

Heidegger on Gelassenheit

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Abstract

Martin Heidegger's *Conversation On A Country Path About Thinking* (1966a) deals with the concept of *Gelassenheit* experienced as the essence of thinking, a thinking that is not intended as representing, as self-determining thinking, but is conceptualized as "meditative thinking." Meditative thinking is the kind of thinking that thinks the truth of being, that belongs to being and listens to it. To understand *Gelassenheit* as the essence of thinking means to have a different and more radical insight into the essence of who we are. The aim of this paper is to investigate what Heidegger means by *Gelassenheit*, but not proposing an answer to a "what is" question. This paper is instead an attempt to enact a thinking transformation that through a close reading of Heidegger's work will lead us on that path towards *Gelassenheit*, on which a different understanding of man's innermost being can be glimpsed.

Conversation on a Country Path about Thinking

One of the major problems we face when approaching Heidegger's thought is that we are forced to dwell in uncertainty. When Heidegger speaks, he does not give any assurance regarding his saying. He willingly puzzles us; he always tries to undermine and rouse us from our comfortable thinking zone. And in so doing, Heidegger wants his reader to be open to something unusual that could occur. This is particularly evident in Heidegger's work *Conversation on a Country Path about Thinking* (1966a), a work that deals on and with the essence of thinking investigated as *Gelassenheit*. That will be the central focus of the present paper.

Before beginning this paper, I would like to make a preliminary remark. I am aware that there are many different ways to approach Heidegger's thought, and I am also

aware of the importance of a critical reading of it. Nonetheless, before being in the position of putting forward a critique, it is necessary to spend time and efforts to work through the complexity and richness of Heidegger's own thought. The aim of the present paper, therefore, is not to be a critique of Heidegger's concept of *Gelassenheit* – this remains in fact a task to be developed in a further study. Aim of the present paper is instead, to be an in depth analysis of Heidegger's own concept of *Gelassenheit*. Having said that, let us now proceed in the investigation.

The *Conversation*, written between 1944 and 1945, was published for the first time in 1959, together with a "Memorial Address" that Heidegger delivered in 1955 on the occasion of the 175th birthday of composer Conradin Kreutzer. The title of the book containing these two works is *Discourse on Thinking* (1966b). In the "Memorial Address," Heidegger talks about *Gelassenheit* in relation to technical devices [*technische Dinge*]. But, as von Herrmann (1994) suggests, if we want to understand how Heidegger thinks *Gelassenheit* in its essential features, we must consider the *Conversation*, a dialogue on the nature of thinking conceived as *Gelassenheit*.

Heidegger's *Conversation* is a dialogue between a scientist, a scholar and a teacher. The scientist represents one who conducts scientific research, and who is therefore accustomed to thinking according to a deductive and representational model of thinking. The scholar represents an academic "learned in the history of philosophical thought" (Lovitts 1995, p. 599), who thinks from within a metaphysical perspective.

The teacher, through whom Heidegger speaks, we can consider to represent the Heideggerian idea of ‘thinker’. In this dialogue these three speakers conduct an inquiry into the nature of thinking, a type of thinking that does not involve willing. They search for a “will-less thinking” (Lovitts 1995, p. 599) that will be found to occur as ‘*Gelassenheit*’.

At the beginning of the dialogue the scientist and the scholar appear to deal with the search in accordance with their scientific way of thinking, which is to say thinking with the mindset proper to their scientific role and speaking from well determined and clear positions. But gradually, under the guidance of the teacher, the interlocutors begin to give up their own standpoints and, with that, their accustomed form of thinking. They let the dialogue itself take charge, so to speak. As they abandon the will to dictate and lead the search, a different approach and way of thinking discloses itself through the dialogue. The interlocutors, as the dialogue proceeds, no longer impose their view, but let the elements of their search emerge from their dialogue with one another. In the *Conversation* the standpoint of the single speakers is gradually abandoned, in the sense that the focus is on what is disclosed during the dialogue by and through the interaction of the three speakers. We could venture to say that, at a certain point, it does not matter anymore who said what, because what reveals itself in the dialogue is beyond the distinction of ‘whatness’. What the *Conversation* shows is the transformed nature of thinking, in its transforming process. During the *Conversation* we witness in the interaction between the three speakers what I would

call the transforming transformation of our own way of thinking, which is forced to change in its core in order to be part of the scene settled by Heidegger.

Heidegger's *Conversation* does not present a linear structure. We do not find a form of deductive reasoning that brings the dialogue forth. Rather, we witness and experience a continuous circular movement. In the dialogue we do not find a series of stages that takes us closer to the goal we are aiming at. In the dialogue it is possible, instead, to recognize hermeneutical circles that are nourished *by* the dialogue itself. The dialogue, that is, the *interplay* between the interlocutors, shows the movement and counter-movement that constitutes the structure of the dialogue as the expanse in which it occurs, as the experience of *Gelassenheit*. That is why we can say that, at every moment of the dialogue, what we are looking for is already showing itself, and the investigation itself is already an experience of it.

Now, the aim of the present paper is to investigate what Heidegger means by *Gelassenheit* through a careful study of the *Conversation*. To reach this goal, I will firstly present the difference between our common way of thinking and meditative thinking. I shall then explore the first step needed to move towards *Gelassenheit*, that is, what Heidegger indicates as "keeping awake" for *Gelassenheit*. I will look, then, at *Gelassenheit* as "higher acting" and "waiting". After that I will contend with the dialogue form chosen by Heidegger for this search. Finally, I shall introduce Heidegger's concept of *Gegnet* and its relation to *Gelassenheit*.

This investigation, however, remains an interpretation that, as such, does not pretend to be exhaustive, though I hope it will give a valuable contribution to the understanding of Heidegger's thought on *Gelassenheit*.

Meditative Thinking

When we use the word thinking, our thought immediately goes back to a well known set of definitions that we have learnt in our life or in our studies. To us thinking is a mental activity that helps us to solve problems, to deal with situations, to understand circumstances and, according to this understanding, to take action in order to move forward. Thinking for us also means to have an opinion, to have an impression that something is in a certain way. Thinking means reasoning, the process of reaching certain conclusions through a series of statements. Thinking is "a means of mastery" (Lovitts 1995, p. 586).

We already mentioned that this is a paper about the essence of thinking, sought as *Gelassenheit*. But the kind of thinking whose essence we are about to investigate is not the common way of thinking. The kind of thinking that we need to think of is "the thinking of the thinker." This is not a general philosophical concept of thinking, but we need to consider what, in the *Discourse*, Heidegger calls "meditative thinking" [*das besinnliche Denken*].

