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HEIDEGGER, NATURE & SOPHIA-POIESIS

SUMMARY OF THEME

The core of this reflection is simply stated: there is no such thing as a pure natural world separate from humanity. There is no ontology prior to or separate from anthropology. We can see this implied in the order of thought itself, should we try to imagine a non-human world. It dissolves into vapor the moment we remove the human observer. Thus the ontological structure of the universe cannot be unglued from its human subject.

HEIDEGGER AND GIRARD

The thought of the most influential philosopher of the 20th century, Martin Heidegger, provides us with an important test case of the argument. Heidegger was deeply wedded to nature and the natural world and always in function of what could be called revelatory ontology, his concept of the truth of being as a revealing (*Entbergen*), as disclosedness (*Erschlossenheit*), as coming to presence (*Anwesenung*). In the thematic of being human existence is secondary and derivative. "The essence of ek-sistence derives existentially-ecstatically from the essence of the truth of Being."¹ In a word human existence is the place where the event of being as revelation occurs. But by this very fact Heidegger is still full to the brim with anthropology, even while he formally renounces it, seeking to reunite philosophy with its pure ontological source. Girardian anthropology is a tool close at hand with which it is possible to turn Heidegger against but also with himself, to ... anthropology. Heidegger is the thinker who is fundamentally closest, I believe, to Girard, in virtue of a profound pattern they share in the interpretation of reality, even though they give diametrically different accounts of it.

The vitality of an encounter between Heidegger and Girard will enable perhaps a new horizon of possibility to appear and this is the goal of this brief study. It will allow us perhaps to catch a glimpse of something fresh in relation to a natural world to which we are intimately, that is generatively, related. A thought of biblical Wisdom made concrete in the historical and revelatory figure of Jesus can open the possibility of a different anthropological structuring of the world in which we live.

Girard and Heidegger share the same quality of thought in their insistence on a revelation or disclosure as the core dynamic of truth. Furthermore there is a sense in which the disclosures they point to, which come on completely different registers, are ultimately talking about the same thing. They seem to have a common starting point from which they at once diverge but in a pattern that remains consistent, and is able to be understood consistently from a Girardian perspective. Girard has demonstrated to us the undecidability of mimetic desire, the flux at the heart of human reality, a constant movement which can turn in any direction without a *telos* or goal outside the movement determined by itself. It is the mediation of the other only that tells desire what to desire and this other is of course the subject of the selfsame mediation. On his side Heidegger presents a very similar sort of movement: it is *Ereignis* or the event of truth as presencing and withdrawal, of appropriation and expropriation, of unconcealing and concealing. This too has no term beyond itself; it is ordered only to and by itself and it results in a fundamental "errancy" of Dasein, a condition of truth as error and error as truth. Heidegger celebrates the fragment of Heraclitus (#93) which sums this up: The lord whose oracle is at Delphi neither speaks nor conceals, but gives a sign (*o anax. ou to manteion esti to en Delphis, oute legei oute kruptei alla semainei*). Heidegger derives from this what he sees as the Greek view of truth: "it [the oracle] unconceals while it conceals, and it conceals while it unconceals."² This is undecidability as the nature of truth and it closely parallels, if not indeed reflects, the undecidability of desire. We see this clearly in respect of Dasein, human being; in face of the world humanity is in a kind of permanent error; its very truth is a form of being misled, or, more precisely, what it sees as most real

¹ Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism" in *Martin Heidegger, Basic Writings*, ed. and introduction David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 212 (hereafter *Basic Writings*).

and proper to itself is that of which and by which it is in fact expropriated.³ The homology between desire as mimetic and truth as error is too powerful to be ignored.

