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Thinking the Event in Heidegger's "Black Notebooks"

ABSTRACT: In this essay I examine the concept of the "event" in Heideggerian thought, with particular reference to the first volume of the *Black Notebooks*, which is contemporaneous with *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)* (1936–1938), and *Notes III* (dating from 1946–47) from the fourth volume. At issue are the concepts of "event" (*Ereignis*), "essential unfolding" (*Wesung*), and "expropriation" (*Enteignis*), which assume considerable importance in the mid-1930s. Through his treatment of the event, Heidegger reinterprets being as an alterity with respect to beings and to Dasein, in that being withdraws and conceals itself. Furthermore, I show a shift in Heidegger's "disposition" (*Stimmung*) that occurs in *Notes III*, from an "attunement" that stresses decision to a way of thinking in terms of "releasing" and "thanking." In these writings, Heidegger already makes use of the concept of "releasement" (*Gelassenheit*), which is usually associated with a later stage of his thought.

KEY WORDS: Heidegger, Black Notebooks, Event, Ontology, Being

The topic of the event is one of the most debated issues within contemporary thought, and Heidegger greatly contributed to making it a central point of philosophical reflection. If we consider his career as a whole, the issue of the "event" (*Ereignis*) begins to assume considerable importance in the mid-1930s. From then on, Heidegger would no longer attempt to grasp the *sense* of being out of Dasein, as he had done in *Being and Time*, but to directly account for the *truth* of being, i.e., the unfolding of being in its *historicity*, which takes place through a process of concealing and unconcealing.

In a marginal note to the *Letter on "Humanism"* (1946), Heidegger writes that the "'event of appropriation' has been the guiding word of my thinking since 1936" (GA 9: 316; trans. 241).¹ That

was the year in which he began writing *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*, the first and most important of a series of volumes with the specific intent of conceiving of being as event.² In a passage of *Contributions*, Heidegger already acknowledges that they “are not yet able to join the free conjuncture [*Fuge*] of the truth of beyng out of beyng itself” (GA 65: 4; trans. 6).³ Moreover, in *Das Ereignis*, which dates from the years 1941–42, he argues that in *Contributions* Dasein is conceived unilaterally in relation to the human being⁴ – a subject, along with the distinction between the human being and Dasein, which we shall consider presently – and that the concepts of the “first” and the “other beginning” are extensively treated in *Contributions* without yet thinking of them as “beginning” *out of* the event and “belonging to it” (GA 71: 287; trans. 249).⁵

Along with *Contributions* and other unpublished treatises written in its immediate aftermath,⁶ we can now also consult the *Black Notebooks* – whose recent publication is undoubtedly the most important addition to the *Gesamtausgabe* since at least the 1989 publication of *Contributions* – in order to investigate the theme of the event. Regarding the place of the *Black Notebooks* in Heidegger’s output, at least one important hermeneutical point should be made: These works should be read and interpreted in conjunction with full Heidegger’s published oeuvre, certainly not in specious isolation or by merely extrapolating certain passages out of context. It remains to be seen to what extent the *Notebooks* will help to clarify not merely Heidegger’s biography but more importantly his thinking and its capacity to speak to us today. Scholarly study of the *Black Notebooks* has only just begun and is made particularly difficult by the very nature of the text, which is quite repetitive and in which Heidegger makes frequent use of an evocative registry. Configured as a peculiar sort of *philosophical* writing, they reveal themselves as a kind of inner conversation, in which, however, we must “*never* [...] think about the ‘others’ or about the ‘thou’, but just as little about the ‘I’ – only about and for the origin of being” (GA 94: 28; trans. 21). Heidegger clarifies that the “ponderings” (*Überlegungen*) included in the first three volumes “are not ‘aphorisms’ [...], but inconspicuous advance outposts” (GA 95: 274; trans. 214); moreover, at

the very beginning of the *Black Notebooks* we read that the notes included therein are “attempts at simple designation” (GA 94: 1; trans. 1).⁷

The *Black Notebooks* not only offer a series of “ponderings” on the political events of the time, but also the development, sometimes insistent, of certain basic concepts of Heidegger’s thinking – almost a ‘construction site’ or laboratory of thought – through which he tries to express being using a non-metaphysical lexicon, since “the issue is no longer to be ‘about’ something, to present something objective, but to be appropriated over to the appropriating event” (GA 65: 3; trans. 5). In other words, the *Black Notebooks* give us access to a set of reflections that allow for a more adequate understanding of Heidegger’s *Denkweg*⁸ in all its internal restlessness and theoretical articulations. Among other things, there are many, and often highly critical, references to *Being and Time*,⁹ as well as a series of supplementary considerations of issues addressed in *Contributions*, especially in the contemporaneous volume 94.

