

Heideggerian Love

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Das Ereignis hat die Liebe
(The event has the love)

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How to develop a phenomenology of love? How to find a thinking-word that might correspond to how love shows itself from itself, that is, to the way loves appears as love? A phenomenology of love is neither a psychological nor a biological description of a set of experiences we might wish to call love. Neither is it for that matter an attempt to describe in concepts what happens with the soul and the living-body when what is called love is experienced. It is rather the search for a thinking-word that corresponds and responds to the multiple ways love gives itself as love. To correspond and respond is, however, already a kind of “love” and it was in this sense that the word *philosophia* was first pronounced by the Greeks. Philosophy already says love, *philia*, in the sense of both a correspondence and a response to the all of being (*to sofón*). A philosophy of love is therefore already entangled with the love of philosophy, and the search for a thinking-word, for a philosophical word about love, is already an act of love.

At the same time that a philosophical discussion about love should not forget that the word philosophy is already saying love, it can, all the same, hardly deny the gap that exists between philosophy and love. Not only the insufficiency of philosophy to grasp with thoughts and words the plural experience of how love appears, but how the ungraspability of love also becomes graspable. Love is more “ponderous

1. Martin Heidegger, “Ereignis” in *Gedachtes*, GA 81 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2007), 269

than the tongue,”² as Cordella is meant to show in Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, as the one who loves and keeps silent on love, even when this results in the uttermost suffering, as a banishment from love. To keep silent on the subject of love – respecting here Rilke’s poetical lesson of “don’t speak about love,” which he will prescribe to a young poet – means to correspond and respond to the many faces and names of love. Its many faces and names show how effusive and disseminative love can be. Indeed “love in the singular is itself perhaps nothing but the indefinite abundance of all possible loves,” to recall the words of Jean-Luc Nancy.³ Saying love, one says in the singular the “indefinite abundance” of all possible loves; one says in the singular a multi-various plural that cannot be brought into a general or universal concept. Thus love withdraws and exceeds the thoughts of words and the wording of thoughts. Love is not the general concept of different kinds and manners of loving, but the name of many names, the hymn of many hymns, sounding as several hymns together, as *polymnia*. *Polyminia* was one of the nine muses, sister to *Erató*, the muse of erotic poetry. It is perhaps rather *Polymnia* that shows the proper of *Erató* and thereby of the naming of Eros. As “nursing mother of the dance,” as the one who, at the wedding of Kadmos and Harmonia, “waved her arms, and sketched in the air an image of a soundless voice, speaking with hands and moving eyes in a graphic picture of silence full of meaning,”⁴ *Polyminia* shows the strange kind of name that love is, the strangeness of the name of many names. This may itself give us a sign as to why, when discussing the love proper to *philosophia*, Plato and the Ancients will talk about Eros, describing *philia* in terms of Eros. Here, what appears is the polymnic rather than the polemic character of love; its indefinite abundance disables the philosophical attempts to grasp it conceptually when, for the sake of finding a common measure of and for love,

2. Shakespeare, *King Lear*, act one, v. 24–25.

3. Jean-Luc Nancy, “L’amour en éclats” in *Une pensée finie* (Paris: Galillé, 1991). For the English version, see “Shattered love” in *A Finite Thinking*, ed. By Simon Spraks (Stanford: California: Stanford University Press, 2003).

4. Nonnus, *Dionysiaca* 5, trans. William Henry Denham Rouse, Loeb Classical Library 344 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940), 88 ff. (Greek epic C5th A.D.)

different kinds of love are distinguished from each other. In its own name – *philosophia* – philosophy already experiences its limits and insufficiencies: its love for grasping the all and yet never reaching the all with its thinking words. Precisely in the task of thinking love, philosophy, the love of thinking, is brought to its limits.

A phenomenology of love should therefore depart from its own limit, from the limit of philosophy itself, or at least from a philosophy that has brought philosophy to its own limits. It should depart from the uncanny equation between the generous abundance of forms, names, gifts of love and the poverty of conceptual attempts to grasp the meaning of loving experiences. It should depart from a thought that has acknowledged the coldness and debilitation not only of concepts but even of language to name, showing how seldom thinking words of love are. This is the main reason for “reading” the seldom words of love in Heidegger’s thought and for discussing what can be called “Heideggerian love.” Because Heidegger thought the end of philosophy, because he brought philosophy to its limits,⁵ he offers us the possibility for thinking the relation between philosophy and love when philosophy experiences itself at the edge. Heidegger’s seldom words on love are to be understood as words being pronounced from a philosophy that is brought to its own limits, to a placeless place where the seldomness and rarity of every love shows itself from itself.

To philosophize from within the limits of philosophy means, in Heidegger’s terms, to philosophize from within the time in which the Gods have abandoned the humans. It is to philosophize from the perspective of the “last man,” as Nietzsche would say, of “the one who has to ask: What is love? What is a star? What is creation?”⁶ for no longer is one able to ask *from* love, *from* the stars, *from* creation. A time of humans abandoned by the Gods is a time of humans abandoned by Eros. Thus Eros is not only one of the Gods but, according to Parmenides, the first of the Gods, *prôtiston theôn*.⁷ Heidegger will translate this fragment in a note as the “highest and mostly first,” *höchsten zu-*

5. Jean-Luc Nancy, op. cit.

6. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra. Vorrede. Kritische Studienausgabe* (München, Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988), 2224, 19.

