

FROM FRANCIS BACON TO MARTIN HEIDEGGER: A MERIDIAN OF REDEMPTION
A COMMENTARY

By

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A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
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To the right and the left in us all

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This paper proposes a reading of Paul Celan's "Der Meridian" speech through the lens of Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*. It takes as its point of conception a historical trajectory of modern science whose basis of legitimacy is and has been contested throughout the course of its development. This paper proposes that *Being and Time* is to be properly understood within the trajectory of that historical context, and that "Der Meridian" is a comment upon the space thereby occupied by *Being and Time*. It makes plain the defining characteristics of science as they appear historically and in *Being and Time* and which are then likewise submitted to analysis in "Der Meridian." It finds these characteristics to be reason, transparency, and a specifically significant forward projection and underscores these characteristics as being of a "redemptive" quality under the auspices of Heideggerian analysis.

CHAPTER 1
FROM FRANCIS BACON TO IMMANUEL KANT: A HISTORY OF UN-RESOLVED
DISPUTE

The theology of Francis Bacon, who is widely regarded as having established the preliminary philosophy of what would become known, after a number of historically significant moments, as the “scientific method,” was a theology of “fallen-ness” and “redemption.” I place these two terms in quotation marks, the first because it is a central ideal in the philosophy of Martin Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit*, which is at the center of the current study; and the second because it is the argument of this paper that “redemption” finds its context in a discourse with Heideggerian “fallen-ness.” For just as “fallen-ness” is meant here to be a very specific experience—both for Francis Bacon and Martin Heidegger—so “redemption” is a very specific antidote to the perilous predicament of the “fallen.”

Before looking closely at these terms, I would like to begin with a brief introduction to the theology of Francis Bacon and to trace the influence of that theology on the history of the development of modernity in order to establish the contribution such a discussion can make toward our understanding of the dialogue that I find occurring between Martin Heidegger and Paul Celan in regards to “fallen-ness” and “redemption.” While both of these men were leading 20th Century personalities, authors and thinkers in the German Language, Francis Bacon was a politician, thinker, and author whose works, written in the early part of the 17th Century, were originally in Latin but form part of the cannon of the English literary tradition. The justification for bringing these thinkers into a dialogue with one another might not be apparent at first, and the disparities might be perceived to be too great particularly considering the temporal and cultural displacements between them. Nevertheless I hope to demonstrate that the similarities of philosophical subject matter are significant and informative to an extent that a much broader perspective of European modernity is possible through a discussion of those points at which

these thinkers and their philosophies intersect. More so, I hope to demonstrate that in matters concerning “redemption” modernity has placed a special emphasis on an idea of movement which can be understood as “trajectory.” This has occurred as the result of the inadequacy of science to find a philosophical foundation in which to legitimate its claims to authority, and it was Martin Heidegger, particularly, who picked up on this issue and fashioned a new understanding of human interpretation of the world of nature and of itself. It is in trying to understand modernity as movement, not only as it has been understood in terms of progress or even an evolution toward utopia, but also as it is understood in terms of pain, destruction, and tyranny—of failure and defeat—that post-Holocaust philosophy has left its most profound legacy.

In order to understand the trajectorial direction of modernity, and the intersection in the modern of the issues of movement and authority, it is important to place a foundation from which the discussion itself can be set into action. I have decided to begin at the beginning, as it were, with the first moments of philosophical articulations of modernity.

There are normally two locations for such beginnings. The first is with the work of Galileo Gallili, the 16th Century Italian astronomist who first described the movement of the planets. It was Galileo who made Kepler’s observations popular in Europe, and his work was essential in creating the mathematical foundation for modern science.¹

The second location is in the work of Sir Francis Bacon, the contemporary of Galileo, who first articulated a project of experimental philosophy and established a tradition of utopian vision for science that was to be profoundly influential as experimental philosophy spread from

¹ For an example of such an introduction to the history of modern science see Barry Gower’s *Scientific Method: an Historical and Philosophical Introduction*, Routledge, New York, 1997. The first chapter is devoted to Galileo and the second to Bacon.

the shores of England to the European continent during the Enlightenment. I have chosen to begin with Bacon, rather than with Galileo, because it is especially the issue of empirical knowledge rather than of mathematical exactitude that has caused the greatest need for legitimacy in science. Whereas mathematical reasoning came to represent the tool as well as the standard for scientific exactitude, it has never been fully accepted as authoritative in matters pertaining to the claims of scientific epistemology or the claims of scientific domination over and mastery of nature. These claims have always rested with and been debated in the philosophical circles which concern themselves with issues of experimental methodology, the mechanics of observation, and the nature and authority of knowledge produced using scientific methods (experimentation being the most significant, but observation—particularly technologically assisted observation—being an equally contested issue). It is therefore with Bacon that I begin.

According to a recent monograph by Steven Matthews, *Theology and Science in the Thought of Francis Bacon*, the historiography of the life and works of Sir Francis Bacon is a lengthy and contentious study. Beginning as early as fifty years after his death, Bacon's followers and detractors repeatedly attempted to place him and his works in various political and theological camps. The Royal Society of London of the mid 17th Century for example, who was the first group to make a systematic philosophy out of the experimental methods established by Bacon, attempted to demonstrate a separation of science and theology in Bacon's writings due to a desire to avoid religious conflicts which were understood to be the cause of the English Civil War.² Likewise Enlightenment thinkers cast Bacon in the light of atheism, and either completely ignored or inaccurately explained away the theological aspects of Bacon's thoughts as

² Steven Matthews, *Theology and Science in the Thought of Francis Bacon*. Ashgate, Burlington VT, 2008, viii.

“Macchiavelian manipulations.”³ The historiography of Bacon has suffered in consequence, with the result that a number of critical works in Bacon’s oeuvre have been overlooked or disregarded by historians as insignificant.

What Matthews—working in conjunction with Stephen McKnight and others scholars of the Scientific Revolution—hoped to achieve in *Theology and Science in the Thought of Francis Bacon*, was a revitalization of the approach to Bacon and the history (if not the philosophy) of science by demonstrating that at its inception science was far from being conceived as a non- or anti- theologically based epistemological methodology. According to Matthews, in fact, theological considerations were at the forefront of Bacon’s new philosophy, both in practical terms as well as eschatological terms. Matthews draws a strikingly convincing portrait of Bacon’s philosophy in which theological considerations are the primary motivations, not merely secondary or cursory remarks, and by no means the calculated political maneuverings against Calvinist opponents which later historians interpreted them to be.

According to Matthews, Bacon’s scientific approach to natural philosophy was understood by Bacon to be nothing less than fulfillment of Biblical prophecy and the way by which humanity and creation would be redeemed to God, an act that would return the earth and its inhabitants to the utopian moment before the fall of Adam and Eve and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Under the heading of *Instauration Magnum*, Bacon’s thought, Matthews argues, was a theologically charged philosophy which took its name from the Vulgate translation of the Old Testament, where “*instauratio* referred specifically to the rebuilding of the temple on

³ Idem.

the return from the Babylonian captivity.”⁴ The *Instauration Magnum*, or “Great Instauration,” was vast in its reformatory objectives and ambitions:

Many scholars have recognized Bacon’s belief that, in reforming the study of natural philosophy, he was recovering the mastery over nature which humankind had once possessed in the Garden of Eden. This is certainly true, but there is more to it. Eden and the Instauration are but two elements, or *loci*, in a well-developed theological system embedded in Bacon’s writings. The entire system can be seen in considering the passages in which Bacon retells the Christian narrative of “sacred history”...When viewed specifically in light of the edenic fall and the means of recovery, it is also termed “salvation history,” for it tells the tale of the providential hand of God working for human recovery.”⁵

Bacon’s Instauration project was conceived, therefore, as nothing less than the pathway of human redemption and reconciliation to God.

What was involved in the Great Instauration project, and what were its implications for the generations following after Francis Bacon? The Great Instauration is the term that Matthews finds to be the most complete expression of Bacon’s project for “the reform of human learning.”⁶ The reform of human learning involved a reevaluation of human knowledge based primarily upon the process of experimentation.

It was not Bacon who saw the implementation of his ideas in the philosophical and political world of 17th Century England, however. Rather that was achieved by the aristocratic members of the Royal Society of London, who established the principles of experimentation and whose early labors in regards to experimentation set the foundation for modern science. In the influential book, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump*, which treats the mid 17th Century conflict between Thomas Hobbes and Robert Boyle concerning the validity of knowledge derived from experimentation, Steven Schapin and Simon Schaffer retrace the establishment of experimental

⁴ Ibid. 51.

⁵ Ibid, 52-53.

⁶ Ibid. 55.

science in English society at the time of the Restoration of the crown.⁷ Boyle and other members of the Royal Society of London espoused the experimental method as a valid and superior method of natural philosophy while Hobbes argued that experimentation was based upon a number of false and even dangerous methodologies.

The Hobbesian-Boyle debate was not primarily a discourse on the nature of knowledge but rather a discourse on the relationship of knowledge to authority. What were appealed to were arguments concerning the legality of certain methods of knowledge production. Hobbes argued that Boyle's experimental method could not be accorded authority because it was not based on "natural reason," which is to say, reason achieved via direct observation and unmediated study, but rather on "artifice"—the use of manufactured environments of experimentation. The issue for Hobbes, however, was not an issue of the validity of knowledge achieved through mediation, but rather it was one of legal import. By whose authority could knowledge adduced through experimentation be said to be legitimate? For Hobbes, the production of knowledge was an endeavor that could only be countenanced by the proper authorities, because "It is not wisdom, but authority, that makes a law" and the law is the final legitimator of knowledge.⁸ In this regard, Boyle's use of witnesses was a particular offence for Hobbes, because witnesses are "private and fallible"⁹ and had no legitimate right to give authority. Hobbes, whose position as a natural philosopher was strictly Euclidean because he saw in geometry a one to one relation between the structure of human society and that of

⁷ Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life*. Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1985.

⁸ Ibid. 326

⁹ Ibid, 327

nature,¹⁰ was essentially of a political disposition whose view represented the struggle of medieval philosophy to regain mastery over the English political landscape after the Civil War.

Boyle and his allies, on the other hand, defended their methods of knowledge production by posing themselves as “priests of the natural world” and by engaging as witnesses for their experiments members of society with an elevated social status. That is, they did not revert to philosophical discourse or challenge Hobbes’ considerations concerning the nature of knowledge. Essentially, the matter at hand was not whether or not knowledge was being produced. Both sides agreed that it was. What was under dispute was the issue of whose authority legitimated knowledge production. Hobbes’ medieval philosophy and Euclidean explanations of the structure of human society and nature were so powerful of an opponent precisely because they took their legitimacy from tradition. This is, of course, also why Hobbes and his allies felt so threatened by the emerging science of experimentation. In short, the dispute was a legal one, not a philosophical one.

Nor was the dispute resolved by philosophical argumentation. Boyle and the Royal Society won only because the experimentalists were successful in publicizing their stance as a resolution to the crisis that the Civil War had brought on English society. As Schapin and Schaffer make clear: “The experimental mode of life achieved local success to the extent that the Restoration settlement was secured. Indeed, it was one of the important elements in that security.”¹¹

The debate between Hobbes and Boyle left unresolved a number of issues that were significant in the work of Paul Celan and Martin Heidegger. The issues of knowledge

¹⁰ Ibid, 328

¹¹ Ibid, 341

production and a philosophical understanding of what occurred in knowledge production were taken up by Heidegger in his 1942 lectures on Hölderlin. For Celan, and for post-holocaust literature in particular, the status of “the witness” is almost sacralized, and Celan devotes a number of poems to explicating the theological and political significance of “the witness”, as well as to enumerating a methodology of witnessing. I shall not have the opportunity to discuss this last issue at great length in this essay, but it is interesting to note that Celan’s valuing of “the witness” can be easily read in the light of the scientific tradition of the witness, which was so predominantly at issue in the Hobbes-Boyle dispute. I am unaware of any research that has looked into this matter.

What is more important for this discussion is the way in which the Hobbes-Boyle debate framed the tradition of science and helped to establish “modernity” as a key symbol of science. “Boyle” the authors of *Leviathon and the Air-pump* tell us, “made experimenters a new kind of clergy”,¹² casting them as “priests of nature.”¹³ Boyle advertised himself and his companions, therefore, both as servants of God and as the ushers-in of a new understanding. This new understanding proved to be of value to English society, and thus the “new understanding” of the “new priesthood” became fashionable and projected knowledge into the future, where it would find its completion in a location of future disclosure of utopian truth, rather than having knowledge be projected onto the past, where it derives its authority from scripture and tradition. This method of advertising themselves and their project, (Hobbes went so far as to call the experimentalists a “cult”) was explicitly Baconian, and derived its vision from the theology of Bacon’s Instauration. As Matthews explains:

¹² Ibid, 310.

¹³ Ibid, 319.

...the founders of the Royal Society presented themselves publicly as Bacon's heirs...In leading the people out of previous errors of natural philosophy toward a promised land of right philosophical method Bacon had been a prophetic figure, but like Moses, Bacon had not lived long enough to experience what that promise would entail.¹⁴

The high regard with which Francis Bacon was held by members of the Enlightenment, both French and German, cannot be greatly overestimated, and as such the utopian vision which he propounded was highly influential. We must not lose sight of the trajectory of science at its inception: the trajectory was explicitly forward, and derived its authority from the promise of a future utopia, rather than from a historical source—a utopia defined on explicitly theological grounds. Furthermore, that future utopia was the promise of theological speculation and self-positioning on the part of Boyle and the Royal Society, and was by no means philosophically grounded.

As we have seen, Matthews' project is revisionist in nature due to the fact that the Enlightenment thinkers deemed it essential to remove Bacon from any connection to theological thought whatsoever. John Henry points out that "Enlightenment thinkers wanted to see the heroic figures in the history of the new science as thinkers swayed only by rational and empirically grounded principles."¹⁵ Such Enlightenment luminaries as Voltaire and Diderot considered Bacon to be the true precursor to Enlightenment thought, and Joseph de Maistre, an early and staunch critic of the Enlightenment, blamed Bacon for the misguided logic of the Enlightenment that "had proven disastrous to both throne and altar."¹⁶ To speak of the history of the Enlightenment, therefore, and of the positive sciences in general, is to speak of the legacy of Francis Bacon.

¹⁴ Matthews, op. cit. 135.

¹⁵ John Henry, *Knowledge is Power: How Magic, the Government and an Apocalyptic Vision Inspired Francis Bacon to Create Modern Science*, pg. 83. Quoted in Matthews, op. Cit. 137.

¹⁶ Matthews, op. cit. 138-139.

To summarize, Matthews' book is a significant contribution to our understanding of Bacon and to the underpinning aims of modern scientific rationality and forms an enlightening backdrop from which to launch our own discussion of the authority and trajectory of scientific philosophy. Specifically, Matthews finds that the scientific belief in human domination over nature coupled with the egalitarian, utopian visions of a scientific humanity find their origins in Bacon's theology and method. Once we look intently into the philosophical underside of the experimental methodology, however, we find that Bacon held a number of philosophical positions which are not unproblematic in the history of philosophy, particularly—from the 18th Century onward—the German philosophical tradition. Close analysis makes it evident that the adaptation of Bacon's methods so successfully in European and world culture is not due to any un-ambivalence in his thought or even in that of those who established the methods of modern science. As Schapin and Schaffer make evident, Robert Boyle did not completely refute the objections brought upon the experimental method by Thomas Hobbes. Rather, the experimental method of "creating knowledge" won the debate due mostly to a number of political and, above all, practical considerations, due in no small measure to a great publicity campaign on the part of Boyle and other members of the Royal Society. What Schapin and Schaffer are arguing in *Leviathon and the Air-Pump*, and what I am echoing, is that the establishment of the formal method of modern scientific enquiry was far from a forgone conclusion and that its establishment left open a number of critical philosophical questions while at the same time entrenching in modern culture a belief in the trajectory of science in a way that makes the question of the scientific method a question of what society (at least, as we shall see, Anglo-American society) understands to be "self-evident."¹⁷

¹⁷ Schapin and Schaffer, op. cit. 6

However, the history of science is far from being the intellectual heritage of England, and “Continental” philosophers and thinkers, including the cannon of German philosophers, offer a strikingly alternative picture to the “self-evident” status of modern scientific knowledge production while at times laboring under a number of the same assumptions which we find to be at the center of Francis Bacon’s “Great Instauration”, particularly in regards to its progressive and utopian orientation.

It is chiefly those assumptions which are the guiding considerations of this paper. Included in the belief in a utopian conclusion to the scientific project is a belief in a certain type of transparency in humanity’s perceptive understanding of itself and the natural world. Also included is the specific notion that humanity has a right to master nature, and to dominate it according to its will. I am beginning this discussion with Bacon, even though I am primarily concerned with the work of Martin Heidegger in *Being and Time* and the ways in which the philosophy of *Being and Time* are employed by Paul Celan in his “Der Meridian” speech, not because I want to draw unambiguous lines marking off the route of scientific philosophy from Bacon to Martin Heidegger. No such connections exist, particularly due to the history of the Baconian promise of utopia after Newton, as we shall soon see. There exist however, a number of striking parallels between Bacon and Heidegger that I shall be at pains to exploit as fully as possible, particularly in regards to issues of redemption.

More importantly, I believe that it is crucial for us to understand these connections if we are to understand the way in which Paul Celan employs Heideggerian philosophy in “Der Meridian,” and the consequences for modernity which are implicit in that implementation. For Paul Celan the problems of European philosophy and scientific modernity are not problems of epistemological or ontological abstractions: they are, appropriately enough considering the

history of science itself, the “practical” problems of the destructive annihilation of his heritage in the Holocaust and as such it is completely appropriate for us to look for the location of a possible criticism from Celan in the deeply held assumptive sites of socially normative knowledge. In brief, I am starting with Francis Bacon because in a sense Heidegger starts with Francis Bacon, or rather, with the set of assumptions that are imbedded in the tradition of modern natural philosophy, and with the question of the final authority behind the promise of that tradition.

