? The anxious avoidance of Being is precisely that which lets Being come to the fore. Acknowledging the ambiguity of Heidegger’s “valuation” nihilism, I build my argument for a “positive” reading of nihilism on Heidegger’s logic of the nothing, which I described in the last chapter. This should not be surprising: as its name declares, nihilism has to do with the *nihil* (nothing).

Accordingly, Heidegger writes: “The essence of nihilism is the history in which there is nothing to Being itself.”³¹⁴ From the point of view of Being as nothing, we may understand why Being’s abandonment is precisely the mode in which Being reveals itself. In nihilism, we “negate” Being (so that we just deal with beings), but since Being is like nothing, by negating it we are bringing it to the fore in its most “fitting” mode, namely, as nothing. Beyond any of the names that Being has received in the course of history—such as *aletheia* (*apeiron*, *logos*, *hen*, *arche*), *physis*, *ousia*, *idea* (*agathon*), *energeia*, *hypokeimenon*, *hyparchein*, *subiectum*, *actualitas*, *certitudo*, *vis*, objectivity, freedom, will (as absolute knowledge), will of love, will to power, action and organization, will to will, machination³¹⁵—the nothing is the one name

³¹⁴ Heidegger, “Nihilism as Determined by the History of Being” in *Nietzsche*, Volume III and IV, trans. by David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperOne, 1991), 201.

³¹⁵ See Heidegger’s “Sketches for a History of Being as Metaphysics” in *The End of Philosophy*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 65, 66.

that best preserves Being's otherness with respect to beings. Since Being is like nothing (from the point of view of beings), we can understand why its refusal and denial is its gift to us.

As one of the consequences of this interpretation, we may consider that in nihilism not only is "some" disclosure of Being possible, but also that this disclosure is the "highest." This thesis is confirmed in Heidegger's "The Age of the World Picture" (1938), where he suggests that the denial of Being is—paradoxically—its *highest* and more *austere* revelation, and with an explicit reference to the nothing:

But suppose that denial itself had to become the highest and most austere revealing of Being? What then? Understood from out of metaphysics (i.e., out of the question of Being, in the form What is it to be?), the concealed essence of Being, denial, unveils itself first of all as absolutely not-having-being, as Nothing. But Nothing as that Nothing which pertains to the having-of-being is the keenest opponent of mere negating. Nothing is never nothing; it is just as little a something, in the sense of an object [*Gegenstand*]; it is Being itself, whose truth will be given over to man when he has overcome himself as subject, and that means when he no longer represents that which is as object [*Objekt*].³¹⁶

On this account, the absolute abandonment or denial of Being is not just one form among others of Being's revelation, but rather this denial "had to become" [*werden müßte*] the highest [*höchste*] and most austere [*härteste*] revealing of Being. In other words, in nihilism—i.e., where Being unveils itself as nothing—the highest and most austere revelation of Being is possible. What this highest and most austere revelation of Being may mean is still an open question, one I will address at the end of this chapter and in the Conclusion. More specifically, what about beings when Being is disclosed at its highest? Does the highest revelation of Being yield care for beings?

³¹⁶ Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture" in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, translated by William Lovitt (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1977), 154.

With my emphasis on the *highest* revelation, I am not necessarily subscribing to Heidegger's history of Being, nor I am necessarily committing myself to what Derrida called the metaphysics of presence (essentially binary and hierarchical). My intention is not to correct Heidegger's narrative by showing that it is in modernity—rather than in the ancient Greek beginning of philosophy—where Being gives itself without surrogates or idols. Instead, I just want to underline the tension between Heidegger's reactionary views on modernity, on the one hand, and the “logical” conclusions of interpreting Being as nothing (with its negative mode of revelation), on the other. In other words, I use Heidegger's language of the “highest” in order both to attack the common bleak view of modernity and to confirm my own interpretation of the inverted logic of Being's revelation (which I logically developed in the previous chapter and which now gets its confirmation in Heidegger's texts about modernity).³¹⁷

Why does Heidegger use a hypothetical expression, asking his readers to *suppose* the denial as the highest revealing of Being? Is there something preventing Being's highest disclosure from happening in nihilism? It seems that while Being in its denial is showing itself to us, we modern and contemporary persons fail to see in this denial Being's disclosure. In other words, the problem is that in nihilism the meaning of the nothing (and denial) is not clear. Indeed, Heidegger defines nihilism as “the essential nonthinking of the essence of the nothing.”³¹⁸ Hence, it seems that in order to unleash this inverted mode of revelation, Being needs our own availability or readiness to engage with the nothing. Heidegger's own writings create the hermeneutical ground that favors this readiness and prevents the misunderstanding

³¹⁷ Since the language of “highest” often leads to the mystification of all-too-human hierarchies, according to my interpretation, the insight into the thatness of beings questions these attempts to create “ontological” gradings. Moreover, in itself the insight into the thatness of beings should not be considered high or low. While beings can be high or low, the fact that beings are, is neither high nor low.

³¹⁸ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. 4, 22.

of the experience of the nothing as mere negation or simple “not-having-being.” We have to confront this denial from the perspective of Being as nothing.³¹⁹ After our study of the nothing in the last chapter, we are prepared to see in this “denial” Being’s revelation.

Let me conclude this short review of nihilism by addressing how Heidegger changed his view on the possibility of overcoming nihilism, and how this change correlates with some of his political views. During the 1930s, Heidegger supported the idea of overcoming nihilism. One of Heidegger’s reasons for supporting National Socialism in the 1930s involved his hope for overcoming nihilism and tempering the effects of technology.³²⁰ The war seems to have taught him, however, that the supposedly noble task of overcoming nihilism had a “dark side.” Thomas Sheehan writes:

³¹⁹ See Chapter Six, page 268.

³²⁰ For instance, in a passage in Heidegger’s lecture on *Schelling: Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit (1809)*, given in 1936 and included in the *Gesamtausgabe 42 (Collective works)*, but withheld from the version published in 1971 (*Schelling’s Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. by Joan Stambaugh, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985), Heidegger mentions with approval Mussolini and Hitler as examples of different countermovements (*Gegenbewegungen*) to nihilism: “It is in any case well-known that the two men who have initiated—in different ways—from out the political organization of the nation, e.g., from the people, countermovements in Europe, that both Mussolini and Hitler were essentially determined by Nietzsche in various respects, and this without directly coming into effect (*zur Geltung käme*) the actual metaphysical realm of Nietzsche’s thinking” (GA 42, 40-41, my translation). According to the Italian philosopher Franco Volpi, Heidegger’s decision to deepen his understanding of nihilism could have been triggered by political and ideological struggles with members of the Nazi party, especially with Ernst Kriek, who in 1934 wrote about Heidegger: “The worldview’s fundamental tone (*Der weltanschauliche Grundton*) of Heidegger’s doctrine (*Lehre*) is determined by the concepts of care and anxiety, both of which aim at nothingness (*Nichts*). The meaning of this philosophy is pronounced atheism and metaphysical nihilism, as it was otherwise predominantly represented by Jewish writers in our country, thus a ferment of decomposition and dissolution (*Zersetzung und Auflösung*) for the German people” (Ernst Kriek, “*Germanischer Mythos und Heideggersche Philosophie*, in the journal *Volk im Werden*, Leipzig. 2. 1934, 247- 249; quoted from Guido Schneeberger, *Nachlese zu Heidegger: Dokumente zu seinem Leben und Denken*, Berna: private edition, 1972, 225, my translation). This accusation that his own philosophy represents metaphysical nihilism may have been one reason for his long engagement with Nietzsche, in which he ended up acknowledging the identity of nihilism and metaphysics, and thus changing his view on the possibility of overcoming nihilism. See Franco Volpi, *Il nichilismo*, trans. into Spanish by Cristina I. del Rosso and Alejandro G. Vigo as *El Nihilismo* (Madrid: Siruela, 2012), 109. Still, in the late 1930s, in Heidegger’s *Contributions to Philosophy*, while he clearly supports the idea of overcoming nihilism, he identifies the role of his philosophy not as overcoming nihilism but, rather, as preparing for a future overcoming of nihilism when the last god comes: “The preparation for overcoming nihilism is paved by the basic experience that the human being, as the one who grounds Da-sein, is *needed* by the godhood of the other god. What is most inescapable and most difficult in this overcoming is the *knowledge* of nihilism” (CP, 110).

In the 1930s Heidegger had hoped National Socialism would provide economic, social, and political solutions to the problem of planetary nihilism (and he implies that his own philosophy might have served as the ideological superstructure of such changes). By the 1950s, however, it would appear he was convinced that a more profound understanding of the *essence* of nihilism invalidated such naïve hopes for a remedy.³²¹

Even during the final years of the war, when he was immersed in his second deep study of Nietzsche (1944–46), Heidegger seems to have already rejected the possibility of overcoming nihilism:

If we heed the essence of nihilism as an essence of the history of Being itself, then the plan to overcome nihilism becomes superfluous ... Instead of such overcoming, only one thing is necessary, namely, that thinking, encouraged by Being itself, simply think to encounter Being in its default as such. Such thinking to encounter rests primarily on the recognition that Being itself withdraws, but that as this withdrawal Being is precisely the relationship that claims the essence of man, as the abode of its (Being's) advent.³²²

Since often nihilism is considered bad, and its overcoming good, we may be surprised that Heidegger's alignment with National Socialism was, if not motivated by, then at least formulated with the explicit goal of, overcoming nihilism; inversely, when he took more distance from National Socialism,³²³ he seems to have realized at the same time the impossibility of overcoming nihilism. The rejection of overcoming nihilism correlates with his idiosyncratic understanding of the abandonment by Being. As I showed, this counterintuitive refusal that gives, and the withdrawal of Being that claims the essence of man, depend on his interpretation of Being as nothing (in which since the nothing is essential to Being, one can't

³²¹ Thomas Sheehan, "Nihilism: Heidegger/Jünger/Aristotle" in *Phenomenology: Japanese and American Perspectives*, ed. by Burt C. Hopkins (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999), 284.

³²² Heidegger, *Nietzsche* vol. 4, 225.

³²³ While Heidegger took some distance from the "actual" party after his resignation from the rectorship of the University of Freiburg in 1934, a different issue is whether he also dismissed Nazism conceptually. About this second issue there is plenty of evidence that he kept close to his heart some version of Nazism until his death. In the Conclusion, I come back to this "ontological" version of Nazism.

overcome the former without eclipsing the latter). Thus, contrary to the common opinion, what seduced Heidegger to get involved with Nazi ideology was not his obscure thinking about the nothing but, rather, his departing from it. It was when he thought that the nothing of nihilism could be overcome that the most outrageous idols emerged. The most simplistic anti-Semitic clichés became suddenly, under the hand of Heidegger, cosmic ontological forces fighting for the destiny of the world. I come to this back in the Conclusion. My goal is to invert the common critique of Heidegger, one that has been voiced since the late twenties, which states that Heidegger was a nihilist and his philosophy a philosophy of nothing.³²⁴ In fact, the opposite seems to be true. The forgetting of the nothing—of the insight that Being is like nothing—let him believe himself to be channeling Being,³²⁵ which made him either blind to the evil happening around him or heartless about it. He transformed a philosophy attuned by the nothing of anxiety into a “heroic” thinking ready to sacrifice in the name of the fate of Being. When we are attuned by the nothing of anxiety, what sacrifice could the absurd and wonderful fact that things are instead of nothing, ask for?³²⁶

3) Technology

³²⁴ See, Heidegger’s “Postscript to ‘What is Metaphysics?’” in *Pathmarks*, 232. On the classic critique of Heidegger’s notion of the nothing from a logical and linguistic point of view, see Rudolf Carnap’s “The Overcoming of Metaphysics through Logical Analysis of Language,” in *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 23-24. See Stephan Käufer: “The Nothing and the Ontological Difference in Heidegger’s What is Metaphysics?”, *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy*, 2005, 48:6, 482-506; specially IV: Forgetfulness of Being and Dominion of Logic, pp 493-498.

³²⁵ According to Heidegger of the 1930s, philosophers are not the agents of the history of metaphysics. In a way that is neither active nor absolutely passive, their thoughts are reverberations of Being that they bring into words. For instance, “the thoughts of a thinker of Nietzsche’s stature are reverberations of the still-unrecognized history of Being [*Geschichte des Seins*] in the word which that historical man utters as his ‘language.’” (Heidegger, *Nietzsche* vol 4, ed. by David Farrell Krell, New York: HarperOne, 1982, 12).

³²⁶ I come back to the notion of sacrifice from the point of view of the ontological difference in the Conclusion.

While the survey of machination offered proof for the idea that there are plenty of sources of enchantment in modernity, the interpretation of nihilism gave me the opportunity to argue for Being's inverted logic of revelation. In other words, while I argued that our injunction, in the era of machination, to calculate and reduce everything to lived experience requires some type of enchantment, with the *nihil* in nihilism I argued that it is Being as such that gives itself in machination within nihilism. Since the nothing of anxiety reveals the wonder of Being, it seems that in nihilism—where the nothing gives the name to the age—there is also the readiness to experience ontological wonder.

Heidegger is well known for his reactionary views on modern technology. On his account, when the essence of modern technology shapes the world, language becomes information, thinking calculation, everything is leveled down into the distanceless,³²⁷ and the standing reserve (*Bestand*—in which the human is also included) decomposes the world as a whole into uniform, replaceable (*Ersetzbar*) pieces ready for consumption (*Verbrauch*).³²⁸ For Heidegger, the requisitioning (*bestellen*) has made agriculture “a mechanized food industry, in essence the same as the production of corpses in the gas chambers and extermination camps, the same as the blockading and starving countries, the same as the production of hydrogen bombs.”³²⁹ In this modern world, not even death as death is possible: “Hundreds of thousands die in masses. Do they die? They perish. They are put down. Do they die? They become pieces

³²⁷ Heidegger, *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures: Insight Into That Which Is and Basic Principles of Thinking*, 23.

³²⁸ Ibid, 35. See also Heidegger's *Four Seminars*: “Today being is being-replaceable. Already the idea of ‘repair’ has become an ‘anti-economical’ thought. It is essential for every being of consumption that it *be already* consumed and thus call for its replacement” (62). While the German word *Bestand* denotes a stock or supply, Heidegger uses this word to define how things appear, within modern technology, as always being challenged and ordered according to some demand in advance. According to William Lovitt, with this word, Heidegger “wishes to stress not the permanency, but the orderability and substitutability of objects” (Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, page 17, note 16).

³²⁹ Heidegger, *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures: Insight Into That Which Is and Basic Principles of Thinking*, 27.

of inventory of a standing reserve for the fabrication of corpses.” Since death is disguised, the “human is not yet the mortal”; the essence of mortality, pain, poverty remain concealed.³³⁰ Even the moon as moon has disappeared: “It no longer rose or set. It is now only a calculable parameter for the technological enterprise of humans.”³³¹ Only when Being means “measurability” does Max Planck’s thesis makes sense: “The real is what is measurable.”³³² Cybernetics has become a replacement for philosophy and poetry. The loss of the gods has changed “the relation to the gods ... into mere ‘religious experience.’”³³³ With this description of the modern world shaped by modern technology, can I still defend the thesis that in the modern world the highest revelation of Being occurs?

Opposing this bleak view that considers modern technology as purely negative, I am going to offer a “positive” interpretation of Heidegger’s view.³³⁴ Any interpretation that sees in Heidegger only a one-sided reactionary attitude towards modern technology has to also acknowledge Heidegger’s insight that it is precisely in this modern world of technology that his *other beginning* becomes possible. Much as in his interpretation of nihilism, there is an ambiguity between a reactionary discourse on the destructive effects of modern technology linked to the longing for a new god, on the one hand, and the insight into the highest revelation of Being ever possible, gathered *within* modern technology, on the other. According to this

³³⁰ Ibid, 53, 54.

³³¹ Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 38.

³³² Ibid, 53.

³³³ Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, 117.

³³⁴ To avoid misunderstandings, a “positive” reading does not mean that I will try to convince that the phenomena described above are actually “positive” or that they did not or do not happen. Rather, I argue that this description is not complete. I will have to reconcile these devastating modern phenomena with the (logical) conclusion that at the same time the revelation of Being occurs—especially when the former cannot be explained as the consequence of the absence of the latter. I come back to this at the end of this chapter.

second option, it is still not clear how modern technology can become the place for the highest revelation of Being.³³⁵

Much as in nihilism, instead of overcoming, Heidegger talks about *Verwindung*—a turning or change of direction—towards the essence of technology. Unsurprisingly, the essence of technology loves to hide.³³⁶ Thus, the link between machination, nihilism, technology, and the nothing remains concealed if we move on the surface of these phenomena, i.e., machination as the obsession with calculation and lived experience, nihilism as the devaluation of values, technology as the “effects of high-frequency machines,” and the nothing as negation. We have to carefully learn how to navigate between “superficial” manifestations and essential ones. Let us try to illuminate the essence of modern technology by focusing on two concepts: *Ge-stell* and the gigantic.

In his critique of the modern world, Heidegger was influenced by Ernst Jünger. Heidegger’s response to Jünger’s “*Über die Linie*” (1950) offers sense of the scope of this influence. Heidegger saw that for Jünger the category of *work* took an ontological status, as

³³⁵ With this more “positive” reading of modernity (in which I underline the possibilities of ontological wonder in nihilism and modern technology), I am deconstructing my own “Manichean” framework that seems to have been operative throughout my work. From the point of view of Being’s revelation, there is no opposition between the process of rationalization and the disclosure of Being. The insight into Being as nothing paradoxically challenges the narrative of ontological decay precisely by granting it. Being’s denial and refusal amount to its mode of disclosure. Hence the process of rationalization does not eclipse ontological wonder but, rather, favors a disclosure to which Heidegger refers—in passing—as the “highest.” Simply stated, from this ontological perspective, the process of rationalization is not an evil enemy to annihilate. However, the deconstruction of this Manichean framework brings to the fore an even more urgent question: what is the relationship between the highest ontological insight of Being and the ethical care for beings? So far in Part II, I have focused on clarifying the meaning of ontological wonder, shown how such wonder is available in our modern times, and, through the interpretation of the nothing, tried to create in the reader the conditions for readiness to the nothing (so that the inverted revelation of Being can occur). But I have not yet addressed whether ontological wonder tends to yield care for beings—which is especially urgent given our ecological crisis. I defer this ethical issue to the Conclusion, but not because it seems irrelevant. To the contrary, this is a crucial issue that needs to be treated at the end, only after we have gained a clear sense of the meaning and relation of modern enchantment and ontological wonder.