7. Parmenides, *On Nature*, B13.

erst.⁸ If we acknowledge Plato's description of Eros as a demi-God, an in-between Gods and humans, connecting abundance and poverty, excess and lack – and this as the very meaning of being “highest and mostly first” – we could say that to philosophize from a philosophy brought to its limits means to philosophize in a time when the tension between Gods and humans is withdrawn. As such, the abandon of Eros reveals however a fundamental trait of Eros, namely of not being in possession by humans. If Eros abandons humans it is because they do not possess Eros. It is rather he Eros who possesses them. The abandon of Eros show that Eros must first overtake and befall humans so that they may fall in love. The humans must first be loved by Eros and only then may they love. Indeed, Eros, love, is overtaking and befalling, reaching existence as an arrow pierces the body of the soul. Eros befalls and shakes the soul, as Sappho sings:

Now like a mountain wind the oaks o'erwhelming,
Eros shakes my soul.⁹

In different languages, to “fall in love” is a common way to say “to love.” This occurs not primarily because one “loses the head” and falls, as Plato acknowledges, under the tyranny of love¹⁰ but rather because Eros has befallen one, shaking the soul of the body as a catastrophe. In a letter from June 1918, the young Heidegger describes the overtaking action of love, saying that: “The you” of your loving soul overtook me” (*Das “Du” Deiner liebenden Seele traf mich*¹¹). In this letter, Heidegger speaks of love as the experience of *being-struck-by* (*Getroffensein*), as an immediate and bridgeless “belonging-to-you” (*unmittelbar, brückenlose “Dir”-Gehören*), affirming in this being joined by hyphen, so to speak, the beginning of the outburst of a belief in one's own self, of a belief in becoming oneself.¹² Eros, the highest and the

8. Heidegger, *GA 81*, 258 “als höchsten zuerst freilich Eros unter den Göttern be-dachte (Moirā) von allen ...<C Parmenides nach Plato, Symposium 178 b.

9. Sappho, frag 44, *Alcée Sappho* (Paris: ed. Les Belles Lettres, 1966), 228, cited by Maximus Tyrius when comparing Socrates and Sappho on love.

10. Plato, *Politeia*, 573b

11. Heidegger, *GA 81*, 16.

12. *Ibid.*

first among the Gods is the God of the highest first. Eros is the God of an overtaking and befalling in which an overwhelming beginning takes place. Both Eros' incipient overtaking and befalling are so overwhelming that words seem "so cold and bordered, so full of finitude and limitation – (that) the only I wish is to always look into your eyes, profound as mountains and seas, and with trembling lips kiss your pure face,"¹³ as Heidegger also wrote. Cold and bordered, full of finitude and limitation are the words when Eros overtakes and befalls, when one "falls in love," discovering the self as belonging-to, as joined by the hyphen, as an immediate and bridgeless towardness in togetherness. The time when the Gods have abandoned the humans, when Eros does not overtake and befall, is a time when humans experience themselves as willing Eros, as willing subjects of the verb to-love, as the ones who can possess love and not who are fallen and shaken by love, and not as the ones who are 'overwhelmed as oaks by mountain's winds.' When humans take Eros for something they possess and want to possess, even assuming that Eros has to be awoken and inflamed through the apparition of the "other," of the "you," they take Eros for what falls under the willing subject. What appears in this time of abandonment by the Gods is a sad and fallen Eros, not an inexistent Eros but an abandoned Eros, that remains, like the dead, as present absence, as distant presence. As band between life *and* death, Eros is a half god, that is, a God that shares mortality and death with the humans. Love begins and gives birth but love also dies. The sadness of Eros is the sadness of a fallen Eros. This is something we can see in old plastic representations around the motif of *Eros funèbre*, the mourning Eros: an Eros lying down as if sleeping, falling down surrendered by beauty, withdrawing itself in its own exuberance.

These ancient images of a fallen Eros remind us that Eros not only overtakes and befalls but is self overtaken and befallen. If the abandonment by the Gods named by Heidegger means the enigmatic uncontrollability of a beginning, of the "highest and the very first," that is, of Eros, than the fallen Eros could be understood as a sign that

13. Ibid., 12, "Ach die Worte sind so kalt, so kantig, so voll von Endlichkeit und Begrenzung – ich möchte nur immer in Deine bergseetiefen Augen schauen, mit bebenden Lippen die reine Stirn Dir küssen."



humans do not have the power to “name the bride,” “to know and look into love, and how love endures,” thus love, Eros, “guards the lightning,” as Heidegger writes in one of his poetical drafts.

With light and sound
the world is dared in promises.
Who names the bride?
Who knows and looks into
love, how love endures?
The flash of a full bloom,
incorporated
to growth,
which in blossom
remains
consecrated,



un-perishing years,
making the court, she guards the lightning¹⁴

14. GA 81, 120. In a free translation of mine
Aus Licht und Laut
ist Welt getraut.
Wer nennt die Braut?
Wer kennt und schaut
die Liebe, wie sie wahrt?
Der Aufblitz einer hochsten Blute,
die, ins Gedeihen
einverleibt,
Erblihen *bleibt*
aus Weihen,
unverjahrt,
da freyend sie die Blitze hute

“Who knows and looks into love, how love endures?” asks Heidegger. This question is about the subjectivity of love. It is not however about how love constitutes, grounds or confers the proper meaning of the subject but how love radically questions the subject, the misunderstanding of the who of love as subject. In asking who knows and looks into “how love endures,” Heidegger indicates that it is from the way “love endures” that the “who” of love can be named. Endurance is a precarious translation of the German verb *währen*, related to “*wesan*” an old form of *wesen*, meaning being as continuous form. It serves to highlight endurance as a meanwhile. Endurance means here, therefore, the intimacy of being entirely the finitude of the meanwhile. In this entire intimacy, one loses oneself, becoming this meanwhile as much as the meanwhile becomes one. In love, the certainty that it is the subject that loves and is loved breaks down. What then breaks through is that love loves and this to such an extent that in love it is only love that knows and looks into who loves and is loved, that is, how love endures. The “who” of love appears in love as the way love endures; love’s endurance is the “who.” Losing oneself, being overtaken, one becomes the “you” that overtakes.

