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Author(s): Gianni Vattimo

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# *Verwindung*: Nihilism and the Postmodern in Philosophy\*

GIANNI VATTIMO

## I

*Verwindung* (“overcoming”) is a word that Heidegger uses rather rarely; it appears in one passage in *Holzwege*,<sup>1</sup> in an essay in *Vorträge und Aufsätze*,<sup>2</sup> and, above all, in the first essay of *Identität und Differenz*.<sup>3</sup> With it Heidegger seeks to designate something similar to yet distinct from *Überwindung* (“going beyond”) in that *Verwindung* contains no notion of dialectical sublimation (*Aufhebung*) nor of a “leaving behind” which characterizes the connection we have with a past that no longer has anything to say to us. I believe that if one reflects on what the term “postmodern” may signify in philosophy (and I do not wish to limit myself merely to pointing out a series of analogies, though quite consistent and noteworthy, between particular philosophical tendencies today and what we call postmodernism in literature and in the arts), one ends up encountering this term.

The first philosopher who writes in terms of *Verwindung*—without actually using the word—is not Heidegger but Nietzsche. One might indeed claim that philosophical postmodernism originates in Nietzsche’s work, notably in the space that distinguishes the second essay in the *Untimely Meditations* (“On the Advantages and Disadvantages of History for Life,” 1874) from the group of works which begins with the first volume of *Human, All Too Human* (1878) and includes *Daybreak* (1881) and *The Gay Science* (1882). In the “untimely meditation” on history, Nietzsche poses for the first time the question of epigonism, of that excess of

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“historical consciousness” which constitutes an obstacle for the inhabitants of the nineteenth century—living as they do at the beginning of the end of modernity—and prevents them from producing true historical novelty and above all from having a specific style. They are consequently obliged to create their own forms of art, architecture, and fashion by drawing from the great warehouse of theatrical costumes which the past has become for them. Nietzsche called all of this the “historical illness”; and he believed, at least at the time of the second “untimely meditation,” that one might elude it with the aid of the “suprahistorical” or “eternalizing” forces of religion and art, notably Wagnerian music. We know, of course, that *Human, All Too Human* marked the abandonment of hopes resting on Wagner and the reformatory power of art. But it should further be noted that Nietzsche’s position with respect to the “historical illness” of nineteenth-century man underwent a profound change. Whereas in the second “untimely meditation” Nietzsche was horrified that modern man was assuming past styles in a fashion quite arbitrary, as though they were masks and theatrical costumes, in January of 1889 he wrote the following to Burckhardt from Torino: “I am, at bottom, all the names in history.” Though the context of this affirmation was that of his final illness, I believe that one can take this as the coherent expression of the position Nietzsche assumed beginning with *Human, All Too Human*.

In this work, the problem of escaping from this historical illness—or, more precisely, from modernity seen as the locus of decadence—is posed in a new way. Whereas the “untimely meditations” on history dating from 1874 sought recourse in suprahistorical or eternalizing forces, *Human, All too Human* puts into play a veritable dissolution of modernity through a radicalization of its own tendencies. If modernity is defined as the epoch of surpassing, of novelty become obsolete and replaced by new novelty in a process that discourages creativity in the very act of demanding it, there is no way of escaping modernity through surpassing. The recourse to art and religion in the essay of 1874 constitutes one response to the demand. In this essay, Nietzsche has already perceived that surpassing is a typically modern category and that it therefore cannot be the means of escaping from modernity. Not only is modernity constituted by the category of *temporal* surpassing—the inevitable succession of historical phenomena of which the modern individual becomes conscious by virtue of historiographical excess—but also, in a very close connection, by the category of *critical* surpassing. Nietzsche’s 1874 essay once again links relativistic historicism, which views history in terms of pure historical surpassing, to Hegelian metaphysics, which views the historical process as a process of *Aufklärung*, of a progressive enlightenment of consciousness and of the absolutization of spirit. It is probably for this reason (of which he could never be explicitly conscious) that, in the 1874 essay, Nietzsche did not seek an escape from modernity by means of the critique, of critical surpassing, and instead applied his efforts to myth and art. In *Human, All Too Human* he remains faithful, in principle, to this early view. But he no

longer thinks of escaping from modernity (or decadence) by means of eternalizing forces; on the contrary, he effects modernity's dissolution through a radicalization of its tendencies.