In the present study, it is precisely on volume 94, whose ponderings span from 1931 to 1938, that I shall focus, along with *Notes III* (dating from 1946–47) from volume 97, which does not contain “ponderings” but “notes” (*Anmerkungen*). I will also refer to a few passages from the other volumes as necessary. *Notes III* shows a change in the “disposition” of thought as *corresponding* to the “event” of being. As I will discuss below, Heidegger shifts his emphasis from the concept of “decision” (*Entscheidung*) – which can be found in passages dating to the late 1930s and early 1940s and whose importance is certainly linked to his concern for Nietzschean thought, which literally “took hold” of Heidegger in those years – to a different “attunement” of thought characterized by letting go. Along these lines, he employs the term *Gelassenheit*, often translated as “releasement” and usually associated with the final stage of his career¹⁰, which conveys a basic acceptance of that which disposes thought and more generally a dimension of *passivity* (to use a term that does not belong to Heidegger’s lexicon). In the late 1930s, Heidegger wrote that it is necessary to attempt “*the decision between beings and being*” (GA 95: 133; trans. 103), which

becomes the “*unique decision between the supremacy of machination and the sovereignty of the event*” (GA 96: 59; trans. 46). A change in sensibility would not occur until *Notes III*, dating from 1946–47. This change is also reflected in the fact that the term *Gelassenheit* appears in these notes’ index of the keywords, and in none of the other indexes that Heidegger himself placed at the end of each notebook.

I. “ESSENTIAL UNFOLDING” AND THE HISTORY OF BEING

Already in *Being and Time* (1927) Heidegger focused on the theme of “decision” with reference to Dasein, arguing that “resoluteness is an eminent mode of the disclosedness of Da-sein” (GA 2: 393; trans. 273). Resoluteness is an authentic mode of being because it discloses Dasein’s essential finitude, allowing it to choose its own possibility of being. But in the thirties the appeal to “decision” began to become problematic, since in the proper sense “the decision comes out of beyng itself” (GA 96: 171; trans. 135). Seen thus, it would seem that what is required of human beings is more of a ‘preparation’ to accept – as Heidegger sometimes puts it – than a real decision, because it is being itself that “decides,” i.e., that reveals itself to the Dasein. This preparation results in a detachment from beings, from whom it is necessary to turn away, because, as we read in the *Ponderings IV*, “the mystery of philosophy is the capacity to wait while questioning, until the simple event comes into clarity unconditionally and creates for itself its place and ground” (GA 94: 256; trans. 188). Thinking should take place in a state of waiting in order to receive what is essential, which does not come about on the basis of the human will. For this purpose, it is necessary for thought to derive *from* the event itself – *Vom Ereignis*, as stated in the subtitle of the *Beiträge zur Philosophie* – as a response to the call of being. This involves a distancing from representational thinking, since “philosophical thinking [...], as the thinking of beyng, cannot at all be assessed according to the modes of the representation of beings” (GA 95: 112; trans. 87). On the contrary, it

is being itself that, through the event, “appropriates” thinking, to the extent that the human being is in a “disposition” that allows it – a point that I shall return to momentarily.

It is well-known that in the years after *Being and Time* Heidegger went through a profound philosophical crisis, which was followed by an attempt, found mainly in *Contributions*, to overcome “fundamental ontology” through a “leap” in order to “correspond” to the event of being. In one of the *Black Notebooks*’ few ponderings which Heidegger dates, we read that “today (March, 1932) I am in all clarity at a place from which my entire previous literary output (*Being and Time* [...]) has become alien to me. Alien like a path brought to an impasse”¹¹ and which clearly can therefore no longer be followed. This is related to his criticism of “metaphysics,” a term that over the course of the 1930s took on increasingly negative connotations, since, from its Greek origins, it conceived of being as “beingness” (*Seiendheit*), unable to grasp being in its *difference* from beings. If, however, being is *not* a being – what Heidegger indicates as the “ontological difference” – it is necessary to abandon the (metaphysical) concepts of cause and grounds in order to turn instead to the essential *provenance* of what is manifested, without becoming entangled in the meaning of being as constant *presence*. In other words, “in order to be appropriated by being qua event, we must divorce ourselves from the beingness of beings and from the supremacy of beings” (GA 96: 108; trans. 85).

Heidegger argues that metaphysics has subjected beings to “machination” (*Machenschaft*), a term that recurs several times in the pages of the *Black Notebooks*, where it is the subject of an increasingly sharp criticism. It may be useful to remind that this concept anticipates the later analysis of technology as “enframing” (*Gestell*), in which Heidegger claims that the essence of technology is the transformation of all that is present into an available resource. In the essay *The Question Concerning Technology*, published in 1954, he argues precisely that “enframing means the gathering together of the setting-upon that sets upon man, i.e., challenges him forth, to reveal the actual, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve” (GA 7: 21; trans. 325). But in the *Black*

