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The Pitch Black Night of Human Creation:

Calling Heidegger's Philosophy of Terror to Account

Peter Murphy

Abstract: "The origin of something is the source of its nature" (Heidegger). According to this view, art is the un-concealment of the source, founding or beginning of things, including political things like the state. An "historical people" emerges from such beginnings, just like great works of art supposedly do. This view of things belongs to the tradition of genesis thinking that meanders from theistic creationism to modern romanticism. Heidegger culminates this tradition by radicalizing it. His idea of genesis is to locate the source of things in "nothing". This is not an ordinary "nothing" but rather the extraordinary "nothing" of terror and annihilation. Heidegger's equation of being and the abyssal "nothing", the work of the unimaginable, presents a far-reaching and disturbing political-philosophical apologia for ontological terror and social destruction.

I.

The Greeks were the first historical people. At least Heidegger thought so. They were the first to create themselves in time, the first to break the rule of the habitual, the first to be original. The title of Heidegger's 1935 lecture on "The Origin of the Work of Art" sums up in three words—origin, work and art—the emergence of an historical people.[1] The "work" of the work of art is to open up a world. The "origin" of the work of art is the beginning, the advent in time, of such a world. This emergence in time is historical. "Art's" work is to create a world historical people.

The first historical people, the Greeks, were the beginning of all beginnings. Their beginning lay in the art of the Greek temple. This art work opened up a "world" (Heidegger, 1971: 41-43). This act of world creation was both an act of art and an act of nature. This aesthetic nature was the self-generating creating coming forth of things for the first time. "The Greeks", Heidegger muses, "called this emerging and rising in itself and in all things *phusis*." (Heidegger, 1971: 42)

As we'll see, this is both true and untrue. But, for the moment, let us just continue to follow Heidegger along.

"To be a work means to set up a world." (Heidegger, 1971: 44) To set up means to open up. To open up means to "to come forth for the very first time." (Heidegger, 1971: 46) The work of art opens a world by bringing forth all the fundamental distinctions of things—the remoteness and nearness, the scope and limits, of things. The rockiness of rocks, the glimmer of metals, the spaciousness of space, the colour of things—in short, the qualities of things, the self-subsistence of things, their is-ness, their being, originates when art opens a world. All of this comes forth from where? It comes forth from concealment, from self-seclusion, from what it is that shutters, protects, hides and conceals. In the case of stone and metal, that means the earth. Heidegger, the master of paradox, has the work of art—in other words, the work of world creation—bring forth the earth. "In setting up a world, the work sets forth the earth." (Heidegger, 1971: 46)

The work of art that begins a world does so by opening and revealing. It opens up both what is hidden away and what hides away. Even the earth, which conceals and hides, is brought forth by the work of un-concealment. Heidegger is determined to show what is concealed but in a very peculiar way. He is a master of paradox, do not forget. He is fascinated by a kind of truth that is an untruth (Heidegger, 1971: 60). There is no enlightenment intended here. The truth of un-concealment is intimately bound up with concealment, while openness brings forth denial and evasion. What is most open is what is most concealed, what is most disclosed is what is most shuttered.

The notion that truth is an untruth is, at first glance, perplexing. But in fact it is not unusual, and certainly the idea is not peculiar to Heidegger. Art is a fiction or an artifice, and yet it can tell the truth. It can reveal and show things that otherwise are obscure to us. Yet Heidegger is not talking about fiction or artifice or imagination. He is talking about some other truth.

This truth reveals what it reveals through evasion and denial. It unveils by concealment. This is the truth of war. It is the truth that is a war, with all of the characteristics of war not least evasion and deceit mobilized against openness and honesty. Truth, though, is not identifiable with one side or the other of this war. Truth is neither honesty nor deceit but rather the battle of the two. It is at war with itself. In this war, truth harbours concealment, and concealment is brought forward by revelation (Heidegger, 1971: 49). But this is not, Heidegger insists, slyly brushing off the Pre-

Socratics, an "empty unity of opposites" (Heidegger 1971, 49). Rather, truth is a war marked by "essential striving". This is where "the opponents"—unveiling and concealing—"raise each other into the self-assertion of their natures" (Heidegger, 1971: 49). In this war, the work-being of work—the nature of the work of the art of creation—"consists in the fighting of the battle between world and earth", openness and closure.