Of course, Heidegger would be horrified to see a convergence here with Girard; he would return adamantly to the thought of being which, in his view, Western metaphysics has forgotten precisely in a misplaced concern for the human. "Concern with human being and with the position of humans amidst beings entirely dominates metaphysics."⁴ And elsewhere he proclaims that the movement of his own thought is to a point where "every kind of anthropology and all subjectivity of man as subject is ... left behind...."⁵

But then again this deliberate attempt to subordinate the human may also lie close to another crucial Girardian concept, the sacrificial. The elimination of the human at some key point constitutes the sacred meaning in any system and with it the order of the universe. This then would be a second Heideggerian gesture that parallels Girard's thought, except of course it is present in Heidegger in a functionally non-critical way, as in fact a necessity in the dynamics of his thought. But the insistence which Heidegger also applies to it shows signs of effort,

² Martin Heidegger "On the Essence and Concept of Physis" in *Martin Heidegger, Pathmarks* ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 213 (henceforth *Pathmarks*).

³ See Martin Heidegger *On Time And Being* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1972), 22-3, for *Ereignis* as implying expropriation--of being by being. There is no doubt that human being shares fully in this. Moreover, in the concept of *Ereignis*/appropriation there is a hint of the original mimesis of appropriation which is the root of the human crisis and the ambivalent sacred order that emerges from it. One commentator records that Lessing wrote the verb *ereignen* as *eräugnen* which suggests its original meaning was "to eye one another." Here is the event of mimesis, occurring between two sets of human eyes, the conflictive appropriation of the object of desire between them; this is rendered ontological by Heidegger, the simultaneous presencing and withdrawal of being. Thus "Being appears primordially in the light of concealing withdrawal." ("On the Essence of Truth," *Basic Writings*, 140). This is not to contend that existential experience of "beings as a whole" cannot separate out a genuine philosophical (un)concealment, but that at a generative level this is structured by mimetic appropriation/expropriation, not the other way round. Before the mimetic other arrives there is no human universe. For *eräugnen* see Joseph J. Kockelmans, *On The Truth Of Being* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 59.

⁴ Martin Heidegger, "Plato's Doctrine of Truth" in *Pathmarks*, 181.

⁵ "On the Essence of Truth" in *Basic Writings*, 141.

and, on occasions too frequent to miss, of signified actual violence, indicating that it is never fully assimilated or automatic in his work but has to be worked in "poetically," actively and artificially. This would lead us to the interpretative claim of a third and final Girardian concept: by reason of this insistence on the sacrificial combined with the destining of being (*Geschick*--fate) which is always uncertain and in motion, Heidegger presents history as a grand sacrificial crisis and above all in its contemporary realization. The holy has escaped us, is not now with us ... but violence is. I believe that ultimately Heidegger enshrines sacrificial crisis as the meaning of meanings, the very term of philosophical truth.⁶

PHYSIS AND BEING

This reading of Heidegger acts as an introduction to his thought, showing us the path forward for its interpretation and in the key first suggested--its anthropological sub-tensions as they could be called.

"Being as a whole reveals itself as *physis*, 'nature,' which here does not yet mean a particular sphere of beings but rather beings as such as a whole, specifically in the sense of emerging presence [*aufgehendes Anwesen*]." (129) With this statement in the essay "On the Essence of Truth" (originally drafted in 1930), Heidegger asserts the identity of being and nature as the whole sphere of beings. In another piece, a commentary on Aristotle's classic explanation of *physis* he recounts the more traditional distinction of nature from technology, *technē*, which seems essential to Aristotle's understanding. But first the important part of Aristotle's

⁶ See Anthony W. Bartlett, "A Flight of God: M.Heidegger and R.Girard" *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia*,

approach for Heidegger is his key description of nature as movement, *kinesis*. Nature/*physis* is what has a principle of movement in itself (*archē kinēseōs*), a revolutionary new concept that Aristotle arrives at as opposed to the older static concept of elements (earth, water, wind, fire), constituting the stable and selfsame in all things. Aristotle dispenses with this idea of nature as what is changeless and goes on instead to demonstrate it as what is always in movement by virtue of the action of form, *morphē*, emerging in and from what is orderable to that form, this other aspect traditionally named "matter." Heidegger gives his usual powerful re-reading to these expressions which have become metaphysical and reified by long use in the West.