The kind of thinking we are probably accustomed to is what Heidegger names “calculative thinking” [*das rechnende Denken*] (1966b, p. 46), and it is the thinking proper to the sciences and economics, which we, belonging to the technological age, mainly — if not solely — employ. Calculative thinking, says Heidegger, “calculates,” “plans and investigates” (1966b, p. 46); it sets goal and wants to obtain them. It “serves specific purposes” (ibid., p. 46); it considers and works out many new and always different possibilities to develop. Despite this productivity of a thinking that “races from one aspect to the next”; despite the richness in thinking activities proper to our age, and testified by the many results obtained; despite our age’s extreme reach in research activities and inquiries in many areas; despite all this, nevertheless, Heidegger states that a “growing thoughtlessness” (1966b, p. 45) is in place and needs to be addressed. This thoughtlessness depends on the fact that man is “*in flight from thinking*” (ibid., p. 45). “Thoughtlessness” [*Gedankenlosigkeit*], Heidegger states,

is an uncanny visitor who comes and goes everywhere in today’s world. For nowadays we take in everything in the quickest and cheapest way, only to forget it just as quickly, instantly. Thus one gathering follows on the heels of another. Commemorative celebrations grow poorer and poorer in thought. Commemoration and thoughtlessness are found side by side. (1966b, p. 45)

Calculative thinking, despite being of great importance in our technological world, is a thinking “of a special kind.” It deals, in fact, with circumstances that are already given, and which we take into consideration, to carry out projects or to reach goals that we want to achieve. Calculative thinking does not pause to consider the meaning inherent in “everything that is”. It is always on the move, is restless and it “never

collects itself” (Heidegger 1966b, p. 46). This fact hides and shows that man is actually “in flight from thinking.” Now, if it is not a question of calculative thinking, then what kind of thinking does Heidegger refer to when he speaks of “meditative thinking”? And why, if at all, is there a need for it? Because if we have no problem in understanding the importance of calculative thinking, we probably are not so clear about the need, for our existence, of a different kind of thinking.

In the “Memorial Address,” Heidegger speaks of two kinds of thinking: the above mentioned “calculative thinking” and “meditative thinking” (1966b, p. 46). Meditative thinking is a kind of thinking man is capable of, it is part of his nature; but nevertheless it is a way of thinking that needs to be awoken. When Heidegger states that man is “*in flight from thinking*” (1966b, p. 45), he means flight from meditative thinking. What distinguishes meditative thinking from calculative thinking? What does meditative thinking mean? It means to notice, to observe, to ponder, to awaken an awareness of what is actually taking place around us and in us.

Meditative thinking does not mean being detached from reality or, as Heidegger says, “floating unaware above reality” (1966b, p. 46). It is also inappropriate to consider it as a useless kind of thinking, by stating that it is of no use in practical affairs or in business. These considerations, Heidegger states, are just “excuses” that, if on one hand appears to legitimize avoiding any engagement with this kind of thinking, on the other hand attests that meditative thinking “does not just happen by itself any more

than does calculative thinking” (1966b, p. 46-47). Meditative thinking requires effort, commitment, determination, care, practice, but at the same time, it must “be able to bide its time, to await as does the farmer, whether the seed will come up and ripen” (Heidegger 1966b, p. 47).

Meditative thinking does not estrange us from reality. On the contrary, it keeps us extremely focused on our reality, on the *hic et nunc* of our being, ‘existence’. To enact meditative thinking, Heidegger says that we need to

dwell on what lies close and meditate on what is closest; upon that which concerns us, each one of us, here and now; here, on this patch of home ground; now, in the present hour of history. (1966b, p. 47)

By remaining focused on the moment, we “notice” aspects of our reality and we keep them in mind. We then “remember” elements, events, circumstances related to them. This invite us to “think further”, and by doing so we clarify, discern, elements that pertain to our situation. Through this process we “grow thoughtful”, and this generates questions that further deepen our thinking and awareness of the roots of what moved us to think; and that was just something barely noticed before. An attempt to enact meditative thinking is carried out by Heidegger himself when, during the "Memorial Address," he tries to conduct the audience from a situation where they are passive 'consumers' of the address to a situation in which they actually meditate and think about what is going on, beyond the simple event of commemoration. What

follows is a long quotation which I think can give us a picture of what the process of meditative thinking is about:

What does this celebration suggest to us, in case we are ready to meditate? Then we notice that a work of art has flowered in the ground of our homeland. As we hold this simple fact in mind, we cannot help remembering at once that during the last two centuries great poets and thinkers have been brought forth from the Swabian land. Thinking about it further makes clear at once that Central Germany is likewise such a land, and so are East Prussia, Silesia, and Bohemia.

We grow thoughtful and ask: does not the flourishing of any genuine work depend upon its roots in a native soil? Johann Peter Hebel once wrote: "We are plants which — whether we like to admit it to ourselves or not — must with our roots rise out of the earth in order to bloom in the ether"...

The poet means to say: For a truly joyous and salutary human work to flourish, man must be able to mount from the depth of his home ground up into ether. Ether here means the free air of the high heavens, the open realm of the spirit.

We grow more thoughtful and ask: does this claim of Johann Peter Hebel hold today? Does man still dwell calmly between heaven and earth? Does a meditative spirit still reign over the land? Is there still a life-giving homeland in whose ground man may stand rooted...? (Heidegger 1966b, p. 47-48)

Even though "man is a *thinking*, that is, a *meditating* being" [der Mensch das *denkende, d.h. sinnende* Wesen ist] (ibid., p. 47), we need to train ourselves in the ability to think meditatively, to confront reality, and thus ourselves, in a meditative way. The cost of not doing so would be, Heidegger states, to remain a "defenseless and perplexed victim at the mercy of the irresistible superior power of technology" (ibid., p. 52-53). We would be — and today, more so than sixty years ago, when Heidegger gave this speech — victims of "radio and television," "picture magazines" and "movies"; we would be, and perhaps already are, "chained" to the imaginary world proposed by these mediums, and thus homeless in our own home:

all that with which modern techniques of communication stimulate, assail, and drive man – all that is already much closer to man today than his fields around his farmstead, closer than the sky over the earth, closer than the change from night to day... (Heidegger 1966b, p. 48)

The risk for man is to be uprooted not only from his reality, from his world, but also from himself. If we think meditatively, however, we allow ourselves to be aware of the risk implied in the technological age and its usefulness, and we can hence act upon it.

When we think meditatively we do not project an idea, planning a goal towards which we move, we do not “run down a one-track course of ideas” (ibid., p. 53). When we think meditatively, we need to “engage ourselves with what at first sight does not go together at all” (ibid., p.53). In order to understand what this means, Heidegger suggests that we look at the comportment we have towards technological devices. We recognize that, in today’s world technological machineries are indispensable. We need just to think of computers and their usage in daily life activities to be convinced, above any doubt, that “we depend on technical devices” (Heidegger 1966b, p.53). By thinking calculatively, we use these machineries at our own convenience; we also let ourselves be challenged by them, so as to develop new devices that would be more suitable for a certain project or more accurate in the carrying out of certain research.

If calculative thinking does not think beyond the usefulness of what it engages with, meditative thinking would notice and become aware of the fact that these devices are

not just extremely useful to us. It would also notice that they, by being so extremely useful, at the same time are “shackling” us: “suddenly and unaware we find ourselves so firmly shackled to these technical devices that we fall into bondage to them” (ibid., p. 53-54). If man, not being aware of this, is in a situation of being chained to these machineries, then by becoming conscious of this he finds himself in a different relation to them. He becomes free of them. With this awareness man can utilize these instruments just as instruments, being at the same time free to “let go of them at any time” (ibid., p. 54). And this is so because once we acknowledge that their usefulness implies the possibility for us to be chained to them, we deal with them differently; we “deny them the right to dominate us, and so to wrap, confuse, and lay waste our nature” (ibid., p.54). It is a matter of a different comportment towards them; it is a different disposition to which Heidegger gives the name “*releasement toward things*” [*die Gelassenheit zu den Dingen*] (ibid., p.54)

Releasement toward things is an expression of a change in thinking. Thinking is not just calculation, but ponders the meaning involved and hidden behind what we are related to and engaged with. This hidden meaning, even if it remains obscure as such, is nevertheless detected – by a meditating thinking – in its presence, a presence that “hides itself.” But, as Heidegger states,

if we explicitly and continuously heed the fact that such hidden meaning touches us everywhere in the world of technology, we stand at once within the realm of that which hides itself from us, and hides itself just in approaching us. That which shows itself and at the same time withdraws is the essential trait of what we call the mystery. I call

the comportment which enables us to keep open to the meaning hidden in technology, *openness to the mystery*. (1966b, p. 55)

“Releasement towards things” and “openness to the mystery” are two aspects of the same disposition, a disposition that allows us to inhabit the world “in a totally different way.” But as we already mentioned, this disposition does not just happen to us. It develops through a “persistent courageous thinking” (ibid., p. 56), which in this work is meditative thinking.

