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REFLECTIONS ON LANGUAGE

By

Michael D. Palmer

B.A., University of Montana, 1976

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

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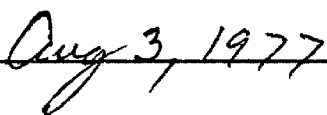
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Reflections on Language (99 pp.)

Director: Henry G. Bugbee, Jr. *H.G.B.*
by JFU

The reflective investigation undertaken in this thesis works out of a question which arises in the course of Rainer Maria Rilke's "Ninth Elegy"--are we here, perhaps, just to say: house, bridge, well, gate, jug, fruit tree, window--at most, column, tower? The question gains its impetus from a condition which pervades the modern era, the era which is our own. More and more we find ourselves enduring in a time when things which can be lived by--simple things near our hands and which know us--are falling away.

The question of the "Ninth Elegy" embodies Rilke's own response to the circumstance implying a mode of existence on the strength of which, to use his language, "life becomes possible again." The style of life in question works out of the manner in which we acknowledge things in speech. The preservation, the continuance, even the flourishing of things near to us, he suggests, rests in what we *say* of them; therein, he believes, things are taken to heart and lived with. Might it be that we are here in order to utter simple, unsophisticated--pure--words which give voice to our experience with unutterable things? The task of this thesis is to explore reflectively and critically the suggestion in Rilke's question; to understand wherein words may be pure and what it might mean to *say*.

The task requires that careful attention be given to our understanding of the interrelationship of word and thing. Martin Heidegger's essay "Language" deals thematically with that interrelationship in a manner implicitly sympathetic to the central issue of this thesis. A critical explication of that essay reveals a line of thought suggesting that the wellspring of human speech is to be found in the perpetual unfolding of things and events in the world. Particular things, set in the continually shifting contextual penumbra we call the world, silently address us, evoking from us a voiced response. At the same time, our voiced response intelligibly and explicitly discloses to us the meaning of things encountered, allowing them to become experience. Thus human speech may be thought of as at once responsive and originary in character.

Prevalent contemporary models of speech tend to deny both that speech is responsive to a prior evocation by things and that it is originary in character. Relying heavily upon the presuppositions and arguments found in Aristotle's work, contemporary thinkers have tended to conceive language in causal terms after the analogy of an instrument of use. Language, it is thought, comes at the end of a causal and cognitive nexus symbolizing some aspect of those events and holding nothing more than an imputed referential relation to things now thought of as *objects*. Thus language as an instrument is regarded as incapable of inflecting one's acquaintance with things which concern him. Proponents of this position are shown to exhibit a fundamental ambivalence in their thought, the resolution of which requires that we rethink our views on language and its capacity to enhance our appreciation of the manifold of things which touch our lives. It may be tentatively concluded that we ignore Rilke's question at our peril.

PREFACE

Upon reading this thesis, it could conceivably be argued that the issues discussed would have been better served had I opened with the more formal and critical explication of positions as undertaken in the third chapter, following such a line of exposition with the reflective considerations which gain their impetus, at least in part, from Rilke's "Ninth Elegy." To have followed such a development would have been to subsume reflective considerations to the primacy of critical exposition. This in turn would have placed the thesis at variance with those events which have made my graduate study at the University of Montana a genuine education, namely, certain seminars on phenomenology as well as my participation as a graduate assistant in the Intensive Humanities Program under Professors Lawry and Lanfear, but most especially the period of extended work undertaken first in seminars and then for two years as an assistant in the Intensive Humanities Program under my friend Professor Henry Bugbee. As it stands, this thesis begins and ends in the spirit of reflection. Thus, the formal and critical expository work of the thesis assumes its significance as tributary to matters of reflective concern and not as fundamental to them.

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CHAPTER 1

SPEECH: THE GROUND OF BEING AND KNOWING

The wanderer does not bring a handful of earth,
the unutterable, from the mountain slope to the valley,
but a pure word he has learned, the blue
and yellow gentian. Are we *here* perhaps just to say:
house, bridge, well, gate, jug, fruit tree, window--
at most, column, tower. . .but to say, understand this,
to say it
as the Things themselves never fervently thought to be.¹

These lines come from Rainer Maria Rilke's "Ninth Elegy." When attended carefully, they engender reflection on what is epistemologically and ontologically fundamental for us in our having to do with beings of the earth--that is, what we *know* of them, and what they and we *are* to one another. In consonance with the style of much of the rest of his work, including his letters, Rilke, here in the "Ninth Elegy," foregoes tendentious assertions. His manner is that of asking questions and proffering suggestions. And what he suggests is that we find ourselves enduring in a time when so much of what can be lived by continues to fall away. We are wanderers who for the most part no longer understand the traditions out of which our predecessors spoke and no longer entertain the promise of those who will come after us. Correlatively, an entire range of familiar and ordinary things, from natural elements

¹Rainer Maria Rilke, "The Ninth Elegy," Duino Elegies, translated by J.B. Leishman and Stephen Spender, New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1939, p. 73 f.

to ordinary household items, have become strangers to us.

More than ever
the things that we can live by are falling away. . . .²

He enunciates the matter succinctly in a letter to Withold Von Hulewicz --a letter which provides invaluable commentary on the "Ninth Elegy"-- dated November 13, 1925, "Animated things, things experienced by us, *and that know us*, are on the decline and cannot be replaced any more."³ We are *here* on the earth, yet continue to lose touch with it, as though the ground from which our sustenance derives were slowly, subtly, nonetheless incessantly, washing from under our feet. Whereas our ancestors belonged, we, more and more, do not. Again from the letter to Von Hulewicz: "To our grandparents, a 'house,' a 'well,' a tower familiar to them, even their own dress, their cloak, was still infinitely more, infinitely more intimate: almost each thing a vessel in which they found something human and into which they set aside something human. Now, from America, empty indifferent things are crowding over us, sham things, *life-decoys*. . . .A house, in the American understanding, an American apple or grapevine there, has *nothing* in common with the house, the fruit, the grape, into which went the hopes and meditations of our forefathers."⁴

The Elegies address this circumstance, affirming a mode of existence on the strength of which, to use Rilke's own words, "life

²ibid.

³Rainer Maria Rilke, A letter to Withold Von Hulewicz, postmarked Sierre, November 13, 1925, Letters of Rainer Maria Rilke, translated by Jane Greene and M.D. Herter Norton, New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1969, pp. 372-376.

⁴ibid.

becomes possible again."⁵ The style of life in question works out of the manner in which we *acknowledge* things in speech. The preservation, the continuance, even the flourishing, of things near to us, he suggests, rests in what we may come to *say* of them;⁶ therein, he believes, things are taken to heart and lived with.⁷ Might it be that we are here in order to utter simple, unsophisticated--*pure*--words which give voice to our experience with unutterable things? If so, the character of such words and what it might mean to *say* remain to be understood. Moving in the direction of such an understanding constitutes the task of this paper.

In the attempt to make good on the disposition of a *pure word* as well as the import of *saying*, the figure of the wanderer must not go unnoticed, for in Rilke's idiom it is the *wanderer* who undertakes to bring the pure word from the mountain slope to the valley. Furthermore,

⁵Rilke, The letter to Von Hulewicz, op. cit.

⁶Rilke, "The Ninth Elegy," op. cit.

⁷" . . . taken to heart and lived with." This phrase which employs language from both the "Ninth Elegy" and some of the letters, becomes fundamental to an understanding of the interpretation of Rilke's thought set forth in this thesis. The *heart* does not reduce simply and merely to the passions. To be sure, what comes to be taken to heart *touches* one affectively, but it also comes to be *known* intimately--hence, Rilke's phrase "loving understanding." Under the interpretation about to be set forth, for something to be taken to heart means that it has become *experience* for one. "Experience," in turn, constitutes a technical word within my own vocabulary. Experience reduces neither to the perception of sense data, as the empiricists would have it, nor to a Kantian working up of sense data via the schematism of the categories of the understanding. That which is perceived becomes experience for one, in the sense I intend, only when attentively noticed. Finally, that which has been accorded due attention, thus becoming experience, may be *lived with* properly, that is, may assume a place among those things which reflect and inflect the life of some particular human being.

when he poses for our surmise the question which asks whether we are not here perhaps just *to say*, he assumes the "we" in question to be the wanderer mentioned only three lines earlier. For now it will suffice to speak of "wanderer" as a metaphor which appeals to various modes of experiencing the things with which we have to do, enacting in speech our being with them. In so dramatizing possibilities of lived existence, the word discloses the significance of human being in a way which, with the exception of a few cognates such as "sojourner" and "saunterer," would otherwise remain quite inaccessible if not strictly tacit.

The figure of the wanderer readily conjures an image of one who ambles about at no set pace with no fixed destination or ulterior purpose. The emphasis in wandering rests strongly on movement or activity of one sort or another as playing a central and defining role but movement from which a pre-established course is conspicuously absent. Such movement must be distinguished, too, from having strayed away from a direct course and again from that traveling about which is aimless, thoughtless or purely in search of pleasure, as might be expected of a vagrant or a gallivanter.⁸ The spirit of the movement

⁸For a contemporary phenomenological analysis of what it might mean to immerse oneself in an activity with wholeness of commitment, yet without an overriding concern for ultimate goals or purposes, see Henry G. Bugbee, Jr., The Inward Morning (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1976; originally published by Bald Eagle Press, State College, Pa., 1958) pp. 42-45, 229-231. Here Professor Bugbee reflects on memories from childhood days of swamping and building a dam (these memories, he says, "press upon me as if they bore the image of conclusive meaning which our situation may yield if only our mode of being be true.") as well as subsequent recollections of encounters with bells ("the sounding of bells often seems the very enunciation of finality, defining and reminding us of ultimate meaning for man."):

central to wandering comes close to that of walking or, as Thoreau would have it, the spirit of sauntering, a word which he believed to have derived from the idlers who traversed Europe during the Middle Ages, soliciting money and goods on the pretense of going *à la Sainte Terre* to the Holy Land. Such spectacles, says Thoreau, increased to the point that children would exclaim, "There goes a Sainte-Terrer," a Saunterer, a Holy-Lander. But in Thoreau's thought, "They who never go to the Holy Land in their walks, as they pretend, are indeed mere idlers and vagabonds; but they who do go there are saunterers in the good sense, such as I mean."⁹

The walking which engages in sauntering is forever in quest of the sacred, the nearness and presence of which has from earliest times been recognized as involving an element of distance.¹⁰ One must *set out*, venture forth, to discover what is sacred, leaving behind those customary relations which have congealed into attachments. Hence,

If you are ready to leave father and mother, and brother and sister, and wife and child and friends, and never see them again--if you have paid your debts, and made your will, and settled all your affairs, and are a free man--then you are ready for a walk.¹¹

⁹Henry David Thoreau, "Walking," The Portable Thoreau, edited by Carl Bode, New York: The Viking Press, 1947, pp. 592-630.

¹⁰Both the early Greeks and Hebrews held conceptions of the sacred or the Holy which involved an element of distance. For the Greeks, sacred groves were set apart from the places where everyday business was transacted. Going to the groves usually required that one make a special point of it precisely because they were not set among the usual places of business. The ancient Hebrews set aside a "Holy of Holies," first within the tabernacle and later within Solomon's temple, within which the presence of the Lord resided. Only the High Priest could enter that small cubicle and then only once a year.

¹¹Thoreau, ibid., p. 593.

The *setting out* of sauntering involves nothing less than a dialectic of distance and nearness. Without the appropriate distancing of those acquaintances and things which have become customary and therefore inordinately near, there can occur no nearing of the sacred, the Holy, that which is most distant.

Rilke's wanderer, like Thoreau's saunterer, has *set out*, ventured forth--and this toward the mountain slope; away from the inordinately near and toward a distant, undefiled place. His setting out marks a renewed participation with things among which he moves, which at once makes for a re-awakening to the ponderable character of all things and simultaneously makes for a kind of uncertainty with respect to what will come of his dealings with them. Indeed, the figure of the wanderer dramatizes the exposed openness requisite to such participation. Martin Heidegger speaks of a matter cognate to the circumstance of the wanderer as a release into risk.

In the Middle Ages the word for balance, *die Wage*, still means about as much as hazard or risk. This is the situation in which matters may turn out one way or the other. That is why the apparatus which moves by tipping one way or the other is called *die Wage*. It plays and balances out. The word *Wage*, in the sense of risk and as name of the apparatus, comes from *wagen*, *wegen*, to make a way, that is, to go, to be in motion. *Be-wagen* means to cause to be on the way and so to bring into motion: to shake or rock, *wiegen*. What rocks the balance weighs down; it has weight. To weigh or throw in the balance, as in the sense of *wager*, means to bring into the movement of the game, to throw into the scales, to release into risk.¹²

Wandering suggests that one risks the outcome--or better, one is risked --in such a way that a measure of uncertainty obtains with respect to

¹²Martin Heidegger, "What Are Poets For?" Poetry, Language, Thought, translated by Albert Hofstadter, New York: Harper and Row 1971, p. 103.

which way matters will fall out in one's dealings with weighty matters and things of concern. The risk integral to wandering pertains to the possibilities of engaging things which move and concern us in such a way that we may come to dwell with them and thus come to an understanding of their peculiarity and strangeness which initially sponsored our concern for them. To the extent that we find mankind at an intersection of activity--that in which he is engaged--and a determinate language--that relative totality of meaning according to which the world assumes a greater or lesser degree of intelligibility, the wanderer's risk in his concerned dealings with things also entails, in Rilke's estimation, a kind of risk of the language in terms of which his engagement with things comes to fuller intelligibility. Undoubtedly it will be necessary to consider Rilke's thought more thoroughly in order to understand what that could mean.

In any case, Rilke's figure of the wanderer venturing forth into risk differs noticeably from that of Thoreau's saunterer. The *setting out* of Thoreau's saunterer retains the element of a goal-oriented pilgrimage--"every walk is a sort of crusade"¹³--foreign to that of wandering. The sound of one compelling others to undertake the mission on which he himself had already set out resounds in Thoreau's speech, especially in Walden. His was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, exhorting one and all to forsake the depleted formalities and utterly usual, lifeless things of a sedimented and increasingly secularized culture for the richness and haleness of

¹³Thoreau, ibid., p. 593.

things to be discovered in unexhausted and undomesticated places. Toward the wild: that is the direction of what can be revered, and that is the direction of sauntering for Thoreau. And while it is true that Rilke's wanderer, too, has ventured forth toward a distant and strange place, the mountain slope, it remains equally true that he finds something distantly and strangely compelling, something distinctly non-secular if you will, in even the most culturally bound things. We begin to discover the non-secular and to find ourselves at home in a non-secular setting when we deny the usualness of those things we encounter in everyday circumstances, which does not mean that we are to turn our backs on the ordinary and the familiar in order to find that which is worthy of our deepest regard. On the contrary, we must take full notice of that which is not so ordinary about the ordinary, not so familiar about the familiar. For at bottom, in Rilke's estimation, the ordinary is not *merely* ordinary, utterly usual; it is extraordinary. In this sense, then, the most common things of ordinary experience require and deserve to be accorded full notice and respect, even reverence. And though he refrains from precisely this language, he seems to acknowledge in ordinary things a certain sanctity. Thus, whereas Thoreau's saunterer goes ". . .out of the house for a walk. . . toward some particular. . .deserted pasture or hill. . ."14 and this with a sense of urgency and mission, Rilke's wanderer returns from the mountain slope to the valley and there, too, notices in speech the sanctity of ordinary and common things: the house, the bridge, the

¹⁴Thoreau, *ibid.*, p. 603.

well, perhaps a gate or a jug. In this respect, the the spirit of wandering seems more akin to the sojourning spirit of the ancient nomadic Bedouins or Hebrew patriarchs who, residing here and there for a time, set out neither to proselytize nor to reconquer the Holy Land from the hands of the Infidels¹⁵ but to discover in every place and every thing the promise it held. The wanderer would dwell, if only *once*, in a land of promise.

In connection with the notions of a land of promise and discovering the sanctity of things, however, it would be misleading to leave unnoticed Rilke's explicit rejection of the ecclesiastical conception of Christianity as he had received it. ". . .all forms of this earth are not only not to be used in a time-limited way only, but, so far as we are able, to be given place in those superior significances in which we have a part. *Not*, however, *in the Christian sense* (from which I more passionately depart); but, in an earthly, a deeply earthly, a blissfully earthly consciousness we must introduce what is *here* seen and touched into that wider, that widest circuit."¹⁶ Things, having been accorded full notice, manifest a certain sanctity. And, in awakening to their sanctity on occasion of noticing them, we simultaneously afford them a place within that transcendent realm which Rilke calls the "widest circuit," and of which he believes we have a part. But the transcendence of the "widest circuit," far from paralleling that of an ecclesiastically conceived *other world*, remains profoundly earthly. That things in coming to be known as distinctly non-secular deserve to be accorded a place among those "superior significances" in that transcendent

¹⁵Thoreau, *ibid.*, p. 593.