Notebooks Heidegger does not yet use the term *Gestell*, speaking instead of “machination.” *Ponderings XIV* includes a passage asserting with apocalyptic tones that machination, for which beings are understood in terms of producibility and computability,¹² should “be thought metaphysically and in terms of the history of beyng,” being “a *highest consummation of technology*. The final chapter of this consummation will consist in [...] the current humanity disappearing [...], the first purification of *being* from its most profound deformation on account of the supremacy of beings” (GA 96: 238; trans. 187). In his view, this dominance dates back to the Biblical idea of God the Creator, which leads to the understanding of a being as *ens creatum*, in the sense of *causatum*. Heidegger also associates the notion of a God-cause to the element of *calculation* promulgated by science, so that “Christianity and science are equally that which annihilates [*das Vernichtende*], which subjects the reference to beyng” (GA 97: 75, my trans).¹³

In approaching Heidegger’s concept of the event, it is useful to quote a passage from *Ponderings IV*, in which he speaks of his “*basic experience: the essential unfolding [Wesung] of being* – grasped at first as the *understanding* of being [...] as Dasein. But this still a wrong way [...]. The basic experience of the essential unfolding of being does not allow the postulation of *one* domain of beings as the standard [...] domain” (GA 94: 248; trans. 182). This means that the experience – *Erfahrung*, not *Erlebnis* – of the essential unfolding of being cannot be accessed by starting from an “understanding of being,” i.e., by starting from a peculiar being, as Dasein is. The notion of “understanding of being” had played a central role in *Being and Time*, where it meant an implicit and vague understanding that enables Dasein to make sense of things. Dasein is different from other beings, as it has an understanding of being and therefore can raise the question of being. But in this way being comes to depend on Dasein, i.e. on human being, while in a later passage of *Ponderings IV* Heidegger explains that “that mistaking of the essential unfolding of being qua the understanding of being [...] is connected to the identification of humanity and Dasein,” so that “the place of Da-sein is [...] not reached in a leap [*ersprungen*]” (GA 94: 249; trans. 182–83).

The basic experience to which Heidegger refers is therefore expressed through the term *Wesung*, which indicates the “essential unfolding” of being *from itself*, which, as stated in *Ponderings (II)*, philosophy should “put in words” in order to “correspond [*entsprechen*] to the essence of being! That is the meaning of authentic existence, which *Being and Time* still presents much too ‘existentially’ [*existenziell*] and extrinsically” (GA 94: 247, 56; trans. 181, 42). In *Contributions*, Heidegger differentiates being from beings through a formula: “beings are. Beyng essentially unfolds [*Das Seyn west*]” (GA 65: 30; trans. 26). This last expression indicates that being is not a being that exists as a constant *presence*, as an object placed in front of a subject.

It is noteworthy that in the *Black Notebooks*, starting with *Ponderings IV* of 1934–35, Heidegger uses an unconventional spelling as a device, which is also present in *Contributions* and in other unpublished treatises, and which consists in writing *Seyn* instead of *Sein*.¹⁴ This choice of spelling, which has aroused much consternation, is indicative of Heidegger’s attempt to free himself from the language of metaphysics, and yet it is by no means definitive, as he would later renounce it. But beginning with *Notes III* of 1946–47, Heidegger crosses out the word *Seyn*, as he would later do to the word *Sein* in an essay entitled *On the Question of Being* (1955). On the very first page of *Notes III*, Heidegger explains this option, making it clear that “‘beyng’ [crossed out] – indicates in a veiled way the divergence [*Austrag*] [...] as the truth of the difference between beings and being” (GA 97: 218; cf. GA 9: 385–426; trans. 291–322).

Thinking the event allows for a transition from an ontological-transcendental perspective to an historical, event-based one, in which being is specifically conceived in terms of its *historicity*. In a self-critical tone, Heidegger notes that we should not anchor “the *question of being* [...] in ‘existence’, but rather in the *beginning* as the throwing oneself adrift into the essence” (GA 94: 94; trans. 71). We should therefore think being out of the event, which is the non-chronological “beginning” of the “history of being,” since – as stated in *Contributions* – “*history is beyng as appropriating event*” (GA 65: 494; trans. 388). The term *Geschichte* refers to *Geschehen*, “to

occur,” so that the history of being is nothing but the occurrence of being. From this perspective, the event is the dynamics of *donation* and *withdrawal* that is the basis of all historical configurations of being. Only by understanding this essential dynamics, by reclaiming it from forgetfulness, we can achieve the “other beginning,” since for Heidegger “a mere ‘revolution’ in beings without a transformation of being creates no originary history” (GA 95: 18; trans. 14).

In the writings of the late 1930s and early 1940s the term *Anfang* – “beginning” – acquires considerable relevance and is closely linked to the concept of the event. In the unpublished treatise *Über den Anfang* (1941), Heidegger explicitly considers the meaning of this term and its relationship to *fangen* (‘to take,’ ‘to capture’) and claims that “the ‘beginning’ is therefore not the beginning of an other. But this word means here to take upon oneself [*An-sich-nehmen*] [...]. The taking upon oneself is unconcealing [*Entbergung*] and above all concealing [*Verbergung*]” (GA 70: 10, my trans). The event as a beginning is therefore a “taking upon oneself” that is not derived from an other and which takes shape as a dynamics of concealing and unconcealing. That what takes is not so much thought as being itself, which in “taking upon itself” is understood as a *beginning*. In *Contributions* emphasis is placed on how thinking takes what is “thrown”¹⁵ and on the correlation between being and Dasein, whereas in *Notes III* Heidegger argues that in the beginning “the event takes upon itself the guarantee [*Gewahrnis*], it takes it, by assuming it, while it sends to the essence of human being the dwelling in the guarantee” (GA 97: 221). This means that, by placing itself in relation to Dasein, the event gives it space in which to dwell. It is notable that in the same volume Heidegger introduces the word *Anfängnis* (cf. GA 97: 10) – not a proper German word – in order to stress the initial moment of the dynamics of the event.

