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Heidegger on Hölderlin's Hymn *Der Ister*

The Dwelling of the Poet and the Place-Making of the River

Abstract

This article offers a topological account of Martin Heidegger's 1942 lecture course on the German poet Friedrich Hölderlin's hymn Der Ister. The main goal of the article is to explore the relationship between the poetic disclosure of place and the place of poetic disclosure in Heidegger's thought in the 1940s. Firstly, the backward streaming of the river is identified as the central theme of the hymn, which leads to Heidegger's idea of dwelling as poetic homecoming. Secondly, after elucidating the link between the Danube river and Antigone, and assessing the philosophical underpinnings of Heidegger's withdrawal from politics, Heidegger's pre-political idea of the polis is examined as tied to his thinking of place-making. Finally, the interplay between journeying and remaining is issued to clarify Heidegger's notion of dwelling, time, and place and his critique of the metaphysical conception of space and time.

Keywords

Martin Heidegger, Friedrich Hölderlin, *Der Ister*, The Danube, place, poetic dwelling, topology of language

**Approaching *Der Ister* Topologically:
The Danube's Poietic Source**

Commencing from the mid-thirties, Martin Heidegger gave three lecture courses at the University of Freiburg on German poet Friedrich Hölderlin's river-hymns: *Hölderlin's Hymns "Germania" and "The Rhine"* (1934–35), *Hölderlin's Hymn "Remembrance"* (1941–42), and *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"* (1942). The third of these lecture courses offers an interpretation of Hölderlin's hymn called *Der Ister*, which the poet authored in the early 1800s. Hölderlin never published the hymn and left it incomplete, even without a title (DI 2/2), which qualifies it as an enigmatic literary piece. Being Heidegger's last systematic work on Hölderlin,¹ the lecture course provides important insights into Heidegger's later Hölderlin interpretations where Heidegger's mature account of language and dwelling appears, which he started developing in the 1930s and 40s.²

1

The lecture course is abbreviated as *DI*. The pagination refers to the German text in Heidegger's collected works (*Gesamtausgabe*), followed by the standard English translation.

2

Heidegger's earlier Hölderlin interpretations in the 1930s were in search of a proper

understanding of the poet's notion of place and place-making. Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei explains the context in which Hölderlin was read as a "national" poet at that period in German history. She argues that following Hellingrath, Heidegger first de-contextualised, or even deliberately disregarded the humanist and democratic dimension of



First, it must be mentioned that Heidegger's lecture course has the ambitious goal of not only attempting to elucidate Hölderlin beyond the scope of existing literary or historiographic analyses, but also of trying to reinterpret Hölderlin's relation to Sophocles's *Antigone*.³ A preliminary view of the tri-fold division of Heidegger's lecture course might be needed to understand the perspective from which Heidegger approaches the hymn: the first section explains the non-metaphysical significance of Hölderlin's poetising of the river, the second and central section thematises the streaming activity of the river in connection with Antigone's departure from the *polis*, and the third section arrives at a synthesis based on the river's backwards flowing and Antigone's dwelling.⁴ What binds the three divisions together is a thinking of the streaming of the river as the happening of place (*Ortschaft*) and place-making, which also defines the nature of po(i)etic human dwelling. Considering the complex nature of the lecture course, what follows neither attempts to provide a complete analysis of Hölderlin's hymn nor elucidates how each section of the lecture course relates to one another, which would require a much more comprehensive exegesis. What will be attempted in this article is to show why Heidegger's interpretation of Hölderlin's *Der Ister* is fundamentally a reflection on the relationship between place and dwelling, and explicate why this link is crucial for understanding Heidegger's later thought on language.

The following question is perhaps inevitable: what is the specific place that Hölderlin's *Der Ister* holds among all the other rivers that Hölderlin poetised? And also, why this river has to do more with human dwelling than any other, not to forget the Rhine?⁵ Heidegger suggests that *Ister* was the Roman name that designated the lower course of the river Danube (*die Donau*) known to Greeks as *Istros* (DI 10/10). The Danube, whose upper course was called *Danubius* by the Romans, springs from the Black Forest region in Germany and discharges into the Black Sea in modern-day Romania, passing through historical ancient Greek and Roman sites. Nonetheless, Hölderlin's hymn relocates the source of the river in a curious way. As it appears in the third stanza, the hymn depicts the Danube as an oriental element arising from the Indus valley, passing through ancient Greek lands, finally making its way back to its actual source in Germany. Interpreting this reversal in the course of the river is the task Heidegger takes upon himself. As will be discussed, for Heidegger, Hölderlin's poetic transposition of the course of the river does not symbolise a nostalgic return to a historical-geographical origin, but rather implies an engagement with the ontological necessity of dwelling or inhabitation, which itself is tied to human being's relation to the source – a source which is also the end (*telos*) and what marks the boundaries of being homely at the hearth. Reflecting on the relationship between the origin and the end, the home and the foreign, or nostalgia and belonging all lead to a thinking of place, which is why I offer to consider Heidegger's lecture course through topological lenses. In a nutshell, drawing elements from hermeneutics, ontological phenomenology, and poststructuralism, philosophical topology (or topography) can be summarized as the study of the meaning of natural and cultural space(s) and place(s), but also of boundaries, thresholds, horizon, ground, ways, and journeying. In general, one of the main focuses of a topological mode of thinking is to interpret the ways in which *being* placed determines our understanding and experience of the world. This implies investigating the ontological relationship between self and world, cognition and environment,

person and place, place and movement. More specifically, Otto Pöggeler defines Heidegger's topology as:

"... a saying (*legein*) of the region or site (*topos*) of the truth, a determination of the region which unfolds as places of gathering, and gathering-together (*logos*) of guiding-terms (*topoi*) of European thought and in this way a gathering of the basic terms of one's own thinking."⁶

In that regard, for Heidegger what is at issue is an investigation of the meaning of being situated in the world and on the earth as the kind of being who dwells, belonging to the saying (*legein*) of *logos* that lays, gathers, or "lets-lie-before" the "is-ness" of that which *is*. In turn, since our relation to place is determined by our relation to the saying-speaking of place(s), what dwelling means can only be issued by examining how being, language and place refer to each other in a *poietic* manner. It is extremely important to note, therefore, that overall Heidegger's thinking of place is distinct from a political and geo-political account of place and a nationalistic notion of place does not figure in Heidegger's thought after the 1940s.⁷ This is related to the fact that Heidegger does not seek to develop an ontic sense of place, as the idea of place and space at work concerns the site of the *emergence* of being itself (*Seyn*) and not that of the expression of a culture or worldview that emerges from a place.⁸ In that regard, explaining the topological dimension

Hölderlin's politics and his stature as a thinker of the Enlightenment. For more see: Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei, *Heidegger, Hölderlin, and the Subject of Poetic Language. Toward a New Poetics of Dasein*, Fordham University Press, New York 2004, p. 11.

3

Australian scholars and filmmakers David Barison and Daniel Ross thematise Heidegger's lecture course in their documentary film titled *The Ister* (2004). Babette Babich's article astutely compares the directors' conceptualisation of the river with Heidegger's critique of metaphysical-technological thinking. For more see: Babette Babich, "The Ister: Between the Documentary and Heidegger's Lecture Course Politics, Geographies, and Rivers", *Articles and Chapters in Academic Book Collections* 38 (2011), pp. 7–24.