We have spoken here of meditative thinking as that mode of thinking that allows “releasement toward things” and “the openness to the mystery” hidden in the technological world. Let us now move on, armed with meditative thinking, to further investigate *Gelassenheit* — which we just glimpsed in relation to technological devices — in its essential traits, considering it as “the manner of taking place of a thinking that is wholly free, wholly open to Being’s governance” (Lovitts 1995, p. 544).

Keeping Awake for *Gelassenheit*

The dialogue on *Gelassenheit* opens by addressing the question of the essence of man. Since the European philosophical tradition has always seen in thinking the sign of the essence of man, questioning the essence of thinking means questioning the essence of man. What is investigated as the essence of man in the *Conversation* is not a general meaning of this essence; rather, what is investigated is “the *historical self-*

*transforming, essential sway [künftigen Wesen] of man” (F.-W. von Herrmann 1994, p. 373)¹ What is distinctive about this search is the fact that it can be carried on and experienced only by turning one’s sight away from man. This seems to be paradoxical, but as von Herrmann states, this ceases to be a paradox when we consider that the “future” essence of man (which is what we are looking for) determines itself from its relation to that which is not man. This means that the “self-transforming *essential sway* of man is comprehensible only in that relation from out of which man receives its *essential sway*” (1994, p. 373),² and that, we shall see, is the relation of *Gelassenheit* to “*Gegnet*”, that is, “that-which-regions,” which is another name for be-ing itself.*

As Heidegger states, the traditional concept of thinking intends thinking as a representing, and therefore as belonging to the context of will. It is still involved with a subjectivism that *Gelassenheit* wants to overcome. Subjectivism, as Caputo attests, is “setting up the thinking ‘subject’ as the highest principle of Being, and subordinating everything to the dictates and demands of the subject” (1990, p. 175). *Gelassenheit*, as the essence of future thinking, does not belong to the realm of willing. What characterizes the search carried out in Heidegger’s *Conversation* is the fact that the context of the search requires distance and detachment from the traditional context in which thinking is related to willing. The question of the essence of thinking, posed in terms of *Gelassenheit*, is in fact a question about the essence of thinking as a “non-willing” [*Nicht-Wollen*]:

Scholar: But thinking, understood in the traditional way, as representing is a kind of willing; Kant, too, understands thinking this way when he characterizes it as spontaneity. To think is to will, and to will is to think.

Scientist: Then the statement that the nature of thinking is something other than thinking means that thinking is something other than willing.

Teacher: And that is why, in answer to your question as to what I really wanted from our meditation on the nature of thinking, I replied: I want non-willing. (Heidegger 1966a, p. 58-59)

“I want non-willing” is the first step towards *Gelassenheit*. But in this statement we immediately notice an ambiguity: on the one hand, when one says “I want non-willing”, it is still a matter of will, wanting the non-willing is an act of will, as it expresses the will to say no to will. On the other hand, Heidegger states that, by saying that I want “non-willing,” I mean that I “willingly ... renounce willing” (1966a, p. 59). But by renouncing this, I search for what overall stays beyond any kind of willing, and that cannot be ‘reached’ by any act of will. By “renouncing willing,” Heidegger states, “we may release, or at least prepare to release, ourselves to the sought-for essence of a thinking that is not willing” (1966a, p. 59-60). By means of willing not to will, we put ourselves in the condition of being able to reach that thinking that is not a matter of will. As Caputo puts forward, we need to go through this stage, as it is a “preparation for the final stage of releasement where we have left the sphere of willing behind altogether, where man, as with Eckhart, has no will at all.” (1990, p. 171).

By willing not to will, we move one step closer to *Gelassenheit*. Letting go of our willing is the first step that allows *Gelassenheit* to “wake up” [*Erwachen*] in ourselves.

It is not, though, that we act to wake it up. Actually this is not at all a waking up. As Heidegger points out, it is an “awakening of releasement,” in the sense of “keeping awake for releasement” [*Wachbleiben für die Gelassenheit*] (1966a, p. 61). Keeping awake for *Gelassenheit* means to let-go of willing, in order to contribute to the “awakening” of *Gelassenheit*. But not only that. By letting-go of willing, we let ourselves be in the position of being let-in into *Gelassenheit*. What we face here is a twofold mode of releasement: from one side we need to let-go of thinking as a representing that tends to explain everything in terms of reasons. This letting-go means that we keep ourselves awake for releasement which, on the other side, means that we open ourselves to something, a ‘mystery’ that – as we shall see later – is actually being itself, and is that which lets us in into *Gelassenheit*.

Heidegger opts to say “keeping awake” [*Wachbleiben*] for *Gelassenheit* instead of “to wake up” [*Erwachen*] *Gelassenheit*, because the latter implies an action undertaken by man, and thus implies that a will is still in place, and that we still abide in the realm of willing. But in order to know what *Gelassenheit* means, it itself has to be allowed to be. It is not us that ‘wake it up’. It is something else; from somewhere else is *Gelassenheit* called to be, is ‘let-in’ in ourselves. What we can do is to keep awake for *Gelassenheit*. Once we free ourselves from willing, we prepare ourselves for the “awakening of releasement”; the more we detach ourselves and we “wean ourselves from willing,” the more we contribute to the “awakening of releasement.” Posed in these terms, it seems that dealing with *Gelassenheit* means to deal with something

specific, something that we would be able to discover and point at, once we possess the right elements. But, as Heidegger often affirms, we need to start from what we know and are familiar with, in order to step forward, or to simply move on.³

Let us, therefore, accept for now this impression regarding *Gelassenheit*, but try at the same time to keep in mind that *Gelassenheit* is not something that, as such, we will be in a position to determine clearly, and hence define as a whole. It will continue to be hermeneutically the same and something different, and that will perhaps let us abide in a kind of secure vagueness⁴ in which our thinking will be at rest and dwell. Having said that, we need to nevertheless focus on specific meanings that we know, which during the dialogue will be enriched, and perhaps changed, with that which is unspoken and ‘unseen’, which will give them new flavor, new sounds, new color.

At this stage, however, we still cannot say what *Gelassenheit* is. Grasping the meaning will be a gradual process of disclosure that arises during the dialogue. Nevertheless, here we come across the structural moment of *Gelassenheit*, which shows *Gelassenheit* as the letting go of willing, a letting go that prepares us to “let-oneself-in” [*Sich einzulassen*] into *Gelassenheit*. *Gelassenheit* awakens when we let go of willing, and by letting go of it, we let ourselves in, in the sense that we are let-in into *Gelassenheit*. By letting-go of willing, we actually give ourselves the possibility of being open to *Gelassenheit* and, in *Gelassenheit*,

remain open for be-ing itself. This is also a step that moves us from thinking as a matter of willing to meditative thinking: it is a “transition from willing into releasement” (1966a, p. 61).