¹⁶Rilke, *The Letter to Von Hulewicz*, *op. cit.*

"widest circuit" means that they are to be placed so as not to be attenuated by the strictures of a temporally bound, pragmatically oriented style of life. But the place of those "superior significances," the sacred existents, in which we have a part remains *here*, on the earth and not beyond it. And should we come to discover a land of promise, it would be among the things with which we most intimately have to do, not apart from them.

Earlier it was noted that the character of our wandering has evolved in such a way that we are steadily losing touch with the traditions of the past as well as with the myriad of ordinary and familiar things which surround us. Rilke believed this progressive isolation from past generations, along with the increasing dissipation of vitality in things near to us, to work in function of an increase in a particular kind of activity undertaken by us, the wanderers.

More than ever
the things we can live by are falling away,
supplanted by an action without symbol.
An action beneath crusts that easily crack, as soon as
the inner working outgrows and otherwise limits itself.¹⁷

The activity in question, an activity devoid of symbol, works to displace things which render the life of man something more than a bare existence.

It's not immediately clear what Rilke means by action which is without symbol. We can appreciate that he would employ the notion of *action* in connection with the figure of the wanderer, a figure the very

¹⁷Rilke, "The Ninth Elegy," op. cit.

etymology of which suggests that movement of one sort or another plays a central and defining role. The word "symbol" poses a more serious difficulty. It suggests that that which appears assumes the aspect of a place holder, a copy or a representation of something else. To the extent that "symbol" has come to intimate a kind of *conventional* representation, we would have to interpret Rilke to be saying that only to the extent that action transpires *with* symbol-- that is, only to the extent that action occurs which is either constituted by or accompanied by some kind of conventional representation--will things which we can live by no longer fall away. Obviously such an interpretation flies in the face of Rilke's intended meaning, for it is precisely our own modern age which so proliferates in conventions of all sorts, including conventional symbols, and which at the same time has come to experience a falling away of things that can be lived by.

An alternative translation of "symbol" from the original would be "image." If interpreted as a kind of picture, it, too, falls prey to the liabilities from which "symbol" suffers. That is, pictures also tend to be thought of as largely conventional. But if interpreted broadly as an articulation of the vitality of the senses, it becomes more readily intelligible. "Action without *image*" would mean action devoid of the capacity to see or perceive properly. That Rilke may have intended such an interpretation gains support from a letter to the young poet Franz Kappus dated a number of years prior to the writing of the "Ninth Elegy!" In the eighth of ten letters to the young poet, Rilke has been impressing upon Mr. Kappus that we *move* in

infinite space and that we must therefore assume our existence as *broadly* as possible whereupon he says, ". . . all those things that are so closely akin to us, have by daily parrying been so crowded out of life that the senses with which we could have grasped them are atrophied."¹⁸ The parrying here mentioned by Rilke dovetails with "crusts" in this phrase from the "Ninth Elegy":

. . . action beneath crusts that easily crack. . .

Proportional to an encrusting of human existence there occurs a parrying of all those things that are so closely akin to us; and with the parrying, a diminution and withering of the senses, with the result that movement or action devoid of an appropriate perceptual capacity supplants the things that we can live by.

The theme integral to "parrying" and "crusts" calls to mind Martin Buber's image of the armour in which he believes each of us encloses himself for the set purpose of repelling the perpetual evocation of all manner of things in whose presence we exist.

Each of us is encased in an armour whose task is to ward off signs. Signs happen to us without respite, living means being addressed, we would need only to present ourselves and to perceive. But the risk is too dangerous for us, the soundless thunderings seem to threaten us with annihilation, and from generation to generation we perfect the defence apparatus. All our knowledge assures us, "Be calm; everything happens as it must happen, but nothing is directed at you, you are not meant; it is just 'the world,' you can experience it as you like, but whatever you make of it in yourself proceeds from you alone, nothing is required of you, you are not addressed, all is quiet."¹⁹

¹⁸Rainer Maria Rilke, A letter to Franz Xaver Kappus, written from Borgeby gard, Fladie, Sweden, dated August 12, 1904, Letters To A Young Poet, translated by M.D. Herter Norton, New York: W.W. Norton & Co. Inc., 1934, pp. 63-72.

¹⁹Martin Buber, Between Man and Man, translated by R.G. Smith, Boston: Beacon Press, 1947, pp. 10 f.

Buber conceives the armour in which each of us seems to have encased himself to be the result of a conceptual scheme--a project, as it were--whose underlying logic works to close off a basic openness to the world, thereby quelling the fears it stirs in us. As the conceptual scheme becomes more pervasive and thus more familiar, the protective apparatus it creates, the armour, also becomes more pervasive and thus more familiar, until we no longer notice either that our thinking has become imbued with that kind of project or that the intended shielding has generally been accomplished. What is clear is that by and large we have ceased to fear the on-goings of the world, but by the same measure we have fairly systematically succeeded in preventing it from affecting us at all. Only at certain times, and then briefly, does the peal of this or that pierce the protective apparatus and affect the heart so deeply that the imposition forces us to take notice and wonder what has happened.

The signs of address of which Buber speaks transpire in the ordinary order of things; their evocative power manifests itself as nothing other than that which occurs time and again in the course of everyday experience. "Nothing," he says, "is added by the address."²⁰ But for most of the time, we refuse the openness requisite to hearing the address by constructing conceptual barriers between us and the happenings of the world, and, in doing so, effectively remove the seed of address from those happenings. They now no longer refer to me; but, then, they no longer refer to anything else either. They are mute.

²⁰Buber, ibid.

For Rilke, too, the insulation we achieve from the perpetual, resonant happening²¹ of ordinary things and events, through the construction of that kind of thickness which he calls crusts, works out of a shyness, perhaps even a *kind* of fear, of the inexplicable or unforeseeable experiences with which we suspect we may prove incapable of coping. In consonance with the figure of the wanderer he likens the depth and dimension of our lives to that of a room in which we walk. ". . .if we think of this existence of the individual as a larger or a smaller room, it appears evident that most people learn to know only a corner of their room, a place by the window, a strip of floor on which they walk up and down. Thus they have a certain security."²² But at this juncture a difference of no small import begins to arise between Rilke and Buber. The shielding of which Buber speaks takes shape in response to a fairly straightforward and basic, though no doubt not unfounded, fear of the world. There may be a kind of inadvertence about one's erecting of the shielding, one may not be particularly aware of the project in which he has implicated himself, but at bottom there is nothing especially subtle or paradoxical about it. For Rilke, this is not the case. Indeed, he notices within the lived lives of men something quite paradoxical; we wanderers bear within ourselves this fundamental ambivalence: we at once want and need the vitality and vibrancy of things, yet at the same time, by virtue of our shyness, assume a posture which increasingly precludes the possibility that things might be for us as vital

²¹" . . .resonant happening." This expression comes to mind from the expression "resonant truth" for which I am indebted to Professor John Lawry.

²²Rilke, The eighth letter to Franz Kappus, op. cit., p. 68.

and vibrant. Having been strangely moved by things we yearn to know them intimately, yet we refuse the risk implicit in coming to such an acquaintance. Or, put in a way more in keeping with the language of the "Ninth Elegy," we at once shun destiny while yet longing for it.

Thus, in Rilke's estimation it is not that the earth and the manifold of things within it no longer hold any measure of power for us, or, as with Buber, that we tacitly nonetheless straightforwardly fear their soundless thunderings. On the contrary, we, like those before us, sense that to be *here* is much.

. . .to be here is much, and the transient Here
seems to need and concern us strangely. Us, the most
transient.²³

The things of the earth have caught our eye and concern us strangely; they touch us; we *feel* them, if now and then only as a barely perceptible and receding presence. In any case, whether powerfully or faintly, things impress themselves upon us such that we long to dwell here among them in some irrevocable manner. But it's precisely this longing for things to remain indefinitely present which works to choke off the perpetual resonant happening of things. Our fear is not, as for Buber, fear of the world's soundless thunderings, and therefore fear of annihilation, but fear, or anxious concern, that what touches us most deeply will be lost in the oblivion of past and unrecoverable feelings. Hence, if possible, we would willfully catch the things in our grasp; we would hold onto them and fix them in the gaze of the eye; capture them in the speechless heart. Indeed, we drive ourselves

²³Rilke, "The Ninth Elegy," op. cit.

passionately to achieve precisely that end.

And so we drive ourselves and want to achieve it,
Want to hold it in our simple hands,
in the surfeited gaze and in the speechless heart.
Want to become it. Give it to whom? Rather
keep it all forever. . .²⁴

If things could only be made to remain forever as now, we reason,
then they would belong to us and we to them, and then we would have
satisfied the longing to have truly been of the earth *once*, the
longing to have lived. Nonetheless our attempts to satiate the gaze
with an abundance of things and to appropriatively still them within
the heart prove futile, for the efficacy to grasp and hold things, to
fix them within the heart, tends to militate against the way in which
they were initially granted, with the result that we ourselves become
fixed, *fixated*. Again Rilke:

Is it not the hidden cunning of secretive earth
when it urges on the lovers, that everything seems
transfigured
in their feelings? Threshold, what is it for two lovers
that they wear away a little of their own older doorsill,
they also, after the many before,
and before those yet coming. . .lightly?²⁵

Gabriel Marcel enunciates the theme of these lines from the "Ninth
Elegy" in the second of his essays on Rilke entitled "Rilke: A Witness
to the Spiritual: Part II" in which he says that what Rilke deplores
is the fascination which anything near to us--whether the other, or the
past, or even the things among which we live--holds for us by making us
cling to it and immobilize it, for such fascination immobilizes us and

²⁴Rilke, ibid.

²⁵Rilke, ibid.

paralyzes our inward growth.²⁶ Thus, the hidden liability--the "catch twenty-two," as it were--of attempts to halt the ever dissipating vitality and presence of things by satiating the gaze and filling the speechless heart with them is that something in our own lives halts at the same time.

In spite of the difference between Buber and Rilke, there remains the overriding similarity that the capacity to assume our existence as broadly as possible diminishes proportionally to an increase in that kind of willful activity which attenuates and otherwise parries the resonant happening of things and events, the kind of activity which Rilke refers to as action without symbol or image. Whereas for Buber that kind of activity comes in response to a basic fear and uncertainty with respect to the occurrent, Rilke understands it to eventuate from the attempt to perpetuate indefinitely one's present affective engagement with things of concern. Especially with respect to the circumstance articulated by Rilke, a significant though perplexing phenomenon may, though not necessarily will, occur: when one *insists* on maintaining the affective power of things in perpetuity, *insists* on keeping matters forever as now, a shift occurs in that whatever initially and powerfully commands one's attention becomes the focus of a cognitive project, the purpose of which is to perpetuate an affective condition.²⁷ That is, what begins as a matter of affective

²⁶Gabriel Marcel, "Rilke: A Witness to the Spiritual: Part II," from Homo Viator, Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope, translated by Emma Craufurd, Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1951, p. 255.

²⁷The emphasis here falls squarely on the proclivity toward insistence. Cognition need not reduce to a project of commanding or steering, unless one insists, either tacitly or explicitly, that it become such.

urgency commanding our attention and concern may, though not necessarily will, evolve into a cognitive enterprise which we then undertake to command and steer.²⁸ At precisely that juncture where consciousness *presumes* to preside over matters which concern one, that is, where consciousness sets about to answer to the heartfelt urgencies, the vitality and sanctity of things begins to dissipate. For when the consciousness undertakes as its project to resolve the urgencies which arise out of one's concerned dealings with things, it simultaneously, though perhaps inadvertently, parries the perpetual unfolding of things and thus mutes their resonance.

Rilke thoroughly appreciates the human urgency to maintain things in the heart. For as much as they mean to us and as much as they have come to share our grief and our gladness, the multi-faceted inflections of our lives, they remain provisional and perishable. "Hence," he says to Von Hulewicz, "it is important not only not to run down and degrade everything earthly, but just because of its temporariness, which it shares with us, we ought to grasp and transform these phenomena and these things in a most loving understanding. Transform? Yes, for our task is so deeply and so passionately to impress upon ourselves this provisional and perishable earth, that its essential being will arise again 'invisible' in us."²⁹ Indeed, in their coming

²⁸In point of elucidating Rilke's thought it is necessary to speak of affection, cognition, and, by implication, will. Neither Rilke nor I mean to advocate anything like a faculty psychology or an opposition between affection, cognition or will. Distinguishing them does not imply that they are separable. Indeed, each inflects and imbues the others. Thus, as Professor Bryan Black might well say, the insistence on cognitive control is a very powerful passion.

²⁹Rilke, The letter to Von Hulewicz, *op. cit.*

to be and passing away, the things that live near us ask of us to be established firmly in the heart.

transitory themselves, they trust us for rescue,
us, the most transient of all. They wish us to transmute
them
in our invisible heart--oh, infinitely into us! Whoever we
are.

Earth, isn't this what you want:
to arise in us? Is it not your dream
to be some day invisible? Earth! Invisible!
What, if not transformation, is your insistent commission?³⁰

Only within us is it possible for the intimate task to be accomplished of transforming the visible into the mode of invisibility which ceases to depend ultimately upon that which is visible and tangible. That, for Rilke, constitutes the peculiarly human responsibility. But that such a task can abort becomes evident nowhere more clearly than in our speech. For in speech it becomes eminently clear that things, themselves frail, are susceptible to a kind of engineering--what Martin Heidegger calls a producing consciousness³¹--which requires that they be as we would have them to be. Correlative to the kind of action which transpires without symbol or image, there takes place a kind of speech which at the outset posits things as entities present at hand substantially diminishing the possibility that any given thing might be conceived as other than an *object* present before one. The mode of speech in question is that of representation in which, through the vehicle of the proposition, specific concatenations of object-things are disengaged from their familiar milieu and brought to

³⁰Rilke, "The Ninth Elegy," op. cit.

³¹see Martin Heidegger, "What Are Poets For?" op. cit.

stand in a prescribed manner. Asserting *what is*, representative propositions pass over the ontological foundations of things opting instead for an epistemic requirement of how things must be.

The things which touch us, and therefore our feelings of those things, ask to arise invisibly within us, ask of us to become experience.³² Within the language of representation, things are as a matter of course established immanently, but the immanence is that of a willful and presiding consciousness and not that of the heart's invisible space. The frailty of things which have been appropriated into the immanence of consciousness becomes replaced by the objects brought to stand in representation. But things *qua* objects, far from becoming more sturdy and more firmly established, in their own way come to exhibit a certain tenuous, weak, slender form. They fail to mean for men in any sustaining way, are liable to becoming utterly usual so as to be left unnoticed, and thus prove susceptible to disappearing from attentive consideration entirely. If life becomes sterile for us by virtue of having required of all manner of things that they *be* for us in a prescribed manner, as objects, then the recovery of a life worth living requires in turn the rescue of things from the caricature of them as reduced to objects.

If things are to be seen for what they are, truly taken to heart--in short, lived with--they must be released from any pre-ordained way of being for us. Having been brought inordinately near through subjection to the concept, that is, having been subjected to

³²See Footnote # 7, p. 3.

a kind of conceptual closure, things perceived require to be released into distance, into the "widest circuit." We release them out of respect and thereby come to an appreciation of their sanctity. Things are not sacrosanct, possessed of some immunity to question or touch. On the contrary, we want to know precisely in what way they come to mean most intimately for us and in what way we may be said to truly know them. The inordinate nearness and closure of things effected by the conceptual control of a presiding consciousness only yields propositional knowledge *about* objects which have been brought to stand in representation. It's the obviousness of things yielded in that kind of knowledge which constitutes their utter destitution and unreality. We know something *about* them but the cognitive nexus of events which culminate in that kind of knowledge selectively determines the things' occurrence, and therefore we cannot be said to know them in the sense of being intimately acquainted with them. It's as though the wanderer were standing before the world but had not yet ventured near and into it as a participant and could not because what it proffered required a kind of distance and detachment which he had not yet come to understand.

The exigency to intimacy, far from excluding distance, demands it. The knowledge of things discovered in intimacy is not knowledge about objects brought near in representation, rather it is the acquaintance with things come to be known first and fundamentally in the mode of acknowledgement. If we would come to know things which touch our lives and concern us, it must be as one who acknowledges them for what they are in their concerning us. To this extent, then, acknowledgement

stands both ontologically and epistemologically fundamental in our interrelationship with things of the world: in acknowledgement things are allowed to *be* in their own right and yet are *known* to be as touching the lives of men.