4

The "poietic", in reference to the Greek *poiesis*, is employed in the sense of that which "brings forth". As such, the poietic is what founds poetry (*Dichtung*) and the poetic (*dichterisch*). Where suitable, I use the spelling "po(i)etic" to emphasise the two-fold relationship between the poietic and poetic. While the poietic is not necessarily poetic in the literary sense, the poetic is always poietic. For more on the difference, see: Krzysztof Ziarek, *Language after Heidegger*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 2013, p. 130–174.

5

"And if we look at Hölderlin's late poetizing in the proximity of 'Germania', we encounter

major poems with the titles 'At the Source of the Danube' (IV, 158ff.), 'The Rhine' (IV, 172ff.), 'The Ister' ('Ιστρος) the Greek name for the Danube: IV, 220ff.), 'Peaceful the Branches of the Neckar' (Fragment 12, IV, 246), and 'The Fettered River' (IV, 56). Cf. 'The Main' (III, 54f.) and 'The Neckar' (III, 59f.). These river poems are not only contemporaneous with 'Germania' from a superficial perspective, but are intrinsically connected to it." – Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymns "Germania" and "The Rhein"*, trans. William McNeill – Julia Ireland, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 2014, p. 83.

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Otto Pöggeler, "Metaphysics and Topology of Being in Heidegger", *Man and World* 8 (1975), pp. 3–27, p. 26, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf01250721>.

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Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place. Explorations in the Topology of Being*, The MIT Press, Cambridge 2012, p. 98, 140.

8

While for Heidegger *place* is not primarily a geographical or architectural theme, his understanding of place has indeed important consequences for these and other related domains. Among many other works from scholars such as David Seamon, Adam Sharr, Robert Mugerauer, Jeff Malpas's recent work on Heidegger and architecture is an important contribution to the topic. The discussion on the key Heideggerian notion of *wohnen*, which includes an explanation of the English translation of the word as "dwelling"



of Heidegger's thinking will display, first, the *poietic* essence of place as that which *makes* and gives space for dwelling, and second, clarify the essence of poetry as inherently tied to the becoming explicit of the meaning of place and dwelling.

One of the main arguments of this article, if not the main one, is that for Heidegger, the flowing activity – the occurrence – of the river “brings out” the primordial disclosure of place and the place of disclosure. At the end of the article, it will become evident that *DI* marks the beginning of Heidegger's explicit topology of language. It considers the *occurrence*,⁹ or *the appropriation (Ereignis)* of place¹⁰ as the occurrence–appropriation of language,¹¹ a point that did not receive sufficient attention in contemporary literature. While Heidegger's thought of place has been discussed in contemporary scholarship by commentators such as Otto Pöggeler (1975), Joseph P. Fell (1979), Jeff Malpas (2006, 2012, 2021), and Krzysztof Ziarek (2013), Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin's river poetry remain to be analysed from a topological perspective. Putting aside Beda Allemann's early groundbreaking work on Heidegger and Hölderlin (1959),¹² in more recent literature we can talk about two main lines of thinking on the lecture course.¹³ On the one hand, scholars such as Robert Mugerauer (2008),¹⁴ Andrew J. Mitchell (2015),¹⁵ Susanne Claxton (2017),¹⁶ and Martin Travers (2018)¹⁷ thematise the role of rivers for Heidegger's concept of poetic dwelling, the idea of the fourfold (*Geviert*) and the holy, discussing how Heidegger's thinking of rivers opens up to an eco-critical avenue of thought mostly based on Heidegger's later philosophy. On the other hand, scholars such as Julian Young (1999), Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe (2002), and Charles R. Bambach (2003) dwell mainly on the problematic political and historical roots and implications of Heidegger's lecture courses. Even though these two trains of thought are equally important and deeply connected, as most systematically examined by Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei (2004), the underlying connection and the nature of that relation often remains obscure. It must be shown that, as a whole, these lecture courses allowed Heidegger to develop his later topological notion of language as the dwelling-place of the human existence and the place of the manifestation (*alētheia*) of being – the presencing of what is present.¹⁸ The river poetry at issue is at the heart of the link between the place of being and language, which is also where the true value of *DI* lies for making this connection explicit.

***Der Ister* as Antigone: Poietic Dwelling as Homecoming**

Heidegger begins the lecture course by evoking that the term “hymn” in Greek (*hymnos*) means an ode, or a song written for praising heroes (DI 1/1). With that initial remark, Heidegger's purpose is to remind a perhaps evident, yet equally elusive point: In *Der Ister*, Hölderlin's hero is the Danube, which Heidegger will consider, following Hölderlin, a demigod. What is praised in *Der Ister* is the spirit of the Danube as the river which founds the German homeland, being a demigod that journeys eastwards in poietic contradiction to the river's “actual” course, unlike the Rhine, “the other” (*der andre*) who goes sideways and gets lost (*Der Rhein ist seitwärts Hinweggegangen.*) precisely for remaining “homely” (*heimlich*) in the homeland (DI 5/4). Here one must bear in mind the double sense of the homely, first, referring to the sensation of being at home, and second, referring to plainness and ordinariness, owing to the excess of familiarity and simplicity at home. Understanding why

Hölderlin questions the Danube's countermovement to the source, "clinging to the mountains" (*Und warum hängt an den Bergen gerad?*), and how this constitutes the essence of dwelling according to Heidegger, is the key to making sense of the latter's interpretation of the hymn.

It turns out that the Ister is not the only demigod who is moving backwards. At the very outset of the lecture course, Heidegger turns to Sophocles's *Antigone* in drawing a parallel between Antigone and the river's backward movement. According to Heidegger, Hölderlin's view of Antigone as a demigod defines the core matter of the hymn. In a nutshell, Antigone's existence is a journey towards the experience of original finitude – an attempt of appropriating finite human life. Leaving behind Creon's law that forbids her to bury his brother Polynices, Antigone moves towards the end of her destiny, which suggests a venture beyond the origin and a defiance of the present political order and time. Deemed to possess a determined urge towards nature, and thus gesturing towards the divinities rather than the *polis*, which fundamentally differentiates her way of being from that of Ismene, Antigone abandons the familiar domain of human existence. This very exit defines the poetic character of Antigone's dwelling.¹⁹

and "inhabiting", is particularly thought-provoking. See: Jeff Malpas, *Rethinking Dwelling. Heidegger, Place, Architecture*, Bloomsbury, New York 2021, p. 4.

9

Throughout the article I use the notion of "occurrence" referring to *das Ereignis* as the appropriation/the event, keeping in mind the etymological background of the word as explained by Sheehan: "At the root of our word 'occur' is the Latin verb *occurrere*, which describes something as 'running towards us' (*ob-currere*), such that it comes into view, presents itself, and is given." – Thomas Sheehan, *Making Sense of Heidegger: A Paradigm Shift*, Rowman & Littlefield International Ltd, New York 2015, p. 233. Nonetheless, differing from Sheehan, I employ "occurrence" in a topological and non-metaphorical sense, underlining both the taking place of the river and its appearing to us in and as poetic language.

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Joseph P. Fell, *Heidegger and Sartre. An Essay on Being and Place*, Columbia University Press, New York 1979, p. 224.

11

Language (*Sprache*) not as mere speech but as our primary openness to speech which stems from stillness (*Stille*).

12

Beda Allemann, *Hölderlin et Heidegger. Recherche de la relation entre poésie et pensée*, trans. François Fédier, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris.

