

A Singular Question: *Mitsein*, συνουσία, and ὕψος *The Unsaid in Postmodernity's Transcending: Devaluing God*

LAURENCE PAUL HEMMING
Heythrop College, University of London

In festo Beatæ Mariæ Virginis a Rosario, 2004

In beginning, I owe a great many debts of thanks. First and foremost to Lieven Boeve, whose invitation and encouragement first brought me to Leuven to undertake the research that eventually became *Postmodernity's Transcending: Devaluing God*, and to the Faculty of Theology, for the welcome they gave me over nearly two years between April 2002 and December 2003. Once again, and with great intellectual and spiritual generosity I was welcomed into this scholarly community for the sake of the conference of which this was the opening paper.¹

The whole of *Postmodernity's Transcending* seeks to enquire into a question first asked by Heidegger himself: "how does it come about, what in space and time *allow* for mathematicising?"² If, therefore, the book concerns itself with

¹ The conference itself considered the final draft of the book before it was revised for publication. At that time it had the title *Devaluing God: Postmodernity's Transcending*. Although I had received (favourable) reports from the two readers, Professor Kevin Hart of Notre Dame University and Dr. Stuart Elden of Durham University, their comments and suggestions had not been incorporated into the text. The suggestion for reversing the title came from Stuart Elden. Many other debts of thanks are owed, both for the time of the conference and subsequently. To Dr. Yves de Maeseneer of Leuven, for organising the conference itself and for his subsequent editing of the papers; and to those others who offered critical responses: Kevin Hart, Stuart Elden, Professor Martin Stone of the Institute of Philosophy at Leuven; Professor Peter Jonkers of the Catholic University of Utrecht, and to drs. Joeri Schrijvers at Leuven, who prepared the summary of the text and was a lively correspondent at various points. One other deserves special mention for her help, encouragement, and suggestions, my colleague in the Society of St. Catherine of Siena (who sponsor the series in which the final published text was published), Dr. Susan Parsons. The pagination of this paper and the responses to it is now based on the text of the book in its published form.

² Cf. *Postmodernity's Transcending*, p. 235. Citing Heidegger, M., *Beiträge zur Philosophie in Gesamtausgabe* vol. 65, Frankfurt, Klostermann, 1989, p. 387. 'Wie kommt es zu dem, was in Raum und Zeit die Mathematisierung zuläßt?'

questions of order, sequence, succession, hierarchy, unity and unindividuated identity, it does this not in order to gain proficiency in the technical-calculative skills of Western metaphysics (where reason and reckoning are exposed in their original sense of *rationes*, of kinds of countings-up), but to see on what basis the mathematical and the spatial stands.³ The book therefore takes as its guiding thread Heidegger's suggestion that *Sein und Zeit* itself contains an attempt to bring this question to light and provides an 'attempt to grasp time and space "in their pre-mathematical form"'.⁴ The sublime, with which *Postmodernity's Transcending* is intimately concerned, therefore is understood *either* as a form of calculation or as a phenomenal indication of something more originary and basic.

In the course of the work being accepted by the publishers,⁵ the two readers (both participants in this discussion) raised what appeared to be separate questions about the work, but which in fact were (for me at least) the same question. The question that they raise is at one and the same time the ground out of which the work was written, and the basis for the direction in which I would like to take future research. It seems appropriate, therefore, to address that question at once as a way of introducing the work, as also one which seems commonly to arise in the work's being received.

This, I would hope, raises from the very outset the question of what kind of enquiry *Postmodernity's Transcending* is, though by reference to a problem that the book itself does not fully resolve. *If* we are to accept Heidegger's contention that with Aristotle and Plato come the inception of Western metaphysics, immediately something very peculiar arises in our attempt to delineate this history. To delineate means literally, here, to assemble it into the straight line that we have taught ourselves histories always are. We read Plato through the lens of Aristotle. This is a point the book itself makes, that Aristotle sets up a relentless critique of Plato, exemplified by his critique of the understanding of the 'forms' and of eidetic mathematics, especially in the last books of his *Metaphysics*. Direct access to Plato would, at least to some extent, appear to have been mediated by Aristotle's reading of him, both shortly after Plato and even more so, nowadays. The way to Plato is historically – for good or ill – through Aristotle, a point Heidegger stressed in the opening to his lectures on Plato's *Sophist*.⁶

However, and at the same time and because of the quirks of history (and especially the saturation of Christian Mediaeval thought with a kind of Christian Neo-Platonism) we read Aristotle through entirely *neoplatonic* eyes. This means

³ We think of the spatial as the void, the 'open'. *Spatium*, from which 'space' is derived, both as a word and in its essence, is, however, a span or allotted breadth, i.e. a *reach*. Contained in the sense of the open void is the metaphysical *reach* that lays it open, and which therefore regulates and orders its openness—this entirely metaphysical determination lies at the basis both of Descartes' *res extensa* and the 'space' derived from Newton's physics.

⁴ Cf. *Postmodernity's Transcending*, p. 235. Citing Heidegger, M., *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, GA65, 1989, p. 387, referring to *Sein und Zeit*. Heidegger speaks of the attempt to understand time and space in 'ihrer vor-mathematischen Gestalt'. Cf. his own citations of Heidegger, M., *Sein und Zeit*, GA2, 1977 (1927), §24, *Die Räumlichkeit des Daseins und der Raum* (pp. 147–151) and the fifth chapter, §§72–77, *Die Zeitlichkeit und Geschichtlichkeit* (pp. 492–533).

⁵ SCM Press, London and Notre Dame University Press, Notre Dame.

⁶ Heidegger, M., *Platon: Sophistes* in *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 19, Frankfurt, Klostermann, 1992, §§1–2.

that the Plato whom we learned at Aristotle's hand is at one and the same time presented as the interpretative key *and* the supposed forerunner, preparatory to our reading of Aristotle. If Aristotle obscures the way to Plato, an aristotelianised Plato is the lens through whom we encounter Aristotle: not only one, but *both* thinkers disappear into the same obscurity and oblivion, a darkness effected by the history of the practice of interpretation itself.

If therefore, on the one hand we are no longer able to understand Plato's insight into number as the before and after to being (because for Aristotle number can only be added to, and so *consequent* on, being, even if it has an ontological origination), at the same time, we are entirely confused about Aristotle's understanding of causation and place because we are always looking in Aristotle for a ('Platonic', numerical) 'before' to take precedence that is never there—never able to fulfil this role. The 'before', the 'already', and the 'after', are always *subsequent* discoveries, even when we discover in them what we thought ourselves already to know. And yet we persist in reversing the order of Aristotle's investigations to accord the before and the already the position assigned to it by later thinkers, themselves often claiming to be faithful to Plato. How to proceed?