As too intimately and entire presence, love breaks down every “own” existence. Being-in-love means being entirely and intimately in the meanwhile. The entirety and intimacy of this being in “the meanwhile” dissolves the oppositions between inside and outside, interior and exterior, selfhood and otherness into a radical new meaning of difference. Difference can no longer be measured by distances in time and space; being in the meanwhile means being in the timeless time and in the placeless place of a lightning. The whole past and the whole future is here, in this meanwhile. Thus everything that existed before and everything that will or may exist after can only exist through and from the lightning flash of this meanwhile. The meanwhile is not the simple “here and now” of a circumstance. It is the temporality of *being in love* that expands every here and now to the whole past and to the whole future. That is why being in love means being in love with the “whole you,” with “your” past and future, where the “you” is the past and the future at one and the same time, the lasting of love. Being in the meanwhile, as is the case when one is in love, means to be in oneself outside and beyond oneself. To be in

itself, out of and beyond, itself defines an ecstasy. It defines the temporality that constitutes the way human life is factually, the way it is, its being. It defines what Heidegger called “the ecstatic temporality of *Dasein*.” Being in the meanwhile, as one is when being in love, renders clear and transparent the “ecstatic temporality of *Dasein*.” *Dasein* is not another name for human existence but the name for the most proper meaning of existence, a meaning that is never given but has to break through when the common meaning of existence as “subjectivity,” as “something present at hand,” breaks down. When being in love, when being entirely and intensively in the meanwhile – the most proper meaning of existence – existence as *Dasein* breaks through.

In a famous letter to Hannah Arendt from 1925, Heidegger writes an equation of love – “to be in (the) love = to be urged to the most proper existence” (*in der Liebe sein = in die eigenste Existenz gedrängt sein*).¹⁵ To be in love is said here to be in the love, to be in Eros and understood as the same as being urged to experience the most proper meaning of existence. The ek-static meaning of existence *qua Dasein* is, as Heidegger always insisted upon, a “fundamental event” (*Grundgeschehen*), a meaning that has to break through at the point at which the meaning of existence as subjectivity breaks down. Another name for it is *Sorge*, usually translated as “care.” Human existence is not given. It has to discover itself continuously as *non-being* in the way things are taken for things, that is as something being *in-itself*, as thinghood. It has to discover itself again and again as being in-itself a non being-in-itself, as being out and beyond itself, as ecstasy of being. *Dasein* means therefore the place of a displacement and the displacement of given places. It means experience, a breaking through while breaking down. Hölderlin described this in terms of “becoming in dissolution” (*Werden im Vergehen*). As such, *Dasein* is no longer a question of identity or of unity. *Dasein* is a question of entire intimacy and intimate entirety. That is the meaning of *Sorge*, a meaning often rendered imperceptible in its translation and understanding as care. *Sorge* indicates the existential meaning of being-whole as intimate and as entire comprehension, a comprehension that means seizing while be-

15. Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger, *Briefe 1925–1975* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1998), 31.

ing seized, apprehending while being apprehended. Comprehension translates the meaning given by Heidegger to the German word *Verständnis*, the meaning of standing in the outstanding place of a displacement that Being is.

To be in this most proper meaning of existence would be then “to be in (the) love,” to be in Eros. Many years later, this will be Heidegger’s response to Ludwig Binswanger’s complaint that his philosophy has thoroughly thought care but fully neglected love.¹⁶ In the seminars held at Zollikon, Heidegger will reply saying that “if understood correctly, that is, in the sense of fundamental ontology, *Sorge* can never be differentiated from “love” insofar as it names “comprehension of Being” as the fundamental determination of the ek-static temporal constitution of Dasein.”¹⁷ “Correctly understood,” love means ecstasy of being, intensive and entire comprehension. Love means the co-apprehension of apprehending while being apprehended, of coming to be while already being and, already being while coming to be; it captures being ahead for and in itself, providing a radical insight into the meaning of existence, which only breaks through when consciousness of subjectivity and the subjectivity of consciousness break down.

During a certain period, Heidegger called “transcendence” this movement of breaking through while breaking down, of “becoming in dissolution.” It indicates another kind of temporality, a vertiginous temporality between the falling over (catastrophic) and the about to fall (imminent). Transcendence means here rather the “trance” and perplexity of this being intensively and entirely in the fugacity of a meanwhile that defines the endurance of love. It says that the ecstasy and ex-centricity of existence are in principle distinct from every meta-

16. Ludwig Binswanger, *Grundformen und Erkenntnis menschlichen Daseins* (Zürich: Max Niehans, 1942). See also Françoise Dastur’s discussions about the relation between love and care in her article in the present volume and her article “Amore, noità e cura. Note a proposito della Grundformen di Ludwig Binswanger” in *Ludwig Binswanger. Esperienza della soggettività e transcendenza dell’altro*. A cura di Stefano Besoli (Quodlibet, Macerata, 2007, 519–534).

17. Heidegger, *Zollikoner Seminare* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1987), 237. For the eng. version see *Zollikon Seminars*, ed. By Medard Boss (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001).

physical determination of becoming such as willing, wishing, longing, desiring, hankering after, urging to.¹⁸

In these determinations, transcendence is understood as a moving beyond to a beyond oneself, presupposing both something in itself as a point of departure and as something beyond for the sake of what the movement moves. Here, movement means to move from one toward another, a moving that is seized from where it begins and where it ceases, and not its event. Totally distinct from the teleology of the willing movement and its variations such as wishing, longing, desire, hankering, urging, is transcendence a becoming in dissolution. Transcendence in this sense is neither transcendent nor immanent. It names the distancing that existence is in “itself.” It names a being beyond itself in it-self and not something that strives after a beyond. Love, *Sorge*, Eros can be called “transcendence” when understood “correctly.” Thus for Heidegger *Dasein* is transcendence. This would then mean that *Dasein* is love, is Eros, and further that only because *Dasein* is Eros, is love, it loves (or not).

