THE ONTO-THEO-LOGICAL CONSTITUTION OF METAPHYSICS

This seminar made an attempt to begin a conversation with *Hegel.* A conversation with a thinker can be concerned only with the matter of thinking. The matter of thinking presses upon thinking in such a way that only thus does it bring thinking to the heart of the matter and from there to thinking itself.

For Hegel, the matter of thinking is: Thinking as such. In order not to misinterpret this definition of the matter—thinking as such—in psychological or epistemological terms, we must add by way of explanation: thinking as such—in the developed fullness in which what has been thought, has been and now is thought. What this means here we can understand only from Kant's viewpoint, from the essence of the transcendental which Hegel, however, thinks absolutely, and that for him means speculatively. This is Hegel's aim when he says of the thinking of thinking as such that it is developed "purely in the element of thinking." (*Encyclopedia,* Introduction, 14.) To give it a short title, which yet is very difficult to

think through rigorously, this means: the matter of thinking is for Hegel "the idea" (*der Gedanke*). "The idea," developed to its highest essential freedom, becomes "the absolute Idea" (*Idee*). Near the end of the *Science of Logic* (Lasson edition, Vol. II, 484), Hegel says of the absolute Idea: "Only the absolute Idea is *Being*, imperishable *Life*, *self-knowing Truth*, and it is *all Truth*." Thus Hegel himself explicitly gives to the matter of his thinking that name which is inscribed over the whole matter of Western thinking, the name: *Being*.

(In our seminar, the manifold yet unified use of the word "Being" was discussed. For Hegel, Being means first, but *never exclusively*, "indeterminate immediacy." Being is seen here from the viewpoint of determining mediation, that is, from the viewpoint of the absolute concept, and thus with reference to the absolute concept. "The truth of Being is essence," that is, absolute reflection. The truth of essence is the concept in the sense of in-finite self-knowledge. Being is the absolute self-thinking of thinking. Absolute thinking alone is the truth of Being, "is" Being. Truth here means always that the knowable as such is known with a knowledge absolutely certain of itself.)

At the same time, Hegel rigorously thinks about the matter of his thinking in the context of a conversation with the previous history of thinking. Hegel is the first thinker who can and must

think in this way. Hegel's relation to the history of philosophy is the speculative, and only as such a historical, relation. The character of the movement of history is an occurrence in the sense of the dialectical process. Hegel writes: "The same development of thinking which is portrayed in the history of philosophy is portrayed in philosophy itself, but freed from that element of historical externality, *purely in the element of thinking.*" (*Encyclopedia,* 14.)

We stop, baffled. According to Hegel's own words, philosophy itself and the history of philosophy are supposed to be related to each other externally. But the externality of which Hegel thinks is by no means external in the crude sense of being something merely superficial and indifferent. Externality here means that outside dimension in which all history and every real course of events have their place in comparison to the movement of the absolute Idea. The externality of history as explained here, in relation to the Idea, emerges as the result of the Idea's self-externalization. Externality is itself a dialectical determination. We thus fall far short of Hegel's real thought if we state that Hegel has brought historical representation and systematic thinking into a unity in philosophy. For Hegel is concerned neither with historiography, nor with the system in the sense of a doctrinal structure.

What is the purpose of these remarks about philosophy and its

relation to history? They mean to suggest that, for Hegel, the matter of thinking is in itself historical—but historical in the sense of occurrence. The process-character of thinking is determined by the dialectic of Being. For Hegel, the matter of thinking is: Being, as thinking thinking itself; and thinking comes to itself only in the process of its speculative development, thus running through stages of the variously developed, and hence of necessity previously undeveloped, forms.

Only from the matter of thinking thus experienced does a peculiar principle arise for Hegel—the criterion for the manner in which he speaks with those thinkers that preceded him.

Therefore, when we attempt a thinking conversation with Hegel, we must speak with him not just about the same matter, but about the same matter in the same way. But the same is not the merely identical. In the merely identical, the difference disappears. In the same the difference appears, and appears all the more pressingly, the more resolutely thinking is concerned with the same matter in the same way. Hegel thinks of the Being of beings speculative-historically. But inasmuch as Hegel's thinking belongs to a period of history (this does not mean at all that it belongs to the past), we are attempting to think of Being, as Hegel thought of it, in the same manner, that is, to think of it historically.