Do we undermine Aristotle and Plato by bypassing them, say to the Presocratics? Or do we attempt a historiographical archaeology, of the kind the nineteenth and twentieth century inflicted on the texts of Sacred Scripture, in order to recover an historical Plato and an historical Aristotle whom we can *really* trust? (And thus, having rendered them as far remote from truth as possible and therefore *really* unintelligible, they have been declared to be precisely impossible to read: and now you know why both Catholicism and Protestantism is nowadays so often reduced to nothing more than a kind of petit-bourgeois or suburban ethics—having abandoned the one corrective to our basest instincts that we possessed, what other truth could we Christians possibly know except one that springs from our selves and our most immediate neighbours?) How would we know that we had succeeded in this hermeneutical task? By what measure could we claim to have succeeded?

The two questions raised by Kevin Hart and Stuart Elden are these: in the first instance, why could more not be said concerning Heidegger's understanding of *Mitsein*; and second, why was I able to make the 'mistake' of referring to Jacques Derrida as a negative theologian, and so why in the discussion of the sublime did I avoid almost any discussion of the French postmodern debate on sublimity, above all as exemplified in Derrida, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy (to whose names might be added those of Lyotard and Courtine)?

Before I can show, however, that these two are essentially the *same* question, I need to introduce a clarification: indeed it is the very point that the book sets out to clarify. Repeatedly I asked in the book, what *kind* of theology is at issue when we seek to speak 'theologically': is it the theology of Aristotle, of Aquinas, of Kant, or whose? What does the term 'theology' actually mean? Aristotle is deliberately intruded into this list, since it is possible (because both Aristotle and Plato employ the term $\vartheta\epsilon\omicron\lambda\omicron\gamma\iota\alpha$) to discuss theology *outside* the context of Christian belief. Kevin Hart has argued that theology is always a matter arising out of faith. In this he is in good company with Martin Heidegger, who as early as 1924 asserted that '*der*

Philosoph glaubt nicht' (in the context of arguing that, by contrast, the theologian did and must);⁷ however, Hart and Heidegger do not make this remark for the same reason. Heidegger rules out the construal of the question of being insofar as it is being as first philosophy (πρώτη φιλοσοφία), which is at the same time theology (θεολογία),⁸ preferring the entirely Lutheran formula 'Erstens handelt die Theologie vom menschlichen Dasein als Sein vor Gott'.⁹ Philosophy, as I have argued elsewhere, is *methodologically* an atheism for Heidegger.¹⁰

Postmodernity's Transcending actually goes to some lengths to show that the presence of the term θεολογία in the Greek literature (especially Aristotle and Plato) indicates that historically there has been a theology without reference to Christian (or any) faith—indeed Aquinas distinguishes between these two types of theology in the very first question of the *prima pars* of the *Summa theologiae*,¹¹ and because of this confusion much contemporary (philosophical) theology is unclear whether it means by the term either the theology that pertains to faith or that which pertains to philosophy. In this sense almost all contemporary theology *and contemporary philosophy* has not yet reached the decision that Heidegger enforces from the very outset of his work, of the separation of faith and philosophy (and by that means—and this is the actual point of the enforced separation, showing how they actually relate, one to the other), nor understood what is at issue in that enforcement. *Postmodernity's Transcending* is an attempt to demonstrate the degree to which contemporary philosophy and contemporary theology, for all their denunciations of metaphysics, for all their claims to have overcome ontotheology, or even simply to have ignored it, remain yet *firmly and resolutely* ontotheological. A central concern of *Postmodernity's Transcending* is to illustrate the extent to which contemporary theology is bound to philosophy *in the wrong way*. In this it is not theology at all, or if it is, it is a genuinely *negative* theology in the sense that it seeks to *undo* theology's embrace of metaphysics for the sake of the *possibility* of a future theology that is not metaphysical.

Which brings us to the question posed to me by Kevin Hart. I want to reply to Hart, can Derrida not be called a negative theologian, even though I would never call Derrida a *Christian* negative theologian (which would indeed be thoroughly inappropriate)? Derrida says, not that he *is not* a negative theologian, but *that one may not say he (Derrida) is a negative theologian*. This is precisely the point of Derrida's essay *Comment ne pas parler: Dénégations*,¹² which I discuss extensively in Chapter Four of the book. Derrida says that one may not say 'Derrida is a negative

⁷ Heidegger, M, *Der Begriff der Zeit (Vortrag 1924)* in *Der Begriff der Zeit, Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 24, Frankfurt, Klostermann, 2004 (1989), p. 107. 'The philosopher does not believe' (author's italics).

⁸ Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*: 1026 a 20 f.; 1064 a 41.

⁹ Heidegger, M, *Der Begriff der Zeit (Vortrag 1924)*, p. 107. 'Theology *only* concerns itself with human existing as being before God' (author's italics).

¹⁰ Cf. Hemming, L. P., *Heidegger's Atheism: The Refusal of a Theological Voice*, Notre Dame, Notre Dame University Press, 2002.

¹¹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I Q. 1, A. 1: Obj. 2; ad 2. 'Unde theologia quae ad sacram doctrinam pertinet, differt secundum genus ab illa theologia quae pars philosophiae ponitur.' ('Therefore the theology which pertains to holy teaching differs according to genus from that theology which is part of philosophy.')

¹² Derrida, J., *Comment ne pas parler: Dénégations*, a paper first given in English in Jerusalem in June 1986 under the title *How to Avoid Speaking*. Subsequently published in French in *Psyché: inventions de l'autre*, Paris, Éditions Galilée, 1987, pp. 535–595; p. 585. Translated into English from the French

theologian' even though one might *see* that he is concerned with the place and absence of God (this is the 'dénégation' at issue). And this is the clarification with which the whole book is concerned. The question here is about the priority of sight over speaking: that one can 'see' or 'know' certain things which one cannot then bring to speech. *Postmodernity's Transcending*, however, argues that even seeing (that is productive looking, what Heidegger once called *ersehen*, not mere onlooking)¹³ is in consequence of speaking; that *λόγος*, speech, is prior even to sight, since it is not *that* one sees, but *how* one sees: seeing, sensing, is always a 'how'.

This means asking how *this one* sees and so is always a question concerning *who sees*. This question brings to the fore how the one who sees 'sees', that is to say, in discovering that it is I myself who see, and that my seeing is different from yours, indicates that seeing has a place, a *locatedness* which *at the same time discloses me to myself as myself and not you or anyone else*. This locatedness is such that *what* the one seeing *sees* comes forth into the light with respect to its emerging from concealment *in* its visibility.