Elsewhere in volume 97, Heidegger makes extensive use of the term *Unterschied*, “difference” (which also appears in both *Notes II* and *III*’s indexes of keywords) and holds that “difference and beginning are the same. In the abandonment of the difference starts the beginning, the expropriation [*Enteignis*]” (GA 97: 234), i.e., the withdrawal of being in distinguishing itself

from beings. In other words, the event begins as *differentiation* of being from beings, by which is meant the withdrawal of being that metaphysics cannot grasp, having only concerned itself with beings. Heidegger goes so far as to say that difference “is the topo-logy of the event of expropriation. The event of difference is the truth of beyng. But beyng is the simplicity of the distinction of beings from being.” In one of his later notes he writes that “the topology of beyng is the beginning. [...] The location [*Ortschaft*] of beyng is the difference” (GA 97: 173, 202). Along these lines, Heidegger would say in the seminar he held in Le Thor in 1969 that the question of the *meaning* of being – as developed in *Being and Time* – had given way the question of the *truth* and finally the *place* or *location* of being, resulting in a “topology of being” (cf. GA 15: 344; trans. 47).¹⁶

II. THE EVENT AS “APPROPRIATION” AND “EXPROPRIATION”

At this point the dynamics of the event should be analyzed more closely, bearing in mind that Heidegger uses the term *Ereignis* in a different sense from its current meaning, which refers to the events that take place *in* the world. Instead, he uses it to indicate the event *of being*, namely the *phenomenality*, which occurs as donation *and* withdrawal. By providing beings, being itself withdraws in concealment, remaining *different* from beings *and* from Dasein to which it is revealed. *Contributions* is entirely devoted to this theoretical issue, which is the real innovation in Heidegger’s thinking after *Being and Time*, but it is also given considerable attention in the *Black Notebooks*, and not only in the ponderings contemporaneous with *Contributions*.

My purpose in the present study is to propose a hermeneutical option that emphasizes the dimension of *alterity* of being, which Heidegger also refers to in a passage of *Ponderings VII*, wherein he claims that “beyng remains the totally other [*das ganz Andere*] with respect to any being, though at the same time their abyssal ground [*Abgrund*]” (GA 95: 49; trans. 38) – although the issue of the “grounding” (*Gründung*) falls outside the scope of the present study. To avoid any

misunderstanding, it should be noted that from this perspective the other is not the other *subject*, but the alterity that, in withdrawing itself, grants space (and time) to the human being and calls upon her/him to respond. Nor is there the least implication of a responsibility *for the other* which has always already summoned the subject in a ‘preoriginal’ past which was never *present* – as is the case in Levinas’s *Autrement qu’être* (cf. Levinas 1990: 23; trans. 9).

Heidegger holds that only a different way of thinking may approach being, i.e., may open itself to “what is other [*das Andere*] [...], which of course cannot be where one [...] boasts of a possession” (GA 94: 328; trans. 239). Thinking that takes leave of all forms of possession is what Heidegger in many places calls *Besinnung*, “meditation,” stressing that “in meditation and through it, there necessarily happens that constant otherness [*Immer-noch-Anderes*], and to prepare that is what genuinely matters but would never find the site of the event if there were no clearing for what is concealed” (GA 94: 280; trans. 205). The emphasis on the need to “prepare the other” (GA 94: 373; trans. 272) should not obscure the fact that it is being itself that offers itself up when the event occurs. Heidegger expresses this fact using tautological locutions, as in a passage from *Notes III* in which he states, by way of explaining the meaning of *sich ereignen*, that “the event occurs [*das Ereignis ereignet sich*] – expropriating” (GA 97: 311). I shall return to the concept of “expropriation” below.

Heidegger argues that *eignen* (‘to belong to,’ ‘to be proper’) and *eigen* (‘proper’) are present in the term *Ereignis*, and in the verb *sich ereignen*, ‘to occur.’ Moreover, he often uses the verbs *ereignen* and *eignen* in the transitive form, with the meaning of ‘to make happen’ and ‘to appropriate.’ However, in a lecture entitled *The Principle of Identity* (1957) and as early as *Notes III* (cf. GA 97: 304; see GA 11: 45), he admits that the correct etymology of *Ereignis* derives from *eräugen*, ‘to catch sight of.’ In any case, being should be reconsidered out of the event, which gives rise to the “mutual belonging” of being and Dasein, according to a dynamics of donation and withdrawal. This means that the relationship between human being and being is configured on the

basis of the event of appropriation, in which the human being is “transappropriated” or “consigned” (*übereignet*) to being and the latter is appropriated to human essence. In this respect, Heidegger writes in the *Black Notebooks* of the “relation between beyng and Dasein,” given that “*the essence of beyng needs humans*” (GA 94: 347; trans. 253).¹⁷