Now, what does *Gelassenheit* mean? What do we keep awake for? What do we let emerge in ourselves, which kind of mindfulness do we awaken, by letting-go of our thinking as a matter of will? How are we to think *Gelassenheit*?

Higher Acting and Waiting

Reading the *Conversation*, we never find a clear statement that gives a definition of *Gelassenheit*. From our perspective, *Gelassenheit* is in fact a process, a conquest, a movement that changes our attitude, our way of thinking. While reading the conversation we come across elements that belong to *Gelassenheit*, but they are not exhaustive. They lead to a better comprehension of its meaning, but they do not define a picture of it, one which we could say: that is *Gelassenheit*. Nevertheless, these elements point towards and constitute its meaning.

At a certain point of the dialogue we come across one of these elements. It is identified in the fact that, in *Gelassenheit*, is “concealed” an acting which is “higher” than the acting we find in “actions within the world”:

Scholar: Perhaps a higher acting is concealed in releasement than is found in all the actions within the world and in the machinations of all mankind...

Teacher:... which higher acting is yet no activity.

Scientist: Then releasement lies — if we may use the word lie — beyond the distinction between activity and passivity...

Scholar:... because releasement does *not* belong to the domain of the will. (Heidegger 1966a, p. 61).

Before continuing, let me stress one point that could appear strange. Heidegger refers to *Gelassenheit* as “higher acting” and this, at first sight, could appear a contradiction if we consider the word *Gelassenheit*. The word *Gelassenheit* has its root on the verb “*lasse*” which means to let, to give something up. This could suggest that an idea of passiveness belongs to *Gelassenheit*, but this is certainly not the case. Actually, the whole dialogue, which is an attempt to lead the reader to experience *Gelassenheit*, implies, paradoxically, an active reading. It is an active reading because what this conversation is about is the letting go of an accustomed way of thinking and wanting, an experience of something which lies beyond it. This apparent passivity, which should be ‘enacted’ in the reading and constitutes the experience of *Gelassenheit*, is no passivity at all. Indeed, it is a “higher acting” that, as we shall see, has the form of “waiting.” The enactment of our thinking, in the attempt to think *Gelassenheit*, is in itself “higher acting,” for in its being ‘on the way’ our thinking is a “waiting upon” what we do not know yet. Our attempt to think *Gelassenheit* is, therefore, already an enactment of the higher acting that is proper to *Gelassenheit*. But now, how are we to understand this “higher acting”?

Probably when we hear the word “acting” we immediately relate it to a familiar concept of action, such as the one that thinks of action as that which produces some kind of result, which means that we understand action in terms of cause and effect. To understand what Heidegger means by “higher acting,” we need to refer to the essential meaning that, according to Heidegger, pertains to ‘action’. In the *Letter on Humanism* (1998b), Heidegger defines the essence of action as “accomplishment”, and he unfolds the meaning of accomplishment as “to unfold something into the fullness of its essence, to lead it forth into this fullness – *producere*” (1998b, p. 239). “Higher acting” is not, therefore, an undertaking towards a practical doing, but is a ‘higher’ acting as accomplishment, in the sense of leading forth something into the fullness of its essence. Releasement itself is what makes this available to man.

Gelassenheit as “higher acting” is further determined in the dialogue as “waiting” [*warten*]. As Heidegger affirms, what can be done to glimpse *Gelassenheit* is to actually do nothing but “wait,” “we are to do nothing but wait” [*Wir sollen nichts tun sondern warten*] (1966a, p. 62). “Waiting” is the key experience, for in waiting we are in the position of crossing from thinking as representing to thinking as meditative thinking. In waiting we move from that thinking which, as Heidegger states, has lost its “element” (be-ing) and dried up, to the thinking that is “appropriated” by its “element” (be-ing itself) and which, therefore, has turned towards be-ing itself (1998b, p. 240-241).

But let us consider more closely the idea implied in 'waiting'. When Heidegger says that we have to do nothing but wait, we probably ask ourselves: what do we have to wait for? Asking this question puts us back into the realm of representing, and therefore removes us from that disposition from out of which we can experience *Gelassenheit*. If we ask what we are waiting for, we are expecting something, we already have an object of expectation, whereas we need to remain open towards something we do not know. If I expect, I have an object of my expectation, whereas 'waiting' has no object. In waiting, we rest in the act of waiting, or as Fabris (1983) states, "waiting does not objectify, does not reify possibilities, but instead it maintains them open as possibilities."⁵ As soon as we represent, says Heidegger, we think about what we are waiting for, and as soon we think about this, we are not waiting anymore: "in waiting we leave-open what we are waiting for" (1966a, p. 68) because waiting allows itself to be brought into the openness. Waiting is a moment of crossing; in waiting the swinging movement between the different kinds of thinking is present. In waiting something opens. What we need to do is 'just' wait, wait without expecting.

It seems as though waiting is a moment of disorientation, which somehow shakes us because it wants us to suspend any kind of thinking as representing, and therefore any kind of wanting in the sense of expecting. Waiting is similar to being suspended, lifted up in a moment where nothing more passes, but just the moment occurs. But if we are to wait and suspend our expectations, are we still thinking? How do we get to know the essence of that thinking we are trying to grasp? Everything seems vague.

If we are disoriented about what Heidegger says, we are in the right disposition to be open towards what is going to come towards us. What Heidegger names here is 'something' that allows itself to be thought only by a thinking that is not representing, not a putting forward of concepts that one knows, in a structured thinking that already means something to me. To do this would prevent us from sensing the echo of 'something' different that is turning toward us. How can we identify this 'disposition'? We cannot describe it, as to describe it would mean to have already clear in front of me what I am describing. If we are in the condition of feeling the urge to ask these questions to ourselves, says Heidegger, we are getting closer to that disposition from out of which we are let-in into the essence of thinking. In waiting we let-go of an accustomed way of thinking, and we let-in what we are 'waiting upon', be-ing in its truth. We could venture to say that *Gelassenheit* names the relation between Dasein and be-ing. In *Gelassenheit*, man, letting go of willing, opens himself, in waiting, to be-ing. In waiting we are open to be-ing itself and in being open to it, be-ing itself is let be and we are let-in into *Gelassenheit*.

In this dialogue, Heidegger never gives the kind of answer we would expect, the kind of answer that would in fact help us in *not* thinking anymore. This kind of answer would seem to give us clearness, the absence of doubt that would allow us be quiet and give us the certainty of possessing knowledge regarding that particular matter. But this is exactly what Heidegger wants to avoid. He wants us to keep thinking, to be restless,

in order to remain open to what occurs, and in fact he chooses the dialogue form to conduct us towards this openness. Before dealing with the importance of the dialogue form, let me briefly recall what we have been saying.