One wonders whether this tells us something about Heidegger's own nature as well. Was the nature of his own self, a battle ground between openness and concealment?

Whatever the case of Heidegger personally, the war of concealment and revelation is a strange battle. It is paradoxical battle. For in this battle, enemies are friends and friends are enemies. When Heidegger asks Pilate's cynical question—"what is truth?"—he answers it simply enough: truth is untruth (Heidegger, 1971: 60). Openness is concealment. That is simple enough. But how does Heidegger get to that point?

Well, Heidegger says, the Greek word for truth, *alētheia*, means the unconcealedness of being (Heidegger 1971: 36, 51, 59). For the present, let us not worry that it means nothing of the kind. Greek truth, *alētheia*, was not revelation but the overcoming of oblivion. Truth was the antipodes of the mythical Hades and its river of Lethe, the source of deadly sleep. Greek truth negated the negation of the lethal soma because it stood aside, apart, from the birth and death of things in time. Greek truth signified what was imperishable or immortal.

Still, we should not argue about this, not yet anyway. Let us for the moment simply accept Heidegger's declaration at face value: Truth is un-concealment. So how then can truth also be concealment?

The sting in the tail, Heidegger declares—and Heidegger is a master of declaration—is that un-concealment was, for thought, the most concealed thing in Greek existence. The middle term of this conundrum was art. The work of art—which originates worlds, bringing them forth by opening them up—manages in this act of un-concealment to bring forth concealment. To explain this, Heidegger draws an analogy. Un-concealment is like a clearing in the midst of being. Thanks to this clearing, beings are revealed. But this has the effect that beings are concealed as well. Heidegger notes, and quite reasonably so, that everything we encounter, every presence we meet, always withholds itself (Heidegger, 1971: 53). This is the "curious opposition" of presence.

Every time a being opens up, it also hides, obscures and conceals itself. It conceals, it denies, it dissembles (Heidegger, 1971: 54-55). Truth is untruth.

There is something in this. Revelation is not pretty. When we insist on the truth, when we demand that someone "tell me the truth", we often expect the worst. We expect something bad—sometimes something terrible—to be revealed. "Truth time" exposes bad things. We hide bad things. Truth exposes what has been hidden.

II.

Enough, for the moment, about truth—what about art? Art is a work that brings forth a world. The work is the bringing forth. Bringing forth is creation (Heidegger, 1971: 58). That which is created is the being that grows out of its own nature by its own accord. Creation is *phusis*—that Greek word again (Heidegger, 1971: 59). Creation is the outgrowth of a self-growing, self-organizing nature. Creation is an "emerging and rising in itself and in all things". That is a very Greek notion. We recognize the echoes of Plato and Aristotle in it. In Heidegger, though, self-organization, self-movement, and self-ruling are also self-originating in the sense of genesis. Preoccupation with genesis or origin is not characteristically Greek. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" is far removed from Plato's demiurge that imitates the patterns of the forms of the cosmos. The work of art, the work of creation—in Heidegger's account—is the work of origin or genesis. This hints at a Creator God. But Heidegger's account is not theistic. Rather it is aesthetic. In other words, to the extent that it is religious, it is a kind of art-religion. It is the work of art that creates. It does so through the unmediated character of a beginning (Heidegger, 1971: 76). Origin, origination, and incipience are central to the work of art. Worlds are created through beginnings.

Such beginnings are an emergence in time out of nothing. There are no media or forms out of which worlds emerge, which is to say also that there is no mediation by immortal, durable, persistent forms. There is no metaphysics. This is so, Heidegger insists, because worlds are beginnings, and a beginning cannot begin *in* something else, determined *by* something else. It cannot be mediated *through* something else. This is so because beginnings—true beginnings which are also untrue beginnings—are world historic. History is the advent of what has no precedent.

Now a brief word of qualification: Such elemental beginnings, Heidegger maintains, have nothing to do with what is primitive. The primitive is futureless and endless. It remains outside of history's time. In contrast a beginning contains in itself its own end. Origin thus supposes extinction. This is a paradox of creation. What is primitive in contrast doesn't have this paradoxical character. A beginning thus is a beginning in time. It is an act of temporal differentiation as opposed to temporal repetition. This act discloses itself in a massive *polemos*. Creation is an upsurge in the midst of a titanic struggle of powers. It is destructive and constructive. As a consequence, worlds that have grown old are demolished, while other worlds, new worlds, worlds that are truly new, emerge in their place.