³³⁶ In his lecture “The Question Concerning Technology” (1955), Heidegger writes about the essence of technology: “Technology is not equivalent to the essence of technology. When we are seeking the essence of ‘tree,’ we have to become aware that That which pervades every tree, as tree, is not itself a tree that can be encountered among all the other trees. Likewise, the essence of technology is by no means anything technological” (Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, 4).

the “totalitarian character of the actuality of the actual [*Wirklichkeit des Wirklichen*]” (*QB*, 301). Work is not just one activity among others, but rather *work*, understood as the essence of reality, “is identical to being, in the sense of the will to power” (*QB*, 301). According to Jünger, the worker by means of his or her work shapes the world, or better said, gives his or her own shape (*Gestalt*) to the world. Jünger writes in *Der Arbeiter* (1932), “Technology is the way in which the *Gestalt* of the worker mobilizes the world,” and it is “the symbol of the *Gestalt* of the worker.”³³⁷ According to Heidegger’s interpretation, *work* names Being (as will to power), which gives meaning to the world, the worker, and technology: “‘Work’ from which the *Gestalt* of the worker for its part receives its meaning, is identical with ‘being’” (*QB*, 302). Technology, in this account, depends on the *Gestalt* that the work of the worker—one being among others—stamps on technology and the world.³³⁸

Contrasting Heidegger to Jünger can offer a better understanding of what Heidegger takes to be the essence of modern technology, namely, *Ge-Stell* (enframing or positionality). In the modern technological world, through calculation, everything is represented (*vorgestellt*), produced (*her-gestellt*), and placed (*gestellt*) in advance, which renders everything as a uniform, and replicable piece of a standing reserve (*Bestand*).³³⁹ Everything is placed into a grid that has already in advance reduced all beings to a replaceable part of a standing reserve,

³³⁷ Ernst Jünger, *Der Arbeiter: Herrschaft und Gestalt* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2014), 275, (“*Die Maschinentchnik ist zu begreifen als das Symbol einer besonderen Gestalt, nämlich der des Arbeiters*”) 78, quoted in *QB*, 301.

³³⁸ While for Heidegger, technology is an heir of metaphysics, there is a relevant inversion. When “being” is determined by the work of the worker (a being among others), the transcendent aim of the *meta*-physical within metaphysics disappears. Instead of transcendence the shape of the worker turns everything into rescendance. Thus, technology “is manifestly grounded in that reversal of transcendence into rescendance of the *Gestalt* of the worker, whereby the presence of this *Gestalt* unfolds into the representation of its power” (*QB*, 301-302).

³³⁹ Much as in German “*Berg*” means a mountain and “*Gebirge*,” a mountain range, the term *Ge-stell* brings together different versions of the verb “*stellen*” (to place, put, set). See Joan Stambaugh’s note in Heidegger’s *Identity and Difference*, New York: Harper & Row, 1969, 14. According to Daniel O. Dahlstrom, “One ordinary meaning of *Gestell* is a shelf. The essence of modern technology shelves whatever is into the standing reserve” (*The Heidegger Dictionary*, London: Bloomsbury, 2013, 169-170).

ready to be mobilized and consumed in a process of endless growth and accumulation. In a way that renders clearer the contrast between the *Gestalt* of the worker and *Ge-Stell* as the essence of modern technology, Heidegger asks Jünger:

Does the essence of *Gestalt* spring in its provenance [*Herkunftsbereich*] from the realm of what I call *Ge-Stell*? Does the essential provenance [*Wesenherkunft*] of the *ιδέα* accordingly belong to the same realm from which the released essence of *Gestalt* stems? Or is *Ge-Stell* only a function of the *Gestalt* of a particular humankind? If this latter were the case, then the *essential unfolding* of being [*Wesen des Seins*] and above all the being of beings would be a product [*Gemächte*] of human representation. The era in which European thinking came to this opinion continues to cast its last shadow over us (*QB*, 303).

Who gives its form to the world? In other words, who is the agent of history? While behind the *Gestalt* of the worker there is a particular human type, who or what is behind the Heideggerian *Ge-Stell*? In other words, if *work* shapes the world, whose shape is it? Do we work and shape the world according to our image and likeness, or is it the “work” that works through us, so that the world is shaped by “something” that still needs to be identified, which Heidegger calls *Ge-Stell*? The former option, which was suggested by Jünger, has a long tradition including figures like Feuerbach and Marx. If the worker shapes the world through his work, but nevertheless faces a hostile world, then we have to conclude that the worker lives in an alienated world.

According to the second option, however, when the workers suffer their precarious situations, there is no alienation to blame, because the human has never been in charge of shaping the world in his image.³⁴⁰ The few capital owners may not understand the

³⁴⁰ Of course, there are more options. For instance, the one developed by Byung-Chul Han, for whom the worker is exploited not by a few capitalist owners, or by *work* itself (i.e., some uncanny nonhuman force embodied in work), but rather the worker self-exploits himself. This option is a variation of the first one, but where the “other” that alienates is not out there but, rather, has been internalized and now dwells invisibly within. Furthermore, in Part I, I was not able to place *Dialectic of Enlightenment* clearly in either category. Although

philosophical complexities of Heidegger's interpretation of *Ge-Stell*, but they may be happy with its possible ideological use.

After our review of machination and nihilism, we should not be surprised to know that it is the abandonment of beings by Being that attunes the essence of modern technology. Let us study how the abandonment by Being is experienced by humans in a technological world as the gigantic.

On the surface, machination refers to the unlimited power to reduce everything to calculating, planning, and molding. It is here that Heidegger sees what he calls the gigantic. Superficially, the gigantic seems to mean something quantitatively great. In the 1938 lecture "The Age of the World Picture," Heidegger offers some examples of the gigantic: "in the annihilation of great distances by the airplane, in the setting before us of foreign and remote worlds in their everydayness, which is produced at random through radio by a flick of the hand" (135). However, Heidegger opposes the common idea of gigantic as something quantitatively great: "we think too superficially if we suppose that the gigantic is only the endlessly extended emptiness of the purely quantitative" (135). In contrast, for him, the gigantic is when the quantitative becomes a special quality. In his *Contribution to Philosophy*, he links machination with the gigantic:

As soon as machination for its part is grasped in terms of the historicity of being, however, the gigantic reveals as 'something' else. It is no longer the representable object of something 'quantitative' without limit; instead, it is quantity as quality. (*CP*, 106).

Horkheimer and Adorno very clearly oppose every sense of mystification and hypostatization, *domination* and *nature* as they describe them seem to surpass the sphere of human subjectivity, as if by humans dominating nature, nature would be dominating itself through us—or as if we would be dominated by domination. Thus, we have to consider whether Heidegger's *Ge-Stell* may illuminate the dialectic of the domination of nature implied by Horkheimer and Adorno.

While first the gigantic is experienced as something quantitatively great, we have to let “the abandonment by being and thus the predominance of the distortion [*Herrschaft des Un-wesens*] (as machination) of φύσις” (CP, 106) resound. At this point in this study, we are prepared to try to clarify this obscure formula. In Chapter Four, while reviewing the essence of wonder, we studied Heidegger’s narrative of the historical distortion of the proper Greek experience of φύσις (*physis*). While *techne* (as what sustains the experience of wonder) should preserve the holding sway of φύσις, it includes the possibility of destroying the harmony with φύσις. In Heidegger’s account, *techne*, instead of operating in accordance with φύσις, can posit its own arbitrary goals. Thus, already in the Greek beginning, there was the possibility that *techne* could not preserve the emergent coming forth out of concealment into the open. We now have to see how specifically modern technology distorts φύσις. Our point of entrance is going to be the gigantic as the quantitative becoming qualitative.

Heidegger traces the changeover of quantitative into the qualitative back to the Greek beginning:

This latter “changeover” is prepared by the determination of beingness on the basis of τέχνη and ἰδέα. To represent [*das Vor-stellen*] and to bring before oneself [*das Vor-sich-her-bringen*] involve the ‘how wide’ [*wieweit*] and ‘how far’ [*inwiefern*], i.e, the characters of *distance* [*das Abstandmäßige*] in relation to beings as ob-jects [*Gegen-stand*], even if no definite spatial things or relations are thought of (CP, 107).

When in *techne* (i.e., the human preserving of φύσις), the interpretation of Being as presence and constancy eclipsed the insight into the presencing of beings (as the emergent coming forth out of concealment),³⁴¹ the look and form of beings (i.e., the ἰδέα) became the defining element in our experience of beings. Once the ἰδέα took precedence, humans started to relate to beings

³⁴¹ On *techne* eclipsing *physis*, see Chapter Four, page 206. On the interpretation of Being as constancy and presence, see, in this chapter, the section on machination, page 287.

in terms of representation (i.e., bringing them before ourselves, instead of preserving their emergence out of concealment), and we turned beings into objects for representation (i.e., things with a constant look that are ready to be brought before ourselves). Now, according to this passage, once representation and objectification eclipsed the insight into the presencing of beings, our primordial relation to beings was reconfigured in terms of distance. Neglecting the mysterious coming-into-appearance, our gaze turned to the fixed object standing at a stable distance. We could control beings by determining their distance in relation to us. For Heidegger, this privileging of distance already bears the seed for making everything calculable and plannable in advance.

Representation, as *systematic*, turns this di-stance [*Ab-stand*], as well as its overcoming and securing, into the basic law of determination of objects. The project of representation [*Der Entwurf des Vor-stellens*], in the sense of an anticipating, planning, organizing *grasp* of everything [*der vorgreifend-planend-einrichtenden Erfassung von allem*], before everything is already grasped in particulars and individuals, this representation finds no limits in what is given and seeks to find none. ... In principle, nothing is 'im-possible'; indeed, that term is 'hated.' That is to say, everything is humanly possible, as long as everything is calculated in every respect and in advance and the conditions are provided (*CP*, 107).

Everything can fit into a plan in advance, even before we encounter any being in particular. This calculation has no limits: where there is a will, we can calculate the way. Hence, Heidegger sees the essence of the gigantic, i.e., the quantitative as qualitative, in the domination of representation and objectification:

Thus we can already see that it is not a matter of a changeover of the 'quantitative' into the qualitative but is a matter of recognizing the original essence of the quantitative and of the possibility of its representation (calculability) in the essence of the reigning of both *representation as such* and the *objectifying* of beings (*CP*, 107).

But, as already discussed, representation and objectification, in turn, respond to some specific interpretation of Being as presence and constancy. Hence, for Heidegger, in the privilege of the quantitative we can still sense the disclosure of the essence of Being—even if in a distorted way:

The quantitative (*quantitas*) can appear as a category because it is basically the essence (distorted essence [*Un-wesen*]) of being itself, but this latter is at first sought only in the beingness of beings, with beings understood as the present and constant.” (*CP*, 108).

Granting that Being (or at least some distorted version of it) resonates in the quantitative aspect of the gigantic (i.e., quantity as quality), it is still not clear how are we able to “hear” this resonance. In other words, how do we experience Being itself in the gigantic? Close to the end of the lecture “The Age of the World Picture,” after having studied how representation and calculation shape our modern world, Heidegger writes,

But as soon as the gigantic in planning and calculating and adjusting and making secure shifts over out of the quantitative and becomes a special quality, then what is gigantic, and what can seemingly always be calculated completely, becomes, precisely through this, incalculable. This becoming incalculable remains the invisible shadow that is cast around all things everywhere when man has been transformed into *subiectum* and the world into picture (135).

Tellingly, the project of calculation leads to the incalculable. It is in the incalculable that the ontological nature of the gigantic can be experienced. In *Contributions to Philosophy*, Heidegger writes, “Grasped historically, the gigantic as such is primarily the incalculable. The latter, however, is the announcement (ungraspable from the overly close nearness) of being itself, but in the form of the plight of the lack of a sense of plight” (*CP*, 108). Being announces itself in the incalculability of the gigantic, in such a way that we can experience it precisely as the ungraspable. I find here another proof for the “negative” logic of the disclosure of Being

(when understood as nothing). Here again, when seemingly everything can always be calculated completely, and the quantitative becomes a special quality (the gigantic), the calculable turns into the incalculable.

While Being seems to disappear under the logic of calculation, and when the priority of procedures and contrivances turns everything into resources ready to be consumed, Being itself appears at the extreme of the project of calculability as the incalculable. I am not here implying some dialectical movement that would start in calculability in order to end in its opposite, the incalculable. Instead, I am suggesting a simultaneous appearing in disappearance, an incalculability in the midst of complete calculation, an immobility in the midst of total mobilization, an invisible shadow in the midst of light. Being is not like the Hegelian Spirit that has to first become what it is not in order to ultimately discover that it has always been both itself and the other. Instead, Heideggerian Being *is* other—it is nothing else than beings with regard to their thatness, or better, it is the nothing from the point of view of beings.

Heidegger's reference to the invisible shadow (see last page above) may help to clarify this contradictory mode of disclosure. What does Heidegger mean with the incalculable as an invisible shadow that is cast around all things everywhere?³⁴² In the appendix for this lecture, Heidegger explains how a shadow can illuminate the incalculable:

Everyday opinion sees in the shadow only the lack of light, if not light's complete denial. In truth, however, the shadow is a manifest, though impenetrable, testimony of the concealed emitting of light. In keeping with this concept of shadow, we experience the

³⁴² My interpretation does not necessarily align smoothly with that of Heidegger himself. For instance, in the passage about this invisible shadow, he writes: "this becoming incalculable remains the invisible shadow that is cast around all things everywhere when man has been transformed into *subiectum* and the world into picture." Is the invisible shadow necessarily linked with man as *subiectum* and the world as picture, such that if we overcome both man as *subiectum* and the world as picture, then we may get some disclosure of Being otherwise than as an invisible shadow? In my interpretation, however, since Being is essentially like nothing for us, the invisible shadow is its highest possible mode of disclosure.

incalculable as that which, withdrawn from representation, is nevertheless manifest in whatever is, pointing to Being, which remains concealed (154).

On a sunny day, a person's body casts a shadow on the floor. If she merely looks at the floor, she may think that the shadow is the lack of light. But if she turns at the sun, or feels its heat warming her skin, she realizes that the shadow is a manifest testimony of the sun. In this way, she can experience her shadow on the floor as the testimony of light. Even further, she may realize that the shadow appears thanks to her own interaction with the emitting source of light; in other words, her body is the one that conceals the emitting of light and thus casts the shadow on the floor. She does not create the shadow (because it is a testimony of the sun) but she essentially participates in the creation of the shadow (it is her body that blocks the light of the sun, thus concealing the emitting of light).

Similarly, in the midst of everything calculable, there is an ontological shadow, namely, the incalculable that points to Being—that remains concealed but manifested in the shadow. We humans are the shadow of Being, such that Being *uses* (braucht) us as contrast in order to be revealed as shadow. Being has to withdraw, becoming the concealed emitting of light, so that we can be its shadow—i.e., the concealed manifestation of Being.

If after my brief survey on machination, nihilism, and modern technology we grant that the experience of Being is available, then the question becomes: how do we relate the resonating of Being in machination, nihilism, and modern technology to the experience of ontological wonder as Being's highest possible revelation? How do we understand the fact that both the enchantment of machination and the experience of ontological wonder share the same root? This relation is particularly relevant for our study. If machination enchants the process of rationalization and the domination of nature, does this shared root mean that ontological

wonder is just another form of enchanted domination? And if that is the case, what is the relation between Being (in its resonating in machination or disclosure in wonder) and the domination of nature? Let us focus on the relation between the resonating of Being in modernity (*Gestell*) and the possibility of Being's disclosure in wonder (*Ereignis*).

Much as a movement that starts in anxiety takes its full course in wonder (see Chapter Six), in our modern world, we may start with *Gestell* and end up transfigured by the event of Being (which after *Being and Time*, Heidegger refers to as the event of appropriation of Dasein to Being [*Ereignis*]). While the overcoming of machination, nihilism, and modern technology is impossible, we have to clarify what this sort of transfiguration of the modern world may mean.

Heidegger's explicit departure from the language of "overcoming" suggests that this transfiguration within technological modernity is *not* a dialectical (sequential) movement in which the technological *Gestell* would be negated and sublated into some healed future. The healing power of the turn is *simultaneously* given with the danger in modern technology. There is a cobelonging of *Gestell* (enframing) and *Ereignis* (appropriation). This cobelonging makes *Gestell* essentially ambiguous. It works like a Janus head:

Enframing . . . is the completion and consummation of metaphysics and at the same time the disclosive preparation of appropriation. This is why it is by no means a question of viewing the advent of technology as a negative occurrence (but just as little as a positive occurrence in the sense of a paradise on Earth). Enframing is, as it were, the photographic negative of appropriation.³⁴³

But how can we turn the photographic negative into the actual photo? As I mentioned above, the task is to avoid a dialectical reading and to grasp simultaneously the appropriation in

³⁴³ Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 60, translation modified.

Gestell, which is not always confirmed in Heidegger's texts. While Heidegger's view is ambiguous, I want—nevertheless—to distinguish two different options.

First is the view that Heidegger most likely defended. The transfiguration of *Gestell* through a new disclosure of Being inaugurates a new world. According to Heidegger, there is a “turn from the forgetting of being to the guardianship of the essence of being” that takes place “when the danger, pivotal in its concealed essence, first properly presents as the danger that it is.” When this turn will happen is unknown: “Perhaps we already stand in the shadow cast in advance of this turn's arrival. When and how this will dispensationally take place, no one knows.”³⁴⁴

Heidegger writes that the turn happens suddenly: “The turn of the danger takes place suddenly. In the turn there suddenly lights up the illuminated clearing of the essence of being. This sudden self-lighting is the lightning flash.”³⁴⁵ The human has to patiently await the arrival for the turn: “Only when the human as the shepherd of being waits for the truth of being can he at all expect—and without deteriorating into a mere wanting to know—the arrival of another dispensation of being.”³⁴⁶ This turn is not separate from *Gestell*; instead, it is anticipated already within the danger of *Gestell*:

In all this disguising of enframing, the glimmer of world still lights up, the truth of being flashes. Namely when enframing in its essence as the danger is lit up. Even in enframing as an essential destiny of being there essences a light from the flash of being. Enframing, although veiled, is still a glance, not a blind destiny in the sense of a completely oppressive doom.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁴ Heidegger, *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures: Insight Into That Which Is and Basic Principles of Thinking*, 67.

³⁴⁵ Ibid. 69

³⁴⁶ Heidegger, *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures: Insight Into That Which Is and Basic Principles of Thinking*, 67.

³⁴⁷ Ibid, 72. “In the essence of danger there essences and dwells as grace, namely the grace of the turn of the forgetting of being into the truth of being” (ibid, 69).

The arrival of the truth of being would transfigure *Gestell* and its forgetting of being. It seems that the refusal or forgetting of being—where being is nothing—would be the best that we could get within *Gestell*, but there is still the expectation that this condition will change into a more favorable dispensation.³⁴⁸ We merely have to wait for the arrival of the turn. This waiting is not passive but requires some active anticipation of the arrival. But what I want to note is that in this interpretation the ontological arrival changes our ontic world. It may not be an “overcoming” of the *Gestell*, but this “recovery” (*Verwindung*) looks pretty similar to some sublation. Thus, I argue that Heidegger’s reactionary views about the modern world blind him about his own insight into Being *as* nothing and about how Being gives itself in and through its abandonment. His repulsion from the cosmopolitan uprootedness of modern life obligated him to postulate that the gift of Being’s refusal should finally overcome the refusal. The resonating of Being in machination, nihilism, and modern technology should be merely the overture to a new melody to come. But Heidegger failed to endure in restraint, diffidence, and silence Being’s most austere and highest possible disclosure.

Secondly, according to the thesis of Being as nothing, I have defended the idea that the modern world is the highest possible revelation of Being. The nature of the turn within modern technology should be studied from the perspective of the logic of the nothing. I argue for the paradoxical supposition that nihilism—in which there is nothing to Being itself—makes

³⁴⁸ Indeed, in his later work, Heidegger seems to expect such a favorable new dispensation of Being that he again suggests a future overcoming of nihilism. In his lecture “The Danger” (1949), the awakening to the fourfold (*Geviert*) (i.e., the gathering in each thing of earth, sky, divinities, and mortals) would lead to an overcoming of nihilism: “When world first properly takes place, then being, and along with it the nothing, vanish into worlding. Only when the nothing, in its essence from the truth of being, vanishes into this is nihilism overcome. But world still refuses itself as world. World still withdraws into the concealment proper to it” (*Bremen and Freiburg Lectures*, 47). Although the world refuses itself as world, Heidegger considers possible the vanishing of Being and nothing in the worlding of the fourfold, which in turn leads to an overcoming of nihilism.

possible the highest and most austere revelation possible. This study of the logic of the nothing justifies—at least against Heidegger’s reactionary side—the argument that in the modern epoch, in which there is nothing to Being, the highest revelation of Being becomes possible.