This bringing to the fore of one's own seeing is always the bringing to the fore that it is *mine*—what Heidegger calls in *Sein und Zeit* 'Jemeinigkeit'. In this bringing of the self to the fore *in* knowing what the self knows is the self-indication of the temporalising of the being of being human. But this temporalising *in* its coming to the fore is at the same time its being-named and being-said. Speaking is the naming and saying, the being-named and being-said of the temporalising of being human. *This* is what really unfolds time in its 'timing': 'speaking' taken in the widest possible sense, and so really 'thinking', assembles and brings forth the *seen* and so *thought* with respect to the unseen and unthought: this saying as a *located* saying is disclosed by its 'from whence'. Speaking is what lets seeing see (and hearing hear; and the other senses sense—speaking is the very *possibility* of ensoulment); at the same time I do not 'speak' the worlding of world, but in world's unfolding, I find myself speaking, and the inherent intelligibility of world, its possibility for lying-open is at the same time its possibility for being-spoken *of*.

We may indeed deny Derrida the right to silence us from calling him a negative theologian, precisely because Derrida's negative theology is his subjectival response to Heidegger's methodological atheism. Derrida, perhaps precisely as an unbeliever, does not understand what it means for philosophy *not* to believe, for philosophy to be and remain atheistic. He really cannot speak of philosophy attaining to its originary atheism, because he cannot avoid speaking of God, even negatively.

To attempt to attain to its ground without God (this is what is meant here) is what philosophy must recover, and for me as a believing, Catholic, Christian, here is why: philosophy must attain to its originary unbelieving ground in order that

by Frieden, K, as *How to Avoid Speaking: Denials* in Coward, H. and Foshay, T., *Derrida and Negative Theology*, New York, State University of New York Press, 1992.

¹³ Cf. Heidegger, M., *Grundfragen der Philosophie: Ausgewählte »Probleme« der »Logik«* in *Gesamtausgabe*, Frankfurt, Klostermann, 1992 (1984), pp. 83–87 'Wir nennen daher dieses Sehen, das sich das zu Sichtende selbst erst in die Sichtbarkeit erbringt und ersieht, das *Er-sehen*' (author's italics). ('Therefore we call this seeing, which first brings forth into visibility that which is to be seen, and produces it before itself, "productive seeing".')

God might undisclose, and so reveal, himself. There is no causal inference here, no suggestion that in my *having* attained to philosophy's originary ground, God *will then* reveal himself. Rather, it is that in my once having attained to philosophy's originary ground, *were* God to reveal himself, the *possibility lies open* that I be properly be disposed to know and believe in whom God is, and be saved. This revelation can never be prepared for, never anticipated. It is mine and addressed to me in every case. 'Der Philosoph glaubt nicht' does not mean that the philosopher cannot be saved, it means that the philosopher *to be a philosopher – to think* – does not learn to think and think what he knows from out of divine revelation: Christian or any other. And this is why I chose upliftment as the ground of the methodological enquiry of *Postmodernity's Transcending*: not because ὕψος, upliftment, is a rational or even noetic path to God, but because as a methodological theme it exposes the way in which in its history Christian theology has (and yet still is) constantly and inadequately tipped and tips over into philosophy and thereby in tipping-over, deprives philosophy of its ground: substituting the God of revelation for the ground proper to being itself. Philosophy cannot, and never will, recover its originary ground in a revealed divinity.

Is it the tipping-over that is to be brought to light, or is it not rather that the one for whom the tipping cannot ever be overcome is that one who needs to be brought to light and so out into the open? Is it that theology, as Christian faith, can do no other than this in its confrontation with philosophy, because this is its fate, and so as long as *I* am aware that this is its fate I am freed from its consequences while left free to understand its task and work? This interplay of the appearing of myself and the bringing to the fore of myself *for* myself (this thinking which is at the same time the moment at which my temporalising is as a speaking), is at the same time the way in which I can be shown to be historical. This disclosure of my being-historical is my bringing of myself out into the open with respect to what precedes me, even when what precedes my lies ahead of me as a task. This *I* that I name here is not the 'I' of Laurence Paul Hemming (a use that has made readers of my work say that I am 'too personal' in my writing), but nor is it the *I-in-general*, the *cogito* or 'Subject' of Kantian philosophy. It is that self-understanding that emerges from out of an understanding of the being of being human—the *I* of being-historical, of self-disclosive historical being. It is the *I*, the *eigen*, of *Eigentlichkeit* and *Ereignis*.

In *Postmodernity's Transcending* I attempt to show how, from the outset, what the sublime, ὕψος (or what in the book and hereafter I will principally refer to as upliftment), *names* and so speaks, as it becomes entangled with divinity, derived as it is out of an essentially neoplatonic reading of Aristotle's understanding of θεωρεῖν, contemplation. What *Postmodernity's Transcending* argues is that upliftment is another name for transcendence, ἐκστάσις. It is, however, not just any name, but the name for ἐκστάσις which attempts to make available the meaning of ἐκστάσις *in* its very standing-out: transcendence *as* transcending *in* its transcending. In this, strictly speaking it is *not* a name for transcendence as the transcendent, the already-transcendent, but *the* ontological name for transcending. In this respect it is one of the few places where contemporary language actually has a name for what Heidegger calls, technically, *das Anwesende*, presencing, as opposed to *die Anwesenheit*, presence. Understood like this, every attempt to construe sublimity

as presence (the 'standard' way of rendering upliftment in the literature, even if this rendering is advertised immediately as 'problematic', and so poses a 'problem' of representation, which then has to be 'solved') immediately is exposed as having covered over its genuine meaning: upliftment belongs and has a place in the *Seinsvergessenheit*, the forgettingness of being. The book does not, however, make this entirely explicit: to do so would result in its too quickly being written off as mere Heideggerising.

What I attempt to expose are some of the transformations that this transcendence *as* transcending is forced through for it to continue to name what it names. And here a most remarkable connection can be seen, almost by accident, almost as if we had fallen over it. Upliftment as the transcending of transcendence is the bringing-before myself of the description of transcending: it has from the outset an ontological character.¹⁴ And here is its temptation: if upliftment is an explicitly ontological description of existence, and one in which divinity or God or the gods also appears, have we not uncovered an ontological grounding for divinity, God, and the gods? This is the question which *Postmodernity's Transcending* itself attempts to address, and I do so by tracing the meaning of sublimity *against* the proclamation of the death of God in postmodernity in order to seek an answer.

Upliftment is the bringing before myself of whatever occurs in its sharpest form, the form that entrains me *to* whatever is occurring (upliftment is the opposite to, the abolition and disbandment of, boredom; of not particularly noticing what occurs and passes me by). As this, it is both attempting to secure what occurs, and the knowledge of its occurrence. (It is, for instance, the shock and the naming of the shock of the passer-by to the figure of the video-installation *Brontosaurus*.) Upliftment is the most originary description of the things that happen, of what-occurs (and both the objective and the subjective genitive should be heard here). Upliftment brings together in one place both time and speaking.