The radicalization consists in the following: *Human, All Too Human* starts out with the purpose of effecting a critique of the higher values of civilization by means of a chemical reduction (described in the opening aphorism) of these values to their basic components before any sublimation. This plan of "chemical" analysis, when carried through to its conclusion, leads, however, to the discovery that truth itself is a value that dissolves; belief in the superiority of truth over untruth and error is a belief which, on the one hand, is imposed in particular, determined situations (instability, total warfare, etc.) and, on the other, is governed by the idea that humankind can know things "in themselves." This is shown to be in fact impossible, since the chemical analysis of the process of "knowledge" reveals that knowledge is nothing more than a series of metaphorizations: from the thing to the mental image, from the mental image to the word that expresses the individual soul's state, from the soul's state to the word imposed as the "right" word by social convention, and from this canonized word once again to the thing. We perceive only those aspects of the thing which are most easily made metaphorical in the vocabulary that we have inherited, that is imposed on us. As always in Nietzsche, chemical analysis proceeds on two levels: a level of the critique of knowledge, which refers back to what we might call a "positivized" Kant, and an "anthropological" or phylogenetic level. In and through the discoveries produced by chemical analysis the notion of truth itself is dissolved, or—and this amounts to the same thing—God dies, killed by religiosity, by the will to truth that His believers have always cultivated in obeying His commandments.

It is with this nihilistic conclusion that one truly exits from modernity. Because the notion of truth no longer holds and carefully laid "foundations" no longer function as a basis for thought (since there is no basis for believing in a basis, in the notion that thought ought to be "grounded"), one cannot escape from modernity by means of critical surpassing, which is still completely interior to modernity itself. It becomes clear that one must look for another way. We can call this the birth of postmodernism in philosophy. It is an event, like the death of God first announced in Aphorism 125 of *The Gay Science*, whose meaning and consequences we have not yet finished measuring. The first and most striking announcement in this same work is the eternal recurrence of the same; this means, among other things, the end of the epoch of surpassing; of the epoch of being thought of as *novum*, or novelty. Whatever its final, and problematical, metaphysical significance may be, the idea of eternal recurrence has in any case a "selective" value (the expression is Nietzsche's). It has the value of revealing the essence of modernity as the epoch in which being is reduced to the new.

The historical avant-gardes of twentieth-century art—above all, futur-

ism—or philosophies such as the Hegelo-Marxism of Bloch, Benjamin, and Adorno may be evoked as examples of this reduction, but the much more general and “epochal” nature of the phenomenon could be shown equally well with reference to contemporary ethics, where the sole value that still seems to “hold” is that of “development”—of one’s personality, life, etc. The epochal character of the phenomenon is further visible in the fact that while we, following in the footsteps of Nietzsche and Heidegger, may no longer believe in an ethics based on development taken as an evident and natural value, we have no substitute value to put in its place. Postmodernity is only beginning. The identification of being with the new, which Heidegger saw expressed in emblematic fashion in the Nietzschean concept of the will to power, continues, like the dead God in *The Gay Science*, to project its shadow over our thinking.