It was Immanuel Kant who first attempted to find a philosophical foundation for modern science. Before turning to Kant, however, we must understand the significance of the influence of Sir Isaac Newton on the foundationalization and normalization of modern scientific rationality in the West.

Edwin Arthur Burtt’s classic 1932 (revised edition) *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science* describes in detail the debates that were apparently settled by the breakthrough of Sir Isaac Newton’s Law of Gravitation and the social normalization of the “mechanical world view.” I do not wish to summarize in detail the course that this solidification of modern science took as it became the authority in human understanding, but I do wish to point out that, according to Burtt, Newtonian science posited a specific assumption concerning the relation of God to nature that resulted in a number of cultural and epistemological consequences as Newton’s synthesis became the uncontested evidence of the efficacy of scientific methodology. This assumption is that God is transcendent over nature, and does not exist in nature. In fact, it is an assumption that has persisted from the time of Bacon’s first philosophical expositions through the moment of the experimental method’s first victories in public debate with such detractors as Thomas Hobbes, through the synthesis of Newton which revolutionized and normalized natural philosophy in Europe, through the Enlightenment and, via Kant, became

the focus of a critique of mechanical philosophy in the work of the early German Romantics. The *Frühromantiker* are the appropriate place to rest after such a long journey precisely because they are traditionally and popularly understood to be anti-rational, and the establishment of this bias reflects precisely the depth to which the assumption—as well as the conflicts which are the consequences of this assumption—has been established in western social consciousness. It is this assumption primarily which allowed for the establishment of modern science in its non-theologically progressive manifestation—that is to say, as a progressivity without a promise. It is this belief in progress that has led to the rupture in redemptive discourse between science and the humanities, and which has covered up, significantly for our study, the issue of redemption that lies at the heart of Heidegger's *Being and Time*. Nevertheless, in the Newtonian synthesis a reinvestment of the modern belief in humanity's domination over nature became normally possible without in turn necessitating a philosophical legitimation of that belief.

The belief in the transcendence of God—that is, a God who exists outside of and separate from “creation,” has a solid basis in traditional Judeo-Christian and Islamic theology. By the time of Francis Bacon there were a number of detractors from this theological position, one of the most influential being the Silesian mystic Jakob Böhme. Bacon assumed a transcendent understanding of God in which God exists outside of Nature and works through a chain of causes to create natural effects, not based on philosophical reasoning, but rather on the assumption that if God were to be found in nature (which is the immanent stance) than humanity would have no authority over nature since to do so would be to have authority over God. Furthermore, according to Bacon, God could not be understood as being the primary agent of effect (later, through Kant, known as the “first principle” of knowledge and, through Fichte, the “absolute principle”) because to believe such a proposition would mean that God is the agent of evil.

Therefore Bacon understood nature as operating through a chain of causes, which God controlled, but into which God had also placed the agency of free will in man.¹⁸

Edmund Burtt's argument is here the most direct. Just as the debate over the efficacy of experimental method was not resolved through philosophical discourse, but rather through the invention of the air-pump and the practical resolution to a number of political challenges to English society, so too the debate over the chain of causes and a transcendental or immanent God was settled only through the vitality of Newton's Law of Gravity. In Newton, Burtt argues, the evidence for philosophical solutions was found out in mathematical formulae which explained experimental knowledge and with this "great synthesis" the mechanical worldview was firmly established in the Western World not because of philosophical infallibility but by virtue of the practical successes in human understanding and mastery over the natural environment. As a result, the transcendent nature of God was assumed beyond a shadow of a doubt:

Magnificent, irrefutable achievements gave Newton authority over the modern world, which, feeling itself to have become free from metaphysics through Newton the positivist, has become shackled and controlled by a very definite metaphysics.¹⁹

Burtt goes on to demonstrate the irony of the situation. Bacon established the experimental method based upon a set of assumptions concerning the relationship of God to nature which were based in theological argumentation rather than philosophical reasoning. What began in Bacon as a belief that God could not be the first cause of natural phenomena ended in Newton as a belief that God was the final cause of all phenomena, in that God stood outside of his creation and periodically "checked in" like a watchmaker to correct any irregularities.

¹⁸ Matthews, op. Cit. 57.

¹⁹ Burtt, op. cit. 227-228

But the evolution of the metaphysics of modern science was not complete until, with the final victory in Newtonian science of Bacon's program of experimentation, the complete dismissal of questions of God from the scientific discourse was possible. Or in other words, what had begun as an evocation of God became a rejection of God. Of course, as Burr is at pains to point out, this rejection was by no means due to any belief on the part of Newton, who was an extremely pious man, but nevertheless within 50 years of the publication of *The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* atheistic systems of thought were being promulgated based on Newtonian principles.

The consequences for science according to Burr were as follows: it became normative that if we talk about God at all in scientific discourse it is always as a divinity outside of nature. To discuss an immanent God is no longer to do science. For Burr the objections were even more severe, because the complete repudiation of theological assumptions inherent in mechanical philosophy represents not only a lack of consciousness of the metaphysical foundations of science, but also in the passive and unconscious acceptance by scientists and laymen alike of that metaphysic a rupture between faith-based systems of knowledge and science.

One of the consequences for the West of the Newtonian synthesis was the belief that nature and its laws could be made transparent in a very specific manner, in fact, that humanity could be made transparent to itself. "Transparency" as such was not a term used by Bacon or Boyle or by other members of the Royal Society, or even by Newton. However, the idea of transparency is central to the experimental system and was proven achievable by Newtonian science, in that the observer is able, through sensual means, to gain insight into his environment. Hobbes had already brought this notion under examination when he contested the authority of

witnesses to experiments performed by the Royal Society, albeit on legal grounds rather than epistemological grounds. As we have seen, neither were Hobbes' objections undone due to philosophical argumentation, which would have founded the discussion upon the matter of observational epistemology, and the question of the legitimate authority of knowledge acquired strictly through observation, either as a result of experimental technology or direct sensual intercourse with nature, was never fully established. Transparency, after Newton—but particularly after Rousseau—became a matter of scientific common sense, rather than a matter of philosophical consideration; and by the end of the Enlightenment transparency had become closely linked to rationality. Before turning to Heidegger's *Being and Time* it is essential that we understand how these two notions, reason and transparency, became foundationalized in the discourse of modernity.

Even though the idea of transparency might at first appear to be relatively simple to grasp, when we come down to trying to define precisely what is meant by transparency thinkers have found that the burden of it is in fact equal to the obstacle of its explication. Not only were there a number of positions, including those of Newton himself, regarding the true nature of the faculty of sight, but in the Enlightenment transparency developed an ontological definition that was to prove fundamentally influential for the future orientation of the philosophy of science. In discussing the issue of transparency in scientific discourse we must distinguish between what is sensationally transparent (such as data we might receive through ocular perception) or ideationally transparent (which was what was desired by skeptics such as Descartes) or even emotionally transparent (which was a type of transparency which Rousseau and the early German romantics sought).

Enlightenment thinkers had already taken up the demands of transparency in a manner complicate to Newton's metaphysics by the time of the French Revolution, and in so doing also foregrounded the coming search in Germany for the philosophical legitimacy of modern science.

In discussing the Enlightenment thinker Voltaire, for example, Martin Jay writes:

Like Descartes, Voltaire used "idea" to refer to an internal representation in human consciousness, an image in the eye of the mind. Ideas are no long objective realities external to the subjective mind, like the Platonic *Eido*. Voltaire thus shared with Descartes a dualism of consciousness and matter...Voltaire furthermore shared Descarte's belief...that ideas, if clear and distinct in the mind, can be expressed in lucid prose... But unlike Descartes, Voltaire followed Francis Bacon, John Locke, and Isaac Newton and what has been called the sensationalist tradition in claiming that *only* the perception of external objects and never innate intuition or deductions are the source of our ideas.²⁰

In this short passage Jay has succinctly demonstrated the multiplicity of variations upon the same theme: transparency is linked undeniably to proper rationality, but what exactly it is to be transparent was still up for debate. A quotation which Jay includes from Ian Hacking is illustrative of how the variations on transparency can be much more than merely ocularcentric: "Cartesian perception is the active rendering of the object transparent to the mind. Positivist seeing is the passive blunting of light rays on opaque, impermeable 'physical objects' which are themselves passive and indifferent to the observer."²¹ In Hacking's analysis, the sensationalist ("positivist") ideal was an actual "blunting" of the eye through means of light so as to create an accord with the equally blunt object. This kind of shared passivity, I argue, allows for the transparency of the data necessary for proper interpretation. In either case, whether the transparency is understood to be in the mind, between ideas themselves, or transparency is a result of a blunting of the observational faculty, the desired result is "proper" interpretation. For scientific purposes transparency is therefore a state of being—whether mind, sensual orientation,

²⁰ Ibid. 85.

²¹ Idem.

or even emotional response, which allows for proper interpretation. This is a point which will become important in our discussion of Heidegger's methodological comments in *Being and Time*.

Rousseau used the phrase *le sentiment de l'ere* by which he meant "the same state of affairs of the primitive Being of consciousness not mediated by concepts."²² It also had a representational characteristic, in which "the act of representation is always adequate to whatever is represented."²³ This is a departure from both the sensationalists—such as Voltaire—as well as the skeptics—particularly Descartes. For if Descartes believed that transparency was obtainable only by making ideas "clear and distinct in the mind," Rousseau's idea was radical indeed, for Rousseau argued that it was ideas themselves that hindered transparency.

What Rousseau actually accomplished in his adaptation of one of the major Enlightenment motifs was to move past the skeptics first by accepting the exterior world as a reality, and secondly by positing an inner world, one that was of emotion, sensation, and feeling. Transparency of perception in the outer world, in fact, depended upon transparency of perception of the inner world. He also provided an important "check" of the progressive trajectory of science—one that was to prove influential on Kantian philosophy and the rise of romanticism, and also obfuscated the question of whether Rousseau is properly an enlightenment thinker or a romantic. What Rousseau argued was that the primitive or "natural" condition of the self is that of a transparent rationality, in which the self engages in an authentic and unmediated relationship to the natural world and its own inner sensations. This notion had a sense of scientific fulfillment to it, especially arriving as it did on the heels of the Newtonian synthesis, since it

²² Manfred Frank, in Elizabeth Millan-Zaibert (trans). *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*. State University of New York Press, Albany, 2004. pg. 64.

²³ Peter V. Conroy, Jr., *Jean-Jacque Rousseau*. Twayne Publishers NY, 1998. pg. 141.

argued that humanity could arrive at utopia if it ceased courting the various sociological trappings of inter-person-ality and assumed a posture of honest and transparent—as well as rational—self-expression. Rousseau’s transparency had the aura of the Garden of Eden, a return to the original state of man—a fulfillment, that is, of the Bacon promise.

Rousseau’s idea of transparency moved beyond the debates concerning the relationship between mind and matter, and the proper way of deciphering the two. Rousseau agreed that transparency in perceiving the environment was important, but by also urging for a transparent relationship to the internal world, to the range of sensations and emotions that might arise, without obstacle, from an equally unmediated interaction with his environment he also demanded the eradication of socially constructed barriers such as moral codes or socially determined personal interactions. Rousseau’s proclamation of the perfection of himself in a primordially transparent state of being legitimated his notion of transparency on ethical grounds which challenged the authority of church and state.

Rousseau’s notion of transparency was incredibly influential. It did not win the victory over Descartes that it could have won due in a large part to the influence of Hegelian idealism, but it did have a hand in framing the discussion of Kant’s metacritique and the philosophers who came after Kant, including Fichte and the *Frühromantiker*. Of greater immediate political significance, however, Rousseau’s influence was such that the notion of transparency became etched onto the modern landscape through the bitter pen of the French Revolution, in which the revolutionaries were motivated by, as Foucault said, “the dream of a transparent society, visible and legible in each of its parts.”²⁴ So powerful is the dream of transparency that Marc Richer ascribed it the place of honor in all revolutionary thought: “In a profound sense, all of

²⁴ Quoted in Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Philosophy*. University of California Press, Berkeley, California, 1993, pg. 411.

‘revolutionary’ thought is animated by the belief in a transparency of society to itself in the ‘moment’ of Revolution.”²⁵

The issue of transparency was particularly demanding since it incorporated within its context the search for the philosophical legitimacy of experimental epistemology. To raise the question of transparency was not to raise the question of whether or not empirical science worked, but rather how it worked. What was as important as the issue of transparency was the issue of rationality, or reason. In a sense, next to the issue of transparency, the Enlightenment can be understood as the struggle, after Newton, to uncover the key to reason, which was by then understood to be the key to science itself.

It is important to note that the connection between transparency and rationality was by no means a foregone conclusion. In his book *The Sovereignty of Reason* Frederick C. Beiser traces the course of the struggle in 17th Century England of reason against other modes of knowledge: for example, those of revelation, inspiration, or tradition.²⁶ Beiser tells us that a feeling of transparency was just as necessary for anti-rationalists such as the so-called “enthusiasts,” who based their knowledge on moments of divinely inspired clairvoyance, as they were described by contemporaries such as Thomas Blount.²⁷ It was the work of rationalist schools such as the Cambridge Neo-Platonists to wrest transparency from the hands of traditionalists and place it in the hands of reason. With the Newtonian Synthesis, in which through reason the cosmos was made transparent, the victory was achieved, and whereas what had passed for Godliness in the Middle Ages might include a definite form of madness, by the end of the Enlightenment this was

²⁵ In Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*. University of California Press, Berkley, California, 2004 (orig. 1984), pg. 44

²⁶ Frederick C. Beier, *The Sovereignty of Reason*. Princeton Universtiy Press, Princeton, NJ, 1996.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 189.

no longer the case. Particularly after Rousseau, to speak philosophically in mystical terms of “Clouds of Unknowing” or other cryptic expressions of divine obscurity was to utter complete nonsense. The cult of rationality, which had taken root on the continent from the time of Newton through the works of the Enlightenment period, made systems of belief based on arguments of faith, scripture, or revelation absolutely obsolete. No matter how it was epistemologically explained, either in terms of a transparency between ideas or as ocular transparency or as an inner transparency of emotion, transparency was the key idea to any rational discourse.

As Beiser makes evident in *The Sovereignty of Reason*, however, once again what is so curious about the emergence of a transparent-rational norm in European culture is that the debate concerning the faculty of reason and its connection to transparency was never truly settled. Rather, it was at the point in which Rousseau added the extra dimension of inner transparency that the trajectory of science was reinvigorated, and, despite the “primordial” check of Rousseau the marriage between transparency and reason served to catapult science even further into the aegis of progress. It is not correct to postulate that the decline of Rousseau-ian transparency was due to the terror that the French Revolution became. Rousseau’s notion of transparency had already, with the publication of Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781, proven its influence on the trajectory of science, and therewith, the trajectory of modernity. It was Kant who brought reason and transparency—with his notion of the “transcendent idealism” (as we shall see)—in a Rousseauian manner which allowed for the blossoming of the German Philosophical school and insured that, despite the French Revolution, rather than because of it, transparency, reason, and science would be yoked together in the philosophical discourse of modernity. What Kant achieved was a way out of Rousseau’s “check”, by allowing for a primordial state of transparency in which reason operates, but by making that primordial state the

foundation of scientific epistemology. This in turn allowed for the further progressive trajectory of science, particularly after the debacle of the French Revolution caused such turmoil and unease throughout Europe in regards to the political implications of scientific idealism. It was Kant, therefore, who provided the extra push for science to move beyond the double hurdle of the Revolution and the romantic backlash to the revolution, and to move forward into the age of Darwin, realism, and naturalism. Yet again, we find in Kant an example of how science and modernity have failed in their efforts to legitimate their authority, to vindicate their claims to human mastery over nature, and to move, nonetheless, in a continued trajectory under the watchful eye of progress.

It is important for us to understand that the German philosophical tradition that begins with Kant begins with a thinker whose primary concern in the *Metacritiques* was not the question of whether or not science worked, but rather with the question of how it worked. To read Kant is to read a philosophy that assumes that the mechanical worldview is valid, but that it lacks proper philosophical foundations. In his book *Kant and the Exact Sciences*, Michael Friedman argues this very point:

Immanuel Kant was deeply engaged with the science of his time—with the mathematical physics of Newton, in particular—during his entire philosophical career. His first published work...initiates a fundamental philosophical reconsideration of Newtonian physics which is then continued throughout the so-called pre-critical period: we here see Kant attempting to redefine the nature and method of metaphysics in light of the recent breathtaking advances in mathematics and mathematical physics...Kant explicitly addresses the question “How is metaphysics in general possible?” by way of the questions “How is pure mathematics possible?” and “How is pure natural science possible?”²⁸

In other words, Kant himself was looking to make his own “grand synthesis” by finding the link between metaphysics and science. As Friedman argues:

²⁸ Michael Friedman, *Kant and the Exact Sciences*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA., 1992. pg. xi.

In explicit agreement with the Newtonianism of Euler, Kant argues that metaphysics must begin with—must take as its “data”—the far more certain and secure results of the mathematical sciences. Indeed, it is only in this way that metaphysics can possibly aspire to a properly scientific status for itself.²⁹

It is in understanding Kant’s underlying agenda that we are able to contextualize the early German romantics, who, as Elizabeth Millan-Zaibert said, were the “first generation of readers of Kant.”³⁰ Whereas the *Frühromantiker* have been traditionally pigeon-holed, particularly in Anglo-American scholarship, as anti-rational and even implicated in creating the environment which made the development of National Socialism possible, it is more expedient, I argue, to look to the early romantics for a critique of Kantian and post-Kantian (particularly Fichtean) metaphysics not as an anti-rationalist crusade primarily but rather as an attempt to locate a philosophical foundation for science, to begin with, and later, to treat the ramifications of the absence of such a foundation. As Schlegel argued in his early work:

How can there be scientific judgments, where there is not yet a science? Indeed, all other sciences must oscillate as long as we lack a positive philosophy. However, in other sciences there is at least something relatively firm and universally valid. Nothing is yet established in philosophy, this is shown to us by the present state. All foundation and ground is still missing.³¹

The question of the “absolute I”, which was the basis of Fichtean philosophy—but was argued down by the early Romantics as being an endless regression—was the beginning of the early Romantic affair with Spinozism, or the philosophy of immanence. Realism became a reaction to romanticism only after romanticism was seen as having completely lost its connection to the questions of science. Important for the literary reaction against romanticism was the

²⁹ Ibid. xii.