Love is for Heidegger *Sorge*, that is, transcendence. But this can only be said when transcendence is “correctly understood” as “becoming in dissolution.” Because platonic love also is commonly defined as transcendence, it is decisive to distinguish between these two meanings of transcendence. If platonic love is transcendence, it is in the sense of a movement of intensification. The movement of intensification that characterizes platonic love is the movement of something beyond itself towards the other beyond. Platonic love is intensification of desire that, beginning with bodily love, with you-loving, progresses to spiritual or intellectual love, to all-loving. Platonic love is not really transcendence but a desire for the transcendent. Heideggerian love describes a different kind of movement. It differs from a movement directed towards something else, from intentionality even in the sense given to it by Husserl. It is not a directed movement but a vertiginous one, the vertiginous movement of “becoming in dissolution.” This movement cannot be described as a play of intentions and directions. It differs from loving intentionality insofar as in this vertiginous transcendence subjects are overtaken and befallen; in this sense, they

18. See Heidegger’s discussions on this in *Being and Time*, § 41.

are dispossessed becoming possessed, taken and befallen by love. What appears here are not the subjects of love, neither the lover nor the beloved, but, as we read in Heidegger's lecture *Was ist Metaphysik?*, the "joy about the present of *Dasein* – not simply of the person – of the beloved," (*die Freude an der Gegenwart des Daseins – nicht der blossen Person – eines geliebten Menschen*).¹⁹ Dispossession of the subject when possessed by love is here understood in terms of a "revelation" (*Offenbarung*) accomplished by the "joy of the present of the *Dasein* of the beloved," of the discovery of the meaning of being in love as being in the meanwhile, and therefore as being in itself out and beyond itself, ecstasy of being. It reveals how the beloved "you" appears as joy of the present of the most extreme meaning of the existence of the beloved.

The reservation that what appears is not "simply the person" is a critique towards Husserl and above all to Scheler's understanding of love intentionality. The "you" of your loving soul that overtakes, for Heidegger, is not the irreducible you in regard to a self as Husserl describes in his studies on the Phenomenology of intersubjectivity. Heidegger and Scheler were both very critical of Husserl's concept of intentionality because it does not really overcome the subject-object dichotomy. In their discussions,²⁰ Scheler proposes that in love the aporias produced through Husserl's notion of the transcendental subject can be overcome, such that in love what is loved is neither the other nor a "you," but the becoming you in the loving relation. In love, stresses Scheler, self and otherness are not; they become insofar

19. Heidegger, "Was ist Metaphysik?" in *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1967), 110, eng. version "What is metaphysics?" in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (Routledge, London, 1993), 99.

20. Heidegger, *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik*, GA 26 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1978). In this course from 1928, Heidegger tells us of the impressive discussions he had with Scheler and about a certain set of discussions connected to a reading of Scheler's text "Idealism and Realism," from which they developed together a kind of phenomenological program, summarized as the "necessity of overcoming the subject-object relationship." It is a kind of phenomenological manifesto, in which a controversy with Husserl's concept of transcendental subjectivity can be followed. This particular controversy can be read today as the starting point for a criticism of the ulterior development of Phenomenology in phenomenologies of personal pronouns' perspectives.

as who is loved in love is not the “other” but the becoming one in the other and the becoming other in oneself. It is the being-relation that defines the beings. Scheler defined this becoming oneself as “person,” describing it as structure of value, of intensification. Scheler described love as a moving search for *more* than oneself, an intensification of one’s own immanence through the power of a transcendent other. Love is here a movement of value, of excess and abundance. Not in the sense that love – and its contrary, hate – discover values, right and wrong, but in the sense that, in love – and hate – everything becomes full of value, disrupting every sphere of indifference and neutrality. In the act of love, the subject disrupts insofar as it becomes full of value; it becomes “person.” Here the objectivity of the other as “loving object,” as “beloved other” is transformed into the only place where the value of being a “person” can really emerge.²¹ Scheler’s point is that no one loves the other because this other has a value. Love is not interest, not habit, not self-escaping, not fear of loneliness, not social interest for being considered by others someone with value. No one loves in the expectation that someone becomes a value. Love is never pedagogical. No one can learn from someone else about love or how to love. Love cannot be imitated. The basic structure of pedagogy: the “if. . . then” finds no place in love. Love, in Scheler’s phenomenological account, is love for the other’s being and the being of both the lover and the beloved is a movement of intensification, the movement of “becoming who you are,” as Scheler used to formulate, quoting a famous verse of Pindar. Love loves the becoming oneself and not the self. That is why, for him, love defines concrete individuality as personality. Therefore Scheler’s love is personal and expressive, not intentional. It unfolds not only the “principle of the heart,” already sketched by Augustine and Pascal, but also the “works of the heart,” something that appears even more clearly in Rilke’s poetry.

21. Scheler, Max, “Liebe und Person” in *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie* (Bern: Francke, 1974), “Nun gilt aber für die individuelle Person, dass sie uns überhaupt nur *durch* und *im* Akte der Liebe, d.h. also auch ihr Wert als Individuum nur in diesem Aktverlauf zur Gegebenheit kommt. Die Gegenständlichkeit als “Liebesgegenstand” ist gleichsam der Ort, wo allein die Person existiert und darum auch auftauchen kann,” 150.