Heidegger notes in this connection that 'Die Zeit ist das, worin sich Ereignisse abspielen',¹⁵ a maxim he connects explicitly with Aristotle: 'Auch die Zeit ist nichts. . . . Es gibt keine absolute Zeit, auch keine absolute Gleichzeitigkeit'.¹⁶ Inasmuch as what occurs is a change, and change exhibits the phenomenon of time, at the same time, the naming and describing of change *also* arises on the basis

¹⁴ In fact, as the astute reader will already have noted, we remain entirely within the problematic of *Sein und Zeit*, of the distinction between *Existenzialität* and *das existentielle*. Cf. Heidegger, M., *Sein und Zeit in Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 2, Frankfurt, Klostermann, 1977 (1927), p. 17 [12 f.]. 'Das Dasein versteht sich selbst immer aus seiner Existenz, einer Möglichkeit seiner selbst, es selbst oder nicht es selbst zu sein. Diese Möglichkeiten hat das Dasein entweder selbst gewählt, oder es ist in sie hineingeraten oder je schon darin aufgewachsen. Die Existenz wird in der Weise des Ergreifens oder Versäumens nur vom jeweiligen Dasein selbst entschieden. Die Frage der Existenz ist immer nur durch das Existieren selbst ins Reine zu bringen. Das *hierbei* führende Verständnis seiner selbst nennen wir das *existenzielle*. Die Frage der Existenz ist eine ontische "Angelegenheit" des Daseins. Es bedarf hierzu nicht der theoretischen Durchsichtigkeit der ontologischen Struktur der Existenz. Die Frage nach dieser zielt auf die Auseinanderlegung dessen, was Existenz konstituiert. Den Zusammenhang dieser Strukturen nennen wir die *Existenzialität*. Deren Analytik hat den Charakter nicht eines existenziellen, sondern *existenzialen* Verstehens. Die Aufgabe einer existenzialen Analytik des Daseins ist hinsichtlich ihrer Möglichkeit und Notwendigkeit in der ontischen Verfassung des Daseins vorgezeichnet.'

¹⁵ Heidegger, M., *Der Begriff der Zeit* (Vortrag 1924), p. 109. 'Time is that, wherein events occur.'

¹⁶ Heidegger, M., *Der Begriff der Zeit* (Vortrag 1924), p. 109, citing Aristotle, *Physics*, 219 a ff. 'However time is nothing . . . there is no absolute time, and also no absolute contemporaneity.'

of, and exhibits the phenomenon of, time. Here one may see an immediate parallel with Aristotle's own attempt to explain time, but with an important difference. For the change that is named here is not 'countable' as are the 'nows' of Aristotelian time: rather it makes possible the exhibition of the self which *is* as temporalising. Not all temporal ecstases involve change – patience, boredom, waiting – to name only three, are disclosed almost by an enforced comportment to the absence of change.

Heidegger had noted that “‘Zeit’ ist in ‘Sein und Zeit’, so befremdlich das klingen muß, der Vorname für den Anfangsgrund des Wortes’.¹⁷ Language, speaking, is the exhibited ‘timing of time’: upliftment, precisely as a driving out of myself to an extreme, an outermost, so that I appear before myself that I *am* brought before myself, makes this visible.

What is remarkable is not the extent to which transcendence collapses through all of its historical transformations, but its persistence and endurance. Perhaps alone among the devaluations of postmodernity, transcendence as the postmodern sublime retains its capacity not to debase and flatten every hierarchy, not to democratise and annul every elite or annihilate and disindividuate every particular ascent, but rather to make available its meaning even for those whom the epigones of democratisation, anti-elitism and mass empowerment have decided have always been excluded (whether they were or not—rarely were the masses *consulted* or interrogated concerning the emancipations to be forced upon them). In postmodernity this means: mass access to the euphoria of consumption; ‘art’ or the (visual, videokinetic) aesthetic as the shock of the new, of shock-as-such. Even the most superficial blandishment has in the end to do just that—to deliver memorable titillation, the euphoric *necessity* for the appearance of the postmodern condition.

Upliftment exhibits two other features which makes it of such importance. Transcendence as such is ambiguous: at one and the same time it names transcending *in* its transcending (an entirely human concern); and at the same time it names *the* transcendent, an ontotheological name for God (or for the god beyond God – this is Derrida's negative point – and so the other-than-human within a human compass). This ambiguity has been present from the very outset, with Plato and Aristotle, and it remains in *all* contemporary discussion, even the supposedly most atheistic. This securing of the transcendent requires no belief (unbelieving philosophers persist in this securing all the time). In this sense upliftment persists *beyond* the death of God. Its other feature, however, is most vigorously exhibited not always, but *now*. Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe has traced how the blankness of the contemporary videokinetic field is a saturated blankness, and as such, is sublime.¹⁸ He accurately describes how ‘technology has subsumed the idea of the sublime . . . it combines limitlessness with pure ratio’.¹⁹ Technology, and specifically the visual and videokinetic mode of its dissemination, the *means* by which technology subsumes upliftment, is itself a temporal determination: what Gilbert-Rolfe calls

¹⁷ *Parmenides* in *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 54, Frankfurt, Klostermann, 1992 (1982), p. 113. “‘time’ is, in *Sein und Zeit*, no matter how strange it must sound, the proper name for the originary *ground* of the word’ (author’s italics). Cited in *Postmodernity’s Transcending*, p. 62.

¹⁸ Gilbert-Rolfe, J., *Beauty and the Contemporary Sublime*, New York, Allworth Press, pp. 111–114.

¹⁹ Gilbert-Rolfe, J., *Beauty and the Contemporary Sublime*, p. 127f.

'the end of absence' is in fact the replacement of the genuinely absent, *nothing*, with the already-known, with what has already come to presence and remains and persists in presence.

Gilbert-Rolfe's point has already been made elsewhere by Edmund White, and explicitly with respect to exactly the 'terribly average nakedness' of much of the work of Gilbert & George, the same exposure that I suggest is paraded by the figure of *Brontosaurus*. White says of it that 'nothing can be deciphered, nothing interpreted or added, because everything is already fully intended as a sign, totally saturated with meaning'.²⁰ Presence, as full presence as the end of knowing, is a determination of the ever-same and so *past*, even when we have not yet encountered it.

It is here, however, that the two questions of Elden and Hart – of the meaning of *Mitsein* and of the (missing) French theoretical articulation of upliftment or sublimity – coincide. This coincidence is visible perhaps most of all in the work of Jean-Luc Nancy. Nancy opens his own consideration of upliftment by noting that 'on pourrait penser que notre époque découvre à nouveau le *sublime*, son nom, son concept ou ses questions'.²¹ In a way beloved of French theorists, however, Nancy immediately announces a limit, a ban if you like, on how one is to proceed: 'on ne fait jamais retour à rien dans l'histoire. Nous ne revenons pas au sublime, nous en provenons plutôt.'²² The published English translation of this passage says 'one never returns to any prior moment in history. The sublime is not so much what we're going back to as where we're coming from.'²³ What Nancy describes, and the English translation reinforces, is an order of appearing, a temporal disposition toward the historiographical facts of the matter. Moreover, as if on cue, in the matter of demonstrating the interpretative character of translations, the English translation of the French work *Du sublime* in which these words function as the first few lines of the preface, and so the headline (the very rubric under which all else will appear), reinforces what is at stake, for the English title is *Of the Sublime: Presence in Question*: the presence is *added* to make sure that precisely what is supposedly *in question* is there *without question*. Why is presence so important here – except that isn't that what *Postmodernity's Transcending* is all about, the ὄντως ὄν – of beings *the very being*, the first, foremost and most divine underpinning of all that is and so the persisting as such in its persistence, the *ἄει*?