A beginning in time ferments strife. It does so because a beginning, an opening, is both unfamiliar and extraordinary. It is unfamiliar because it is new, and what is new, truly new, undoes what precedes it. This undoing is what makes that which is truly new also preternaturally extraordinary. It is extraordinary because it creates a world both that has a precedent (the Greek beginning) and that has absolutely no precedent whatsoever. World historic creation is thus torn—it is impossibly, almost inconceivably torn. It is torn because it emerges in and out of an explosion of forces, each of which both obliterate and become the other. Thus, of necessity, this emergence contains strife—unimaginably tensile strife.

It is hardly surprising then that emergence is a state of emergency, and the beginning, the advent, is a war. Heidegger declares that beginnings begin in a war with the familiar and the ordinary. Art unleashes this war. It is a war of truth against itself. It is a war of truth that is fictional and of lies that reveal things. It is also a war between revelation and concealment. In this war, what is hidden is exposed and what is revealed hides itself from the world. Along the rim of this paradoxical volcanic rift occurs the act of foundation. Visceral paradoxes, like the paradox of the opening of the earth, help to elucidate the impossible-possible event of a ground-laying grounding (Heidegger, 1971: 76). In such a beginning, founding, or ground-laying occurs an act of history or, more precisely, the founding act of an historical people (Heidegger, 1971: 76-77).

This is Adventist History. According to Heidegger, this "in the beginning" has happened three times. The *first time* was in ancient Greece, "when Being was set into

work, setting the standard". The *second time* was in the Middle Ages when the realm of beings that Greece opened up was "transformed into a being in the sense of God's creation". Note the awkwardness of Heidegger's expression when he talks about the medieval era. The *third time* of founding was the Modern Age—when beings became objects (Heidegger, 1971: 77). Heidegger's philosophy is full of anticipation of the coming of a *fourth time*.

In each of these cases, history begins. It starts over but without repetition, even if the Greeks "set the standard". Whenever the work of art does its work, a *thrust* enters history. Art does the work of truth at war with itself. It founds, it originates.

III.

In all of this, there are some things to agree with Heidegger. Yes, art is world making. Yes, acts of creation are paradoxical. Yes, there are a handful of societies that have managed to install paradox at their heart. Yes, the ancient Greeks and the Modern European West would be included in this cluster. It is doubtful, however, if the Middle Ages would make the grade—and, even if Heidegger would protest it, Rome and America also belong in this cohort, possibly Japan as well. All of these are societies driven by deep, deep paradoxes, sometimes almost unfathomable paradoxes, and all them thus capable of acts of world making not seen, and more to the point not possible, in other less ambidextrous societies.

But, as for Heidegger's account of creation, I'd take issue with that in almost every aspect. What Heidegger offers is a philosophy of "creation out of nothing". The beginning that interrupts history, which starts and re-starts it yet without repeating it, is a disclosure of Nothing. Creation brings forth the something that is nothing, or the nothing that is something. I happily accept that this is not per se nonsensical or rather it is a non-sense that makes sense. Creation and creativity rely on the force of paradox. This force might be thought of as the engine of creation. Paradox is essential to the nature or *phusis* of creation. What is at issue is not this generality, but rather the specific creationist paradox of the "creation of something out of nothing"—the creation of determinations out of indetermination.

To see where the creationist paradox leads Heidegger, let us turn our attention to the lecture series that he gave in the winter semester of 1941 (Heidegger, 1993). There, in those lectures, we begin to see clearly the menace of the idea of creation out of nothing, and the ominous implications of creation forged in the battle of the unfamiliar with the familiar amidst the strife of truth at war with itself.