Heidegger will criticize Scheler's concept of love, because in the attempts to think Being at the basis of a being in relation, he described relation as a being. If the beings partaking in a relation are described by Scheler as becoming and thereby as what cannot be grasped as "something in-itself," as "present at hand," his account on the *being*-relation tends to treat relation as something in-itself and therefore as present at hand. In contrast to Scheler's love, Heidegger proposes the meaning of *Dasein* as *Sorge* and transcendence, as "becoming in dissolution." This explains the reservation "not simply the person" and further why the overtaking "you" in love's meanwhile is the "joy of the present of the *Dasein* of the beloved," the joy of the present of the most proper meaning of existence in the beloved.

In the already quoted letter to Hannah Arendt, Heidegger further adds to his equation of love what could be considered a definition of Heideggerian love. "Amo means volo, ut sis, as Augustine said: I love you – I want you to be, what you are" (*Amo heisst volo, ut sis, sagt einmal Augustinus: ich liebe Dich – ich will, dass Du seiest, was Du bist*).²² This definition is taken from Augustine and is intimately connected to Hannah Arendt and her readings of Augustine on the concept of love.²³ This definition seems to contradict the interpretation here proposed of being in (the) love as being in the most proper meaning of existence, as being in the meanwhile, beyond the intentional and the personal. This Augustinian sentence, which we can read here and there in several texts by Heidegger – even the late ones – seems to contradict above all Heidegger's insistent critique of the subjectivity of the will and the willing subjectivity. Critique of metaphysics is in Heidegger above all a critique of the will and if metaphysics is in itself the problem of overcoming, to overcome metaphysics is to overcome the power of the will and the will to power that defines modern subjectivity. In Heidegger's view, the will always wants itself, it is self-referent; self-reference is the fundamental structure of the subject. Therefore, willing is identified with the "will to power" and the "will to will." Dispossession of the subject, dispossession of self-referentiality means

22. Arendt and Heidegger, *Briefe*, 31.

23. Arendt, *Der Liebesbegriff bei Augustinus. Versuch einer philosophischen Interpretation* (Berlin/Wien: Philo-Verlagsgesellschaft, 2005).

therefore dispossession of the will. If this vehement critique defines Heidegger's work as a whole, it is astonishing to discover that precisely and only in relation to love do we find some hints of an experience of the will not coincident with the subjectivity and self-referentiality of the will, not coincident with the "will to power" and the "will to will." Precisely in relation to love – the fundamental experience of being overtaken and befallen by the joy of the present of the Dasein of the beloved – is said in terms of the will. It is said as a quote, in Latin, from Augustine. The Augustinian *volo* says in German – Ich *will*. In other languages, *volo* would be rather translated to I wish or want. In Spanish, it is common to say "*Te quiero*," meaning firstly "I love you" and only then "I want or wish you." Instead of rushing to see in these words, which became the signature of love between Heidegger and Arendt, a formulation of love intentionality and of personal love, it is important to try to figure out what does "will" mean here, what other experience of the will than of power is here pronounced.

In these words of love by Augustine, Heidegger listens to the dimension of coming pronounced in the will. *Volo*, Ich *will*, I wish, I want is saying as in English I will, not the future but the coming, I am coming to your coming. Heidegger uses the same formulation when discussing Hölderlin's poem *Andenken*. Interpreting who speaks in the poem, Heidegger shows that it is Hölderlin insofar as the being poet of Hölderlin (his essence, *Wesen*) has encountered plenitude in the "will that the northeast wind is what it is."²⁴ Interpreting in this poem the analogous formulation to Augustine's sentence, "to will that the northeast wind is what it is," Heidegger refers to another verse in the poem, "but it comes what I will," bringing the will to the coming. This enables him to say: "in no way does 'will (*Wille*)' mean the selfish enacted demand of a self-referential and directed desire. Will is the knowing readiness for belonging to a destiny. This will only wants and wishes what comes, because this coming has already interpellated this will to a knowing, "calling" it to stay in the wind of being called by the name."²⁵ In this passage, to will that you are what you are, to will that

24. Heidegger, *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlin's Dichtung*, GA 4 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1981), 81.

25. *Ibid.*, "Wille" meint hier keineswegs die eigensüchtig betriebene Erzwingung

the northeast wind is what it is, is interpreted as the willing of the coming that already has interpellated the will to stay in the wind of its called name. The “you,” in several passages written in quotation marks, is not the “you” or the “other” of a person or of an intended subject. It is the named you, the “you” being named and called, the “you” being whispered as wind, an overwhelming wind, “shaking my soul,” recalling again the words of Sappho. The named, called, pronounced and whispered “you,” the you-wind is a coming rather than a becoming. To will the coming, to welcome the coming is presented here as the source for the words of love in loving, showing them as words pronounced and called as wind, showing the overwhelming fugacity of the words of love.

This rare experience of will as willing the coming that defines love for Heidegger is totally distinct from the metaphysical determination of will. In this determination, will is becoming and becoming the essence of being. In his long critical discussions about the modern metaphysical fundament of the will, Heidegger will bring together two dimensions of this determination: on the one hand, Schelling’s “will of love” (*Wille der Liebe*) and, on the other, Nietzsche’s “will to power” (*Wille zur Macht*)²⁶. “Love and power,” as Heidegger sees, are essentially opposing and conflictual, they are bound by “struggle” and “contradiction”²⁷ but as such they are essentially the same. Heidegger understands Schelling’s “will of love” as “serene intimacy” (“gelassene Innigkeit”²⁸) accomplished in the entire becoming oneself, an intimacy that is so entire that the will to become oneself does not need any longer to wish or want itself. Non-will in Schelling is for Heidegger the accomplished becoming oneself that only love can enact and in

eines selbstisch errechneten Begehrens. Wille ist die wissende Bereitschaft für die Zugehörigkeit in das Geschick. Dieser Willen auf ein Wissen angesprochen hat und ihn “heisst,” im Wind der Verheissung zu stehen,” 82

26. Heidegger, *Die Metaphysik des deutschen Idealismus: zur erneuten Auslegung von Schelling: philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit und die damit zusammenhängenden Gegenstände* (1809), GA 49 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1991). Above all, 10–104.