He translates a key passage from the *Physics* as follows:

Consequently, in one way *physis* is spoken of *as follows*: it is what primarily and antecedently underlies each single thing as 'the order-able' [(i.e. *hylē*--"matter")] for beings that have in themselves the origin and ordering of movedness and thus of change. But in the other way [*physis* is addressed] as the placing into form, i.e. as the appearance, (namely, that) which shows itself for our addressing it." (193 a28-32)⁷

What is described is a movement in each individual case of a form placed dynamically into view in and through what is orderable to that form and its appearance. But at once and critically we have the implied human figure to and for whom this occurs. There cannot be a description of *physis* as what is in movement without the human figure to register and receive the movement. The point is made evident by the complimentary expression "the appearance

which shows itself for our addressing," in Greek *hē morphē kai to eidos to kata ton logon*. The *eidos* (which is also expressed by Plato as *idea*) is the appearance, the looks, the visibility something offers and which is furthermore received by the human address, the *logos*. For Heidegger this last word means word or language, which in turn is rooted in *legein*, meaning to collect or gather. In other terms, the movement of *physis* is produced by form which is itself appearance for human sight and gathering. The movement is "into the unhidden of presencing" which Heidegger immediately gives in parenthesis to be *parousia*, the presencing of *ousia*, being.⁸ We have therefore arrived paradoxically at the subtending anthropology that makes possible both Aristotle's dynamic concept of nature and Heidegger's philosophy of the disclosure or presencing of being. For our overall purposes here this is of enormous importance: nature is what it is by virtue of its occurrence, its *parousia*, for and by humans. It is a matter of movement that is both received and somehow generated by humanity. Human *logos*--the human as the form of life having *logos*, *zōon logon echon*--is the indispensable condition of the emergence of nature. My argument at once is that to liberate nature, for it to be found as holy in a nonviolent manner, human generativity must first itself become nonviolent. It must gather the movement of things consistently in a nonviolent way for nature also to be discovered as nonviolent.

This conclusion brings us back also to the distinction Aristotle makes between nature and technology. In contrast to *physis* man-made artifacts (*poioumena*) like beds, robes, depend on something from outside themselves. As Heidegger translates here again is Aristotle:

"However, a couch (bedstead) and a robe and any other kind (of such things) that there is *insofar as* it is cited and grasped according to a given way of addressing (e.g. as a robe) and

⁷ "On the Essence and Concept of Physis," *Pathmarks*, 208, italics in original.

inasmuch as it comes from a productive know-how (such a thing) has *absolutely no* impulse to change arising from itself."⁹ (192 b16-20) Some things therefore are not the product of nature--their placing into appearance does not come from within themselves. But rather they derive from another human logos or address and also from a human know-how or technique. These things are *technē*, technology. As Heidegger here comments clearly: "In the case of artifacts, therefore, the *archē* of their movedness--and thus of the rest that characterizes their being-completed and being-made--is *not* in the artifacts themselves but in something else, the *architekton*, the one who controls the *technē* as *archē*."¹⁰ In the case of technology, therefore, the human underpinning of the world is formally evident--at least in the case of Aristotle. Making, *poiēsis*, is one kind of generation, whereas growing, *physis*, is entirely another. The latter does not require a "supervening *poiēsis* that takes just something lying around (e.g. wood) and brings it into the appearance of 'table.'"¹¹ The supervening *poiēsis* is of course human agency and it underlines in one evident area the human construction of the world. This may be possible only because the world is a human construction in the first place, because nature is originally technology.

ANTHROPOLOGY, INTELLECT AND THE GOSPEL

It is important to stress that this is not a reductionism, making *physis* non-existent apart from the human. I'm not at all arguing in idealist fashion that everything is a modality of mind. Certainly there is an actual physical world. But its realization at the level of meaning and

⁸ Ibid., 213.

⁹ Ibid., 191, italics in original.