This is the battle of a truth that is untruthful. It is war and, in war, warriors deceive. They survive on cunning and ruse. So creation out of nothing in the first instance is the hiding of truth that begins things by the un-concealing of them. Un-concealment, *alētheia*—that which for the Greeks had been the overcoming of the oblivion of death of the river *lethe*, the a-lethal act—in Heidegger's account hides the truth. Hiding the truth, lying, is the work of art. It reveals first by hiding a (dreadful) truth—the truth of obliteration that is the essence of Being. To this end Heidegger invokes Nietzsche: "One who tells the truth ends by realizing that he always lies." Thus "we have art so that we do not perish from the truth." "We need the lie in order that we achieve victory over this reality… in order to live." (Heidegger, 1991: 215, 216, 217) Still rehearsing Nietzsche, Heidegger says of art: it is the will to semblance. It is illusion, deception, and untruth. Art lies. The art of war is the art of lying. The lie of Nietzsche's artist, however, is not just strategic in nature. Its rationale is not just to attain victory over the enemy. More fundamentally the lie hides what is shocking, namely the works of *lethe*. It shelters us from the experience of its horror. It shields us from seeing what is dreadful. The lie is necessary so that we do not look into the abyss. We cannot cope with the unimaginable concealed in the abyss.

Heidegger, though, is not Nietzsche. For just as much as Heidegger admits to the power of the aesthetic lie, he also doesn't (really) believe in it. Rather he wants us, mortals, to confront, engage, and be annihilated by the fatal truth of the abyss. This is why he says that truth is at war with itself. This is not truth in the Greek sense of a-lethal knowledge, the unvarnished counter to oblivious death. Heidegger's truth is not the Greek-Christian death of death (Carroll, 2001). It is not even the consoling untruthful truth that Nietzschean artists mint. It is not their coddled play with transgression and fictitious horror. Ordinary works of ordinary artists are works of imagination. Creation is the work of the unimaginable. This is the truth that succumbs to oblivion and that

desires, or has us desire, death. It is a truth that throws back the shutters to reveal a petrifying pitiless nothingness. Truth is horror, truth is terror. Truth is the scream. If art hides it or prettifies it, then philosophy reveals it and sanctifies it. It does so not to silence the screams but in order to amplify them—for the scream is the unspeakable speech that is the sign, the confirmation, and the validation of the coming of annihilation. Heidegger's philosophy speaks truth to death when it calls up the obliteration that is the essence of being.

Obliteration, not just negation, on this account is creation. Only by destruction can new worlds be created. Thus, Heidegger reasons, human beings must become apolitical: *without city and place, lonely, strange and alien... without statute and limit, without structure and order, because they themselves as creators must create all this*.[2] Only in nothing, and only through the overpowering power of struggle, strife and *polemos* that leads to the unutterable un-doing of things, do position, order and rank, cleavages, distributions and joints, in short, the world, open up. And only this type of world-becoming is creative.

Creation is originary or incipient (Heidegger, 1993: 5-6). This, Heidegger proposes, is the significance of the Greeks. They begin the beginning. They perform the first act of incipient creation, where the beginning contains the future or the end. When Heidegger says that "the inception of our history is the Greeks", what he means is that the Greeks are the beginning of beginnings, the foundation of foundations (Heidegger, 1993: 13). Let us all be "struck by the incipient", he declares (Heidegger, 1993: 17).

I am not sure that exposing ourselves to the thunder-bolt of the incipient is, at all or in any respect, a good idea—at least if we place any value at all on our lives. We will soon enough discover that, so far as incipient creation is concerned, the act of creation requires our destruction. This is the concealed truth of the beginning and subsequent re-beginnings of historical peoples. What is hidden, understandably, is that creation requires our annihilation.

This is so because Nothing corresponds to Being (Heidegger, 1993: 44). Being is the being that grows of its own accord… out of nothing. What is nothing? Heidegger insists that it is not something "indifferently negative" (Heidegger, 1993: 45). Nothing is not just "nothing" (Heidegger, 1993: 45). Nothing rather is the paradoxical empty

something that invokes Terror. It calls up the horror of standing before the Nothing that is nihilation (Heidegger, 1993: 45). It derives meaning from the terror unleashed by extermination.

Nihilation is not just a metaphor. Out of the terror of the beginning, the history of a world emerges. Heidegger explains this with casual brutality: "…the Nothing does not need beings in order to be the Nothing as a result of their elimination." (Heidegger, 1993: 46) This, remember, is 1941. And should the auditor have missed the point, Heidegger immediately reiterates with emphasis: "The Nothing does not need beings." (Heidegger, 1993: 46)

Put another way: Being is empty. It is the emptiest emptiness (Heidegger, 1993: 46). It is also an emptiness that is a surplus. This is an inverted Neo-Platonism. It is the inverse of the Neo-Platonic plenitude that overflows. It is a barrenness that generates a surplus. Should anyone still be unsure of what Heidegger is getting at, he announces a little further on in his lectures that: "in the extremity of the desired annihilation of all beings, and precisely here, being must appear." (Heidegger, 1993: 52)

In case you missed that, I'll repeat it: "in the extremity of the desired annihilation of all beings, and precisely here, being must appear."