27. *Ibid.*, 102.

28. *Ibid.*, 101

this sense unconditional subjectivity. The other extreme of unconditional subjectivity appears for Heidegger in Nietzsche's will to power. At stake here is a will that wants itself beyond itself, wanting the will, willing the will to such an extent that the will "rather will nothingness than not will," as Nietzsche will formulate. For Heidegger the question of the will is the question about the impossibility for modernity and for contemporaneity to experience the coming beyond the idea of self-becoming.

The gift of Heideggerian love would be then one that indicates a will that wants and is wanted by the coming. In this sense, it could be said that the "event has the love" (*das Ereignis hat die Liebe*). This will is beyond activity and passivity because it is beyond the "domain of the will," following here Hannah Arendt's interpretation of Heidegger's critiques of Nietzsche's notion of the will to power.²⁹ In contrast to a will of love and a will to power, in contrast to a concept of will grounded upon the active power and empowering of the self and the subject through love, to will the coming – which defines Heideggerian love – asks for an understanding of action beyond the dichotomy between activity and passivity. In the aforementioned interpretation of Hölderlin's *Andenken*, Hölderlin discusses the relation between *Liebe und Taten*,³⁰ between love and acts. Discussing Hölderlin's verses "listen a lot/to the days of love,/and acts (*Thaten*) that happened," Heidegger stresses the listening, describing the listening that thinks as a reminder (*Andenken*) of the tender endurance of the "days of love," to the meanwhile-temporality of the loving. He describes this listening as having a certain spirit, the "spirit of the will that the beloved would be in the own essence and there remains."³¹ The vocabulary of the will that wants the coming is not that of activity or of action. Acts are neither active nor passive. How to conceive then the acts of love? They can be conceived as gestures, to be understood theatrically. Thus a gesture is a gestation, which shows how the condition of being

29. Arendt, *The life of the mind* (New York / London: Harvest Book, 1971), 178–179.

30. Heidegger, *Erläuterungen zur Hölderlin's Dichtung*, 118–119.

31. *Ibid.*, 118.

grasped grasps, how being touched itself touches, how the being called calls, the being wanted itself wants. The vocabulary of this rare will speaks in terms of gestures and gestations insofar as it speaks in terms of how love carries the body of the soul when the soul of the body is shaken by the wind of love.

Neither activity, nor passivity, gestuality is the possible made possible and not the realization of possibilities. Loving gestures do not realize or actualize possibilities because there is no before the being in love. All the gestures are what happened because they bring everything of what has happened to the event of being in love. Love brings to the world another meaning of possibility that only with difficulty can be brought to understanding. To indicate how love makes possible the possible rather than realizing or actualizing possibilities, Heidegger will even use the German verb “*mögen*” (to love), that builds the word *Vermögen*, making possible. In the *Letter on Humanism*, we find some other words of love by Heidegger addressing love’s unique capacity of making possible the possible:

Thinking is – this says: Being has fatefully embraced its essence. To embrace a thing or a person in its essence means to love it, to favor it. Thought in a more original way such favoring (*Mögen*) means to bestow essence as a gift. Such favoring is the proper essence of enabling, which not only can achieve this or that but also can let something essentially unfold in its provenance, that is, let it be. It is on the “strength” of such enabling by favoring that something is properly able to be. This enabling is what is properly “possible,” whose essence resides in favoring. From this favoring Being enables thinking. The former makes the latter possible. Being is the enabling favoring, the “may-be.” As the element, Being is the “quiet power” of the favoring-enabling, that is of the possible. Of course, our words *möglich*, possible, and *Möglichkeit*, possibility, under the dominance of “logic” and “metaphysics,” are thought solely in contrast to “actuality,” that is, they are thought on the basis of a definite – the metaphysical – interpretation of Being as *actus* and *potentia*, a distinction identified with the one between *existentia* and *essentia*. When I speak of the “quiet power of the possible” I do not mean the possible of a merely represented *possibilitas*, not *potentia* as the *essentia* of an *actus* of *existentia*; rather, I mean Being itself, which in its favoring presides over thinking and hence over the essence of humanity, and that means over its rela-

tion to Being. To enable something here means to preserve it in its essence, to maintain it in its element.³²

Love is not only a possible making possible but also a making possible of the possible. Therefore it cannot be understood as “the passion of *potentia passiva*,” of the power of powerlessness in which one becomes able to abandon oneself to what cannot be appropriated, as suggested by Agamben.³³ Love does not simply let the other be its own possibilities acknowledging both the powerlessness and the non-appropriation of the other. It favors and makes possible the possible in the being of the beloved.