Rilke understands the task of saying to be the task of acknowledging ordinary things; that is, the task of reawakening that understanding of ordinary things which requires that we sense and appreciate more fully their strangeness and unusualness, their otherness. It has been suggested that things assume the aspect of objects through predisposing how they may be for us; this in correlation with a speaking transpiring in the mode of a cognition as *representation* in which things are brought into the immanence of an ostensibly presiding consciousness. But in the idiom of the "Ninth Elegy," the peculiarly human exigency is for things to arise in us invisibly. Things trust us for rescue, something which can only be accomplished through at one and the same time releasing them into the distance of the widest circuit and allowing them to arise within the heart's space of the invisible. The question is how a transposition and a transmutation may take place from what occurs as a closure within the immanence of a presiding consciousness via a cognitive representation of things *qua* objects to what occurs as the arising of things invisibly in the heart's space, where they become experience. For things to arise invisibly in the heart, a transposition must occur such that the wanderer, standing before things of the world which he initially only tacitly understands, ventures into the world, awakens to it, and allows the things in it to arise in him so that they explicitly become

experience. But his venturing into the world of things must at one and the same time constitute a release of those things into distance. Releasing things into distance trusting that they will return and arise invisibly within one's heart, that is how the transposition occurs, and that is the wanderer's risk. For Rilke this transposition occurs, if anywhere, in the *acknowledging language of saying*, for it is in the language of saying that what touches and concerns one becomes experience without being subsumed to a pre-established concept or a preordained way of viewing it. In *saying*, one implicitly affirms having been tacitly touched and moved by earthly things without at the same time foreclosing on what those things might be for one some time hence. For this reason, we are told that the wanderer does not bring from the mountain slope to the valley a handful of earth--that would merely be to bring some entity into close proximity without allowing it explicitly to become experience for the heart--but the pure word, which is the flower of existent things.

For Rilke, the saying of a pure word carries the force of praise; a pure word does not appropriate things, it celebrates them.

. . .And these things that live,
slipping away, understand that you praise them. . .³³

Further, the saying which praises and celebrates at one and the same time articulates our intimacy with things, which saying does not reduce to the ephemeral feeling of the speechless heart.

³³Rilke, "The Ninth Elegy," op. cit.

Praise the world to the angel, not the unutterable world;
you cannot astonish him with your glorious feelings;
in the universe, where he feels more sensitively,
you're just a beginner. Therefore, show him the simple
thing that is shaped in passing from father to son,
that lives near our hands and eyes as our very own.
Tell him about the Things. He'll stand more amazed,
as you stood
beside the rope-maker in Rome, or the potter on the Nile.
Show him how happy a thing can be, how blameless and ours;³⁴

The saying speech which *shows* constitutes a configuration which discloses the thing it celebrates. In this sense it is non-representational. In saying, there is *no-thing* to represent. Saying, rather, *presents* things in language for the first time calling them into appearance and into the heart while at the same time preserving their integrity and sanctity, their otherness.

In saying, the transformation of which Rilke spoke in his letter to Von Hulewicz is accomplished; the transformation which transposes the visible and tangible into the heart's space of the invisible without appropriatively grasping that which the saying celebrates. In saying, the transformation is accomplished in which things arise intimately within the heart--"surplus of existence / is welling up in my heart," says Rilke in the "Ninth Elegy"--while yet remaining in that infinite distance without which they are denuded of their integrity and sanctity. In giving himself to the saying which praises and celebrates earthly beings out of reverence for them, the wanderer comes to belong to the things themselves so as to dwell in a land of promise; in that fashion he comes to live *once*.

³⁴ Rilke, ibid.

Are we here in order to say the things of ordinary experience, bringing them to dwell within us and thereby coming to dwell among them? Perhaps--but everything developed to this point has primarily worked out of reflective consideration of the suggestions proffered in Rilke's "Ninth Elegy" and related letters. And as yet, we do not satisfactorily comprehend what he has suggested. The task ahead requires that we investigate more thoroughly the logic of saying as well as the alternative logic of representational language.

CHAPTER II

HEIDEGGER: "LANGUAGE"

Heidegger's short essay "Language"¹ has proven helpful in my coming to understand what it might mean to *say*, if for no other reason than that pondering his enigmatic strains of thought has pushed me toward rendering my own reflections more concrete. I will, therefore, continue these reflections on language with a review of a few important movements of thought from his essay with a view to making good on some of their suggestive features which contrast with certain current and historical views on language. The logic of this approach will be to illuminate certain inadequacies of prevalent conceptions of language-- inadequacies which compel us toward a broader and more penetrating understanding of language.

In simplest terms, Heidegger's essay constitutes an effort to free the discussion of language from the grip of the powerful yet simplistic and, therefore, inadequate characterization of language as the instrument of human expression by which ideas and things are variously represented. He attempts to free the discussion from what may be called the representational model of language through focusing on the tenuous and insubstantial, though generally acknowledged, fecundity of language,

¹Martin Heidegger, "Language," Poetry, Language, Thought, translated by Albert Hofstadter, New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1971, pp. 187-210.

its *presence* .² That is the force of his terse comment "Language speaks."³ Far from committing the category mistake of reifying language and then attributing to it a man-like activity, he draws attention to the flourishing of language at all stages.⁴ In spite of repeated attempts to subsume language totally to human purposes and uses, it continues to say more and different things than we intend.⁵ In short, it speaks.

²Thinkers from a broad spectrum of positions have found it necessary at some point at least to nod in the direction of what I call the *presence* of language. This includes those of the analytic tradition whose general position has been considered less sympathetic to such a notion; e.g., see Irving M. Copi, Introduction to Logic, fourth edition, New York: The MacMillan Co., 1972, p. 53, in which he speaks of the presence of an argument.

³Heidegger, "Language," op. cit., p. 190.

⁴Though he does not explicitly charge Heidegger with reifying language that is no doubt precisely what A.J. Ayer, in his discussion of "the Elimination of Metaphysics" in Language, Truth and Logic, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1946, would believe Heidegger has done. Indeed, Ayer specifically groups Heidegger among those metaphysicians who have been "duped by grammar." In this respect, he agrees with Rudolf Carnap who, in his "Überwindung der Metaphysik durch logische Analyse der Sprache," (Erkenntnis, Vol. II, 1932), charges Heidegger with taking "Nothing" as a name which is used to denote something peculiarly mysterious.

⁵In his essay "Ending the Waiting Game," Stanley Cavell suggests that Beckett in Endgame reduces language to its most literal form, yet even there, he notes, language says too much. In their barest intelligible aspect, words say more than we intend. "One of our special curses is that we can use the name of God naturally only to curse, take it only in vain. Beckett removes this curse by converting the rhetoric of cursing, not, as traditionally, by using the name in prayer. . .but by turning its formulas into declarative utterances, ones of pure denotation --using the sentences 'cognitively,' as the logical positivists used to put it. . .Positivism said that statements about God are meaningless; Beckett shows that they mean too damned much." Must We Mean What We Say? Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976, pp. 115-162.

Thus, his discussion of language turns to speech. He asks, "What does it mean to speak?"⁶ Clearly the question remains essentially untouched if broached in terms of an investigation into such linguistic phenomena as the physiological mechanics of making sound and the systematic formation of words into sentences--traditionally considered germane to the disciplines of phonetics and grammar--because such inquiries already presuppose speech to be fundamentally an activity of man and therefore *a priori* preclude the possibility that anything should be said beyond what men intend to say. The implications of Heidegger's response to his own question reveal a new understanding of both language and man.

From the outset Heidegger's interpretation of the occurrence and import of *speech* assumes a decidedly broader context than ordinarily allowed under interpretations of language offered in prevalent contemporary circles. For Heidegger, *speech* consists in a nexus of events, one aspect of which constitutes discourse or the spoken word. Precisely what those events consist in which go together to compose the nexus Heidegger calls speech remains to be seen. For the time being, it will suffice to note that he regards the spoken word to hold a special place in speech; when the word is spoken--when discourse occurs--speech, as he conceives it, comes to fruition and culmination.

Because he understands the spoken word and speech to stand in a special intimacy relative to one another, yet without one reducing to the other, Heidegger believes himself justified in broaching speech through an inquiry into the spoken word. If he is right, then the obvious

⁶Heidegger, op. cit., p. 193.

question is: which word should be investigated, which word will reveal the character of speech? Presumably any one of many spoken words could adequately guide the inquiry, though Heidegger does not say so explicitly; it must be inferred from other of his comments to the effect that discourse of all sorts ultimately rests within the broader scope of speech as he understands it. At the same time, there occurs in a multitude of instances a phenomenon of words built upon words, discourse built upon discourse, such that the words themselves become ordinary, all too familiar, mundane, even pallid. Cases in point proliferate in printed material concerned with the asking and answering of seemingly endless, foolish questions; e.g., "What does Clark Gable's son think of 'Gone With the Wind?'" or "This may sound kind of goony, but how many little dents does a golf ball have?"⁷ On the more serious side, the same phenomenon occurs in terms of the exponentially increasing compilation of statistics, as though more precise statistical analyses somehow generate of themselves an understanding of the issues in question.⁸ In these instances, as well as in countless others the mode of discourse seems to have obscured the depth of life out of which it issues. For this reason, Heidegger, in attempting to inquire

⁷"People, Etc." The Entertainer, from an appendix to "The Missoulian" (newspaper), Saturday, February 19, 1977.

⁸The statistical analyses which accompany contemporary discussions pertaining to the disposition of the few regions in North America which might still be considered wild stand forth in striking fashion. Statistical analyses of these areas fail to generate of themselves either a sensitivity or an understanding of the serious issues in question, such as what stance we ought to assume relative to the land. Yet such analyses proliferate.

into speech via the spoken word, turns from the mundane and pallid to "what is spoken purely," the "original."⁹ That which is spoken purely, as Heidegger tentatively poses the matter, is the poem; it is an original. He immediately acknowledges that such a notion initially appears as little more than a bare assertion. At the same time, he appeals to those who may be following his train of thought to listen to a poem and only then pass judgment as to whether or not they have succeeded in hearing something spoken purely. The particular poem to which extensive attention is devoted in the essay is Georg Trakl's "A Winter Evening." It runs as follows:

A Winter Evening¹⁰

Window with falling snow is arrayed,
Long tolls the vesper bell,
The house is provided well;
The table is for many laid.

Wandering ones, more than a few,
Come to the door on darksome courses.
Golden blooms the tree of graces
Drawing up the earth's cool dew.

Wanderer quietly steps within;
Pain has turned the threshold to stone,
There lie, in limpid brightness shown,
Upon the table bread and wine.

Trakl's poem exhibits a certain poetic force, a certain poetry of the spoken word. And its poetic force comes forth only in the arrangement of words, their peculiar relationship to one another which

⁹Heidegger, "Language," op. cit., p. 194.
¹⁰ibid., pp. 194, 195.

is one of rhyme and charm in the verses and stanzas. But the arrangement of words into verses and stanzas does not guarantee their poetic force, and for this reason Heidegger does not focus his discussion of the poem on its artistic structure. Instead he takes up with the manner in which the poem opens a new perspective on the world in the very arrangement of its words.

That words in general and this poem in particular might be capable of such a disclosure is a radical notion, to be sure. In consonance with a tradition dating back at least to the time of Aristotle, we tend to discount the possibility that a word, a poem, might be irreplaceable for us in unfolding a world for which we do not have the key. At any rate, for Heidegger it is on the strength of coming to a new and continually developing understanding of the world and the beings of the world as disclosed by the spoken words of the poem that we are warranted in calling it an original, something spoken purely. And for the same reason, it may be said to carry poetic force. Thus, the particular arrangement of words in Trakl's poem makes it special. Yet when the way in which it is special becomes fully understood, it will also be understood that verse and stanza are forms not necessary for the utterance of the poetic. The most literal of prose, for example, may also carry poetic force to the extent that it brings near to us a view of the world or the beings within it of which we were not previously wholly cognizant. "The opposite of what is purely spoken, the opposite of the poem, is not prose. Pure prose is never 'prosaic'. It is as poetic and hence as rare as poetry."¹¹

¹¹ibid., p. 208.

Heidegger's discussion of "A Winter Evening" constitutes an attempt to disclose the poetic force exhibited in the spoken word as the culmination and completion of speech, the speaking of language. What he means by poetry as that which is spoken purely and in what manner it might appropriately be said that the poetic force of a word opens a new perspective on the world requires further elucidation. In the meantime it will be helpful to outline briefly the view of poetry relative to which Heidegger contrasts his own.

When language is taken either tacitly or overtly to be an instrument by which men make themselves understood it is typically delimited according to various functions which it supposedly performs. Regardless of the ways in which to categorize these functions, and they are numerous¹², the understanding of poetry remains essentially constant. In each case it is conceived as that mode of linguistic presentation in which the speaker *qua* poet enjoys a certain license with words, say in coining new words or in employing metaphors. The poet--*maker*, in the Aristotelean sense--is allowed such license on the understanding that nothing decisive rests on what he says. Putatively poetic language tells us nothing pertinent with respect to the world, for "The poetic universe of discourse is a world of 'as if'."¹³ Its utility lies not in the conveyance of knowledge but in the expression

¹²See Albert M. Frye and Albert W. Levi, Rational Belief, p. 8, in which they list five functions of language; Irving M. Copi, Introduction to Logic, fourth ed., p. 45, in which he lists three basic functions of language; and C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards, The Meaning of Meaning, p. 10, in which they list two primary functions of language.

¹³Albert M. Frye and Albert W. Levi, Rational Belief, New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1941, p. 14.

of "feelings and attitudes."¹⁴ It offers enjoyment for its own sake by conjuring certain images to be contemplated. ". . .it appeals to the imagination, it gives delight merely as sound. Its purpose is esthetic enjoyment."¹⁵ In short, poetry consists in ornamentation. Weighty matters--issues, for example, concerning truth and falsity--always require that recourse be taken to the precision of literal, informative discourse whose function is ". . .to describe the world, and to reason about it,"¹⁶ for it is upon the supposed concreteness of literal, representational language that poetry is believed to make sense or even to be possible.

More explicit consideration will be given at a later point to both the representational model of language and the view of poetic language which presupposes it. We must now turn once more to Heidegger's notion of the poetic word as that word which conjures a new awareness of the circumstance in which we find ourselves. That this sort of disclosure may be accomplished in a word, a poem, depends, we have said, on the possibility that the linguistic utterance carries and delivers a certain poetic power. The question now is this: in what way does the spoken word yield poetic force? Or again: in what way does the poetic manifest itself in word? Answering these requires Heidegger to weave several elements into a unitary whole. At some point the spoken word must concur with the matrix of signs which already hold significance. That is, if the spoken word is to carry poetic force,

¹⁴Irving M. Copi, Introduction to Logic, fourth ed., New York: The MacMillan Co., 1972, p. 46.

¹⁵Frye and Levi, p. 8

¹⁶Copi, p. 45

it can do so only to the extent that it becomes intelligible within the pale of an already established intricacy of meanings--what might be called in a more or less general sense "mother-tongue," "dialect," "the language of the home"--the bounds of which constitute the limits of present understanding. However, if the spoken word is to be anything more than a reiteration of that which is already intelligible and familiar, it must sound out the significance of something heretofore relatively unfamiliar or unnoticed in the arrangement of familiar words.¹⁷ This linguistic phenomenon disclosive of that which, though intelligible, has previously remained unfamiliar or gone unnoticed is what Heidegger calls *naming*.¹⁸ When the spoken word *names*, the poetic is then manifested.

At this juncture, two points require to be brought forth, both of which concern the interrelationship of the spoken word which names and that which is named in the speaking of the word. In the first place, when it is said that the word which names *sounds out* the significance of that which it names, "sounds out" is intended to focus on the experiential base of the uttered word. It is one's experiential groundedness in the world, out of which the word arises, that constitutes the broader context of speech as Heidegger conceives it. For a word to sound out the significance of something, to name it, means that

¹⁷One is liable to think that what Heidegger is here struggling to make sense of has been subsequently resolved through the efforts of Noam Chomsky concerning the theoretical depth of language in terms of his generative and transformational grammar. For a discussion of Chomsky's contributions to the study of syntax and a critique of what his position presupposes from a perspective sympathetic to that of Heidegger, see Albert Borgmann, The Philosophy of Language, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974, pp. 147-160.