Are you still not sure that Heidegger means what he says? Then consider that still further on in the 1941 winter lectures, he again warms to the theme that there is nothing ordinary and everything terrifying about Nothing. Indeed, so extraordinary is it, this is a horror that exceeds our capacity to imagine it: "… to us the Nothing is not a nullity. To recoil in terror of annihilation and to be horrified by devastation is to shrink back from something that cannot be addressed as mere imagination, as something baseless." (Heidegger, 1993: 61) Heidegger often returns to the point that "nothing" is not a mere negative. In his 1942 lectures on Höderlin's "The Ister", he equates nothing with the uncanny, with what is frightful, powerful and in-habitual, with what overpowers and unmakes the home (Heidegger, 1996: 63-87). This un-homeliness is the act of a being, the human being, which proceeds towards its own death (Heidegger, 1996: 75). This is a being that comes to nothing. This is the being whose nature is "un". This "un" is the nature of a being that destroys its homely self in the drive for what is in-habitual and extra-ordinary. The "un" is not just a negation but an overpowering of things. This

overpowering, this uncanny power, towers above humanity, revealing itself in horror and terror. In order to create, this power must annihilate.

IV.

In works of fiction, horror is left to the imagination. In the works of uncanny bestiality, however, the horror is unimaginable. It can be prosaically reported and meticulously recorded but the imagination is repelled by it. Take for instance the recorded works of that attentive student of Hitler and Stalin, the Baath Party leader and psychopath Saddam Hussein. Even professionals collecting evidence on Saddam's torturers find the videos of their deeds almost impossible to watch.[3] To watch means having to imagine unimaginable horror. It means having to imagine the endless repetition of such horror. The human mind flinches and turns away from such thoughts. The imagination shudders, in revulsion, as the video clip

> opens amid Saddam's elite troops, Saddam Fedayeen, chanting 'With blood and spirit we will redeem you Saddam.' The Fedayeen stand barking and clapping in a courtyard. A blindfolded prisoner, forced to his knees and held in position, has his arm outstretched before him along a low concrete wall. A masked member of the Fedayeen raises high a three-foot-long blade and ferociously slams down on the man's hand, slicing through his fingertips. The victim is wailing, screaming in agony. The swordsman-torturer, not sufficiently satisfied with his first effort, raises the sword again and drives down once more on the man's immobile hand. This time he severs the fingers closer to the knuckles as the blood spurts from his hand spilling over and down the concrete slab. The victim emits a wail I have never heard—*could never imagine hearing*—from a grown man, this time louder, harder than the first.

Such terror of annihilation as this cannot be grasped, or long contemplated, by the imagination. For terror of this kind is unimaginable. It is not the terror of the sublime imagination that we are familiar with, say, from Kant's Third Critique. Rather, in the case of the unimaginable, we are on the terrain of the French Revolution where the guillotine has replaced the imagination, and horror is enacted on a mass scale. Such terror is not the work of ruthless statecraft that torments its enemies but rather it is the

commission of social desecration on a scale that is beyond imagination. This is a world, or perhaps more exactly an under-world, or an un-world, where day after day, in endless procession, tens of thousands of times

> a hooded and blindfolded prisoner is led to a room where he is forced to kneel, hands tied behind his back. Another man sits before the prisoner with thick metal tweezers and a scalpel. With his left hand he grabs the prisoner's tongue with the tweezers and pulls it forward from his head. With the scalpel in his other hand, he slices through the prisoner's tongue, cutting it from his mouth and then dropping it on the floor.

In the works of the unimaginable, when deeds such as this are repeated an incalculable numbers of times, there is an unmistakable strain of social necrophilia. When the power of the unimaginable became explicit, for the first time, in the Terror of the French Revolution, death is transformed in status from a violent political means to a necrotic social end. Death's works are enacted on an all-consuming social scale.