13

While there are obviously many other works

on Heidegger and Hölderlin, it is not possible nor particularly useful to mention all of them here. I limit the secondary literature to which I refer mainly to those which address the issue of place and dwelling in English.

14

Robert Mugerauer, *Heidegger and Homecoming. The Leitmotif in the Later Writings*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2008.

15

Andrew J. Mitchell, *The Fourfold. Reading the Late Heidegger*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston 2015.

16

Susanne Claxton, *Heidegger's Gods. An Eco-feminist Perspective*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, London – New York 2017.

17

Martin Travers, "Trees, rivers and gods: paganism in the work of Martin Heidegger", *Journal of European Studies* 48 (2018) 2, pp. 133–143, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047244118767820>.

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For a detailed account of Heidegger's early and late topology, as well as the idea of language in relation with the later idea of the Earth and the Fourfold. For more see: J. P. Fell, *Heidegger and Sartre*, pp. 215–227.

19

In that context, Nikolopoulou astutely summarises the link between Antigone's being-towards-death and the river's seaward journeying as an urge that stems from an ecstatic sense of finitude, one that is also oriented towards an irrational experience of



It is indeed thought-provoking that in order to explicate the meaning of dwelling, Heidegger engages a *character* who does not remain in the *polis* but rather departs from it. Like the Ister, who leaves the homeland and moves in complete opposite direction, it is Antigone who *brings out* the essence of human finitude between mortals and immortals. Antigone and the Ister reveal the dynamic between (*das Zwischen*) the place of the nearness (neighbourhood) of gods and mortals, the sky and the earth, the home and the foreign, the source and the sea. In that regard, what constitutes the essence of the river is its very streaming and the making of the between. This very betweenness will determine the uncanny character of the dwelling of the river, neither completely belonging to the source nor to the river mouth. The between, as the streaming motion that ties the river's mouth with the source, allows things to be related to one another in the first place, which is where the measure of poietic existence comes into full display (DI 173/139). As a demigod and the founder of the poietic between, Antigone *is* the river, and the river *is* Antigone. In their own and distinct ways, they disclose the same way of being on the earth.

It is against this background that the river's spring from the German "fatherland"²⁰ and discharge into the Black Sea is interpreted to display the same ontological nature of "homecoming" as becoming – homely (*heimischwerden*). Thus, Heidegger claim that the basic determination of historical existence – inhabiting the world – is the necessity to learn to "appropriate" what is familiar.

"Yet that which is their own often remains foreign to human beings for a long time, because they abandon it without having appropriated it. And human beings abandon what is their own because it is what most threatens to overwhelm them." (DI 23–24/21)

This idea roots from the following lines of the first strophe, which reads, "not without pinions (*Schwingen*) may someone grasp at what it is nearest" (DI 3/3). The nearest remains the furthest precisely because of the excessive proximity. The appropriation at issue, which determines the essence of dwelling, does not mean rendering something wrong correct, but rather to learn to stand in an authentic relation to the origin. This, however, does not imply a smooth return to the home, but on the contrary necessitates a confrontation with the source. For Heidegger being able to confront the origin, and thereby the end, as was the issue in *Being and Time*, is the primary measure of poietic dwelling. This is also why "becoming-at-home" differs from simply remaining at or near the familiar environment, signifying a struggle against the ordinary movement of historical existence. The poietic spirit does not immediately belong to a place and history, but first and foremost problematises the situation of *being placed* in the world as a particular being, defined by a particular situation and history. This means not only being related to the world being stuck in midst of things, but also confronting the world from one's own situatedness, which demarcates the boundaries of the between. The river returns to the abandoned origin not in order to save the home from the past, but to appropriate its present relation to that originary dwelling-place. Since the homecoming at issue concerns human beings' authentic, namely, owned link to place and time, the return at issue is a "historical" one.²¹

Taking a Step Back from Politics towards the *Polis*

The way in which Heidegger reflects on the sameness of Antigone and the Ister by drawing on their departure from the home leads to two issues that

need to be addressed in order to properly make sense of the meaning of the streaming activity of the river. The first one concerns the ontological basis of the historical kinship between the Greeks and the Germans; Antigone and the river Ister, and the second one concerns the non-metaphorical link between poetic language and dwelling. On the one hand, the first one is usually considered the politically problematic pathway that leads to (or stems from) Heidegger's support for the Nazis and his "crypto-fascism".²² On the other, the second issue is crucial to not mistake the river's streaming as a mere symbolic image of "becoming". Yet, the connection at issue and the importance of the second problem cannot be understood entirely without paying some attention to Heidegger's view of National Socialism. The lingering question is whether his identification of the Ister with Antigone is an ideological appropriation of the river and Sophocles's tragedy by establishing a problematic historical link between the Greeks and the Germans. As such, Heidegger's attempt to come up with a so-called *spiritual* version of National Socialism needs a philosophical contextualisation as tied to his idea of modern technology and "machination" (*Machenschaft*). Doing so would also allow for a more comprehensive view of Heidegger's relation to politics in the 1940s and provide a philosophical explanation of his idea of politics as appears in the lecture course.²³

Let us not forget that the *DI* is delivered in 1942 as Greece was still under Nazi occupation. Considering this historical fact is sufficient to see how odd it is that Heidegger explicitly mentions the historical "uniqueness" and "singularity" of National Socialism, alluding to the "historical" connection between the Germans and the Greeks (*DI* 98/80; 106/86).²⁴ Responding to the issue, Bambach notes that this statement outlines the very basis of Heidegger's political treatment of the hymn.²⁵ Lacoue-Labarthe puts forward a more radical argument: Heidegger's Hölderlin interpretations illustrate the metaphysical underpinnings of his support for National Socialism, which is sustained by the idea of (re)creating an onto-mythological sense – and place – of historical German *Dasein*.²⁶ Bambach would agree, suggesting that Heidegger's

nature. – Kalliopi Nikolopoulou, *Tragically Speaking. On the Use and Abuse of Theory for Life*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln 2012, p. 210.

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Der Ister is one of Hölderlin's poetic works classified under the title of "The Songs of the Fatherland" (*Die Vaterländischen Gesänge*), along with *Der Rhein*, *Germanien*, *Patmos*, *Andenken*, and *Mnemosyne* among others.

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For Heidegger, the original sense of the "historical" (*geschichtliche*) does not concern historical (*historische*) events that happened in the past. History is not a mere container in which historical events of the world are ordered in a chronological manner, but it is the presencing and taking place (*geschehen*) of be-ing (*Seyn*) itself.

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Richard Polt, *Time and Trauma. Thinking through Heidegger in the Thirties*, Rowman &

International Ltd, London – New York 2019, p. 161.

23

As Murchadha submits, the more reasonable way of analysing Heidegger's politics is to do it "philosophically rather than – as with certain commentators, above all Emmanuel Faye – understanding his philosophy politically". – Felix Ó Murchadha, *The Time of Revolution. Kairos and Chronos in Heidegger*, Bloomsbury, London – New York 2013, p. 2.

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Nonetheless, this is an idea already present in *Introduction to Metaphysics* from 1935.

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Charles Bambach, *Heidegger's Roots. Nietzsche, National Socialism, and the Greeks*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca – London 2003, p. 235.

26

Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, la*

Nazi sympathies lay at the basis of his autochthonic interests in Hölderlin and “the Greeks”.²⁷ The question is certainly worth considering: if Antigone’s departure from the *polis* and the homecoming of the river reflects the same movement towards the source, how and where can we draw the line between an onto-historical myth of Greco-German kinship and a convincing account of dwelling based on the river’s streaming activity?