I acknowledge the tension between my attempt to offer a “positive” reading of the essence of modernity and the “negative” connotations of machination, nihilism, Gestell, and the gigantic. But the tension (if not confusion) arises because I use the “positive” and the “negative” within different registers or spheres. On the one hand, my “positive” reading focused on the ontological possibilities of modernity. Along these lines, when the quantitative has become a quality, and the tendency for planning and calculating has achieved its highest, precisely then the invisible shadow casts its ontological insight. In other words, what is “positive” is that in modernity the revelation of Being seems to be inescapable. On the other hand, it is from an ethical point of view that these concepts have a “negative” connotation. In other words, it is from the perspective of what facilitates or hinders the care for beings that my (ontological) “positive” reading still seems questionable.

So far, I am arguing for the equiprimordiality or simultaneous happening of two phenomena: (1) the modern crisis described by Heidegger’s negative view of technology, to which I would add our contemporary environmental crisis; (2) the possibility of the highest disclosure of Being—deprived of any idolatrous cloaks. Thus, there is a correlation between the crisis in our ethical care for the natural world and our fellow human beings, on the one hand, and the possibility of the irruption of the nude fact of our bare existence, on the other. But let me be clear here: I am not insinuating some pessimistic necessity that assumes our ontic-ethical crisis as the condition of possibility for the disclosure of Being. Instead, I claim that at any moment the revelation of Being is possible, even at a time of ecological crisis.

Rather than assuming that ontic suffering causes ontological revelation, I focus on how ontological revelation can soothe the ontic distress. Although I am not expecting that the disclosure of Being is *necessarily* going to resolve our environmental issues, I will argue in the Conclusion that the disclosure of Being has an *indirect* consequence in relation to our ecological crisis: anxiety and wonder have the power to *reveal* the enchantment that possesses us. This revelation is the first step towards any successful critique of rationalization. I will also argue that ontological wonder *directly* challenges our instrumental mode of dealing with nature, and inaugurates care for all beings for the sole reason that they *are*—that they are not nothing.

According to this interpretation, while the disclosure of Being can be indirectly and directly used for the critique of the process of rationalization, there is no *necessary* connection between the ethical and the ontological; this is why the lowest ethical experience may coexist with the highest ontological experience. For some saints and ethical souls, the ontological dimension is outrageous or at least useless—and they are absolutely right. But for a phenomenologist, who is concerned with seeing more, the ontological dimension is relevant. The lessening of our ontic suffering is not always linked to some ontological truth. And the inverse is also possible: there is some ontological suffering, e.g., the weight of having to deal with our thrownness, that is betrayed by any attempt to moralize it (i.e., to try to give it an ontic justification: I suffer because when I was as a child my parents emotionally abandoned me, or I had an abusive partner). They are parallel tracks that sometimes come together, but they should not be confused.

When we try to explain our ontological anxiety with some moral or ethical worldview, we flee from precisely that which anxiety uncannily reveals; and inversely, when we try to

solve some ethical-ontic issue through Being, we may not have the effect expected (precisely because Being is “useless” for the logic of our ethical world). And yet, in the Conclusion I will still try to justify my attempt to give an ontological answer to our ontic ecological crisis. We are finally ready to assess ontological wonder vis-a-vis the enchantment of the Weberian modern gods.

Conclusion

In Part I of this study, I demonstrated that, contrary to the widespread interpretation, disenchantment does not signal a lack of enchantment. Instead, it refers to the struggle of various competing forces of enchantment. Since the process of rationalization has its own mode of enchantment, the decay of magic (Weber's *Entzauberung*) correlates with the flourishing of various non-magical sources of modern enchantment. In short, the modern world is profusely enchanted. I argued that this conclusion is already Weber's. Thus, the three contemporary texts that I examine that argue for the re-enchantment of the world—Jane Bennett's *The Enchantment of Modern Life*, Jason Josephson-Storm's *The Myth of Disenchantment*, and Joshua Landy and Michael Saler's *The Re-Enchantment of the World*—supplement but do not challenge Weber's thesis.

I identified the impersonal forces of enchantment with Weber's value spheres, which Weber says function much like the gods of an ancient pantheon. Because the issue of disenchantment shifted from a seeming lack of enchantment to its opposite—the struggle of various enchanting forces—I addressed the question of how to assess these forces. Since the world has always been enchanted, we cannot endorse “disenchanted” rationality over “enchanted” faith. Nor we can endorse blind faith in wonder or mystery as the medicine for our “disenchanted” environmental crisis.

From *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, I assessed the different forces of enchantment vis-a-vis the notion of the domination of nature. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, the process of rationalization increases its domination of nature by dialectically subsuming everything rational and irrational. My goal then became to assess *wonder* in relation to the process of

rationalization that seems to be causing the global crisis. I asked whether there is a type of wonder that can counter the modern project of the domination of nature. As a possible answer, I focused in Part II on ontological wonder.

In Part II, I elucidated the meaning of ontological wonder. While I focused on Heidegger's version of ontological wonder, my reading was mediated by Mary-Jane Rubenstein's interpretation of it in terms of wonder at the thatness of beings.

I started by describing other moods in order to clarify ontological wonder by contrast. I found that marveling works dialectically, which fits well with the ongoing process of rationalization in at least two respects. First, since we marvel at the unusual in order to escape the usual, and we inevitably turn what is unusual back into something usual; the process of marveling is endless. The process of rationalization uses this endless marveling to keep itself going. Second, often we prefer to stay ignorant so that we can marvel at the unusual. Ignorance becomes the condition of possibility for marveling. Consequently, the process of rationalization supports and is supported by our addiction to our own enchanted stupidity.

Ontological wonder, in contrast, departs from the dialectic of the usual/unusual. When attuned by ontological wonder, we do not marvel at *what* something is or *how* it works; rather, we are struck suddenly by the most *usual*—the obvious but usually unrecognized fact *that* beings *are* at all. While *what* and *how* things are can be explained, no explanation could account for and, thus, tame the mystery of thatness. In short, the experience of wonder has an ontological role: it reveals for the first time the event of Being.

While Heidegger assigns wonder's revelatory power to the time of the Greek beginning of philosophy, he rejects the notion that wonder can reveal Being for our modern time—a time

in which Being has been dismissed as irrelevant. He ascribes to restraint, shock, and diffidence (rather than to wonder) the capacity for revealing the modern event of Being.

Against this account, I correlate Heidegger's description of wonder in *Basic Problems of Philosophy* with his account of anxiety and the nothing in "What is Metaphysics?" In doing so, I conclude that wonder (in connection with anxiety) is capable of revealing Being today. In short, through the nothing of anxiety, ontological wonder is ready to attune us to a world in which—according to Heidegger—Being has abandoned us.

While Heidegger describes the modern world as bleak, he also argues that Being occurs in machination, nihilism, and modern technology. Thus, I argued that when in nihilism "there is nothing to Being," an original disclosure of Being becomes possible. The "nothing to Being" turns into "Being as nothing," and anxiety turns into the wonder that anything exists at all. Within the movement of nihilism, at the moment when the gods have left, and right before the birth of new gods, there is the possibility of this ontological revelation.

While this interpretation of nihilism opposes any simplistic reading that sees Heidegger's view on modernity as purely reactionary and nostalgic, it also implies something else—just vaguely hinted by Heidegger himself. By correlating Heideggerian passages on the modern world with the study of anxiety and wonder in which we experience Being as nothing, I proposed the outrageous thesis that in nihilism—in which there is nothing to Being—the highest revelation of Being is possible. Nihilism as the withdrawal of Being is not merely one of many ways in which Being reveals itself; it is Being's highest form of disclosure.

I claim: that ontological wonder occurs in modern times through anxiety; that Being is disclosed in machination and modern technology; and that the highest revelation of Being is possible in nihilism's encounter with the nothing. This paradoxical access to Being has yet to

be correlated with the peculiarly modern mode of enchantment. The spell of machination turns everything into an object that is makeable and self-making, representable, calculable, and experienceable (as commodified lived experiences). Moreover, bewitched by technology, we posit everything in advance within a quantitative frame that, by eclipsing the experience of *physis* (as the emergent coming forth to presence out of concealment), reduces nature to resources ready to be extracted—who knows toward what end?

And yet, in the midst of this mad enchantment of machination, the resonating of Being occurs. Since Being itself seems to be the hidden root of modern enchantment, the question arises: Can ontological wonder dispel the spell that sees nature as a big gas station? Can Being be both that which enchants and that which disenchant? While I have argued that Being is not one of the Weberian modern gods, it could be the case that Being functions like a fate that is imposed even upon the gods—or it is like ambrosia that makes the gods drunk and seduces them into this game of melting all that is solid into air.

This Conclusion brings together the insights of this study's first and second parts. My aim is to combine the enchantment of the Weberian modern gods with Heidegger's description of the enchantment of machination and the ontological revelatory capacity of nihilism. Armed with an enriched version of the enchantment of rationalization, I can finally answer my guiding question: How does Weber's thesis about the disenchantment of the world fare if it is juxtaposed with an ontological type of wonder?

My Conclusion is divided in two parts. In the first part, I emphasize three points, and I start by supplementing the enchantment of the Weberian modern gods with Heidegger's description of the enchantment of machination. Using Heidegger's description of worldhood, and locating the enchantment of the modern gods at the level of worldhood, I clarify the

inconspicuousness of modern enchantment. Gods are not objects to be desired; instead, they *constitute* our desire (we desire objects through them). Second, for analytical purposes, I distinguish two “functions” of ontological wonder (and focus on the second function). On the one hand, there is the existential function, in which we face the evident but not obvious fact of existence. On the other hand, there is a “worldly” function—as it were—in which, I argue, the disclosure of ontological thatness breaks the normal running of worldhood, thus bringing the world to the fore. In other words, the experience of ontological wonder helps to reveal the otherwise invisible modern mode of enchantment. Third, and relevant to the guiding question of this work, I claim that although ontological wonder does not stop the process of rationalization, it may give us enough distance from it to ask: all this endless growth toward what end? In short, it sobers us up. While ontological wonder does not directly offer a new path, it makes us see with new clarity where the path is heading—although whether this clarity could make room for a different path to come remains for me unknown.

In the second part, I focus on the ethical consequence of ontological wonder and respond to two critiques. First, I confront some of the ethical limitations inherent in the relationship of ontological wonder to our environmental crisis. Because experiencing the thatness of beings does not depend on us, using this experience as a principle to ground our ethical attitude would seem to be difficult. From the (ethical) uselessness of ontological wonder, however, I draw two conclusions. On the one hand, I argue that when we experience ontological wonder, this experience triggers a sense of gratitude and respect for all beings for the sole “reason” *that* they are. I find support for my argument in Heidegger’s notion of “letting beings be,” in the inversion of intentionality that happens in ontological wonder, and in Heidegger’s two words for use (*Brauchen* and *Benutzen*). On the other hand, and at the risk of

contradicting myself, I contend that the uselessness of ontological wonder may be useful to break our obsession with the useful (i.e., our injunction to manipulate, control, and dominate nature). Paradoxically, then, when there is no profit to be gained from dominating nature, a useless ontological care for nature arises that stops our intention to shape the world according to our enchanted goals; instead, we let nature be. When the fact of the existence of nature is disclosed, the dialectic of curiosity and marveling—which relates to beings as if they were disposable objects—is calmed. Although this ontological insight does not provide a clear path toward a different relationship to nature, it at least seems to point out a possible beginning.

Second, I study some current critiques of Heidegger's philosophy that affect my study of wonder. Although Heidegger justified his political commitments through reference to the question of Being, the latter should not be dismissed because of Heidegger's (mis)interpretation. Following Heidegger's suggestion, I have tried to understand modernity as the moment in which the highest disclosure of Being is possible. But we should not forget that that moment is also the most *austere*. Through an austere reading of Heidegger's meaning of Being (i.e., as the thatness of beings), my study of ontological wonder distances itself from Heidegger's mystifications and ontologized anti-Semitic prejudices.

D) The Enchantment of Rationalization and Ontological Wonder

1) The Modern Gods and the Invisible Enchantment of Rationalization

In *Science as a Vocation*, Weber writes:

Nowadays...we have the religion of "everyday life" (*Alltag*). The numerous gods of yore, divested of their magic and hence assuming the shape of impersonal forces, arise from their

graves, strive for power over our lives, and resume their eternal struggle among themselves. But what is so hard for us today, and is hardest of all for the young generation, is to meet the challenge of such an *everyday life*. All chasing after “experience” (*Erlebnis*) arises from this weakness. For weakness it is to be unable to look the fate of the age full in the face (*SV*, 24)

In this study, I have taken the tale of the disenchantment of the world and contrasted it with Weber’s “religion of ‘everyday life,’” thus revealing that we are always already enchanted. The process of rationalization does not disenchant in the sense that it annihilates every source of enchantment. Rather, the process of rationalization has its own type of enchantment that assumes multiple shapes as impersonal forces that govern our lives. Although (reflecting various points of view) this modern enchantment has received a variety of names (myth, ideology, aura, fetishism, the objet petit a, etc.), in all of its versions modern enchantment has been divested of its magical form. Hence Josephson-Storm’s erudite work on magic is incapable of illuminating Weber’s religion of everyday life. Although his work helped us unveil the myth of modernity (i.e., the myth of not having a myth), it cannot disclose the non-magical enchantment these impersonal forces enact today.³⁴⁹

After reading *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (written in the aftermaths of two World Wars and the Holocaust), and from the point of view of the world’s current global environmental crisis, can we still agree with Weber’s virile call to “meet the challenge of such an *everyday life*?”

³⁴⁹ In contrast, Ernst Jünger’s work is a fecund source for elucidating the Weberian religion of everyday life. He clearly saw that the power behind the tyranny of the useful and the dream of endless progress could not in itself be grasped in terms of the “useful.” He saw this power as having a “cultic origin.” He writes, “Let us leave aside the question of which spirit’s realm rules over the optical illusion of progress: this study is no demonology, but is intended for twentieth-century readers. Nevertheless, one thing is certain: only a power of cultic origin, only a *belief*, could conceive of something as audacious as extending the perspective of utility [*Zweckmässigkeit*] into the infinite. And who, then, would doubt that progress is the nineteenth century’s great popular church—the only one enjoying real authority and uncritical faith” (Ernst Jünger, “Total Mobilization,” in *The Heidegger Controversy*, 124).

From Horkheimer and Adorno we learn to suspect the work of myth behind every “fate of the age.” Although we may not be ready to accurately criticize this modern fate, my study as a first step towards a possible critique aims to find a way to make this seemingly inescapable fate patent—i.e., to compel the gods to reveal themselves.

I agree with Weber’s critique of the young generation for chasing after lived experiences (*Erlebnisse*),³⁵⁰ but I do so not because this chasing is a mark of weakness but because, following Heidegger, there is no escape from “the fate of the age” *through* “lived experiences.” Lived experiences are not the opposite of “disenchantment” (so that we could escape the latter through the former); rather, they are an integral manifestation of the religion of everyday life. Lived experiences belong to the enchantment of the modern gods.³⁵¹

Weber’s modern gods seem to find confirmation in Heidegger’s interpretation of Hölderlin’s image of tremendous powers wandering over the earth. A similar sense of fate, and of having to suffer and be transformed in accord to the fate of these powers, guides all of these readings of our modern world. Either each person “finds and obeys the daemon that holds the threads of *his* life” (*SV*, 31) or surmises “from afar the steed of the lord” (*BQP*, 152), but in both cases there is not much escape from our imposed fate. What does this fate entail?

From my reading of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, I contend that these struggling gods, although numerous, are not so diverse. The various “shapes” they assume veil the one face of the process of rationalization: the domination of nature. While I acknowledge that this interpretation contradicts Weber’s claim regarding the truly conflicting and irreconcilable

³⁵⁰ Weber says about the obsession with lived experience: “Today, that belief has put itself at the service of a number of idols whose shrines are to be found today at every street corner and in every periodical. These idols are ‘personality’ and ‘experience,’ and the two are closely connected. The idea is prevalent that experience forms the essence of personality and is an integral part of it. People put themselves through torture in order to ‘experience’ things, for that is an essential part of the proper lifestyle of a ‘personality,’ and if they do not succeed they must at the very least try to act as if they possessed this gift of grace” (*SV*, 10).

³⁵¹ About how machination and lived experiences belong together, see Chapter Seven, page 290-291.

character of these modern gods, I argue that because, according to Weber, modern gods (value spheres) are not excluded from the process of rationalization (regardless how conflictingly they participate in this process), their irreconcilable differences happen *within* the unquestionable fate of rationalization, which, in turn, I conclude—following *Dialectic of Enlightenment*—belongs to the project of dominating nature.

Granting that Weber's multiple values spheres (interpreted through my reading of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*) represent different versions of rationalization's process of dominating nature, what can Heidegger add to this interpretation? Following Heidegger, I analyzed through ontological lenses the modern world in terms of machination, nihilism, and technology. In other words, I started from the domination of the will to will, calculation, utility, manageability, and progress, and I asked about their condition of possibility—about their essence. At the essence of these modern phenomena, I found, according to Heidegger, a decline from the original Greek experience of truth as unconcealment and of Being as *physis*. Since Being is now experienced as presence and consistency, and the human being—one being among others—posits everything in advance according to its own image, all is reduced to what is makeable and self-making, representable, objectifiable, and experienceable.

Like the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*'s reversal of subjectivity (in which the human subject is dominated by its domination), the human subject believes itself to be shaping the world according to its own likeness, but Heidegger's analysis shows that this shaping is not its own. The worker's *Gestalt* turns out to be the *Gestell*. When procedures and contrivances are exclusively prioritized, the quantitative becomes qualitative, and everything is ready to be mobilized for production and consumption. Then the human subject becomes the victim of the very process over which she believed herself to be in charge. According to Heidegger, our

domination of nature is determined by an interpretation of Being as *Gestell*, which dominates us precisely when we believe ourselves to be the agents of domination. The problem is not merely that we are not the agents; it is also that we have become the victims.