³⁰ Millan-Zaibert, op. cit. pg. 5. This is not a completely accurate statement, since Kant’s own generation—including Reinhold and Fichte—also read and reacted to Kant. However, Millan-Zaibert’s argument is validated in the fact that the early Romantics were the first outside of Kant’s generation to read and react to his work.

³¹ Frank, in Ibid. 33.

arrival of Darwinian theory, which not only provided a new platform from which science could investigate the natural world, but it also extended the life of science without a philosophical foundation by removing the impetus of utopian-ism—which had dogged discussions of reason and rationality since the French Revolution had created a terror out of a utopian dream—while maintaining both a theoretical model and, with that model, a new vision of future orientation. Both realism and naturalism, informed by Darwinian Theory, were thus able to create emotionally stirring portraits of a newly transparent natural world and humanity's place within it. Once again, particularly in naturalist literature where the inner psychology of characters was as significant as the exterior actions, the notion of transparency first articulated by Rousseau is evident. While other thinkers and movements remained critical of modernity—notable are the works of Friedrich Nietzsche and the so-called Decadent and neo-Romantic movements of the early Twentieth Century—modernity had been firmly established in a tradition with well-delineated characteristics: its direction was forward and progressive, its normative principles were reason and transparency, and its metaphysic was both overtly and covertly mechanical. Most importantly, however: it still had no adequate philosophical legitimation.

We shall have to return to Kant as I read Heidegger because Heidegger makes plain his departure from Kant and helps, thereby, to elucidate more clearly the highlights of Kant's system. Because Kant is the last major German philosopher to be included in the analytical philosophy side of the post-Heideggerian rupture³², it is imperative that we understand how and why Heidegger departs from Kant. For now it is satisfactory to note that the early German romantics were of one accord with Heidegger: modern science had not been properly legitimated in Kant.

³² I will discuss this rupture in more detail below.

The absence of a philosophical foundation for science is imperative to understanding the inherent strains under which modernity has persisted up until the present day. The promises of scientific utopia which were originally formalized in terms of redemption have been transformed into a general notion of progress without any well-defined conclusion, and this notion has in turn been countered by a belief in the promise of Biblical Apocalypse—at times equally progressive in outline and theologically more faithful to the original vision of scientific philosophy. At the same time the normative metaphysics of the mechanical worldview—which have been taken up by Church and State in the age of liberal democracy in an uneven and often uneasy partnership—have been challenged by adherents to any number of alternative visions: all of which are marginalized by the scientific community and normative society. And in the modern era scientific technology has been raised to new heights of destruction, creating a wave of concern over the relative worth and ethics of scientific pursuit and the fear that there might be, in scientific rational, a demon of destruction bound to the annihilation of life itself.

Within a context of a philosophical vacuity these questions are of the utmost concern, and the arrival of Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* can not be properly contextualized outside of this history. For it is only within the historical discourse of the scientific tradition that Heidegger's contributions to science and scientific method in *Being and Time* can be evaluated, and only from the view point of the history of the philosophy of science are we able to move from Heidegger to the Holocaust and to the critique of scientific modernity that Paul Celan presented in Darmstadt in his "Der Meridian" speech.

CHAPTER 2 BEING AND TIME

Up until this point this paper has been concerned with tracing the development of science as a trajectory with a future-orientation, one which has been formulated in terms of a promised utopia and one which developed into a general notion of progress. I have traced this trajectory from its beginning conception in the work of Francis Bacon through to the attempt at philosophical legitimation of science that we find in the work of Immanuel Kant. I have indicated that in the process of this trajectory, science normalized the notions of transparency, reason, and progress itself, but that by no means have these notions been capable of offering the type of legitimacy that science claims. I have also looked at the counter-progressive move of Rousseau, which was that of a state of primordial transparency, and demonstrated how that move was utilized by both sides of the emerging debate, the modern and the romantic or revolutionary. It is within this context that we are able to proceed into the 20th Century, and particularly to the monumental work of 20th Century philosophy, Martin Heidegger's 1927 *Being and Time*. In *Being and Time* we shall find as central motifs, the issues of transparency, reason, primitivism, and—most important of all—trajectory. Also in the pages of this book we find—couched in very subtle terms but by no means any less powerful of an argument—a reappraisal of the notion of redemption and the part of science in the work of redemption.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger specifically sets out to formulate a philosophical foundation for science through an exposition of “Being”. In so doing, he touches the major modern discourse concerning the question of the creation or discovery of scientific knowledge. Heidegger uses the notion of transparency in a Rousseauian manner by reasoning through a number of propositions concerning Being which allows material objects and spiritual entities to maintain both internal and external characteristics. The strength of *Being and Time*'s thesis does

not rest exclusively in the radical new approach which Heidegger opens for the field of literary interpretation. Rather, it is that in bringing together so many of the strands which have been left unattended by the history of modernity Heidegger widens the scope of scientific knowledge to incorporate a much more expansive field of human endeavor under a general conception that I will call “interpretive art.”

By the term “interpretive art” I mean to say that *Being and Time* challenges the borders that had been formulated through the evolution of scientific method as these borders pertain to art and science by blurring the boundaries between art and science. In *Being and Time*, I argue, what is essential to the existentialist philosophy, the power of interpretation—or hermeneutics, as Heidegger tells us—is purposely granted a non-specific characteristic in regards to science, art, or literature. Whereas Heidegger’s later works make evident that he is concerned with scientific knowledge as creation because its primary modus operandi is interpretation, *Being and Time* makes no such explicit claims. Rather, by defending the question of Being—which had been relegated to a question for theologians, romantics, or mystics—as a question of philosophical and scientific preeminence, and by highlighting interpretation of phenomena as a general categorical understanding of science, Heidegger calls the reader’s attention to the similarity of technique shared by scientist and artist alike. Significantly, it is Heidegger’s emphasis on trajectory—whether it be through a temporally or tropologically oriented focus—as the existential characteristic of “authentic” Dasein that grounds modernity in a philosophically teleological legitimation whose dynamic is both problematic and liberational. This last characteristic leads us to the final point, which is that the liberating movement of *Being and Time* is meant to be understood as a work of redemption.

Critical reception of *Being and Time* has established firm and deep roots in the fields of literary criticism and political theory. Jean-Paul Satre's influential *Being and Nothingness* takes its title from major motifs in *Being and Time*¹ and existentialist philosophy was one of the foremost avant-garde philosophies of the 1950's and 1960's in the West, giving definition to artistic movements in all of the countries in Western Europe and in North America, and helping to foreground the youth movements and equal rights movements of the 1960's.

Due to this vast field of influence there are a number of variations and various commentaries on Heidegger, to the point that a recent book by Simon Critchley and Reiner Schürmann finds it necessary to ask the question "where should one begin with Heidegger?" *On Heidegger's Being and Time* formulates two possibilities: Critchley argues that we must understand *Being and Time* as it developed out of Husserl's phenomenology. "To understand *Being and Time* and Heidegger's thinking overall we must see it as a radicalization of Husserl's phenomenological project."² Schürmann, on the other hand, argues that "many of the key features and motivations for Heidegger's early work—especially as it concerns the question of the meaning of Being—can only be discerned by reading it in the light of the trajectory of his later work."³ Schürmann, therefore, advises that we read Heidegger backwards, starting with his later work and progressing forward.⁴

In this paper, I have not been inclined to either of these views, for a number of reasons. First of all, my argument is that *Being and Time* arose out of a specific historical context which I

¹ There appears to be much debate on whether Satre truly understood the philosophy of *Being and Time* or whether he possibly distorted its meaning in *Being and Nothingness*. See Blattner 168-169.

² Simon Critchley and Reiner Schürmann, *On Heidegger's Being and Time*. Routledge, NY, 2008, pg. 1.

³ Idem.

⁴ Idem

understand to be the history of the philosophy of science. *Being and Time* represents a specific comment upon the history of that philosophy, with a number of consequential comments that will be enumerated as this discussion progresses. As such, it is unnecessary to specifically understand *Being and Time* in either a Heideggerian or a phenomenological context. While Heidegger is rightly considered one of the preeminent philosophers of the 20th Century, *Being and Time* is also one of the preeminent philosophical theses of the 20th Century. As such it stands to be read and understood on its own merits, and not exclusively in the context of “Heideggerian thought.” Furthermore, *Being and Time* has a history of influence that is beyond the influence of Heideggerian thought, particularly his later post-war thought, because by the time even his lectures from the Nazi era had been publicized *Being and Time* had already made a major impact on the philosophical theater.

Secondly, and more importantly for this study, there is a major correlation between *Being and Time* and Paul Celan’s “Der Meridian” that has as of yet been left unspecified. While it is informative to read Celan in the light of “Heideggerian thought” in general, I argue that the tree has been missed for the forest, as it were.

There is, however, a drawback to this approach. In a recent study entitled *Paul Celan and Martin Heidegger*, James K. Lyon provides a chronologically oriented analysis of the intersections between the poet and the thinker. With access to Paul Celan’s private library, Lyon availed himself of the opportunity to closely scrutinize the types of markings which Paul Celan habitually left in the books which he studied. Lyon tells us that Celan “left behind considerable information on his reading habits. In the case of writers who were especially important to him, he often noted inside the book the date he acquired it, the date he read individual chapters, and

the date he finished a complete work.”⁵ Also, Lyon tells us that Celan not only marked his books freely, but used an array of various markings:

Besides underlines and single, double, and triple vertical lines in the margins next to specific passages, he decorated the borders generously and energetically with *x*'s, swirls, exclamation points, question marks, lone words or phrases as textual annotations, and the single lower-case letter *I*, which the editor of the historical-critical edition of his poems thinks was an abbreviation for an “idea” that Celan hoped to develop in his poetry.⁶

In other words, Celan left very clear indications of his thoughts as he read, allowing scholars a certain access to the development of his ideas at the same time in which he expressed them on paper.

The problem with my thesis is this: in the case of his personal copy of *Being and Time*, which Celan had acquired by February of 1952⁷ and read in March of 1952 and February and March of 1953⁸ there are no marks for the significant portions of the text which are important for my comparison with “Der Meridian.” Lyon specifically states that “the absence of any markings in various sections—pages 57-102, 112-139, 168-220, and 290-347—suggests that he was probably reading selectively.”⁹ Now if Celan’s copy of *Being and Time* retained the same pagination as the original 1927 edition (or closely thereto)—and Lyon’s comments on Celan’s markings indicate that this is the case—then the most important sections for my reading of “Der Meridian” through the lens of *Being and Time* are precisely those sections which are left unmarked, particularly pp.168-220, which deals with the characterizations of fallenness and “Care as the Being of Dasein,” and pp. 290-347, which cover issues of resoluteness and the

⁵ James K. Lyon, *Paul Celan and Martin Heidegger: An Unresolved Conversation 1951-1970*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, MD, 2006, 8.

⁶ Ibid, 23-24.

⁷ See *ibid*, appendix, 219.

⁸ Ibid, 9.

⁹ *Idem*.

“temporality as the Ontological Meaning of Care.” In fact, Lyon explicitly states that the sections headed “Idle Talk” and “Ambiguity,” which are central sections to my reading, were left completely unmarked. “One might think that (those sections) would have appealed to him, but he made no markings in these sections.”¹⁰

There are a number of explanations to explain this lack. The first, and simplest, is that I am completely wrong in my thesis. This, I leave for the reader to decide. The second, which is also likely, is that the content of these passages was already familiar to Celan through his introduction to Heidegger by Ingeborg Bachmann in Vienna in 1948. Bachmann and Celan shared an intimate relationship in Vienna,¹¹ at which time Bachmann was writing her dissertation on Heidegger.¹² Lyon makes note of the fact that there are two crucial pieces of evidence that have been left out of his study. Both are letters in which he specifically refers to Martin Heidegger. One is the collection of letters to Klaus Demus and the other is the collection to Ingeborg Bachmann.¹³ While the lack of this evidence by no means conclusively demonstrate that these passages were left unattended due to prior engagement, it does point to the possibility of an engagement with the ideas presented in the excluded passages in an interaction outside of the text—or at least the text to which Lyon had access.

There is yet a third explanation for this striking evidence against my thesis, which is that the ideas which I have presented to coordinate with Heideggerian thought, but that Celan interacted with that thought through a different vehicle besides that of *Being and Time*. For

¹⁰ Ibid, 15.

¹¹ See John Felstiner, *Paul Celan: Poet, Survivor, Jew*, New Haven, 1995, and also the figure of the Stranger in Bachmann’s novel *Malina*.

¹² Lyon, 9.

¹³ viii

example, of all of the Heideggerian texts which Lyon reviewed from Celan's library, pertaining to the book *Holzwege* Lyon writes: "Few...are as well worn or contain quite as many annotations and markings as this one does, and few absorbed him so intensely."¹⁴ This is of course no indication that *Holzwege* appears in "Der Meridian" at all. In fact, as I have only recently obtained a copy of *Holzwege* I am unable to make comment.¹⁵ As a result I am aware of the possible inadequacies of my analysis. Once again, I leave it to the reader to decide, and to further research.

Nevertheless, the intersections between *Being and Time* and "Der Meridian" in the manner in which I have indicated them are significant enough to warrant their complete explication in the manner in which this paper presents them. It is not merely a matter of interpretive freedom that I am pursuing. I find in Celan's poetry, and again in "Der Meridian" (as well as in Bachmann), continued recourse to a slight of hand which I suspect to be fundamentally existentialist in nature. It is similar to what Peter Szondi has called a text's "becoming reality", by which he means that a text is "projecting itself, constituting itself as reality."¹⁶ What I mean by this "slight of hand" I understand as being one way in which the text demonstrates its "becoming reality," and is characterized by a conscious manipulation on the part of the author of the relationship between author, reader, and text, in which the text uses some sort of a device in order to pass a message to the reader which is not the intended message, but which conceals the intended message for a specific purpose. It is in the unveiling of the message that the large topological structure is likewise unveiled, revealing a "hidden" layer of relationships

¹⁴ Ibid, 23.

¹⁵ Like Celan, *Being and Time* is the first Heideggerian text that I myself have carefully studied. As such, this thesis represents my first direct encounter with Heidegger, outside of a number of minor introductions which I have had through classes and acquaintances.

¹⁶ Peter Szondi, "Reading Einführung", in *Celan Studies*. Stanford University Press, 2003, pg. 31

that “already always”¹⁷ existed. As I stated, I do not think this is merely a matter of interpretation, because the text often gives clues that it itself has been, all along, aware not only that the message is hidden in this particular manner but that reader was bound to miss it. In order to explicate what I have found to be one such structure which carries with it a great intensity of meaning and is encoded inside of “Der Meridian,” I shall first have to look more closely at *Being in Time*. Again, whether this is the right path or a *Holzweg* I leave for the reader to decide.

In the opening paragraphs of *Being and Time* the historical marginalization of the question of Being is brought to the foreground:

On the basis of the Greek’s initial contributions towards the Interpretation of Being, a dogma has been developed which not only declares the question about the meaning of Being to be superfluous, but sanctions its complete neglect. It is said that ‘Being’ is the most universal and the emptiest of concepts. As such it resists every attempt at definition. Nor does this most universal and hence indefinable concept require any definition, for everyone uses it constantly and already understands what he means by it. In this way, that which the ancient philosophers found continually disturbing as something obscure and hidden has taken on a clarity and self-evidence that if anyone continues to ask about it he is charged with an error of method.¹⁸

Heidegger’s analysis of the philosophical position in 1927 echoes the concerns of Schapin and Shaffer in *Leviathon and the Air-pump*—some 60 years after *Being and Time* first appeared—where it was pointed out that the legitimacy of the empirical method is understood to be so “self-evident” that to question the authority of empiricism was enough to cause one to be treated as an outsider. Here the issue, once again, is that of transparency (“clarity and self-evidence”), and Heidegger is from the very beginning questioning the reader’s assumptions in

¹⁷ My use of this term will be apparent towards the end of my reading.

¹⁸ A note on the text of *Being and Time* used in this paper. Throughout I will use the standard English translation provided by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, published in 1962 by Harper and Row, NY. The numbers provided in parenthesis correspond to the page numbers of the translation, not the original 1927 German edition. So, for example, this quotation comes from page (2) in the Harper and Row edition.

regards to what is to be understood as truly transparent. The question of Being is such that to raise it under modern standards of rigor is to be “charged with an error of method.”

Yet Heidegger insists on placing his discussion of the subject of Being inside of the rhetorical traditions of science. He calls his work an “investigation” (2) and begins from the very start to develop “categories” (3). Furthermore, he makes a central issue of transparency: “The question of the meaning of Being must be *formulated*. If it is a fundamental question, or indeed *the* fundamental question, it must be made transparent, and in an appropriate way.” (24) In this passage Heidegger lets it be known: there are various types of transparency. There is the type, first of all, that is common or assumed, which appears to have a “clarity and self-evidence.” Then there is the type of transparency that *Being and Time* will strive for: it is a transparency that is formulated “in an appropriate way.” What are the criteria for “an appropriate way?” “By considering these prejudices...” *Being and Time* states at the end of §1, “we have made it plain not only that the question of Being lacks an *answer*, but that the question itself is obscure and without direction.” The double trope, “transparent” and “in an appropriate way” transforms into its opposite: “obscure and without direction.” (24)

There are three methodological considerations occurring in the space of the §1. First of all, Heidegger’s use of scientific formulations such as “investigation,” “categories,” and even the issue of formulating questions, places *Being and Time* squarely in the realm of what is accepted to be scientific reasoning. Secondly, “transparency” is understood as being either illusory or truly enlightening, depending on a set of principles that are not yet defined. Thirdly, coupled to transparency is the issue of direction. As with transparency, the direction of science can be either correctly or incorrectly formulated. These three motifs, scientific reasoning, transparency,

and direction are to remain with us throughout the entire course of the work, and they become increasingly more significant as the work progresses.