One point to be remembered here is Heidegger’s complex relationship with National Socialism at the time. Despite becoming a member of the Nazi party in 1933 after being elected as the rector of the University of Freiburg, Heidegger’s notes in the *Black Notebooks* suggest a much more contentious relationship. For instance, Heidegger places Nazism, along with Bolshevism, liberal democracy of Americanism, Christendom in the same basket of the technical expropriation of politics. If National Socialism has “an inner truth and greatness”, it turns out that for Heidegger this “truth” and “greatness” lies in its “global destructiveness”.²⁸ Heidegger already sees the danger that Nazism poses for European history, but he hopes – a “hope” with serious repercussions that must be interrogated – that the technological destruction Nazism brings might reveal the possibility of a new horizon for “politics”.²⁹

He writes:

“National Socialism is not Bolshevism, which is not a Fascism – but both are machinational victories of machination – gigantic forms of the consummation of modernity – a calculated depletion of nationalities.”³⁰

In relation with that, Richard Polt suggests that Heidegger’s

“... comments on Jews (and Americans, Englishmen, and Christians) are part of a whole. It is not a mathematically deductive system, but more like an ecosystem [...]”.³¹

Making sense of the boundaries of that “ecosystem” could reveal the meaning of what Heidegger calls the pre-political dimension of politics, which is inextricably bound up with his thinking of place.³²

What requires attention here is that for Heidegger “politics” implicates the technical dimension of the “political”, that is, that which pertains to the *polis*.³³ Heidegger remarks that the *polis* is commonly translated as “city” (*Stadt*) or “city-state” (*Stadt-staat*), and while this translation is correct, it loses sight of the more essential aspect of the political (DI 100/81). According to Heidegger, the dwelling and the dwelling place of the human being is not primarily a political question if we take politics in the narrow, technical sense of the word:

“If ‘the political’ is that which belongs to the *polis* and therefore is essentially dependent upon the *polis*, then the essence of the *polis* can never be determined in terms of the political, just as the ground can never be explained or derived from the consequence.” (DI 105/85)

The political, for Heidegger, amounts to something more fundamental than the management of state affairs or even citizens’ everyday participation in politics. In fact, when the political is taken merely as a cultural achievement or societal responsibility, which constitutes its meta-physical aspect, politics run the risk of turning into the battleground of conflicting ideologies and world-views. This dimension of politics, which is determined by what Heidegger thought to be “will to power”, or even “will-to-will”, has particularly led to the destruction of the earth’s human and non-human habitats in the 20th century, emerging from the totalitarian urge of mastering the earth and the world. Thus, Heidegger writes:

“The failure to question the ‘political’ belongs together with its totality. Yet the grounds and subsistence of such belonging together do not rest, as some naïve minds think, on the arbitrary willfulness of dictators, but in the metaphysical essence of modern actuality in general.” (DI 118/94)

Hölderlin’s thinking of the river and its dwelling offers another way of relating to the *polis*, as well as *physis* and *logos*. This is the pre-political (*vorpolitische*) (DI 102/82) essence of the *polis*. Thinking the river and Antigone in unity is where the meaning of the pre-political resides, which not only remains deeply connected to the political, but also grounds it. As such, the aim is to identify the groundlessness of the political without the necessary poietic essence of the *polis* – the primary meaningful disclosure of place as such. It is also in that sense neither Antigone nor the Ister are simply non-political. What concerns their essence is not indifferent to or independent from the political. Their being is pre-political to the degree that their appropriative countermovement against the source shows forth in a more original manner how a thinking of the *polis* is tied to the thinking of dwelling and the place of dwelling. This is why in the lecture course Heidegger tries to determine the essence of the political without setting in place a teleological relationship between the poietic and the political.

While the bond between the poietic and the political is not teleological – the political is not the corrupt version of the poietic – the link is not without tension either. In referring to the land that the Danube renders arable, Hölderlin’s hymn reads “here, however, we wish to build” (DI 3/4), indicating the close tie between building and dwelling. It is no secret that most civilizations have emerged in cities which were founded by the rivers. But Hölderlin writes in another late poem called *In lieblicher Bläue* (*In Lovely Blue*): “po(i)etically dwells man” (DI 171/137), which makes the relationship between the political and the poietical worthy of questioning. Simply by virtue of its being, the river opens a dwelling-place for human beings, making inhabitation possible and leading to various political organisations of peoples. With this idea one

politique du Poème, Galilée, Paris 2002, pp. 18–20.

27

C. Bambach, *Heidegger’s Roots*, pp. 237–240.

28

R. Polt, *Time and Trauma*, p. 154.

29

Julian Young writes that Heidegger clearly rejects the “priority of the political”, this is where we find a “condemnation of Nazi militarism” in his thought. – Julian Young, “Poets and Rivers: Heidegger on Hölderlin’s ‘Der Ister’”, *Dialogue* 38 (1999) 2, pp. 391–416, here p. 408, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0012217300007289>.

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Martin Heidegger, *Ponderings XII–XV. Black Notebooks 1939–1941*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 2017, p. 99.

31

R. Polt, *Time and Trauma*, p. 162.

32

While the later Heidegger continued to resist liberal democracy as well as Marxism as

viable political projects, while his critique of the technological essence of politics became more coherent, which led to his critique of the common ground of all techno-politics, an improved position compared to his earlier stance in the 1930s.

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Heidegger’s critique of the technological does not concern our use of tools, devices, since *technē* is our way of disclosing the world, but the transformation of our being and dwelling into a merely calculative mode of being. The essence of the technological (*Gestell*), translated as the “framework”, “positionality”, “inventory”, or interpreted as the “world of exploitation”, is the horizon of our modern interpretation of being as infinite raw material or standing-reserve (*Bestand*). This is explicated in *DI* in terms of the technological determination of space and time

could indeed argue that humans are political beings echoing Aristotle. Yet, Heidegger's interpretation of the hymn precisely draws on how the political is first and foremost poetical, and hence aims to bring back in view how our relation to *logos* is key, as well as how the political itself depends on the place-making of *physis*.

In the lecture course the *polis* is interpreted as that which emerges in and around the *polos*, which is the "pole, the swirl (*Wirbel*) in which and around which everything turns" (DI 100/81). Heidegger suggests that the word *polis* stems from "pole", which goes back to the verb "*pelein*" in Greek, implying both constancy and change. The *polis* is where the swirling of place, as a certain motion of clearing, makes room for the human dwelling "in the midst of beings as a whole". For Heidegger, it is not our everyday dealings that determine the meaning of the *polis*, but rather our implicit experience of being that delimits the horizon of our everyday dealings. A particular way of relating oneself to the "pole" leads to a particular organization of the *polis*, thus, to a particular political establishment – the specific "state" where one stays and obtains a "status". Thought politically, being is an estate, where we, along with our possessions, remain and *are*. However, according to Heidegger, the unfolding of the place dwelling, which is where our relation to being lies, makes politics possible, but not the other way around. Here Heidegger's suggestion is crucial: we often take for granted Aristotle's idea that the human being is a "political being", without asking *wherefore* the human being is able to *be* political (DI 102/83). The reason is that the human being "has" the word, in the sense of belonging to *logos*, being able to address the presencing of what is present without simply getting encompassed in presence. Being placed in the *polis*, therefore, means being capable of experiencing the boundaries of the site, namely, its "polar" character.