Rationalization thinks that it fights against enchantment, but it is blind to its own enchantment. Hence, what are usually taken as signs of disenchantment (departure of the supernatural, de-animation of nature, de-divinization of nature or *die Entgöterung der Natur*, and de-spiritualization) are in and of themselves effects of enchantment. But let me be clear: rather than instrumental rationality or bureaucratization somehow having an occult, external force behind them, they themselves, I claim, constitute an essentially non-religious, non-supernatural, non-animistic mode of enchantment. Moreover, my study is not a defense of a self-determined human subject who in its false consciousness is alienated from its true potentialities. Instead, I hold that everyone constitutes a sort of bi-unity, in which our co-subject—the second pole of our ellipsoid self—is inhabited by some enchanting force.³⁵² In this accompanied and augmented mode of existence, we have in the other pole a sort of animated echo chamber that amplifies our voice (or, maybe, it is the other way around, and the enchanting forces need us to amplify their voices). In any case, we are enchanted not by some alien force but by a force that dwells “within” and “without,” which is experienced as “*interior*

³⁵² For a discussion of bi-unity, see Peter Sloterdijk’s *Bubbles: Microspherology*, trans. by Wieland Hoban (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2011). See above Chapter 5, page 232 note 256. In the spirit of Weber’s theory of types, we can imagine different types of bi-une ellipsoid selves that differ from one another depending on the modern god that inhabits the other pole of ourselves. Although my study focuses mainly on Dasein who is the “there” for Being, I have mentioned in passing three other types: the *homo religiosus* in an absolute relation to God, the *mapuche* as the one that dwells and preserves the rhythm of *mapu* (earth, land, soil, “*physis*”), and the psychoanalytic self who is constituted by its desire. Each type names a devotee animated by a god, and each god enchants its devotee differently. Although these types of human subjects often share a similar language, there is no possible communication or translation between them. Of course, some of them are closer to one another than others. The *homo religiosus* neighbors the psychoanalytic subject, and both Dasein and the *mapuche* are awake to the mysterious emergent coming forth from concealment. This interpretation, however, conflicts with one of my theses: Being is not a modern god but that which reveals gods’ enchantment. Accordingly, Dasein would differ from the other types of bi-une subjectivities.

intimo meo et superior summo meo."³⁵³ The question remains whether we are capable of looking the enchantment of the age full in the face, not merely to meet the challenges of our everyday life, but to let ourselves be enchanted differently and, thus, transform the everyday.

In Part I, I showed that the modern gods' mode of enchantment is nothing extraordinary or supernatural; I called it inconspicuous enchantment because it is present in the usual, the familiar, and the self-evident of our everyday routines. But in Part I, we had not yet developed the categories to examine this mode of enchantment further. Thanks to Heidegger's description of machination, we can now clarify three components of this inconspicuous enchantment.

First, the more pervasively these modern gods unfold the global process of rationalization, the more obstinately does the enchantment of rationalization conceal itself. To the degree that the domination of nature permeates everything, it becomes more invisible and, thus, it is almost impossible to resist. It is precisely the usualness of our daily routines that makes this type of enchantment invisible.

Second, when the enchantment of rationalization conceals itself in this way, that which seems completely opposed to rationalization, namely, lived experience, turns out to be part of its all-pervading essence. Again, the problem of chasing after lived experiences is not that it is a sign that we are too weak to embrace the challenge of everyday life (i.e., we escape the challenge by chasing after lived experiences). Instead, lived experience is a manifestation of the same essence of rationalization. Since rationalization participates in our ecological crisis, we deceive ourselves when we think we can oppose this process of rationalization by chasing after experiences.³⁵⁴ The enchantment of the modern gods, like machination, grows stronger

³⁵³ Augustine, *Confessions*, translated with an Introduction by R. S. Pine-Coffin, New York: Penguin Books, 1961, 3.6.11.

³⁵⁴ We may think that by abandoning the "system" (e.g., resigning our office job) and chasing after lived experiences (e.g., trying some extreme sport, running a marathon, traveling to some exotic "spiritual" place, or

through that which seems to be its extreme opposite (lived experience). Thus, this modern mode of enchantment lies behind both rationalization and irrationalization. Both the reduction of everything into what is calculable and the chasing after intense lived experiences (e.g. new forms of spirituality) are versions of the same melody. As in machination, nihilism, and modern technology, the essence of the enchantment of rationalization remains hidden under its manifestations (especially the ones that seem to oppose it), making it hard to resist.

Third, because this modern enchantment is invisible, acquiring knowledge about it is difficult. Since the enchantment of rationalization loves to hide, some breakthrough has to occur if we are to become able to acknowledge its presence. When our referential context of significance (i.e., the world) works smoothly, the process of rationalization enchants us through its inconspicuousness, unobtrusiveness, and non-obstinacy. Gods are not objects to be desired; they are that which invisibly constitutes our desire. Gods are not like things to be used; they inconspicuously pervade the world of significance so that things can be disclosed as useful. In short, gods are not “something”; they are that which makes us encounter something *as* desirable and useful. The enchantment of the gods resides in the worldhood of the world.

Therefore, this enchantment of rationalization remains inconspicuous if it is not revealed by some experience of crisis.³⁵⁵ Only when our pragmatic relation to the world is obstructed can the enchantment of rationalization reveal itself.

taking some “ancestral” drug) we can counteract the process of rationalization. And yet, even when we chase after lived experiences, the emphasis on manipulation often does not change. Instead, it can expand from the manipulation of the “external” nature (work as the mode of transforming our environment) to the manipulation of the “internal” nature (lived experiences as the mode of transforming ourselves).

³⁵⁵ What is the relationship between the chasing after lived experiences and ontological wonder (as a possible outcome of this experience of crisis)? I admit that we can easily confuse the two. First, instead of chasing experiences to *flee* the crisis, ontological wonder is part of the experience *of* the crisis. Of course, nothing prevents us from turning the experience of crisis into a lived experience. Second, another crucial difference concerns the idea of “chasing.” Ontological wonder cannot be chased. No one—I guess—chases after crisis, but neither is anyone immune to it. Hence, my study wants to create some hermeneutical ground so that once we experience the crisis of the referential context of significance (triggered by some extreme experience, such as war, disease,

Although I clarified the inconspicuous enchantment of the Weberian modern gods through Heidegger's description of the enchantment of machination, Heidegger's description introduced difficulties to my own project. According to my interpretation of Heidegger, behind the enchantment of machination is Being's inverted mode of disclosure (i.e., Being's refusal is its mode of disclosure). Thus, I concluded that modernity is permeated by Being. Again, the negative narrative of modernity explains its decay by the absence of Being, but it fails to recognize that in its absence Being gives itself to us. Consequently, the oppositional structure of the enchantment of machination vis-a-vis ontological wonder no longer works. Both seem to share the same root. Does ontological wonder name one force of enchantment among others, struggling to impose its hegemony? Can we identify ontological wonder with the tremendous powers that wander over the earth? Although Heidegger seems to have confused ontological wonder with these powers, I have argued that we experience ontological wonder when—thanks to anxiety—the enchantment of these tremendous powers no longer speaks to us. Rather than being a meaningful plot, ontological wonder appears—or at least can appear—when everything seems to be meaningless. Thus, I claim that ontological wonder cannot be identified and does not promote the modern gods that rule our world; instead, it discloses the nothing (according to the insight of Being as nothing) that interrupts our world of significance and makes these tremendous powers conspicuous. But if I defend the difference between ontological wonder and these tremendous powers, I must confront the problem of how I can justify this difference while acknowledging the fact that the two share a common root.

or mourning, or by the indeterminate night of anxiety) we can be prepared to welcome the experience (i.e., to give it a “positive” sense and stop pathologizing), allowing us to let the experience take its full course. In other words, because we cannot *make* these experiences happen, we must learn—once they happen—to decipher what they have to tell us.

Although we have gained a solid understanding of the meaning of ontological wonder, I still must clarify what it means to say that Being resonates in modern enchantment.

2) Ontological Wonder and the Revelation of Modern Enchantment

According to Weber:

Unless we happen to be physicists, those of us who travel by streetcar have not the faintest idea how that streetcar works. Nor have we any need to know it. It is enough for us to know that we can ‘count on’ the behavior of the streetcar. But we have no idea how to build a streetcar so that it will move. (*SV*, 12)

Just as obscure as the technology that makes the streetcar move are the social relations involved in its production; just as obscure is the dismissal of streetcars based on the desire—fostered by publicity—that everyone should have their own car (even when that creates cities impossible to live in); just as obscure are our reasons for getting in one of these streetcars every day in order to work many hours to get the economic system moving, while others do not need to go anywhere because as owners of the capital they make others work for them (a fact that is made invisible and somehow reversed, with the result that workers feel grateful to owners for creating jobs).

About the modern conditions under which we live, Weber argues that in rationalization there “is the knowledge or the conviction that if *only we wished* to understand them we *could* do so at any time” (*SV*, 12). Although Weber may be right about the technologies involved in the streetcar of his time, and even I grant that the same happens in the technologies of today, I wonder, could people today understand the social, libidinal, environmental, and economical forces that govern their lives and societies *if only they wished it?* As is the case with technological devices, we use and are used by these forces without knowing how they work.

While using the streetcar without knowing how it moves seems perfectly acceptable, somehow using and being used by social, libidinal, environmental, and economic relations seems to me less acceptable when I acknowledge the inequality and social injustice that these unknown forces often seem to propagate.

How can we see these relations in which we are constantly involved, but of which we are hardly aware? Under the influence of enchantment we believe ourselves capable of knowing all and doing everything. Thus, acknowledging that there may be a blind spot—i.e., the enchantment that makes us think that there are no blind spots—can be difficult. Indeed, it may seem bizarre to suggest that we need a revelation that will allow us to see the world and the enchantment that animates it. For many critical theorists there is no problem of revelation. For them, at stake is the overcoming of the hegemonic beliefs that legitimize the domination of some class over the rest of society. But the answer to the question “What is the status quo and what are the hegemonic beliefs?” seems more or less evident. In my study, in contrast, we must first struggle to see that which has to be criticized. Modern enchantment is so pervasive and invisible that most of the time we support it even when we think we oppose it. Again, how do we see the enchantment that possesses us?

The enchantment of rationalization becomes evident when the world of referential significance is in crisis. As we saw in Chapter Six, anxiety, wonder, and shock light up the world precisely when the latter stops functioning well. In Part II, I focused on wonder’s ontological function: wonder reveals Being. I want to underline here, however, that wonder and anxiety *also* make patent the enchantment in which we already dwell. Alongside the

properly ontological function of wonder, this second function is a “worldly” function—it reveals the worldhood of the world that is saturated by enchantment.³⁵⁶

Just as a missing hammer reveals the workshop, or a broken streetcar can illuminate the city, I claim that anxiety reveals the fate imposed by the modern gods.³⁵⁷ When things become unusable they become conspicuous, obtrusive, and obstinate. They are no longer invisible. For a moment the spell is broken (often against our will) and our absorption in the world is interrupted, and in this detached—or, better said, disenchanting—mode of being, three phenomena are revealed. We see for the first time the “hammer” as a present-at-hand thing; we perceive it within a network of significant references (saturated by enchantment) as a thing ready-to-hand; and, I argue, we perceive the world with its heretofore concealed impersonal forces striving for power over our lives. Since the pantheon of the gods resides in the worldhood of the world where meaning and values are forged, in anxiety’s revelation of worldhood, the gods are unveiled. In anxiety, beings no longer speak to us, but we “hear” the whispering of the divine voices.

³⁵⁶ According to this second function, ontological wonder has a role to play in the critique of ideology. Since every critique requires us to clearly identify *that* which is criticized, anxiety and wonder facilitates critique by disclosing the world in which ideology surreptitiously moves. Following Slavoj Žižek, I understand ideology in its elementary Marxist definition: “they do not know it, but they are doing it,” and in its more cynical version, “they know that, in their activity, they are following an illusion, but still, they are doing it” (*The Sublime Object of Ideology*, London: Verso, 1989, 24, 30). Even in the second formula, I argue, there is no clarity about the illusion that we are following. Ideology requires invisibility in order to enchant. Furthermore, the connection between ideology and enchantment can be deduced from a passage written long before the actual theorization of ideology. In 1576, Étienne de La Boétie declared: “For the present I should like merely to understand how it happens that so many men, so many villages, so many cities, so many nations, sometimes suffer under a single tyrant who has no other power than the power they give him; who is able to harm them only to the extent to which they have the willingness to bear with him; who could do them absolutely no injury unless they preferred to put up with him rather than contradict him. Surely a striking situation! Yet it is so common that one must grieve the more and wonder the less at the spectacle of a million men serving in wretchedness, their necks under the yoke, not constrained by a greater multitude than they, but simply, it would seem, fascinated (*fascinés*) and bewitched (*ensorcelés*) by the name of one man whose power they need not fear (for he is evidently alone), and whose qualities they cannot admire (because of his inhumanity and brutality toward them)” (*The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude*, trans. Harry Kurz, Indianapolis, 1942, published by Liberty Fund, 5-6, translation modified).

³⁵⁷ About the example of the missing hammer, see Chapter Six, page 249.

But how is this revelation of ontological wonder possible in the midst of the enchantment of rationalization? Does not the enchantment of rationalization cover up the insight into the thatness, thus making us indifferent to ontological wonder? And yet, just as the absent hammer reveals the hammer in its heretofore concealed nature and the lack of need becomes itself a mode of need, so our *indifference* to Being becomes our access to the ontological *difference*. Since Being is like nothing (from our point of view), it follows the inverted logic of the manifestation of the nothing: its abandonment is its highest form of disclosure; its refusal is its gift. As we have seen, this inverted logic of revelation happens in the night of anxiety. Ontological wonder is always ready to awaken in us at any moment and to break through modern enchantment (even though its awakening is outside the scope of our will). In other words, fascination, marveling, and enchantment do not prevent ontological wonder from suddenly waking and, thus, revealing the different sources of enchantment. Although the ontic question (regarding *what* and *how* things are) covers up the ontological insight into the thatness, precisely the covering up of Being is its mode of uncovering. In short, modern enchantment and the possibility of experiencing ontological wonder coexist.³⁵⁸

As I insinuated in the previous point, the enchantment of rationalization (or machination) and ontological wonder are not opposites. In fact, they are branches of the same trunk—Being. So far, I have argued that they are not the same: ontological wonder can make patent the inconspicuous enchantment of rationalization (worldly function), and the excess of modern enchantment does not prevent ontological wonder from rising. What I still have to clarify is my position regarding the “ontological origin” of the enchantment of rationalization.

³⁵⁸ Marveling does not cancel ontological wonder, but what of the reverse? Intending to study ontological wonder as a possible response to the enchantment of rationalization, I have assumed that the former could stop the latter. My first answer (developed in this section) is that ontological wonder does not necessarily cancel modern enchantment; instead it can reveal it.

Where does this enchantment of rationalization come from? Heidegger's short answer is that it comes from Being's abandonment, which, according to my interpretation of the inverted logic, means that the enchantment of rationalization comes from Being.

Alternatively expressed, and as articulated in Chapter Seven, the distorted essence of Being resonates in machination, nihilism, and modern technology. According to Heidegger, this distorted modern enchantment can be transfigured—as it were—into its “proper” essence. Heidegger seems to hold onto the idea that a turning within the essence technology would inaugurate a new way of being in the world. Heidegger seems to anticipate that this new relation to Being has yet to arrive, but I conclude that in modern nihilism it has already happened .

But my interpretation differs also in a second respect. What does it mean that the modern world (permeated by machination, nihilism, and the Gestell) is determined by Being's distorted essence? Is our history the outcome of the different ways in which Being discloses itself? And in this instance what do I mean by “itself”? Does Being have agency and will, and, thus, does it “decide” how and when to appear? In short, is Being a type of surrogate for some sort of divine providence (or tragic fate)? With respect to the thatness of beings, I cannot answer these questions. The austere version of Being that I developed in Chapters Four, Five, and Six does not justify treating Being as “something” that dictates the plot of our history. Although Heidegger attacked any view that assumed that Being and Dasein are separated (as if Dasein would have to wait passively for the sendings of Being), he tended to mystify Being and turn it into a “tremendous power wandering over the earth,” as a consequence of which we must surmise “from afar the steed of the lord.”³⁵⁹ Because the issue is difficult and complex, it

³⁵⁹ See Chapter Four, page, 196.

is easy to caricature Heidegger's view of the history of Being. We come back to Heidegger's history of Being and mystification in the second part of this Conclusion. Here I want to clarify that when I assume that Being resonates in modern nihilism, or that in modernity the "highest" revelation of Being is possible, I am insinuating not that Being is available to somehow *dictate* (as fate or destiny) the events in modern history but that the experience of the thatness of beings is available. Again, according to my interpretation, machination is not a fate sent by Being; it is one contingent and human (all-too-human) answer to the fact of our existence. While this contingent answer could change, this possible change is not determined by Being (whatever that would mean). Instead, it is forged by the interaction of beings (human and other-than-human) that have to existentially answer to the mysterious fact of their Being. Rather than assuming a self-determined human subject that guides history or a passive human that receives its fate as the sendings of "Being," I assume an in-between place in which the human determines history and is determined by the different pre-understandings of Being (not given but contingently created by Dasein having to answer to its thatness).

3) Ontological Wonder and the Deceleration of the Process of Rationalization

I started this study with a guiding question: How does Weber's thesis about the disenchantment of the world fare if it is juxtaposed with an ontological type of wonder? At the end of Part I, I interpreted the thesis of disenchantment as a problem of competing forces of enchantment that struggle to possess us in order to move the process of rationalization and domination of nature further—at which point the guiding question changed. I then asked whether some type of wonder might stop the process of rationalization and the domination of nature. My answer is modest. Having argued that ontological wonder has two "functions," I

divide my answer into two parts. My examination of the existential function is found at the beginning of the second part of the Conclusion. Thus, what follows is the first part of my answer.

Regarding what I have called the worldly function, while ontological wonder cannot stop the enchantment of rationalization, it allows us to *see* the enchantment that otherwise would remain concealed. The experience of the ontological wonder may not stop this process of the domination of nature, but at least it does not push it further. Struck by ontological wonder, we take our foot off the gas pedal—as it were—and the process of rationalization can slow down.³⁶⁰ We may even realize that our question concerning what ontological wonder can “do” reflects machination’s reduction of everything to doing and making (which itself is part of the problem).

Here I address a possible critique, which consists of two parts. Given that the experience of ontological wonder seems accessible only to those who would somehow have had the experience that I have pointed to, how could it possibly slow down or resist the mass-cultural phenomenon of rationalization? I begin with the first part of this critique: Are these ontological experiences rare (and open only to the few), or are they common and open to many? Because it is outside of our power to produce these experiences of ontological wonder, it would seem appropriate for my study to issue the type of warnings that Rudolf Otto offered to the

³⁶⁰ Regarding the “Theses on the Concept of History,” Walter Benjamin famously wrote: “Marx said that revolutions are the locomotive of world history. But perhaps things are very different. It may be that revolutions are the act by which the human race travelling in the train applies the emergency brake” (This is one of the preparatory notes to “On the Concept of History,” which does not appear in the final versions of the document. Quoted in Michael Löwy’s “The revolution is the emergency brake: Walter Benjamin’s political-ecological currency,” 3 (available at http://www.walterbenjaminportbou.cat/sites/all/files/2010_Loewy_ANG.pdf, last accessed on 10/23/18). My modest study cannot apply the emergency brake, but it seeks to determine where the brake is. I argue that we do not know where the emergency brake is—or worse, that it is often confused with the gas pedal. Accordingly, ontological wonder cannot apply the emergency brake, but at least it pushes us to make the first step, which is taking our foot off the gas. Of course, additional steps are still necessary because momentum could lead us off the cliff anyway.

reader of his book *The Idea of the Holy*.³⁶¹ And yet, I claim that the experience of ontological wonder is both more common than we expect and open to the many. People today often allow themselves to speak only to the psychoanalyst or psychiatrist about experiences of estrangement in which the world as a whole turns mysterious. Moreover, the ontological *unheimlich* is often triggered when people endure life-threatening experiences—as in war³⁶² or a serious illness. I suggest that these experiences seem to be rare because we lack a hermeneutical ground to meaningfully welcome them (aside from the psychoanalytic and psychiatric). In the absence of this ground, people often dismiss these experiences as insignificant or embarrassing.