In the third paragraph Heidegger expresses the significance of the question of Being. Here Heidegger is explicit in his purpose for this work. It is imperative, he argues, that the question of being be raised philosophically because the question of being is the very question of the method of science:

Basic concepts determine the way in which we get an understanding before hand of the area of subject-matter underlying all the objects a science takes as its theme, and all positive investigation is guided by this understanding. (30)

To use Heidegger's examples, which he introduced previous to this passage also in §3, physics conceptually differentiates itself from chemistry or biology because the "area of subject-matter underlying all of the objects" of physics are guided by a conceptual understanding of the objects of physics as unique from the objects of chemistry or biology. It is important to note that the term "positive" and "guided" are directional terms. They indicate the directional typology of the specific type of investigation under discussion, ie, the investigation must be positive, and it must be "guided." Heidegger continues:

Only after the area itself has been explored beforehand in a corresponding manner do these concepts become genuinely demonstrated and 'grounded'. (idem)

Thus our example, physics, is first basically understood as a concept unique in object-structure from biology or chemistry. This basic understanding "guides" further "positive" investigation so that the objects are truly revealed as belonging to the conceptual category "physics," and the concept category "physics" is established. Again, there must be a correspondence in the direction in the way in which the initial conceptualization occurs and the way in which the exploration of the area of the conceptualization occurs. Heidegger continues:

But since every such area is itself obtained from the domain of entities themselves, this preliminary research, from which the basic concepts are drawn, signifies nothing else than an interpretation of those entities with regard to their basic state of Being. (idem)

All of the objects which comprise our conceptualization of the concept category “physics,” including the category itself, are obtained from the infinitely wider “domain” of general entities, which is to say, from everything. Therefore, the preliminary research which “grounds” physics as a concept is the work of interpretation. To argue that there is a specific category of science called “physics” is to agree to an interpretation of entities and their relationship one to another which has been given the label “physic.” Physics, however, is an authentic category because its objects have been demonstrated via a correspondence between the direction of the conceptualization of physics—that is, the way in which it is conceived (as a study of physical objects and their relations)—and the direction of the exploration of the conceptualization as it pertains to the objects in the area of investigation—that is, that physical objects are explored in a manner that is physical as opposed to say, chemical or biological in nature. It is the matter of this directionality that we must be clear. Again, while Heidegger does not explicitly use the term “direction” in these passages, but the marker words “way,” “positive” and “corresponding manner” demonstrate directional principles.

This type of investigation, Heidegger tells us, is the work that is a “laying the foundation.” (30) Even here, Heidegger indicates that directionality—or in this case, trajectory—is important:

Such research must run ahead of the positive sciences, and it *can*...Laying the foundations for the sciences in this way is different in principle from the kind of ‘logic’ which limps along after, investigating the status of some science as it chances to find it, in order to discover its ‘method’. Laying the foundations, as we have described it, is rather a productive logic—in the sense that it leaps ahead, as it were... (30-31)

Here we encounter the terms “run ahead,” “limps along after,” and “leaps ahead,” indicating both direction and speed—what I shall call ‘trajectory’. We should also take note that trajectory here

is described in a comparative manner. In order to “run ahead” or “limp along after” there must be another object which is moving along a similar path.

Heidegger then goes on to tell us that what he is articulating is similar to what Kant was describing in *Critique of Pure Reason*:

Similarly the positive outcome of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* lies in what it has contributed towards the working out of what belongs to any Nature whatsoever...His transcendental logic is an *a priori* logic for the subject-matter of that area of Being called “nature.” (31)

In the case of Kant, the conceptual area was nature. But Heidegger argues that Kant did not go back far enough in his investigation. “But it (such an inquiry as Kant’s) remains itself naïve and opaque if in its research into the Being of entities it fails to discuss the meaning of Being in general.” (ibid) It is for this reason that Heidegger is going to take up the question of Being: because “the question of Being aims...at ascertaining the *a priori* conditions not only for the possibility of the sciences...but also for the possibility of those ontologies themselves which are prior to the ontical sciences and which provide their foundations.” (idem) Heidegger is not only aiming at providing, as it were, a foundation for Kant’s foundation of science, but he is aiming at providing a foundation for Being itself. This is succinctly stated in the next sentence, which is italicized in the original to set off its significance from the rest of the text:

Basically, all ontology...remains blind and perverted from its ownmost aim, if it has not first adequately clarified the meaning of Being, and conceived this clarification as its fundamental task. (idem)

By all ontology, Heidegger means all ontic sciences. Earlier in §3 he provides us with a list of examples: mathematics, physics, and biology are listed, but so are history and theology. (29-30)

This list includes subject areas that we today would not generally consider to be scientific.

History and theology are “humanistic arts,” but only science in so far as they ask questions and seek answers via the method of interpretation. But Heidegger’s earlier statement regarding

conceptualization of categories of knowledge as a work of “interpretation of entities with regard to their being.”

This leaves the question of science in *Being and Time* a more ambiguous question. By no means is Heidegger precluding the hard sciences from his consideration. By all measures it is toward a philosophical legitimacy of the sciences such as physics, biology, and chemistry as well as mathematics that *Being and Time* specifically and directly aims its discussion. As we have seen even the very manner in which Heidegger pursues his question is framed in the language of the hard sciences. Rather, the ambiguity lies in the question of whether or not *Being and Time* is addressing itself to a larger field of human understanding, that is whether or not such pursuits as the visual arts, poetry, music or, today, media are also being addressed, since art, poetry, music and media also use as their method an “interpretation of entities in regards to their being”, that is *Interpretation*, rather than *interpretation*. Because this issue becomes even more pronouncedly significant in “Der Meridian,” I will use the term “interpretive arts” frequently throughout the remainder of this paper, by which I mean *Interpretation*, with the capital. By this I mean an all-inclusive range of human activity, one that incorporates the hard sciences and the human sciences, but also the various manifestations of art, into an understanding of those activities which pursue “interpretation of entities in regards to their being.”

William Blattner points out that it is precisely with the issue of *Interpretation* that Heidegger instigated what Michael Friedman has called “the parting of ways” between the so-called Continental and analytic philosophies.¹⁹ The causes of this rift are to be found already in §4 of *Being and Time*. Heidegger opens the paragraph by postulating an analytical definition of science. “Science in general may be defined as the totality established through an

¹⁹ William Blattner, *Heidegger's Being and Time*. Continuum International, NY, 2006, 1.

interconnection of true propositions.” (32) This formulation, Blattner tells us, corresponds to the rigorous logical discipline of analytical philosophy, which argues that “the fundamental unit of analysis is the judgement (or statement, sentence, assertion, proposition)...(which) are essential to the formation of thoughts or sentences that can be true or false, that is, that can succeed at or fail in describing the world.”²⁰ This reduces to what Blattner calls “the core commitment of the philosophical tradition that Heidegger rejects”, which is “Intentionality is ineliminably conceptual.”²¹

Intentionality is the term used to describe “the mind’s capacity to represent the world around it”, particularly in empirical terms.²² Intentionality as a principle springs from Kant, who understood it as follows: Kant agreed with skeptics (like Descartes) who argued that we are unable to know the world of phenomena as it is in itself. Rather, we are only able to understand the world “as it appears to us,”²³ or, how we perceive it. We can therefore know only the *a priori* rules governing our own perception of the world, but never the *a priori* rules governing the world. Kant adds an extra dimension, however. Kant argued that “space and time and everything within them are merely appearances, so that in learning the structure and rules of appearance, we are knowing the structure of nature itself.”²⁴ Thus the imperative of the analytical school is to perfect the logical reasoning which governs the *a priori* rules of our own perception.

²⁰ Ibid, 174.

²¹ Idem.

²² Ibid, 2.

²³ Idem.

²⁴ Idem.

The problem with accepting this hypothesis as the grounds for scientific legitimacy is that if we cannot know whether our own perceptions are real perceptions, then we cannot know whether or not the entirety of “space and time and everything within them” are merely appearance, or if there exists a regulatory reality, or even what relationship a possible regulatory reality and a reality of mere appearance might have. In fact, the questions regarding reality are endless in this situation, because in the end there is no authority to decide. Logical reasoning, therefore, reflects mathematics, and can be used to support either a traditionalist authority (as Thomas Hobbes’ used Euclidean Geometry) or a progressive authority (as the Newtonian synthesis did). But in the end it is impossible to decide which one is more correct, and therefore science, in seeking its legitimation, has only one recourse: to develop a traditionalist paradigm of its own in which progress is the defining characteristic. This is exactly what has happened, as I have argued.

Heidegger is unsatisfied with the propositions of Intentional reasoning, and his grounds for dissatisfaction shall be made apparent as I progress through this essay. Let me quote the very next sentence which comes after Heidegger’s explication of the Intentionalist definition of science in *Being and Time*: “This definition is not complete, nor does it reach the meaning of science.” (32) Encapsulated in this statement is the direction and intent of *Being and Time*. It is a work that intends to go beyond the definition of science provided by Intentionality. “This definition is not complete” is a directional statement rather than a contentious statement because it does not refute the validity of the Intentionalist definition but rather the fullness of it. Heidegger is proposing to go beyond it and to provide it with a full depth of meaning, to “reach the meaning of science.” This is his intent.

It is not my intention in this paper to provide a detailed account of *Being and Time*. We have seen that Heidegger's intentions are to provide a philosophical foundation whose intent is to legitimate science. We have seen that Heidegger's methodology is a pursuit of the question of Being in a scientific manner, using scientific categories and principles. We have seen that Heidegger employs strict definitions of transparency and trajectory, that these concepts have a specific importance for his philosophy, and that the issue of the precise meaning of interpretation as it pertains to the subject of science in *Being and Time* is more open-ended, though it does focus chiefly on the matter of the hard and humanistic sciences, as opposed to art or other forms of human expression. What there is left to do before turning to "Der Meridian" is to be as concise as possible in summarizing the major articulation of Being and the method by which that primary articulation is reached. Luckily Heidegger himself provides just such a summary. Before turning to that summary, however, we must first be clear about the major points of Heidegger's understanding of Dasein, and how it applies to humanity and the sorts of activities in which humans engage.

The word Dasein has a long and complex history in the tradition of German philosophy. As such, we should be sure to look to *Being and Time* to be sure that we understand how it is employing the term. This is clearly articulated in §4.

"Dasein," Heidegger writes, "is an entity which does not just occur among other entities. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an *issue* for it." (32) Dasein, Heidegger makes clear, is an ontological category of Being in which the understanding of Being is itself significant. "*Understanding of Being is itself a definite characteristic of Dasein's Being.*" (idem) Dasein is self-reflective, and self-reflectivity is one

condition of Dasein's Being—one of the most important conditions. It is the condition of humanity: "man himself." (idem)

What is equally important about Dasein is that it is the type of Being which science also demonstrates. "As ways in which man behaves, sciences have the manner of Being which...man himself possesses." (idem.) Therefore, all of the qualities which man as Dasein possesses, science will also demonstrate.

Dasein, as a category of being, is also defined by what it does. This is called its existence. "Dasein always understands itself in terms of its existence." (33) Other entities which are not Dasein in character are also existent, in the fact that they are equally defined by what they do. However, Dasein, which is differentiated as Dasein due to its reflection on the meaning of Being, is also characterized by a reflection upon those other types of beings which are not Dasein. "Therefore, *fundamental ontology*, from which alone all other ontologies can take their rise, must be sought in the *existential analytic of Dasein*." (34) In this case, the self-reflection of Dasein in its consideration of the meaning of being—which is an activity that Dasein pursues as a naturally occurring part of its existence, is that which understands "fundamental ontology", or the question of Being. It is therefore in the self-reflection of Dasein that the answer to the question of Being is to be found.

These characterizations of Dasein have a number of consequences. First, "Dasein accordingly takes priority over all other entities in several ways." (idem) The first of these ways is that "Dasein is an entity whose Being has the determinate characteristic of existence." (idem) Dasein can determine what it does in its existence. Because of its power to determine, the second way in which Dasein takes priority over other entities is that "Dasein is in itself 'ontological'." (idem.) Dasein and Being cohabitate together. Dasein does not carry its being

inside of any other Being or Being structure. It is not a sub-category determined by a larger categorical structure, such as “a Ford is a type of car.” Dasein is merely Dasein. The third manner in which Dasein takes priority is that it provides “the ontico-ontological condition for the possibility of all entities of a character other than its own.” By ontical, Heidegger means that Dasein determines the existence of other types of Being. By ontological, Heidegger here means that Dasein determines the categorical ontology of all other structures.

The second consequence springs from the first, namely that Heidegger has legitimated the domination of nature by humanity and human science through means of granting to humanity the characteristic of Dasein, and denying that characteristic to other beings. This homo-centric analysis will come under criticism in Celan’s “Der Meridian.”

The third consequence of these characterizations, which Heidegger refers to as the “Dasein’s ontico-ontological priority” (idem) is of utmost significance, for it is the explanation behind Heidegger’s insistence on the significance of trajectory. Because Dasein is characterized as determining its own existence, and existence is defined as what a being does, then the trajectory of existence becomes a determining factor for Dasein.

(T)he roots of the existential analytic...are ultimately *existential*, that is, *ontical*. Only if the inquiry of philosophical research is itself seized upon in an existential manner as a possibility of the Being of each existing Dasein, does it become possible to disclose the existentiality of existence and to undertake an adequately founded ontological problematic. But with this, the ontical priority of the question of being has also become plain.” (idem)

The ontical or existential priority rests precisely in the possibility of the existential manner of Dasein. How Dasein exists, how it projects itself as possibility, and how it fulfills or does not fulfill its possibility are all matters of projection and trajectory. Furthermore, the sciences, “as ways in which man behaves...have the manner of ...‘Dasein’.” (32) Therefore science has an existential possibility, an existential projection, and an existential trajectory as well.

Furthermore, and of utmost importance for Heidegger’s philosophical grounding of science, this

characteristic of existential direction is not only itself evidence of the Dasein of science, but it is as such constitutive of the very legitimacy of science. Therefore, the legitimacy of science is not founded merely in the fact that it reflects upon the nature of the world, or of being, but it is equally founded upon the fact that science has direction, which is projection and trajectory.

With these remarks Heidegger proposes that we must look for the answer to the question of Being first in the ontology of Dasein itself. What manner of Being is Dasein? The onto-ontological priorities of Dasein are characteristics, but what are the specifics. In order to summarize this matter so that we can quickly move into “Der Meridian,” I will focus on those aspects which of *Being and Time* only which have significance for the selection of “Der Meridian” I have chosen to make a reading of, that is, approximately the first half. This includes the description of Dasein’s Being as “care.” For the second half of “Der Meridian,” it becomes necessary to consider closely Heidegger’s remarks on the phenomenological method of investigation, as they are presented in §7. By focusing on the characteristics of “care” which are constitutive of Dasein’s being, we are able to move quickly into the first half of “Der Meridian” and establish the phenomenological nature of the logic at work in the trajectory of the speech. I shall therefore turn now to a sentence from §58 of *Being and Time* which summarizes Heidegger’s major articulation of Being.

“Dasein’s Being is care. It comprises in itself facticity (thrownness), existence (projection), and falling.” (329)

We have seen already how existence is tied to projection, and we have seen evidence of projection’s fulfillment or non-fulfillment in its trajectory. We shall have a chance to make a more complete disclosure of this issue in my reading of “Der Meridian.” Likewise, because “Der Meridian” relies so heavily upon the characteristic of fallenness, I will take the opportunity

to treat this subject in a complete analysis as it pertains specifically to “Der Meridian.” There remains only the issue of thrownness, which, as the quote above makes evident, is the characteristic of Dasein’s facticity. What does that mean?

According to Heidegger, Dasein finds itself in existence. Furthermore, while in existence, Dasein finds itself in various situation which are constituted by physical presence and states of mind. In both the fact of its existence and the ongoing factuality of its present situation, Dasein finds itself to have been “delivered over” to the facts “belonging to presence-at-hand.” (174) “The expression “thrownness” is meant to suggest the *facticity of its being delivered over.*” (idem)

There are a number of ontological characteristics that are ascribed to thrownness. Primarily, thrownness is most generally understood as a state-of-mind which reflects the facticity of Dasein’s Being-in-the-world. The state-of-mind is disclosed by “moods.” “Dasein can, should, and must, through knowledge and will, become master of its moods.” (175) Therefore thrownness is also the ontological characteristic status of Dasein’s mastery of its moods.

We shall have recourse to return to the issue of thrownness as we progress through “Der Meridian.”

CHAPTER 3 “DER MERIDIAN”

Celan was born in Czernowitz, Galicia, in present day Ukraine, to a Jewish family. His mother’s native language was German, and Celan (originally Antschel) was raised in the German tradition and attended German gymnasium. Celan’s entire family was murdered in the Holocaust, and he made his way after the war first to Vienna and finally to Paris, where he settled and began writing poetry in German. He first came to the attention of the Gruppe ‘47 and, as we have noted, through his friendship with Ingeborg Bachmann was introduced to the work of Martin Heidegger. Celan’s poetry was for the most part well received in the 1950’s in Germany, and in 1960 he was the recipient of the Büchner Prize for Literature. On the occasion of the reception of that prize, in Darmstadt in October of 1960 Celan gave an address which is entitled “Der Meridian.” It is to that speech that I now wish to turn for a rather lengthy, but I hope fruitful, analysis, in which a hidden or buried structure which is essentially Heideggerian is revealed.