The connection between God’s death and the eternal recurrence sheds light on the deep metaphysical essence of modern historicism and, indeed, on the very essence of modern metaphysics. Metaphysics as the science of the first principles of being has survived in modern times (after Kant) in historicism, which views history as a process of *Aufklärung* in which the strength of the ground, of the foundation, develops through the “progressive” emancipation of humankind. If one looks at modern metaphysics from this point of view, it becomes clear why Nietzsche’s announcement of the death of God had to be accompanied by the idea of eternal recurrence of the same. The dissolution of the very idea of foundation deprives the notions of historical development and progress of any possible significance. Novelty, progress, and development could be considered values only insofar as they represented the more complete and articulate enactments (*energeia*) of the foundational principle. In fact, all revolutions in Western culture have presented themselves as renewals legitimized by their recovery of the origin: the French Revolution, Renaissance art, etc. With the dissolution of the idea of foundation, revolution, novelty, and progress also lose their meaning. God’s death involves the “instauration” of the eternal recurrence of the same. But if, as Nietzsche proposes in Aphorism 44 of *Daybreak*, “progress in the knowledge of the origin increases the insignificance of the origin” or of the ultimate ground, what is the task of thought in this new situation? The idea of thought which dominated the metaphysical tradition of Western culture has always been defined as the search for principles and causes. (One will remember the first chapter of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*.) When we discover, as it were, the insignificance of principles, what will the meaning of thinking be? (In Heidegger’s words, “Was heisst Denken?”)

Aphorism 44 of *Daybreak* offers an answer to this question. In Nietzsche’s view, the insignificance of the origin augments reciprocally “the reality of what is most near; what is around us and within us begins, little by little, to show colors, beauties, enigmas and richness of significance—things of which ancient humanity had not the least suspicion.” It is

above all the capacity to grasp these nuances and to take pleasure in them that Nietzsche believes to be the essence of thought in the epoch of the dissolution of metaphysical foundations. Nietzsche also speaks of a "thinking of the proximity," which no longer deals with the ultimate foundation and principles (*archai*) but with the "errors," interpretations and cultural constructions inherited from humankind's past. We may also call this "genealogical thought," which, in Heideggerian more than Nietzschean terms, may still be called a thought of being insofar as for Nietzsche (and Heidegger as well, as we shall see) being is nothing but the "richness of colors and enigmas" which has been "constructed" upon a very poor basis (the meaningless origin) by human "errors" and interpretations. These "errors" ought actually to be thought of as errances, as the development of spiritual formations whose only principle is a particular historical continuity without any connection to an ultimate truth.

Other metaphors and images may be found in Nietzsche's works to describe this new essence of thought. In *Human, All Too Human* (no. 34), he writes of a "morning philosophy" and of a "man of good constitution" who does not manifest the traits of dogs or persons who have grown up in chains. In many other passages he speaks of convalescence, healing, and health. (The frequency of such allusions may be biographically motivated.) These metaphors suggest a sort of "surpassing" of metaphysical (modern, decadent) thought by means of an attitude other than the critical surpassing entailed in the search for a newer, stronger, or "truer" foundation.

## II

I propose the Heideggerian term *Verwindung* as a description or designation of what Nietzsche thought of primarily in terms of convalescence and the strong physical constitution; of an attitude whose essential meaning is that of being related to the past of metaphysics and therefore to modernity as the ultimate result of that past (Platonic-Christian morality) in a manner that nevertheless constitutes neither the acceptance of its errors nor a critical surpassing which would merely continue that past. Although the term is relatively rare in Heidegger's texts, I shall not attempt a complete analysis of it here. In each of the cases I have mentioned above, the term has to do with a particular kind of overcoming (*Überwindung*), a surpassing which is not understood in the usual sense of the word nor in the dialectical sense of the Hegelian *Aufhebung*.