¹⁸Heidegger, p. 198.

the word intelligibly vocalizes or intones experience. No doubt this notion is most difficult to comprehend. The liability is that the key words--"sound out," "vocalize," "intone," "experience"--will be interpreted in light of the view which insists on rendering language as fundamentally an activity of man by which the actual and imaginary are represented. The spoken word in this view is typically encountered as a vocal sound effected by the organs of speech--e.g. mouth, lips, tongue--which are in turn activated by certain mental processes in a supposed speech center of the brain.¹⁹ The question is whether vocal sound, now associated with certain parts of the body conceived in purely physiological terms, has been adequately understood. In another essay, Heidegger suggests a negative answer to the question. ". . . We Germans call the different manners of speaking in different sections of the country *Mundarten*, modes of the mouth. . . Those differences do not solely nor primarily grow out of different movement patterns of the organs of speech. The landscape, and that means the earth, speaks in them, differently each time. But the mouth is not merely a kind of organ of the body understood as an organism--body and mouth are part of the earth's flow and growth in which we mortals flourish, and from which we receive the soundness of our roots. If we lose the earth, of course, we also lose the roots."²⁰ In this context, then, the naming

¹⁹For a discussion of how ". . . the human behavior of speech might be controlled by neural mechanisms" within the context of the question concerning incorrigible knowledge, see D.C. Dennett, Content and Consciousness, New York: The Humanities Press, International Library of Philosophy and Scientific Method series, 1969. In his chapter on introspective certainty, Dennett says, "The speech centre part of our machine does not examine or analyse its input."

²⁰Martin Heidegger, "The Nature of Language," On the Way to Language, translated by Peter D. Hertz, New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1971, pp. 98, 99.

word *sounds out* the significance of whatever it names insofar as the named itself proves to be the experiential ground in connection with which the naming word arises.

But, secondly, when it is said that the naming word *sounds out* the significance of that which it names it must be noted that, although the sounding or intoning of the word brings to culmination what occurs experientially as the incipient stages of speech, it would be wrong to think of the word which names as merely the end result of a causal nexus. Conceptions of language which place the word at the end of a causal nexus tend to construe the word as a label.²¹ Naming, then, becomes labeling and this by convention. Furthermore, conceptions of language which place the word at the end of a causal nexus tend to construe that which is named (labeled) as manifestly intelligible apart from the naming of it. This or that is thought to be what it is apart from anything that might be said *of* it. In contrast to the view which renders naming as labeling along with the corollary which says that things are no more or less intelligible by virtue of our having named them, Heidegger suggests that the word, in sounding out the significance of the experiential ground from which it arises, uncovers that experiential ground allowing it to appear in a way that deepens our understanding of it. He speaks of the matter

²¹See C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards, The Meaning of Meaning, New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., Inc., 1956. Chapter One concerning thoughts, words and things contains a discussion of this view from the perspective of those who defend it.

in this way:

This naming does not hand out titles, it does not apply terms, but it calls into the word. The naming calls. Calling brings closer what it calls. However this bringing closer does not fetch what is called only in order to set it down in closest proximity to what is present. . . The call. . . brings the presence of what was previously uncalled into a nearness in which what is called remains, still absent. 22

In naming, it is the presence of something which is brought near while at the same time that which is named may--indeed, in some sense *must*--remain quite distant, remote, other. Needless to say, the dialectic of presence and nearness, distance and remoteness integral to naming simply gets muddled if interpreted as specifically quantifiable. What occurs in naming parallels that which was broached in the first chapter in connection with distance and nearness; in naming, one's voiced acknowledgement of a thing's remoteness, its otherness, brings it closer, which nearness is that of the heart. Or again, the logic of the matter seems cognate with Heidegger's notion of "de-severing" as articulated in Section 23, "The Spatiality of Being-in-the-World," of Being and Time.²³

De-severing" amounts to making the farness vanish-- that is, making the remoteness of something disappear, bringing it close. Dasein is essentially de-severant: it lets any entity be encountered close by as the entity which it is. De-severance discovers remoteness; and remoteness, like distance, is a determinate categorial characteristic of entities whose nature is not that of Dasein. De-severance, however, is an existentiale. . .

²²Heidegger, "Language," op. cit., p. 198. The parallel with what Rilke says in the "Ninth Elegy" should not go unnoticed. The wanderer does not bring a handful of earth from the mountain slope to the valley but a pure word which he has learned, which is the flower, indeed, the _____, of the existent thing.

²³Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, a translation of Sein Und Zeit by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, New York: Harper & Row, 1952, English p. 139, German p. 105. As one of Heidegger's technical

When Heidegger says that Dasein is essentially *deseverant*, he means approximately what Rilke means when in the "Ninth Elegy" he says that to be *here* is much and the transient *here* seems to need and concern us strangely. And, though naming is a phenomenon Heidegger articulates in his later work and the *deseverant* character of Dasein a phenomenon articulated in his earlier work, the speaking which is naming clearly fulfills the *deseverant* character of Dasein in the same way *saving* fulfills that which most fundamentally concerns Rilke's wanderer. In naming, as in saying, we circumspectly and heedfully bring the presence of this or that near whose character and integrity--what Heidegger of the Being and Time period understands as "a categorial characteristic of entities"--are such as to be violated if appropriatively made to stand in close proximity.

The question at this point concerns the character of that which the poetic word names. The words of Trakl's poem disclosingly name for Heidegger, and presumably for us also, two primary elements: *thing* and *world*. The discussion of thing and world has thus far been somewhat ambiguous. We are now ready to rectify this situation to some degree. For Heidegger, the sole way of dwelling in the world--that is, existing in such a way that we find ourselves at home--is through our sojourn with things. Only in such a sojourn with things is it possible

terms "existentiale" requires a brief explanation. Heidegger contends that "the structure of existentiality lies a priori." Quite simply, this means that there are preconditions or dispositions of mind and necessary modes of thinking which allow one to be aware of himself as existing. For Heidegger, these necessary modes of understanding the self are existentials. De-severance constitutes one such existentiale.

for us truly to enter into the on-goings of the world as participants. Whatever tends to light up a certain region or place--a world--as we heedfully and circumspectively attend to it in the mode of acknowledgement may be spoken of as a *thing*. "A Winter Evening" names and thus offers for our attentive consideration the snowfall and the vesper bell; they are things. Signs, symbols, equipment, tools and natural elements may also assume the character of things to the extent that they come to bear on us in our concerned dealings with them so as to hold up a context of significance, a world. Toward the conclusion of his essay entitled "The Thing," Heidegger says, ". . . tree and pond, too, brook and hill, are things, each in its own way. Things, each thinging from time to time in its own way, are heron and roe, deer, horse and bull. Things, each thinging and each staying in its own way, are mirror and clasp, book and picture, crown and cross."²⁴

What might otherwise be thought of as disparate elements are gathered together into a unitary whole by the thing. Indeed, "gathering" lies at the heart of Heidegger's notion of what constitutes a thing. "The gathering, assembling, letting-stay is the thinging of things."²⁵ In the essay "The Thing," Heidegger finds gathering in the sense of the Old High German *thing* the one distinguishing feature of a thing. Gathering distinguishes a thing from the Roman sense of *res*, the medieval sense of *ens*, as well as the modern sense of object, all

²⁴Heidegger, "The Thing," Poetry, Language, Thought, New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1971, p. 182.

²⁵Heidegger, "Language," op. cit., p. 199.

of which amount to attenuated characterizations of something-or-others which, though they may be present before us, fail to concern us in any decisive way and therefore ultimately fail to engage us in the events of the world. Certain elements and powers of the world come together all at once as a gathering in the thing *for someone*. Gathering is not a gathering unless the elements so gathered bear upon men, concern them and generally become a matter for conversation.²⁶ The Roman word *res* intimates this sort of gathering strongly enough but seems to have been inflected significantly by the Greek philosophical conception of *ὄν* which, along with the Latin *ens*, means whatever stands here present before one. "*Res* becomes *ens*, that which is present in the sense of what is put here, put before us, presented. . . especially in the Middle Ages, the term *res* serves to designate every *ens qua ens*, that is, everything presented in any way whatever, even if it stands forth and presences only in mental representation as an *ens rationis*."²⁷ The modern sense of object as derived from Kant's articulation of the thing-in-itself also means merely something that *is* and which, in the final analysis, cannot possibly come to concern or bear on men. ". . . for Kant, that which is becomes the object of a representing that runs its course in the self-consciousness of the human ego. The thing-in-itself means for Kant: the object-in-itself. To Kant, the character of the 'in-itself' signifies that the object is an object in itself without reference to the human act of representing it, that is, without the

²⁶Heidegger, "The Thing," op. cit., p. 199.
²⁷ibid., p. 176

opposing 'ob-' by which it is first of all put before this representing act. 'Thing-in-itself,' thought in a rigorously Kantian way, means an object that is no object for us, because it is supposed to stand, stay put, without a possible before: for the human representational act that encounters it."²⁸

In naming things and thus acknowledging them in their own mode of being, they and we are readied for a gathering of worldly elements in the thing. The thing is not merely a symbol for gathering but, as a thing, it is itself the focal point of gathering; in it is accomplished gathering. There is nothing strange about this phenomenon except that we may be in danger of losing a strong familiarity with it as we continue to lose touch with things. Certainly it was clearly manifested in antiquity. Homer, for example, implicitly acknowledged the thingly character of the bed shared by Odysseus and Penelope in their moments of deepest intimacy.²⁹ From time to time the bed seems to have gathered a world around itself; seems to have held that world up for consideration. Around it was built first their bedroom and eventually their entire dwelling place, the place to which grey-eyed Athena found occasion to come and over which the all-seeing eye of Zeus kept watch from the high places. The bed, carved by Odysseus himself from one of the native trees of Ithaka, found its roots in the thin soil of that rocky island, a place not well suited to horses but good for the keeping of

²⁸Heidegger, *ibid.*, p. 177.

²⁹Homer, *The Odyssey*, translated by Robert Fitzgerald, Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1963, see especially Bk. 23, p. 435-7.

goats and the rearing of boys. In that bed was focused, from time to time, the world of Odysseus. It stood at the core of all those elements and powers--the gods and fellow Akaians, the rocky soil of Ithaka and the heavens above it--from which he wandered and to which he returned home. In the unpretentiousness and inconspicuous compliance of the bed was gathered an animated world of mystery and joy, fear and sorrow in which Odysseus found himself engaged and concerned. Working on the strength of the way in which things such as Odysseus' bed gather a world, Heidegger says

Thinging [gathering, assembling, letting-stay], they [things] unfold world, in which things abide and so are the abiding ones. By thinging, things carry out world. Thinging, they gesture--gestate--world.³⁰

Thinging, things bear, carry, gestate, gesture--a world. They accustom (bething) men with a world; or better, they visit men with a world. It is the world as a place in which man might live and dwell, a place gathered in and held forth by things, that Rilke fears we are in danger of losing if we fail sayingly to acknowledge things.

World, in turn, consists of an indissoluble unity which envelops us and in which we may--or may not--come to dwell depending upon whether we let it touch us.³¹ Taking his cue from Trakl's poem, Heidegger says:

"The snowfall brings men under the sky that is darkening into night. The tolling of the evening bell brings them, as mortals, before the divine. House and table join mortals to the earth. . .The unitary fourfold of sky and earth, mortals and divinities, which is stayed in the thinging of things, we call--the world."³²

³⁰Heidegger, "Language," op. cit., pp. 199,200.

³¹The issue of whether and to what degree we are *in-the-world* seems to be more open in Heidegger's later works than it was in Being and Time.

³²Heidegger, "Language," op. cit., p. 199

Heidegger makes a great deal of the four-fold of earth and sky, mortals and divinities. And though it is not necessary to interpret him as saying literally that these four, and no others, combine to form the world, it remains helpful to consider what he means by each of the dialectically related elements or regions. The Earth is that which serves and supports; it is the firmament. Out of it all creatures emerge and back to it they are all eventually referred. It persists as that which sustains and gives life. It is the hiddenness involved in all unhiddenness, the closure out of which all disclosure arises. It manifests itself as recalcitrant to all projects, yet supports all manner of beings each in its peculiar diversity. "Earth is the building bearer, nourishing with its first fruits, tending water and rock, plant and animal."³³ The sky presences as the place of the heavens, the region of light. It yields itself as the wide expanse of openness--the sun in its course, the ever-changing faces of the moon, the perpetual recurring of the seasons, of day and night--overarching the Earth as its needful complement."³⁴ The divinities are "the beckoning messengers" of God.³⁵ This is the region, the dimension, of the Holy which so imbues the world as to leave it a distinctly non-secular unity. We hear the Hebrew Psalmist invoke that which is Holy, the Most High God, as what he is, which precludes comparison of him with anything present at hand.³⁶ The Mortals are

³³Heidegger, "The Thing," op. cit., p. 178.

³⁴ibid.

³⁵ibid.

³⁶This rendering of Heidegger's notion of divinities and The Holy may run against the general drift of Heidegger's thought. In spite of the fact that he expended considerable effort early in his

men; they are called so not merely because their life on earth is terminable but because they alone are capable of dying, that is, of taking death--what Rilke calls the nether side of life--upon themselves as that most serious and ponderable of conditions which lies at the very heart of life.³⁷ Each of these four is caught up in and involved in the others. Each belongs to the other and together they constitute what Heidegger calls the *four-fold*. Each of the four reflects the character of the others in its own way, and each in its own way is mirrored back into its own within the reciprocal interplay of the four. In short, the four-fold as Heidegger conceives it occurs as a mutual owning and proffering of certain elements or regions.

The most notable feature of world as Heidegger conceives it consists in the mutual inflection and intertwining of its various regions, which constitutes its simple unity. The various regions belong together. They come together and are gestured forth in a simple unity from time to time in things, first in this one, then in that one. Simultaneously world as an indissoluble unity provides the

career, coming to grips with certain scholastic thinkers whose general orientation was distinctly religious (though no doubt quite ecclesiastical in character), there is little evidence that Heidegger ever seriously undertook to recover the roots of the Judeo-Christian tradition. His understanding of divinity, the sacred and the holy manifests an early Greek orientation. Hence, when I make an allusion or a reference to passages and strains of thought working out of either the Old or New Testaments, there remains considerable question as to whether Heidegger's view can accommodate them.

³⁷Heidegger, "The Thing," op. cit., p. 178, 179.

contextual penumbra within whose ambiance things stand forth in their own peculiarity. "The world grants to things their presence. Things bear world. World grants things."³⁸ As with the manner in which things gather the regions of the world and thus visit men with a world, there is nothing esoteric about the manner in which world grants things their peculiarity.³⁹ World has no "mind" by which it purposefully or intentionally grants--or withholds--the individuality of things. Heidegger simply intends to draw attention to what might appropriately be called the contextual milieu within which things are immersed and without which we would not be able to make sense of specific beings.⁴⁰ The world nestles things in such a way that its own undulating movement and intertwining remains subtle and unobtrusive, although not indistinct, as this and that thing in turn come to the focus of attention.

The manifold of ways in which the various regions of the world may be toward one another, presenting to us first one appearance and then another, constitutes the world as a distinctly non-static unity. World remains in perpetual flux and so presences as a field of possibilities, a place open to discovery and interpretation. It is the understanding of world as a perpetually shifting elemental unity within

³⁸Heidegger, "Language," op. cit., p. 202.

³⁹The world of the ballroom admits of the tuxedo's thingly character, while the world of the Selway Wilderness does not grant the tuxedo as a thing but merely presents it as an oddity.

⁴⁰Maurice Merleau-Ponty in his essay "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence" found in Signs, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964, gets at a similar matter relative to language. He says that words become meaningful at the intersection of, and as it were the interval between, words. True language is indirect or allusive; it is the voice of silence which provides the backdrop against which sounded language makes sense.

whose confines we are ever drawn into the re-examination and investigation of the most familiar phenomena that places Heidegger's view at radical variance relative to conceptions proposed by other thinkers. In this connection, Ludwig Wittgenstein's work of the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus comes most readily to mind in which he says, "1. The world is all that is the case."⁴¹ Far from being a milieu requiring continual interpretation, the world for Wittgenstein of the Tractatus remains a composite of all that which is determinately the case; nothing more, nothing less. Its basic components are *facts*. With respect to facts (*tatsachen*) some are irreducible, which is to say some are atomic (*sachverhalte*). Though irreducible insofar as they alone constitute the simples of what is the case, atomic facts are composed of *objects*. Objects, the elements of facts, are never the case, they only mark out the logical space within which facts persist as what is the case. Whatever reality is theirs they assume by virtue of being combined in facts.

Wittgenstein's conception of world in the Tractatus remains essentially unintelligible apart from his conception of language. Indeed, one of the principal themes of the Tractatus is the connection between language and reality. Language, it seems, runs parallel to objects and facts. Names correspond to objects and assume meaning in

⁴¹Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, a translation of Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung, by D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness, New York: The Humanities Press, 1961, p. 7.

standing for objects, but they remain unreal⁴² in isolation as do objects. Propositions provide the context within which names may appropriately be said to have referential significance.⁴³ Elementary propositions correspond to atomic facts and assume meaning, *sense*, in referring to facts in isomorphic fashion. The isomorphic association which holds between a proposition and a fact is that of *picturing*, that is, propositions picture facts in being logically representative of them.