In this reading of “Der Meridian” I stress the significance of a processional, rather than a tropographical, reading of the speech. There are a number of important works which have carefully considered the major tropological structures in “Der Meridian.” Jacques Derrida, for example, looks closely at the significance of “the date” in “Der Meridian” in his “Shibboleth for Paul Celan.” In James Lyon’s *Paul Celan and Martin Heidegger*, the issue is that of the treatment of poetics in “Der Meridian” with an emphasis on the manner in which Celan shares an exchange with Heideggerian thought on modern, “mechanized” poetics. Similarly, Eric Kligerman has taken under review the issue of the Uncanny in “Der Meridian,” as well as issues of translation, in his 2007 *Sites of the Uncanny: Paul Celan, Specularity and the Visual Arts*.

While these approaches offer a wealth of insight into the structural components of “Der Meridian,” we are not yet able to grasp the larger picture if we do not attend to the processional nature of its delivery. We must remember, first of all, that “Der Meridian” was written for and delivered to a listening audience, and even though it leaves a vast amount of room for studied interpretation, it also intended to have an impact on its listeners in only one sitting, which would have been as it was heard from beginning to end.

More importantly, however, I argue that there this specific Heideggerian structure which is inherent in the speech, which is revealed most explicitly as a logic with its basis in the temporality of the speech, is revealed only if we read processionally rather than tropographically. A chapter in Veronique M. Foti’s recent *Heidegger and the Poets* attempts such a processional reading, but her reading moves with an eye on the topical structure rather than on the logical structure, and misses therefore what I consider to be the major dynamic at work in the first half of “Der Meridian,” which is structurally explicitly Heideggerian.

Specifically, the logical structure in “Der Meridian” is employed both in terms of the temporality of Dasein’s projection as it is described in *Being and Time*, as well as in the “moods” that disclose the “thrownness” and “fallenness” of Dasein within the context of its topical self-communication. As such, the logical structure of “Der Meridian” takes into consideration the proper approach to and deployment of tropes under the specific guidance of the existential priority of Dasein. “Der Meridian” embeds within its presentation a moment of Heideggerian “fallen-ness,” in which Dasein degenerates into aspects of incompleteness and inconsistency both in the way it communicates itself and in the way it views its own being in time. We have seen these aspects fully explicated in *Being and Time* and “Der Meridian” catalogues them in itself in its movement through “fallen-ness” and into a greater self-awareness in its first half.

There are a number of obstacles in treating “Der Meridian” which are also present in Celan’s poetics in general. Not the least of these is the issue of what Celan calls, according to Derrida, *concentration*, which is a term used to describe how single tropes take on various possible meanings, sometimes meanings which are in conflict with themselves, in a way that purposefully affects the reading of the poem. Derrida talks about *concentration* in reference to the “dates” of encounter in “Der Meridian”:

Several singular events may conjoin, enter into alliance, *concentrate* in the same date, which thus becomes both the same and the other, altogether other as the same, capable of speaking to the other of the other, to the one who cannot decipher one or another absolutely closed date, a tomb closed over the event that it marks.¹

Celan is a master at saying multiple things at once, and through the vehicle of *concentration* one poem can sometimes take on competing interpretations of itself in a manner which can itself be a comment upon the conflict in the interpretations. *Concentration* may also serve as a marker for Szondian “becoming reality.” “Der Meridian” is imbued with many such *concentrations*, not only in the way it employs its “dates,” as Derrida points out, but also in the manner in which it employs a number of tropes as well as non-dated temporal demarcations (for example, past, present and future configurations). James K. Lyon, for example, has pointed out how Celan seems to be playing both sides of the fence with Heidegger in the manner by which “Der Meridian” treats the issue of the poet as speaker in the poem, on the one side in deference to Heidegger, and on the other in contradiction to him.²

Concentration allows, for example, for both a positive and negative reading of “Der Meridian”’s employment of Martin Heidegger. It is not simply a matter of Celan’s reception of Heidegger, but rather what is at stake in reading “Der Meridian” along existentialist lines is out

¹ Jacques Derrida, „Shibboleth for Paul Celan.“ 12.

² Lyon, op. cit. 127-130.

understanding of Celan's attitude toward the discourse of modernity itself. I argue that once we recognize the essentially Heideggerian structure of "Der Meridian"'s first half it becomes easier to recognize that the second half actually diverges from itself through the tool of *concentration*, so that a duality is made apparent in which Celan is both invoking and encouraging the modernist project and, as the same time, critiquing and disavowing it. In order to fully explicate the particular poignancy of this duality, however, it is first necessary to elucidate the existentialist structure of the first half.

Both Jacques Derrida and Veronique Foti indicate the Heideggerian elements in "Der Meridian." Derrida, for example, argues that "it (the poem) speaks of what provokes it, *to the date* which provokes it, thus convoked from the future of the *same* date, in other words from its recurrence at *another* date."³ It is exactly this matter of temporal projection that is a central characteristic of the existentially logical structure disclosed in the procession of "Der Meridian." Likewise, Foti argues when she remarks that "poetry...indicates orientation"⁴ the essential ontico-ontological relationship as Heidegger describes it that exists between direction and existence.

Yet neither Foti nor Derrida avail themselves of the opportunity to treat explicitly the numerous references in "Der Meridian" to issues of directionality. "Breath, that is direction and destiny..." "Is there not...in Georg Büchner...a radical Calling-Into-Question of art, a Calling-Into-Question from this direction?" "I have jumped ahead, reached out too far—not far enough, I know..." These are just a few of numerous examples of an expression of an explicit sense of

³ Derrida, op. Cit. 10.

⁴ „It in here, in the estrangement of art, rather than in the mere factual chronicle of his life, that Lenz, the man, reveals himself; for poetry ‚hurries ahead‘; it indicates orientation.” Foti, op. cit. 103.

direction in “Der Meridian.”⁵ While Derrida and Foti gesture toward these directional issues, I am arguing that far from being marginal comments on the part of the author, the issue of direction is central to “Der Meridian”—more central, in fact, than the specific tropes of “the Medussa’s head, the ape, and the automaton” or even the *Atemwende* itself. That is to say, that it is only in the context of direction that these other tropes can be characterized as meaningful.

As we have seen, direction is only one of the existential characteristics of Dasein, however. My reading is therefore an attempt to specifically locate and elucidate the existentialist elements within the logical, processional, and topical structure of “Der Meridian.” In order to do so it is necessary to write a “commentary” of the speech,⁶ and so I will begin with the first line of “Der Meridian” and proceed through until the explication of the *Atemwende*. I have chosen this point due mostly to considerations for time and space but also because this segment establishes the crucial connection between Celan and Heidegger that I consider paramount for understanding “Der Meridian.” As I have argued, beyond the section of the *Atemwende*, Celan takes the issues of phenomenological philosophy which are introduced in the first half and escalates the discussion to degree beyond the scope of this paper. While the second half of “Der Meridian” is indeed crucial in understanding Celan’s complete argument as it deals with issues of modernity, particularly with the intersection of poetry and modernity, the issues for the second half as I understand them need to be treated in conjunction with a thorough grounding in the early German romantic literature and its critique of Kantian philosophy, as well as a discussion of “the phenomenological method” as it is introduced in *Being and Time*. Furthermore, while the second

⁵ Existentialism in Celan’s poetry has been treated in a 1993 work by Clarise Samuels, *Holocaust Visions: Surrealism and Existentialism in the Poetry of Paul Celan*, Camden House. I have just discovered this book, and have not had the opportunity to avail myself of its particulars, but it does not treat “Der Meridian”.

⁶ This word is used in theological studies to indicate a reading of scripture which moves from beginning to end “commenting” as it goes on the elements of significance.

half of “Der Meridian” remains faithful to the existentialist foundations it establishes in the first half, it is not essential that it be read processionally. That is, once we gain a clear understanding of what is occurring in the first half, the second half can be treated topically according to the intended aims of the analyst.

To summarize my argument: I am saying that there exists in “Der Meridian” a logical trajectory that is established from the opening discussions of various forms of artistic expression in Büchner and continues in its momentum until the moment when it attempts to treat the issue of tyranny and art in the “acute accent of the present.” At this moment, “Der Meridian” loses its trajectory, falls into a backtracking movement in which the text is temporally and tropologically dislocated—assuming, in fact, the very characteristics enumerated in *Being and Time* as those of “fallen” Dasein. “Der Meridian” then relocates itself within the space—both the temporal and topical locality—of the fall in order to recover the original trajectory of its Dasein. What follows this relocation is an existentialist statement upon the relationship of modernity to tyranny, and the part poetry has to play in the work of freedom

Before I begin a note concerning my method is deemed necessary. Because this reading attempts to indicate the logically directional characteristics of “Der Meridian,” I shall not spend a great deal of time discussing the various topical elements of the speech. As such, at times, it might appear as though I am giving only a cursory glance at some very crucial issues in “Der Meridian.” It would be convenient to stop and discuss the validity of the various readings that I make of specific tropes, or to include comments from other scholars, or to ask whether or not I have provided the material with as full of an explication as I could. There are a number of reasons why I would consider such discussions to be harmful to this reading of “Der Meridian.”

First, as I have indicated, Celan chooses tropes that are quite ambiguous, often cryptic, in nature, and presents them in a way that is meant to explicate numerous sides of their ambiguity. In our desire to fully flesh out the ambiguities, we would become bogged down in such a discussion and would lose sight of the direction of the text, and for this reading it is the direction that is most crucial.

Secondly, the issue of the direction is an even more exacting demand when we remember, as I have stated, that the text was originally a speech, in which the audience did not have a chance to discuss the tropes or dwell on them if they wanted to follow the speaker as he progressed. In my reading, therefore, while I at times do stop to take more careful consideration of the tropological structure, I am also eager to move forward, because the text moves forward, and I beg the reader's patience as I attempt to follow the trajectory, rather than only the tropology, of "Der Meridian."

I shall quickly review the opening sections up until the fall, so that we might be clear about how the direction of the speech is established. Art is introduced in the opening lines as a formal endeavor in which the aspects of mimesis and correct technique are represented by the characteristics of "marionettenhaftes" and "jambisch-fünffüßiges".⁷ Cryptically, art is also introduced as a "kinderloses Wesen," (idem) which is the first in a series of three paradoxes in which Celan presents artistic achievement's relationship to particular manifestations of nothing. In this case, artistic creation is a barren pursuit. It is important to point out, however, that here art has a very poetic form. It is the form of iambic-pentameter, the down-up five-metered rhythm famously characteristic of Shakespearian Sonnets, of which Celan had made many

⁷ All citations of "Der Meridian" are taken from Paul Celan *Gesammelte Werke Dritter Band*. Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1986. As with *Being and Time* I will use parenthesis in the text after each quotation to indicate page numbers. Here it is (187). Any English translations provided are my own. So as to avoid confusion, I will revert to footnoting any further citations from *Being and Time*.

translations into German. From the outset, therefore, the lines between “art” and “poetry” are not clearly delineated. Furthermore, in connecting Shakespeare to classical Greece, Celan is invoking the originations of modernity. Shakespeare, who was the contemporary of Francis Bacon, is validated (“den Hinweis”) by Pygmalion.

There is also, according to Celan, a great deal of conversation about art. He cites such a discussion from the pages of Büchner’s *Danton’s Tod*. In fact, the possibilities for discussion and analysis are so vast that the conversation “could be pursued endlessly” (“endlos fortgesetzt werden könnte”). (idem) Something, however, comes between (“Es kommt etwas dazwischen”)—something interrupts.

Rather than defining at this moment what it is that interrupts the discussion regarding art, Celan reinvokes art (“Die Kunst kommt wieder”) as if, from the outset, to establish a reality of art: despite what interferes, art returns. It returns, according to Celan, in Büchner’s *Woyzeck*, where it shows up as an ape form (“Affengestalt”), which is a way for Celan to bring art in Büchner forward to the time of Darwinism, realism, and naturalism, in which art is no longer an idealized form but rather wears (“anhat”) nothing (“nix”) and is merely a created being (“Kreatur”)—a word which carries a mark of ignobility. If art’s paradox in the first instance is that of its barrenness, here the paradox is turned the other way around: the monkey, which is wearing “nothing”, is recognized as art because the skirt and trousers (“Rock und Hosen”) give it away (“aber es ist dieselbe, an ‘Rock und Hosen’ haben wir sie sogleich wiedererkannt”). (idem) In this case, “art” is marked not by poetical craftsmanship, but rather by scientific interpretation, namely, Darwin.

Finally art presents itself in Büchner’s *Leonce and Lena* as a third manifestation, one which has a marked resemblance to scientific instrumentation and carries a definitively utopian

promise: “Zeit und Beleuchtung sind hier nicht wiederzuerkennen, wir sind ja ‘auf der Flucht ins Paradies’, ‘all Uhren und Kalender’ sollen bald ‘zerschalgen bzw. ‘verboten’ werden.” (188)

This is an avant-garde manifestation of art, or, worse, the type of political art that was manifested in the French Revolution where calendars were completely rewritten and the utopian age of reason and transparency declared. Art is political, and time has been forbidden, bringing us back as far as Bacon’s desire to return to the Garden of Eden. Once again, however, art is shown to have underneath all of its trappings, “nichts als Kunst und Mechanismus, nichts al Pappendeckel und Uhrfedern!” (idem)

In all three of these manifestations art is also a problem (“auch ein Problem”) that is, after all, “eternal” (“ewig”). It is however, a problem which allows for mortal language: “Ein Problem, das einem Sterblichen...Worte und Worte aneinanderzureihen erlaubt.“ (idem) Art is connected to both linguistics and mortality. Art, in all three instances, is much more than merely “visual” or “poetic.” Art, in this introduction, is a linguistically, poetically, visually, scientifically, and politically encompassing term. I will refer to this type of art as “interpretive art.” The future trajectory of the speech should be marked by just this characteristic: that art is understood to mean “interpretive art”, and where the text deviates from this characteristic (and it will) we should look for a conflict.

Whenever art is discussed, however, there is inevitably somebody who does not know what is being talked about. Here Celan gives a critical analysis of what he understands happens when somebody gets lost in conversation, particularly conversation about such important subjects as visual or musical art, poetry or other forms of literature, politics, or science, etc. That person who does not understand loses the conversation, who nevertheless, “hears the speaker and sees him speak,” who took speech as reality and form...and at the same time breath, which

means direction and destiny” (“...den Sprechendedn hört, der ihn ‘sprechen sieht’, der Sprache wahrgenommen hat und Gestalt...und zugleich auch Atem, das heißt Richtung und Schicksal.”).

(idem) This cryptic understanding is more accessible if we remember our own experiences of having been lost in a presentation, perhaps — or a rather heavy conversation — and, having no opportunity to add or interrupt, and with no possibility of turning away, sit and stare at the speaker who begins to take on no longer a personality, but rather merely the shape of language in the form of words which are no longer accessible to the hearer, but are merely moving in a certain direction, under a certain impetus of breath, toward a certain destiny—none of which is accessible to us. In this case we, the lost listeners, have become, to use Celan’s description, “Art-blind,” (“kunstblind”) blind to the topic being explicated.

This is how Celan asks us to understand Lucile’s watching of the deaths of Camille and Danton. Whereas the executed themselves are excited for their deaths and the opportunity to make a final speech (“vom gemeinsam In-den-Tod-gehen die Rede, Fabre will sogar ‘doppelt’ sterben können, jeder is auf der Höhe...”), and the bystanders are unimpressed (“nur ein paar Stimmen...finden, daß das alles ‘schon einmal dagewesen und langweilig’ sei”), and all around it appears to be the victory of the puppet and the string, (“den Triumph von ‘Puppe’ und ‘Draht’ bestätigen”), it seems as though Lucile has not fully understood, has somehow become lost in all of the high talk, has become “artblind”, and can only mutter the words “Long live the King” (“Es Lebe der König”)—a statement which must inevitably lead to her own execution. (189)

To read Lucile as artblind is to understand her as lost in the madness of the situation, in the art of the talk, able to understand nothing except that words are coming out of somebody’s mouth and that those words have the quality of life and death to them, of destiny. So she says, “Long live the King.” Celan argues that this moment is an “homage to the majesty of the absurd

which testifies to the presence of humans.” This is to say that, faced on both sides with uncomfortable prospects—on the one hand the reality of the “puppet” and the “string” which Celan argues was the mark of the Reign of Terror, and the inanity of the executed prisoner’s last words, which Lucile could not follow—in other words, on the one hand the marionette outside, which is in the hands of destiny, and on the other hand the marionette inside, which cannot follow the hand of destiny in the words of the speech-giver—Lucile speaks. Her speech act, Celan tells us, is a “counterword” (“Gegenwort”), which “cuts the string” (“das den Draht zerreit”) and does not “bow to the bystanders and parade-horses of history” (“nicht...vor den ‘Eckstehern und Paradegulen der Geschichte’ bckt”). There is no name for this action, Celan tells us, but he believes that it is poetry. (189-190)

What is at stake already in the Lucile episode is the relationship of the human to the problem of art. It is here, in the French Revolution, that this relationship becomes totalitarian. The problem of art was challenging enough in its three forms as mimetic, natural, and political art, but art becomes the inspiration for a spectacle of death in Celan’s rendition of *Danton’s Tod* and speaks even more deeply to the problematic of art, to the possibility of a totalitarian quality in art—or at least a totalitarian characteristic in humanity’s relationship to art, to which Celan answers with the words of Camille: “‘Ach, die Kunst!’”. It is a woeful relationship which art and humanity are in, “acutely” felt by Celan, who places an “acute accent of the present” (“den Akut (Akzente) des Heutigen”) on Camille’s words rather than a “grave accent of the historical” (“den Gravis des Historischen”) or the “circumflex...of the eternal” (“den Zirkumflex...des Ewigen”).⁸ That is, Celan’s bemoaning of the totalitarian impulse in relationship to art, and possibly in art itself, is not one that remembers the eternal quality or the historical quality of that

⁸ Idem, 190.

totalitarianism, but the contemporary manifestation of that quality. We cannot help but be reminded of the Third Reich.

It is here that “Der Meridian” is marked by a fracture in its trajectory. In order to explicate this fracture, let us continue reading on for a few more paragraphs.