¹⁰ Ibid., 193.

truth is intimately bound to anthropology, specifically to the conditions of thought and meaning that Girard has shown to arise at the level of generative violence. This in fact makes the human relationship with the natural world much more critical and responsible than any philosophical idealism. Heidegger himself gives us examples of the primary constitution of abstract philosophical concepts at the level of the anthropological. *Ousia*, the technical term created by Aristotle, meaning substance, essence, being, started out with an "ordinary meaning" of what someone owns, i.e. holdings, financial means, or as Heidegger phrases it "'present assets,' 'property,' *what lies present*."¹² We at once grasp the mimetic drama underlying ontology when we understand that that what lies present before us does so because it is held/possessed by another and is filled with the power of violent rivalry between us, no matter how mediated this might be by custom, law, financial exchange etc.. The word "possess" is itself a formation of Latin "sedere," to sit: it is when a human sits on something that it attains the level of *ousia*, of substance or being. Or, to put it more simply still, *what is*, the something, *is what we want*. Similarly the technical term "category," employed by Aristotle and Kant to denote basic determinations of reality underlying all statements or judgments, this derives from the Greek *kata-agoreuein*. Once again according to Heidegger, it means: "to accuse someone to his face in the *agora*, the public court, of being 'the very one who...'"¹³ To make a categorical judgment is originally to attack someone publicly with words, seeking to overwhelm them in the collective violence of the assembly. In both these instances the metaphysical clarity of key philosophical concepts is rooted in situations of mimetic rivalry and violence.

¹¹ Ibid., 228.

¹² Ibid., 199.

¹³ Ibid., 193.

What happened to make us completely to misrecognize the anthropological underpinning was the intervention of the intellectual vision devised by Plato. Once more according to Heidegger: "We late born, are no longer in a position to appreciate the significance of Plato's daring to use the word *eidōs* for that which in everything and in each particular thing endures as present. For *eidōs*, in the common speech, meant the outward aspect [*Ansicht*] that a visible thing offers to the physical eye. Plato exacts of this word, however, something utterly extraordinary: that it name what precisely is not and never will be perceivable with physical eyes."¹⁴ And not only does *idea* name the nonsensuous visible; it also names and constitutes the essence in the audible, tasteable, tactile, everything of which humans are aware. This is the fundamental move of Western thought and metaphysics, one that sweeps away mimetic underpinnings by instituting sight as a mode of knowing abstracted from its actual physical and, therefore, public reality. In one bold move Plato divides an intellectual world from the public and fleshly world of conflictual mimesis, creating a safe space of truth, order and, indeed, heavenly blessing. In the allegory of the cave in *The Republic* the visible sun becomes an image of the idea of the good which communicates its truth/visibility to all other forms or ideas and is therefore value and good itself, higher than all being and sharing its value with all from its position beyond all. Thus Platonic metaphysics saves humanity from mimesis by providing it with an organ of sight not subject to mimetic interference and reaching up to heaven itself. The move is without doubt brilliant and has seduced Western culture and Christian thought for a long, long time. Aristotle certainly inherits the Platonic intellectualism. It is also this that saves his discovery of movement from mimetic crisis. As we have seen, Aristotle locates the *eidōs* or idea in the very warp and woof of physical reality, understanding it to emerge there when addressed by *logos*. As we have also seen Heidegger

¹⁴ "The Question Concerning Technology" in *Basic Writings*, 301.

gives an ontological reading to *logos* as gathering and to do so he must overall discount its meaning and function as human reason. However, supporting this other, traditional reading is Aristotle's decisive accent on the interior process of understanding or intellection by mind, *nous*. Here the mind works by the internal light of active intellect; in other words is still governed by *idea*.¹⁵