For Heidegger, questioning the ground of the *polis* and the possibility of the emergence of a new *polis* (and the demise of the old one) belongs to the existence of the human being as a pre-political possibility. Only the poetic human being can dare to challenge the already existing experience of the pole. The river-poet is uncanny (*deinon*) for pursuing "the possibility of a counterturning abode therein – *hupsipolis*" (DI 107/86), namely, "towering high above the site". To dare becoming un-homely (*unheimische*), which is also leaving behind the region of extreme comfort and familiarity, is the essence of making an issue of the foundations of the political, instead of getting entangled in the business of politics. However, as Gosetti-Ferencei astutely notes:

"Antigone, who wanders 'outside' the polis [...] also represents the *polis*."³⁴

Indeed, it must be emphasized that Antigone is not a mere adventurer; the adventurer can no longer experience the danger of what is dangerous (DI 91/75). Romantic enthusiasm for wilderness as an experience of "being itself" as nature in sheer opposition to culture is not at stake, rather, being capable of preserving the threatening nature of what is near and familiar in the *polis*. Uncanniness, as Heidegger conceives it, is "the essence of the *polis* itself". If Ismene's "homely" remaining in the *polis* leads to homelessness, Antigone's "homelessness", in and through her uncanniness, brings out the possibility of a poetic appropriation. In other words, the appearance of the *polis* itself depends on the experience of the disclosure (*alētheia*), or the presencing of being (DI 113/91). The key topological question that Heidegger's lecture course poses, then, is the following one: how should we think the *polis* as an

ontological site (*Stätte*) without reducing it to a mere political realm? This is part of the necessity of thinking the Greek *polis* not only as “city”, “state” or “city state”, which veils over the ontological character of the *polis*. We need another – inceptual – thinking that does not hinder our understanding of *topos* as the site of the unconcealment of – the meaningfulness – of being.

Here it becomes clearer why the political is primarily poetical, as well as how poetry relates to the poetical. Indeed, for Heidegger, just as for Kant, poetry is not just one “art” among others,³⁵ but rather is the essence of it. Poetry does not need to be mimetic or technical, as *poiesis* signifies something other than the knowledge, imitation, and reproduction of the laws of nature in the way *technē* does. The poetic manifests the capacity of *making* a new world, or re-imagining the world anew. The poetical *makes-space* for the political to find a new root and grow out of the questioning of the cor-respondence between the human being and the presencing of the world.³⁶ Hence, as Robert Bernasconi emphasises Heidegger’s view,

“... that is why it is the poet, not the statesman, who finds what remains.”³⁷

What remains, which first needs to be built, requires the place of dwelling to be opened up and cleared. If war-politics is the technical organisation of space – leading to artificial demarcation and systematic destruction of the earth – then poetising signifies the originary making of *any* dwelling place by “towering high above the site”. In other words, the poetising of the spatial-temporal dimension of dwelling, which the river-poet accomplishes, where the “pole” gathers around human beings, is *first* a po(i)etic action that renders the political possible.

Considering Heidegger’s ideas in the lecture course, it can be now seen how Hölderlin’s poetry provides Heidegger with the possibility of reviewing his compartment towards politics and history. Indeed, Heidegger’s Hölderlin interpretations evolve over the decades, and this is why the Ister lecture course has a special importance. As Polt suggests, towards the early forties and onwards,

“Heidegger draws back from his political or quasi-political discourse of leaping, deciding, and founding. His enthusiasm for struggle and power cools. During the Second World War, he moves toward a ‘nonwillful letting-be’.”³⁸

In his later thought, let alone being an adherent of Nazi ideology, Heidegger considers National Socialist movement to be the peak of the machination of being, which he also calls the “abandonment of being”, or “gigantism of technological historiological-political arrangements and institutions”.³⁹ Indeed, it

(DI 55/45), which also determines the human being’s existing relation to the *polis*.

34

J. A. Gosetti-Ferencei, *Heidegger, Hölderlin, and the Subject of Poetic Language*, p. 230.

35

Barry Stocker, “Philosophical secrets: Heidegger, poetic form and the Uncanny”, *Angelaki* 3 (1998) 1, pp. 145–152, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09697259808571975>.

36

That is to say: “poetry” not in the sense

of pertaining to “poesy” (*Poesie*) as the technical-aesthetic experience of works of

poetry, but as *Dichtung*, as the poetising, making-place of the manifestation of being.

37

Robert Bernasconi, “Poets as Prophets and as Painters: Heidegger’s Turn to Language and the Hölderlinian Turn in Context”, in: Jeffrey Powell (ed.), *Heidegger and Language*, pp. 146–162, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 2013, p. 155.

is the “abandonment of being” that nourishes the essence of metaphysics, which is a history that starts with the Greeks. What that means is that the Greeks stand at the beginning of the history of the “oblivion of the clearing”.⁴⁰ What is of utmost significance to Heidegger in reflecting on the history of philosophy is to read it backwards, which means appropriating our existing position in history along the way. The Ister lecture course is Heidegger’s appropriation of his own thought, his philosophical interpretation of Hölderlin’s poetry, as well as his relation to European thought and history. The so-called historical kinship between Greece and Germany at issue, therefore, needs to be regarded not as a nostalgic admiration for the Greeks and a praising of the German *Übermensch* as falsely interpreted by the Nazi ideology, but as a destinal (*geschickliche*) dialogue between different ends of the same history (*Geschichte*). For Heidegger, the Greek element of *philosophia* that emerges as the “love of wisdom” comes to its completion in Germany via Hegel’s project of technologising philosophy into “absolute knowing” and the historical self-realisation of consciousness (DI 117/94). Thinking with Hölderlin marks Heidegger’s way out of modern subjectivity that nourishes techno-politics.

The Occurrence of the River as The Event of Language

Thus far I have issued that how Heidegger considers the river’s backward flow towards the origin cannot be taken to suggest a nativistic account of place. Now, how the Hölderlin’s poetic language appears as the place of poietic dwelling can be addressed. The central idea that Heidegger puts forward is that the occurrence of the river is also where the emergence of a site of dwelling manifests itself. This is tied to my topological argument that Hölderlin’s poem characterises the gathering-laying-saying (*logos*) of place (*topos*) as the place (*topos*) of gathering-laying-saying (*logos*).⁴¹

DI marks a critical point in Heidegger’s later thought for bringing his critique of the metaphysical-aesthetic interpretation of literary texts into sharper view.⁴² One of Heidegger’s crucial moves is to discuss why Hölderlin’s rivers cannot be regarded as “symbolic images”, “allegories” or “signs”. According to the metaphysical mode of thinking that divorces the sensuous (*Sinnlich*) from the non-sensuous, the rivers could be conceived of as symbolic images (DI 17/16)⁴³ of being or becoming. In fact, such thinking defines precisely the modern meaning of the “meta-physical”, as especially after Kant the word has come to connote what goes “beyond and over” (*meta*) the “natural” (*physikē*) in a way that was not explicit as such for Aristotle. Now, this move also has consequences for the meaning of the metaphorical (DI 17). In Greek the word metaphor literally denotes the carrying (*pherein*) of the meaning of an entity beyond (*meta*) its ordinary locus, that is, its transplantation and displacement. Though Heidegger certainly does not say that there are no metaphors or symbolic images in Hölderlin’s poetry, reducing the very core of his river poetry to mere metaphors is what he finds problematic. The poetising of the river does not implicate a separation between what is considered “real” and “imaginary”, based on a naturalistic understanding of actuality, space and time, which is why Heidegger argues against such a reading of the poem.