After placing the emphasis on the acute accent of the present and declaring that it is his intention to place such an accent, Celan then points out that the woeful qualities of art are indeed ubiquitous—a curious transposition from his original accentuation of the acute, and, rather cryptically claiming his conscience pricked by the grave accent of the past, returns to the historical and to Büchner in a transition, marked at the moment of “Der Meridian”’s treatment of the contemporary totalitarianism of art by the pain of that same totalitarianism and carried backwards by that pain to two sentences in *Lenz*, one in which Lenz “recovers” his spirits in a discussion of literature and the other wherein Lenz finds “the only criterion in matters of art,” a totalitarian statement expressing a singular authority.

Why did Celan shift from the acute accent to the grave, transiting, for the space of a breath back to the grave accent of history? This is the question for which we must find an answer, for it is the clue to Celan’s use of Heidegger in “Der Meridian,” and the explication of why the matter of trajectory is of crucial importance in reading “Der Meridian.”

Celan indicates that there are, in the two passages which he chooses from *Lenz*, both the expression of Büchner’s aesthetics as well as the reality of the historical *Lenz*, author of “Anmerkung übers Theater.” These observations, left without any further comments, lead Celan back to the “literarisch so ergiebig” imperative of Mercier, ‘Elargissez l’art’. This transition ends by claiming that the passages quoted from *Lenz* anticipate Hauptmann and the naturalistic movement, which are also rather ambiguously presented and seem somewhat misplaced. Celan

has gestured toward Naturalism in his introduction of various forms of art in Büchner, (the classical, naturalism, and that of the avant-garde or political), but why should naturalism be chosen for specific consideration, or, furthermore, Hauptmann in particular? There are no further comments to suggest that these observations are of any singular significance, and the listener as well as the reader are left feeling somewhat misled by “Der Meridian.” Celan then ends this section by pointing out that the political and social roots of Büchner’s work might be found in the two passages quoted.

What has happened? Up until this point, “Der Meridian” is unambiguous in its pursuit of its chosen topic, the totalitarian qualities humanity’s relationship to art—possibly totalitarian qualities in art itself. Celan has provided evidence and a historical background from Büchner, apropos to the spirit of the award, for these qualities. He has even gone so far as to provide a counter-word against totalitarianism, a moment of the absurd, which he postulates as poetry. The problem of art is severe, and he laments that problem, but his lamentation breaks down at the moment in which he realizes not the historical, or even eternal nature of the problem, but rather with his calling to our attention—and his own—the acute accent of the present, and “Der Meridian” loses its trajectory and “falls” back into remarks that are historically located, literarily valid, and critical in nature, but which do not serve to further the purpose of an elucidation of the “acute” accent.

The text stumbles into its reversal in the section immediately following Celan’s proclamation “Ich setze den Akut.” It moves backward upon itself in a return through the circumflex, now ubiquitous, nature of art (“auch die Gabe der Ubiquität”), finds the grave accent once again in *Danton’s Tod* as well as, now, *Lenz* (“sie ist auch im ‘Lenz’ wieder zu finden, auch hier—ich erlaube mir, das zu betonen—, wie in ‘Dantons Tod’ als Episode”).

While the intention of the speech strives to push its momentum forward into the acute accent of the present, it is all the while being forced back upon itself from the pain of that accent, and the two directions rupture one from another and “Der Meridian” remains with a few non-essential remarks concerning the significance of Büchner’s aesthetical expression and the relevance of the passages to literary history (“hier findet Büchners ästhetische Konzeption ihren Ausdruck” and “diese Stelle hat, vor allem anderen, literarhistorische Relevanz”)—both of which stand in the place of his earlier statements on art history and three movements of art exemplified in Büchner’s writings.

“Der Meridian”, which had begun with a great forward momentum, was turned about on itself and forced to retrace its steps back to their source. The forward momentum, however, is still propelling us forward and, in an odd moment of a somewhat peculiar nature in which Celan’s cites Mercier’s ‘Elargissez l’art’, the “Der Meridian” is once again grounded and returns, though somewhat reluctantly, to its forward momentum with remarks about Büchner’s anticipation of naturalism (“hier ist der Naturalismus, hier ist Gehart Hauptmann”) and a few suggestions that we might, in the future, find the political and social roots of Büchner’s work in the two passages quoted (“hier sind auch die sozialen und politischen Wurzeln der Büchnerschen Dichtung zu suchen und zu finden”).

To summarize, “Der Meridian” was stopped in its forward momentum by an awareness of the acute accent, and by the time it regained its composure it was caught at its beginning, able to look forward (“hier sind...die...Wurzeln der Büchnerischen Dichtung” etc) but not moving with that looking—it could only speculate on the “eröffnet Ausblicke” which the passages open up, but it is unable to develop the argument of these “Ausblicke,” and most importantly, unable

to catch up with itself in its original intent, which—as we shall see—is the original resolve of its Dasein. “Der Meridian” is caught gazing into the future at the promises that are available.

It is these passages in particular that highlight both the significance of understanding the trajectorial nature of “Der Meridian”—the significance of its intention and the momentum it has placed on that intention, and the significance of the central Heideggerian motif in “Der Meridian”—the “fall” of Dasein. Specifically, pain of the acute is too severe, and the argument of “Der Meridian” “falls” in a Heideggerian sense of falling. Without understanding this logical evolution of the speech, we would miss this fall and everything that comes after it could not be placed in its proper context.

If this reading sacrifices a number of possible moments of topical comprehension of “Der Meridian” up to this point, then they are given up for the greater understanding of the trajectory “Der Meridian.” While we could exploit the wealth of analysis that Celan provides in the section immediately following the two quoted passages from *Lenz*, or dispute the readings that I have given of the three art forms present in Büchner—even a careful analysis of the two passages quoted would provide the reader with more than a few interesting insights into the aesthetics of Büchner, just as Celan tells us—I have chosen instead to move ahead along with the speech. These passages are not relegated to a place of lesser importance because they contain information of inherently lesser value, however. In fact, once the trajectory is understood the specifics of the tropological exegesis become all the more significant.

What is more important is to point out that the comments which make up the sections of “Der Meridian” that I argue constitute “the fall” of the speech are of three substantive characteristics which we find enunciated in Heidegger’s analysis of the “fallen-ness” of Dasein.

These characteristics are, in order of Heidegger's presentation in §§ 35-37 of *Being and Time*, "idle talk," "curiosity," and "ambiguity."

It might not at first appear that Celan's comments in these passages are comments that one would consider to be "idle talk." But taken in the light of his greater concerns, which are with the totalitarian relationship of humanity to art—particularly in the present time—the relative worth of information that might lead us to a greater understanding of Büchner's aesthetics pales of necessity. These remarks are specifically "idle" in the Heideggerian sense in that 1) they represent an "everyday Dasein's understanding and interpreting." It might not appear to be so, because the comments are not about common subjects but about the aesthetics of Büchner, however, *relative* to the more specific topic of "Der Meridian," which is an engagement with aesthetic totalitarianism, these comments are mundane and ordinary. Furthermore, comments such as "Here, Büchner's aesthetics find expression" or "the passage opens vistas: it anticipates Naturalism and Gerhard Hauptmann" are not grounded in the logical argumentation already presented in "Der Meridian," which is to say that they do not "communicate in such a way as the let (them) be appropriated in a primordial manner"—which would be defined as the original logic of "Der Meridian," but "communicate... rather by following the route of *gossiping* and *passing the word along*."⁹ These remarks appear to be authoritative, and our own understanding lends them an authoritative air, but in the context of "Der Meridian" they are groundless because up until this point Celan has been completely unconcerned with Büchner's aesthetics. "Idle talk...is the kind of Being which belongs to Dasein's understanding when that understanding has

⁹ Heidegger, op. cit.. 212.

been uprooted.”¹⁰ “Der Meridian”, uprooted by the acute accent, “falls” back on idle talk at this moment.

Secondly, the comments in this section reflect curiosity. Curiosity, according to Heidegger, is marked specifically by a type of sight in which “Dasein seeks what is far away simply in order to bring it close in the way it looks...when curiosity has become free...it concerns itself with seeing, not in order to understand what is seen...but *just* in order to see.” “Der Meridian” does not attempt at this moment to understand how the Büchner passage “anticipates Naturalism and Gerhart Hauptmann,” and is curious about how “(h)ere we must look for the social and political roots of Büchner’s work.” It is merely curious “*just* in order to see.”

Finally, these sections are ambiguous. It is unclear why Celan chooses the two particular passages from Büchner that he chooses. It is unclear what Celan is trying to tell us when he says that these passages have an “importance to literary history,” or even why “it is in these passages that we must look for the social and political roots of Büchner’s work”. The movement of the sections is also ambiguous: how do these passages lead us back to the historical Lenz and, even more ambiguously, to Mercier’s “Elargissez l’art?”

We have already remarked on the ambiguous, even cryptic nature of much of Celan’s work, but Heideggerian ambiguity as a characteristic of fallen-ness is not cryptic, which entails a hiding or concealing. Rather, Heidegger tells us ambiguity is “the sort of thing which is accessible to everyone, and about which anyone can say anything.” When we encounter ambiguity, “it soon becomes impossible to decide what is disclosed in a genuine understanding,

¹⁰ Ibid, 214.

and what is not.”¹¹ These to defining characteristics are easy to see in Celan’s comments in these passages.

I have argued that “Der Meridian” has followed a specific and easily discernable trajectory. I have also argued that that trajectory experienced a set-back of the sort that is represented by Heidegger’s notion of fallen-ness. From our earlier discussion of Dasein and fallenness, we can remember that Dasein is a futurally-oriented intentionality with a capacity for self-reflection. It is these characteristics which distinguish it from ordinary being. We must now ascertain how Celan leads us toward an understanding of the fall of “Der Meridian,” for it is in the “fall” that we are to become aware of the critique humanity’s relationship to art—understood as “interpretive art”—which “Der Meridian” is presenting.

Let us pick up with the text where we left off. Up until this point we have had a sort of an introduction: artistic conversations can continue ad infinitum; something intervenes; that which intervenes is often totalitarian in nature—in fact, totalitarianism seems to be a naturally occurring characteristic of artistic communication. There have been counter-words to the totalitarianism. The totalitarianism of art can be brutal, it has a history and a presence and an eternal quality about it. Finally, as part of the introduction, Celan self-consciously adds a demonstration of a fall that occurs while attempting to speak of the totalitarianism, particularly of present or contemporary totalitarianism.

The self-consciousness of the fall of “Der Meridian” is highlighted in the next section (the first section of the first major direction) which begins with an apologetic gesture on the part of Celan. We are told that it has “calmed (his) conscience that (he) did not fail to mention this (all of the “idle talk” “curiosity” and “ambiguity” surrounding the two passages quoted from

¹¹ Ibid, 217.

Lenz).” Once again, we have a reference to Celan’s cryptic “bad conscience about the grave accent”.¹² “But”, he continues, “it also shows, and thereby disturbs my conscience again, that I cannot get away from something which seems to be connected with art.” (191)

Celan, realizing that he has broken off from his original trajectory, has been diverted and has taken a detour from his original intent, is trying to pick back up the trail of that topic. He is unable to mention that “something” specifically, but he has heard the “call” of it through his “bad conscience.”¹³ He also makes a more explicit comment regarding the nature of the totalitarianism upon which he wishes to comment: it “seems to be connected with art.” This comment lays the burden of guilt less on the human side and more on the side of art itself. Let us continue following the trajectory of “Der Meridian.”

“Ich suche es auch hier, im ‘Lenz’,--ich erlaube mir, Sie darauf hinzuweisen.” With this statement it becomes apparent that what Celan is attempting to do is to recover the original trajectory of “Der Meridian,” which was lost in the fall and the diversion into the various tropes that were therein presented. The method by which Celan is attempting this recovery is referred to by Heidegger as “taking over,” by which it is meant not returning to the original location prior

¹² In fact, the mention of a „bad conscience“ is further evidence of Celan’s overt use of *Sein und Zeit* in these passages. Compare Celan’s “bad conscience of the grave accent” to *Sein und Zeit*, Division Two section II, “Dasein’s Attestation of an Authentic Potentiality-for-Being, and Resoluteness, in which Heidegger makes evident the emergence of a guilty conscience and the relationship between the feeling of guilt and Dasein’s intention, or “resoluteness.” Since, however, Heidegger posits that existentially there is no such thing as a “bad conscience,” and Celan indicates that he has a “bad conscience,” the existentially technical reading of this statement—particularly, coming as it does, in the middle of the “fall”—points toward a criticism of Heidegger and his complicity in National Socialist atrocities. The discussion of this topic must be reserved, therefore, for the “negative” reading of “Der Meridian,” by which I mean the reading that casts Heidegger in a negative light.

¹³ Again, see *Sein und Zeit* division Two section II, in which the “call” of the “guilty conscience” is a call to return to the intentional resoluteness of one’s Dasein, in this case, the resoluteness to speak to the acute accent of tyranny.

the fall, but rather following the course of the fall in such a manner as to include the substance of the fall in the trajectorial path of Dasein in its original resolution.¹⁴

The material of the original trajectory of “Der Meridian” was founded in a discussion of *Dantons Tod*. From *Danton’s Tod* “Der Meridian” moved into an attempt to comment on the present totalitarianism that has something to do with art. Failing at that attempt, and falling into comments on *Lenz*, “Der Meridian” does not attempt to revert back to *Dantons Tod*, but rather picks up with the substantive material of the fall. *Lenz*, therefore, is a substitute for the lost *Dantons Tod*.

Furthermore, “Der Meridian,” which fell off in the present moment, is picking up in the historically located time of *Lenz*. However, it is anticipating finding it again in the historical, and warns the audience¹⁵ “Ich erlaube mir—Sie darauf hinzuweisen.” “Der Meridian” is attempting to recover itself, to recover what was lost in its fall, to redeem itself to itself. And in the very next sentence it does just that:

“Lenz, also Büchner, hat ‘ach, die Kunst’...”. The phrase, “ach, die Kunst”, which had been taken from Camille in *Dantons Tod*, represents a threshold phrase. Its original context was the sentence, “‘—ach, die Kunst!’ Ich bin , Sie sehen es, an diesem Wort Camilles hängengeblieben,” which occurred shortly before the fall and ushered in the remarks which introduce the various accents with which one could discuss tyranny and art. “Die Kunst—‘ach, die Kunst’: sie besitzt, neben ihrer Verwandlungsfähigkeit, auch die Gabe der Ubiquität...” is the sentence which marks the beginning of the fall, since it is the ubiquitous which fundamentally

¹⁴ The concept of “taking over” is one that also operates in a specifically temporal context, according to *Being and Time* and can be demonstrated as being temporally of the exact same nature in “Der Meridian.” Compare *SZ* §§ 74 and 79-81.

¹⁵ Another curious move which speaks to the negative implications of what Celan is doing in “Der Meridian” on his German audience.

differentiates itself both temporally and tropologically from the acute. To return, therefore, to “ach, die Kunst”, is to return to the very moment of the fall, to waver in that space between the original resolution of Dasein and the unavoidable into which it had fallen. From this point, either “Der Meridian” will regain its original trajectory or it will fall once again. It is not yet ready for the original trajectory, but, apropos to the principle of “taking over,” it remains inside of the threshold space of “ach, die Kunst” and plunges into an analysis of a passage in *Lenz* in which Lenz describes his desire to capture a scene he witnessed while walking in the valley.

So stirring was the scene of two girls sitting on a rock that “Man möchte manchmal ein Medusenhaupt sein, u so eine Gruppe in Stein verwandeln zu können, und den Leuten zurufen.”(191-192) The desire to, as Celan puts it, “grasp the natural as the natural by means of art” overtakes one. “‘One’, the text says, not ‘I.’”

Here we encounter one of the most important points of tropological research associated with “Der Meridian.” Kligerman, Foli, and Lyon all spend a considerable portion of time discussing the issue of the relationship of mimetic art to totalitarianism. I argue, however, that “Der Meridian” is not primarily concerned with mimesis, the figures of the Medusa’s Head the monkey or the automaton. “Der Meridian” is specifically interested, *in its resolution* (and self-consciously so), in speaking in the acute accent of “—ach, die Kunst,” and in recording what occurs in Dasein when one attempts to speak in the acute accent of totalitarianism. As such it is interested in a certain movement, the very trajectory of Dasein which is the specific legacy of Heideggerian philosophy and of scientific modernity. What is at stake in the words, “Meine Damen und Herren, beachten Sie, bitte: ‘Man möchte ein Medusenhaupt’ sein, um...das Natürliche als das Natürliche mittels des Kunst zu erfassen,” is not so much mimesis as it is the very structure of modernity. With this statement “Der Meridian” completely recovers the acute

accent of the present. It emerges from the last vestiges of the historical into a contemplation of modern “interpretative art,”¹⁶ which is so heavily informed by science that it all falls under the sway of science, or, as in the case of romanticism, gets ostracized from modern discourse. To “seize the natural as the natural by means of art” is the exact project of modernity, as we have described it, and is, furthermore, as we have seen, the exact project of *Being and Time*. Mimesis is only one part of the project, which is why only a few lines later Celan places the ape (representing Darwinism), the automaton (representing politicized art), and “...ach, die Kunst” in the same realm of the uncanny as the Medusa head.

“Der Meridian” has caught up with itself. It has accomplished the task of “taking over.” It has reaffirmed its position vis-à-vis its original subject material, reconnected to the tropes of the ape-form (naturalism), the automaton (avant-garde art) and... “ach, auch die Kunst,” (192) and, in order to solidify the recovery, to finalize the grounding of the trajectory of “Der Meridian,” Celan reinvoles the acute accent: “Meine Damen und Herren, ich habe den Akut gesetzt...” (idem) It is now clear that Celan is talking about more than mimetic art. He is talking about an uncanny realm in which “die Affengestalt, die Automaten und damit...ach, auch die Kunst zuhause zu sein scheinen.” (idem) By here invoking specifically the acute accent, Celan reinvigorates the discussion, reminds his audience of his original intention, and reclaims his original trajectory after the fall. Furthermore, he gives a certain nod to that force which had dislocated his trajectory or caused it to fall, and cedes that “...ich mit dieser Frage nach der Kunst und nach der Dichtung...aus eigenen, wenn auch nicht freien Stücken zu Büchner gegangen sein muß, um die seine aufzusuchen.” (idem)

¹⁶ I have previously defined “interpretive art” as those human activities which pursue “an interpretation of...entities with regard to their basic state of Being.” As such “interpretive arts” is a category that can include the hard and the human sciences, as well as the fine arts, performance, literature, and media.