The least ambiguous text is found in the first part of *Identität und Differenz*. Heidegger writes the following with regard to the *Ge-Stell*, that is to say the world of technology, of the ensemble of (*Ge-*) "placing" and (*Stellen*) disposing and imposing ("framework" in English, but I would propose the word "im-position"):



That of which we have experience in the “Ge-Stell” . . . is a prelude to what is called *Er-eignis* (event, appropriation). . . . Within the event of appropriation is announced the possibility that the pure and simple unfolding (*Walten*) of the Ge-Stell *verwindet* in a more “initial” (*anfanglich*) event.”<sup>4</sup>

In what follows, it becomes clear that the *Ge-Stell*, the world of technology, is not simply the place where metaphysics achieves its culmination and completeness. Through it additionally comes “a first flash of *Ereignis*.”<sup>5</sup> We shall presently return to this text on the *Ge-Stell*, but for now I am simply trying to show in what sense the word *Verwindung* can aid us in defining what Nietzsche sought in the expression “morning philosophy” and in what sense *Verwindung* may also indicate what, in our hypothesis, constitutes the postmodern in philosophy.

How then shall we translate *Verwindung* in the passages from *Identität und Differenz* and, consequently, although with some qualifications, in the other texts in which Heidegger uses the term? What we know from the suggestions Heidegger made to the French translator of *Vorträge und Aufsätze*,<sup>6</sup> where the word is used in a text that speaks of the overcoming (*Überwindung*) of metaphysics, leads us, on the one hand, to think that he is dealing with a surpassing which has the traits of acceptance and of fathoming. The lexical meaning of the word in German contains, on the other hand, two additional dimensions: that of convalescence (“eine Krankheit verwinden” means to cure or heal, to recover from an illness) and that of distortion (tied secondarily to *winden*, to wind or twist) and “deviating alteration,” one of the meanings of the prefix *ver-*. “Resignation” is also tied to the connotation of convalescence; one overcomes, recovers from, gets over (*verwindet*) not only an illness but also a loss or a defeat, sorrow or pain. If we return with these points in mind to the terms *Verwindung* and *Ge-Stell*, or to the term “metaphysics” (whose final form is *Ge-Stell*), we find the possibility of a change that could lead us toward a more authentic *Ereignis*. This possibility of an event that is outside or beyond metaphysics is tied to its *Verwindung*. In other words, metaphysics is not something “which one can brush aside like an opinion. Nor can one leave it behind oneself as though it were a doctrine that no one believes in anymore.”<sup>7</sup> It is something one retains in oneself, like the traces of an illness or a sorrow to which one is resigned. One might say, playing on the polyvalence of the word *remettre* (in Italian *rimettere*) the following: “de la métaphysique on se remet” (one recovers from metaphysics); “à la métaphysique on se remet” (one entrusts oneself to metaphysics as to a destiny, one resigns oneself to it); “la métaphysique on se la remet” (one re-hands over metaphysics to oneself as one does a letter, a message). In each of these dimensions of meaning, a suggestion of distortion persists which, moreover, can also be found in the notion of convalescence/resignation; one does not purely and simply accept metaphysics, just as one does not consecrate oneself to the *Ge-Stell* as the system of technological imposition. One lives metaphysics as the possibility for a change, the

chance that it might twist in a direction that is not foreseen in its own nature.

In all these senses, *Verwindung* defines a characteristically Heideggerian position, his idea of what the task of thought ought to be in this moment in which we find ourselves situated, namely at the end of philosophy in the form of metaphysics. For Heidegger, and for Nietzsche, thought has no other "object" than the errances of metaphysics recalled to memory in an attitude that is neither that of criticism which surpasses nor that of mere acceptance.

Heidegger's *Verwindung* is also characterized by a genealogical attitude. This is the meaning of the importance that the notion of thought as recollection or remembrance (*An-denken*) acquired in Heidegger's late works. Being, if it must be thought of as different from beings (in order to avoid the error of metaphysics, which was the error of identifying Being with beings), cannot be grasped as present, as an "object," and therefore not even as a "foundation," a ground, or a first principle which we eventually "reach" and upon which we can "stand." Thought is not or is no longer the illusion of grasping Being as presence; rather, thought is recollection (*An-denken*). But exactly insofar as it cannot grasp Being as presence, post-metaphysical thought does not move away from the contents of traditional metaphysics towards another "object"; it simply re-thinks the history of metaphysics from a different, distorted (*verwunden*) point of view. Metaphysical thought considered Being as the *archè* and foundation because it thought in terms of presence; but presence, Heidegger argued in *Sein und Zeit*, is only one dimension of the threefold ecstatic essence of Being, which includes past and future as well; in thinking which is no longer metaphysical, Being no longer appears as presence but as an event (*Ereignis*), the disclosure of an epochal horizon which is historical and cultural (as in Foucault's *epistémè*), within which *Dasein* has access to the world and to itself. The distortion in which *An-denken* and *Verwindung* consist would then be this way of considering metaphysical *archai* no longer as principles but as events, as historical disclosures within the framework of the "eventual" character of Being.<sup>8</sup>