Heidegger instead positively celebrates the crisis of movement, significantly going back behind or around the philosophical tradition of *idea*, mind, consciousness etc.. But it is the dynamics of the gospel that have worked progressively to subvert the obscuring of mimesis in the philosophical tradition, and Heidegger, I am convinced, is a primary beneficiary of the gospel's work. When he returns Western thought to the essential movement of being as coming-to-presence he is in fact responding to the revelatory power of the Christian message neutralizing the force of *idea* in favor of uncertainty and movement.¹⁶ This is true of his great work *Being and Time* where the type of movement in time through which the being of Dasein is disclosed comes to him originally from the New Testament.¹⁷ But it is also generally apparent when we see that his resolute refusal to repeat the gesture of Platonic metaphysics fixing truth in a heavenly stasis means also a willingness to accept that being or nature is inherently prey to the human crisis of violence, something which is progressively opened up to us by the Crucified. Heidegger simply affirms, says yes to, the disclosure of violence brought by the Crucified. Nowhere is this acceptance of the violence of being and

¹⁵ The mind receives the external *eidōs*/form within itself as universal potency and it makes it an intellectual *eidōs* or *idea*, by virtue of the active, immortal intellect which is "a kind of permanent state like light" (*ὅς ἐστις τὴν οἰον τὴν φῶς*), *De Anima* 430a 15.

¹⁶ Kierkegaard is of course the key witness of this process; as he so keenly understood it was Christianity that introduced doubt into the world.

¹⁷ See Merold Westphal in regard to *Being and Time*: "Death will replace the second coming of Christ as the future that will certainly come (but at a time uncertain) and whose coming calls us out of complacent everydayness;" in *Overcoming Onto-Theology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), 42.

humanity more apparent than in his *An Introduction to Metaphysics*: man is in a condition of power and violence because he belongs to being and brings its terrible overpowering to realization in violence. It is also clear that Heidegger has in a typically mythical way reversed the order of anthropology and ontology, giving the latter an originary power and violence and making human violence derivative. But his broad identification of humanity and being in violence is nevertheless certain and only possible because the gospel has opened this truth progressively to the Western philosophical tradition. And for us now reaching the same point in the present discussion we are alerted to the crucial reflection: being or nature cannot be romantically and wishfully separated out and declared pure from the infection of human violence. Both Plato in his way and subsequently the greatest philosopher of the twentieth century showed us the exact opposite to be true.

TECHNOLOGY, POIĒSIS AND THE SACRIFICIAL

But to return again to the question of technology. We left it at the Aristotelian distinction from nature/*physis* where technology is a distinct human intervention or *poiēsis* that provides by means of the human person the generation of the object. Heidegger goes on to reflect on technology in detail in his *The Question Concerning Technology* (first published in 1949 as *Das Gestell*). Here he destabilizes the Aristotelian priority of *physis* over *technē*, referring technology directly to the question of being. He upsets the Aristotelian hierarchy by making *poiēsis*--now translated as bringing-forth--a master trope that now includes *physis*. The evident effect of this move is to take technology away from the specifically human and merge it with the essential movement of being. What better way to change the meaning of one realm (human

production) than give its name to a completely diverse one (nature)? "Not only handicraft manufacture, not only artistic and poetical bringing into appearance ... is a bringing-forth, *poiēsis*. *Physis* also, the arising of something from out of itself, is a bringing-forth, *poiēsis*. *Physis* is indeed *poiēsis* in the highest sense. For what presences by means of *physis* has the bursting open belonging to bringing-forth, e.g. the bursting of a blossom into bloom, in itself (*en heautoō*). In contrast, what is brought forth by the artisan or the artist ... has the bursting open belonging to bringing-forth, not in itself, but in another (*en allōi*), in the craftsman or artist."¹⁸ Thus the traditional Aristotelian distinction is subsumed in a new Heideggerean scheme.