2.1 We picture facts to ourselves.

2.11 A picture presents a situation in logical space, the existence and non-existence of states of affairs.⁴⁴

There is nothing uncertain or unclear about the picturing of propositions in that the facts pictured are themselves unambiguous and not subject to interpretation. The crystalline clarity of that which is the case, its manifestness, as it were, certifies and assures that the picture is a model of reality. Nonetheless a troubling question persists: to what extent does the linguistic model, the picture, inflect Wittgenstein's conception of reality, his conception of the world as a composite of unambiguous facts? He claims in the Tractatus that the logic of propositions is not prescriptive--not a body of doctrine--but a mirror-image of the world.⁴⁵ In this case the logic of propositions would hold no sway in one's understanding of reality. It would simply

⁴²For Wittgenstein reality is possible only on the level of facts. See proposition 2.06 in this connection on p. 13.

⁴³ibid., prop. 3.3, p. 25.

⁴⁴ibid., prop. 2.1, 2.11, p. 15.

⁴⁵ibid., prop. 6.13, p. 133.

reflect in language that in reality which, in its determinateness, has already become manifest to some particular human being. Yet in the subsequent development of his own thought, Wittgenstein seems to have modified that stance substantially. Most notably in the Philosophical Investigations⁴⁶ Wittgenstein moves toward the view that language not only reflects or mirrors reality but that in certain crucial respects it shapes reality. Early on in the Investigations, for example, he contends that ". . .to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life."⁴⁷ With a difference in configurations of languages, "language-games,"⁴⁸ one encounters a difference in forms of life. In this vein, then, Wittgenstein began to re-think certain basic presuppositions of the Tractatus. Far from reaching to the very *essence* of the structure of language and reality, the Tractatus, like other "language-games," articulated a specific configuration, and thus a specific mode of understanding, of the world. The structure of the world was not so much mirrored by the structure of the proposition, the structure of language, as it was *shaped* by the structure of the proposition. Hence, that the world was seen to consist in a composite of facts, each with a specified form and each devoid of ambiguity and ambivalence, was arrived at not experientially but through a requirement. Having taken language to be most fundamentally a composite of propositions, each with a specified form and each utterly clear and intelligible, the world was then required to conform

⁴⁶Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, translated by G.E.M. Anscombe, third edition, New York: The MacMillan Co., 1968.

⁴⁷ibid., section 19, p. 8e.

⁴⁸ibid., section 23, p. 11e.

to the picture in all respects.

114. (Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, 4.5): "The general form of propositions is: This is how things are."--that is the kind of proposition that one repeats to oneself countless times. One thinks that one is tracing the outline of the thing's nature over and over again, and one is merely tracing round the frame through which we look at it.⁴⁹

The world that Wittgenstein brought to articulation in the Tractatus was precisely what his model of representation admitted beforehand was possible. The conception of world as a composite of all that which is determinately *the case* became a "super-concept" within a "super-order"⁵⁰ prescribed and ordained according to the dictates of the logical form of the language employed to picture it.

115. A *picture* held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably. ⁵¹

Thus the task for Wittgenstein ultimately became one of recovery; recovery of the fecundity of speech, its ordinary usages.

116. When philosophers use a word--"knowledge," "being," "object," "I," "proposition," "name"--and try to grasp the essence of the thing, one must always ask oneself: is the word ever actually used in this way in the language which is its original home?--

What we do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use.⁵²

Of course, if the word "world" is to have a use, it must be as susceptible to interpretation, as liable to the inflections of day to day speech--in short, as humble--as that of the words "table," "lamp," "door."⁵³

⁴⁹Wittgenstein, ibid., section 114, p. 48e.

⁵⁰ibid., section 97, p. 44e.

⁵¹ibid., section 115, p. 48e.

⁵²ibid., section 116, p. 48e.

⁵³ibid., section 97, p. 44e.

In a manner not foreign to the spirit of Wittgenstein's Investigations Heidegger focuses his concern toward a recovery of the ordinary significance of the words "world" and "thing." No doubt such a recovery would not be possible apart from a simultaneous recovery of the day to day style of life out of which such words arise. Yet the difficulty is to say what counts as ordinary in a style of life in which certain words might be significant in an ordinary way. To say that the ordinary is simply that which occurs within the pale of any style of life already confuses and refuses the issue, for it is precisely the ordinary which so many forms of life seem to have unnoticingly, complacently, lethargically given over in favor of a prescribed standardized mode of existing. The style of so many lives seems to have become all too ordinary and therefore not ordinary at all--where the ordinary, what we are prone to pass off as the usual, is in certain respects really quite unusual. Furthermore, we have no reason to expect that the utterance which arises from an unnoticing, complacent form of life will be essentially different from that form of life. In the idiom of Rilke's "Ninth Elegy," such utterance manifests itself as nothing more than "an action without symbol." Not unexpectedly, then, Heidegger, in attempting to recover something more than a semblance of the ordinariness of words like "world" and "thing," turns to those who have reflected on the unusual aspect of ordinary words and ordinary life. Heidegger considers Rilke and Trakl to be two men who were reflectively aware of the ordinary in its strange and compelling peculiarity.

Returning more directly to the essay "Language," Heidegger understands Trakl's poem to have named both *thing* and *world*. The poem does not command thing and world to appear in a particular way, it brings each to bear on the human understanding in a manner not explicitly known before. In the invitation, thing does not lose its distinctness within the milieu of significance which is world. On the contrary, it indicates, raises for consideration and sustains that milieu in its (the thing's) distinctness. World, on the other hand, appears as a field of possibilities not previously explicitly experienced, which is to say that it presences as the continually shifting contextual penumbra within which things are granted freshly. World neither denies things its worldly aura nor overshadows their distinctness. In short, world and thing stand in a particular mode of being toward one another and continue in a certain penetration of one another which is neither a coupling of the two nor a subsisting of one alongside the other. Thus, the naming of world and thing in Trakl's poem constitutes an invitation for them to appear for human understanding in their particular intimacy. This intimacy Heidegger speaks of as the *dif-ference*⁵⁴, a word intended to focus on both the separateness and togetherness of world and thing in which each assumes the measure of its own dimension. The two function as dialectical complementaries; neither reduces to the other, yet neither is possible or intelligible without the other. When world and thing are named, and thus invited to bear on human understanding, it is the intimacy of

⁵⁴Heidegger, "Language," op. cit., pp. 202, 203.

the two as dialectical complementaries which is really called: an intimacy constitutive of the depth and dimension of all beings which deeply touch and move men.

It was said previously that if the spoken word is to be anything more than a reiteration of the familiar it must *sound out* the significance of something heretofore not wholly familiar in the arrangement of familiar words. Such a sounding, for Heidegger, intelligibly voices a new intimacy, a new dimension--*a new givenness*--of the difference for thing and world. Naming constitutes the voicing in which the movement of intimacy and dimension for thing and world becomes explicitly articulated and therefore the way in which the peculiar togetherness of the two becomes explicitly understood. Naming is the intelligible sounding of a meaning not previously understood explicitly and occurs when familiar meanings are set off-center, slanted--*skewed*--though not unrecognizably so. The urgency to speak forth, name, the significance of the dimension of thing and world works in function of the way their ever shifting intimacy *moves* us to speech. As thing and world subtly shift from one manifestation of being toward one another into a new dimension of intimacy, a rift occurs in the course of the movement which then touches man so as to move him to voice its meaning. The rift which renders naming an urgency Heidegger calls *pain*.⁵⁵

Pain results from a shift from the way thing and world were to the way they have become in their penetration of each other. Pain

⁵⁵Heidegger, "Language," *op. cit.*, p. 205.

marks the occurrence of a pulling, a rending and a separation which, when closely attended by human understanding, yields a new depth and dimension in that which most deeply touches a man. Heidegger's employment of the word amounts to a reworking of its usual meaning, and for that reason he says:

Then would the intimacy of the difference for world and thing be pain? Certainly. But we should not imagine pain anthropologically as a sensation that makes us feel afflicted. We should not think of the intimacy psychologically as the sort in which sentimentality makes a nest for itself.⁵⁶

Pain, then, as Heidegger conceives it, finds its fundament in the ever shifting movement of the difference for thing and world, and does not reduce ultimately to human being though its significance is named by men. Unfortunately Heidegger fails to deal with the extent to which a man must bear pain in himself, occasionally as something hard to bear, in order to name it appropriately. After all, unless a man *bears* the pain of which Heidegger speaks, there is no impetus to voice its significance. In this respect, Heidegger seems to have passed over Trakl's figure of the wanderer all too quickly. In the third stanza of Trakl's poem, the stanza in which pain becomes thematically central, we are told that it is the wanderer who steps quietly within, presumably to receive the gifts of bread and wine as given upon the table. The wanderer does not step within, though, except he traverse the threshold which, according to Heidegger's interpretation, has been solidified by pain. Yet no discussion is forthcoming relative to what

⁵⁶Heidegger, "Language," op. cit., p. 205.

the wanderer endures in traversing that which has been hardened by pain. Heidegger rightly steers us away from certain "anthropological" and "psychological" conceptions of pain. Nonetheless the human manner of bearing pain may require to be construed differently than anthropologically or psychologically. How, for instance, are we to understand the lament of exile so powerfully articulated in Psalm 137 except as a bearing of the rending and separation which is pain.

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea,
we wept, when we remembered Zion.

We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst
thereof.

For there they that carried us away captive required
of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.

How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?

If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand
forget her cunning.

If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to
the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above
my chief joy.⁵⁷

Can we imagine that the displaced singer of this psalm has not borne in himself the pain of which he sings? And if we cannot, must we then think of the pain he bears and of which he speaks so poignantly as the sort in which sentimentality makes a nest for itself? Surely not.⁵⁸

⁵⁷Psalm 137, King James Version of The Holy Bible.

⁵⁸In this connection, one cannot help but think of others who have borne pain in a manner not unlike that of which the psalmist sang, suggesting all the more strongly that Heidegger has taken too little note of Trakl's figure of the wanderer in connection with the discussion of pain. From the Greek tradition we hear the voice of Oedipus who, while at Colonus, says: "Suffering and time, vast time, have been instructors in contentment, which kingliness teaches too." (See Sophocles, The Oedipus Cycle, translated by Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald, New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1969, p. 82.) And from the 19th century, Vincent Van Gogh's letters to his brother Theo (See Dear Theo, edited by Irving Stone, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1937), as well as his sketches and paintings, seem most telling with respect to the life of one who suffered pain most deeply.

To be sure, the pain of the difference one comes to bear does not always--or for that matter, even usually--reduce to something hard to bear. It may or may not be hard to bear. In any event it must be considered as something suffered in the sense that what occurs as the difference of world and thing in its perpetual change of appearance works on one. Pain as borne by a human being consists in that which one undergoes and endures having been worked on by the peculiarity and strangeness--the pain, if you will--of the occurrent. Thus, Psalm 137 articulates pain as borne by people whose homeland had been laid waste and who themselves had been carried away captive into a strange land. At the same time, there are passages in the Psalms which celebrate blissfully joyous occasions and, in a manner second to nothing Rilke articulates in the Duino Elegies, show in speech how happy creatures and things can be. When Israel went out of Egypt, departing from a people of strange language, Psalm 114 tells us,

The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs.⁵⁹

In similarly celebrative language, Isaiah prophetically foretells of those who heed the word of the Lord.

For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.⁶⁰

In any case, one clearly does not come to an understanding of pain considered as a skewing of the difference for thing and world, as Heidegger does, unless one pays careful attention to the way in which

⁵⁹The Holy Bible, King James Version, Psalm 114:4.

⁶⁰ibid., Isaiah 55:12. In this connection, also see Job 38:7 which speaks of that most primordial of times when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.

pain comes to be borne in and by a man, which is pain considered neither anthropologically nor psychologically. The figures of the wanderer presented by both Trakl and Rilke focus attention on pain as something borne humanly.

That Heidegger might have been expected to deal explicitly with the extent to which a man must bear pain in himself before that pain can become fully intelligible becomes increasingly clear as his terse saying "Language speaks" becomes more clear. The bidding of the dif-ference--where dif-ference is understood as the gathering of things and world into the pain of intimacy--constitutes the nature of speaking. Bidding here carries the force of a command (an enjoinder) to which something or someone stands answerable. Bidding finds its fundament, according to Heidegger, in the way the dif-ference first allows things and world to reside within the intimacy of the two by commanding each to be *still* in the other. The liability to which we remain subject throughout Heidegger's work recurs once again at this juncture. We are prone to conclude that he has mistakenly reified something--in this case, the dif-ference--and then attributed to it a distinctly human activity--again, in this case the activity of bidding and commanding. If there is confusion in what he says it consists in this: in spite of his attempt to break with metaphysical philosophy, he continues to dwell within the confines of the linguistic structure which sponsored metaphysics; the linguistic structure dominated by the proposition. Hence, whereas a more appropriate articulation of what occurs as an exigency of things and world to reside in one another might assume a paratactical configuration, e.g., *difference; command, thing*

and world as residing in one another. Heidegger articulates the matter in the customary subject/verb/object configuration, thereby leaving himself open to the previously mentioned charge. In any case, his concern is to make good on a needful reciprocity of things and world, which he calls the *stilling* of the two, as made possible by their peculiar manner of being toward one another in the difference. The difference stills the two in a bidding/commanding fashion so that each resides in the other.

The difference stills in a twofold manner. It stills by letting things rest in the world's favor. It stills by letting the world suffice itself in the thing. In the double stilling of the difference takes place: stillness.⁶¹

What, then, is stillness? For Heidegger it reduces neither to the soundless nor to the tranquil, both of which persist in the mode of lack and thus ultimately prove contingent upon that of which each is a lack. Stillness properly understood exhibits a peculiar charged character; it is a rest, a residing, which ". . . is always more in motion than all motion and always more restlessly active than agitation."⁶² Within stillness things and world may each rest or reside in its own identity while simultaneously moving in vibrant reciprocity with the other. As stillness itself, the difference establishes the identity of both world and things within which each rests and at the same time sets in motion the reverberation of the two in their mutual inflection by gathering them first into one particular intimacy and then into another. Thus, the gathering which stillness

⁶¹Heidegger, "Language," *op. cit.*, p. 206.

⁶²*ibid.*

accomplishes as the difference functions as a resonance, a vibrancy--
a pealing--of two dialectically intertwined identities.

Stillness peals. Its pealing constitutes a call to things and world which is the bidding/command of the difference, previously noted as the nature of speaking. The pealing of stillness, then, amounts to a speaking of sorts; a speaking which lies at the heart of *thing* and *world* as such. Indeed, language understood in the broad sense as an entire range of events out of which utterance arises, transpires as the occurrence of vibrant stillness. "*Language speaks as the peal of stillness.*"⁶³

But the occurrence of vibrant stillness as the speaking of language always takes place *for someone*. This means that even though the peal of stillness is not specifically human, it nonetheless remains unintelligible except insofar as it resonates in human speech.

"...the very *nature*, the *presencing*, of language *needs and uses* the speaking of mortals in order to sound as the peal of stillness for the hearing of mortals."⁶⁴ (Here, then, Heidegger alludes to a phenomenon which he passed over entirely in the discussion of pain; the phenomenon of that which occurs for thing and world as a new difference needing and requiring to be borne in men in some decisive fashion.)

The character of human speech is such that it, in turn, needs the peal of stillness. Human speech, as Heidegger puts the matter, is not self-subsistent.⁶⁵ It continually finds itself answerable to the

⁶³*ibid.*, p. 207.

⁶⁴*ibid.*, p. 208.

⁶⁵*ibid.*, p. 208. Also in this connection, the opening lines

peal of stillness of the difference, the speaking of language; and this in a two-fold way: through *listening* and *responding*⁶⁶ It is when a shift in the intimacy of world and things has been intimated to man--perhaps through moods or affections--and yet prior to any explicit comprehension of the shift, that man may find it needful to carefully attend things and world with an eye toward making sense of them in their relationship as bearing on him. When his attention is devoted wholly to attending the pain of intimacy for things and world as it touches him, then it may be appropriately said that man *listens*. Things and world utter no word; they are still. And yet in that stillness transpires their mutual inflection which bears on man as a ringing, a peal, to which men may *listen* and then *respond* in the mode of a naming or saying which sounds out, gives voice to, the significance of stillness as it peals.

A review of Heidegger's essay "Language" has suggested this much: Language must be understood as speech; for indeed language speaks. Speech in turn requires to be understood as more than simply the spoken word. It transpires as an entire range of events which culminates in the spoken word. Initially there transpires the mutual inflection of things and world, each stilling the other and each thus

of Psalm 19 should not go unnoticed.