Not only must Being (no longer conceived in terms of the present/object) be viewed as an event more than as a "structure," but insofar as Being is not to be thought of as an object, it is additionally something which is anterior to any distinction between subject and object. Consequently, one ought not to think that metaphysics is just an error of some philosophers or even of humankind, for this would imply that there is Being out there and somewhere else the human way of viewing it. As this is not the case (Being preceding all distinctions between subject and object), the forgetfulness of Being, the mistaken identification of Being with Beings, is not simply man's error, but a destiny of Being itself. Consequently, to say that Being cannot be grasped in presence as an object means ultimately that Being has the destiny of dissolving, of disappearing, of fading and wakening. As in Nietzsche, the dissolution of the



notion of foundation is not simply something which concerns human thought, but Being itself, because to think that the end of metaphysics concerns only human thought would amount to accepting and perpetuating the metaphysical distinction between a “subjective” view of things and an “objective” being of the things themselves.

*Verwindung*, *An-denken*, and, in Nietzsche’s terms, genealogical thought try to describe what thought might be in these conditions. *Andenkendes* or *verwindendes* thought has the structure, well exemplified by the method of etymological reconstruction so frequent in Heidegger’s late writings, of the *regressus in infinitum*, which does not lead anywhere but places metaphysical *archai* under the sign of the *Ereignis*: they are nothing but epochal, historical openings of truth’s horizons. Again, one may think of Foucault’s *epistemai*, or of Dilthey’s “metaphysics,” or even of Kuhn’s paradigms. Heidegger attributes an emancipatory meaning to this way of thinking, and in a passage from *Der Satz vom Grund* he writes of the “liberatory bondage of ‘Ueberlieferung,’”<sup>9</sup> that is, of the capacity to consider Being no longer as a structure but as a “happening” of disclosures or as *Ge-schick* (destination).

Post-metaphysical thought appears, on these bases, as an attitude of historical relativism, which is nevertheless tempered and in its turn distorted and gotten over (*verwunden*) through the awareness that the history of disclosures is not “only” the history of errors, belied on some grounds elsewhere available; rather, it is being itself—and this, as Nietzsche had noted in his metaphor of a “good constitution,” makes a profound difference. There is yet another word for the attitude toward the past so defined (toward everything which is transmitted to us, even by contemporaries), namely *pietas*<sup>10</sup> or devoted affection, respect.

*An-denken* and *Verwindung* also show us in what sense Heideggerian philosophy ought to be called a hermeneutics: not in the sense of a technical theory of interpretation, nor even in the sense of a philosophy which devotes major attention to the phenomenon of interpretation in its description of existence, but in the more radical, ontological sense. Being is none other than the trans-mission of historico-destinal disclosures which constitute the possibility of access to the world for humanity in each epoch. The experience of being, as the experience of responding to and of receiving, is always *An-denken* (re-thinking, meditative pondering, loving recollection) and *Verwindung* (overcoming, getting over, recuperating).

### III

Nietzsche and Heidegger, in their “continuity” (which can be recognized only by an explicit “distortion” of the Heideggerian interpretation of Nietzsche),<sup>11</sup> provide the basis for at least some further steps towards the definition of what a postmodern philosophy might be.

The steps should draw from several points, which I shall set out as the provisional conclusions of this paper.