Thinking can stay with its matter only if it becomes ever more

rigorous in its constancy, only if the same matter becomes for it ever more sharply contested. In this way the matter requires thinking to stay with it in its own manner of being, to remain steadfast toward that manner of being, answering to it by sustaining the matter to its completion. If its matter is Being, the thinking which stays with its matter must involve itself in the perdurance of Being. Accordingly, in a conversation with Hegel we are expected to clarify in advance the sameness of the same matter for the sake of that conversation. According to what has been said, we are required in our conversation with the history of philosophy to elucidate the otherness of the historical at the same time as we elucidate the otherness of the matter of thinking. Such a clarification must of necessity turn out to be short and sketchy.

In order to clarify the diversity that prevails betweeen Hegel's thinking and our own attempt at thinking, we shall note three things.

We shall ask,

1. What is the matter of thinking for Hegel, and what is it for us?
2. What is the criterion for the conversation with the history of thinking for Hegel, and what is it for us?
3. What is the character of this conversation for Hegel, and what is it for us?

To the first question:

For Hegel, the matter of thinking is: Being with respect to beings having been thought in absolute thinking, and as absolute thinking. For us, the matter of thinking is the Same, and thus is Being—but Being with respect to its difference from beings. Put more precisely: for Hegel, the matter of thinking is the idea as the absolute concept. For us, formulated in a preliminary fashion, the matter of thinking is the difference *as* difference.

To the second question:

For Hegel, the criterion for the conversation with the history of philosophy is: to enter into the force and sphere of what has been thought by earlier thinkers. It is not by chance that Hegel advances his principle in the context of a conversation with Spinoza and before a conversation with Kant. (*Science of Logic*, book III, Lasson edition, vol. II, p. 216 ff.) In Spinoza, Hegel finds the fully developed "standpoint of substance" which cannot, however, be the highest standpoint because Being is not yet thought equally fundamentally and resolutely as thinking thinking itself. Being, as substance and substantiality, has not yet developed into the subject in its absolute subjectivity. Still, Spinoza appeals always afresh to the whole thinking of German Idealism, and at the same time

provokes its contradiction, because he lets thinking begin with the absolute. Kant's path, in contrast, is different, and is even more decisive than Spinoza's system for the thinking of absolute idealism and for philosophy generally. Hegel sees in Kant's idea of the original synthesis of apperception "one of the most profound principles for speculative development." (*Ibid.*) For Hegel, the force of each thinker lies in what each has thought, in that their thought can be incorporated into absolute thinking as one of its stages. Absolute thinking is absolute only by moving within its dialectical-speculative process, and thus requiring stages.

For us, the criterion for the conversation with historical tradition is the same, insofar as it is a question of entering into the force of earlier thinking. We, however, do not seek that force in what has already been thought: we seek it in something that has not been thought, and from which what has been thought receives its essential space. But only what has already been thought prepares what has not yet been thought, which enters ever anew into its abundance. The criterion of what has not been thought does not lead to the inclusion of previous thought into a still higher development and systematization that surpass it. Rather, the criterion demands that traditional thinking be set free into its essential past which is still preserved. This essential past prevails throughout the tradition in an originary way, is always in being in advance of it,

and yet is never expressly thought in its own right and as the Originary.

To the third question:

For Hegel, the conversation with the earlier history of philosophy has the character of *Aufhebung*,[1] that is, of the mediating concept in the sense of an absolute foundation.

For us, the character of the conversation with the history of thinking is no longer *Aufhebung* (elevation), but the step back.

Elevation leads to the heightening and gathering area of truth posited as absolute, truth in the sense of the completely developed certainty of self-knowing knowledge.

The step back points to the realm which until now has been skipped over, and from which the essence of truth becomes first of all worthy of thought.

After this brief characterization of the difference between Hegel's thinking and ours with respect to the matter, and with respect to the criterion and character, of a conversation with the history of thinking, let us now try to proceed with the conversation begun with Hegel and clarify it a little more. This means: we venture an

[1] Aufhebung. This *terminus technicus* of Hegel's philosophy has the triple meaning of negating something in its mere individuality as a partial reality (*negare*), of preserving it in its essential being (*conservare*), and of elevating it into the higher sphere of the whole of reality (*elevare*). (Tr.)