This topic is connected to the reinterpretation of the notion of truth as *aletheia*, through which Heidegger distances himself from the concept of truth as *correctness* or *adaequatio*. In *Being and Time* he claims that the phenomenon of truth does not have the character of correspondence or *adaequatio intellectus et rei* (adequation of intellect and thing), but the more originary sense of “un-concealment”, which is shown by the Greek word *a-letheia*. In this sense, “primarily ‘true,’ that is, discovering, is Da-sein” (GA 2: 292; trans. 203). This means that Dasein is “true” to the extent that it discovers beings. Heidegger would later criticize the notion of *aletheia* for its ambiguity and the excessive importance given to the unconcealing, to the detriment of the withdrawal, of being. On the one hand, the term *aletheia* “appoints what presences [*das Anwesende*] in its unconcealedness,” so that “the presencing [*das Anwesen*] itself is essentially hidden.” On the other hand, it “appoints also the un-concealedness [*Un-Verborgenheit*] itself. It leaves intact the concealedness [...] in the presencing.” This means that the *a-* of *a-letheia* “is equivocal. It says that the concealedness is taken from what presences. It is removed [...]. It says (for a different thinking) that the concealedness is not yet experienced as such” (GA 97: 415). For this reason Heidegger reformulates the notion of truth as “clearing [*Lichtung*] for self-concealing [*Sichverbergen*]” (GA 94: 483; trans. 351; cf. GA 65: 338; trans. 268). Here, the crucial aspect is that concealment is not something inaccessible, leaving no trace of itself, because otherwise it could only be the subject of a (metaphysical) postulation. Truth is clearing *for* self-concealing, which means that the self-concealing is revealed *as such* – not as a merely *present* object. In other words, the event that occurs on the withdrawal of being in some way *offers itself up*, and does so with what Heidegger sometimes calls “hesitancy” (*Zögerung*) (cf. GA 65: 380; trans. 300). In its withdrawal, being “hesitates” in the “openness,” and

it is only in the disposition of “restraint” – a concept we shall examine shortly – that the human being can become Dasein and presage the event of being.

In his writings, Heidegger repeatedly stresses the moment of the *withdrawal* of being within this dynamics, as is clear from the *Ponderings V*, which state that “we never grasp the *inceptual*; in order not to become something present at hand and thereby forfeit itself, the inceptual must constantly withdraw [*entziehen*]. Therefore, the beginning can never present itself; it can only be carried out [...] such that the withdrawal [*Entzug*] of truth *remains* a withdrawal” (GA 94: 334; trans. 243). But if humans persevere in their attachment to what is given, then they “withdraw *completely* from beyng, believing they already have ‘beings’ [...] firmly in hand” (GA 94: 336; trans. 244).¹⁸ Only by “renouncing [*Abkehr*] all objectification” (GA 94: 497; trans. 361) can we grasp the withdrawal of being, which Heidegger also expresses with the term *Verweigerung*, “refusal.” Specifically, he speaks of “the refusal as an assignment of Da-sein, whereby [...] humans are transformed,” so as to perceive that the “denial” (*Versagung*) of being actually is “the supreme gift [*Schenkung*]” (GA 94: 429, 462; trans. 311, 335), as stated in *Ponderings VI*. In other words, only through a different “disposition” of thinking can we achieve Dasein and accept the withdrawal of being as a gift. If, as Heidegger says, “this gift affects you, then [...] you are appropriated to Da-sein” (GA 94: 464; trans. 337). Previous ponderings refer to “renunciation as preparedness for refusal” (GA 94: 419; trans. 304), which leads us to that aspect of the event that goes by the name of “expropriation.”

Ereignis is the event which occurs when being withdraws itself, and in this withdrawal it is “expropriated,” in the sense that it preserves what is proper to it. In this regard, Heidegger says in *Notes II* that “the great expropriation [*Enteignung*] (of beyng [...] in the beginning) is the decision of the *difference*” (GA 97: 120). Expropriation thus indicates the initial moment of the event, in which, in withdrawing itself, being differentiates itself from beings. An emphasis on this issue, which is placed in connection to the “abandonment” by being (to which we shall return

shortly), is especially noticeable in volume 97. However, expropriation carries a second meaning: If on the one hand the event brings about the human being, in the transitive sense that the former “appropriates” the latter,¹⁹ assigning it what is ‘proper’ to it – i.e., its origin –, while the human being is “consigned” to being; on the other hand this appropriation is revealed as an expropriation, since what is ‘proper’ to the human being is not his property. In fact, Heidegger argues that “in the happening meant here, we – those to whom it is granted – are appropriated [*ereignet*] by beyng” (GA 94: 326; trans. 237). In other words, the human being becomes Dasein by coming into “attunement” with being (which withdraws itself) and then realizes it is exposed to a radical *heteronomy*.