The heavens declare the glory of God;
and the firmament sheweth his handiwork.
Day unto day uttereth speech,
and night unto night sheweth knowledge.
There is no speech nor language, where
their voice is not heard.

Touched only glancingly and unwittingly by Heidegger, these lines articulate an understanding of human speech as fundamentally responsive in character.

⁶⁶ibid. p, 209.

residing within the other in its own peculiar identity. As the particular shape of their givenness shifts a rift occurs, the pain of their intimacy, which comes to touch men so that they bear that rift in themselves. Man, in closely attending a given configuration of thing and world, bringing to bear his own comprehending understanding, is said to listen to their restless vibrancy which resonates as the peal of stillness. On the strength of listening, man responds in his own way in words. The degree to which those words sound out or give voice to the significance of thing and world, name them, is the degree to which the spoken words seal new meaning and thus carry poetic force.

To be sure, Heidegger's view remains something less than completely satisfying; a myriad of questions remain. Why call the events which lead to the spoken word "speech?" Is there anything in our own experience which might confirm that utterance consists most basically in response? If it is truly response, why bother to inquire into it? After all, shouldn't our primary concern focus on the spoken word--what we call verbal communication? Also, if the poetic naming of which Heidegger speaks constitutes the move into new understanding, how does one account for what may be called ordinary utterance, that speaking which occurs within the pale of present understanding? That is, given primordial naming; ordinary, poetic saying, how is customary discourse to be accounted for? Heidegger's essay does not deal specifically with these questions and a host of others, nor did he intend it to do so. Primarily the essay simply *suggests* a new way of broaching language, and therefore its force is that of an invitation. There may be no effective argument which would yield what he suggests. And in

the face of so many questions, no one can be expected to make a leap of faith, as it were, to accept it. At the same time, it must be asked: From what might anyone be expected to leap? In what precisely does that position concerning language consist which makes Heidegger's suggestion--or for that matter, Rilke's suggestion concerning saying-- seem so remote or faint? Perhaps an investigation of that position coupled with a discussion of some of the questions raised earlier will reveal the move toward Heidegger's position--or Rilke's position which is akin to it--to be more like a step than a leap.

CHAPTER III

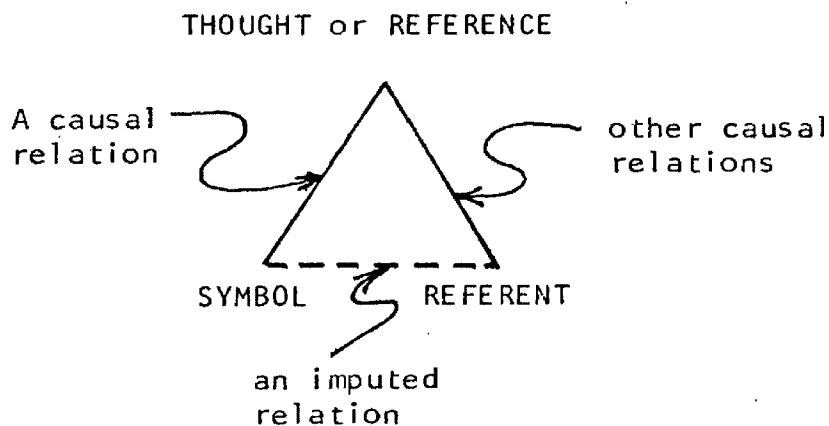
THE REPRESENTATIONAL MODEL OF LANGUAGE

It may be recalled from the first chapter that for Rilke the mode of *saying* which utters *pure words* transpires in response to a manifold of ordinary things which, slipping away, trust us to rescue them by way of transforming them in a loving understanding into the invisible heart, there allowing them to become experience. Indeed, that a word comes forth purely means, in part, that it is uttered in response to something which in a decisive and unconditional way has come to concern the wanderer. In this way, then, the occurrence of saying cannot be understood apart from the phenomenon of someone understanding himself to be placed in question. C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards, authors of The Meaning of Meaning,¹ give definition to a position paradigmatic of a prevalent contemporary view of language which acknowledges no such phenomenon of being placed in question either in respect to the view they espouse or in their manner of broaching issues of language. Indeed, they understand themselves to be undertaking, from a position of presumed neutrality, the task of *describing* the peculiar connectedness and dissimilarities of overt language and objects of the world. For them overt language must at once represent objects and events without simultaneously and needlessly duplicating them, a position which tends to focus on the radical dissimilarities of overt

¹C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards, The Meaning of Meaning, A Study of the Influence of Language upon Thought and of the Science of Symbolism, New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1956.

language and objects to the exclusion of any possible reciprocal inflection of the two primary elements. The lingering question in discussing their description of the process of language is whether the *description* of such a process or the neutrality which such a description presumes ever reaches the central issues of human speech.

The model of language proposed by Ogden and Richards rests essentially on causal relations which ostensibly avoid "any introduction of unique relations invented *ad hoc*,"² though for purposes of analyzing certain senses of "meaning" with which they are concerned they deem it "desirable to begin with the relations of thoughts, words and things as they are found in cases of reflective speech uncomplicated by emotional, diplomatic, or other disturbances. . . ."³ At any rate, their model exhibits three primary components-- 1) the referent, 2) the thought or reference, 3) the symbol--and focuses attention on the indirectness of the relationship between words and things.⁴



² *ibid.*, p. 50.

³ *ibid.*, p. 10.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 11.

Causal relations hold between thoughts and words (symbols) as well as between thoughts and things (referents). Between words and things no relation holds beyond the indirect one in which the speaker employs words according to convention in discoursing about things or events. For Ogden and Richards fundamental mistakes occur in speech when the imputed relation of word and thing is taken for a "real" relation.

It may appear unnecessary to insist that there is no direct connection between say "dog," the word, and certain common objects in our streets, and that the only connection which holds is that which consists in our using the word when we refer to the animal. . . the kind of direct meaning relations between words and things is the source of almost all the difficulties which thought encounters. . . The root of the trouble. . . [is] the superstition that words are in some way parts of things or always imply things corresponding to them. . . The fundamental and most prolific fallacy is, in other words, that the base of the triangle given above is filled in.⁵

What, then, can be said about the relationship of words to things? For Ogden and Richards, we must at least theoretically begin with the thing or, more precisely, the referent (care with the language is of the utmost importance here), for that is where the causal nexus begins which may eventually culminate in utterance. When an organism, presumably a human organism, comes in contact sensuously with some referent, the referent causes certain happenings in the nerves of the organism. There is as yet nothing that could be called perception, only a causal stimulation of nerves, which from the perspective of the organism may be called direct apprehension.⁶ But that which is

⁵ ibid., pp. 12-15.

⁶ ibid., p. 80.

directly apprehended is not the referent itself; e.g., some object in the world, but sensations due to the modification of some part of a sense organ, say the retina of the eye. (The apprehension of sensations constitutes a further modification of the nervous system.)⁷ The sensations which are apprehended lie at the heart of all perception and without them perception remains impossible. They may be appropriately termed subjective signs of external objects,⁸ and their qualities are not the qualities of objects but transformations of the nerves found in the sense organs. In this respect, then, the sensations which are subjective signs must not be confused with pictures of reality.⁹

Upon the direct apprehension of sensations due to the modification of a sense organ, perception becomes possible. When subjective signs, sensations, are interpreted as signifying something other than themselves, perception may be said to have occurred. Colors and other such directly apprehended phenomena constitute the *initial* signs on which all interpretation, all perception, all inference, and thus all knowledge, is based.¹⁰ (According to Ogden and Richards, "Directly apprehended retinal modifications such as colours, are therefore *initial* signs of 'objects' and 'events'. Characteristics of things which we discover by interpretation such as shapes of cones or tables are signs of second or third order respectively."¹¹) Through interpreting

⁷ibid., p. 81.

⁸ibid.

⁹ibid., pp. 60-62.

¹⁰ibid., p. 80.

¹¹ibid., p. 82.

elementary signs we come to *know* what is present--a whole which is composed of a lighted region, air, etc. Ogden and Richards illustrate the matter in this way:

What do we see when we look at a table? First and foremost, a lighted region containing some air, lit by rays coming partly from the direction of the table, partly from other sources; then the further boundaries of this region, surfaces of objects, including part of the surface of the table. If now we point at what we see and name it *This*, we are in danger, if our attention is concentrated on the table, of saying: This is a Table. So that we must be careful. And where is colour according to this scheme? Somewhere in the eye, as anyone who cares to strike his eye will discover.

What we have described is not the Table, though part of what we have described is part of the Table. Anything which we say under these circumstances which involves the Table must also involve *Interpretation*. We interpret a sign, some part of what is given, as signifying something other than itself, in this case, the table.¹²

Thus, according to Ogden and Richards, essentially all sense experience¹³ is interpreted; appreciating *that* is the key to understanding what they call the *sign-situation* and *reference*, which is the intermediary step in the indirect relationship of the word and the referent as pictured in the triangle-shaped model.

How one will react to any given sign depends heavily upon one's personal history. That is, one's interpretation of a sign is contingent upon what one has come to expect in the course of having

¹²*ibid.*, p. 80.

¹³Actually "experience" as Ogden and Richards employ it on p. 50 is a poor word in that what is suffered by way of modification of the sense organs has not yet become experience. To become experience, sensations must be interpreted.

become acquainted with similar events in the past. At this juncture a distinction made by Ogden and Richards between *external* events and internal or *psychological* events¹⁴ assumes significance. When a nexus of external events causes a certain nexus of psychological events, thought is said to have taken place. Thus, "I am thinking of A" amounts to the same thing as saying "My thought is being caused by A."¹⁵ Further, when a nexus of psychological events is caused by a nexus of external events it may be appropriately said that one's thought is *directed at* its object. Such a phenomenon constitutes a *reference*. ("...a reference... is a set of external and psychological contexts linking a mental process to a referent."¹⁶) With the recurrence of certain similar external and psychological nexuses interpretation becomes possible, and without the recurrence of certain kinds of psychological contexts, no prediction, no recognition, no indirect generalization, no knowledge or probable opinion as to what is not immediately given--in short, no *reference*--would be possible.¹⁷ For to say that something is an interpretation is to say that it is a member of a psychological nexus or context of a certain kind, where by "a certain kind" is meant the residual trace built up in the course of reacting or adapting to an external contextual stimulus. A sign, now stated in a slightly different manner, is always a modification of some part of a sense organ similar to some part of an original stimulus which is sufficient to call up an excitation of a psychological nexus

¹⁴*ibid.* p. 56.

¹⁵*ibid.* p. 54.

¹⁶*ibid.* p. 90, also see p. 62.

¹⁷*ibid.* p. 57.

similar to that caused by the original stimulus.¹⁸ Thus, over a period of time, one may come to interpret a very limited sign as signifying a much broader external event than it actually does, and so making for a more speculative inferential reference. If there exists an event which completes the external context in question, the reference is *true* and the event is its referent. If there is no such event, the reference is *false*, and the inference based on expectation is invalid.¹⁹

This brings us directly into the question of truth and falsity. For Ogden and Richards truth and falsity do not pertain primarily to propositions but to references; references are either true or false, and on the strength of true or false references we come to true or false propositions. In this respect Ogden and Richards believe themselves to be taking a different position than the traditional one.²⁰ But if the matter is to be understood properly, it requires some care in explication. According to the theory in question, if one believes something which happens to be false, the reference or thought of that false belief is of the same kind of psychological contexts of which references of true beliefs are members; both have referents.²¹ The two differ only in the way each matches up to its external referent. The logic of the matter is that Ogden and Richards consider every specific belief, e.g., "This is a book," to follow from a compound psychological context; that is,

¹⁸*ibid.*, p. 53.

¹⁹*ibid.*, p. 62.

²⁰Ogden and Richards are at great pains to distinguish their position from that of Aristotle, though at one point in discussing the power of words, they backpeddle slightly (pp.35,36) defending him against other early thinkers. For a discussion of the objections of Ogden and Richards to Aristotle's position, see pp. 257-260.

²¹Ogden and Richards, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

from a psychological context composed of simpler, less specific references which may be called "ideas" or "conceptions," each of which has a referent. Essentially, these simple references are true, partly in function of their lack of specificity. In any case, the more complex psychological references, upon which beliefs of all sorts are founded, cannot be distinguished from one another purely on the unfounded assumption that some have referents and some do not--"The referent of a compound false belief will be the set of scattered referents of the true simple [ideas] which it contains."²²--but must be distinguished in the way the structures of the complex references as a whole match up to the external nexuses which are their referents.

Thus, if we say, "This is a book," and are in error, our reference will be composed of a simple indefinite reference to any book, another to anything now, another to anything which may be here, and so on. These constituents will all be true, but the whole reference to this book which they together make up (by cancelling out, as it were, all but the one referent which can be a book and here and now) will be false, if we are in error and what is there is actually a box or something which fails to complete the three contexts, book, here and now.²³

As has been alluded to briefly already, the point of what Ogden and Richards say with regard to truth and falsity as finding their fundament, not in propositions but in references, is to carve out a position which supports their contention that nothing beyond imputed relations holds between words and things.²⁴ Hence, when one utters a word or makes a statement, he is not, in their view,

²²ibid., p. 73.

²³ibid., p. 72.

²⁴ibid., p. 67.

picturing reality²⁵ or making any essential connection with external events, but rather merely *symbolizing* a reference. Regardless of the manifold ways we may try, we cannot go beyond reference with respect to either knowledge or truth. *True* reference consists in reference to a set of referents as they hang together; *false* reference consists in reference to them as being in some other configuration than that in which they actually hang together.²⁶ But in no case does speech carry any originary force in the causal chain of events which is reference; it simply symbolizes reference. Further, a word or a statement comes to have meaning only insofar as it is brought to enter a reference context of the kind outlined previously.²⁷ Brought into such a context, it becomes a symbol; and so considered comes to be, *qua* symbol of a reference to some configuration of external phenomena, capable of truth and falsehood.

Most striking about the exposition of the relationship between word and thing as set forth in causal terms by Ogden and Richards is not the manifestness of the thought it discloses about the relationship but the traditional and uncritical character of its lines of argument and presuppositions. In spite of their intention to put some distance between their view and that of Aristotle, much of what Ogden and Richards say amounts to little more than one part of a much larger

²⁵The phrase "picturing reality" is reminiscent of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, and indeed Ogden and Richards take Wittgenstein to task for his view of the connection between language and reality as brought to articulation in the General Form of the Proposition. In this connection, see Ogden and Richards, pp. 89, 253, 255.

²⁶*ibid.*, p. 82

²⁷*ibid.*

historical exfoliation of his views with shifts in emphasis here and there, and inconsequential changes in vocabulary. For example, that Ogden and Richards see the relationship between word and thing to be an indirect one or that they believe language to come at the end of a causal nexus of external and psychological events symbolizing some aspect of those events, follows directly in line with a movement of thought, the first systematic delineation of which assumed definition at the hand of Aristotle.²⁸ In On Interpretation²⁹ he says this:

Words spoken are symbols or signs of affections or impressions of the soul; written words are the signs of words spoken. As writing, so also is speech not the same for all races of men. But the mental affections themselves, of which these words are primarily signs, are the same for the whole of mankind, as are also the objects of which those affections are representations or likenesses, images, copies.

That the relationship of overt language and things of the world consists in a mediated relationship for Aristotle comes forth in his differentiation of three basic aspects of reality. From objects or *things* (πράγματα) follow *affections of the soul* (τῶν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ παθημάτων). These affections, as impressions of the form of things manifest themselves in external *signs* (σημεῖα); more specifically in

²⁸Plato, primarily in the Cratylus, also addresses questions regarding the disposition of language and the relationship of word and thing. And no doubt several of Aristotle's distinctions on these matters derived from Plato. Nevertheless, the explicit position he assumed regarding the relative ontological status of word and thing--there are no signs as instruments of nature--prompts me to say that his thought, rather than that of Plato, provides the foundation for the numerous contemporary stances on the mode of being for word and thing, including that of Ogden and Richards.

²⁹Aristotle, On Interpretation, translated by Harold P. Cooke, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, The Loeb Classical Library, 1973, Bekker pagination, 16a4-8.

sounds (φωναί) and eventually in letters (γράμματα).³⁰ Signs-- either sounds or letters--exhibit no direct intimacy with things. There are, so to speak, no signs as instruments of nature, something repeated with respect to both nouns and verbs, and then again with respect to sentences.³¹ If a word coincides with a thing or event, it does so *by convention*³² as a convenient instrument of reference or representation receiving its meaning by virtue of expressing affections or impressions of the soul. The choice of this or that sound to be the expression of a given impression is virtually arbitrary, contingent only on social agreement once employed in a certain manner. In short, the relationship of word to thing amounts to one of radical signification in which the mediating factor consists in a nexus of causal and cognitive (what Ogden and Richards call "psychological") factors.