It is necessary for Heidegger to do something like this because of technology's increasingly dominant role in Western culture. He sees it as deciding the question of being for contemporary man. But, on the contrary, being must be made to decide technology, and along with the re-ordering of language the descriptive example Heidegger resorts to is plainly sacrificial. Once he has dispensed with the intellectual Greek tradition this is inevitable. He insists against the grain of conventional wisdom that technology is no mere means to an end, a tool or instrument to bring about a further goal, and to illustrate the point he uses the example of the production of a silver chalice, a sacrificial vessel. Analyzing the making of this object he lists the different types of causality involved, including material, formal and efficient. The most important, however, is the final cause which "is above all responsible for the sacrificial vessel".¹⁹ The *telos* or finality gives the ontological bounds and meaning of the object, "confining the chalice in the realm of consecration and bestowal" that is within the holy or sacred and the forces that flow from it.

¹⁸ "The Question Concerning Technology" in *Basic Writings*, 293.

Heidegger does not further explain these things but simply states the way the *telos* controls the presencing form (*eidos*) and the matter it shapes. "The *telos* is responsible for what as matter and what as aspect are together co-responsible for the sacrificial vessel." But the force of the example is in the power of sacrificial shedding of blood to shape the human universe without a divorce between the anthropological and ontological, to dissolve in fact the separation of these two realms. Sacrifice is indeed a *poiēsis* of being that also includes the *technē* of the chalice. Only in this way is ontology and anthropology, nature and technology, so effortlessly united. The only thing that Heidegger is not admitting is the priority of the killing over the holy. For him it is entirely the other way round. So what the silversmith does is again *legein*, gathering together through pondering, the silver, and the form, and the *telos*, allowing thereby an *apophainesthai*, a shining-forth. But from a Girardian perspective Heidegger has already given the game away. By turning to the sacrificial to assert a *poiēsis* of being that includes technology he has resorted to founding violence. And indeed it is only original violence that can so control everything in one meaning; it is only the sacred that can make the universe run in a single direction. Therefore, *poiēsis* is shown here essentially as sacrifice.

Heidegger seeks to ontologize technology, removing it as an issue of humanism and the philosophical tradition that has obscured being in favor of metaphysics and human control (and by the same token has stabilized mimesis). But the task is more difficult than a simple reversal to a language of being and the sacred and Heidegger then goes on eloquently to protest the vast human control exercised on nature through technology. He calls this an

¹⁹ Ibid., 291.

"enframing" of the world, *Gestell*, a mode of being characteristic of contemporary history. He presents this as a challenging, a violence directed against *physis*. There follows some of Heidegger's most emotive passages where we hear the complaint of a son of the soil, of a landscape romantic, an environmentalist and a philosopher of being, all in one.

The revealing that rules in modern technology is a challenging [*Herausfordern*], which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy which can be extracted and stored as such.... The earth now reveals itself as a coal mining district, the soil as a mineral deposit. The field that the peasant formerly cultivated and set in order appears different from how it did when to set in order still meant to take care of and maintain....

The setting-upon that challenges the energies of nature is an expediting, and in two ways. It expedites in that it unlocks and exposes. Yet that expediting is always itself directed from the beginning toward furthering something else, i.e., toward driving on to the maximum yield at the minimum expense. The coal that has been hauled out in some mining district...is being stored; that is, it is on call, ready to deliver the sun's warmth that is stored in it. The sun's warmth is challenged forth for heat...

The hydroelectric plant is set into the current of the Rhine...In the context of the interlocking processes pertaining to the orderly disposition of electrical energy, even the Rhine itself appears to be something at our command.²⁰

²⁰ Ibid., 297.

What Heidegger is objecting against is the free-floating structural violence of technology, its never-ending heaping-up of nature for purposes of further manipulation, one that never rests. This leaves everything endlessly fragmented and contrasts with the holiness/wholeness of sacrificial violence. The concrete form of consumerism would also have to be included here, the supermarket shelf or car dealership with its piled-up goods, super-differentiated but all the same and again always added to. This is the stockpile ready to hand for the individual person, each person a master of the universe. Although Heidegger only hints at the role of exchange the medium of money, the dollar, would also have to be reckoned, the means by which this stockpile is maximized and moved around among humanity. Heidegger doesn't dwell on this because this would probably be to return the question too obviously to inter-human relationships but from the point of view of mimetic anthropology the question of exchange would be fundamental and in fact a core dynamic of control of nature. It is the world violently grasped and therefore immediately a question of desire and mimesis, and so of the proliferation of mimetic grasping in endlessly reproductive forms. This would propel the stockpiling on exponentially, making it more and more the single theme of contemporary humanity.