With this recovery, which is a form of redemption, “Der Meridian” begins to take stock of its fall. That is, Celan argues that he was forced to go to Büchner—that is, to *Lenz*—not of his own free will but because that was the substance of the fall—in order to meet the other, which is Büchner’s own trajectory regarding totalitarianism. For we must be clear that it is a matter of trajectory:

Gibt es nicht...bei Georg Büchner, bei dem Dichter der Kreatur, eine vielleicht nur halblaute, vielleicht nur halbbewußte, aber darum nicht minder radikaler—oder gerade deshalb im eigentlichsten Sinne radikale In-Frage-Stellung der Kunst, eine In-Frage-Stellung aus dieser Richtung? (192-193)

This quotation is significant because it openly connects and thereby acknowledges the reading of “Der Meridian” as an existential text for whom directionality and topicality are understood in specifically Heideggerian terms. What we have indicated to be significant about direction is that when we talk about direction we talk about Dasein, for Dasein is defined in its resolution by direction. Celan is indicating what he believes to be the direction of Büchner’s existential being (“aus dieser Richtung”), and where his own and Büchner’s have met as a result of “Der Meridian”’s fall. Less importantly but no less immediate is Celan’s use of the hyphenated word structure “In-Frage-Stellung,” which James K. Lyon research indicates is a specific linguistic structure lifted from Heidegger. With these two points in mind, this passage provides even further evidence to support the argument of this paper: we are not completely served by treating Celan’s engagement with Heidegger from a strictly topical perspective. Prior to tropological research—and this is an explicitly Heideggerian argument as well—we must understand how to approach the subject matter itself. That is, we must understand that the very logical structure of “Der Meridian” is completely dependent upon Heidegger for its articulation.

Returning to “Der Meridian,” we are still uncertain why a meeting between the two Daseins is important, or what might possibly come out of it, but Celan is arguing that if he had

not followed the substantial material of the fall, if he had not gone into the fall and picked up the tropes of the fall—in fact, if he had never fallen—then he would not have met the “other” in Büchner.

We are not yet sure why meeting Büchner was important, and “Der Meridian” does not seem to have completely recovered the lucidity with which it began. Up until the fall, “Der Meridian” did not leave many questions unanswered. At this point, however, it is still reverberating with a certain vibratory nervousness, a certain type of a temporal displacement. It is not yet fully recovered, but it is recovering. But “Der Meridian” has recovered a confidence, that the question it originally posed is the correct question: “Das sind wohl, Büchners Stimme fordert mich zu dieser Vermutung auf, alte and älteste Unheimlichkeiten. Daß ich heute mit solcher Hartnäckigkeit dabei verweile, liegt wohl in der Luft—in der Luft, die wir zu atmen haben.” (193) What is to be found historically in Büchner is relevant still to today.

Furthermore, Celan is aware of the displacement itself. “Ich habe vorgegriffen, hinausgegriffen—nicht weit genug, ich weiß—, ich kehre zu Büchners ‘Lenz’ zurück, zu dem—episodischen—Gespräch also, das ,über Tisch’ geführt wurde und bei dem Lenz ,in guter Stimmung war.’” (193) Once again, Celan returns to the fall. He has not picked up all of the pieces of the fall, all of the substance of the fall. He does not desire to leave any behind. It is of significance to him, and he will not continue with his asking if he does not have all of the substantial elements of the fall along with him. He has begun to make sense of the ambiguities, the idle talk, and the curiosity that was experienced in the fall, particularly, he tells us, as they relate to the direction of the question of totalitarian and art in the acute accent.

Celan picks up the passages of *Lenz* which were introduced at the very outset of the fall. He tells us that Lenz, in discussing art, forgot about himself, that, in fact, “the man who has art

before his eyes and mind...has forgotten himself.” Furthermore, the Lenz fragment reminds Celan of Lucile, whose “long live the king” cost her her life.

Suddenly all of the directions of “Der Meridian” come together at once into a primary focus that asks many major questions all at one time. First, there is the question of “Der Meridian” and its encounter with Büchner:

“Ich suche jetzt keinen Ausweg, ich frage nur, in derselben Richtung, und, so glaube ich, auch in der mit dem Lenz-Fragment gegebenen Richtung weiter.“ (idem) Again, Celan is moving with and from the position of the tropes that he has been given in the fall, in a specific direction, which we now understand to be the “direction of resolve” as well as the direction of the *Lenz* quotation as well: the acute accent of the present has joined with the grave accent of the historical to specify the uncanny realm in which interpretive art takes on qualities of totalitarianism.

Second, there is the question of art, itself, and more specifically, the question of poetry:

Kunst schafft Ich-Ferne. Kunst fordert hier in einer bestimmten Richtung eine bestimmte Distanz, einen bestimmten Weg...

Und Dichtung? Dichtung, die doch den Weg der Kunst zu gehen hat? Dann wäre hier ja wirklich der Weg zu Medusenhaupt und Automat gehen...Vielleicht—ich frage nur—, vielleicht geht die Dichtung, wie die Kunst, mit einem selbstvergessenen Ich zu jenem Unheimlichn und Fremden, und setzt sich—doch wo? Doch an welchem Ort? doch womit? Doch als was?—wieder frei?

Dann wäre die Kunst der von der Dichtung zurpükzulegende Weg—nicht weniger, nicht mehr. (idem)

We shall return to this crucial passage below. For now, let us observe that if Lucile’s

counterword is to be understood as poetry, and poetry is to be used to free us from

totalitarianism, then poetry, like art, must follow the path of totalitarianism if it is to be free.

Why this is the case is not clear, but that the issues of direction, self-forgetting, and now an

understanding of “A way”—in short, this logic—come from the fall, and that they arrive out of

the experience with totalitarianism that was so horrible that it caused the disruption of the

conversation, then perhaps, in order for the conversation to resume and to be truly free, it must follow the path of the disruption. "...in Büchner's work, I am looking for Lenz himself, as a person, I am looking for his shape: for the sake of the place of poetry, for the sake of liberation, for the sake of the step." "Der Meridian" is looking for the self who had forgotten itself in its discussion of art, the fallen self of art, that which is in need of liberation.

Celan's searching takes him in the next few sections away from Büchner's Lenz and to the historical Lenz. Now we see that the fall has created a pattern. It is a pattern that goes from the present to the past, from Celan's own questions back to those of Büchner, in order to return to itself once again. The search takes him this time to Moscow, where Lenz died. This is the last place of his physical existence. The search takes him back to the date of Lenz's walking in the mountain, January 20th, where Lenz first became estranged from himself. And it locates the moment of that estrangement in the passage: "'...nur war es ihm manchmal unangenehm, daß er nicht auf dem Kopf gehn konnte.'—Das ist er, Lenz. Das ist, glaube ich, er und sein schritt, er und sein ,Es lebe der König'." (195)

It is at this point that we understand the real crux of the issue for interpretive art, for modernity, and for the part of poetry in modernity. We must remember that what Celan is seeking and believes he found is the estranged Lenz. There is a relationship, then, between the Lenz who is estranged and who estranged himself, the Lenz who regretted not being able to walk on his head—Celan tells us that Lenz "set himself free" in this act of regret—and the one who, in talking about art, forgets himself. For it is not in the action of "walking on his head" that Lenz estranged himself and set himself free. Rather it was the desire to do so, or, perhaps more importantly, the bemoaning of the fact that he could not. Here the central issue is one of regret...the regret that one could not "walk on one's head."

The origin of this term is lost in obscurity, but it has been said that philosophizing is an act of “walking on one’s head.”¹⁷ If this is the case, then Lenz is regretting his inability to philosophize. Lenz, the great *Sturm und Drang* author, was a feeler, rather than a thinker, and yet he had encountered the other, he had encountered the thinker. In feeling, which is to say in his “talking about art,” Lenz forgets himself. But this kind of forgetting is not an estrangement of the kind that causes an encounter, which could be understood as a step against the tyrant. But it is a sort of estrangement, nevertheless, an uncanniness. As Celan says, “Wer Kunst vor Augen und im Sinn hat, der ist—ich bin hier bei der Lenz-Erzählung--, der ist selbstvergessen. Kunst schafft Ich-Ferne.” It is hard to miss the connections between science and art in this passage. The issues of transparency, of empiricism, of witnessing: these issues all have the possibility of making for self-forgetting.

Furthermore, Celan points out that Lenz’s forgetting himself reminds Celan of Lucile. “I think of Lucile when I read this.” What is the relationship between the Lenz who forgets—and thus estranges himself—and the Lenz who regrets—and thus estranges—himself?

In the first instance Lenz talks about art, and forgets himself. Even though there is a talking, it is not a self who is talking. It is something else. In fact, the talker who is talking is akin to Lucile in an uncanny manner: Lucile, who is the symbol of those who hear and see what is said about art but do not understand, and Lenz the artist who in discussing art forgets himself—that is, does not truly hear or see what is being said about art and does not therefore understand.

¹⁷ I read this somewhere in reference to either Hegel or Lessing. I am still searching for the source. Because this interpretation stands well contextually with the passages under consideration, I am going ahead with this reading. It should be noted from the outset that what I am arguing is important is not what was specifically regretted (“ihm unangenehm”), but that Lenz regrets himself rather than forgets himself. I make this distinction clear below.

The difference between Lucile and the Lenz who forgets himself is that Lucile speaks a word against her condition, whereas Lenz speaks as a result of his condition. Art, for Lenz, has become “idle talk,” a “curiosity,” and remains “ambiguous.” The speaker who has forgotten himself has fallen. Lucile is not fallen, but rather is “thrown” into a Being that is foreign and frightening, that comes face-to-face with the tyranny, and she speaks a word against it: “Long live the king.” An ironic word, to be sure.

In contrast, the Lenz who forgets himself, is participating in the tyranny, because he is not encountering another but, forgetting himself, he also forgets the other. “Here this would actually mean the road to Medusa’s head and the automaton!” The Lenz who forgets himself is underway to tyranny.

The Lenz who regrets himself, on the other hand, remains mindful of himself and estranges even that Lenz who speaks about art. The Lenz who speaks about art—or rather, the tyrant of art who speaks through Lenz in a form of possession, is countered in the regret that Lenz is not able to philosophize. For here, too, is the regret that Lenz forgets himself when he speaks of art, that he participates in something which is uncanny and mechanical. That he is not engaging with another. So his regret is an engagement, and an act of resistance.

Aber es gibt vielleicht, und in einer und derselben Richtung, zweierlei Fremde—dicht beieinander...Dichtung: das kann eine Atemwende bedeuten. Wer weiß, vielleicht legt die Dichtung den Weg—auch den Weg der Kunst—um einer solchen Atemwende willen zurück? Vielleicht gelingt es ihr, da das Fremde, also der Abgrund *und* das Medusenhaupt, der Abgrund *und* die Automaten, ja in einer Richtung zu liegen scheint,—vielleicht gelingt es ihr hier, zwischen Fremd un Fremd zu unterscheiden, vielleicht schrumpft gerade hier das Medusenhaupt, vielleicht versagen gerade hier die Automaten—für diesen einmaligen kurzen Augenblick? Vielleicht wird hier, mit dem Ich—mit dem *hier* und *solcherart* friegesetzten befremdeten Ich, --vielleicht wird hier noch ein Anderes frei? (196)

This passage, I believe, confirms our reading. The I which forgets itself is a mechanical I. But the I that estranges itself sets the mechanical I free. And in the process sets poetry, perhaps even the way of art, free as well. “Vielleicht ist das Gedicht von da her es selbst...und kann nun, auf

diese kunst-lose, kunst-freie Weise, seine anderen Wege, also auch die Wege der Kunst gehen—wieder und wieder gehen?“ (idem)

This passage also confirms our larger reading, our Heideggerian reading, which takes into account the resolution and trajectory of “Der Meridian.” In this passage Celan is accepting Heidegger’s belief that the fall is a positive event, that it is part of Dasein, so long as it reminds Dasein of its thrownness and reinvigorates Dasein with its own sense of Being-in-the-world. Celan is arguing even further. He is arguing that the fall occurs in order to set free the self from the tyrant. As Foti remarks, “Perhaps, through the step of another estrangement, the poem can at last become free of art without being artless.”¹⁸

Just prior to this section in which the *Atemwende* is described, “Der Meridian” regains the acute accent of the present, which is to say it once again is able to approach the subject of contemporary art. “Meine Damen und Herren,” Celan says, “es ist heute gang und gäbe, der Dichtung ihre ‘Dunkelheit’ vorzuwerfen.” (195) When, therefore, Celan underscores the fact that “*here and in this manner*” (the manner of the *Atemwende*) he is specifying, I believe, the *here* of “Der Meridian” itself, which has just undergone an *Atemwende* of its own. That is, like poetry, “Der Meridian” has gone “den Weg—auch den Weg der Kunst—um einer solchen Atemwende willen zurück?” (idem) It has turned from its own chosen direction, its own chosen intended path of investigation, which is the investigation of the tyrannical in aesthetics, the “oh, art” in the acute accent, and, through a “fall,” was forced into a detour that was not of its own choosing, “for the sake of an encounter.” This interpretation is supported by the section following the introduction of the *Atemwende* term, in which Celan asks, “Perhaps we can say that every poem is marked by its own 20th of January?”

¹⁸ Foti, op. cit. 104.

A number of scholars have pointed out that the 20th of January, 1942, held specific meaning for Celan because it was the date of the Wannsee Conference, in which the decision to initiate the Final Solution to the “Jewish problem” was made by Nazi leaders. When Celan asks, “Perhaps the newness of poems written today is that they try most plainly to be mindful of this kind of date?” he is talking specifically about post-war poetry’s (Celan’s, perhaps Bachmann’s and other’s) relationship to the tyrannical movement in modernity, which he then argues might be the origin of all writing: “But do we not all write from and toward some such date? What else could we claim as our origin?”

We have read quickly through a number of the most crucial passages of “Der Meridian.” Again, I have only glossed the surface of these issues, in the hopes of maintaining the focus on the trajectory of the speech. What this reading has concluded in the last few pages is that Celan is arguing that there is an uncanniness in interpretive arts, an uncanniness in modernity itself which contains moments of totalitarianism. When the self encounters such moments, it experiences a “fall,” which is a turning of the breath or of language, and it moves away from the tyrannical in order to restabilize its own intended trajectory. In the process it meets an other—perhaps, as in the case of Lenz, it is another self, or perhaps, as in the case of Celan and “Der Meridian,” it is a completely other person (Büchner) and work (*Lenz*), but in either case the other has its own trajectory and its own relationship to the tyrant. It is in this meeting that the original trajectory of the self is reinvigorated, and it is able to emerge from the fall back onto an authentic path of Dasein.

If this reading has been overly superficial it has been so for the sake of moving the discussion forward to a more significant analysis of poetics in “Der Meridian.” For it is Celan’s immediate personalization of the poem in the very next sentence, “Aber das Gedicht spricht ja!”

which encapsulates the questions of Being, of art, and of science and modernity in a poignant moment of explication. The question of Being, like the question of modern science, is a question of authority. Who speaks, on whose behalf, and toward what end? It is an ultimate question of Dasein, and has remained a central question for both poets and thinkers since the end of the Second World War. Let us review our notes on existential direction in “Der Meridian” in order to see if we can garner a more direct access to the issue of authority as it is presented by existentialist theory and “Der Meridian”.

CHAPTER 4 REDEMPTION

There is an original trajectory. Then there is a force that interrupts that trajectory. Then there is a detour. The poem, and art, and “Der Meridian” are all following Newtonian Laws of Inertia in which once a body is set in motion it will continue in that same direction until a greater or equal force causes its momentum to shift. In the theory of relativity that greater force is ultimately attributed to gravity or some force whose original cause is gravity. But what is gravity, and is it connected in some manner to the “grave” accent of the historical from which Celan professed, in the *Atemwende* of “Der Meridian” to suffer a bad conscience?

In fact, the Heideggerian notion of the action of Dasein and its “fall” into non-resolute being depends upon gravity. It is against the Aristotelian “falling” of objects into the present “now” of Being from which Dasein, so says Heidegger, is intent on breaking free. Since Dasein is given priority in Phenomenology because of its ability to attain self-reflective knowledge, and self-reflective knowledge is also the characteristic of the interpretive arts as activities which humans do in order to achieve self-reflective knowledge, then the interpretive arts have the same inherent authority as Dasein and an ontico-ontological priority over other non-Dasein beings.

Now in *Being and Time* Heidegger explicates that the projective imperative of Dasein legitimates the force of its interpretive powers, and that the force of Dasein’s interpretive powers is by nature a violent force which acts against the forces that would cause Dasein to fall:

Our Being alongside the things with which we concern ourselves most closely in the ‘world’—a Being which is falling—guides the everyday way in which Dasein is interpreted, and covers up ontically Dasein’s authentic Being, so that the ontology which is directed towards this entity is denied an appropriate basis...The laying-bare of Dasein’s primordial Being must rather be *wrested* from Dasein by following the *opposite course* from that taken by the falling ontico-ontological tendency of interpretation.¹

¹ Heidegger, op. cit. 359.

This is not the only time that Heidegger has mentioned a need for a violence on the part of Dasein to free itself. From the very start his privileging of Dasein at the expense of other beings is inherently a violent action, and echoes the original designs of Baconian philosophy to found a system which would give humanity dominion over nature. More blatant, however, is how Heidegger continues in the same paragraph:

Dasein's *kind of Being* thus *demand*s that any ontological Interpretation which sets itself the goal of exhibiting the phenomena in their primordiality, *should capture the Being of this entity, in spite of this entity's own tendency to cover things up*. Existential analysis, therefore, constantly has the character of *doing violence*.²

Here, "existential analysis" becomes any manner of Interpretation which is authentically projected.