attempt with the step back. The term "step back" suggests various misinterpretations. "Step back" does not mean an isolated step of thought, but rather means the manner in which thinking moves, and a long path. Since the step back determines the character of our conversation with the history of Western thinking, our thinking in a way leads us away from what has been thought so far in philosophy. Thinking recedes before its matter, Being, and thus brings what is thought into a confrontation in which we behold the whole of this history—behold it with respect to what constitutes the source of this entire thinking, because it alone establishes and prepares for this thinking the area of its abode. In contrast to Hegel, this is not a traditional problem, already posed, but what has always remained unasked throughout this history of thinking. We speak of it, tentatively and unavoidably, in the language of tradition. We speak of the *difference* between Being and beings. The step back goes from what is unthought, from the difference as such, into what gives us thought.[2] That is the *oblivion* of the difference. The oblivion here to be thought is the veiling of the difference as such, thought in terms of Λήθη (concealment); this veiling has in turn withdrawn itself from the beginning. The oblivion belongs to the difference because the difference belongs to the oblivion.

[2] *Das zu-Denkende* is that which gives thinking to us and it is that which is to be thought. (Tr.)

The oblivion does not happen to the difference only afterward, in consequence of the forgetfulness of human thinking.

The difference between beings and Being is the area within which metaphysics, Western thinking in its entire nature, can be what it is. The step back thus moves out of metaphysics into the essential nature of metaphysics. The remark about Hegel's use of the ambiguous key word "Being" shows that discourse about Being and beings can never be pinned down to *one* epoch in the history of the clearing of "Being." Nor does discourse about "Being" ever understand this name in the sense of a genus, an empty generality under which the historically represented doctrines of beings are subsumed as individual cases. "Being" ever and always speaks as destiny, and thus permeated by tradition.

But the step back out of metaphysics into its essential nature requires a duration and an endurance whose dimensions we do not know. Only one thing is clear: the step back calls for a preparation which must be ventured here and now; but it must be ventured in the face of beings as such and as a whole, as they *are* now and are visibly beginning to show themselves ever more unequivocally. What now *is*, is marked by the dominance of the active nature of modern technology. This dominance is already presenting itself in all areas of life, by various identifiable traits such as functionalization, systematic improvement, automation, bureaucratization,

communications. Just as we call the idea of living things biology, just so the presentation and full articulation of all beings, dominated as they now are everywhere by the nature of the technical, may be called technology. The expression may serve as a term for the metaphysics of the atomic age. Viewed from the present and drawn from our insight into the present, the step back out of metaphysics into the essential nature of metaphysics is the step out of technology and technological description and interpretation of the age, into the *essence* of modern technology which is still to be thought.

This remark ought to prevent the other obvious misinterpretation of the term "step back": the view that the step back consists in a historical return to the earliest thinkers of Western philosophy. The "whither" to which the step back directs us, develops and shows itself only in the execution of the step.

In order to gain perspective in the seminar on the whole of Hegelian metaphysics, we chose as a temporary expedient an interpretation of the section which opens the first book of the *Science of Logic*, "The doctrine of Being." The section title alone gives us in each of its words enough to think about. It reads: "*With what must the beginning of science be made?*" Hegel's answer to this question consists in the demonstration that the beginning is "of a speculative nature." This means: the beginning is neither something immediate nor something mediated. We tried to express

this nature of the beginning in a speculative sentence: "The beginning is the result." In accordance with the dialectical plurality of meanings of the "is," this means several things. It means for one thing: the beginning—taking *resultare* in its literal meaning[1]—is the rebound of thinking thinking itself out of the completion of the dialectical movement. The completion of this movement, the absolute Idea, is the totality developed within itself, the fullness of Being. The rebound from this fullness results in the emptiness of Being. In science (the absolute, self-knowing knowledge) the beginning must be made with this emptiness. The beginning and the end of the movement, and before them the movement itself, always remains Being. It has its being as the movement, revolving within itself, from fullness into the most extreme self-externalization and again from there into self-completing fullness. The matter of thinking thus is for Hegel thinking thinking itself as Being revolving within itself. In an inversion which is not only legitimate but necessary, the speculative sentence concerning the beginning runs: "The result is the beginning." The beginning must really be made with the result, since the beginning results from that result.

This says the same as the remark which Hegel adds in an aside and in parentheses, near the end of the section about the beginning: "(and *God* would have the uncontested right to have the beginning

[1] *resultare*—to leap back, to rebound.

made with him)" (Lasson edition, vol. I, 63). According to the question that is the title of the section, we are now dealing with the "beginning of science." If science must begin with God, then it is the science of God: theology. This name is taken here in its later meaning of theo-logy as statements of representational thinking about God. θεόλογος, θεολογία mean at this point the mytho-poetic utterance about the gods, with no reference to any creed or ecclesiastical doctrine.