Furthermore, according to Heidegger, ontological anxiety and wonder are basic dispositions. The “basic” quality of the basic dispositions means that every person is always already attuned by them to different degrees. Thus, in this regard there should be no elitism, at least in principle. Someone in a particular moment can be better attuned than others to pursue a philosophical question, but everybody—in principle—is ready for it. Finally, we should not forget the meaning of the *unheimlich*: when the common turns rare. That the common turns

³⁶¹ “The reader is invited to direct his mind to a moment of deeply-felt religious experience, as little as possible qualified by other forms of consciousness. Whoever cannot do this, whoever knows no such moments in his experience, is requested to read no farther; for it is not easy to discuss questions of religious psychology with one who can recollect the emotions of his adolescence, the discomforts of indigestion, or, say, social feelings, but cannot recall any intrinsically religious feelings” (Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. John W. Harvey, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958, 8).

³⁶² Alan Watts recounts that Kalfried Graff Durkheim, a former German diplomat who studied Zen in Japan and operated a school of meditation in the Black Forest, told him about helping soldiers from the World War I who had undergone existential experiences that they could not integrate in their lives. He describes one of these common experiences: “You heard the whistle of a bomb falling straight at you, and knew that this was quite certainly the end. You accepted it, and quite suddenly the whole universe made sense. . . . But the bomb was a dud, and you lived to remember the experience.” Durkheim continues, “this happened often in the war, and when those who lived through it tried to tell to their friends it was shrugged off as some kind of hallucination, a brief fit of insanity in a desperate situation. When these people come to me, as they often do, I have the happy opportunity of showing them that, for once in their lives, they were truly sane” (Alan Watts, *In My Own Way: An Autobiography* (1915-1965), Novato: New World Library, 2007, 321).

rare is in itself not rare; it is precisely that which is common that turns rare—and because it is common it is available to everybody.³⁶³

We can also ask whether it is common for these ontological experiences of the *unheimlich* to yield care for beings. This question, which concerns an ethical effect of these experiences, brings me to the second part of the critique.

On this point I concur with the critique. It seems that these singular experiences (although common) cannot resist the mass-cultural phenomenon of rationalization. Accordingly, my modest answer does not claim that ontological wonder can stop the process of rationalization and domination of nature. I do claim, however, that these singular experiences of wonder, although they cannot stop the process of rationalization, do deaccelerate the process. Since these experiences are available (and are becoming more frequent) in modern times, my writing aims to create the hermeneutical ground to sustain and promote these experiences and their possible ethical effects.³⁶⁴

³⁶³ Because of this availability of the experience of ontological wonder, I have written most of my text in the first person plural (we). I assume that the reader and I can relate to the experience that the text describes. Of course, I acknowledge the temptation to turn this experience of the unusualness of the usual into some form of elitism for the few. I return to Heidegger's elitism in the second part of this Conclusion.

³⁶⁴ We should not, however, underestimate the influence that these singular experiences can have at the macro level. For instance, the Japanese plant-biologist-turned-farmer Masanobu Fukuoka discovered his celebrated "natural farming" after having undergone an existential crisis. Masanobu writes that after being released from the hospital for acute pneumonia, "I could not pull myself out of my depression. In what had I placed my confidence until then? I had been unconcerned and content, but what was the nature of that complacency? I was in an agony of doubt about the nature of life and death. I could not sleep, could not apply myself to my work. In nightly wanderings above the bluff and beside the harbor, I could find no relief." But after one of these nights, at the moment of sunrise, "Just at that moment, a night heron appeared, gave a sharp cry, and flew away into the distance. I could hear the flapping of its wings. In an instant, all my doubts and the gloomy mist of my confusion vanished. Everything I had held in firm conviction, everything upon which I had ordinarily relied was swept away with the wind. I felt that I understood just one thing. Without my thinking about them, words came from my mouth: 'In this world there is nothing at all...' I felt that I understood nothing (*To "understand nothing," in this sense, is to recognize the insufficiency of intellectual knowledge*)." Crucially, his depression ended with an encounter with the meaning of the nothing. Confronted by the nothing, every concept, including the "very notion of existence itself, were empty fabrications. My spirit became light and clear. I was dancing wildly for joy. I could hear the small birds chirping in the trees, and see the distant waves glistening in the rising sun. The leaves danced green and sparkling. I felt that this was truly heaven on earth. Everything that had possessed me, all the agonies, disappeared like dreams and illusions, and something one might call 'true nature' stood revealed." (*One Straw Revolution, an Introduction to Natural Farming*, trans. Larry Korn, Chris Pearce, and Tsune Kurosawa, New

II) Ethical Consequences and the Critique of Ontological Wonder

1) Ontological Wonder and Care for the Natural World

Although the experience of the nothing of anxiety offers the uncanny gift of ontological wonder—which in turn reveals the enchantment of rationalization and the domination of nature—a key question remains: Can wonder ground an ethical attitude that can be used to confront the crisis of the natural world?³⁶⁵ In other words, is it possible to make this austere “thatness” of things the grounds for an ethic? Can wonder reveal how we ought to live responsibly as human beings in relation to the world? Do we gain some ultimate principle (*arche*) for guiding our life when we wonder at the fact that things *are*? Since my study has proven that enchantment of machination coexists with ontological wonder, these questions are crucial: it could be the case that ontological wonder and the ethical care for beings are two dimensions that do not interact at all, or even worse, that ontological wonder could require some ontic disaster to thrive.

In anxiety, as the world of significance falls into pieces, ultimate principles stop speaking to us. Ethical principles do not escape this moment of meaninglessness. When anxiety takes its full course, the experience of wonder does not provide us with any new or old ultimate principle.

York: The New York Review of Books, 2009, 9). In a moment that is relevant for my own work, Masanobu took this experience as the starting point for his own “one straw revolution” in farming. Indeed, a singular moment for a singular man appears to have changed people’s understanding and practice of sustainable farming around the globe. For Masanobu, the encounter with the meaning of the nothing brought him joy, but, more importantly for my study, it inspired him to question the “rationalized” mode of farming and to imagine mode of relationship to nature other than domination.

³⁶⁵ While in the previous section I focused on how ontological wonder helps to reveal enchantment and possibly deaccelerate the process of rationalization, here I ask how wonder’s existential “function” (i.e., the capacity to disclose the thatness of beings) relates to the process of rationalization and the domination of nature.

And yet, in the absence of an ultimate principle, entities call on us to be responsible for them not because of *what* they are but because of the fact *that they are*.³⁶⁶ Having seen them for the first time outside of our daily concerns, we care for them not because they are means to an end but because they look at us with the otherwise concealed mystery of being not-nothing.³⁶⁷ Within the experience of wonder, the space for ontological care is opened up. This is a gratuitous care that, rather than consuming beings for our legitimate or illegitimate projects, seeks to celebrate and preserve the simple and unfathomed insight into Being. In

³⁶⁶ Based on Heidegger's *Being and Time* and "Letter on 'Humanism,'" Jean-Luc Nancy elaborates on Heidegger's notion of originary ethics. As in my study, Nancy regards this originary ethics as grounded in the unfathomed insight of existence: "One might be tempted to say that respect for existence, such is the imperative. But this imperative precisely does not provide sense or value. What it enjoins is to have to make the sense of existence *as* existence. It cannot be reduced, for example, to a 'respect for life,' as though the sense of life or life as sense were given" ("Heidegger's 'Originary Ethics,'" in *Heidegger and Practical Philosophy*, ed. by F. Raffoul and D. Pettigrew, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002, 74). Like Thomas Sheehan (see above, Chapter Four, page 177, note 203), and in contrast to my own interpretation, Nancy identifies the meaning of Being with Being as meaning: "in Dasein the fact of Being is making sense" or "the sense of Being is the Being of sense" (ibid., 67, 72). From the point of view of Being as sense, we are called to make sense: "... nothing is more ordinary than the call, most often an undecieved one, to the 'sense of existence,' and nothing is rarer than responding to this call in a fitting ('responsible') way, in other words, without being deceived by a 'sense' supposedly given to existence, as if from within or beyond it, instead of confirming oneself to the making sense of ek-sistence" (ibid., 76-77). For Nancy, the danger in originary ethics resides in confusing making sense with assigning a fixed, given, and supposedly "originary" sense: "Here one doubtless finds the crux of a radical thinking of ethics: in the possibility of confusing original making sense with an assignable origin of sense... Thinking the origin as *êthos*, or conduct, is not the same as representing an originary *êthos*, but it is easy to slide imperceptibly from one to the other... (ibid., 75). In my study, however, the sense of Being cannot be reduced to Being as sense. I claim that making sense is derivative: Although the call for making sense responds to the insight into the thatness of beings (which itself is senseless), we cannot reduce the thatness of beings to our sense making. I have tried to focus on this "residue" or "excess" that, even though senseless, is not outside sense; rather, it is the (senseless) blind spot of *sense* that makes or sense making possible. Moreover, I claim that the experience of this senseless blind spot can trigger care for all beings. While I concur with Nancy that there is a responsibility to make sense, a different responsibility arises when we are addressed by beings as not-nothing—a responsibility to care for beings by letting them be in their gratuitous and mysterious existence.

³⁶⁷ As I mentioned earlier, sometimes the experience of ontological wonder is triggered by an extreme experience—as when a person is told he has a terminal illness. A possible effect of this extreme experience is to cultivate care for beings. For instance, Akira Kurosawa's movie *Ikiru* (1956) subtly describes the moment in which the protagonist finds out that he has cancer. The entire existence of the protagonist becomes a question for him (i.e., he encounters beings as a whole), and as a response to this existential crisis, he cares for other beings. Specifically, the protagonist, a bureaucrat who has spent the last 30 years in the office of public affairs in a city hall (in Tokyo during the postwar period, which nicely exemplifies the world shaped by the process of rationalization), is suddenly awakened by his imminent death to his own existence. After a period of confusion and anxiety, he undergoes a second awakening, during which he finds meaning in his life by caring for the community (through lobbying in the city hall bureaucracy for a playground for the neighborhood's poor children). Caring for beings becomes the meaningful answer after the nihilation of the nothing visits the protagonist and shatters his former "life" (which he describes as "killing time").

short, in ontological wonder we care for beings by letting them be. In what follows, I succinctly justify (in four points) the *potential* ethical effects of ontological wonder. I am not developing here a comprehensive account of ethics, nor I am addressing the various critiques that this ontological “caring for beings by letting them be” may prompt.

First, I turn to the notion of care (*Sorge*) that I imply in this passage. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger calls *care* the essence of Dasein; care is the transcendental structure that conditions all of Dasein’s various comportments. Even indifference toward another person is possible only for someone who has care as his essence. Heidegger uses concern (*Besorgen*) as the care for things and solicitude (*Fürsorge*) as the care for other Daseins. Now, in Chapter Six,³⁶⁸ which surveys Heidegger’s passage of the missing hammer, I mentioned that Heidegger’s account helps us explain the unethical consequences of instrumental rationality. Just as when we hammer well the hammer is almost invisible, often in our daily concerns we render invisible not only equipment but other human beings. In short, we treat people (and nature) like equipment.³⁶⁹ Heidegger, who mentions in passing this negative or deficient solicitude (his

³⁶⁸ See above page 260.

³⁶⁹ One of the crucial insights in Heidegger’s *Being and Time* is that the human being is not a soul (ego) vis-a-vis the body and the world (*res extensa*). Rather, it is a being-in-the-world in which other beings, especially other humans, are part of its own being: “Dasein in itself is essentially Being-with” (*BT*, 156); “Thus as Being-with, Dasein ‘is’ essentially for the sake of Others” (*BT*, 160). Consequently, Dasein’s indifference toward other Dasein has to be understood within the structure of Being-with—as its deficient mode. Although we encounter other Dasein within our world of daily concerns (and never as “free-floating subjects along with other Things” [*BT*, 160]), Heidegger wants to maintain a clear separation between the mode of being of Dasein, on the one hand, and the mode of being of equipment, on the other. Thus, he would have disagreed with my statement that we often treat other Dasein as equipment. He writes: “Even if we see the Other ‘just standing around,’ he is never apprehended as a human-Thing present-at-hand, but his ‘standing-around’ is an existential mode of Being—an unconcerned, uncircumspective tarrying alongside everything and nothing” (*BT*, 156). And yet, when he succinctly treats the deficient mode of solicitude he compares (on the one hand) Dasein’s indifference to other Daseins to (on the other hand) the type of inconspicuousness that is common in our dealings with equipment: “Dasein maintains itself proximally and for the most part in the deficient modes of solicitude. Being for, against, or without one another, passing one another by, not ‘mattering’ to one another—these are possible ways of solicitude. And it is precisely these last-named deficient and Indifferent modes that characterize everyday, average Being-with-one-another. These modes of Being show again the characteristics of inconspicuousness and obviousness which belong just as much to the everyday Dasein-with of Others within-the-world as to the readiness-to-hand of the equipment with which one is daily concerned” (*BT*, 158). Dasein’s indifference is a difficult phenomenon to grasp. It is exemplified by people who deny being racist or classist, but in their

name for Dasein's indifference to other beings like it), focuses on the distinction between the two modes of positive solicitude: to "leap in" (*einspringen*) for the other, and, thus, to "take away 'care' from the Other and put itself in his position in concern"; and "leaping ahead" (*vorausspringen*) of the other "in his existential potentiality-for-Being, not in order to take away his 'care; but rather to give it back to him authentically as such for the first time" (*BT*, 158-159). According to my reading, the main issue is not these two modes of positive solicitude but indifference towards other Dasein (and nature), which seems to be the rule rather than the exception.³⁷⁰

To resolve the ecological crisis, what is needed is a way to break this unnoticeability of humans and nature. Hence, I claim that although this "ontological care" (experienced in ontological wonder) is grounded in care as described in *Being and Time*, the former expands the scope of positive solicitude (previously limited to the relation among Daseins) to all beings. I claim that wonder breaks up the inconspicuousness and obviousness of others (human and non-human) so that we can care for them by letting them be in their own possibilities and not according to ours. While care (as described in *Being and Time*) conditions the possibility for

"indifference" always and immediately (I would say unconsciously) assess whether those who approach them belong to their own group or to another. In other words, their indifference is predicated by a complex set of differences upon which they predicate their own identity. Thus, indifference is not blindness; it is a mode of "seeing" that resembles circumspection (*Umsicht*, i.e., the way of seeing in our practical dealings). Just as I am circumspectively aware of the hammer (almost invisible) while I am hammering, often I am indifferently aware of the bus driver, the gardener, and the people in line at the grocery store. Although I am aware of them, and even my identity—as a student, for instance—is in relation to them, I can simultaneously be indifferent to them. Moreover, according to Heidegger, our calculative attitude embodies this indifferent mode of solicitude: "this 'inconsiderate' Being-with 'reckons' [*rechnet*'] with the Others without seriously 'counting on them' [*auf sie zählt*'], or without even wanting to 'have anything to do' with them" (*BT*, 163).

³⁷⁰ While Heidegger considers who "leaps ahead" as a mode of liberating the other, he sees in "leaping in" a mode of domination: "in such solicitude the Other can become one who is dominated and dependent, even if this domination is a tacit one and remains hidden from him" *BT*, 158). Although Heidegger's insight is crucial and subtle, he does not mention the domination that happens in the deficient mode of solicitude, in which we most of the time live.

experiencing wonder, wonder, in turn, conditions the possibility of having positive solicitude for all beings.³⁷¹

Second, what about the idea of letting beings be?³⁷² To illuminate its ethical connotation, we have to contrast it with instrumental rationality. Often, according to the latter, we relate to beings by imposing our goals on them and by treating them as things ready to be disposed after they have served our purposes. To counteract this unethical side of instrumental rationality, “to let beings be” becomes an ethical attitude. Now the question arises: Why would the insight into the thatness of beings give way to letting them be? When we confront something or someone as “not-nothing,” why would this give rise to respect, love, and care rather than disrespect, hate, or negligence? I claim that to let beings be (as a form of love and respect) we have to be able to see them and we have to “understand” what it means *to be*.

³⁷¹ Similar to the change from care as the condition that makes possible experiencing wonder, to care as what is conditioned by wonder, Heidegger in *Contributions to Philosophy* considers restraint as the ground of care and not the other way around: “Restraint is the ground of care [*Sorge*]. The restraint of *Da-sein* first grounds care as the steadfastness [*Inständigkeit*] that withstands [*ausstehende*] the ‘there,’ but care—it must be said ever and again—does not mean melancholy preoccupation, or tormenting worry [*Trübsinn und Beklemmung und verquälte Bekümmernis*] over something or other” (*CP*, 29).

³⁷² The notion of “letting be” is related to Heidegger’s understanding of love; crucial for my reading, this sense of love is not exclusive to human beings. In *Letter on Humanism*, he writes: “To embrace a ‘thing’ or a ‘person’ in their essence means to love them, to favor them. Thought in a more original way such favoring means the bestowal of their essence as a gift [*das Wesen schenken*]. Such favoring [*Mögen*] is the proper essence of enabling [*Vermögen*], which not only can achieve this or that but also can let something essentially unfold in its provenance, that is, let it be” (in *Pathmarks*, 241). The influence of Augustine here is clear. For instance, in Heidegger’s study of Augustine, he writes about *dilectio* (love): “But we also should not love the human being in the way gourmands talk when they say: I love wild game. The gourmand loves them only to kill them. So he loves them such that they are not (*non esse*). One may not love human beings in this way, assigning them into one’s own aims.” Contrasting authentic or communal-worldly love to self-love, Heidegger continues, “Authentic love has a basic tendency toward *dilectum, ut sit* [being loved so that he may be]. Thus love is the will toward the being of the loved one... Love of oneself [*Eigenliebe*] has the tendency to secure one’s own being, but in the wrong way: not as self-concern but as the calculation of the experiential complex in relation to one’s self-world. Thus, ‘self-love’ [*Selbstliebe*] is really self-hate... Communal-worldly love has the sense of helping the loved other toward his existence, so that he comes to himself” (Heidegger, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, trans. by Matthias Fritsch and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010, 220-221). On the influence of Augustine on Heidegger’s definition of love, and specifically the link between Augustine’s distinction of *cupiditas* and *caritas* and Heidegger’s distinction within positive solicitude between “leap in” and “leaping ahead,” see Thomas Carlson, “With the World at Heart: Reading Cormac McCarthy’s ‘The Road’ with Augustine and Heidegger,” in *Religion & Literature*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (Autumn, 2007), pp. 47-71.

As mentioned above, the “worldly” function of ontological wonder allows us to see the other (human or other than human). In Heidegger’s analysis of our absorption in our daily concerns this idea of “seeing” the other is not obvious at all. Simply stated, to let the other be first requires being able to see it, which happens when in wonder the veil of the taken-for-grantedness of beings falls.

This condition, however, is not sufficient. We have to “know” the meaning of *Being* in order to let the other *be*.³⁷³ According to my study, it is the existential function of ontological wonder that brings us back (from our concerned world) into the mysterious fact that things are. While to be able to see the other inaugurates a positive solicitude for all beings, it is thanks to the disclosure of the thatness of beings that in our positive solicitude we “leap ahead” of the other (rather than merely leap in) without closing the openness and reducing the indetermination of its enigmatic existence. Although everybody exists in a pre-understanding of Being (i.e., its own life is already the response to its Being), this pre-understanding has to come to the fore if we are to respect and care for the other by offering back the mystery of its own Being.³⁷⁴

Third, as we saw in Chapter Six, in the moment of ontological wonder there is a countermovement or recoil, which I want to correlate with the type of inversion of intentionality that the ethical attitude of “letting the other be” implies.³⁷⁵ At the beginning of

³⁷³ To “know” the meaning of Being means precisely to have confronted its unknowability and have been shaken up by it to the core.