Heidegger says explicitly it is a matter of contemporary humanity. Enframing is a threat to "man in his essence."²¹ In it humanity itself is enframed, set up, an item on a market shelf. Enframing leaves human beings empty of being, subject to nihilism, losing all other modes of revealing and so also original revealing. "As soon as what is unconcealed no longer concerns man even as object, but exclusively as standing-reserve, then he comes to the very brink of a precipitous fall, that is, he comes to the point where he himself will have to be

²¹ Ibid., 309.

taken as standing-reserve. Meanwhile, man, precisely as the one so threatened, exalts himself to the posture of lord of the earth. In this way the illusion comes to prevail that everything man encounters exists only insofar as it is his construct."²² So, as far as Heidegger is concerned, humanity must abandon its own dangerous fiction of *poiēsis* and return to the supreme and true *poiēsis* of being, to dwell, as he calls it, poetically in being.

Heidegger's call is for a radical *poiēsis*, one that is sacrificial and so generative on the ontological level, and therefore also revelatory in Heidegger's understanding. From a Girardian perspective, however, such a *poiēsis* is actually no longer fully possible because of what should be called the counter-revelation of the cross, subverting all ontology based in the sacred. Nevertheless, Heidegger is still absolutely correct to situate the problem at the level of such a *poiēsis*; *physis* is a *poiēsis* because the human world depends primordially on a sacrificial genesis. The question then is with what other *poiēsis* is it possible to construct the world once we realize that Heidegger's attempt forcefully to returned us to the generative *poiēsis* of the sacrificial is doomed. On what basis can humanity construct its world. Is it to be in fact the contemporary *poiēsis* of open-ended violent grasping and consumerism? Or will it be simply a fantasy of sacrificial *poiēsis*, nothing more than a sentimental return to nature that repeats Heidegger's gesture knowing it is a fiction? A kind of pastiche *poiēsis*? Or can it be something other, something truly new?

²² Ibid., 308.

BIBLICAL WISDOM AND POIĒSIS

Biblical Wisdom is a different way of imagining and enacting human *poiēsis*; it is an ordering of the world by and through nonviolence, by and for the other, not by and against the other. In contrast to sacrificial ontology biblical Wisdom (*Sophia*) accepts fully the human construction of the world and works to undo the violence of mimesis and its sacrificial *poiēsis*. The purpose of this essay has really been to get us to this point, to open up the ground to where something like this becomes clear and articulated. Only a few pointers can be given now, standing here as we are on the brink of a general biblical and theological development. But the movement to this point is absolutely necessary because it allows the radical alternative of biblical Wisdom to stand forth, to be revealed, as for the first time, without the cloying residue of either metaphysics or revelatory ontology. In contrast, to think in terms of biblical Wisdom is to make the anthropological first philosophy, as it were, the first principle of reflection. The figure of Wisdom is personal and relational in principle, a woman who takes her place before God and transforms the character of nature itself into relationship. "I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always ... and delighting in the human race" (Proverbs 8.30-31) Furthermore when this figure is pursued in and through the figure of Christ (as for example in the gospel of John) a new radical or abyssal *poiēsis* is released, the generative nonviolence of an absolute self-giving. There can be no other meaning anthropologically to the message of the gospels. On the basis of biblical Wisdom human *poiēsis* then becomes neither an enframing of nature, a violent accumulation, nor a regression to the sacred, but a release of the possibility of infinite gift, an abyssal bestowal without a prior evoking violence nor a subsequent evoked violence.