Why is "science"—which since Fichte is the name for meta-physics—why is science theology? Answer: because science is the systematic development of knowledge, the Being of beings knows itself as this knowledge, and thus it is in truth. The schoolmen's name which during the transition from the medieval to the modern period emerges for the science of Being, that is, for the science of beings as such in general, is ontosophy or ontology. Western meta-physics, however, since its beginning with the Greeks has eminently been both ontology and theology, still without being tied to these rubrics. For this reason my inaugural lecture *What is Metaphysics?* (1929) defines metaphysics as the question about beings as such *and* as a whole. The wholeness of this whole is the unity of all beings that unifies as the generative ground. To those who can read, this means: metaphysics is onto-theo-logy. Someone who has experienced theology in his own roots, both the theology of the

Christian faith and that of philosophy, would today rather remain silent about God when he is speaking in the realm of thinking. For the onto-theological character of metaphysics has become questionable for thinking, not because of any kind of atheism, but from the experience of a thinking which has discerned in onto-theo-logy the still *unthought* unity of the essential nature of metaphysics. This nature of metaphysics, however, still remains what is most worthy of thought for thinking, as long as thinking does not break off the conversation with its tradition, permeated by destiny, in an arbitrary manner thus unrelated to destiny.

In the fifth (1949) edition of *What is Metaphysics?*, a new introduction explicitly refers to the onto-theological nature of metaphysics. But it would be rash to assert that metaphysics is theology because it is ontology. One would say first: Metaphysics is theology, a statement about God, because the deity enters into philosophy. Thus the question about the onto-theological character of metaphysics is sharpened to the question: How does the deity enter into philosophy, not just modern philosophy, but philosophy as such? This question can be answered only after it has first been sufficiently developed as a question.

We can properly think through the question, How does the deity enter into philosophy?, only when that *to which* the deity is to come has become sufficiently clear: that is, philosophy itself. As

long as we search through the history of philosophy merely historically, we shall find everywhere that the deity has entered into it. But assuming that philosophy, as thinking, is the free and spontaneous self-involvement with beings as such, then the deity can come into philosophy only insofar as philosophy, of its own accord and by its own nature, requires and determines that and how the deity enters into it. The question, How does the deity enter into philosophy?, leads back to the question, What is the origin of the onto-theological essential constitution of metaphysics? To accept this kind of question means to accomplish the step back.

In this step, we turn our thought to the essential origin of the onto-theological structure of all metaphysics. We ask: How does the deity, and therewith accordingly theology, and with theology the onto-theological character, enter into metaphysics? We raise this question in the context of a conversation with the whole of the history of philosophy. But we are questioning at the same time with a particular regard to Hegel. Here we are prompted to give thought first to a curious fact.

Hegel thinks of Being in its most empty emptiness, that is, in its most general aspect. At the same time, he thinks of Being in its fully completed fullness. Still, he does not call speculative philosophy, that is, philosophy proper, onto-theo-logy but rather "Science

of Logic." By giving it this name, Hegel brings to light something decisive. It would be easy, of course, to explain the designation of metaphysics as "logic" by pointing out that for Hegel the matter of thinking is "the idea," understanding that word as a *singulare tantum*. The idea, thinking, is obviously and by ancient custom the theme of logic. Certainly. But it is just as incontestable that Hegel, faithful to tradition, sees the matter of thinking in beings as such and as a whole, in the movement of Being from its emptiness to its developed fullness.

But how can "Being" ever come to present itself as "thought"? How else than by the fact that Being is previously marked as ground, while thinking—since it belongs together with Being—gathers itself toward Being as its ground, in the manner of giving ground and accounting for the ground.[3] Being manifests itself as thought. This means: the Being of beings reveals itself as the ground that gives itself ground and accounts for itself. The ground, the *ratio* by their essential origin are the Λόγος, in the sense of the gathering of beings and letting them be. They are the Ἕν Πάντα. Thus "science," that is, metaphysics, is in truth "logic"

[3] There are three closely related terms in the German text: "*begründen*" (to account for), "*ergründen*" (to give the ground), and "*gründen*" (to ground). In a consultation Heidegger clarified the relation of these terms as follows: "*Begründen*" has to do with beings and is ontic. "*Ergründen*" belongs to Being and is ontological. "*Gründen*" is the relationship of "*begründen*" and "*ergründen*" and encompasses both. (Tr.)

for Hegel not because the theme of science is thinking, but because *Being* remains the matter of thinking; while Being, ever since the early days when it became unconcealed in the character of Λόγος, the ground that grounds, claims thinking—the accounting of the ground—for itself.