Going back to the etymology of the word “allegory” in Greek, which composes of *allo* (other) and *agoreúin* (speaking openly, publicly), Heidegger emphasises that the poetising of rivers is not an allegorical representation of their essence:

“The ‘rivers’ are [...] not to count as symbols of a higher level or of ‘deeper’, ‘religious’ content. Hölderlin’s hymnal poetry, which is the vocation of the poet after 1799, is not concerned with symbolic images at all.” (DI 20/18)

For Heidegger, the rivers are nothing but what they themselves *are*. They are not the signs or the cyphers that refers to another mystery, but they are the mystery; they are the *signs* themselves (DI 189/153). In other words, that *other thing* that the metaphysician is seeking is nothing but the river itself. If Hölderlin’s rivers are not poetic “images”, then what are they? Bearing in mind that the matter is related to Heidegger’s thinking of the locus of *alētheia* – the place of the unconcealment of the meaningfulness of being – this question needs to be asked in another way: what does the Hölderlin’s river *disclose* about poetry and what does his poetry disclose about the river? Heidegger writes:

“The poets, as poets, are these rivers, and these rivers are the poets. ‘Poetically’ they ground the dwelling of human beings upon this earth. The rivers, that is, the Rhine and the Ister are not symbolic images [...] these signs that show are the poets.” (DI 204/166)

Hölderlin does not wish to inform us about the river by offering an objective description of the topographical features of the river, nor he only beautifies the river by employing some kind of higher, embellished language. First and foremost, the poet names the river. The poet’s “naming” (*nennen*) of the river, which is distinct from mere “mentioning” (*erwähnen*), is a response to the river’s calling. According to Heidegger,

“‘Naming’ means: to call to its essence that which is named in the word of poetizing and to ground this essence as poetic word.” (DI 24/21)

One might indeed question how the river can call us. The river calls the poet insofar as it appears as and opens up a place for human dwelling. Before seeing the river, we hear the river’s running water from afar. To be sure, it is not only the humans who are “called” by the river. Lines 15–20 of the hymn evoke that the “land is rendered arable by the river”: as such, where the plants grow and the animals drink water, “so humans go there too” (DI 3/4). The river permits beings to emerge, grow and become manifest, which is suggestive of the significance of *physis* as nature. However, even though plants and animal also “dwell” by the river, their response to the river’s appeal for dwelling remains silent – a silence that remains only intelligible in language. Do animals and plants “dwell” by the river in the same way that the poet dwells? Though the openness at issue for dwelling is not reserved only to the human being by the river, unlike the animal, which is *alagon*, or “without word” (DI

38
R. Polt, *Time and Trauma*, p. 3.

39
M. Heidegger, *Ponderings XII–XV. Black Notebooks 1939–1941*, p. 86.

40
T. Sheehan, *Making Sense of Heidegger*, p. 262.

41
Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger’s Topology. Being,*

Place, World, The MIT Press, Cambridge 2006, p. 33.

42
This dimension of Heidegger’s topology will become much more mature in his later

work *Unterwegs zur Sprache (On the Way to Language)* (1959).

43
As Young argues against Heidegger’s critique of the “imagistic” essence of Hölderlin’s poetry, he seems to be downgrading the significance of the idea of the non-metaphorical,

113/91), only the poetic human existence can conceive and answer to this call by attending to the unsaid. The poet responds to that call not by using up the river, but first and foremost by “naming” it. Here the naming of the river, which calls living beings to its abode for dwelling, is made sense of by the poet *as* a call for dwelling, and it is brought into language by re-calling and naming the river. In poetic language, the river becomes a place of “re-collection”. In naming the river, poetic existence echoes the river’s flowing activity. Thus, Heidegger suggests:

“The river ‘is’ the locality that pervades the abode of human beings upon the earth, determines them to where they belong and where they are homely (*heimisch*). The river thus brings human beings into their own and maintains them in what is their own.” (DI 23–24/21)

Here it becomes clear why the poet’s naming the river and the river’s calling the poet constitutes the river and the hymn as the *topos* of the gathering-saying-laying (*logos*). The river’s calling of the poet and the human’s responding back to the river via poetic language is an encountering, a cor-respondence, and a gathering. If the *occurrence* (*Ereignis*) of the river, which is also its steaming activity, brings human beings into their *own* (*Eigene*), it is also because the *event* of language brings out the poetic nature of the river. In this (co)occurrence, the river and language both *appear* as the originary dwelling place(s) of existence. What that signifies remains concealed for the human being if it is not “appropriated” via poetry. As such, for Heidegger it is first poetry that “hears” this primary event or appropriation, which is a mutual attunement to being and language. Thus, in referring to the river Hölderlin writes “a sign is needed only”, a sign which is to become language. In turn, Hölderlin’s poetry does not simply try to un-conceal what is concealed, but lets the river to be the sign that it is in its mystery.

In the same vein of thinking, the poetic word discloses not only the so-called original meanings of the words, but their originary flowing into meaningfulness, which is their “essencing”. Considering Hölderlin’s hymn, the idea of *essence* (*Wesen*) at issue here would not concern the correct representation of the river, but rather it would refer to its presencing – coming into presence (*Anwesen*). It is mainly in that sense that Heidegger distinguishes the poetising of rivers as aesthetic objects of imagination from the act of poetising their essence – their becoming apparent and meaningful in and of language. The meaning (*Sinne*) of phenomena can never be “framed” in “images” (*Bilde*) since for human existence phenomena are only meaningful insofar as they come into meaningfulness (*Sinnlichkeit*). The river’s “call” for dwelling is its own manner of “showing” itself. This “showing” is expressed via its poetic streaming, which is essentially different from causing an effect, and thereby from a mere linguistic indication or signification, is first a letting-see. However, the event of language, which occurs as a correspondence (*homolegein*) that springs from the river, cannot be detached from our attending to its streaming.⁴⁴ While we need the river’s manifestation, the river needs our hearkening (back) to it.

Place as Journeying, Time as Remaining

The final question that I will address here is the following: how does the streaming of the river indicate a sense of *journeying* and *remaining* at the same time? For Heidegger, the dwelling of the river between the source and the end is a remaining that is set in motion and a motion that is set in place, which does not symbolise but manifests the meaning of the poet's dwelling in her dwelling place. As the poet is called by the river, this call has a specific spatio-temporal meaning. Going back to the very first line of the poem, the poet is called *now* (*jetzt*): “*Jetzt komme, feuer!* (Now, come fire!)” (DI 3/4). Moreover, in the line fifteen the poet is called to a particular *here* by the river: “*Hier aber wollen wir bauen* (But we wish to build here)” (DI 3/4). Explaining the relationship between the “here” and the “now” will further clarify the poietic place-making of the river and reinforce the non-metaphorical sense of the streaming of the river. In turn, this will illuminate how the thinking of place is also a thinking of time.