The germ of this necrotic strain threaded its way for centuries through the Faustian art-culture and art-religion of the European West. It mutated from the Gothic era via the Baroque to Romanticism. But it is not until the French Revolution that the threshold between grisly imagination and the unimaginable is finally crossed over. What made the difference? Most crucially, the all-devouring overpowering of state and society found a justification—in the act of creation.

As Heidegger later put it, creation cannot abide structure and order, statute and limit because creators must create all of this. The radicalism of Heidegger is evident when he quotes from a letter that Hölderlin wrote to his brother (Heidegger, 1993: 62). Hölderlin puzzles about whether the assault of Nothing on society and humankind should be opposed? Heidegger's answer to this question is a mocking rhetorical counter-question. What if the Nothing that horrifies man and displaces him from his usual dallying and evasions were the same as Being? If this was the case, Heidegger reasons, then Being would have to announce itself as something horrifying and dreadful. For anything else is an avoidance of Being. There is no doubt that Heidegger thinks that the time has come for this announcement. It is too late for any more equivocation.

So no wonder that disclosure, un-concealment and truth function to hide, cover up and conceal something dreadful. This is the secret of nihilation that ordinary humanity, sensibly, evades. To be shaken from this evasion is to be confronted with the horror and dread of Nothing. Out of this Nothing and the fear and trembling it breeds comes new worlds. The new originates in dread and fear. Creation out of nothing is the vocation of those who do not evade the horrifying and the dreadful but who embrace and enact it. It is the vocation of those who contemplate, not the beauty of forms, but the works of devastation and holocaust. It is the vocation of those who wish for the worst not the best.

Heidegger very pointedly states in his 1942 lectures on Hölderlin that the Nothing of the unimaginable belongs to evil (Heidegger, 1996: 78). Extraordinarily, he instructs us to understand this evil not as something morally bad, that is as something characteristic of human behavior, but as an essential trait of Being itself within whose realm human beings journey. He divines that what is morally reprehensible in human beings is *evil but not immoral* in the context of Being. This is an appalling distinction yet one that, in various guises, has been remarkably influential from the epoch of the French Revolution onwards via Communism and Nazism to Islamofacism. Perhaps in understanding Heidegger's distinction, chilling as it is, we might move a step closer to making some sense of this long and disturbing passage through the pitch black night of human creation. The conundrum of modern life is not so much that necromanticism exists, although that is puzzling enough, but that the desire for abysmal nothingness has continuously reinvented itself in ever more gruesome ways in the last two hundred years and, in the course of these reincarnations, has attracted endless followers who see mass murder as an evil that is not immoral, a license to commit the worst of crimes and yet have them exculpated.[4]

V.

The refrain of those who march to the tune of *"evil but not immoral"* is that what begins, ends, and what ends, begins. In both cases, the end is annihilation and only the time of destruction can give birth to worlds. Time casts a deep shadow across the body of Heidegger's philosophy. The conjugation of "being and time" is the most powerful leitmotif of his work. Historical time is the midwife of precocious acts of creation. These

acts are undetermined. Nothing, *nihil*, "causes" them. They are unmediated. These miraculous beginnings in time are preceded by nothing and are destined to expire in nothing. Nothing is the emptiness that is filled up with the pure difference of "un". Time creates through "un"-doing. The "un"-doings of historical time precede and postdate creation. The constant alteration of time's "un"-doings is the only constant left us. It is the only (ironic) trace of the metaphysical.

Heidegger repeatedly and insistently attributes creation, creation out of nothing and into nothing, to the Greeks. But Greek nature or *phusis*, the coming forth or originating of something out of itself, was not ever, and could not ever be, creation out of nothing. The notion of an emergence out of nothing is shaped by the theistic creation mythology of the Middle East. It underpins the biblical account of genesis. The Greeks had no interest in genesis thinking. For the Greeks, *phusis* implied durable, imperishable form. Creation, which was usually understood as a kind of making, occurred when the material stuff of self, society and nature was moulded by form, reason or spirit. From the Pre-Socratics through Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics and the Epicureans, there were lively arguments about the nature of this nature. But mostly it was agreed that *phusis* was a kind of self-propelling morphology. Whatever was said in these debates, no one ever equated the morphology of form, reason or spirit with nothing—whether this was the nothing of birth or the nothing of extinction.