Metaphysics thinks of beings as such, that is, in general. Metaphysics thinks of beings as such, as a whole. Metaphysics thinks of the Being of beings both in the ground-giving unity of what is most general, what is indifferently valid everywhere, and also in the unity of the all that accounts for the ground, that is, of the All-Highest. The Being of beings is thus thought of in advance as the grounding ground. Therefore all metaphysics is at bottom, and from the ground up, what grounds, what gives account of the ground, what is called to account by the ground, and finally what calls the ground to account.

Why do we mention this? So that we may experience the shop-worn terms ontology, theology, onto-theology in their true gravity. At first and commonly, the terms ontology and theology do, of course, look like other familiar terms: psychology, biology, cosmology, archeology. The last syllable, -logy, means broadly and usually that we are dealing with the science of the soul, of living things, of the cosmos, of ancient things. But -logy hides more than just the logical in the sense of what is consistent and generally in

the nature of a statement, what structures, moves, secures, and communicates all scientific knowledge. In each case, the -Logia is the totality of a nexus of grounds accounted for, within which nexus the objects of the sciences are represented in respect of their ground, that is, are conceived. Ontology, however, and theology are "Logies" inasmuch as they provide the ground of beings as such and account for them within the whole. They account for Being as the ground of beings. They account to the Λόγος, and are in an essential sense in accord with the Λόγος-, that is they are the logic of the Λόγος. Thus they are more precisely called onto-logic and theo-logic. More rigorously and clearly thought out, metaphysics is: onto-theo-logic.

We now understand the name "logic" in the essential sense which includes also the title used by Hegel, and only thus explains it: as the name for that kind of thinking which everywhere provides and accounts for the ground of beings as such within the whole in terms of Being as the ground (Λόγος). The fundamental character of metaphysics is onto-theo-logic. We should now be in a position to explain how the deity enters into philosophy.

To what extent is an explanation successful? To the extent that we take heed of the following: the matter of thinking is beings as such, that is, Being. Being shows itself in the nature of the ground. Accordingly, the matter of thinking, Being as the ground, is

thought out fully only when the ground is represented as the first ground, πρώτη ἀρχή. The original matter of thinking presents itself as the first cause, the *causa prima* that corresponds to the reason-giving path back to the *ultima ratio*, the final accounting. The Being of beings is represented fundamentally, in the sense of the ground, only as *causa sui*. This is the metaphysical concept of God. Metaphysics must think in the direction of the deity because the matter of thinking is Being; but Being is in being as ground in diverse ways: as Λόγος, as ὑποκείμενον, as substance, as subject.

This explanation, though it supposedly touches upon something that is correct, is quite inadequate for the interpretation of the essential nature of metaphysics, because metaphysics is not only theo-logic but also onto-logic. Metaphysics, first of all, is neither only the one nor the other *also*. Rather, metaphysics is theo-logic because it is onto-logic. It is onto-logic because it is theo-logic. The onto-theological essential constitution of metaphysics cannot be explained in terms of either theologic or ontologic, even if an explanation could ever do justice here to what remains to be thought out.

For it still remains unthought by what unity ontologic and theologic belong together, what the origin of this unity is, and what the difference of the differentiated which this unity unifies. All of

this still remains unthought. The problem here is obviously not a union of two independent disciplines of metaphysics, but the unity of *what* is in question, and in thought, in ontologic and theologic: beings as such in the universal and primal *at one with* beings as such in the highest and ultimate. The unity of this One is of such a kind that the ultimate in its own way accounts for the primal, and the primal in its own way accounts for the ultimate. The difference between the two ways of accounting belongs to the still-unthought difference we mentioned.

The essential constitution of metaphysics is based on the unity of beings as such in the universal and that which is highest.

Our task here is to deal with the question about the onto-theological nature of metaphysics first of all simply as a question. Only the matter itself can direct us to the point with which the question about the onto-theological constitution of metaphysics deals. It can do so in this way, that we attempt to think of the matter of thinking in a more rigorous manner. The matter of thinking has been handed down to Western thinking under the name "Being." If we think of this matter just a bit more rigorously, if we take more heed of what is in contest in the matter, we see that *Being* means always and everywhere: the Being of *beings*. The genitive in this phrase is to be taken as a *genitivus objectivus*. *Beings* means always and everywhere the beings *of Being*; here the genitive is to be taken

as a *genitivus subjectivus*. It is, however, with certain reservations that we speak of a genitive in respect to object and subject, because these terms, subject and object, in their turn stem from a particular character of Being. Only this much is clear, that when we deal with the Being of beings and with the beings of Being, we deal in each case with a difference.