III. THE “TURNING” OF BEING AND THE “RELEASEMENT”

In the mid-1930s there is a shift in Heidegger’s thinking known as the “turning” (*Kehre*), where he abandons the existential analytic of Dasein elaborated in *Being and Time* in favour of an attempt to think being as such. But the turning is something that occurs in the development of his thought only in an external sense, since it is not only “a change of standpoint from *Being and Time*” (GA 9: 328; trans. 250). At a deeper level, the turning must instead be thought of as something that characterizes the very event of being in its relation to Dasein. To describe the event of the withdrawal of being, Heidegger uses precisely the term *Kehre*, in the sense that being is “turning” (*kehrig*): It gives itself to and withdraws itself from Dasein, so that in *Ponderings IV* he refers to the “turning relation between Da-sein and being” (GA 94: 292; trans. 213). This marks a further variation on the theme of appropriation, to the extent that “humans [...] appertain to the turning, which means they are appropriated by the *event* as the essential unfolding of beyng itself,” since “the truth of being is precisely *not* a human fabrication” (GA 94: 343–44; trans. 250–51). The turning of being and its withdrawal from representation constitute what Heidegger will later, in the Zähringen seminar (1973), call the “phenomenology of the inapparent” (GA 15: 399; trans. 80) – a singular locution,

considering that the term ‘phenomenology’ had long ago been deleted from Heidegger’s lexicon. The idea behind this expression is to combine the revealing side, which comes from the phenomenological lesson, with a dimension that is irreducible to givenness. In this regard, it should be noted that in volume 97, but not in the *Black Notebooks* of previous years, the expression *das Unscheinbare*, “the inapparent,” occurs many times, especially in relation to the issue of the event, given that, as stated in the *Notes I*, “the inapparent is the silent event-making [*das still Ereignende*] of the event in silence” (GA 97: 65). A phenomenology of the inapparent should therefore be embodied in a thought that accepts the event of being, not reducing it to other instances, whether of transcendental nature – in the form of conditions of possibility – or related to the ‘principle of reason,’ for which *nihil est sine ratione*.

As for the argument, which Heidegger had already made in *Ponderings (II)*, that “the human being should come to himself” (GA 94: 5; trans. 5), it should be noted that the 1930s marked a change in meaning of the term *Da-sein*, now written with a hyphen to indicate that it is the ‘place’ to which the human being must come in order to correspond to the event of being. Unlike in *Being and Time*, Dasein no longer referred so much to the human being as to the place of the openness of being, in which the human being is called to enter – or to “insist,” as Heidegger says. It is a matter of becoming steadfast in the truth of being, enduring the groundlessness that belongs to it: In fact, as stated in *Contributions*, Dasein means “withstanding the openness of self-concealing” (GA 65: 301; trans. 238). In *Ponderings XIII* reference is made to “a silent transformation of humanity into steadfastness [*Inständigkeit*] in Dasein,” which “can be carried out only in the appropriation [*Ereignung*] by the event” (GA 96: 144; trans. 112).²⁰ It follows that such transformation does not depend on human will, since it is consigned to the event of being.

However, the possibility to “insist” within the scope of Dasein is made difficult precisely by the withdrawal of being, which has *abandoned* beings (*Seinsverlassenheit*). In this way – to come back an issue raised earlier – “beyng has already abandoned all beings and relegated them to

themselves – to their machinational objectification” (GA 94: 405; trans. 295). This will ultimately result in the “forgetfulness of being” (*Seinsvergessenheit*), which will fall into oblivion. In this regard, reference is made in *Ponderings (III)* to the “decay [*Verwesung*] of the essence,” so that “being is forgotten, precisely because still constantly known and used – in a casual way” (GA 94: 87–88; trans. 66), having been reduced to a being. The point is that such forgetfulness is a consequence of the very event of being and it is not attributable to an inadequacy of thinking.²¹

This leads to the issue of the relationship between the “first” and the “other” beginning, which is extensively covered in *Contributions* and is also treated in the *Black Notebooks*, although with diminishing frequency from 1940 on. The first beginning refers to Greek philosophy and the rise to the history of metaphysics, which, however, would in the form of machination come to an end, while the other beginning is conceived out of the event. In this sense, “the other beginning is possible only on the basis of the most intrinsic *historical* thinking, a thinking that has overcome all historiography [...]; being is now to be experienced and grounded, on the basis of the (event)” (GA 94: 270; trans. 198). Heidegger uses imagery to illustrate the need to “leap” into the other beginning by starting from what in the first beginning remains *unthought*; he states that “one who would take a *great leap* needs a *great running start*. For that, he must draw far *back*, indeed all the way back to the first beginning” (GA 94: 234; trans. 171). It follows that “the essence of history is itself newly determined (on the basis of the event) through inceptual questioning in the other beginning. The other beginning indeed *follows* – historiologically calculated – upon the first; but historically it is only through the *other* beginning that the ‘first’ *becomes* the first” (GA 95: 45; trans. 34). Furthermore, it is only by means of a *transitional* thinking, which is enlisted to prepare the event of being, that the “downgoing” (*Untergang*) of the first beginning may be transformed into the “transition” (*Übergang*) to the other beginning (cf. GA 96: 252; trans. 200).²²