The French tells us that upliftment has reappeared in its centrality in thinking, its name, concept and questions. Then, Nancy tells us, this appearing must be subject to the ordinary passage of time—one can't 'go back'. Or is this what the French says? It says *literally* that 'one never makes a return to nothing in history' (here is a really accurate translation, one which will make every linguist wince with distaste). History is just that determination of time wherein *the* nothing never

²⁰ White, E., review of *Gilbert & George: A Portrait* in *London Review of Books*, vol. 21, no. 13, July 1999, p. 10.

²¹ Nancy, J.-L., *Préface* in Courtine, J.-F. et al., *Du sublime*, Paris, Belin, 1988, p. 7. 'One could think that our epoch has discovered anew the *sublime*, its name, its concept, or its questions' (author's italics).

²² Nancy, J.-L., *Préface*, p. 7. 'One never makes a return to anything in history. We do not return to the sublime, rather we stem from it.'

²³ Nancy, J.-L., *Préface* in Librett J. S. (trans), Courtine, J. F. et al., *Of the Sublime: Presence in Question*, New York, SUNY, 1993, p. 1.

reappears in the way that the *nothing in question* made possible what appeared in its appearing at the time. Taken as a literal translation of what Nancy says, this statement means history, and so the past as the persistence of what passes in the ordinary passage of time, is the place of presence as such: time moves on. A more generous translation, a translation that interprets Nancy despite himself and so in a way utterly unfaithful to Nancy's intentions would say: in the persisting of what persists, what lay behind and lies ahead of what has come into presence and persisted from its coming forth, this behind-and-ahead is hard to see, is hard to keep and hold *with* and *within* the persisting in presence.

But Nancy does not have this view of presence. Like Derrida (and Levinas, indeed!), his holding out against presence is holding out against 'the totalising'; he articulates the question of the whole, of totality and of the self entirely within the language of Kantian subjectivity. Thus upliftment – the sublime – is the instant wherein upliftment functions 'paradoxalement comme exposition hors de soi, passage à la limite (in)sensible de soi'.²⁴ He asks 'peut-on dire encore que la totalité, à cet instant, est présentée?',²⁵ concluding (only with some qualifications) that yes, this is indeed the case. Nancy's juxtaposition of the instant with the totality means that, despite his huffing and puffing over Kant's pomposity in the description of the sublime in the third critique, Nancy does not himself understand upliftment in a way other than Kant does. Upliftment, therefore, retains the relation to presence which itself must always be deconstructed, but having been placed within these parentheses, it may still prove to be a way of speaking about high instants. Which is exactly the *actual* paradox of postmodernity: postmodernity promises us that there is an understanding we *could* reach, but in always deferring that understanding (we are all, after all, in the know about it) let us remain with the language we have.

In the second half of his earlier statement (*nous ne revenons pas au sublime, nous en provenons plutôt*) Nancy poses the whole problematic of 'presence' as such and its temporal determinations, almost without noticing that he does so, and says, almost in an aside: 'we do not return to the sublime, rather we are in coming-forth [from it]'—that is to say: we stem from it.

Let us lay aside for later the question of Nancy's confidence in saying it is 'we' who are always limited in this way: at issue here is whether we can get back or whether we come forth and so stem from upliftment. Does this mean that it lies behind us – or does it roll out from ahead of us? *Provenir* – 'to come forth from', like the Greek word ἀρχή, has exactly this ambiguity, an ambiguity that lies in the whole history of the understanding of time itself. The persistent questioning of presence, as a questioning regarding God, has – for all its Gallican peregrinations – a much simpler and less anxious home. The question is not what presence *is*, nor what kind of *is* its historical manifestations have attempted to make-present, but rather, on what are these stood, and what is the ontological ground of presence? This is not other than the question of ground as we considered it earlier. If we return for a moment to Heidegger's 1924 lecture in which the philosopher ceases

²⁴ Nancy, J.-L., *L'Offrande sublime* in *Du sublime*, p. 66. 'Paradoxically, as exposition to what is outside of self, passage to the (in)sensible limit of self.'

²⁵ Nancy, J.-L., *L'Offrande sublime* in *Du sublime*, p. 66. 'Could one still say that totality, at this instant, is presented?'

believing, we discover why. The theologian above all attempts to make manifest the presence of absolute presence, the *ἀεί*. However, immediately after Heidegger asserts in this lecture that the philosopher does not believe, we are told *why*: ‘Fragt der Philosoph nach der Zeit, dann ist er erschlossen, *die Zeit aus der Zeit zu verstehen* bzw. aus dem *ἀεί*, was so aussieht wie Ewigkeit, was sich aber herausstellt als ein bloßes Derivat des Zeitlichseins’.²⁶

The question therefore arises, on what kind of understanding of temporality is Nancy’s understanding of upliftment stood? I have already suggested the answer to this question: an entirely Kantian subjectivity. But isn’t Nancy himself a critic of subjectivity—how can this be, and what mistake have I (obviously) made? The reason for excluding the discussion of the French theorists from *Postmodernity’s Transcending* is precisely because these accounts of the being of being human continue resolutely to resolve questions of presence and of upliftment on the basis of the philosophy of subjectivity—metaphysics, if you like. For the sake of time, and in the limited space that we have here, I will only observe that this manifests itself in two ways. First, by being unable to resolve the question of presence into a deeper question of what presence is and *opens* if it is *not* the *ἀεί ὄν*, or rather if the *ἀεί* turns out, as Heidegger argues, itself to be a different determination of being, and a derivation of being-timely, to the one which founds the metaphysical history of the West. To do this requires to take more seriously the *nothing* – to return, exactly as Nancy says one may not – to the *historical* manifesting of the nothing. Which exactly exposes why Nancy says one may not—because he (and he is not alone in this) has an entirely metaphysical understanding of time.