Thus we think of Being rigorously only when we think of it in its difference with beings, and of beings in their difference with Being. The difference thus comes specifically into view. If we try to form a representational idea of it, we will at once be misled into conceiving of difference as a relation which our representing has added to Being and to beings. Thus the difference is reduced to a distinction, something made up by our understanding (*Verstand*).

But if we assume that the difference is a contribution made by our representational thinking, the question arises: a contribution to what? One answers: to beings. Good. But what does that mean: "beings"? What else could it mean than: something that *is*? Thus we give to the supposed contribution, the representational idea of difference, a place within Being. But "Being" itself says: Being which is *beings*. Whenever we come to the place to which we were supposedly first bringing difference along as an alleged contribution, we always find that Being and beings in their difference are already there. It is as in Grimm's fairytale *The Hedgehog and*

the Hare: "I'm here already." Now it would be possible to deal with this strange state of affairs—that Being and beings are always found to be already there by virtue of and within the difference—in a crude manner and explain it as follows: our representational thinking just happens to be so structured and constituted that it will always, so to speak over its own head and out of its own head, insert the difference ahead of time between beings and Being. Much might be said, and much more might be asked, about this seemingly convincing but also rashly given explanation—and first of all, we might ask: where does the "between" come from, into which the difference is, so to speak, to be inserted?

We shall discard all views and explanations, and instead note the following: this thing that is called difference, we encounter it everywhere and always in the matter of thinking, in beings as such -encounter it so unquestioningly that we do not even notice this encounter itself. Nor does anything compel us to notice it. Our thinking is free either to pass over the difference without a thought or to think of it specifically as such. But this freedom does not apply in every case. Unexpectedly it may happen that thinking finds itself called upon to ask: what does it say, this Being that is mentioned so often? If Being here shows itself concurrently as the Being of . . . , thus in the genitive of the difference, then the preceding question is more properly: what do you make of the dif-

ference if Being as well as beings appear *by virtue of the difference,* each in its own way? To do justice to this question, we must first assume a proper position face to face with the difference. Such a confrontation becomes manifest to us once we accomplish the step back. Only as this step gains for us greater distance does what is near give itself as such, does nearness achieve its first radiance. By the step back, we set the matter of thinking, Being as difference, free to enter a position face to face, which may well remain wholly without an object.

While we are facing the difference, though by the step back we are already releasing it into that which gives thought, we can say: the Being of beings means Being which is beings. The "is" here speaks transitively, in transition. Being here becomes present in the manner of a transition to beings. But Being does not leave its own place and go over to beings, as though beings were first without Being and could be approached by Being subsequently. Being transits (that), comes unconcealingly over (that) which arrives as something of itself unconcealed only by that coming-over.[4] Arrival means: to keep concealed in unconcealedness—to abide present in this keeping—to be a being.

Being shows itself as the unconcealing overwhelming. Beings as

[4] *Überkommnis,* coming-over, overwhelming (Tr.)

such appear in the manner of the arrival that keeps itself concealed in unconcealedness.

Being in the sense of unconcealing overwhelming, and beings as such in the sense of arrival that keeps itself concealed, are present, and thus differentiated, by virtue of the Same, the differentiation. That differentiation alone grants and holds apart the "between," in which the overwhelming and the arrival are held toward one another, are borne away from and toward each other. The difference of Being and beings, as the differentiation of overwhelming and arrival, is the perdurance (Austrag) of the two in *unconcealing keeping in concealment.* Within this perdurance there prevails a clearing of what veils and closes itself off—and this its prevalence bestows the being apart, and the being toward each other, of overwhelming and arrival.

In our attempt to think of the difference as such, we do not make it disappear; rather, we follow it to its essential origin. On our way there we think of the perdurance of overwhelming and arrival. This is the matter of thinking, thought closer to rigorous thinking —closer by the distance of one step back: Being thought in terms of the difference.