Until now we have characterized *Gelassenheit* as our disposition in terms of “keeping awake” for *Gelassenheit*. This disposition is open when we let go of thinking as willing. *Gelassenheit* “awakens when our nature is let-in so as to have dealings with that which is not willing” (Heidegger 1966a, p. 61). To let-go of willing awakens *Gelassenheit*, which in turns reveals itself as a let-oneself-in into releasement, a releasement in which one would be “freed of that task of weaning” (ibid., p.60). *Gelassenheit*, is further characterized as “higher acting,” which is not to be conceived as an action undertaken for a practical making or doing, but is to be taken in the sense of ‘waiting’. We have determined this waiting not as a waiting for something, but as a waiting that does not expect, because it does not know what to expect. It waits upon something which is ‘beyond’ man’s will. It is a waiting upon be-ing itself, which gifts itself to man’s thinking, and toward which (be-ing) Dasein in releasement remains open.

Our efforts have been an attempt to free ourselves from thinking in terms of representing, to leap into meditative thinking. In so doing, we have approached (we have been getting closer to) that disposition that we are investigating. *Gelassenheit* is not primarily something to be described, but is above all something to be experienced,

that is to be discovered and learned. *Gelassenheit* is not an event that happens to us, and we just acknowledge it. *Gelassenheit* occurs as something that needs to be allowed to happen. To do this we need to undergo a process of change in the way in which we understand ourselves, and thus in our being a 'thinking being'. The question we should pose now is not, therefore, what *Gelassenheit* is, but how can we dwell in that disposition in which *Gelassenheit* occurs and holds sway. How do we let this experience occur? "Through the way of the conversation" [*Durch den Gang des Gespraches*] (1966a, p. 69), Heidegger says. The dialogue is, in fact, conducting us to that 'waiting' in which *Gelassenheit* holds sway.

The Dialogue Form

The possibility of reaching *Gelassenheit* is offered by the fact that what is sought for is not known, is hidden and therefore not representable as something that we already know. Throughout the conversation, Heidegger tries to allow something to emerge that the dialogue, in its evolving, has been building up and disclosing. Indeed, it is the dialogue itself which leads us on that path: "the conversation brings us to that path which seems nothing else than releasement itself" (Heidegger 1966a, p.70).

Is this the reason why Heidegger uses the dialogue form to conduct this search? What happens in a dialogue, in a conversation between people, that does not occur when I think by myself? Is an open space let open amongst people when they engage in dialogue? Is it in the expanse, in this 'meanwhile' that originates and unfolds when

people 'talk', that the openness itself unfolds? Is it in the dialogue (a 'swaying' of people's thinking) that something existing, but otherwise not unfolding, is first revealed? In the dialogue our receptiveness opens up and we become more prepared to wait. The tendency of affirmation weakens and the truth of what occurs finds its way to us. During a conversation 'something else' is allowed to be; it regains its time and space in our existence. It is created through the dialogue, like a symphony. The dialogue is a dynamic game of references, of signs, that allows new paths of thought, paths that are continuously questioned concerning their certainty. This means undermining the authority of what is well known, to let be the multidimensionality of what exists and surrounds us as an expanse, a vastness of silent notes.

In what follows here is a long quote from the *Conversation*, which I believe could be useful for understanding this dynamic of the dialogue, that we could say enacts the meditative thinking process:

(Scientist): In many respects it is clear to me what the word releasement should not signify for us. But at the same time, I know less and less what we are talking about. We are trying to determine the nature of thinking. What has releasement to do with thinking?

(Teacher): Nothing if we conceive thinking in the traditional way as re-presenting. Yet perhaps the nature of thinking we are seeking is fixed in releasement.

(Scientist): With the best of will, I can not re-present to myself this nature of thinking.

(Teacher): Precisely because this will of yours and your mode of thinking as re-presenting prevent it.

(Scientist): But then, what in the world am I to do?

(Scholar): I am asking myself that too.

(Teacher): We are to do nothing but wait

(Scholar): That is poor consolation.

(Teacher): Poor or not, we should not await consolation -something we would still be doing if we became disconsolate.

(Scientist): Then what are we to wait for? And where are we to wait? I hardly know anymore who and where I am.

(Teacher): None of us knows that , as soon as we stop fooling ourselves

(Scholar): And yet we still have our path?

(Teacher): To be sure. But by forgetting it too quickly we give up thinking. (Heidegger 1966a, p. 62)

A conversation confuses. You do not have ‘control’ of what you mean, because the interlocutor may be far removed from the meaning you have in mind. The interlocutor’s approach to your thought forces you to question your statements, your beliefs, far beyond your own interpretations. It forces you to be open to different perspectives. In a conversation that wants to deal with essential matters, such as the one we are engaging with, we do not look for clarifications, definitions or agreements on how to define *Gelassenheit*. We could say that this dialogue wants to be free from content: it looks for an ‘open space’ where what we are looking for does not need to be defined against some other concept. In this openness the truth of that which is appears, and does not need to be justified, but just let-in in its essential clarity of being.

The fact that the meaning sought is not accessible as something determined and determinable in one definition, makes the dialogue form extremely important. The three speakers, occupying different ‘thinking spaces’, create and at the same time reach openness otherwise not accessible. This brings with it hints and sights that create different sparks of awareness, and therefore leads to a new openness and vision.

This new openness and vision prepares us to come closer to an otherwise inaccessible awareness through a continuous resting movement, which is a swinging from one interlocutor to the other, in a creative relation. Having said that, we now know that, in the course of this dialogue, something has been happening, in what is said, as well as beyond and before it. To be aware of this swinging movement is our first experience of thinking as *Gelassenheit*.

Until now we have seen that the path leading to *Gelassenheit* implies a letting-go of our own will, and this opens up to us the possibility of letting-oneself-in into *Gelassenheit*. We have spoken of *Gelassenheit* as a “higher acting” and we have explained its meaning by saying that this higher acting is in fact a “waiting upon.” We then further expanded our context disclosing the ‘expanse’ into which this experience occurs. This ‘expanse’ is opened through the conversation. Through it, this openness is allowed to be, is disclosed, and from out of it what we have been saying takes form and something from the backdrop begins to show. Do we begin to glimpse a new “horizon”?

Horizon and Region

When we hear the word horizon, we probably imagine the line that we see far away when we look out at the ocean. It defines the space within which we see things. The horizon is the space within which we represent the objects around us. According to

Heidegger, the horizon is not just this. This perception, he states, is only the side facing us of the openness that the horizon is.

The horizon is experienced through the objects that are within it, and actually it can be determined only in relation to objects and through the fact of representing it to us. The reason for pointing this out, Heidegger says, is to stress the fact that man has no experience of what the horizon actually is. We experience objects that we see in a horizon; but we have no experience of the horizon itself. Not only do we not recognize it, but “what lets the horizon be what it is has not yet been encountered at all” (Heidegger 1966a, p. 64). It seems as though here we face three different elements: objects, the horizon and that which lets the horizon be.

Assuming that we know what we mean by objects, let us focus on the latter two elements: the horizon that is an openness, and the being-open of the horizon, its openness, that does not appear or that appears, but is not identified. Given this, says Heidegger, according to our thinking as representing, the ‘being horizon’ of the horizon [*Horizonhafte*] is just that side of the openness that faces us, an openness that is all around us, and that is filled up with the “appearances of what to our representing are objects” (1966a, p. 64). Being the horizon, the openness that surrounds us, is revealed as something else besides the field of vision that we perceive. But, says Heidegger, “this something else is the other side of itself, and so the same as itself” (ibid., p. 63). In speaking about the horizon we have performed a ‘step back’ in

thinking. From a thinking dimension closer to *Gelassenheit* we are now back, considering how we represent to ourselves the concept of horizon. From here, we begin another hermeneutical journey towards a transformed meaning of horizon, as it is thought from the perspective of future thinking.