The second reason for excluding a discussion of the French consideration of upliftment lies in the vexed question of the relation between presence and intentionality. Intentionality – the archaeology of the question of the true intention of the authorial mind – arises out of the attempts to construe the absolute intentionality of God, which *Postmodernity’s Transcending* attempts to illustrate by reference to Aquinas. The French theorists have therefore not been wrong in dismantling – deconstructing – the baroque machinery of intentionality as it intensifies in its trajectory from Descartes to Nietzsche, and even to Husserl. This has, however, resulted in an impasse. Precisely because of the understanding of subjectivity on which their own investigations are stood, Nancy and others are forced to analyse presence and its effects through a kind of *epoché*, a placing of the question into an *atemporality* which illustrates the falsehood of intentionality itself but can get no further than this. Without Aristotle’s understanding of the unity of *νοῦς*, neither the object (nor the text) nor its relation to the subject (or the self) can be resolved—the question itself is endlessly deferred. Aristotle’s understanding of *νοῦς* cannot be recovered because, although it is the final interior and exterior unity of world – the way in which I fit in to the unity of the *same* world to which you too are accommodated (this is Hegel’s point) – even Hegel was only able to resolve this unity with respect to history (world is no longer finite, it changes *absolutely* and not just relatively), and – are we not all agreed – that attempt has failed, its time is passed.

²⁶ Heidegger, M, *Der Begriff der Zeit (Vortrag 1924)*, p. 107. ‘When the philosopher enquires after time, then he is resolved to *understand time from out of time*, for example from the *ἀεί*, which thus looks like eternity, but which turns out to be a mere derivation of being-timely’ (author’s italics).

For Aristotle νοῦς turns out to be attained through sequence, countability, μάθησις. Hence the concern of *Postmodernity's Transcending* to ask: first, how does sequence, succession and hierarchy appear; and second, on what ground does sequence stand? This is the basis of the whole of the analysis of the mathematical and μάθησις in the book. The answer is very simple. There is *nothing other* that sequence, hierarchy and μάθησις could stand upon than the temporalising being of being human itself. Upliftment – transcending – is the temporal occurring of being human, it is how being human is passed through what-occurs.

There is indeed in Nancy a critique of subjectivity, and Ignaas Devisch sums it up in a way that parallels my own enquiry. For Nancy, he says, ‘politically speaking the significance of the subject is that there is a relation to others only on the basis of an autonomous individual who pre-exists all communal formulations and decides independently whether she or he enters sociality or not, whether he or she “signs” the social contract or not’.²⁷ This is almost a summary of the critique of subjectivity that I advance in the *Introduction to Postmodernity's Transcending*. This is Nancy’s own exposure of the false temporal structure of Postmodernity, his own denial of the possibility of a philosophy of subjectivity: such a fictive moment of decision (and a fictive *deciding subject*) can never actually occur. Why therefore, might Nancy and I be at odds? Shouldn’t we be in total agreement?

Heidegger develops the existential analytic of *Dasein* through understanding *Dasein* as nothing other than temporality—literally, ‘timeliness’ (*Zeitlichkeit*). Nancy pursues this analysis and pronounces it correct, but argues that there is a more primordial understanding of *Dasein* even than *Dasein* itself—*Mitsein*, *Miteinandersein*.²⁸ Nancy says (quite correctly) of this primordial understanding that *Mitsein* is essential to the constitution of *Dasein* itself, and then adds ‘Sur cette base, il devrait être absolument clair que le *Dasein*, pas plus qu’il n’est “l’homme” ni “le sujet”, n’est pas “un”, unique et isolé, mais toujours seulement l’un, chaque un, de l’un-avec-l’autre. Si cette détermination est essentielle, elle doit acquérir et exposer sans réserve une dimension co-originaire: or on a déjà souvent remarqué que cette co-originarité, malgré son affirmation, cède le pas à la considération du *Dasein* “en lui-même”.²⁹ In other words Nancy is seeking the originary ground of *Dasein* (which he says Heidegger failed in) and Nancy grounds it in *Mitsein*. The question we must keep in view in Nancy’s considerations is: given that the analytic of *Dasein*, and *Mitsein* as a determination of the meaning of *Dasein*, arises on the basis of *Dasein* as *nothing other* than timeliness, how does Nancy show us that *Mitsein* is *also* primordially timeliness, and if *Mitsein* is not this, in what is *Mitsein* to be grounded?

²⁷ Devisch, I., *A Trembling Voice in the Desert: Jean-Luc Nancy's Rethinking of the Space of the Political in Cultural Values*, vol. 4, no. 2, April 2000, pp 239–256, p. 241.

²⁸ Nancy, J.-L., *Être singulier pluriel*, Paris, Éditions Galilée, 1996, p. 46. ‘L’être-avec (le *Mitsein*, le *Miteinandersein* et le *Mitdasein*) est très clairement déclarée, par Heidegger, essentiel à la constitution du *Dasein* lui-même.’ (‘Being-with [*Mitsein*, *Miteinandersein* and *Mitdasein*] is very clearly declared by Heidegger as essential to the constitution of *Dasein* itself.’)

²⁹ Nancy, J.-L., *Être singulier pluriel*, p. 46. ‘On this basis, it becomes absolutely clear that *Dasein* is neither any more “man” nor “the subject”, it is not “a one”, unique and isolated, but always only the one, each one, of the one-with-another. If this determination is essential, it needs to attain to and expose without reserve a co-originary dimension: but as has often been noted, despite this affirmative co-originary, he gives up on the step to the consideration of *Dasein* itself.’

In fact Nancy argues not that *Mitsein* is timeliness, but that the grounding of *Mitsein* is at the same time the aggregation of being-amongst, taken as a multiplicity of ‘ones’: this is the basis of his frequent description of *Mitsein* as ‘l’un-avec-l’autre’. But the-one-with-the-other is *already* an ontological determination (which is to say, it does not arise *from out of* an ontological questioning). It is (if we take as correct Aristotle’s arguments rehearsed in *Postmodernity’s Transcending* for the originary grounding of mathematics) what μύθησις makes possible, my already having discovered that I am one, on the basis of discovering that you are other to my one, and we-many are already and even prior to our being-two-together. Nancy takes this discovery as *already-present*, *already-prior*. It is the very basis on which he derives the plural of *Mitsein* as the plurality of the many ones that we all (already) are. The question is: how did Nancy come to know that he was such a one-with-another? He presumes this knowledge is self-evident, but in fact in so presuming, he presumes that it is already originary to my knowledge that I am a one, otherwise he could never have structured his statement in this way.