We here need to insert a remark, however, concerning what we said about the matter of thinking—a remark that again and again calls for our attention. When we say "Being," we use the word in

its widest and least definite general meaning. But even when we speak merely of a general meaning, we have thought of Being in an inappropriate way. We represent Being in a way in which It, Being, never gives itself. The manner in which the matter of thinking—Being—comports itself, remains a unique state of affairs. Initially, our customary ways of thinking are never able to clarify it more than inadequately. This we shall try to show by an example, bearing in mind from the start that nowhere in beings is there an example for the active nature of Being, because the nature of Being is itself the unprecedented exemplar.

Hegel at one point mentions the following case to characterize the generality of what is general: Someone wants to buy fruit in a store. He asks for fruit. He is offered apples and pears, he is offered peaches, cherries, grapes. But he rejects all that is offered. He absolutely wants to have fruit. What was offered to him in every instance *is* fruit and yet, it turns out, fruit cannot be bought.

It is still infinitely more impossible to represent "Being" as the general characteristic of particular beings. There is Being only in this or that particular historic character: Φύσις, Λόγος, Ἕν, Ἰδέα, Ἐνέργεια, Substantiality, Objectivity, Subjectivity, the Will, the Will to Power, the Will to Will. But these historic forms cannot be found in rows, like apples, pears, peaches, lined up on the counter of historical representational thinking.

And yet, did we not hear of Being in the historical order and sequence of the dialectical process that is in Hegel's thought? Certainly. But here, too, Being gives itself only in the light that cleared itself for Hegel's thinking. That is to say: the manner in which it, Being, gives itself, is itself determined by the way in which it clears itself. This way, however, is a historic, always epochal character which has being for us as such only when we release it into its own native past. We attain to the nearness of the historic only in that sudden moment of a recall in thinking. The same also holds true for the experience of the given character of that difference of Being and beings to which corresponds a given interpretation of beings as such. What has been said holds true above all also for our attempt in the step back out of the oblivion of the difference as such, to think this difference as the perdurance of unconcealing overcoming and of self-keeping arrival. If we listen more closely, we shall realize, of course, that in this discussion about perdurance we have already allowed the essential past to speak inasmuch as we are thinking of unconcealing and keeping concealed, of transition (transcendence), and of arrival (presence). In fact, it may be that this discussion, which assigns the difference of Being and beings to perdurance as the approach to their essence, even brings to light something all-pervading which pervades Being's destiny from its beginning to its completion. Yet it remains difficult to

say how this all-pervasiveness is to be thought, if it is neither something universal, valid in all cases, nor a law guaranteeing the necessity of a process in the sense of the dialectical.

The only thing that now matters for our task is an insight into a possibility of thinking of the difference as a perdurance so as to clarify to what extent the onto-theological constitution of metaphysics has its essential origin in the perdurance that begins the history of metaphysics, governs all of its epochs, and yet remains everywhere concealed *as* perdurance, and thus forgotten in an oblivion which even escapes itself.

In order to facilitate that insight, let us think of Being, and in Being of the difference, and in the difference of perdurance in terms of that character of Being through which Being has cleared itself as Λόγος, as the ground. Being shows itself in the unconcealing overwhelming as that which allows whatever arrives to lie before us, as the grounding in the manifold ways in which beings are brought about before us. Beings as such, the arrival that keeps itself concealed in unconcealedness, is what is grounded; so grounded and so generated, it in turn grounds in its own way, that is, it effects, it causes. The perdurance of that which grounds and that which is grounded, as such, not only holds the two apart, it holds them facing each other. What is held apart is held in the tension of perdurance in such a way that not only does Being

ground beings as their ground, but beings in their turn ground, cause Being in their way. Beings can do so only insofar as they "are" the fullness of Being: they are what *is* most of all.

Here our reflections reach an exciting juncture. Being becomes present as Λόγος in the sense of ground, of allowing to let lie before us. The same Λόγος, as the gathering of what unifies, is the Ἕν. This Ἕν, however, is twofold. For one thing, it is the unifying One in the sense of what is everywhere primal and thus most universal; and at the same time it is the unifying One in the sense of the All-Highest (Zeus). The Λόγος grounds and gathers everything into the universal, and accounts for and gathers everything in terms of the unique. It may be noted in passing that the same Λόγος also contains within itself the essential origin of the character of all language, and thus determines the way of utterance as a logical way in the broader sense.

Inasmuch as Being becomes present as the Being of beings, as the difference, as perduration, the separateness and mutual relatedness of grounding and of accounting for endures, Being grounds beings, and beings, as what *is* most of all, account for Being. One comes over the other, one arrives in the other. Overwhelming and arrival appear in each other in reciprocal reflection. Speaking in terms of the difference, this means: perdurance is a circling, the circling of Being and beings around each other. Grounding

itself appears within the clearing of perdurance as something that *is*, thus itself as a being that requires the corresponding accounting for through a being, that is, causation, and indeed causation by the highest cause.