The loving meaning of the possible proposed by Heidegger is to be distinguished from the dynamics of movement from a potential state to the actuality of another. The “irreality” of the possible, says Heidegger in his interpretation of Hölderlin’s *Andenken*, shall be understood as the reality of a “dream” that is the concrete reality of

32. Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 220. “Das denken ist – dies sagt: das Sein hat sich je geschicklich seines Wesens angenommen. Sich einer ‘Sache’ oder einer ‘Person’ in ihrem Wesen annehmen, das heisst: sie lieben: sie mögen. Dieses Mögen bedeutet, ursprünglicher gedacht: das Wesen schenken. Solches Mögen ist das eigentliche Wesen des Vermögens, das nicht nur dieses oder jenes leisten, sondern etwas in seiner Herkunft ‘wesen,’ das heisst sein lassen kann. Das Vermögen des Mögens ist es, ‘kraft’ dessen etwas eigentlich zu sein vermag. Dieses Vermögen ist das eigentlich ‘Mögliche,’ jenes, dessen Wesen im Mögen beruht. Aus diesem Mögen vermag das Sein das Denken. Jenes ermöglicht dieses. Das Sein als das Element ist die ‘stille Kraft’ des mögenden Vermögens, das heisst des Möglichen. Unsere Wörter ‘möglich’ und ‘Möglichkeit’ werden freilich unter der Herrschaft der ‘Logik’ und ‘Metaphysik’ nur gedacht im Unterscheid zu ‘Wirklichkeit,’ das heisst aus einer bestimmten – der metaphysischen – Interpretation des Seins als *actus* und *potentia*, welche Unterscheidung identifiziert wird mit der von *existentia* und *essentia*. Wenn ich von der ‘stillen Kraft des Möglichen’ spreche, meine ich nicht das possibile einer nur vorgestellten *possibilitas*, nicht die *potentia* als *essentia* eines *actus* der *existentia*, sondern das Sein selbst, das mögend über das Denken und so über das Wesen des Menschen und das heisst über dessen Bezug zum Sein vermag. Etwas vermögen bedeutet hier: es in seinem Wesen wahren, in seinem Element einbehalten.

33. Giorgio Agamben, *L’ombre de l’amour. Le concept d’amour chez Heidegger* (Paris: Payot et Rivages, 2003). The essay was first published in *Cahiers du college international de Philosophie*, n.6, Paris, 1988.

an in-between. To explain this he quotes the following passage from Hölderlin's essay "Becoming in dissolution":

in-between being and non-being the possible becomes everywhere real and the real becomes ideal and this, in the free artistic imaging, is a terrible but nevertheless divine dream.³⁴

Heidegger elucidates what is terrible about the experience of this possible, of this dreamlike-state in-between the real and the unreal, as the terrible of being thrown into the unreal that is however, at the same time, divine because here reality appears transformed, appears as coming.

Willing the coming, love makes possible and favors the possible, liberating it from the rational and sensible metaphysical distinctions between essence and existence, act and potency, actuality and possibility. Love not only transforms the knowing but the feeling as well. Love is not a feeling but an overwhelming transformation of the feelings. It is not a knowing but a total transformation of what it means to know. Heidegger describes this transformation of love in terms of the non-duality of activity and passivity, of knowing and feeling. This transforming force of love is called favor. Favoring, that is, making possible the possible, is the "nature of love."

With favor and favoring Heidegger also translates *filia* in Heraclitus' fragment "*physis kryptesthai filein*," nature loves (favors) hiding itself.³⁵ The nature of love is defined as the way nature is nature, that is, loving, favoring, making possible the possible. Discussing the translation of *filein* to favor during his seminars on Heraclitus Heidegger quotes Parmenides' fragment 13, in which Eros is called the one who can be "guessed" as the first among the Gods.³⁶ Heidegger does not develop the connection between Eros, *filia* and *physis*, between Eros, favor, and

34. Friedrich Hölderlin, "(im) Zustand zwischen Seyn und Nichtseyn wird aber überall das Mögliche real, und das wirkliche ideal, und diss ist in der freien Kunstnachahmung ein furchtbar aber göttlicher Traum," from *Werden im Vergehen*, quoted by Heidegger in *Erläuterungen zur Hölderlin's Dichtung*, 107

35. Heidegger, *Heraklit: 1. Der Anfang des abendländischen Denkens; 2. Logik, Heraklits Lehre vom Logos*, GA 55 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1979), §6.

36. GA 55, §6.

nature, but admits it as fundamental and as something to be understood as a critique of Plato. *Filia* is in a certain sense assumed as a fundamental way in which Eros eroticizes. Eros eroticizes favoring self-concealment, favoring its own gliding and sliding away.³⁷ Birthing Eros is also mourning Eros. *Filia*, or this face of Eros eroticizing, brings to conception the experience of the non-duality of life *and* death in everything that lives and dies. Heidegger used to affirm that death is itself non-mortal³⁸ and that only man is mortal, only man *can* die, facing death as possibility and not as fatality. Saying that, he indicates that in mortals the conjugation of life *and* death not only appears but also become transparent.

The experiential content of this non-dual conjugation of life *and* death becoming transparent in human existence is discussed some years later by Heidegger and Fink in their seminar on Heraclitus. In their discussions, mortals, transparency of life *and* death, are described as being in-between day and night. Human mortal life is a life in-between day and night, a life that takes part both in the clarity of daylight and in nocturnal obscurity, being both comprehension of differences and comprehension of un-differentiation. It is neither only daily nor only nocturnal, but both *at once*. Wakefulness and sleep are concrete experiences of the in-between of human mortal life. During their dialogue, Eugen Fink suggests that this human mortal in-between could be interpreted as the double movement of human self-

37. Die Gunst ist die Weise, aus der die Rückgründung des Aufgehens in das Sicherschliessen, aber auch die Überholung des Aufgehens durch das Sichverschliessen, aber auch die Vorgründung des Sichverschliessens in das Aufgehen wesen, wie sie wesen. Die Gunst wiederum ist nicht etwas für sich und ausser dem phyein und kryptesthai, sondern das Gönnen hat die Wesensart des Aufgehens und Sichverschliessens. Die Gunst ist die Innigkeit der einfachen Unterscheidung; das Gönnen lässt die reine Klarheit erstehen, in der Aufgehen und Sichverbergen auseinander und aufeinander zugehalten sind und also miteinander straiten um die einfache Gewähr des einfach gegönnten Wesens. Die Gunst ist die Grundzug der eris, des Streits, sofern wir diesen anfänglichen denken und nicht sogleich und nur aus dem Widrigen der Ungunst und der Missgunst als den Hader und den Zwist vorstellen, GA 55, § 6, 133.