Fleshing out this mediated relationship requires a slightly more extended explication of the manner in which overt language arises in Aristotle's view. He begins with the distinction in De Anima between perception and thought, of which the latter is common only to members of the animal world which are rational creatures, namely, men.³³ In human beings, the capacity for perception (the function of the sensitive soul through the organs of sense) inflects and is inflected by the capacity for thought (the function of the mind). Indeed, though different in some important respects, thinking and perceiving retain a certain affinity, ". . . for in one as well as the other, the soul discriminates and is cognizant of something which *is*."³⁴ Whereas Aristotle regards

³⁰Aristotle, op. cit., 16a30, 31 and 17a1,2.

³¹ibid., 16a30-32 and 17a1-3.

³²Aristotle, De Anima (On the Soul), edited by Richard McKeon, New York: Random House, 1941, Bekker pagination, 427b8,9.

³³ibid., 427a19,20.

that which *is*, and therefore that with respect to which one thinks and perceives, to be some existent thing or event out there in the world, Ogden and Richards hold the technically more sophisticated position (though not necessarily more accurate one) that neither perception nor thought directly apprehend anything beyond the stimulation of nerves in one or another sense organ. Nonetheless, under both interpretations, thought and perception inflect and are inflected by one another.

Further, under both interpretations, perception is considered primarily a causal phenomenon. For Aristotle, perception occurs through a direct causal process of movement of affection,³⁴ beginning with things or "objects of sense"³⁵ which impress upon the sensible soul via particular organs of sense (e.g., the hand) not the matter but the *form* of that which is perceived. The most elementary form of sense in Aristotle's view is touch,³⁶ of which the paradigm analogy consists in the way wax receives the impress of a signet-ring.

"...sense... must be conceived of as taking place in the way in which a piece of wax takes on the impress of a signet-ring without the iron of gold; we say that what produces the impression is a signet of bronze or gold, but its particular metallic constitution makes no difference."³⁷ Similarly, the touch of this or that upon the hand would result in an impression of the form of the perceived upon the sensible soul of the percipient, such that an image of the perceived is

³⁴*ibid.*, 416b33-35.

³⁵*ibid.*, 418a9.

³⁶*ibid.*, 413b4, 414b2, 3.

³⁷*ibid.*, 424a17-22.

effected. Furthermore, in perception, successive sensible experiences go together to make new kinds of experiences which are in turn richer in meaning than any single sense perception. These new perceptual experiences take shape out of a sort of remembering and fusing of perceptual (sensible) forms or images, and are called *forms of forms*.³⁸ They exist as intelligible generic images dispositionally typical of particular phenomenal occurrences of one sort or another. Thus, for example, the generic form of a tree would be significantly different from the generic form of a man or a horse. Ogden and Richards regard perception to involve a somewhat higher degree of inference than Aristotle thought to be the case, and certainly they shy away from Aristotle's model of images assuming shape in the sensible soul.³⁹ Yet if one takes Aristotle's analogy of the signet-ring and wax in soft focus, and if one takes into account Ogden and Richards' notion of "residual traces"⁴⁰ left by similar kinds of causal "striking" which help to determine what the mental processes will be, then it becomes clear that the differences in position between Ogden and Richards, and Aristotle reduce to differences of degree and not kind.

At the juncture where it becomes appropriate for Aristotle to speak of intelligible generic forms or images, it also becomes appropriate to speak of a *mind* which *thinks*, *judges* and *knows* them. Preliminarily, the mind, after the model of sensation, exists as the capacity to receive the form of its objects.⁴¹ The capacity to know its

³⁸*ibid.*, 432a1, 2.

³⁹Ogden and Richards, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-62.

⁴⁰*ibid.*, p. 52.

⁴¹Aristotle, *De Anima*, 429a17, 18.

objects shows itself as the *potentiality* of mind to think the form of its objects; "mind is in a sense potentially whatever is thinkable..."⁴² While engaged in thinking, though, the mind in some sense becomes those objects--the intelligible forms, the forms of sensuous contents without matter, images--which it thinks.⁴³ Without those objects, mind exists only as a potentiality; nothing of itself.⁴⁴

Insofar as intelligible forms or images derive from sensible forms, it may be said that the thought of any mind depends ultimately upon perception, "no one can learn or understand anything in the absence of sense. . ."⁴⁵ This is not to say that mind functions merely passively with respect to the objects it thinks and knows. For Aristotle, as the hand is a tool for using tools,⁴⁶ the active mind manifests itself as the capacity to employ the intelligible forms which it receives from perception to its own ends. Hence, perception inflects mind in that through perception, and only through perception, does mind receive the objects it requires to think, and mind inflects perception in that it employs the objects received from perception to its own purposive cognitive ends (reminds one of what Ogden and Richards say regarding interpretation)⁴⁷ making of those objects more than mere perceptual phenomena. This peculiar mutual inflection of perception and thought holds a limiting influence over the way language and things perceived can be conceived, and the force they are presumed to hold for us.

⁴³*ibid.*, 429a21-23.

⁴⁴*ibid.*, 431b17,18 and 429a15-29.

⁴⁵*ibid.*, 432a6,7.

⁴⁶*ibid.*, 432a1,2.

⁴⁷Ogden and Richards, *op. cit.*, 84,85.

Before addressing questions regarding the relationship of word and thing more directly, it remains to be noted that thought is of two sorts for Aristotle, depending upon the character of its object. If the object of thought presents itself as an unanalyzable whole, thought is believed to be incorrigible. If, however, the object comes as the result of some prior synthesis, it is corrigible--where corrigibility concerns the subsumption of thought to judgments with regard to truth and falsity.⁴⁸ For instance, to the extent that it is possible to think simply "white," the thought is supposedly incorrigible. If the thought is "Snow is white," it may or may not be mistaken. In this respect, Ogden and Richards follow closely in Aristotle's footsteps. For them, the simple ideas or concepts based on the most simple and general sorts of reference relations are not subject to fallibility. Only with concatenation of them into psychological contexts (beliefs) which do not correspond to external contexts (referents) does corrigibility become an issue.

It makes no difference for either Aristotle or Ogden and Richards that phenomena such as "white" and "snow is white" are, strictly speaking, not thoughts but words. Nor in Aristotle's case does it seem to make any difference that he is unable to demonstrate adequately a unitary thought in the mind, unaccompanied by truth or falsity, or one resulting from some prior synthesis requiring to be accompanied by truth or falsity. Fallibility and infallibility still

⁴⁸Aristotle, De Anima, 430a26-430b5 and 430b27-31.

pertain, for words as the precipitate of thought in some sense resemble thought. "A noun or a verb by itself much resembles a concept or thought which is neither combined nor disjoined. Such is "man". . .or "white," if pronounced without any addition. As yet it is not true or false."⁴⁹ A word does not resemble a thought in the sense that it looks like a thought, rather, as noted previously, a word constitutes a symbol which stands for a thought by convention. Any resemblance between a word and a thought consists in the way the two hold meaning. Strictly speaking, only thoughts, for Aristotle, are meaningful. Words assume meaning as they stand for thoughts, or better, sounds assume meaning, i.e., become meaningful words, when they are employed by the mind to stand for thoughts. For Ogden and Richards, words assume meaning when taken in such a way that they enter particular reference contexts, thus becoming symbols for such contexts. And they do not *prima facie* agree with Aristotle that individual words can be neither true nor false, since for them, references of any kind are true or false, and thus any word or phrase which symbolizes a reference may be appropriately said to be true or false. But for Ogden and Richards as well as Aristotle, when one is concerned with matters pertaining to thoughts--say matters such as truth and falsity--it is sufficient to inquire into the precipitate of thought, namely, words.

What then of overt language? According to Aristotle, individual words constitute the smallest meaningful segment of language.⁵⁰ To be sure, there are smaller segments of sound, such as letters and

⁴⁹Aristotle, On Interpretation, 16a13-15.

⁵⁰Aristotle, De Poetica (Poetics), edited by Richard McKeon, New York: Random House, 1941, 1457a10-19.

syllables, ⁵¹ but they are not meaningful because they do not resemble thoughts or concepts as do words. On the other hand, words may be concatenated to form meaningful phrases and sentences, one special kind of which "point out" (λόγοι ἀποφαντικοί) or refer to things or events. These are called propositions,⁵² and with them Aristotle purportedly capitalizes on his true/false distinction, for only propositions can be true or false. Other kinds of sentences, such as those constituting the utterance of prayers or poems, he believes to fall more appropriately under the rubric of rhetoric or poetry,⁵³ the subsumption to which amounts to saying that they remain meaningful in some sense, but only trivially or arbitrarily so by virtue of their failure to point to anything concrete.⁵⁴ Portrayal of certain kinds of impossibilities, for example are allowed under poetic license but only because nothing decisive is at stake in poetry. The poet foregoes rigor for the sake of saying something striking or novel about life.

Since Ogden and Richards contend that references and not propositions are those relations which first and primarily admit of truth and falsity, they object to Aristotle's notion that only propositions may be true or false. As already noted, they regard any word or phrase as admitting of truth or falsity insofar as the word or phrase in question symbolizes a reference relation. Yet it's not entirely clear to what extent Ogden and Richards have broken away from Aristotle. Every

⁵¹ ibid., 1456b20-39.

⁵² Aristotle, On Interpretation, 17a15.

⁵³ ibid., 17a1-7.

⁵⁴ Aristotle, Poetics, 1460b23-27.

reference--that is, every circumstance in which a pair of psychological and external contexts make it possible for a stimulation of nerves in a sense organ to be taken as a sign of something, thus implying a referent--involves interpretation to some extent. Furthermore, the logical form of propositions constitutes the form for reference relations; that is, they believe the form of propositions to constitute the determinative structure for the interpretations implicit in reference relations.⁵⁵ Thus, when Ogden and Richards say that a single word, e.g., "white," may admit of truth or falsity, what they seem to mean is that the word implies, and tacitly fits into, some kind of simple proposition which provides the determinative structure for the reference relation upon which the word is based. In short, Ogden and Richards seem not to have carved out any essential difference between their position and that of Aristotle, either with respect to propositions or language in general.

The question at this juncture is where the *saying* of which Rilke spoke or the *naming* of which Heidegger spoke stand with respect to the causal model of language outlined in the preceding pages. Insofar as they do not fit nicely into strict reference relations, they could be expected, at least *prima facie*, to fall under the rubric of poetry. This would most certainly be the case for Aristotle, under whose scheme, as already noted, all those modes of utterance which are not propositional in character, including poems and prayers, tend to be subsumed to rhetoric or poetry, the purpose of which is to speak in a

⁵⁵Ogden and Richards, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

striking or forceful manner for heightened effect. Generally, all language serves an instrumental purpose for Aristotle; the mind employs language by convention to its own ends. But with modes of speech such as a poem or a prayer, the situation becomes accentuated. Poetry he conceives to be the "representation of life," carried out with craftsman-like skill in rhythmic language and tune by poets (makers).⁵⁶

"...the poet represents life, as a painter does, or any other maker of likenesses, he must always represent one of three things--either things as they were or are; or things as they are said to be; or things as they should be. These are expressed...with or without rare words and metaphors...all of which we allow the poet to use."⁵⁷ Differences in various modes of poetic expression, say the difference between epic and elegiac poetry, are inconsequential in that the mode of expression serves only as "the *means* of representation"⁵⁸ and could be altered without doing an injustice to that which is being represented. (Oddly enough, prayer as a mode of speech, though initially categorized under the rubric of poetry,⁵⁹ seems to have been dropped from the discussion in favor of various kinds of poetry proper. Though purely a matter of surmise, one wonders if Aristotle might not have found the subsumption of prayer to the model of poetry--i.e., making--ultimately unsatisfactory to account for what occurs in prayer. Perhaps we are called to prayer in such a way that the words we utter, far from being strictly at our command, work to command us.)

⁵⁶Aristotle, Poetics, 144a14-16 and 1447b13,14.

⁵⁷ibid., 1460b8-12.

⁵⁸ibid., 1447b29,30.

⁵⁹Aristotle, On Interpretation, 17a4-8.

In Aristotle's view metaphor constitutes one of the most common licenses afforded the poet. As a poetic mode of utterance, it allows one thing or relationship to become vivid through recourse to another thing or relationship. Thus the presence of an analogy which can be traced by logical thinking is essential for an understanding of a given metaphor. The logic of analogy of metaphor functions in this manner: when B is to A, as D is to C, then instead of B, the poet would use D.

Thus a cup B is in relation to Dionysus A what a shield D is to Ares C. The cup accordingly will be metaphorically described as the "shield of Dionysus," D + A, and the shield as the "cup of Ares," B + C. Or to take another instance: As old age D is to life C, so is evening B to day A. One will accordingly describe evening B as the "old age of the day," D + A--or by the Empedoclean equivalent; and old age D as the "evening" or "sunset of life," B + C.⁶⁰

But, to reiterate, the use of such language never forms the basis of anything essential or important; nothing decisive hinges on the use of metaphor. It simply provides the convenient break from customary parlance without which customary speech would become commonplace, trite, even boring. In short, metaphor in the strict analogic sense amounts to ornamentation, relying heavily upon the manifestness of the component elements for intelligibility. If it breaks down or otherwise becomes unintelligible, recourse may always be taken to the clarity of literal or ordinary language. Aristotle's estimation of the appropriate balance one would hope to strike between metaphor and customary parlance comes forth in this passage from the Poetics:

⁶⁰ Aristotle, Poetics, 1457b20-25.

The merit of diction is to be clear and not commonplace. The clearest diction is that made up of ordinary words, but it is commonplace. That which employs unfamiliar words is dignified and outside the common usage. By "unfamiliar" I mean a rare word, a metaphor. . . But if a poet writes entirely in such words, the result will be either a riddle or jargon. . . We need then a sort of mixture of the two (unfamiliar words and ordinary words). For the one kind will save the diction from being prosaic and commonplace, the rare word, for example, and the metaphor and the "ornament," whereas the ordinary words give clarity.⁶¹

Why do ordinary words manifest clarity? Precisely because they, in their propositional context, refer directly to concrete reality, whereas metaphors as ornamental or stylistic modes of re-saying the literal risk that clarity to the extent that they only allude to concrete reality.

The view of metaphor held by Ogden and Richards is essentially the same as that held by Aristotle. Metaphor in their estimation is one step further removed from external events than is literal speech. Whereas in literal speech all symbols are taken as *primary* symbols-- that, "as names used with a reference fixed by a given universe of discourse"⁶²--in metaphorical speech, symbols are used in a kind of second order abstraction. Thus, "Metaphor, in the most general sense, is the use of one reference to a group of things between which a given relation holds, for the purpose of facilitating the discrimination of an analogous relation in another group."⁶³ In this fairly standard view of metaphorical language, as with Aristotle's, analogy is of primary importance in that one reference borrows part of the context of

⁶¹*ibid.*, 1458a18-35.

⁶²Ogden and Richards, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

⁶³*ibid.*, p. 213.

another in an abstract form. For Ogden and Richards, this kind of establishing of contexts for words via the use of other words remains susceptible to tremendous liabilities, including the inherent possibilities of ambiguity--"Whenever a term is thus taken outside the universe of discourse for which it has been defined, it becomes a metaphor, and may be in need of fresh definition."⁶⁴--to which the language of "very simple folk" is not so susceptible. Such is the case, they believe, because for "very simple folk with small and concrete vocabularies. . .the majority of their words have naturally been acquired in direct connection with experience. Their language has throughout many of the characteristics of proper names."⁶⁵

The question now is whether we could succeed in making sense of the mode of speech which Rilke calls *saying* and which Heidegger calls *naming*, from the traditional position just reviewed. That is, are we justified in thinking of saying/naming in terms of that supposed instrumental function of language which is poetic metaphor? It seems that we are not. For Aristotle as well as for Ogden and Richards, as already noted, the mode of speech consisting of poetic metaphor ultimately rests on a more primary mode of speech, i.e., literal discourse, which usually assumes the form of propositional sentences.⁶⁶ But the speech which Rilke and Heidegger attempt to bring to intelligible focus does not reduce to another more primary mode of speech, but is itself primary in

⁶⁴ibid., p. 111. Concerning the ambiguities to which metaphorical language is susceptible, also see p. 96.

⁶⁵ibid., p. 214.