Thinking can pave the way for the event of being only if it allows itself to be approached by basic “attunements” or “dispositions” (*Stimmungen*), which come *from* being itself. In this regard, it

should be noted that already in *Being and Time* Heidegger recognized the importance of attunements or moods, which allow Dasein to open up the world. In fact, he claims that “we must *ontologically* in principle leave the primary discovery of the world to ‘mere mood’” (GA 2: 183; trans. 130). In particular, the “fundamental” attunement is anxiety, which is not directed towards some specific object, but rather discloses “the world as such” (GA 2: 248; trans. 175). But in the mid-1930s Heidegger rethinks the role of attunements with reference to the event of being, and especially to the other beginning. In *Contributions*, he devotes considerable space to this issue, linking the other beginning to a set of dispositions, among which the most basic is “restraint” (*Verhaltenheit*), which indicates a lingering, a pause, expressing willingness to accept the withdrawal of being.²³ In the *Black Notebooks* as well – and especially in the *Ponderings IV* – Heidegger speaks of the “restraint as the basic disposition [*Grundstimmung*] of Dasein,” while also specifying that we should “establish (as a historical disposition) the restraint of the preservation of Da-sein” (GA 94: 274, 246; trans. 201, 180).²⁴ The basic disposition of restraint is associated with the term *Verschweigung* (‘silence,’ ‘reticence’), whose importance is such that in *Ponderings IV* Heidegger argues that “the new ‘logic’ is *the logic of silence*” (GA 94: 229; trans. 167) – a singular logic which is basically the same as the “sigetics” treated in *Contributions* (cf. GA 65: 78–79; trans. 62–63). Such logic requires that thinking disposes itself to accept the silence of being, namely its withdrawal from the unfolded word, although it is the origin of all words. However, Heidegger recognizes, with a tone of despair, that “humans know little of the event of silence and above all want to know nothing of it” (GA 95: 26; trans. 20).

In the *Black Notebooks*, particularly in volume 97, Heidegger points out the consonance between *Denken*, “thinking,” and *Danken*, “thanking.” In *Notes I*, there is a passage that is specifically dedicated to “thanksgiving,” which states that “thanking is thinking. But thinking is remembering [*An-denken*]. Remembering is thinking in the beginning. The inceptual thinking is the releasement [*Gelassenheit*] of saying in the poetizing [*Dichten*] of beyng” (GA 97: 78–79).²⁵ As

I touched on earlier, Heidegger brings the issue of *Gelassenheit* into meaningful relief in *Notes III*, which date from 1946–47, and in which we read that “‘released’ and ‘releasement’ – now are no longer understood primarily out of human behavior, but out of the event [...]. ‘Releasement’: that the beginning has occurred [*ereignet*] and so has transpropriated [*vereignet*]. Only in this releasement the ‘letting’ essentially unfolds” (GA 97: 295–96).²⁶ In a later note, Heidegger speaks of “letting-be beings [...]. But the letting-be has already been let in [*eingelassen*] in being and comes from the latter, which, however, must have let the human being in and released him in the concession of *beyng*” (GA 97: 296). In other words, releasement as a disposition of thinking is required by a more original releasement of *being*, which, in offering itself up, withdraws itself, thereby leading to “expropriation.” Thinking is thus configured as a response that is “attuned” to a *Stimmung* that is not merely psychological, given that “to be attuned [*Gestimmtsein*] does not mean to wallow in dispositions qua feelings and to feel these feelings; instead, it means: in belonging to *beyng*, to *be* the ‘there’ [*das Da sein*] qua the clearing of concealment as such” (GA 95: 155; trans. 120).

Heidegger ultimately arrives at the conviction that thinking may be disposed to let go only if it is “attuned” to being, and for this purpose – as stated in *Das Ereignis* – a “*disposing* [*stimmen*] – instead of talking ‘about’ dispositions” (GA 71: 284; trans. 247) is necessary. In other words, we should *enter* a peculiar disposition, which is determined by the ceaseless iteration of certain words and certain issues. This occurs in the pages of the *Black Notebooks*, in which there is a kind of *mantra* with which Heidegger intends to strike a profound chord in his readers.

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NOTES

¹ I cite Heidegger’s works by page both in the original German, with reference to the volumes of Heidegger’s *Gesamtausgabe* (GA), and in the English translations. I have sometimes modified the English translations in my citations.

² Heidegger later noted that “the relations and contexts constituting the essential structure of the event were worked out between 1936 and 1938” (GA 14: 46; trans. 43), the period from which *Contributions* dates. In a passage from *Besinnung* he specifies, however, that in its basic features, his plan for an opus devoted to the issue of the “event” dates back to the spring of 1932 (cf. GA 66: 424; trans. 374).