In the history of philosophy, rivers are often conceived as an image or symbol of constant change against permanence, most famously associated with Heraclitus' thinking (consider fragments B 12, B 49 B 91), but also as figures in the thought of philosophers like Hume and Hegel. However, as I have mentioned in the previous section, taking being(ness) (*ousia*, *Sein*) as boundless stability – timelessness – and taking becoming (*Werden*) as boundless instability – placelessness – does not help us to grasp the ontological ground of the relationship between place and time. As a solution, Heidegger goes to the very essence of being-in-space and being-in-time and comes up with a new pair of terms, namely, “locality” (*Ortschaft*) and “journeying” (*Wanderschaft*) (DI 39/33), which conceptualises the streaming activity of the river. The river is neither completely static – it continues to flow – nor in absolute motion – it remains on its course. One must be careful not to confuse what is at work with a dialectical relationship in the Hegelian sense since for Heidegger motion and rest are not opposites that can readily be set in contradiction to be resolved in a higher unity. Just as in rest motion is already concealed as a potentiality and motion emerges from and leads to rest, their “sameness” is neither an empty unity nor can be thought as a mathematical conception of identity (as equality). As such, In *DI* Heidegger's thought takes another step in the direction of loosening up the metaphysical bond between the notion of being as constant presence and becoming as permanent change, which was already one of the important implications of *Being and Time*. Now what becomes more lucid is that the taking-place of time, or time as precisely what which *takes place*, hence the happening of place, precedes both space (*Raum*) – as mere extension – and time (*Zeit*) – as mere magnitude of linear motion.

Could we identify a non-metaphysical account of time and place, or at least find traces of the possibility another thinking on the issue in the history of metaphysics? Though a comprehensive answer to this would certainly require a work on its own, it might be useful to briefly turn to Aristotle's *Physics*, which can help clarify Heidegger's idea of place as boundedness by the taking-place of time in connection with the flowing of the river.⁴⁵ In the fourth book of *Physics*, examining the links between space, spatiality, and the location of beings, Aristotle famously suggests that “whatever exists, exists

which sits at the heart of Heidegger's topological thinking. For more see: J. Young, “Poets and Rivers: Heidegger on Hölderlin's ‘Der Ister’”, p. 413.

⁴⁴ This point will become clearer in *On the Way to Language*, as tied to the “way-making movement” (*Be-wägung*) of language.

somewhere”.⁴⁶ This holds true for all phenomena except for the unmovable mover, which is located outside of place, though that which is encompassed and contained in space must also exist somewhere. Nonetheless, things cannot be contained in another body of space *ad infinitum*. Therefore, place is not only a body in which beings are located, since if this were the case, bodies that the place at issue contains would have no room in which they could be located; two bodies would collapse into one another, which is not possible. Aristotle hence denies that place can be conceived of as matter (*hyle*) or form (*eidos*), which is part of his critique of Plato’s notion of space (*chôra*) that Plato develops in the *Timaeus* dialogue as the infinite womb.⁴⁷ Being neither matter nor form, Aristotle argues that the place of the boat is what constantly bounds and encompasses the river such that the river constantly appears as the site of the boat.⁴⁸ Although the boat’s location changes during its course, its place remains the same since the boat belongs to its proper boundaries that are in motion. Thus appears the definition of place (*topos*) as

“... the first immovable limit of what encompasses the thing.”⁴⁹

It is crucial to emphasise that here Aristotle suggests that no

“... speculations as to place would ever have arisen had there been no such thing as movement, or change of place.”⁵⁰

Although the physical place of the boat may change from one location to another, the boat, in each case has, or belongs to, its own embodied space. Thus, “place [is] an ‘immovable vessel’, and vessel [is] a ‘moveable place’”.⁵¹ This idea has important consequences for Heidegger’s own thought. As Walter Brogan points out,

“Place is not an indifferent container that defines the being. Rather, the being arrives in its place and thereby its place first comes to be.”⁵²

This idea is tied to Heidegger’s conception that dwelling in a dwelling-place does not indicate a mere remaining at home, or in a familiar site, which would solely amount to a sense of cultural captivity or rootedness. Much rather, dwelling necessitates the interplay between “wandering” (*wandern*) and “whiling” (*weilen*), or “staying, remaining”. Of course, it must be underlined that whilst for Heidegger place does not mean the location of an entity as the case in Aristotle, in distinction from the modern definition of place, the place of a phenomenon does not solely connote a fixed point in space either. In turn, if for Aristotle things are always underway, on the way to their proper place, or end (*télos*), which is not the case in Heidegger’s thought, Heidegger’s idea of the essence of human existence and its temporal structure nonetheless links up with Aristotle’s idea of movement. As Thomas Sheehan argues, for Aristotle, unlike Plato, the realness of things does not only consist in their constant, unchanging presence (*eidos*), but in their being-towards-completion. Accordingly, the notion of movement as *energeia atelēs*, which means “the incomplete completion of something”,⁵³ is also the basis of Heidegger’s early conception of “time” as the horizon of the meaning of being of beings. If the possibility of dwelling as “becoming-at-home” depends on the possibility of a “homecoming” and on the appropriation of the origin from the end, this means that dwelling signifies the hermeneutic capacity to re-interpret the home. Instead of being readily available to our understanding, the meaning of things become manifest. Thus, the meaningful disclosure of things implies

the “stretchedness” between possibility and actuality in their becoming what they are. Sheehan suggests:

“The ‘re-turn’ or turning back to our here-and-now-selves from out of the possibility that we are is also a ‘re-turn’ to the things we currently encounter as we render them meaningfully present in terms of this or that specific possibility. This dynamic structure of ahead-and-return is what Heidegger is getting at with his notion of ‘temporality’ as thrown-openness.”⁵⁴

What Sheehan explains can and needs to be connected with Heidegger’s notion of becoming-at-home and the first law of phenomenology that the river reveals. Dwelling requires nearness to be experienced as nearness. While Heidegger writes, “the abode is a whiling. It needs a while. In such a whiling human beings find rest” (DI 23–24/20), it is not only a place of comfort and tranquillity. The nearness in which we find ourselves at the hearth provides us with the possibility to return to it: what is near always demands to be re-interpreted, that is, *journeyed*. As explained with regards to the sameness of the respective dwellings of Antigone and the Ister, the interval between the familiar and the unfamiliar, the liminal space of confrontation in the between, is precisely what renders dwelling – becoming at home – a possibility. In that sense, as regards with the idea of dwelling, a sheer opposition between the temporal and the spatial, temporariness and permanence, becoming and being can no longer hold. The “temporal” movement of the river already refers to the “spatial” unity of place. The Ister’s streaming activity, as if it were running backwards “from the East”, reveals the need for homecoming to the origin as that which is to be re-interpreted and be made one’s own.

The abovementioned idea has important implications since thinking with Heidegger it appears that a psychological or spiritual sense of belonging to home, or even passing one’s lifetime in proximity to one’s place of birth, does not lead to “dwelling”. Dwelling is rather about remaining with(in) the manifestation of place through (and as) time, and more importantly, experiencing time as the opening up of the place of existence. To put it more succinctly, the *occurrence* of place is what we experience as time. The sense of journeying at issue, which is always related to the disclosure of place, is the *poietic* experience of “temporality”. The river shows forth the poietic dimension of time as journeying (*Wanderung*), a journeying that is neither chronological nor consequential, but is tied to the free(ing)-whirling movement of the opening of being,⁵⁵ which also offers us the meaning of “temporality” (*Zeitlichkeit*). What is called the “temporal” has little to do with the consequential passing

For more see: Martin Heidegger, *Unterwegs Zur Sprache* (GA 12), Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main 1985, pp. 249–250.