38. Heidegger, "Die Aletheia ist nichts Sterbliches, so wenig wie der Tod selbst" in *Das Ende der Philosophie und die Aufgabe des Denkens* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1976), 75

comprehension. He connects this understanding to Heidegger's *Being and Time*. Human existence comprehends itself as different from everything else, as not being the other beings, and it is as differentiated from others that human factual life immerses itself in the quotidian. Man says first "I am not this or that, I am not you and you" in order to say "I am." Self-comprehension implies strangely self-alienation, differentiation and opposition to others. It is from out of this self-differentiation that man grounds his knowledge about things and discovers himself as incomprehensible. It is however also within this self-differentiation that human mortal life discovers the whole of beings and the being of the whole, beyond self-differentiation. The Ancients formulated the principle of knowledge regulating this movement as "unlike knows unlike." Experiencing, however, the whole of beings beyond self-differentiation, human mortal life discovers its likeness to nature's abyssal and nocturnal ground, to the life of life, to the non-dual conjugation of life *and* death, to nocturnal and abyssal non-differentiation. At this moment, human mortal life comprehends being through obscurity and not through clarity, following another principle for knowledge, in which "like knows like." This double movement of belonging *at the same time and at once* to a principle of daylight (by which unlike knows unlike) and to a principle of nocturnal darkness (by which like knows like), is discussed, in this dialogue between Heidegger and Fink, in terms of proximity and distance, of seeing/listening in contrast to touching. Human life, the only mortal life, is both distance to things and proximity to the whole of things, it is daily differentiating distance and nocturnal non-differential proximity.³⁹

This double principle of knowledge shows how nature loves to conceal itself in human mortal life. Nature favors human existence insofar as human mortal life is nature's own concealment. This is an obscure principle of comprehension where like knows like at the same time that unlike knows unlike. When the difficulty in seizing this principle becomes explicit in the dialogue, Heidegger says: "it can only

39. This discussion about awakedness and sleep, daylight clarity and nocturnal obscurity is an interpretation and development of Heidegger's affirmation in *Being and Time* that man is ontically the closest to himself but ontologically the most distant.

be comprehensible through the phenomenon of living-body” (*Das wird erst durch das Leibphänomenon verständlich*).⁴⁰ Fink adds immediately after: “somehow in the way of understanding proper to Eros” (*etwa in der Verstehensweise des Eros*),⁴¹ to which Heidegger agrees saying that “Man only incorporates when he lives” (*Der Mensch leibt nur, wenn er lebt*).⁴² To “leib,” to “incorporate” is here admitted so as to comprehend from the obscure standpoint of Eros the whole of life, and where appearing as such, that is, nature, appears to itself hidden in individual, singular, finite forms of life. To “leib,” to “incorporate” means then to understand nature’s self-hiding from within, from “oneself.” In this erotic, incorporated understanding, daylight of differences and self-differentiations appear from the nocturnal obscurity of nature favoring its own concealment. Differences appear from the obscure light of the appearing as such, from the obscure light of the Eros of nature.

The way of understanding proper to Eros sketched out in these seldom and disseminated words of love in Heidegger’s work indicates a meaning for the knowing brought to life by and through love, by and through Eros, for philosophy. In one of the texts collected and published under the title *Mindfulness, Besinnung*, Heidegger tries to formulate what happens to the definition of philosophy when it ceases to think being in advance of beings and their beingness. The following passage about the word philosophy can be found there:

Philosophy means “love of wisdom.” Let us think this word out of a foundational mindfulness by relinquishing the representational domains of everyday life, erudition, cultural concerns and doctrines of happiness. Then the word says: “love” is the will that wills the beloved be; the will that wills that the beloved finds its way unto its ownmost and sways therein. Such a will does not wish or demand anything. Through honoring, and not by trying to create the loved one, this will let above all the loved one – what is worthy of loving – “be-come,”⁴³ be the coming the beloved is.

40. Fink, Heidegger, *Heraklit*, 233.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

43. Heidegger, *Besinnung* GA 66 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1997), §14, “Philosophie heißt: “Die Liebe zur Weisheit”. Denken wir diesen Namen aus der Wesensbesinnung. Verlassen wir den Vorstellungskreis des Alltags und der Ge-

Philosophizing from within the time in which philosophy is brought to its limits, the time in which Eros, the highest and the very first of the Gods, has abandoned the humans can be understood as to begin to philosophize under the nacre light of Eros, unfolding the way of understanding proper to Eros. Here it might be perhaps possible to discover philosophy as the diurnal way of existing in this nocturnal belonging to life, within which human existence is still enveloped, with its illusions of power and will.

lehrsamkeit, der Kulturbesorgnis und der Glückseligkeitslehre. Dann sagt das Wort: “*Liebe*” ist der Wille, daß das Geliebte *sei*, indem es zu seinem Wesen finde und in ihm wese. Solcher Wille wunscht und fordert nicht. Wurdigend laßt er erst das Liebens-würdige als das Geliebte “werden”, ohne es doch zu schaffen,” 63. For the eng. *Mindfulness* (New York: Continuum, 2006), § 14, 52,