Even to know that you are a one-with-another is an ontological determination. This is in fact the very basis on which Cartesian subjectivity is attained, that there is *always self-evidently* an ‘I-am-one’ that can think ‘I am’ prior to its thinking anything else or any other relation. So is the actual being of one-with-another in some sense prior to being brought forth that you and I and we all are ‘l’un-avec-l’autre’? The answer to this is yes: when we are, unthinkingly, simply the ‘many’. The ‘many’, the unthought, ungrounded, manifold has not the plural or dual or singular mathematical quantity of particular and determinate number (note, please, that plural, dual, singular are also – in Greek at least – grammatical numbers), but *no* determinate number at all. The manifold – the indeterminate many – is prior to number, and prior to its enumeration. The individuations of number are themselves extracted from the prior (and always already at hand) manifold. The many as such is unthought. But we can think of the many. However, the thought of the ‘many’ becomes numerable and determinable, in the very act of being thought – it enumerates as it thinks, and the thought ‘numbers’ – but the many as such is *always* innumerable and indeterminate and unthought as such. Devisch comments on Nancy’s privileging of *Mitsein* over *Dasein*, saying ‘Nancy asks, why did Heidegger take so long to elaborate the “with”?’.³⁰ Except Heidegger does not take so long to get to the ‘with’ of ‘being-with-one-another’, he was already fully aware of it and it can be found fully elaborated in Plato. *Mitsein* can be taken as a translation of συνουσία, which means variously society, social exchange, communion, even social or sexual intercourse. Above all and first, however, it means συνουσία, ‘alongside-and-together-with-insofar-as-there-is-actual-being’ (hence ουσία and not ὄν, εἶναι), being-with. As a term it appears in Plato as meaning ‘the manifold’.³¹

In contrast to Nancy, therefore, Heidegger did not find *Mitsein*, συνουσία, as something to be attained to or achieved—he found it already there, already ly-

³⁰ Devisch, L., *A Trembling Voice in the Desert*, p. 242.

³¹ See, for a fuller discussion of this Hemming, L. P., *Can I Really Count on You?* in Jordan, M. (ed.), *Authorizing Marriage? Canon, Tradition, and Critique in the Blessing of Same-Sex Unions*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, forthcoming, where the meaning of the term συνουσία is discussed in relation to Aristophanes’ speech in the *Symposium*.

ing present (exactly as the unthought indeterminate manifold actually is). Nancy, in contrast, sees the manifold as essentially a task. ‘Aucun’ he says ‘pourtant, n’a radicalement thématé l’avec comme le trait essentiel de l’être et comme sa propre essence singulière pluriel’.³² What does this actually say? It says we must *think* the essence of being, *as* the indeterminate manifold, and we must think it *through* the determination ‘singular plural’ (notice how we have lost the dual, now that we are no longer Greeks).³³ But the ‘singular plural’ is not any kind of real determination, it is a name, like ‘the infinite’, for marking an indeterminacy.³⁴ In other words, Nancy will leave the manifold *indeterminate*. He will determine it *as* the indeterminate. Not: the indeterminate, which could then go on to be determined (however arbitrary those determinations might be) *but* the persisting-in-indeterminacy, the ‘ever-indeterminate’. The ‘ever indeterminate’ of being is, surely, nothing other than ‘infinite being’. Have we in Nancy’s understanding of *Mitsein* simply recovered the definition of full presence, masquerading as something else—the indeterminate infinite of *our very selves*, τὸ ἀεί ὄν, now no longer functioning as a name for God, but as a name for the whole of beings *as* the whole of human being, society, the πόλις, call it what you will?

Further evidence: *Mitsein*, says Nancy, is more originary than *Dasein*, it lies prior. Now as the prior it is the always-before, the *a priori* (the without-any-other-prior, and from the always-before). The *a priori* is nothing other than the ἀεί. Nancy says we have to attain this as a formal (indeed imperatively moral) task: ‘que l’être, absolument, est être-avec, voilà ce qu’il nous faut penser’.³⁵ So the always-prior of the ἀεί is what we have to reach by thinking it, thinking *through* to it. It lies ahead of us. Except if we think *Mitsein* in its genuine determination as the manifold, it is nothing of the kind—it is what lies genuinely behind us, it is the ‘from out of which’ thinking thinks. It is what thinking thinks *from* not *to*. Nancy has put *Mitsein*, as a covert thought of the ἀεί, in the wrong place, in the place of the ἦν εἶναι of Aristotle’s formal cause, *not* in any genuine ‘before’. None of this is a question of being—it is rather, the question of how being arises on the basis of different temporal determinations. We have, despite ourselves, been forced to exhibit two different kinds of temporalising of being. Nancy’s temporalising of eternity, albeit in a masked, covert, ‘forgotten’ way, and—well what exactly?

Heidegger reminds us, the ἀεί is *not* a definition of eternity (insofar as we are philosophers, and so not looking for the eternal God of first causes), but itself a temporal determination: it is therefore not the ‘ever-before’ but the ‘from-

³² Nancy, J.-L., *Être singulier pluriel*, p. 54. ‘No-one, however, has radically thematised the *with* as the essential trait of being et as its proper singular plural essence’ (author’s italics).

³³ Here is proof why Nancy thinks singular-plural is a *geometrical* thought—it is simply two points at opposed ends of a continuum. But the singular-plural conceals the grammatical dual, at which point it becomes clear that what is at issue here is not a continuum, but a sequence with definite, determinate, stops: number. The plural is not, and never can be, genuinely indeterminate: it is accounted for as the ‘third in general’.

³⁴ This can be demonstrated precisely by the means by which the individuation of number is itself attained: every actual number is attained through its specificity and determinate relation to other numbers—every number has a genuine beginning and end that separates it from every other genuine actual number. Determinacy is of the *essence* of number as such. For the Greeks, there can never be a genuine (or ‘real’), but indeterminate, number.

³⁵ Nancy, J.-L., *Être singulier pluriel*, p. 83 f. ‘That being, absolutely, is being-with, here is that which it is necessary for us to think.’

which'. *Mitsein* turns out to be the prior temporal determination of *Dasein* in the matter of attaining to *Dasein*. Let us put this in a more formal way. For Heidegger, *Dasein*, as a genuinely ontological determination, is something which appears in thinking. Thinking is a thinking-from-to (hence its proper Greek name was not νοεῖν, thinking as such, but διανοεῖν, thinking-from-to, thinking-through-to). Thinking-through *is the same thing as, is another name for, temporalising*. Thinking from where to where? For Aristotle, as *Postmodernity's Transcending* shows, this is a thinking from natural being, φύσις, to enduring-being-ever, ἦν εἶναι. However this is not just onlooking-thinking, idle thinking-about. Rather this is thinking in its bringing itself into itself as thinking: that which comes to be thought in the elaboration of the philosophy of subjectivity as intentional consciousness, knowing that I am thinking insofar as I am thinking. This is what makes Aristotle genuinely ontological in his thinking, that the self comes before itself in what it thinks of. Two words account for this thinking insofar as it is a self-thinking, which *Postmodernity's Transcending* attempts to exhibit the meaning and function of: μάθησις, and ὕψος.