The horizon is “the openness that surrounds us” (ibid., p. 64). But how are we to think this horizon as openness? We can think of it, says Heidegger, as a *Gegend*, a “region”. As von Herrmann affirms, what Heidegger names here *Gegend* is also called “the unconcealed, the truth... of be-ing”⁶ (1994, p. 381). In the *Conversation*, the region is defined by Heidegger as “an enchanted region where everything belonging there returns to that in which it rests” [*durch deren Zauber alles, was ihr gehört, zu dem zurückkehrt, worin es ruht*] (1966a, p. 65).⁷

The region Heidegger mentions is not one amongst others, but is “the region,” “the region of all regions” (1966a, p. 65). We have seen Heidegger leading us to the region from the concept of horizon and what we call horizon is “the side facing us of an openness which surrounds us” (ibid., p. 64). But what this openness is in itself has not yet been said. This openness in itself, “the region of all regions,” is “that which comes to meet us” (ibid., p. 65); as soon as we begin to think of it as “the region,” it reveals itself as “that which comes to meet us.” It reveals itself as a movement that “comes to meet us” and enacts the possibility of the relation with man. The word assigned by Heidegger to the region of all regions, to the openness in itself, is an ancient German

form for the word *Gegend*, that is, ‘*Gegnet*’. *Gegnet* refers to the acting of *Gegnet* towards the being of Dasein. We could say that *Gegnet* is the essential movement that relates and determines a relation to the being of Dasein.

As Fabris (1983) points out, the words “*Gegend*” and “*Gegnet*”, as well as the verbal forms “*gegenen*” and “*vergegenen*”, belong to the same root “*gegen*”, which originally indicates “a dynamic opposition, temporally or spatially occurring.”⁸ In the English edition, *Gegnet* is translated as the phrase “that-which-regions,” since, as the translators point out, in English there is no “analogous variant”⁹ which could translate the German word, retaining the idea of movement implied by it. The concept of movement implied in this word enhances a fundamental element proper to *Gegnet*. How does Heidegger characterize *Gegnet*?

Gegnet is said to be “an abiding expanse which, gathering all, opens itself, so that in it openness is halted and held, letting everything merge in its own resting” (Heidegger 1966a, p. 66). With this statement we are further pushed to let go of our common way of referring to something as something. Here the meaning of that-which-regions enriches with a ‘structure’ which is fundamentally a relation that lets “everything merge in its own resting.” *Gegnet* is the “abiding expanse,” “*die verweilende Weite*.” In this statement, it is worthwhile stressing the meaning implied in the German words that merge a temporal and spatial connotation. *Gegnet*, says Heidegger, is a “*Weite*”. As Fabris (1983) observes, the twofold meaning of this word, as “immeasurable,

undetermined space” and as “distance,” is combined in Heidegger’s use of the word. In this dialogue, Fabris continues, the term “*Weite*” refers to what comes inceptually from an undetermined distance, it refers to what ‘gives itself from far away’.”¹⁰

Gegnet is not only a “*Weite*”: it is a “*verweilende Weite*,” which adds a temporal aspect to it. “*Verweilen*” means to abide, to linger, to remain, to dwell. *Gegnet* is not only an original movement. It comes from an undetermined distance and keeps gifting itself to us, as it remains, dwells, abides temporally as original openness, as “an enchanted region where everything belonging there returns to that in which it rests”¹¹ (Heidegger 1966a, p. 65). It is “an expanse and an abiding. It abides into the expanse of resting. It expands into the abiding of what has freely turned towards itself” (ibid., p. 66). In these lines Heidegger plays the ‘symphony’ of the essential swaying of *Gegnet*. The essential swaying of *Gegnet* is expressed by the musicality, by the movement, expressed by the words, by their interplay with one another. This interplay expresses here the sound of the essential swaying of be-ing that the dialogue, as an interplay of thinking engaged with the truth of be-ing, lets emerge.

In its essential swaying, the *Gegnet* – another name for the truth of be-ing – moves towards and “comes to meet us”; but, as Heidegger points out, it seems that this coming forth of *Gegnet* is rather a “drawing back” from us (ibid., p. 66). We recognize it as something that draws back from us. In coming forth it creates a distance. It creates, or perhaps reveals, a space/time, an expanse in which things

themselves also do not have the character of objects anymore. They lose their nature of means and return to their nature of being as tree, stone, flower. They return to that moment that seems to be the absence of time — in the sense of sequence of moments — and emerges as time-space within which they simply are and rest.

The openness itself, is also identified as “*die Weite des Fernen*,” “the expanse of distance” (Heidegger 1966a, p. 68). *Gegnet* is the vastness into which thinking as waiting finds that ‘while’ in which it rests, “the abiding in which it remains” (ibid., p. 68). Remaining in the proximity of the expanse means turning back towards the openness itself. This turning back is a “returning” [*Zurückkehren*] towards the openness, an openness that is “that for which we could do nothing but wait” (ibid.) The openness itself is *Gegnet*, and when we think, that is, when we wait upon *Gegnet*, we are “let-in” by *Gegnet* into *Gegnet*. Thinking is no longer representing. Thinking becomes “coming-into-the-nearness-of distance” [*das In-die-Nähe-kommen zum Fernen*] (ibid.). Echo of the Enowning? In the language of be-ing-historical thinking, we could say that we have been getting closer, and yet we are already there, in that moment in which the enowning occurs and reveals itself. It seems like the openness lets us in and allows us to rest in it, where resting means to turn back to that to which we belong, and in so doing we are allowed to be our innermost being, to be Da-sein.

In the *Conversation* we are on our way towards the other beginning of thinking. We are again preparing and carrying out the crossing from the first beginning of thinking

to the other beginning. We move from the relation between man and being as beingness, to the relation in which the openness itself moves towards us. It is not a matter of transcending to a different level of being, but of man receiving his essence, in the sense of returning to his nature of thinking being, by means of his relation to *Gegnet*. In this relation, and just in this relation, the human being can fully be himself.

At this point, let me recall for a moment what we have been saying. We have seen that waiting means to be free from thinking as representing. It means to be let-in into the openness itself; waiting “moves into openness without representing anything” (Heidegger 1966a, p. 69); and in waiting, in being freed from representing, we “let ourselves in” [*Sich einlassen*] (ibid.) into *Gelassenheit*, in the sense of being open to *Gelassenheit*, in and through waiting. The fact that we are let-in into *Gelassenheit* is in fact a being let-in into *Gegnet*, by *Gegnet* itself. The openness that we experience, and to which we are released, is disclosed by means of the dialogue, as well as something else which is “as inconspicuous as the silent course of a conversation that moves us” (ibid., p. 70). Lovitts writes:

the speaking that has already taken place has manifested a self-authenticating happening of disclosure such that those who in thinking together have carried that speaking forward are united in the hearing of that happening’s fresh arrival and can both witness to and reinforce its self-authentication by bringing it to utterance not merely through self-contained individual statements but through the confirmatory medium of antiphonal speech. (1995, p. 601)

The dialogue leads us on a path towards *Gelassenheit*, a path that in its unfolding appears to be *Gelassenheit* itself. *Gelassenheit* is revealed to be the path, and also the way in which we move on this path. As Heidegger asks: Where does this path go? And where does our moving end? Where does it rest? “Where else but in that-which-regions, in relation to which releasement is what it is” (1966a, p. 70). *Gelassenheit*, Heidegger affirms, is what it is only in relation to ‘*Gegnet*’. What does Heidegger mean with this statement? We are getting closer to *Gelassenheit* as “releasement to that-which-regions.”