³⁷⁴ The idea of spending an entire life without knowing what life is all about and being confronted by it at the moment of our death is a recurrent theme in literature. See, for instance, Leo Tolstoy’s *The Death of Ivan Ilych* (1886). Of course, we do not have to wait until our imminent death to confront the meaning of our life. Accordingly, Henry David Thoreau writes: “I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived” (*Walden*, intro. by Bill McKibben, Boston: Beacon Press, 2004, 85).

³⁷⁵ About the idea of two different directions of intentionality, see for instance, Jean-Luc Marion’s analysis of the idol and the icon in the first two chapters of *God Without Being: Hors-Texte*, trans. by Thomas A. Carlson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991). For the importance of the inversion of intentionality for ethics, see

the night of anxiety we experience the slipping away of beings, but in this receding these beings turn around and look at us with the gaze of their heretofore concealed existence. In other words, already in the experience of the thatness of beings there is the inversion of intentionality in which we are traversed by the thatness of others. To let the others *be* requires, in my understanding, that we must be traversed by the other. Thus, the other stops being an invisible means for our project and we let our own project be the vehicle for the expression of the mode of Being of the other.

Fourth, the inversion happening in our care for other beings (human and not human) and its ethical implications can be further clarified through Heidegger's two words for *use*. For Heidegger, *Benutzen* refers to our utilizing and consuming things for our benefit and according to our measure. In *Brauchen*, in contrast, there is a harmony between our projects and the nature of the thing that is being used: "the user lets the used thing enter into the property of its own nature."³⁷⁶ When we let the used thing be, an inversion of the relation of *Benutzen* occurs:

Emmanuel Levinas' *Totality and Infinity*, trans. by Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969).

³⁷⁶ Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, trans. by J. Glenn Gray (New York: HarperCollins, 1968), 195-196. Regarding the nature of using (*Brauchen*), Heidegger writes: "'Using' does not mean the mere utilizing [*Benützen*], using up, exploiting [*Ab- und Ausnützen*]. Utilization is only the degenerate and debauched form of use. When we handle a thing, for example, our hand must fit itself to the thing. Use implies fitting response. Proper use does not debase what is being used—on the contrary, use is determined and defined by leaving the used thing in its essential nature...To use something is to let it enter into its essential nature, to keep it safe in its essence" (187). Later he summarizes: "'To use' means, first, to let a thing be what it is and how it is. To let it be this way requires that the used thing be cared for in its essential nature—we do so by responding to the demands which the used thing makes manifest in the given instance. Once we understand 'using' in this sense, which is more natural to us, and in which using designates a human activity, we already differentiated it from other modes of acting with which it is easily and readily confused and mixed up: from utilizing, and from needing [*Benötigen*]" (191). This mode of using creates an "essential community" (191) between the user and the thing used. According to my reading, however, Heidegger takes another step, in which "using" does not designate a human activity, and in which we reach—according to my interpretation—the proper ontological mode of "letting be." In the context of the translation of Parmenides's $\chi\rho\eta$ (which he translate as "it is useful"—fragment 6), Heidegger writes: "Using, thought of in this way, is no longer, is never the effect of man's doing. But conversely, all mortal doing belongs within the realm in which the $\chi\rho\eta$ makes its appeal" (196). We do not use the thing, nor does the used thing use us. While in the first sense of using we let the used thing be according to *what* and *how* it is (ontic), in the second sense, I claim, *using* touches the ontological thatness wherein the user and the used thing belong to the mysterious fact that they are. Instead of letting the other be with regards to its possibilities for what and how it is, in this second case, we let-lie what originally lies before us in the pure fact that it is: "Laying, thought as a

it is not that we use something, but rather that we are used by what we use. While *Benutzen* has a negative connotation for Heidegger, *Brauchen* describes a virtuous relationship to things, to other Daseins, and even to Being itself.

Having fleshed out the potential connection between ontological wonder and the ethical care for beings in which we let them be, the question arises: Can this ontological thatness become the ground for ethics? What is problematic, in my view, is the fact that the experience of ontological wonder does not depend on us. Although I have claimed that this experience is common, to wonder at the fact of bare existence is beyond the scope of our will. Heidegger writes: “We are so finite that we cannot even bring ourselves originally before the nothing through our own decision and will” (*WM*, 93). Challenging the rule of *making* in machination, we cannot *make* wonder happen. Furthermore, when wonder does occur, the closure of wonder is inevitable.³⁷⁷ Since this wonder cannot be created or sustained by our will, ontological wonder cannot become a normative principle. Since it does not depend on us, we cannot be compelled to behave according to the care that spontaneously (but not necessarily) emerges from encountering the thatness of beings; it can awaken in us at any moment. Triggered by the most trivial of everyday experiences, we may find ourselves struck by wonder. In short, it is a gift and not a norm.

letting-lie in the widest sense, relates to what in the widest sense lies before us, and speaks without a sound: there is [*es ist*]” (206-207). I do not expect this logic to be totally clear. What I do want to emphasize is that in this obscure second step we avoid misunderstanding the logic of the using as a mere inversion of instrumental reason (as if, instead of using things as means towards our ends, the used things would use us to their “ends”). It is precisely the obscurity of this second step, in which user and used thing belong to the realm of the *using*, that cannot be rendered according to instrumental rationality. Since neither the user nor the used thing imposes on the other its nature—i.e., each helps the other manifest its own nature—this non-instrumental mode of interacting is, I contend, ethical.

³⁷⁷ As we have seen, the emotional component of wonder soon fades away. Thus, what is at stake is the attempt to sustain the meaning that the experience of ontological wonder leaves behind. This meaning should not be confused with any meaningful narrative; indeed, the former occurs when the latter is in crisis. It is here that the practice—a type of *techne*, of questioning—can keep the meaning of wonder alive. But there is a temptation to close the opening to this austere and useless meaning of wonder and replace it with fancy views that are more useful for the dynamics and hierarchies of power.

Even if the inversion of *Benutzen* into *Brauchen* does not occur, the uselessness of wonder can be crucial in relation to the domination of nature. While wonder is useless for *Benutzen*, in its uselessness it challenges the contemporary tendency to seek in nature only what we humans want or need from it. The excess of this *thatness* calls into question the status of the human being as the measure of all things. Ontological wonder stops our drive towards manipulation to such a degree that it prevents us from making wonder itself useful as the grounds for a prescriptive ethics. Although we believe that ethics opposes machination and *Gestell*, ethics often merely embodies the logic of the latter. The fact that ontological wonder is useless for ethics uncovers the pervasive utilitarian calculation of some current ethics. Paradoxically, and acknowledging the danger of falling prey to the logic of *use* (*Benutzen*), I affirm: The uselessness of ontological wonder is “useful” for breaking the enchantment of ethics that nurtures the process of rationalization and domination of nature.

According to Heidegger, it is common to misjudge philosophy, whether by overestimating or underestimating it: “Philosophy is overestimated if one expects its thinking to have an immediately useful effect. Philosophy is underestimated if one finds in its concepts merely abstract (remote and watered down) representations of things that have already been solidly secured in experience” (*BQP*, 5).³⁷⁸ There is no profit to be made from encountering

³⁷⁸ See also *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 10. Heidegger’s idea of the “uselessness” of philosophy is complex. Heidegger writes: “It is entirely correct and completely in order to say, ‘You can’t do anything with philosophy.’ The only mistake is to believe that with this, the judgment concerning philosophy is at an end. For a little epilogue arises in the form of a counterquestion: even if *we* can’t do anything with it, may not philosophy in the end do something *with us*, provided that we engage ourselves with it? (*IM*, 13). This is a good example of Heidegger’s above mentioned two distinct words for “use.” The call for not overestimating philosophy may seem in tension with my purpose of using a philosophical reflection of ontological wonder to answer our ecological crisis. This goal betrays the influence of the tradition that comes from Marx’s philosophy of praxis that has as goal to change the world. Writing in the twenty first century, however, after the attempts of the last century to create so many Eden’s gardens (which always entails to first identify and annihilate what from the point of view of the garden counts as “weed” or “pest”—see Zygmunt Bauman’s *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989, 92), I confront with caution the injunction for transforming the world. My answer tries to bring both currents together in the paradoxical way mentioned above: When everything has to be useful (even philosophy), only the encounter with the useless, may be the way to open up the possibilities for real change. In

the nothing of anxiety and wonder. But rather than a lack, this signals an excess of another way of dwelling in the world, in which we stop shaping the world according to our image and instead let beings be. We care and shelter other beings not because they answer to our call but because we are all already addressed by the silent call of existence.

2) Ontological Wonder in the Shadow of Heidegger

In my study of ontological wonder, I have closely followed Heidegger's oeuvre, although—against Heidegger himself—I have inverted the negative valuation of nihilism by interpreting it in light of the logic of the nothing. But when I claim that ontological wonder is relevant to our environmental crisis, the proximity of my study of wonder to Heidegger's work obligates me to raise some unavoidable questions. For example, did ontological wonder promote Heidegger's participation in Nazism? Simply stated, what does the highest and most austere revelation of Being have to do with the concentration camps?³⁷⁹

other words, like Heidegger, we should not overestimate philosophy by asking to effect the change of the world, and yet, this “useless” questioning, in a world obsessed with transformation, becomes—in line with philosophy of praxis—a path for real transformation.

³⁷⁹ Hannah Arendt compares Heidegger's attempt to make wonder his abode with the story of Thales and the Thracian peasant girl. According to Rubenstein's reading of Arendt's text, Heidegger spent so much time looking above at the “star” of Being that he fell down—in his case, not into a well (like Thales) but into an inexcusable political blindness. Rubenstein explains Arendt's account of Heidegger's mistake: “Had he only come down from the philosophical clouds, Arendt suggests, Heidegger would have seen the dangers beneath his all-too-human feet. But he was too hell-bent on the coming of some metaphysical revolution to notice the deportations, the storefronts, the yellow stars, the burning of the temples” (*Strange Wonder*, 21). In my reading of Arendt's text, in contrast, Heidegger's “mistake” was not necessarily his decision to dwell in wonder; instead, it was, like Plato's adventure with the tyrant in Syracuse, his attempt to try to move this abode into the world of human affairs: “Now we all know that Heidegger, too, once gave in to the temptation to change his ‘abode’ and to involve himself in the world of human affairs. And as far as the world is concerned, he was served much worse than Plato, because the tyrant and his victims were not on the other side of the ocean, but in his own country” (“For Martin Heidegger's Eightieth Birthday,” in *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism: Questions and Answers*, Gunther Neske & Emil Kettering, New York: Pragon House, 1990, 216). For the summary of Arendt's four main concerns about wonder, see Rubenstein's *Strange Wonder* 21, 22. Rubenstein's entire book is a response to these four concerns.

Especially because I am writing after some of Heidegger's *Black Notebooks* have been published, I finish this study by attempting to succinctly address some ethical concerns regarding ontological wonder. I treat this issue at the end of my dissertation not because it is less important than other issues. Instead, to answer the question that I just posed, the meaning of Being as the thatness of beings (which is experienced in ontological wonder) must first be elucidated. I articulate my answer at the level that Heidegger wanted it to be encountered: the level of the question of Being. At this level my study has tried—with the aid of Heidegger—to articulate an ethical response rooted in the experience of Being to our ecological crisis, but in doing so my study avoids the (ontological) excesses that Heidegger committed in his political commitments. To this end I focus in the remainder of the Conclusion on three issues. First, I study Heidegger's tendency to justify his geopolitical views and ordinary prejudices by ontologizing them. Second, I discuss the articulation of the ontological difference from the point of view of sacrifice (and the elitism that this conveys). Third, I review the dangers of mystification inherent in Heidegger's history of Being.

a) Ontologizing Prejudices

I have tried to immunize my description of ontological wonder from Heidegger's ontological excesses.³⁸⁰ From a philosophical point of view, what is at stake is not whether

³⁸⁰ I consider as ontological excesses the parallel "ontological" world that Heidegger created during the thirties to explain the political situation of Europe before and during the World War II. In that world national states represent "metaphysical" and "spiritual" forces fighting for some "metaphysical" destiny: "Russia and America, seen metaphysically, are both the same: the same hopeless frenzy of unchained technology and the rootless organization of the average man" (*IM*, 40). "Europe lies in the pincers between Russia and America, which are metaphysically the same, namely in regard to their world-character and their relation to the spirit" (*IM*, 47-48). In this grand narrative, Germany, of course, has a special "metaphysical" role to play: "We lie in the pincers. Our people (*Volk*), as standing in the center, suffers the most intense pressure—our people, the people richest in neighbors and hence the most endangered people, and for all that, the metaphysical people. We are sure of this vocation; but this people will gain a fate (*Schicksal*) from its vocation only when it creates *in itself* a resonance, a possibility of resonance for this vocation, and grasps its tradition creatively. All this implies that this

Heidegger was an anti-Semite and an active member of the Nazi party, or that he refused to apologize for the atrocities committed by members of his party (all issues that are morally deplorable). Instead, what is at stake is that he ontologically justified these actions. Peter Trawny, the editor of Heidegger's *Black Notebooks*, writes,

Indeed, it has long been known that Heidegger shared banal anti-Semitic stereotypes with the majority not only of Germans, but perhaps even of Europeans. That he transformed these stereotypes into the history of being was hitherto unknown. This transformation, carried out at the end of the 1930s, is *the* problem.³⁸¹

Both Heidegger's commentaries that supported the Nazi party in the thirties and, later, his commentaries that distanced himself from the Nazi party³⁸² follow the same approach of

people, as historical people, must transpose itself—and with it the history of the West—from the center of their future happening into the originary realm of the powers of Being. Precisely if the great decision regarding Europe is not to go down the path of annihilation—precisely then can this decision come about only through the development of new, historically *spiritual* forces from the center" (*IM*, 41). We see here Hölderlin's tremendous powers wandering over the earth capturing Heidegger's phantasies. These tremendous powers appear as lords calling for some aristocratic and ethnocentric ontology, in which Being as such appears as a ground for social and ethnic hierarchies. And yet, can we count ontological wonder as one of the Weberian gods or Hölderlin's tremendous powers ruling our world? Does ontological wonder ask for our sacrifice in order to secure these hierarchies for the sake of the pathos of distance and rank?

³⁸¹ Peter Trawny, *Heidegger and the Myth of a Jewish World Conspiracy*, translated by Andrew J. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Preface of the English translation X). Similarly, Richard Wolin in his book review, "National Socialism, World Jewry, and the History of Being: Heidegger's Black Notebooks," writes: "Even before he joined the Nazi Party, Heidegger's thought was saturated with *völkisch* ideological themes. Parts of *Being and Time* express the same anti-liberal, proto-fascist perspective as Oswald Spengler and other contemporary German thinkers, including Carl Schmitt and Ernst Jünger. The major difference is that Heidegger's anti-democratic sentiments are masked in the discourse of fundamental ontology." Available at: <https://jewishreviewofbooks.com/articles/993/national-socialism-world-jewry-and-the-history-of-being-heideggers-black-notebooks/> (last access: 5 October, 2018).

³⁸² We have to carefully assess Heidegger's "distancing" of himself from Nazism. Richard Wolin writes: "Heidegger faulted the Nazi movement merely for having failed to realize the sublimity of its appointed historical destiny, as delineated by his own philosophy of Being. After the war, in other words, Heidegger arrogantly maintained that it was not he who had abandoned Hitler, but Hitler who had failed him!" ("National Socialism, World Jewry, and the History of Being: Heidegger's Black Notebooks"). Similar, Slavoj Žižek writes: "The volumes show that, after 1934, Heidegger effectively cultivated more and more doubts about Hitler and the Nazi regime; however, this growing doubt had a very precise shape of blaming the enemy. What Heidegger reproached Hitler for was not the Nazi stance as such but the fact that the Nazis also succumbed to technological-nihilist *Machenschaft*, becoming like America, Great Britain, France, and Soviet Union who are thereby always MORE guilty" ("The Persistence of the Ontological Difference" in *Heidegger's Black Notebooks: Responses to Anti-Semitism*, edited by Andrew J. Mitchell and Peter Trawny, New York: Columbia University Press, 2017, 404).

expressing his view from some “ontological” point of view. The question remains, does the ontological difference justify this ontological clothing of Heidegger’s geopolitical views?

I draw a distinction between Heidegger’s “ontological” excesses and his insights into ontological wonder, and it lies at the center of my exposition. In my interpretation of Heidegger’s “What is Metaphysics?,” I have argued that the central encounter with the nothing discloses a strictly *austere* meaning of Being. In Chapter Seven I argued that in nihilism the highest revelation of Being is possible, but we should not forget that this revelation is also the most austere.³⁸³

In the context of my work, austere means holding fast to the insight into the thatness of beings. It means that we must restrain ourselves from all the fancies of “ontological” powers wandering over the earth; rather than building baroque hierarchies of historical people fighting for metaphysical fates, we must encounter the austere insight into the thatness of beings. But limiting Heidegger’s reflection on Being to this *thatness* may sound misleading. Where are the other important expressions that saturate Heidegger’s work: *Ereignis*, the last god, the fourfold, etc.? And yet, I interpret these other notions as reworkings of this first and unfathomable insight into the thatness of beings.

The nothing, on the one hand, discloses the meaning of Being in its most austere version: the thatness of beings. On the other hand, the nothing unmask every attempt to treat any being as the Being of beings. Supreme beings, causes, and grounds all sink into indifference when they are experienced in the light of the nothing of anxiety. What is left is the whisper of beings: we are not-nothing. This austere insight differs considerably from the talk of tremendous powers wandering over the earth, or from the “god wholly other than past

³⁸³ Heidegger, “The Age of the World Picture” in *The Question Concerning Technology*, appendix 14, 154. See above Chapter Seven, page 301.

ones” (CP, 319). Although I do not have a monopoly on the meaning of Being, this austere interpretation of the meaning of Being is advantageous because it provides a standpoint from which to criticize any reification and mystification of Being—including Heidegger’s own tendencies in that direction.³⁸⁴

I argue that Heidegger’s ontological justification of his political views can be attributed to his failure to hold fast to the highest and most austere disclosure of Being offered in the context of modern nihilism. Instead of keeping Being as nothing, he replaced it with the content of the most banal ideological propaganda. Why?