45

Heidegger offers a critical interpretation of Aristotle’s idea of *topos* and movement as early as in the early 1920s. For more see: Martin Heidegger, *Platons Sophistes*, Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt 1992, p. 101, 105–109.

46

Aristotle, *Physics IV*, 208a80–81.

47

Ibid., 209a5–8.

48

Ibid., 212a20.

49

Ibid., 212b18–19.

50

Ibid., 211a15–18.

51

Ibid., 212a15–16.

52

Walter Brogan, *Heidegger and Aristotle. The Twofoldness of Being*, State University of New York Press, Albany 2005, p. 36.

53

T. Sheehan, *Making Sense of Heidegger*, p. 46

of each moment which are added onto one another.⁵⁶ As Malpas suggests, for Heidegger both space as extension and time as successive ecstases are derivative of our experience of place as the occurrence of un-concealment, which is the main issue of Heidegger's idea of "original temporality".⁵⁷ The "temporal" dimension of being is the same appropriative "occurrence" of the river, the rendering open of the dwelling-place where the human being can make sense of things within the purview of finitude. The spacetime's "wandering" appears as the *stretching out* of place.

The Ister: Heidegger's Topology of Language

DI marks an extremely critical point in Heidegger's later thought: not only that his "topology of being" (*Topologie des Seins*) and the thinking of place becomes explicit both in method and content, but it also appears that his topology cannot be separated from his *topology of language*.⁵⁸ As stated in Heidegger's Le Thor seminars in 1969, the shift from the (1) thinking of the horizon of meaningfulness to (2) the meaningful emergence and un-concealment of things takes a new turn with the (3) thinking of the place, or the *topos* of *Ereignis*.⁵⁹ Heidegger calls the later phase of his thought "topology of being", and not chorology of being, for while Plato's *chôra* emerges as the womb of things, Aristotle's *topos* indicates the bodily interface between beings.⁶⁰ Now, if Heidegger can write that "language is the house of being" in the *Letter on Humanism*, which is considered by Malpas the turning point in Heidegger's topological thought,⁶¹ this is owing to the topology of poetic language that Heidegger developed in the early 1940s, as made explicit in *DI*. Heidegger's topological account of *Der Ister* and his conceptual analysis of the rivers as originary *topoi* co-determine and maintain each other in the quest of making sense of language as the *place* of being and dwelling.

54
Ibid., p. 103.

55
Ibid., p. 97.

56
It is no coincidence that the later Heidegger asks: "Lautet dann der Titel der Aufgabe des Denkens statt Sein und Zeit: Lichtung und Anwesenheit?", indicating that the thinking of "time" first requires grasping the link between the openness, or the "clearing and presencing". – See: Martin Heidegger, *Zur Sache des Denkens*, Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main 2007, p. 90.

57
J. Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology*, p. 102.

58
K. Ziarek, *Language after Heidegger*, p. 135.

59
Martin Heidegger, *Seminare*, Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main 1986, p. 344.

60
Brogan puts the idea astutely: "It is this way of being that directs and makes possible the kinds of motion that beings undergo. This way of being is *physis*. *Physis* is the *arche* of beings that move according to their nature. *Physis* is not motion but the *arche* of the motion in beings such that it lets them be the beings they are." – W. Brogan, *Heidegger and Aristotle*, p. 79.

61
J. Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, p. 151.

Axel Onur Karamercan

Heidegger o Hölderlinovoj himni *Der Ister*

Obitavanje pjesnika i pravljenje mjesta rijeke

Sažetak

*Ovaj članak nudi topološki prikaz predavanja Martina Heideggera iz 1942. o himni *Der Ister* njemačkog pjesnika Friedricha Hölderlina. Glavni je cilj članka istražiti odnos između poetskog razotkrivanja mjesta i mjesta poetskog razotkrivanja u Heideggerovoj misli 1940-ih. Prvo, obrnuti tijek rijeke identificiran je kao središnja tema himne, što vodi do Heideggerove ideje stanovanja kao poetskog povratka domu. Drugo, nakon rasvjetljavanja veze između rijeke Dunav i Antigone i procjene filozofskih temelja Heideggerova povlačenja iz politike, Heideggerova pretpolitička ideja polisa ispituje se kao povezana s njegovim razmišljanjem o pravljenju mjesta. Konačno, razmatra se međuigra između putovanja i ostajanja da bi se razjasnio Heideggerov pojam obitavanja, vremena i mjesta, te njegova kritika metafizičke koncepcije prostora i vremena.*

Ključne riječi

Martin Heidegger, Friedrich Hölderlin, *Ister*, Dunav, mjesto, poetsko obitavanje, topologija jezika

Axel Onur Karamercan

Heidegger über Hölderlins Hymne *Der Ister*

Das Wohnen des Dichters und die Raumgestaltung des Flusses

Zusammenfassung

*Dieser Artikel bietet eine topologische Verbildlichung von Martin Heideggers Vorlesung von 1942 über die Hymne *Der Ister* des deutschen Dichters Friedrich Hölderlin. Die Hauptintention des Artikels ist es, die Relation zwischen der dichterische Unverborgenheit des Ortes und dem Ort der dichterischen Unverborgenheit in Heideggers Gedanken in den 1940er-Jahren zu durchleuchten. Erstens wird das Rückwärtsströmen des Flusses als zentrales Thema der Hymne identifiziert, was zu Heideggers Idee des Wohnens als dichterische Heimkehr führt. Zweitens wird nach der Erläuterung der Verbindung zwischen dem Fluss Donau und Antigone sowie der Bewertung der philosophischen Fundamente von Heideggers Rückzug aus der Politik Heideggers vopolitische Idee der Polis als verflochten mit seinem Denken über die Raumgestaltung examiniert. Schließlich wird dem Wechselspiel zwischen Reisen und Bleiben auf den Grund gegangen, um Heideggers Begriff von Wohnen, Zeit und Ort sowie seine Kritik an der metaphysischen Konzeption von Raum und Zeit zu verdeutlichen.*

Schlüsselwörter

Martin Heidegger, Friedrich Hölderlin, *Der Ister*, Donau, Ort, poetisches Wohnen, Topologie der Sprache

Axel Onur Karamercan

Heidegger sur l'hymne *Der Ister* de Hölderlin

L'habiter du poète et l'aménagement du fleuve

Résumé

*Le présent article propose une approche topologique du cours datant de 1942 que Martin Heidegger consacre à l'hymne *Der Ister* du poète allemand Friedrich Hölderlin. Son principal objectif est d'interroger la relation entre le dévoilement poétique du lieu et le lieu du dévoilement poétique dans la pensée de Heidegger des années 1940. L'article commence par identifier l'aller-à-reculons de l'Ister comme le thème principal de l'hymne, ce qui mène à l'idée de Heidegger de l'habiter comme d'un retournement natal poétique. Ensuite, après avoir mis en lumière le lien entre le fleuve du Danube et Antigone, et évalué les fondements philosophiques de son retrait de la politique, l'idée heideggérienne prépolitique de la polis est interrogée en rapport avec ses réflexions sur l'aménagement du lieu. Enfin, l'article aborde l'interaction constante entre voyager et rester afin d'éclairer le concept de Heidegger de l'habiter, du temps et du lieu, ainsi que sa critique de la conception métaphysique de l'espace et du temps.*

Mots-clés

Martin Heidegger, Friedrich Hölderlin, *Ister*, Danube, lieu, l'habiter poétique, topologie du langage