We may see here something of the traditional contrast of nature and grace, or nature and supernature, of a radical separation of two doctrinal themes. The dichotomy is in fact a separation of a new generativity from generative human violence, which is not a different ontological realm, a different "nature," rather an utterly different mode of *poiesis*. It is *poiesis* according to Wisdom, a *Sophia-poiesis*. What I am suggesting at root is an Easter anthropology, a way to examine, teach and model the historico-anthropological impact of the Risen Crucified as a singular intervention in human reality. It is to see the in-breaking of another set of lineaments of the human in the human world, to discern its limbs, its movements, its changed structure of will and desire, and the progressive spiritual or relational impact this has on the human space. It is in fact the transformation of all human modes of relating.

I think in fact that Heidegger has understood this, although he expressed it ontologically, and in an aversive, distorted fashion. What in fact I am trying to do is to rectify the distortion by means of a Girardian lens and thus make Heidegger into a witness for a new in-breaking of the human. For he in fact saw a human future, even though it was seen through the prism of ontology. In maintaining his fidelity to historical modes of being he continues to hold out hope that something new can come, and the intensity of this hope can really coincide only with a biblical perspective. The following words in respect of technology could be taken as an invocation of Sophia; in their final expression they let the human stand forth as both a learning in the midst of present crisis and a possibility of salvation:

The essence of technology is in a lofty sense ambiguous. Such ambiguity points to the mystery of all revealing, i.e. the truth.

On the one hand, enframing challenges forth into the frenziedness of ordering that blocks every view into the coming-to-pass of revealing and so radically endangers the relation to the essence of truth.

On the other hand, enframing comes to pass for its part in the granting that lets man endure--as yet inexperienced, but perhaps more experienced in the future--that he may be the one who is needed and used for the safekeeping of the essence of truth. Thus does the arising of the saving power appear.²³

If we could simply read "biblical Wisdom" instead of "the essence of truth" we would suddenly have both a completely new understanding of history and a new understanding of Christianity on the plane of history. It would be the generativity of biblical Wisdom that has brought about the frenzy of technology in the sense of a first immature affirmation of human control over nature and a mimetic grasping of its goods. As biblical revelation both asserted the intrinsic goodness of creation and stripped away the collective restraints on individual mimesis it has served to release an initial explosion of technology and consumerism. But as this all-too-human response brings its own crisis, or indeed series of crises, it is impelled to reach out for a deeper intelligence or Wisdom within the new generativity it first embraced. Technology and consumerism could be experienced within themselves as entirely inadequate responses to their generative source, and so a saving power is discovered within but away from the frenzy of the first response. If the *poiēsis* of Wisdom

²³ Ibid., 314.

became the truth of history Heidegger would have to agree with this assessment from the deepest level of his own philosophy.

The enormous importance of Heidegger is to show us the way to see nature as a temporal human production, not an object over against the human. Even though he reads *poiēsis* ontologically as a setting-forth of being it is rooted always in temporal human action and primordially in the sacrificial. He thus clears the way for a Girardian re-reading that opens a biblical radicalism and an entirely new possibility of *poiēsis* and with that of *physis*. It renders the world open, requiring to be made. This is the huge significance of his work; he has made nature itself fluid, open, transformable. It is really his watchword. What Girard has given us is the anthropology to make it truly intelligible, that is in mimetic terms: *it is mimesis that sets in motion the human universe*. Mimetit anthropology is also necessarily Christocentric or Sophia-poietic because it is only in through Christ that mimesis is transformed into something nonviolent and new. Jesus-Wisdom sets in motion a new motion, a re-creation, a new genesis. This might seem like a facile religiosity but in the light of the foregoing it is in fact a rigorous anthropology. It is a way of responding to the crisis of human mimesis. To make the shift to the thinking of this anthropology is not less enormous than the shift produced by Plato's revolutionary understanding of the real as *idea*, which was itself a decision about mimesis. It is, however, humanly much more demanding. But as our crisis-ridden times gather their multiple crises into an increasingly unbearable intensity the coherence of such a shift also gathers toward a corresponding urgency and power of possibility. As Paul has said, the more sin thrives the more grace abounds.

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