⁶⁶For an explicit statement of this view from Ogden and Richards see the work already cited, p. 102.

character. On the other hand, we are not to suppose that Rilke and Heidegger are speaking of literal representational utterance of the sort Aristotle and others such as Ogden and Richards consider primary, i.e., referential language working from the label/object model. The essential feature of the language in question for Rilke and Heidegger consists in its fecundity. Language for them manifests at certain crucial junctures a kind of originary power. It does not simply reduce to a process of symbolizing heretofore manifestly intelligible beings or contexts of the world among which we move and dwell but is, in some sense, the very articulation of intelligibility forcefully disclosing beings and events to us on the occasion of speech. Literal representational language, believed to come at the end of a causal and cognitive nexus of events, manifests no such power but is itself always considered the result of some previous cause.

Thus, it seems that the mode of speech of which Rilke and Heidegger attempt to make sense reduces neither to poetic metaphor based on strict analogy nor to the more primary references of literal representational language. Nonetheless, if it is not to be simply assumed that the mode of speech they hope to bring to our attention does in fact occur from time to time, we must move toward understanding it via the speech to which we have for the most part become accustomed and within the categories of which we tend to think, namely, literal and metaphorical speech. We can move toward such an understanding if we will look once more at metaphorical language. We must do this because, in the work of Aristotle, as well as that of Ogden and Richards, there persists a basic ambivalence concerning metaphor. They

at once wish to reduce metaphor to the status of an indirect or secondary, and therefore ornamental, mode of speech, while at the same time acknowledging a certain power or presence to metaphor. Ogden and Richards insist that metaphor founds itself upon the clarity of a pre-established analogy and the concreteness of literal representational language,⁶⁷ yet they regard certain metaphors to be capable of evoking ". . . new sudden and striking collocations of references for the sake of the compound effects of contrast, conflict, harmony, interanimation and equilibrium. . ."⁶⁸ And in spite of his analysis of poetic metaphor in terms of the clarity of strict analogy, Aristotle also seems to have recognized something quite special about at least some metaphors. "It is a great thing, indeed, to make a proper use of these poetical forms, as also of compounds and strange words. But the greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others; and it is also a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars."⁶⁹ What Aristotle seems to be implying here in the Poetics is that certain "good Metaphors" bring one thing or event forcefully present through recourse to another in such a way that what we appreciate as having been brought forth powerfully was heretofore unnoticed in precisely the way it now appears. In such cases the connection with analogy remains intact, but the metaphor, far from depending upon the clarity of a previously established analogy, actually renders the analogy perspicuous without explicitly stating what

⁶⁷Ogden and Richards, op. cit., p. 214.

⁶⁸ibid., p. 240.

⁶⁹Aristotle, Poetics, 1459a2-7.

the analogy consists in. That is, a "good metaphor" does not rely on literal representational speech so much as the latter assume inflection and otherwise becomes expanded by virtue of insightful recourse to the former. Rilke's figure of the wanderer constitutes just such a metaphor. It dramatizes a mode of human existence which would, with the exception of a few cognates already mentioned, otherwise remain essentially tacit, if not entirely unintelligible by intelligibly articulating an experiential base of received meaning.

In his essay entitled "Metaphor and Antimetaphor,"⁷⁰ Beda Allemann speaks of metaphors which *work*--metaphors which speak in a particularly striking manner, yielding new insight--as exhibiting a kind of "inner necessity,"⁷¹ by which he means metaphors whose essential frames of reference are themselves. These he calls "absolute" metaphors, and that they constitute their own frames of reference is supposed to mean that they are secondary to no other mode of reference, literal or otherwise. ". . .an absolute metaphor. . .cannot be reduced to anything," he says.⁷² Further, an absolute metaphor, he believes, is *not* based on logical comparison, unlike an "abstract" metaphor whose primary distinguishing feature is its reliance on analogy.⁷³ Thus, whereas analogy remains an integral feature of abstract metaphor, the presence of an explicit analogy, he argues, which can be traced by logical thinking, far from being essential to an

⁷⁰Beda Allemann, "Metaphor and Antimetaphor," Interpretation: The Poetry of Meaning, edited by Stanley Romaine Hopper and David L. Miller, New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1967, pp. 103-123.

⁷¹ibid., p. 110.

⁷²ibid., p. 117.

⁷³ibid., p. 116.

understanding of some given absolute metaphor, marks the death of absolute metaphor. To illustrate the notion of absolute metaphor, Allemann draws from the first two lines of a poem entitled "Chorus of Things Invisible" (Chor der unsichtbaren Dinge) by the Swedish poet Nelly Sachs:

Wailing wall night!
Carved in you are the psalms of silence.⁷⁴

Basically, Allemann makes two points in connection with these lines: 1) any attempt to found the metaphors "wailing wall night" and "psalms of silence" upon traditional logical relations of resemblance is bound to encounter serious difficulties, 2) nonetheless in their succinctness both metaphors are readily intelligible, indeed, are strikingly enlightening.⁷⁵ With respect to the first point, he concedes it may not be impossible to reconstruct a logical and meaningful relation, say between "night" and "wailing wall," but in the final analysis, we would probably need an inordinate number of words to make good on the logical relations in question. Yet Allemann's concession remains significant relative to his notion of absolute metaphor. Strictly speaking, that a metaphor is absolute would not mean that it could not be reduced to a logical relation--for, granting that economy of language is not a determining factor in the construction of a logical relation, we could indeed reduce an absolute metaphor to a logical comparison--but only that such a reduction would violate the metaphor. Thus, it seems more appropriate to speak of an absolute metaphor as that kind of particularly insightful metaphor whose power is undercut when reduced to the

⁷⁴ibid., p. 115.

⁷⁵ibid.

explicit logical analogy to which it succinctly alludes. In this sense, it remains questionable to what degree absolute metaphors as Allemann understands them (or any metaphor which *works*) constitute their own frames of reference. To be sure, the best of metaphors exhibit a kind of presence when the analogy to which they allude remains tacit. Nonetheless, the connection with logical comparison remains an important, if not an overtly primary, feature of all metaphors.

It is this necessary intimacy with logical analogy which all metaphors exhibit and the continued susceptibility of reduction to the ostensibly more perspicuous literal language of which analogies are constituted that generally distinguishes metaphor from the kind of *saying* of which Rilke speaks and the kind of poetic *naming* of which Heidegger speaks. Clearly neither Rilke nor Heidegger believes that the mode of speech with which each respectively concerns himself consists basically in metaphor. Indeed, in one of his later essays, Heidegger argues that we remain bogged down in metaphysics if we take certain modes of speech (in particular, certain poetic words) as metaphorical in character, for with metaphor, he believes, we consistently lack a primary statement which must ultimately be recovered.⁷⁶ Yet even here, the genuine issue with respect to primary statements concerns the subsumption of speech of all sorts to an instrumental function. Rilke and Heidegger would no doubt hold⁷⁷ that a primary statement is not simply one which *refers* to this thing or that event, for

⁷⁶Heidegger, "The Nature of Language," *op. cit.*, p. 100.

⁷⁷To be sure, one must infer Rilke's position from his letters and poetry, neither of which speak directly to this matter.

in terms of the representational model of speech, reference is always an indirect and imputed relation, and this by convention. No, Rilke and Heidegger would count as a primary statement that articulate voicing which, in its coming forth broaches new meaning, a possibility which places in question the notion that language always and merely serves man in an instrumental capacity. But in this connection, what the best of metaphors--and there are certainly a relative few of them--show us is that not all language reduces to an instrument whereby we symbolize a causal and cognitive nexus of events. For there are crucial instances in which language, far from merely representing thoughts or feelings which are, in turn, *about* objects or events, evokes reality, calling things and events into presence in speech. In such instances, the ambivalence present in the thought of Aristotle and Ogden and Richards evolves into a blatant inconsistency. Supposing the primary feature of language to consist in the symbolization of a preceding causal and cognitive chain of events--constituting an indirect relationship between word and thing--they deprive all language of the very feature which they think they notice in "good metaphors," namely, the capacity for genuine expression, which for Rilke and Heidegger constitutes the capacity to evoke reality. The inconsistency arises in that the model of language proposed first by Aristotle and later by Ogden and Richards presupposes that we have in advance the results of all expression, that we know everything prior to articulating it, that the world as well as the beings in it are clear and

intelligible apart from anything we might say regarding them.⁷⁸ We are left with a model which posits speech as a tool of the mind, thus denying it any originary force, but which, at the same time, would acknowledge precisely that originary force in certain "good metaphors." The force of the inconsistency works to reveal the sense in which a strict interpretation of the representational model does not accomplish too little but too much. Everything expressible is treated as if it had already been expressed.

If there is to be genuine expression, as even the proponents of the representational model of language wish to acknowledge, it must not be preceded by an explicit comprehension of that which is expressed. Indeed, if there is to be genuine expression, present comprehension must be informed in the terms of expression and as the expression assumes voice. Can such an event be demonstrated? Perhaps so, if consideration is afforded the common conversational experience of groping for a particular word or phrase which will complete a sentence. The urgency in such cases is to say something, yet what? This and that word present themselves, each rejected in turn as it fails to do justice to the tacit elements of the urgency. Comprehension is not yet enlightened. When the "right" word comes, as we say, it is immediately recognized as such, understanding gains fresh insight, and the conversation moves on. Expression has occurred.

⁷⁸The claim here is not that the proponents of the representational model of language hold that human beings are somehow omniscient, simply that for them, language holds no sway relative to what can be known. Knowing, in their view, precedes and underlies speech. Thus, whatever can be known, can be known clearly and intelligibly prior to speaking of it.

What is here spoken of as groping for an appropriate word is not to be confused with the matter of memory dealt with so amusingly in the tenth book of Augustine's Confessions⁷⁹ where we read:

. . . I come to the fields and spacious palaces of my memory. . . When I enter there, I require what I will to be brought forth, and something instantly comes; others must be longer sought after, which are fetched, as it were, out of some inner receptacle; others rush out in troops, and while one thing is desired and required, they start forth, as who should say, "Is it perchance I?" These I drive away with the hand of my heart, from the face of my remembrance; until what I wish for be unveiled, and appear in sight, out of its secret place.

The sort of groping at issue in this case concerns the attempt to elicit from memory something already comprehended which eludes recollection.⁸⁰ This is clearly distinct from what may occur as a groping which constitutes an attempt to voice something heretofore unspoken and heretofore not explicitly comprehended.

⁷⁹Augustine, The Confessions, Book X, translated by Edward B. Pusey, New York: Random House, The Modern Library, 1949, p. 203.

⁸⁰In citing the passage from The Confessions, I am not suggesting that Augustine would not have understood the sense in which one gropes or reaches about uncertainly for a word to satisfactorily complete a sentence which will, in the uttering of it, inform present understanding. Indeed, the spirit of confession (Latin: *confessāre*, frequentative of *confitēri*: to acknowledge) as undertaken in The Confessions consists in a man's attempt to articulate explicitly, and so come to understand, what has decisively placed him in question.

Further, my own view is not such as to discount the role of memory relative to the origin of understanding and comprehension. Indeed, in consonance with Augustine's confessional work of reckoning with things that may have gone unnoticed or been repressed, the interpretation set forth in this thesis of Rilke's notion of what it means to *say* relies heavily on noticing things which have grown inordinately near. Such noticing requires that we acknowledge memory as complicit in the origin of understanding and comprehension.

In the latter instance something special is at issue. For a brief interval our speaking is not our own. We neither command it nor can we force it. We search restlessly and uncertainly for an utterance which may be confirmed in the hearing of it. Hearing--that seems suggestive. Groping for an appropriate voicing raises the question of whether or not we are disposed toward hearing that voicing which will satisfy the sense of exigency to which we understand ourselves answerable. It's a matter of anticipation, recognition and acknowledgement. We anticipate that the exigency to which we understand we are answerable can and will be resolved in the occurrence of a particular occurrence of speech. And what is it that recognizes the appropriate voicing? Is it not our own listening, that attentive listening which neither commands nor appropriates words but which alternatively rejects or responsively acknowledges the language which presents itself? If so, it would seem we have hit on a phenomenon, *listening*, without which speech cannot move in certain circumstances. But here, too, *listening* requires to be understood as the bringing to bear, the intentional attending,⁸¹ of human understanding upon what first comes as a tacit exigency requiring to be brought to intelligibility.

⁸¹The phrase "intentional attending" comes to mind from the essay "Wilderness in America," (published in the Journal of the American Academy of Religion, December, 1974, Vol. 42, No. 4, p. 614) by Henry G. Bugbee, Jr., in which he says "In contrast with the subordination of attention to intention, to be intent in attending is to give heed, and therein the perceived maywork evocatively to cumulative effect."

It is the listening which anticipates and acknowledges speech--the listening in which understanding is positioned attentively to an utterance not yet voiced--that remains inadequately accounted for in terms of the representational model of language.⁸² Listening holds no sway in the strict understanding of the representational model because the speaker is not thought to be answerable to anyone or anything beyond himself. Even what Ogden and Richards speak of as interpretation--the inference that this or that series of neural impulses constitutes a sign of some particular external thing or event--fails to do justice to the notion of listening, for in interpretation, as they conceive it, the emphasis falls on recognizing familiar patterns of neural impulses so that a determination may be made that what is occurring at any given time fits into the framework of previously established and familiar relations. In this sense, then, interpretation may work itself out in practical terms as a fundamental refusal to listen. Rather than taking notice of the freshness and vitality of the perpetual unfolding of the world and beings which reside within it, the speaker unwittingly runs the risk of losing touch with what concerns him most powerfully in that his focal concern in interpretation

⁸²Though I do not fully develop the matter in this thesis, it should be noted that a more extensive discussion of the notion of listening would require that I deal explicitly with traditional and contemporary positions regarding questions of epistemology and truth with which my own position is at variance. Relative to the notion of listening, the question is: what counts as fundamental in knowing?--as fundamental in truth? Consistent with my brief development of listening, no conception of knowledge or truth would be adequate which fails to recognize, in its own terms, that there exists no neutral position from which to consider the matter. Even the epistemologist stands in question.

consists in the recognition of things and events already familiar. When, through the coherent deformation of words, the disclosure of a new aspect of things in their givenness is undertaken, this mode of interpretation, in consonance with its own frame of reference, may legitimately refuse what is proffered, opting instead for the customary, the usual.⁸³

When it becomes clear that listening plays a crucial role in the coming to pass of an appropriate utterance, then we are not far from Heidegger's notion of the dual character of human speech. (It may be recalled that for him, men *listen* to the silently peeling intimacy of thing and world, *responding* in a manner which gives voice to that intimacy.) Thus, we are in a position to say why Heidegger calls an entire range of events *speech* rather than simply those which take the form of the spoken word. There is something, the continually changing intimacy of thing and world, to which listening, as an integral element of speech, may be attuned. The extent to which present understanding remains listeningly disposed is the extent to which it can properly be said that a man is addressed. Events unfold with the force of address, and therefore may be said to speak--silently. By implication, the spoken word which is uttered on the strength of having listened to the address of thing and world as they are toward one another in perpetually changing ways may be appropriately called *response* and

⁸³Listening, as I am developing the notion, requires that one understand himself to be placed in question relative to the occurrent. The conception of interpretation set forth by Ogden and Richards acknowledges no such phenomenon of being placed in question--which would be consonant with my suspicion noted at the outset of this chapter.

not, as the proponents of the representational model of language are wont to say, expression. Or, in other words, genuine expression comes forth responsively.

But more importantly, when it becomes clear that listening plays a crucial role in the voicing of an appropriate utterance, we are not far from understanding Rilke's question on the strength of which we undertook these reflections on language: are we here, perhaps, just *to say* those simple words which bring to intelligibility our earthly experience with all manner of things which claim our concern--house, bridge, well, jug, fruit tree? In the face of so many abortive attempts to speak responsively and in the face of what in this era may only be called a pervasive refusal to listen, we ignore Rilke's question at our peril. At issue is the extent and force in the modern era--the era which is our own--of speech relative to the preservation of things as well as our own becoming. Our being here on the earth needs and concerns us strangely. The liability is that we will misconstrue our position as men in the world. Whatever else it might mean to be as a man, it means to be as one who speaks. Yet that speaking cannot be understood apart from the engagement of men with things and the world which sustains them. If our speaking denies that engagement, either through a refusal to attend listeningly things in their givenness or by an utterance which only insistently reiterates the customary--in short, if in speech we no longer give due notice to the simple things which ask of us to become experience--we run the risk of defaulting on the exigency which, according to Rilke, concerns us so deeply: the longing to belong, the longing to be of the earth

once. What we *say* of things--it is *that* which lies at the heart of what things may be for us and in what manner we will, in turn, be for them. Rilke's question constitutes an invitation to reacquaint ourselves with those things which strangely concern us by noticing them more carefully in speech. That we have good reason to heed the question is clear.

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