Heidegger understood the morphological nature of Greek *phusis* perfectly well. In the first volume of his Nietzsche lectures, he gives a very fine account of Platonism (Heidegger, 1991: 162-199). He describes how the Greek *phusis* brings forth form or *morphe*, the limit or the boundary, the configuration of a being. He also describes how one's delight in art arises from logical, mathematical feelings—from the feeling for letting one's mood be determined by order, boundary and overview. Yet, for Heidegger, the lure of destruction, change and becoming, or rather their continuum, is irresistible. The durability and constancy of Platonic metaphysical being cannot trump the seduction of alteration and destruction. Nor can it separate the one of these (alteration) from the other (destruction).

Here we have before us two models of creation, two concepts of *phusis*. For Heidegger, point blank, "the origin of something is the source of its nature." This is an

opening shot from his 1935 lecture. According to this view, art is the un-concealment of the source, founding or beginning of things. Historical peoples emerge from such beginnings. They are a genesis out of the Nothing that terrifies. This view of things does not belong to the form thinking of the Greeks but to the genre of genesis thinking that meanders from pre-modern theistic creationism to modern necromanticism and its philosophies of Terror (Murphy and Roberts, 2004). Genesis thinking equates origin (a beginning in time) and nature. The counter-view, the Classical Greek view, is that nature is *phusis* not *arche*. *Phusis*, from which all things emerge, is a set of immutable aesthetic qualities—like symmetry, proportionality, harmony, and rhythm. Such metaphysical, Platonic qualities underpin the grandest expressions of cosmos, society and self.

When historical peoples turn against metaphysics, besotted by the lure of genesis, the result is nihilism and necromanticism. The point made here is precisely the contrary of Heidegger's egging-on of the German catastrophe. The antidote to such catastrophes is proper respect for *phusis*, for the timeless super symmetry symbolized by Nature. Nature's forms are immutable. They are the antithesis of a truth that has become historical. This historical truth is a leap that begins in time. It originates like a Creator God does, and this origination supposes annihilation. It creates strife—a rift in continuity. It is this, the destructive advent of historical time, which reveals the equation of Being and Nothingness.

Such an equation is a heady justification of art, just as sublime aesthetic obliteration is a heady explanation of social invention and world creation. It excites and it enthralls. But once the intoxication passes, there is the aftermath of terrible creation-termination to consider. The signs of aftermath are Faustian exhaustion and necromantic devouring of society and art. As we pick our way through the wasteland of social obliteration littered with deathworks, products of abject imaginations that have fallen disastrously in love with the unimaginable, we begin to understand a final awful merciless equation—that out of nothing comes nothing.

Peter Murphy is Associate Professor of Communications**,** Monash University. His recent books include *Civic Justice* and (with David Roberts) *Dialectic of Romanticism*. Email: Peter.Murphy@arts.monash.edu.au

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Notes

[1] See "The Origin of the Art of Work" in Heidegger, 1971.

[2] This comes from Heidegger's 1942 lectures on *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*. The translation is taken not from the standard English language translation, Heidegger (1996), but from Ward (1995: 192).

[3] The following is drawn from the account by the great reporter and broadcaster, William Shawcross (2005) The quotes are from the documentary producer Nick Schulz who recounts how he was "unable to sit through these clips at first, having to turn away several times...."

[4] That Heidegger's philosophy should have become a court philosophy for Iran's theocratic state should not surprise us. The messianic death fixation of that regime, which sacrificed hundreds of thousands of its subjects in the apocalyptic primitive slaughter of the Iraq-Iran War, has uncanny parallels with Germany in the 1930s. When Jurgen Habermas made his 2002 sojourn to Iran, he observed: "During the 1990s, Martin Heidegger and Karl Popper provided the key terminology for a debate between Reza Davari Ardakani on the one side and Abdolkarim Sorush on the other. Davari is now president of the Academy of Sciences and classed with the 'postmodernists'. The latter were particularly drawn to the analysis of the 'nature of technology' in Heidegger's later writings and linked it to the Iranian critique of Western modernity. Sorush, meanwhile, who is currently spending a semester as guest lecturer at Harvard, personally tends toward a mystical branch of Islam, but, as a Popperian, is a resolute adherent of a cognitive division of labor between religion and science. If I understood it correctly, during this dispute Davari rose to the status of philosophical spokesman of the Shiite orthodoxy, while Sorush continues, albeit with dwindling influence, to favor an institutional division of political and religious realms." (Habermas, 2002)