The problem which Phenomenology faces and which Celan picks up is that Heidegger postulates that Dasein is characterized by a struggle between "falling" and "progress." It would be a mistake, however, to read that Heidegger is agreeing with a strictly positivistic and progressive science. Rather, according to Heidegger, it is precisely in the struggle between fallen-ness and Dasein that a "being of care" emerges, which is a characteristic of Dasein that not only has an ethical dimension, but, more importantly for the grounding of science, accounts for the potentiality of Being.

§'s 64-66 of *Being and Time* gives a more complete description of the Being of Care and how this Being is characterized in existential terms. There are a number of significant intersections between §s 64-66 of *Sein und Zeit* and "Der Meridian," and we will not be able to explore them all in detail. These paragraphs are among the most important for understanding "Der Meridian"'s exchange with and debt to *Being and Time*, particularly as a fuller vision of that exchange emerges from a reading of both halves of the speech. What is important for this

² Idem.

paper is that in these paragraphs Heidegger goes beyond the original question of Kant, which is “how does science work” to ask the question “what is the subject who does science,” which is another way of asking “what is the scientific subject.” In so doing Heidegger retraces Kant’s differences with the Cartesian subject who “thinks” itself into existence, and Heidegger, echoing Kant, specifies that it is not merely that the subject “thinks,” but that it “thinks something.”

The “something”—which is a representation—in a subject that is defined as “I think something” lends Kant a substantiality that is absent in Descartes. “For Kant, however, these representations are the ‘empirical’, which is ‘accompanied by the “I”—the appearances to which the “I” clings.” (367) Heidegger makes his direction clear in the next few sentences:

“(E)ven the ‘I think something’ is not definite enough ontologically as a starting-point, because the ‘something’ remains indefinite. If by this “something” we understand an entity *within-the-world*, then it tacitly implies that the *world* has been presupposed; and this very phenomenon of the world co-determines the state of Being of the “I”.³

If the Kantian “I” is determined by a relationship to the phenomenal world, then “I think something” cannot serve as a ground for science because it has no basis for authority other than one of relation. The “I” of “I think something” must necessarily be defined by the “something,” which could be based upon a principle of empirical transcendence as in the case of Kant or a principle of the absolute I—itself an evolution of the Kantian principle—as was the case with Fichte, the point is that the “something” is philosophically so ambiguous that modern science after Newton was able to dispense with it altogether. Furthermore, and more important for Heidegger, the indefiniteness of the “something” causes the relationship on which science is in this manner to be grounded to be as indefinite as the “something.” “(A)s a consequence the “I”

³ Ibid, 368.

was again forced back to an *isolated* subject, accompanying representations in a way which is ontologically quite indefinite.”⁴

For Heidegger, it was imperative either to conceptualize the “something” in definite terms or to define the “I” without any recourse for a relationally-based ontology (which would in fact be no ontology at all, according to Heidegger). Without this grounding it would be impossible to legitimate science philosophically. Heidegger actually makes an attempt at both sides of the coin.

He begins by trying to define the “I” in definite terms. Here as well, he argues, Kant has not gone far enough, for Kant’s definition of the “I” is a “transcendental subject of thoughts” or a *res cogitans* is the very “form” of representation, which is to say, not something that is represented but rather that “which makes every representing and everything represented be what it is” (367) The problem for science if this line of reasoning stood as its ground is one of epistemology: there would be no way of knowing if that which is understood through empirical science is the true form of the world or merely the form in which it presents itself to the scientist because this is the manner in which the scientist himself is framed. It could not be decided if the world as understood were only a mirror of that which understands it. For Heidegger, the mere fact of “I” was enough of a ground upon which to proceed.

“*In saying “I”, Dasein expresses itself as Being-in-the-world.*”⁵ This is as much as to say that “in saying “I”, Dasein surely has in view the entity which, in every case, it is itself.”⁶ Dasein wants to understand itself as that which expresses itself in everything it does, not as a transcendent source which gives definition to that which it does. The “I” of Dasein is therefore

⁴ Idem.

⁵ Idem.

⁶ Idem.

the very things which Dasein chooses to do in the course of its existence. In this case, which is the fundamental onto-ontological priority of Dasein, science as something which Dasein does and as a being of Dasein in its own right is legitimated in the very fact of its existence.

Such a legitimation, however, does not properly account for the projection of Dasein, for that characteristic of itself which gives it determined direction throughout the course of its existence. Because, however projection is a defining characteristic of Dasein which it has in itself, projection is inherently caught up with Dasein in its essential modality of being.

The conflict which exists in the Kantian definition of “I” as “I think something” which is, in fact, Kant’s attempt at legitimating science, is, in fact, inherent in the definition “I think something” itself, and it by explicating this inherent conflict that Heidegger in turn reveals the inherent significance of the characteristic “projection.” In so doing he re-categorizes the terms under which a relational explication of “I” could operate, and legitimates science not only as a being of Dasein but also as a being with a projection whose inherent characteristic is that of “redemption.”

“The everyday interpretation of the Self...has a tendency to understand itself in terms of the ‘world’ with which it is concerned....it *fails to see* itself in relation to the kind of Being of that entity which it is itself.”⁷ Heidegger cuts underneath the Kantian subject by revealing that such a subject is not concerned with itself, but rather with the world, and defines itself according to the world.

“What is the motive for this ‘fugitive’ way of saying “I”? It is motivated by Dasein’s falling; for as falling, it *flees* in the face of itself into the “they.” When the “I” talks in the

⁷ Idem.

‘natural’ manner, this is performed by the they-self.”⁸ Why this is so is due to the temporal character of Dasein. “Temporality temporalizes, and indeed it temporalizes possible ways of itself. These make possible the multiplicity of Dasein’s modes of Being, and especially the basic possibility of authentic or inauthentic existence.”⁹ It is therefore toward Heidegger’s exegesis of time that we must turn in order to understand more completely the relationship between the authentic, existential “I-self” and the inauthentic, fallen “they-self,” the understanding of which is the determinative legitimacy of science according to the existentialism expressed in *Being and Time*.

The “they-self,” which is the constitutive subject of fallen Dasein, is predicated upon a temporality which understands time as a sequence of “now” events which run ad infinitum into the future, Heidegger argues. Such a sequence of “nows,” however, can not take into consideration the inevitability of death, and as such the conception of time as a sequence of “nows” which is constitutive of fallen Dasein is a “fleeing *in the face of* death—that is, a looking-away *from* the end of Being-in-the-world...The inauthentic temporality of everyday Dasein as it falls, must, as such a looking-away from finitude, fail to recognize authentic futurity and therewith temporality in general.”¹⁰ Because “death is always mine,” this turning away from death constitutes a turning-away-from-me, in which “they” take over as the definitive subject of “I.” In this way the “I” understands that it always has “more time,” but the time which “I” has in such a situation is never its own, but always “their” time, which is to say, public time. “The only time one knows is the public time which has been leveled off and which belongs to everyone—

⁸ Idem.

⁹ Ibid, 377.

¹⁰ Ibid, 477.

and that means, to nobody.”¹¹ In the sequence of “nows,” therefore, the “self” is lost in a never yet arrived future and time belongs to “them,” which is to nobody.

An existential, ontological, or phenomenal understanding of time takes death as the defining phenomenal vision for constituting “Being-in-the-world.” Thus, Dasein is always constitutively a future-oriented phenomenon. As a future-oriented phenomenon, Dasein expresses “resoluteness” in its Being, which is understood as an “anticipatory resoluteness” toward death in the present. “Anticipatory resoluteness, when taken formally and existentially...is *Being towards* one’s ownmost, distinctive potentiality-for-Being.”¹² As such, “Dasein *can indeed*, come towards itself in its ownmost possibility, and that it can put up with this possibility as a possibility in thus letting itself come towards itself. This letting-itself-*come-towards*-itself in that distinctive possibility which it puts up with, is the primordial phenomenon of the *future as coming towards*.”¹³

It is this “redemption” of the self to the self, in which the fallen “they-self” is returned to its original anticipatory resolution (which expresses itself in terms of direction) that we have witnessed occurring as the logical paradigm of the first half of “Der Meridian.” However, the redemptive posturings of *Being and Time* are much more significant than to be merely propositions for a program of the self-fulfillment of the individual Dasein. Rather, by granting science an equal status in the project of Dasein science itself undergoes a redemptive process

What is understood in Heidegger’s philosophy of being is not that Dasein is able to consistently maintain the projection of its anticipatory resolution, which is to say, a state of non-fallenness, but rather that it “takes over” the substantial phenomena of fallenness as substantive

¹¹ Idem.

¹² Ibid, 372.

¹³ Idem.

elements of its thrownness, which is its own “I-*am*-as-having-been,” and reinvests itself of those elements so as to become, once again, “authentically futural.” Moreover, it must take also invest itself in its own thrownness to such a degree that it “takes over” that thrownness as well:

“(T)aking over thrownness signifies *being* Dasein authentically *as it already was*”.¹⁴ “As authentically futural, Dasein *is* authentically as “*having always already been*... Only in so far as it is futural can Dasein *be* authentically as having always been,” and return to anticipatory resoluteness which is constitutive of authentic “Being-in-the-world.”¹⁵

It is not only that Dasein must “take over” the substantial elements of its existential falls, as we have seen demonstrated in “Der Meridian,” but it must also “take over” its own thrownness, in a manner which returns Dasein to a primitive condition which, in fact, it “already always” has been. It is this light in which I read Derrida’s statement “And it (the poem) speaks to what provokes it, *to* the date which provokes it, thus convoked from the future of the *same* date, in other words from its recurrence at *another* date,” as explicitly existentialist in meaning. It is only through a “taking over” of its own thrownness that Dasein can fulfill the imperative of controlling its own directional destiny. It is a return to such a condition, Heidegger argues, that is the essential project of modern science, and which establishes philosophically its legitimacy and authority.

Because, however, in a sense Heidegger’s analysis of the “I” of scientific investigation indicates explicitly the fallen-ness of both the Cartesian “I think” and the Kantian “I think

¹⁴ Ibid, 373. The German is here more illuminating. The original reads: “Übernahme der Geworfenheit aber bedeutet, das Dasein in dem, *wie es je schon war*, eigentlich *sein*.” I shall make a few translation change to that of the original translators and by the addition of “always already” (in this case, “*wie es je schon war*” becomes “as it always already always”, which retains the meaning of the “je” and does not leave the temporal placement of the following expression exclusively in the past, but makes it the expressions of an always existing condition of Being.

¹⁵ Idem.

something,”¹⁶ the existential redemption of science is also a redemption of itself to itself. This makes sense if we remember that Heidegger understands science as a being of Dasein. For existential being, time is subjective in that it is always determined by a future death, which is always “mine,” and it is bound up with the subject because it defines the present orientation of the subject as an “I”. “In Kant...while time is indeed ‘subjective’, it stands ‘beside’ the ‘I think’ and is not bound up with it.” (480) To be “bound up” with time is to allow time a deterministic influence on the substantial elements of “anticipatory resoluteness.” In so doing, the present Dasein consists of the substantial data of the past, in which it was “thrown” and has “fallen,” and the future orientation which is marked by death and which defines Dasein as “Being-in-the-world.” The “something” of “I think something” is therefore determined by the subjectively valued phenomena that constitute the “thrownness” of being in such a manner as to make them part of the “anticipatory resoluteness” of Dasein. The subject which does science is a subject which is oriented toward its own death in such a manner as to be resolute in its anticipation of death.

As a scientific discourse, therefore, *Being and Time* understands the legitimacy which it provides science to be equally an act of redemption. That is to say, science, which is a Dasein being, and the modernist project in general, have been redeemed from their fallenness and have “taken over” their thrownness by becoming temporalized in a present which anticipates the end of science and modernity through *Being and Time*’s reasoned transparency. However, this act of redemption is only valid so long as science and modernity continue in a direction which is most heavily informed by that anticipation. If science and modernity “turn away” from themselves,

¹⁶ by demonstrating that both postulates temporalize the “I” in such a manner as to make it present-at-hand in a way that can never truly exist in the present, but must always find its expression in the future—a future which never arrives and which belongs, in essence, to “nobody”.

they will fall into existential characteristics of in-authenticity. The consequences for humanity in the event of such a fall are not readily approached in *Being and Time*, although post-Holocaust appraisals or modernity speak exponential volumes to one face of the fallen modern.

Just as much, then, as the redemptive gesture in *Being and Time* is a redemption of all forms of Dasein—the human, scientific, and modern—in their ontico-ontological priority the redeemed Dasein incorporates all other manners of Being into its own redemption as well. This, to return to our own beginning in a manner that is appropriate to both Heidegger and Celan, is an explicitly Baconian principle. For the “Great Instauration” of Bacon assumed not only a redemption for fallen man, but a redemption of all of creation since it was a process whereby the “Temple of Nature” would be rebuilt: “If the temple is also the model of the cosmos then this is the place where the mediator would come to figuratively unite with the cosmos, and foreshadow the unity with the cosmos that would occur in the incarnation.”¹⁷ There is in fact an uncanny resemblance between Bacon and Heidegger’s project. Compare the following passages. The first we have seen already, from Heidegger:

Laying the foundations...is rather a productive logic—in the sense that it leaps ahead, as it were into some area of Being, discloses it for the first time in the constitution of its Being, and, after thus arriving at the structures within it, makes these available to the positive sciences as transparent assignments.

The aim of *Being and Time* is to “disclose” the “constitution” of Being in such a way as to “arrive” (destination of direction) at its characteristic “structures” in such a way as to “make these available” to science as assignments which are clearly (“transparent”) theirs to take up for consideration. Bacon has a similar passage concerning his Great Instauration:

¹⁷ Matthews, op. cit. 107.

For I am building in the human understanding a true model of the world, such as it is in fact, not such as man's own reason would have it to be; a thing which cannot be done without a very diligent dissection and anatomy of the world.¹⁸

In both Heidegger and Bacon there is the clarity of truth, the dismissal of skepticism, and the establishment of a project for science. If the circle has not been completed, it has certainly been renewed.

In this light, we can say that Heideggerian phenomenology is not a completion of science, in that there is return to the conditions of life which are said to have existed in the Garden of Eden when humanity, in the form of Adam and Eve, was free to eat of the Fruit of the Tree of Life. Rather, what phenomenology has accomplished is a further flowering of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, in which evil is a definitive self-forgetting under the auspices of fallen-ness which does not take stock in the phenomena of that fallen-ness in such a manner as to reconstitute the phenomena as part of its thrownness. It is by taking up phenomenology's proclamation or a reorientation of science to the explicit facts of fallen-ness that science can re-describe itself in a non-fallenness, which would at least be a step. Perhaps it already has.¹⁹

It is as such a step of redemption that "Der Meridian" understands and utilizes existentialist philosophy. What "Der Meridian" is demonstrating in its recourse to the *Atemwende* is that Dasein when properly oriented toward its own falling, understands Dasein "in its own essential Being-guilty. This understanding means that in existing one takes over Being-guilty; it means *being* the thrown basis of nullity." In so doing, fallen-ness becomes thrownness,

¹⁸ Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum*, quoted in Steven Matthews, *Apocalypse and Experiment: The Theological Assumptions and Religious Motivations for Francis Bacon's Instauration*. Dissertation for PhD, University of Florida, 2004, pg. 235.

¹⁹ Must the negative trappings of science be understood as negative? The atom bomb, destructive machinery, global warming—are these not markings of a science constantly reminding and being reminded of its death?

which is the constitutive condition of Dasein to begin with (as “thrownness into the world”), and thus “taking over thrownness signifies *being* Dasein authentically *as it always already was*.”²⁰ As such, “coming back to itself futur-ally,” “Der Meridian” in its “resoluteness brings itself into the Situation by making present.”²¹

But being the “thrown basis of nullity” is an existential variation on the possibility of “taking over” one’s own fallenness. In actuality, it is presented in *Being and Time* as a prior state of being, a state existing before fallenness, and yet always existing alongside of fallenness. The redemptive gesture of *Being and Time* once again reflects Rousseau’s primordial transparency by calling back humanity, the sciences, and modernity to an awareness of their own state of being as it “already always” exists. The “post-modernist” phrase “already always” has become a cliché but its status as such indicates the strength of the call initiated by Heidegger: modernity must be itself what it “already always” is, or else exist in a no-time where “nothing” is owned by a non-existent “they,” with “no-one” to challenge it. These negative markers are not merely semantics, they are characterizing conditions of a Dasein without resolute anticipation.

All the same, by bringing the issues of redemption which Martin Heidegger raised in *Being and Time* forward into post-Holocaust Europe, Paul Celan reinvests them with a new eye toward transparency, and with a mind toward a new type of rationality. By shifting the attention from issues of self-completion, or away from issues of the completion of the modern project itself, toward an attention for “all of our dates” from which poetry writes itself, the second half of “Der Meridian” must be read as a comment on Martin Heidegger’s redemptive gesture toward modernity. If the first half employed specifically Heideggerian categories in which to establish

²⁰ Ibid, 373.

²¹ Ibid, 374.

its framework of discourse, then the challenge for understanding the second half of “Der Meridian” is the question of how to understand Celan’s comments as critical or reinforcing of those categories. I have outlined how “Der Meridian” establishes a trajectory of discourse that is explicitly existentialist in structure. It remains to be seen whether or not Heidegger’s existentialism will withstand the potential damages that as complex and clever of a poet as Celan is can bring to it, particularly from the spectacular view of “survival”.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Nathaniel Vaughn Finley came to the University of Florida in 1998 after serving four years in the US Navy. In 2000 he completed his Bachelor of Arts in history and in 2004 completed a Master of Arts, also in history with a focus on Germany. He graduated in 2009 with a second MA in German studies.