Releasement to That-Which-Regions

Gelassenheit means “waiting”, and in waiting we are in relation to the openness, and since the openness is *Gegnet*, it is possible to say that “waiting” — and therefore *Gelassenheit* — is a relation to *Gegnet*, a “relation to that-which-regions” [*Verhältnis zur Gegnet*] (Heidegger 1966a, p. 72). Indeed, it is not only a relation, but is “the relation to *Gegnet*” (ibid.), in that in waiting we release ourselves to *Gegnet* and, in so doing, we let *Gegnet* reveals itself as *Gegnet*. *Gelassenheit*, as the relation to that-which-regions, is a true relation; and, as Heidegger tells us, a relation is true when what is related to, is allowed to be and held in its ownmost way of being, by what it relates to.

Heidegger states: “The relation to that-which-regions is waiting. And waiting means: to release oneself into the openness of that-which-regions” (1966a, p. 72). But this

does not mean that we are brought to a place where we were not (before being brought there). It is not that we are outside a place and then brought back to a place. As Heidegger points out, we are never outside *Gegnet*. Also when we think in terms of representing, we belong to *Gegnet*, in that, as “thinking beings” [*als denkende Wesen*] (ibid.), we remain in that horizon which is but the side of *Gegnet* that is “turned toward our re-presenting. That-which-regions surrounds us and reveals itself to us as the horizon” (ibid., p. 72-73).

We already noted that *Gegnet* reveals itself in the form of horizon, but we can also say that it hides within the horizon. Thus, at the same time we are within *Gegnet*, as it surrounds us, we are also not in it, insofar as we have not let ourselves be involved with it as *Gegnet*. This involvement only occurs when we wait because, in waiting, says Heidegger, we are set free, we are “released from our transcendental relation to the horizon” (Heidegger 1966a, p. 73). This “being-released from” [*Gelassensein*], says Heidegger, is “the first aspect” of what is called *Gelassenheit*. But it is the first not in terms of importance, or as the first of a series. It is the first aspect, in the sense that it is the first that we can directly refer to, as we are now mindful of some of the elements that constitute the experience of *Gelassenheit*.

The fact that we refer to “being-released from” as the first aspect does not mean that this aspect has any kind of priority, for in *Gelassenheit* there is no ranking. Moreover, we cannot simply identify *Gelassenheit* with this first moment, because it neither

comprehends the whole of *Gelassenheit*, nor is it exhaustive of its nature. In fact, Heidegger continues, the “*eigentliche Gelassenheit*,” that is, the “authentic releasement” (1966a, p.73), can happen even without this first moment. *Gelassenheit* is what it is in its whole, and it is in its whole only when it is in relation to *Gegnet*, that is, when it is “*Gelassenheit zur Gegnet*,” “releasement to that-which-regions” (ibid., p. 74). “Releasement to that-which-regions” is what Heidegger calls “authentic releasement.”¹²

According to Heidegger, man, in Da-sein, “originally belongs” to that-which-regions and this is because man

is appropriated initially to that-which-regions and, indeed, through this itself [...] In fact (supposing that it is waiting which is essential, that is, all-decisive), waiting upon something is based on our belonging in that upon which we wait. (1966a, p. 73-74)

Even if man is initially appropriated to that-which-regions, man needs to be truly appropriated to it in order to be and rest in his nature of thinking being. But if we already belong to that-which-regions, what is the difference whether we are truthfully appropriated to it or not? This question is asked during the conversation, and it directs our attention to the fact that there seems to be a difference between a ‘more originary’ (authentic) condition of thinking and being, and a more common condition we live in as human beings. It is a condition that bespeaks of being (authentic thinking) and not being (representing, calculative thinking) at the same time. It is, as Heidegger puts it, a “restless to and fro between yes and no” (1966a, p. 75).

This situation highlights the condition and the movement proper to our existence. This is the movement that searches for be-ing, for the truth of be-ing which, in turn, reveals itself as that swinging-movement that reveals be-ing in its swaying of concealment and unconcealment. What we observe here is the same movement that crosses from the first beginning to the other beginning. The same movement that in *Being and Time* (Heidegger 1996) attempts to lead to a different comprehension of the meaning of being. It is the difference and the distance between the ontic and the ontological. It is the movement that impregnates the ‘event’ of the truth of be-ing. These appear to be all different perspectives of the same “originary” movement, the “originary turning” that is *Ereignis*.

Let us pause for a moment to consider a possible misunderstanding. It could appear, from what we have been saying, that *Gelassenheit* “floats in the realm of unreality and so in nothingness, and, lacking all power of action, is a will-less letting in of everything and, basically, the denial of the will to live!” (1966a, p. 80). But this is not the case, for in the *Gelassenheit* we find something that recalls the “power of action,” but which is not a will. It is a “resolve” [*Entschlossenheit*] (ibid., p. 81), but not as an act of will that makes a decision and finds a solution to a problem or a situation. This “resolve,” as Heidegger himself suggests, must be thought as the one that is spoken of in *Being and Time*, that is, it is a “letting oneself be called forth” (1996, p. 283) to

one's ownmost possibility of being. "Resoluteness" — as *Entschlossenheit* is translated in *Being and Time* — is "authentic being a self" (1996, p. 274).

It is quite difficult to think a resolve that is not a matter of will that moves to an action; we tend, in fact, to consider resoluteness as a strong determination to attain something. As we read in Heidegger's *Introduction To Metaphysics* (2000), the essence of the resolve, as he intends it, is not an intention to act; it is not a 'gathering of energy' to be released into action. Resolve is the beginning, the inceptual beginning of any action moved. Here acting is not to be taken as an action undertaken by Dasein in being resolute. Rather, acting refers to the existential and fundamental mode of being of Dasein, which is to be "care," and which is the "primordial" being of Dasein.

Resoluteness, in its essence, is the remaining open of Dasein for be-ing. In the context of the *Conversation*, this resolve should thus be understood as "the opening of man particularly undertaken by him for openness..." [*als das eigens übernommene Sichöffnen des Daseins für das Offene...*] (Heidegger 1966a, p. 81). It is a resolve to remain open to be-ing, and therefore to what is ownmost to man's nature, which is disclosed in relation to be-ing. This resolve is what Heidegger, in the *Conversation*, indicates as "releasement to that-which-regions," the resolve to release oneself to that-which-regions, to remain open towards the openness itself.