One of the classic examples in the history of metaphysics of this situation is found in a generally neglected text of Leibniz, which we shall call for short "The 24 Theses of Metaphysics" (Gerh. Phil. VII, 289 ff.; cf. M. Heidegger, *Der Satz vom Grund*, 1957, 51 ff.).

Metaphysics responds to Being as Λόγος, and is accordingly in its basic characteristics everywhere logic, but a logic that thinks of the Being of beings, and thus the logic which is determined by what differs in the difference: onto-theo-logic.

Since metaphysics thinks of beings as such as a whole, it represents beings in respect of what differs in the difference, and without heeding the difference as difference.

What differs shows itself as the Being of beings in general, and as the Being of beings in the Highest.

Because Being appears as ground, beings are what is grounded; the highest being, however, is what accounts in the sense of giving the first cause. When metaphysics thinks of beings with respect to the ground that is common to all beings as such, then it is logic as onto-logic. When metaphysics thinks of beings as such as a whole, that is, with respect to the highest being which accounts for every-

thing, then it is logic as theo-logic.

Because the thinking of metaphysics remains involved in the difference which as such is unthought, metaphysics is both ontology and theology in a unified way, by virtue of the unifying unity of perdurance.

The onto-theological constitution of metaphysics stems from the prevalence of that difference which keeps Being as the ground, and beings as what is grounded and what gives account, apart from and related to each other; and by this keeping, perdurance is achieved.

That which bears such a name directs our thinking to the realm which the key words of metaphysics—Being and beings, the ground and what is grounded—are no longer adequate to utter. For what these words name, what the manner of thinking that is guided by them represents, originates as that which differs by virtue of the difference. The origin of the difference can no longer be thought of within the scope of metaphysics.

The insight into the onto-theological constitution of metaphysics shows a possible way to answer the question, "How does the deity enter into philosophy?," in terms of the essence of metaphysics.

The deity enters into philosophy through the perdurance of which we think at first as the approach to the active nature of the difference between Being and beings. The difference constitutes the

ground plan in the structure of the essence of metaphysics. The perdurance results in and gives Being as the generative ground. This ground itself needs to be properly accounted for by that for which it accounts, that is, by the causation through the supremely original matter—and that is the cause as *causa sui.* This is the right name for the god of philosophy. Man can neither pray nor sacrifice to this god. Before the *causa sui,* man can neither fall to his knees in awe nor can he play music and dance before this god.

The god-less thinking which must abandon the god of philosophy, god as *causa sui,* is thus perhaps closer to the divine God. Here this means only: god-less thinking is more open to Him than onto-theo-logic would like to admit.

This remark may throw a little light on the path to which thinking is on its way, that thinking which accomplishes the step back, back out of metaphysics into the active essence of metaphysics, back out of the oblivion of the difference as such into the destiny of the withdrawing concealment of perdurance.

No one can know whether and when and where and how this step of thinking will develop into a proper (needed in appropriation) path and way and road-building. Instead, the rule of metaphysics may rather entrench itself, in the shape of modern technology with its developments rushing along boundlessly. Or, everything that results by way of the step back may merely be exploited and ab-

sorbed by metaphysics in its own way, as the result of representational thinking.

Thus the step back would itself remain unaccomplished, and the path which it opens and points out would remain untrod.

Such reflections impose themselves easily, but they carry no weight compared with an entirely different difficulty through which the step back must pass.

That difficulty lies in language. Our Western languages are languages of metaphysical thinking, each in its own way. It must remain an open question whether the nature of Western languages is in itself marked with the exclusive brand of metaphysics, and thus marked permanently by onto-theo-logic, or whether these languages offer other possibilities of utterance—and that means at the same time of a telling silence. The difficulty to which thoughtful utterance is subject has appeared often enough in the course of this seminar. The little word "is," which speaks everywhere in our language, and tells of Being even where It does not appear expressly, contains the whole destiny of Being—from the ἔστιν γὰρ εἶναι of Parmenides to the "is" of Hegel's speculative sentence, and to the dissolution of the "is" in the positing of the Will to Power with Nietzsche.

Our facing this difficulty that stems from language should keep us from hastily recasting the language of the thinking here at-