Counting: the very means by which I extract myself from the manifold and account for myself is an abstracting, a διαίρεσις, a dividing the world up and so *counting* and calculating it in the very act of dividing, but this is the means by which change is accounted for and so *temporalised*. Temporalised means exhibited or pointed-up *as* and *in* a temporal determination. *As* a dividing-up, it is also a bringing of the self before what the self is brought before, the whole, the manifold. The self, coming to itself, does so by making manifest to itself its timeliness: in doing so, it measures its timeliness by the λόγος-character of the account: hence the 'why' and the means by which temporalising and speaking are grounded ontologically in the same way. The name of the whole, the manifold, *das Seiende überhaupt*, being overall, Heidegger repeatedly demonstrated functions as a covert name for God, hence why the divinity of ὕψος as upliftment and so sublimity becomes a category of metaphysics.

This abstraction, the very thing that should bring the self as a self-exhibited being, a self-determinable and self-interrogable being before itself in its being is, however, cancelled by the *what*, the τι, of what it brings before itself: itself in relation to the whole, the manifold. The self is not able to exhibit itself on the basis of the being of its being, but rather only on the basis of beings as such, what the self has in view in its abstracting imagining. The loss of the being of the self before the self *in favour* of the *what* of what the self brings before itself is the *false* grounding of the αἰεῖ, why presence takes over and displaces presencing. This is the very *Seinsvergessenheit* in its operation.

This is why intentionality always appears as a striving-ahead-to-get-to (ὁρέξις) the 'what', the τι, of the object in view—and why Nancy puts *Mitsein* as the manifold in the wrong place, as ahead of him, as what (as a moral task, we *must* think) is to be got to. Not because *Mitsein* is a thing, an object of intentional consciousness, Nancy is too well schooled in the dangers of such thinking; but rather as what eludes intentional consciousness and so needs to be brought forth *as what eludes it*: thus it becomes what lies *even further ahead*, if we could but 'see' the indeterminate manifold by distracting the gaze from the particular object (and now you have in a mere nutshell why the sublime is so concerned with the conun-

drum of representing the *unrepresentable*). The ever-further-ahead is no more than the ‘ever’ as such, *ἀεί*, the *underlying present presence of whatever is present*, which is why Aristotle only understands *μάθησις* in terms of abstraction—the ever-more abstractedness that leads to full presence.

But to get ahead to this is to get no further ahead than Hegel got, for the manifold, as the *out* of which is only invisible because it is the *from-where*. It can be brought to sight by *thinking of it*, but then we have only a thought about it, we can never think it as such, it is genuinely unthinkable, and happily so!

And here is why *Dasein* is not intentional consciousness. The question of upliftment, and of *μάθησις* in general, is not *what ‘it’ is*, its *τί*, but how it appears at all, *on what it is stood*. This is the question of ground. Its ground is the actual temporalising of the being-of-being-human, *Dasein*. Time: Time, however, as nothing, is, strictly speaking the *Ab-Grund*, the without-a-ground, it is groundless. The grounding of the being of being human turns out to be, not ground as such, but groundlessness. This, unlike *Mitsein*, is something to be attained through thinking, but it cannot ever be attained by thinking *Dasein* as a thing, or as a covert name for the subjectivity of the subject. In his 1924 lecture Heidegger argues that ‘*das Grundphänomen der Zeit ist die Zukunft*’.³⁶ This is the-from-out-of-what the future is not striven forward to, but emerges, it is the *conferral* of futurity in *Dasein*, from out of which *Dasein* draws itself as itself (from whence it temporalises), i.e. makes itself self-interrogable and self-questionable.³⁷

Have we not here relapsed into speech of *Dasein* as a thing? Does not Heidegger rule this out? In a later lecture course, Heidegger’s appended notes stress this need for erasure: ‘*das Da-sein kann aber hier nicht einmal genannt werden, weil es sogleich gegenständlich gedeutet würde und die Bestimmung des Wesens der Wahrheit nur zu einer “neuen” Theorie herabgesetzt werden könnte*’.³⁸ Part of the problem of leaving the word *Dasein* untranslated in English is we overlook the fact that, heard with German ears and since Kant, the word simply means ‘existence’. Human *Dasein* as human existence *also* has a certain indeterminacy about it: human existence can mean—existing in general, or it can mean a *particular* human existence: you, me, *l’un avec l’autre*. In every case for Heidegger existence in this technical sense means ontological existing, existing and knowing at the same time *that I am* and that *I am*: the work of Longinus’ *ῥήτωρ*: to gather into a commonly *thought* worlding of world from out of an already *unthought* manifolding manifold those who, through upliftment, are brought before themselves in a particular and determinate way—who share and are at the same time individuated through a common *παθήσις*, common experience as ‘occurring-with’ *discovering* themselves to be *συνουσιῶν*, being-together-with. Here *Mitsein* is not attained as a *must-think*, a moral task which is at the same time something ahead of me to which I must get to.

³⁶ Heidegger, M., *Der Begriff der Zeit (Vortrag 1924)*, p. 118. ‘The grounding phenomenon of time is the future’ (author’s italics).

³⁷ This repeated use of the reflexive pronoun, which seems so clumsy to us, is the mark of the missing medial voice in modern Western European languages. No such clumsiness would appear in a Greek description, where the middle voice would indicate a self-evident self-reflexivity.

³⁸ *Grundfragen der Philosophie*, p. 193. ‘Here *Da-sein* cannot even be mentioned, because it would immediately be interpreted as an object and the determination of the essence of truth would be denigrated into a mere “new” theory’.

There is one final question I want to ask: do we explore the question of the meaning of *Dasein* with respect to what Heidegger himself thought it meant? Doesn't it in any case change, let us say from the lecture on time in 1924 to *Sein und Zeit* in 1927 or the *Beiträge* in 1936–38? This is, of course, the question of intentionality, the question of an authorial archæology all over again, and it should precisely be obvious why we need no longer ask the question in this way. Bringing existence before ourselves *as* a question is precisely to ask the question of who we are as existing. In this sense every attempt to answer the question is both disclosive of the one answering, and is a description of that means by which the question comes before us at all. There is, strictly speaking, no intention to be described; rather there is an enquiry into what it means (and this means *who*, since τὶ has no gender in Greek) to describe existence in its existing.

We see here how it is we may resolve the question of how we may read Plato and Aristotle, and, most importantly, how we may discover what it is that is at work in the way in which we read each through the other. For on the way to reading them, we uncover not what they say, but of what they are speaking, and what in their speaking leads them both to uncover and cover-over in particular ways. We learn of what it was they were encountering, in its unfolding. We learn, in other words, *against* Nancy, to return to the nothing in what they say in order to understand what they brought out into the open.

Being-together-with and knowing it: a group coming together to consider an artwork, be it a video installation like the one discussed in *Postmodernity's Transcending* and entitled *Brontosaurus*, or perhaps considering a book about this artwork. Determinately coming together in an experience which, we hope, for the time being might yet be sublime. For the privilege of writing for you and speaking to you, I thank you.