Now, there is another element that pertains to *Gelassenheit*: there is, in fact, not only a resolve, but also a “steadfastness” [*Ausdauer*] (Heidegger 1966a, p.81) proper to *Gelassenheit*. Thinking, becoming more and more aware of its nature, and experiencing more clarity about it, remains firm and resolute. Thinking “stands within” and “rests” in this “composed steadfastness” (ibid., p. 81)]. The “steadfastness” proper to *Gelassenheit*

would be behavior which did not become a swaggering comportment, but which collected itself into and remained always the composure of releasement [*Verhaltenheit der Gelassenheit*]. (Heidegger 1966a, p. 81)

Releasement rests in this “composed steadfastness” and, by resting within it, it relates to that-which-regions and is let-in by that-which-regions in the regioning of that-which-regions, in its swaying. The “holding sway” of *Gegnet* allows releasement to be in its ownmost being, as “releasement to that-which-regions.” To all of this Heidegger gives the name of “in-dwelling” [*Inständigkeit*] (1966a, p. 81). “In-dwelling” refers to what in *Being and Time* is named ‘existence’, which in its essence is so described by Heidegger in the *Introduction to “what is metaphysics?”*:

what is meant by ‘existence’ in the context of a thinking that is prompted by, and directed toward, the truth of Being, could be most felicitously designated by the word “in-standing” [*Inständigkeit*]. We must think at the same time, however, of standing in the openness of Being, of sustaining this standing-in (care), and of enduring in what is most extreme (being toward death)...; for together they constitute the full essence of existence... (1998a, p. 284)

Resolve, steadfastness, in-dwelling belong all together to “authentic releasement,” that is as such, when it is in relation to that-which-regions. Heidegger summarizes this authentic relation as follows:

(Scientist) [...] authentic releasement consists in this: that man in his very nature belongs to that-which-regions, i.e., he is released to it.
(Scholar): Not occasionally, but...prior to everything.
(Scientist): The prior, of which we really can not think...
(Teacher): ...because the nature of thinking begins there.
(Scientist): Thus man’s nature is released to that-which-regions in what is prior to thought.
(Scholar): [...]and, indeed, through that-which-regions itself (1966a, p. 82-83)

During the conversation, the experience of “that-which-regions” occurs, but while the “nature” of that-which-regions “has neared,” Heidegger says, “that-which-regions itself seems... to be further away than ever before” (1966a, p. 85). It is the openness itself that here opens before us; but in its opening, the openness hides itself, and thus seems to be “further away” from us. Perhaps *Gelassenheit*, says the teacher, as the resolve to let oneself be involved with the truth of be-ing, would be – as we have been experiencing during the conversation – a “coming near to and so at the same time remaining distant from that-which-regions...” (ibid., p. 86). But what would be the nearness and distance in which *Gegnet* conceals and unconceals itself?

(Scholar): This nearness and distance can be nothing outside that-which-regions.
(Teacher): Because that-which-regions regions all, gathering everything together and letting everything return to itself, to rest in its own identity.
(Scientist): Then that-which-regions itself would be nearing and distancing.

(Scholar): that-which-regions itself would be the nearness of distance, and the distance of nearness... (Heidegger 1966a, p. 86)

Here Heidegger mentions the ‘dialectic’ of concealing and unconcealing that is the way in which be-ing in its truth, *Gegnet*, the openness in itself, holds sway. Until now we have considered the nature of thinking as “(that in-dwelling releasement to that-which-regions) which is the essentially human relation to that-which-regions” (Heidegger 1966a, p. 87). The nature of thinking, so expressed, is “something we presage as the nearness of distance” (ibid.). This nearness of a distance that the nature of thinking reveals itself to be, cannot be expressed by a ‘single’ word. Nevertheless, Heidegger stresses, during the conversation one word echoes from the backdrop, a word that could be closer to indicating what we have been looking for. The word is a Greek one: “*Ἀγγιβασίη*” (ibid., p. 88) that can be translated, as Heidegger suggests, as “going towards,” but also — more literally — as “going near.”

Heidegger is reluctant to choose one word to indicate what is being revealed during the conversation. A single word can only with difficulty retain the meaning of something multidimensional. Nevertheless, Heidegger proposes a word which, in itself, seems to remain in the dynamic of the counter-movement of be-ing itself, and which seems to suggest itself throughout the conversation. This word, ‘*Ἀγγιβασίη*’, both names and does not name the nature of thinking which is sought. Nevertheless, it remains the word that seems best suited to let the nature of this experience emerge. “*Ἀγγιβασίη*” as “going toward” and “going near,” can be taken as “moving-into-

nearness' [*In-die-Nähe-gehen*]... in the sense of letting-oneself-into-nearness" [*In-die-Nähe-hinein-sich-einlassen*] (Heidegger 1966a, p. 89). This "letting-oneself-into-nearness," Heidegger finally states, seems to be "the name for our walk today along this country path" (ibid.).

The path towards *Gelassenheit* guided us into-nearness, a nearness with which we have been involved by engaging with this path, which has been a path of thinking, a path along which the nearness and distance of that towards which we have being moving has being disclosing itself in our own attempt to understand what we are looking for. Our path, which began as a question about *Gelassenheit*, brought us into the nearness of be-ing and became an experience of a moving-into-nearness of be-ing. With this experience we are posed now before a task that belongs to man's nature, which is that of being a "thinking being," a being that meditates and thinks the truth of be-ing. The task is that of being mindful and moving closer to that which is the closest to us, and because of this the farthest, that is, be-ing in its truth. Thinking the truth of be-ing is the task of thinking, and thus of man, that as "thinking being," is called to "in-dwell into releasement to that-which-regions."

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NOTES

¹ Translation mine.

² Translation mine.

³ In the context of Heidegger's philosophy, we need to think this step forward as indeed a step back towards the origin, towards the "other beginning" of thinking.

⁴ What I call here secure vagueness can be thought of as that time-space in which "the leap" of thought mentioned by Heidegger in the *Contributions to Philosophy (from Enowning)* (2001), takes place. In this expanse, in which I claim we rest in *Gelassenheit*, we become aware of moving closer to our innermost being, and this gives us a sense of being 'at home' -and in this sense it gives us a sense of security. But in this secure expanse, there is at the same time a sense of vagueness as we are open towards something that comes towards us and that we do not know. In this sense I claim that in *Gelassenheit* our thought rests in a kind of secure vagueness, that is, it remains open and free before what is to come.

⁵ Fabris Adriano, note 5, pp. 81-82. In: Heidegger (1983)

⁶ Translation mine.

⁷ In this statement, as von Hermann (1994) suggests, the "charm" [*der Zauber*] that enchants names the way in which the region acts. Cf. WiE p. 381.

⁸ Fabris Adriano, note 7, p. 82. In: Heidegger (1983).

⁹ Cf.: Heidegger 1966b, p. 66, note 1.

¹⁰ Fabris Adriano, note 8, p. 83. In: Heidegger (1983)

¹¹ In German: "durch deren Zauber alles, was ihr gehört, zu dem zurückkehrt, worin es ruht."

¹² The peculiar relation between *Gelassenheit* and that-which-regions is named by Heidegger “*Vergegnis*,” “regioning”. More specifically, *Gelassenheit* names the relation of Dasein to the openness, that is, it speaks from the perspective of man as thinking being. The same relation, but from the perspective of *Gegnet* towards the ‘essence’ of human being as *Gelassenheit*, is called “*Vergegnis*,” the “regioning,” and it highlights the perspective of *Gegnet* from which the relation is moved, that is, is allowed to be. *Vergegnis* is a word that sums up the essence of what we are trying to experience as *Gelassenheit*. It is a word coined by Heidegger, along with its verbal form “*vergegnen*.” It is used by Heidegger to gather together the meaning of *Gelassenheit*. It indicates the movement that, coming from *Gegnet*, moves *Gelassenheit* towards *Gegnet* itself. It is both the movement that opens and the openness that keeps open for *Gelassenheit*, for the waiting upon *Gegnet*, so that *Gelassenheit*, as the nature of thinking, can be appropriated (enown) to itself, resting in its belonging to *Gegnet*. *Vergegnis* is thus another word for “turning in enowning.”

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