(a) Both the notions of *Verwindung* and *Andenken*, and the similar notion of “morning philosophy” in Nietzsche, seem to point out that post-metaphysical thought can only be a sort of “revised” (*verwunden*), distorted form of historicism. This is very clear in Nietzsche’s proclamation of the death of God. This is in no way comprehensible as a metaphysical assessment of the nonexistence of God (as if there were a “structure” of being in which God cannot exist); it is a real announcement, the “narration” of a “fact” or, at least, of an experience that humankind, or Western culture, has undergone. This “fact” doesn’t prove anything in the strictly logical sense of the word; it is cited as a rhetorical appeal, as a way to persuade by referring to an experience which everyone is expected to have had. (We may recall Kant’s arguments for aesthetic validity in his *Critique of Judgment*.) This appeal to fact and experiences implies a sort of paradoxical historicism, as if one were to say that we must think this or that because an event, the death of God, has occurred. If God is dead, that is, if foundational thought has been dissolved by the experience had by philosophical reason in the course of history, then the only way of “proving” a thesis is to appeal to these experiences. In a sense, then, we have to conform to a “logic” which is inscribed only in the course of events, to which we cannot object in the name of some different legitimacy.

But why should we take seriously and conform to the development of Western thought in which, ultimately, God is dead? We should do so precisely because this development has dissolved any other point of reference, any other basis of certainty except the cultural heritage. When the origin has revealed its insignificance, as Nietzsche says, then we become open to the meaning and richness of proximity; or, in other words, we become capable of playing those language games which constitute our existence upon the sole basis of our belonging to a particular historical tradition, which we have to respect in the same way in which we feel respect for monuments, graves, traces of past life, or even family memories.

(b) But as we follow Heidegger’s indication that modern science and technology really characterize the metaphysics we are supposed to “overcome,” then the “objects” towards which the *verwindend* and *andenkend* attitude of post-metaphysical thought turns itself are not exclusively the messages of the past. Metaphysics is not only transmitted to us in the contents of the *Geisteswissenschaften*, in the humanistic heritage of our culture; it is “realized” in the *Gestell*, the scientifico-technological organization of the modern world. Hermeneutics, as *verwindend-andenkend* thought, must also interpret the “messages” of science and technology, and even the messages of the mass media system, which represent a sort of distorted synthesis of the cultural tradition and of modern technology. Although Heidegger has repeatedly said that science does not think, it is difficult to maintain that hermeneutics (seen here as the characteristic

form of post-metaphysical thought) has solely the task of re-collecting messages which used to be the contents of the *Geisteswissenschaften*. Even Gadamer, who would certainly prefer the “humanistic” orientation of hermeneutics, has more and more often emphasized, in recent works such as *Vernunft im Zeitalter der Wissenschaft* (1976), the ethical and political implications of hermeneutics, which surely require a *Verwindung* of the scientific and technological languages that tend to dominate our society. Of course it is not easy to see what a *verwindend* recollection of the “messages” of science and technology could be: the reconstruction perhaps of a *Weltanschauung*, of a unified view of the world, out of the multiple information provided by the natural and human sciences. Because of the predominantly operational and manipulative character of modern sciences, it is likely that the construction of such a unified *Weltanschauung* will reveal itself to be very difficult, or even impossible; but the continuity of experience which the hermeneutic recollection aims to reconstruct cannot be reached without some sort of unification of the information provided by the sciences. This unifying reconstruction cannot be pursued only in the form of ethics (as Gadamer seems to believe); that is, solely by putting science and technology under the control of moral imperatives related to our cultural heritage. A theoretical or cognitive reconstruction is needed: this may be the distorted recollection of the ancient idea of metaphysics as the *prote philosophia*, the first science. Post-metaphysical philosophy can no longer unify the different knowledges of the world provided by the sciences from the point of view of the foundational grasping of being *qua* being, as Aristotle put it, or from the point of view of a transcendental or methodological reflection on the conditions of possibility of the sciences (as Kant or the neopositivists thought). What philosophy, in its present form, can do is perhaps only to propose a “rhetorically persuasive” unified view of the world, which includes in itself traces, residues, or isolated elements of scientific knowledges. As a matter of fact, our everyday language receives and uses, outside of any rigour, terms originally belonging to specific sciences like psychoanalysis, physics, etc. In such a philosophic, unifying discourse, not only metaphysics but also its final form, that is, science and technology, would be *verwunden*: recollected, distorted, accepted as a destiny.