The temptation to create an idol is greatest when we stop the sway of the nothing of anxiety just before it runs its full course. At this moment, the world of significance is in crisis and stable values sink into indifference. We are exposed to the temptation to latch onto

³⁸⁴ My attempt to demythologize Heidegger’s thought resembles John D. Caputo’s *Demythologizing Heidegger* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993). For Caputo, mythologizing in this context means, “the tendency of Heidegger to construct a fantastic portrait of the Greek sources of Western thought and culture—in the most classically German manner—and to represent these Greek sources as a single, surpassing, great ‘Origin’ (*Ursprung*), a primordial incipience or ‘Beginning’ (*Anfang*) of the West” (1). In his attempt to deconstruct the metanarrative of Being, Caputo does not aim to eliminate every myth; rather, he wants to mythologize differently, “inventing new and more salutary myths, or recovering other and older myths, myths to counter the destructive myths of violence, domination, patriarchy, and hierarchy” (3). In short, he wants to invoke myths other than the myth of Being: “The question of ‘demythologizing Heidegger’ then comes down to the task of disrupting the myth of Being with the myth of Justice, of disturbing the power, glory, and prestige of Being with the poverty, invisibility, and humility of justice” (3). Acknowledging that the problem is not mythologizing but the type of myths that we tell ourselves, Caputo easily distinguishes between “dangerous myths and salutary myths; between privileging, elitist, and hierarchizing myths and myths that promote justice and multiplicity; between exclusionary and oppressive myths and liberating, empowering myths” (3). While I agree that Being can become a myth (like a tremendous power wandering over the earth) and that there is no way to live without myths (i.e., demythologizing always means invoking other myths), I argue in this study that enchantment possesses us without our being aware of it. Hence, the problem is not the type of myth that we are telling ourselves; it is the fact that we do not even know which myth we are telling ourselves. Moreover, we should not forget that most of the time we believe we are defending the myths of humility and justice, even while we are enacting the dangerous myths that we believe ourselves to be countering. Since myths inconspicuously possess us, the task of demythologizing has to start with making myths conspicuous. The thesis of my study is that the austere interpretation of Being, rather than a myth, discloses our enchanted mode of being. I have suggested that the nothing of anxiety reveals our enchantment (including myth and ideology) and that the epilogue of this night—the wonder of the thatness of beings—is the most “clear” disclosure of the opacity of our world. Thus, my modest contribution comes before demythologizing (or the critique of ideology) and attempts to make audible the chanting of the sirens that we do not perceive because they have faded into ambient background sounds.

anything that promises an exit out of the night of the nothing of anxiety. Hence, the path that unveils idols can also create new ones.

Let me be clear here: No one can live without idols. I am not arguing that we can live without prejudices or that we can avoid the enchantment that makes them appear universally true. Rather, I dispute the gesture of ontologizing our prejudices (i.e., when we confuse Being with these idols) because when this occurs the meaning of Being changes in a way that prevents these idols from being disclosed as such. The goal is not to live without the enchantment of the modern gods but to know before which altar we already stand. In ontological wonder, we do not pay homage to some god; instead, we find the way to see them. The insight into the ontological wonder has no content that would impose a divine or human fate upon us.

However, holding fast to this austere insight seems almost impossible. Let me recall that rather than attracting, the nothing repels us into beings; it creates the empty space that we fill with significance. Hence, I criticize Heidegger not because he was unable to sustain ontological wonder (a position exemplified by Rubenstein's critique) or because, inspired by the idol of the ancient Greek World, he embraced the idol of the German people. Instead, I criticize him on the grounds that he used the language of Being to do it. To deal with idols Heidegger developed the very idea of "destruction,"³⁸⁵ but in doing so he made a new idol of Being.

When we forget the nothing, the path is open for the projection of our own fancies. The opacity of the nothing is turned into a white screen upon which we can project anything we want. When our opinions are turned into ontological truths, we can build an occult ontology in which metaphysical forces justify all-too-human social hierarchies. We create ontological lords

³⁸⁵ On the idea of destruction of previous ontological standpoints, see Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 44, and *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, § 5.

in order to become a lord on earth. The point of my critique is not that there are hierarchies, but that they are justified by the language of wonder and mystery—and, thus, they are difficult to resist. Rather than serving as a force of emancipation, ontological wonder ends up masking enchantment.

b) The Ontological Difference and Sacrifice

But perhaps the problem is not that Heidegger failed to maintain the ontological difference, but the reverse—that he preserved it. What if the ontological difference intrinsically entails an ethical failure, such that a direct path runs from *preserving* the ontological difference to Heidegger’s politics. To explore this possibility I examine Heidegger’s interpretation of the ontological difference from the point of view of sacrifice. In 1943, in the midst of the war, Heidegger wrote,

The need [*Not*] is for the truth of being to be preserved, whatever may happen to human beings and to all beings. The sacrifice [*Opfer*] is that of the human essence expending itself—in a manner removed from all compulsion, because it arises from the abyss of freedom—for the preservation of the truth of being for beings [*des Seins für das Seiende*]. In sacrifice there occurs [*ereignet sich*] the concealed thanks [*verborgene Dank*] that alone pays homage to the grace [*Huld*] that being has bestowed upon the human essence in thinking, so that human beings may, in their relation to being, assume the guardianship of being [*Wächterschaft des Seins*]. Originary thinking [*Das anfängliche Denken*] is the echo of being’s favor, of a favor in which a singular event is cleared and lets come to pass [*sich ereignen*]: that beings are [*daß Seiendes ist*].³⁸⁶

For Heidegger, philosophizing attains its compelling necessity when it is attuned by a need. Philosophy’s need is to preserve the truth of being. But what does it mean that the truth of Being should be preserved “whatever may happen to human beings and to all beings”? Why

³⁸⁶ “Postscript to ‘What Is Metaphysics?’” in *Pathmarks*, 236. Cited parenthetically hereafter as *PWM*.

should the human essence expend itself for the preservation of the truth of Being? These phrases seem to denote some opposition between the human being and the truth of Being: to preserve the latter the former must be sacrificed. Following our austere interpretation of Being, these sentences do not make sense. Although the thatness of beings is not itself a being, it is a meaningless abstraction to imagine some “thatness” without or in opposition to a being. Indeed, to imagine Being without beings requires turning Being into a being.

As I have argued in this study, since Being is like nothing, all roads lead to Being as nothing. Hence, there is no need for our sacrifice. Being has its own ways of finding its mode of revelation. For instance, in the midst of the gigantic, where everything is calculable, the shadow of the incalculable comes to the fore. While we may have to learn how to see Being in the incalculable, Being has already given itself to us—and learning how to see the truth of Being does not require our sacrifice nor the sacrifice of other beings.

In this passage, Heidegger describes the economy of sacrifice and grace at the core of the relation between Being and Dasein: we pay homage to Being’s grace by our sacrifice. Here, Being starts to look like a god—and not so “wholly other than past ones,” as he would like to believe. The fact that he wrote in these terms in 1943 is significant. At a time when millions of men and women were sacrificing their lives for their “countries” or being “sacrificed” (according to the view of the victimizers) because of their ethnicity, this ontological talk—which produces monstrous similarities between the Führer and Being—clearly creates misleading connotations. The language of sacrifice can easily be used to justify war and annihilation.

Let us examine more specifically what he means by sacrifice. In the same text, he continues:

Sacrifice is the departure from beings [*Abschied vom Seienden*] on the path to preserving

the favor of being [*Wahrung der Gunst des Seins*]. Sacrifice can indeed be prepared and served by working and achievement [*Werken und Leisten*] with respect to beings, yet never fulfilled by such activities (*PWM*, 236).

What does sacrifice as “the departure from beings” mean? I have quoted passages in Chapters Four and Five³⁸⁷ in which Heidegger explains that the insight into the Being of beings does not entail turning away from beings. I have explained that the insight into the ontological difference requires some degree of detachment from beings,³⁸⁸ which occurs spontaneously in the nothing of anxiety when every being (including us) sinks into indifference. But at this moment of a crisis of meaning, we experience beings as a whole. In other words, this departure from beings leads to some “place” where beings are even more present. The departure signals how beings in their receding precisely turn toward us. In our ordinary dealings with things, we are actually “apart” from them, and, thus, in anxiety we turn back to them by turning away from our everyday concerns. Only in this moment do they look at us with heretofore concealed strangeness from the perspective of their thatness. The language of sacrifice, however, misleadingly creates the impression that we experience the truth of Being by simply detaching ourselves from beings. Again, the only detachment required is the one that spontaneously happens in anxiety—namely, the departure from our ordinary concerned mode of dealings with beings. In short, the “departure” is a turning back towards (and not away from) the things in

³⁸⁷ See, Chapter Four, page 180-181; Chapter Five, pages 230-231.

³⁸⁸ Departure, or distancing ourselves from beings in order to experience Being, is a recurrent theme in Heidegger’s work. Indeed, the notion of the nothing has the function of creating this distance. For instance, in the seminar in Le Thor (1969) Heidegger explains, “the essence of the nothing consists in the turning away from beings [*Seienden*], in the distance from them. Only in this distance can the being as such [*das Seiende als solcher*] become apparent. The nothing is not the simple negation of the being. On the contrary, the nothing in its nihilation [*Nichten*] refers [*verweist*] us to the being [*Seinde*] in its manifestation. The nihilation of the nothing [*das Nichten des Nichts*] ‘is’ being [*das Sein*].”³⁸⁸ (Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 57, translation modified). Particularly relevant here is Heidegger’s clarification that the nothing does not negate beings. In other words, the distance that the nothing creates from beings (so that Being as such may become apparent) does not entail their annihilation. Hence, we have to carefully interpret the meaning of this “turning away from beings.”

themselves.

The logic of sacrifice can become an instance of economical exchange, but it also can overcome that logic. Thus, sacrifice becomes a seductive means of defending a mode of being that is outside the logic of calculation. This, in my reading, helps explain Heidegger's temptation to mystify Being through the language of sacrifice. He writes,

Sacrifice is at home in the essence of the event [*Ereignis*] whereby being lays claim upon the human being for the truth of being. For this reason, sacrifice tolerates no calculation, which can only ever miscalculate it in terms of utility [*Nutzen*] or uselessness [*Nutzlosigkeit*], whether the ends are placed low or set high. Such miscalculation distorts the essence of sacrifice. The obsession with ends [*Zwecken*] confuses the clarity of the diffidence, ready for anxiety [*angstbereiten Scheu*], that belongs to the courage of sacrifice [*des Opfermutes*] which has taken upon itself the neighborhood of the indestructible (*PWM*, 237, translation modified).

As we have seen, the truth of Being is at odds with instrumental rationality, which calculates means toward ends. Given that Being tolerates no calculation, we can appreciate that the logic of sacrifice (which also does not tolerate calculation) might tempt us because it is a way of expressing a mode of being beyond the scope of calculation. Along these lines, in this passage, anxiety and diffidence (*Scheu*) belong to the courage of sacrifice (rather than restraint).³⁸⁹ However, I argue that rendering the relation between Being and Dasein in terms of sacrifice leads to a greater misunderstanding of the ontological difference in terms of an either/or opposition: either beings (and the forgetting of the truth of Being) or Being (and the sacrifice of beings).

Moreover, the elitism inherent in Heidegger's philosophy finds its justification in this logic of sacrifice:

³⁸⁹ On the connection between diffidence and restraint see Heidegger's *Contribution to Philosophy (Of the Event)*, 15, and our discussion in Chapter Five, pages 229-232.

Thus the dislocation of man [*die Verrückung des Menschen*] back into his ground has to be carried out in the first place by those few, solitary, and uncanny ones, who in various ways as poets, thinkers, as builders and artists, as doers and actors, ground and shelter the truth of Being in beings through the transformation of beings. Through the rigor of the decisions which lie ahead, they become, each in his way and unknown to the many, a silent sacrifice. If we appraise the reflection on this dislocation [*Verrückung*] of man from the standpoint of sound common sense and its predominance, we will reject it as deranged [*‘verrückt*], to play cleverly with a word, and will not even take the pains to reject such reflection but will simply ridicule it (*BQP*, 181).

The silent sacrifice of those few uncanny ones resembles Abraham’s absolute relation to the absolute described by Kierkegaard.³⁹⁰ When there is no discourse for mediating this absolute relation, those few uncanny ones have to resist in solitude the rejection and ridicule of everyone else who dwells in sound common sense. We can even imagine Heidegger thinking along these lines when he justified (to himself) his silence regarding the atrocities committed by his party: *through the rigor of the decisions which lie ahead, we become unknown to the many, a silent sacrifice*.³⁹¹

There is no way to miss the elitism in Heidegger’s work. But what kind of elitism grants the experience of ontological wonder? While Heidegger associates it with the logic of sacrifice, I relate it to anxiety. While Heidegger’s thinking is for those few, solitary, and uncanny ones who have the courage to sacrifice themselves, my interpretation of ontological wonder creates

³⁹⁰ See Søren Kierkegaard, Problem III: Was it Ethically Defensible for Abraham to Conceal His Undertaking from Sarah, from Eliezer, and from Isaac?, in *Fear and Trembling*, trans. by Walter Lowrie (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1955).

³⁹¹ For a reading of the relevance of silence in Heidegger’s thinking that explains, but does not justify, Heidegger’s silence about Nazi cruelty and his wrongdoing, see Elliot R. Wolfson, *The Duplicity of Philosophy’s Shadow: Heidegger, Nazism, and the Jewish Other* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), especially Chapter Four, “Being’s Tragedy: Heidegger’s Silence and the Ring of Solitude.” About Heidegger’s silence, Wolfson writes: “Heidegger’s uncommunicativeness likely reflects an inner conflict, but, even more tellingly, it may represent putting into practice his contention that the situation was too deplorable to validate uttering a complaint verbally, not because of a paucity of words but because the surfeit of words is precisely what is deficient” (139).

the “elitism” of the anxious, the bored, the joyful, the shocked, the diffident ones. Ontological wonder is the privilege not of the few but of the many—because we are always already attuned by these basic dispositions. The availability of these *basic* dispositions calls into question the logic of the elitism that Heidegger imposed on his description of anxiety and sacrifice. According to my interpretation, no one is exempted from experiencing these basic dispositions. They are not the privilege of a few aristocratic poets and thinkers; instead, we are always already being held out into them.

c) *The Mystification of the History of Being*

The mystified reading of the ontological difference also occurs in Heidegger’s “Being-historical-thinking.” This mystification appears as a sort of “idealism” in which the essence of history looks very different from what we usually understand as history. In *Basic Question of Philosophy*, Heidegger writes:

History does not mean for us here the simple gathering of everyday public events, and a fortiori it is not such events as bygone [*Vergangene solcher Vorkommnisse*]. All of that certainly belongs to history and yet by no means touches its essence. For history is the occurrence in which, through man, beings become ‘more being’ [*das Seiende seiender wird*]. This occurrence involves most intrinsically the coming forth of beings as such into an openness which for its part requires a grounding and shelter in beings... The question of the essentialization of truth [*Wesung der Wahrheit*] is therefore the originally historical question, the question that grounds history, and is therefore historically different according to the respective historical moment” (*BQP*, 172).

That history may move according to “the essentialization of truth” is not necessarily problematic. The problem arises when this distinction between historical events at the surface and the essence of history as the essentialization of truth creates two separated spheres that have an unbalanced relationship: ontic events depend absolutely on the essence, and the

essence is absolutely cut off from its manifestations. In short, we have a new version of the old idea of some suprasensible dimension that guides from afar the events at the surface.³⁹² From the perspective of the surface, the determination of the essence seems to be arbitrary because there is no evident derivation from the surface to the essence: “In every case, however, the determination of the essence [of truth, which is the ground for history] is apparently arbitrary [*willkürlich*], and so little can it be derived from what is given [*Vorgegeben*], that it is, on the contrary, the determination of the essence which allows us to grasp a given something as this and not that” (*BQP*, 173). Consequently, the essence of history, which is grounded in *Dasein*, is a completely different type of history, “a history still *destined* [*bestimmt*], ...completely different from what now seems to be taken as history: the dreary hunt for self-devouring incidents which allow themselves to be seized, fleetingly, only by means of the loudest clamor” (*CP*, 29). The problem becomes clear when on the “surface” people are being annihilated, but, according to Heidegger, this is simply a secondary reflection of some esoteric history disclosed only to those few, solitary, and uncanny ones.³⁹³ The first and most obvious criticism is that

³⁹²In this respect, Heidegger’s history of Being is a faithful heir to German Idealism. It is not coincidental that at the beginning of “What is Metaphysics?” Heidegger approvingly quotes Hegel: “From the point of view of sound common sense, philosophy is in Hegel’s words ‘the inverted world’” (*WM*, 82). In contrast, according to Marx’s and Engels in *The German Ideology*: “Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc.—real, active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these, up to its furthest forms. Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their life-process. If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a camera obscura, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process” (*The German Ideology Part One*, ed. by C.J. Arthur, New York: International Publishers, 1970, 47). How is it possible that Heidegger, who, according to my thesis, offers us a way to unveil ideology, fell prey to the inverted world of German Idealism? Or is it the case, instead, that Marx and Engels are merely representing the point of view of sound common sense? In this study, I have tried to move in between the (not always complementary) Heideggerian question of Being and the Marxian critique of ideology. While I have argued that the (austere) experience of ontological wonder offers a mode of disclosure for our ideological enchantments, there is no guarantee that Being as such may not itself become the source of ideological mystification.

³⁹³ In his *Black Notebooks*, Heidegger presents his own version of his commitment to and later reservations about National Socialism. Tellingly, he justifies his political visions in metaphysical terms: “Thinking purely ‘metaphysically’” (i. e., in terms of the history of being), in the years 1930 to 1934 I took National Socialism to be the possibility of a transition to another beginning, and that is the meaning I gave to it. In that way I misjudged the ‘movement’ in terms of its proper forces and inner necessities; I also underestimated the greatness of its

the history of Being is merely the projection of all-too-human social and geopolitical biases into some “essential” realm. While geopolitical views have to be verified factually, when these geopolitical views are disguised as ontological insights there is no space for falsifiability. According to Richard Wolin,

For when the trajectory of concrete historical life is restyled according to the logic of a self-positing ‘history of Being,’ whose ethereal ‘sendings’ (*Schickungen*) seem impervious to counterfactual instances and arguments, political judgment is potentially deprived of any intersubjectively verifiable basis or touchstone.³⁹⁴

Falling prey to this danger, Heidegger in the *Black Notebooks* applied to specific groups of people the same concepts that previously he had publicly used to apprehend the metaphysical essence of modernity. In this way, Heidegger presents ordinary anti-Semitic prejudices as “metaphysical” insights. For instance, in the *Black Notebooks* the category of the gigantic is applied to the entire “Jewish civilization.” Heidegger writes: “One of the most hidden figures of the *gigantic* and perhaps the oldest one is the tenacious skillfulness in reckoning and manipulating and meddling in which the worldlessness [*Weltlosigkeit*] of Jewish civilization is grounded.”³⁹⁵ This text is especially disturbing in that the term “worldlessness,” which he uses in 1929–30 to describe stones, and which in these notebooks he also applies to the animal,

dimensions and the kind of greatness it possesses. Rather, what is beginning here is the completion of modernity, and in a much deeper—that is, more comprehensive and pervasive—way than in fascism—; this completion began in the ‘Romantic’ period generally, to be sure—with a view to the humanization of the human being in its self-certain rationality. But for the completion what is needed is the decisiveness of the historic-technological in the sense of the total “mobilization” of all the capabilities of a humanity that is now standing on its own” (GA 95 *Überlegungen VII-XI [Schwarze Hefte 1938-1939]*, Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2014, 408). Of course, Heidegger would be the first to confirm that “metaphysical” thinking is fallible: indeed, erring is essential for this thinking.

³⁹⁴ Richard Wolin, Introduction to *The Heidegger Controversy*, 12. In his review “National Socialism, World Jewry, and the History of Being,” Wolin writes: “Many of Heidegger’s key assertions concerning ‘humanity,’ ‘fate,’ and the ‘history of Being’ shun demonstrative argument in favor of airy conjecture about the nature of obscure deities and supra-mundane potencies to whom we must passively submit. In this respect Heidegger’s later thought represents, in no uncertain terms, a renunciation of human autonomy.”