³ Elsewhere Heidegger clarifies that *Contributions* represents “a framework, yet without structural articulation [*Gefüge*]” (GA 69: 5; trans. 5).

⁴ “Da-sein is indeed thought essentially out of the event, but nevertheless too unilaterally in relation to the human being. The human being still not thought historically enough” (GA 71: 5; trans. xxiv).

⁵ On Heidegger’s own commentary regarding *Contributions*, cf. Vallega-Neu 2014.

⁶ These are works, such as *Besinnung* (1938–39), *Über den Anfang* (1941), *Das Ereignis* (1941–42), and the still unpublished *Die Stege des Anfangs* (1944), with an even more fragmented structure than *Contributions*. On this, see Vallega-Neu 2018.

⁷ Among the publications to date devoted to the *Black Notebooks*, cf. Trawny et al. 2015, and Farin & Malpas (Eds.) 2016.

⁸ For a different opinion, cf. Krell 2015: 130.

⁹ On this, see Grondin 2016.

¹⁰ On this subject, cf. Davis 2007.

¹¹ Moreover, he warns that we cannot access his thoughts on the issue of the “event” by referring to the lectures he gave between 1927 and 1936, since the “‘historical’ interpretations” included in them would be merely a “mask” (cf. GA 94: 243; trans. 178).

¹² Machination is the “interpretation of beings as representable and represented. Representable means, on the one hand, accessible in [...] calculation and, on the other hand, providable in production” (GA 65: 108–09; trans. 86).

¹³ It should also be noted that, in addition to Heidegger’s infamous remarks about Jews and Judaism, the *Black Notebooks* also contain a virulent attack on Christianity (*Christentum*), which, however, he distinguishes from Christendom (*Christlichkeit*) (cf. GA 97: 204–05).

¹⁴ This is a spelling that Heidegger does not use consistently, and which is usually rendered into English as “beyng.” However, in *Notes I* Heidegger also uses the spelling *Da-Seyn*.

¹⁵ “*The leap* (the thrown projection) is the carrying out of the projection of the truth of beyng, in the sense of an entering into the open realm such that the projector of the projection experiences himself as thrown, i.e., as appropriated by beyng” (GA 65: 239; trans. 188).

¹⁶ On this, see Malpas 2006.

¹⁷ In another passage, Heidegger asks “whether we appertain to beyng, [...] whether the truth of beyng essentially unfolds in such a way that beyng requires us – as ones who are self-altering and who ground Dasein” (GA 94: 279; trans. 205).

¹⁸ We should therefore ask “whether humans are able to provide an abode for beyng – or whether they let themselves be satisfied with beings” (GA 94: 496; trans. 360).

¹⁹ In fact, Heidegger writes in *Contributions* that “being appropriates [*ereignet*] Dasein and only thus essentially unfolds as event” (GA 65: 256; trans. 201).

²⁰ Note that in the Zähringen seminar several years later, Heidegger uses the term *Inständigkeit* to express what he had previously indicated through the notion of “ek-stasis” (cf. GA 15: 384; trans. 71). But already in the *Letter on “Humanism”* of 1946 he uses the same language, since he speaks of “an ecstatic inherence [*Innestehen*] in the truth of being” (GA 9: 325; trans. 248).

²¹ Nor to a people or to a religious community, although in the *Black Notebooks* Heidegger ascribes responsibility for the oblivion of being to Jews and Judaism. On this subject, cf. Di Cesare 2018: 229–30.

²² In *Ponderings XI*, which dates to 1938–39, Heidegger admits that in the early 1930s he had become convinced that National Socialism would make the transition to the other beginning possible: “Thinking purely ‘metaphysically’ (i.e., in heeding the history of beyng), during the years 1930–1934 I saw in National Socialism the possibility of a transition to another beginning and interpreted it that way,” recognizing the “necessity of affirming National Socialism and indeed on thoughtful grounds [*aus denkerischen Gründen*]” (GA 95: 408; trans. 318). On this, cf. Trawny 2015. See also Trawny & Mitchell (Eds.) 2015.

²³ Restraint is “the pre-disposition of readiness for the refusal as gift [...], a turn toward the hesitant self-withholding as the essential unfolding of beyng” (GA 65: 15; trans. 14).

²⁴ In the same volume, we read that “the most originary appropriation of the (event)” requires the “preservation [*Bewährung*]. That word names the activity of restraint” (GA 94: 270; trans. 198).

²⁵ The connection between thinking and releasement is taken up again later, when he speaks of “letting-be [*Seyn-lassen*]: thinking-of-beyng: the most silent thanksgiving” (GA 97: 111).

²⁶ Moreover, it should be remembered that he had already begun to address this issue in a conversation from 1944–45 (published in 1959) entitled *Toward an Emplacing Discussion of Releasement*, where he also used the term *Inständigkeit*. This conversation was resumed, with some variations, in the first of the *Feldweg-Gespräche* (cf. GA 77: 1–160; trans. 1–104).