(c) *Verwindung*, which we experience as the sole possible form of post-metaphysical thought, is not only a matter of thought: rather it concerns Being as such. This is another clear implication of the thought of both Nietzsche and Heidegger: nihilism is not only an “error” of the mind but a destiny of Being itself. The history which we recollect has itself the structure of the *Verwindung*, of recollection and distortion. This may appear to be a very abstract generalization, but it is no longer so if we translate *Verwindung* into a term which is much more familiar to the historians of Western civilization, the term “secularization”: I am thinking here of Max Weber, but also of Norbert Elias and of René Girard. Taken in the connotations it has in these authors, secularization/*Verwindung*

would describe the course of history not as a linear progression or as decadence, but as a course of events in which emancipation is reached only by means of a radical transformation and distortion of its very contents. Thus, for instance, Nietzsche and Heidegger, or more recently Foucault, suggest that "humanity" can be fulfilled in history only through a profound revision and transformation of the very notion of humanism. Or, to cite another example, is it not true that the scientifico-technological society may be described as the absolute spirit imagined by Hegel, but in a distorted way, as Adorno has suggested? It is very likely that the idea of thought's progress and emancipation through "critical overcoming" is closely related to a linear conception of history; when critical overcoming is "distorted" into the notion of *Verwindung*, history itself can no longer appear in its linear light. History reveals its "ironic" essence: interpretation and distortion, or dis-location, characterize not only the relation of thought to the messages of the past but also the relation of one "epoch" to the others. Perhaps this was one of the meanings Heidegger had in mind when he spoke of the "epochal" essence of Being (in the essay on Anaximander in his *Holzwege*): in its event, Being reveals itself only insofar as it also conceals itself, so that one cannot speak in terms of progressive revelation of Being (nor, of course, in terms of "regressive" concealing of it).

This last implication of "morning philosophy" and of the *verwindend* "essence" of thought is especially pertinent, though it entails many problems related to the question of the possibility of a "philosophy of history."<sup>12</sup> Like the death of God in *The Gay Science*, the *Verwindung* too is an "event" whose consequences we have just begun to comprehend.

## NOTES

1. Martin Heidegger, *Holzwege* (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 1950), p. 333.
2. Martin Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1954), p. 71, 78–79.
3. Martin Heidegger, *Identität und Differenz* 4th ed. (Pfullingen: Neske, 1957).
4. *Identität und Differenz*, p. 25.
5. *Identität und Differenz*, p. 27.
6. See Martin Heidegger, *Essays et conférences*, trans. A. Préau (Paris: Gallimard, 1958), p. 81.
7. *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, p. 72.
8. See on this point R. Schürmann, *Le principe d'anarchie: Heidegger et la question de l'agir* (Paris: Seuil, 1982).
9. Martin Heidegger, *Der Satz vom Grund* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1957), p. 187.
10. For a discussion of *pietas*, see my essay "Dialectics, Difference, Weak Thought", in *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, 10, no. 1 (1984); and my book *Al di là del soggetto* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1981).
11. Heidegger's view of Nietzsche is set forth in the two volumes of *Nietzsche* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1961).
12. I have tried to develop these themes in "Myth and the Destiny of Secularization", *Res*, no. 9 (1985); and in the paper "The End of the Story," presented at the International Symposium on Postmodernism held at Northwestern University in Evanston, IL, October 1985).