³⁹⁵ Heidegger, GA 95 *Überlegungen VII-XI (Schwarze Hefte 1938-1939)*, 97.

here is applied to the Jewish people. What does “metaphysics” mean here? How does it allow Heidegger to make such a massive generalization and present his own prejudices as true descriptions of “ontological” categories?³⁹⁶

In addition to the problem of turning base prejudices into massive generalizations with ontological justification, I see in Heidegger’s version of the history of Being another problem. I have already examined Heidegger’s tendency to separate phenomena into their essences and manifestations and then to argue for the essential “sameness” of opposite manifestations. For instance, I have noted that the essence of machination gathers together seemingly opposed phenomena: the reduction of everything to calculability and the chasing for lived experiences. However, this “metaphysical” tendency can lead also to outrageous excesses, as the publication of the first *Black Notebooks* demonstrates. Heidegger’s growing distance from Nazism came principally from his realization—with the aid of Ernst Jünger—that National Socialism, with its accent on technology, instantiated gigantism and machination. Grotesquely, this logic leads Heidegger to overlook the difference between perpetrators and victims. Since Nazis and Jews are manifestations of the same machination, Jews were just the victims of their own essence: “When the essentially ‘Jewish,’ in the metaphysical sense, struggles against what is Jewish, the high point of self-annihilation in history is attained.”³⁹⁷ While several post-Heideggerian

³⁹⁶ I do not want to provide psychological explanations—as, for instance, David Krell does when he refers to Heidegger’s paranoia (see, *Daimon Life*, and “Heidegger’s *Black Notebooks*, 1931–1941,” 153). Psychological, sociological, and cultural reasons are foreign to Heidegger’s approach. In contrast, my study of ontological wonder tries to approach these excesses from the perspective of the question of Being (which is Heidegger’s proper approach, but which should not be equated with him—just as the principle of the sufficient reason or the will to power are not restricted to what Leibniz and Nietzsche have said about them).

³⁹⁷ Heidegger, GA 97 *Anmerkungen I-V (Schwarze Hefte 1942-1948)*, Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2015, 20). Commenting on this passage, Žižek writes that for Heidegger, “the Holocaust was as an act of Jewish ‘self-annihilation’ insofar as, at Auschwitz and other death camps, the Jews—as the prime movers behind ‘machination’ and the technological devastation of all of Being—themselves succumbed to industrialized mass murder. In this way, Europe’s Jews merely fell prey to forces they themselves had unleashed” (“The Persistence of the Ontological Difference,” 407-408). Elliot Wolfson, while interpreting a passage in Heidegger’s “*Die Überwindung der Metaphysik*” that exhibits a similar logic, writes: “It may strike one as grossly unsympathetic that Heidegger attributes to the Nazis the same criticism he leveled against the Jews, but there is

thinkers have argued that Heidegger does not succumb to biological racism, it could be argued that this metaphysical racism is even worse.³⁹⁸ While the connection between machination and race is illuminating, its explanatory capacity is lost when, in order to justify “metaphysically” the monstrous attempt to annihilate the Jewish people,³⁹⁹ it enters the narrative of the history of Being.

no question that the former are implicitly targeted for filling the vacuum created by the abandonment of being with promulgating the consumption of beings for the sake of manufacturing technological machination to boost the production of war... Evidently referring to Hitler as the one who sought to save subjectivity by appeal to the ideal of the *Übermensch*, Heidegger shrewdly points out that the superhuman and the subhuman, the victor and the victim, are one and the same. ...the belonging together renders them identical in virtue of their difference and thereby undermines the hierarchical foundation for the dominance of the superhuman over the subhuman” (*The Duplicity of Philosophy’s Shadow*, 151). While the logic that identifies victor and victim is far from being unproblematic, I concur with Wolfson that, at the very least, Heidegger does use this logic to criticize Nazi ideology. Moreover, the belonging together of the victor and victim does not imply a simple equality of both terms; rather, they are “identical in virtue of their difference.” Finally, since the victor and the victim belong together as a consequence of being both manifestations (or victims) of the abandonment of Being, it seems unreasonable to blame the victim for self-annihilating—as if the victor (Nazis) were merely the victim of the victims (Jews). If there is someone to blame, according to this narrative, it should be Being itself.

³⁹⁸ On Heidegger’s critique of biological racism, see especially Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. by Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 74.

³⁹⁹ In *The Banality of Heidegger* (trans. by Jeff Fort, New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), Jean-Luc Nancy considers Heidegger’s obsession with the *initial* and *foundations* as the key to understanding Heidegger’s anti-Semitism: “That Heidegger picked up and exploited the banality of anti-Semitism means that he left a place—and not the least important—for a decisive element of the metaphysics of beings: the presupposition of the initial, of the foundation and the origin, of the authentic and the proper” (41). This motif of the beginning (which gathers all the values of authenticity, originarity, and properness) works within—I would say—an “organic” view of destruction and rebirth. In other words, the condition of the blossoming of the new beginning is the destruction of the first beginning. Simply, “the shipwreck is indispensable to the ‘new beginning’” (16). According to Nancy’s interpretation, the manner in which Heidegger believes this destruction should take place betrays Heidegger’s anti-Semitism. Because the forgetting of Being “destroys” Being, we need to destroy the destruction of Being so that a new beginning can arise: “The destining of *beyng* toward a new beginning of its *Geschehen*—that is, the destining to its renewed and retrieved destining, overcoming itself by destroying the destruction that its forgetting has engaged (its own forgetting, the forgetting of itself that it opened with itself)—this destining demands the ending of what in any case foments the scheming of the end: the West, the metaphysics of beings, the historyless, the groundless, and the peopleless” (30). Since this narrative is, in fact, Being’s monologue (Being is the sole performer), both forgetting and destruction are, in reality, instances of self-forgetting and self-destruction. Like Yahweh, *Being* seems to have elected a people as the agent of its own historical destiny—even if the destining requires the people’s own annihilation. “The mobilization of anti-Semitism takes on all its meaning and its truly ‘historical’ dimensions from the moment when it is clear that the Jew is the oldest figure of the self-destruction of the West, a self-destruction that is its truth as advent and destiny of the forgetting of *beyng*” (30). The Jews—as paradoxically both the destroyers of Being and the vessels of Being’s destiny—become the agent of (self)-destruction: “It was therefore necessary that the agent of Western destruction destroy itself. It is to this that the historico-destinal-logic leads according to which *beyng* was destined in its first beginning toward the advent of another, the true (re)beginning in which it will be given to *beyng* to make use of beings and no longer to be covered over them” (51). Agreeing with Peter Trawny’s notion of “Historical anti-Semitism,” Nancy concludes: “In the midst of this spectacle, the technical and calculated destruction of the people who more than any other bore the meaning of calculating domination expresses the truth of the ruination. Heidegger was not only anti-

To conclude this short overview of the excesses of Heidegger's history of Being, I point out some relevant inconsistencies in his account. In Heidegger's narrative, only Being is in charge of the course of the history of Being. If we are not among the uncanny ones, we can assert no arguments or counterfactual instances to challenge this history. But the problem is not merely who is privileged enough to know the course of this history; it is also the fact that this history is experienced by the human subject as a destiny that—willingly or not—we must follow. In this history, human subjects have lost their autonomy. Everything that happens in modernity comes down to the fact of the abandonment of beings by Being—in which beings are not at fault.⁴⁰⁰

Semitic: he attempted to think to its final extremity a deep historico-destinal necessity of anti-Semitism” (52). While I concur with Nancy's interpretation of Heidegger's narrative of the history of Being (especially in the context of the *Black Notebooks*), I reject the idea that to turn into its proper essence, the un-essence (*Unwesen*) has to be self-annihilated. I have tried to explore the meaning of *recovery* and *transfiguration* as a mode to understanding the belonging together of unessence and the essence. Moreover, by focusing on the austere interpretation of Being as nothing, I have tried to prevent the use of Being to justify any narrative, regardless of how “ontological” that narrative's plot may appear. Similarly, Nancy writes: “It is not enough, finally, to understand that *being* submits itself to no ‘ontology’: we must still yet withdraw it also from the nomination of a *beyng*, as well as from every other nomination, and from the destination that every name no doubt draws along in its train” (58, 59). Although the interpretation of Being *as* nothing attempts to withdraw Being from any nomination, I acknowledge that the nothing also can become a new name that imposes its own destination.

⁴⁰⁰ In *Freedom to Fail: Heidegger's Anarchy* (trans. by Ian Alexander Moore and Christopher Turner, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), Peter Trawny explores the tragic dimension of Heidegger's thinking. Trawny begins by focusing on Heidegger's interpretation of truth as unconcealment. Since concealment is required by (and survives) unconcealment, the possibility of going astray is necessary: “Concealment always occurs together with openness. It makes every certainty illusionary. Because we do not dominate this appropriative event, we must go astray; foundering is inevitable” (41). Thus, it is not surprising that Heidegger wrote: “He who thinks greatly must err greatly” (“The Thinker as Poet” in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter, New York: HarperCollins, 1971, 9). But when errancy is essential to truth, truth and errancy cannot clearly be distinguished. Trawny writes: “The criterion for distinguishing truth and errancy is missing. For Heidegger, it is precisely a matter of understanding and thinking this lack. Whoever errs cannot separate the aberration from the true” (54-55). Indeed, the thought of errancy can itself be errant (30). Moreover, the belonging together of errancy and truth inaugurates an an-archic mode of freedom—i.e., freedom for error (63). If we negated the possibility of erring, we would cancel the ground for freedom. “Being without error is technical routine. Thinking ceases” (63). Now, when errancy is essential to freedom and truth, we enter in the heart of tragedy. Not surprisingly, Heidegger affirms: “Beyng itself is ‘tragic’” (GA 95 *Überlegungen VII-XI (Schwarze Hefte 1938-1939)*, Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2014, 417). Trawny comments: “In the truth of being, errancy is not only inevitable; it belongs as an essential possibility to truth itself. At issue is not that we err once in a while, but that errancy is at the center of the whole, the heart of tragedy. If Oedipus did not err, the plot, his action, would not be tragic. An ethics of unconcealment is the sense of a tragic ethics is an ethics of errancy” (50-51). The fact that in Trawny's interpretation of Heidegger's *tragic ethics* there is no room for revenge, guilt, and conscience may sound compelling, it seems less once we note that there is also no room for responsibility: “An-archic freedom is a

When everything that happens in this history depends on some mysterious destiny defined by “Being,” we are exculpated from our responsibility. As Wolin writes,

For if it is, as we learn in “Overcoming Metaphysics,” “Western metaphysics” that is in fact responsible for the devastating “events of the world history in this century,” then certainly Germany as a nation—which Heidegger persists on viewing as the vehicle of our salvation—need bear special responsibility neither for the European catastrophe nor for its “crimes against humanity.”⁴⁰¹

If the decay of “Western metaphysics” comes from some specific interpretation of Being as presence and constancy, which, in turn, correlates with Being’s own withdrawing, then the decay is not our fault. If there is one “good” thing about Being’s exculpatory function, in which Being is to be blamed for our deeds, it is that we do not have to deal with guilt or blame fellow humans. If Being is in charge of the course of this history, how then is it still possible for Heidegger to blame the Jews for our state of affairs? About this “lapse” in Heidegger’s account, David Krell writes:

freedom from responsibility and guilt. Just as Oedipus cannot be guilty of having slept with his mother, the one who errs is not guilty of having foundered in the interplay of concealment and openness. In the appropriative event of truth, moral responsibility is merely a phantasm” (52). Although Heidegger rejects moral responsibility, truth as unconcealment allows another type of responsibility: “A moral responsibility is rejected in favor of a responsibility in the sense of a correspondence to the word. Seen in this way, errancy would be a mishearing [*Verhören*] from which a discordant answer to the word would necessarily arise” (52). Now, when Being itself is tragic, we see that a plot shapes the disclosure of Being. “Considered from the perspective of the inception, everything is open. Yet, within being, there is opened up at the same time a form of occurrence, a plot, in which the openness of being takes shape” (39). And this shape is mythological: “Mythos, the plot of the tragedy, turns on transgression, foundering” (40). Being itself has a beginning, a middle, and an end—it is determined by the tragic and mythic rhythm of errancy, decline, tribute, and rebirth. In short, the history of Being is a drama. And yet, can we accept Heidegger’s insight into truth as unconcealment without the sacrificial rhythm that Heidegger’s “ontological” drama seems to imply? Trawny himself is ambiguous about this. While he acknowledges the need for responsibility (“The victims are the trace of a history that challenges us to identify the culprits... A history without culprits—is unbearable” [61]), he nostalgically laments today’s lack of narratives: “Viewed more closely, the world is full of narratives. Yet it is itself no longer one” (84). In my study, I have explored the impossibility of living without narratives that enchant the world, yet I have also argued that Being itself should not be identified with any one of these narratives. In fact, the disclosure of Being marks both the crisis of these narratives and the possibility of their revelation. Confusing Being with one of the tremendous powers that wander over the earth is precisely what the austere interpretation of Being as nothing (as the thatness of beings) tries to avoid.

⁴⁰¹ Richard Wolin, Introduction to *The Heidegger Controversy*, 14.

As he reiterates over and over again, it is not we who have abandoned being, but being that has abandoned us, abandoned *all* beings, and did so long ago. And being, *Sein*, to say nothing of *Seyn*, is not any particular *Seiendes*. There is thus no one and nothing to blame for the situation.... This, of course, would make it impossible for Heidegger's thinking to blame this or that group of human beings for contributing to the oblivion of being. Oblivion belongs to being, not to us.... And if Heidegger should ever polemicize against his contemporaries, or against any subset of his contemporaries, it must be that he has forgotten to *think*, forgotten to *remember*.

For you and me, this lapse in thinking would be risible, and we would laugh at ourselves for it, were we alert enough for self-critique. For Heidegger, by contrast, this lapse in himself is unforgivable, unpardonable.... This lapse and collapse, this failure of *thinking*, is not the sort of condemnation or death-sentence and conflagration that the self-appointed tribunals of our own time might wish for him. Yet for anyone who *reads* him, *and precisely for those who will continue to read him*... this lapse and collapse will be worse than unforgivable—it will remain *unforgiving*.⁴⁰²

In my critique of Heidegger's version of the history of Being, I have underscored his massive generalizations and his disguising of banal stereotypes and geopolitical views as ontological descriptions. Moreover, I have shown that following Heidegger's own premises, there is no justification for blaming any group of people for modernity's ills. Crucial for my study, I have also argued that the experience of ontological wonder as the epilogue of the night of the nothing of anxiety should not be confused with the narrative of the history of Being. A long distance separates (a) the austere experience of the fact that things are from (b) any "metaphysical" and "historic" fighting of ontological wars.

Finally, if we accept Heidegger's premises about the relationship of historical peoples to the history of Being, then the reading of nihilism that I have developed throughout this study calls into question Heidegger's perspective on the Jewish people. Since in nihilism the highest

⁴⁰² "Heidegger's Black Notebooks, 1931-1941," in *Research in Phenomenology* 45, 2015, 153-154.

revelation of Being is possible, then when Heidegger identifies the Jewish people with the spirit of machination, he should have concluded that the highest and most austere revelation of Being was possible for the Jewish people.

Concluding Remarks

Ontological wonder discloses an austere insight into the thatness of beings. This thatness cannot be rendered—without losing its insight—the subject of some grand narrative, nor does it ask for sacrifice. It cannot create esoteric schools of philosophy for the few, nor does it justify the division of the world into “metaphysical” peoples to be sacrificed to Being. But perhaps the problem with ontological wonder is that its meaning is so austere that it appears entirely useless for our ethical commitments. When we refrain from engaging in ontological storytelling, we can fall to the other extreme: ontological wonder is totally useless. To finish this study I directly address this concern.

I have explored the thesis that in the historical moment when “there is nothing to Being itself,” the highest and most austere revelation is possible. Rather than anticipating with hope a new disclosure of Being (or a new saving god) to come, I have argued that, from the point of view of Being as nothing, any new god (or any “figure” of Being at all) would represent a “lesser” revelation than Being as nothing.

But if we grant this thesis, we have to come to terms with the uncomfortable fact that the highest and most austere revelation of Being does not always secure happiness or a more just society. In short, seeing *more* does not necessarily entail becoming a better person. The path of happiness and the path of sainthood—although related—are not the same as the path

of *besinnliches Denken* (meditative thinking). No one requires that to be happy or to become a better person, Being as such must be disclosed to them in shock or wonder. Though we always already dwell in a pre-understanding of Being, we have to distinguish between our pre-understanding of Being, on the one hand, and an original revelation, in which Being as such becomes conspicuous and can be thematized, on the other.⁴⁰³ Does the latter affect the former? Do we hammer better after the referential significance of the workshop's world is lit up by the missing or broken hammer? It seems that it does not. Accordingly, Heidegger writes:

if being necessarily remains unthematized in human life, if, in other words, the aim of *Being and Time* does not lead everyday Dasein to a thematization of being—something which would not constitute its ownness [*Eigenheit*] anyway—it nevertheless remains the case that 'human life' as such would not be possible without the prior and unacknowledged clearing of being. This is the meaning of the celebrated and yet misunderstood analysis of equipmentality in *Being and Time*. The equipmental character of the thing does not need to become thematized in order to exist, and nevertheless, it is in the chair as chair that I am seated.⁴⁰⁴

The clearing of Being determines us with or without our acknowledgment, and, besides, acknowledging and thematizing it does not belong to Dasein's "ownness." Along these lines, in *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger writes:

To be sure—whether the question “Why are there beings at all instead of nothing?” is posed or not makes no difference whatsoever to beings themselves. The planets move in their orbits without this question. The vigor of life flows through plant and animal without the question (*IM*, 5,6).

⁴⁰³ About the pre-understanding of Being, see above Chapter Six, page 258. As we have seen, the emphasis on an “original” revelation that discloses “Being as such” does not cancel the need for a hermeneutical context to signify this experience. Both our readiness to welcome ontological wonder and the endless task to decipher its meaning require that we engage in philosophical questioning. Although the thatness of beings is experienced at the crisis of significance, we are never outside the totality of significance. In ontological wonder we rather touch the fertile blind spot of significance from which we are called to make sense, but which in itself is senseless.

⁴⁰⁴ Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003, 58.

If humanity does not ask this question, it will not miss its chance to get to Mars. And yet, a slightly different question has inspired my study: Can the disclosure of Being help us avoid the annihilation of our planet, plants and animals—*beings* that precisely move and live without asking this question?

Thematizing Being, and bringing to the fore our own presuppositions and the realm of our own goals, does not help us hammer better or sit more comfortably in the chair. To let the guiding question of philosophy resonate in us does not make any difference whatsoever to beings themselves. What, then, do we gain by thematizing Being?

We gain *nothing*, and the nothing can show us where we stand by revealing a world in which calculation, profit, and endless growth make unquestioned sense. In other words, philosophizing lights up the assumptions and goals that are implied by hammering, seating, and turning the entire planet into a gas station. Meditative thinking does not help us achieve any specific goal, but it does allow us to apprehend the basis or root-thought that determines all of our goals. This, in turn, allows us to gain a perspective that allows us to call the world into question. This is the first step towards a critique of the presuppositions that guide our goals. If our goals are guiding us towards ecological collapse, it should face our enchantment with a clearer vision.

The experience of ontological wonder is open to everyone, and if it or its ethical effects occur infrequently, this is so because we lack the hermeneutical context to make sense of—and to make us available for—it. This study aims to create this hermeneutical ground, so that by meaningfully welcoming these moments of existential estrangement, we may learn to care for every being for the simple reason that they are—and they could have been nothing.

It is not uncommon to hear that spending time in nature helps cure anxiety and depression. My analysis also suggests the inverse: anxiety—at least when it runs its full course and turns into the wonder that things *are*—can help us to deaccelerate the will to dominate the natural world.

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