

**A POETICS OF DWELLING:
THE PROSE WORK OF BOTHO STRAUB AND
LATE THOUGHT OF MARTIN HEIDEGGER**

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ABSTRACT

Botho Strauß, source for polemic and target of vitriol over three decades, proposes an unsettling understanding of the *poetic* in his prose works, from his earliest writing to most recent publications. The thesis contends that this understanding of the *poetic* is deeply indebted to the late thought of Martin Heidegger: it investigates the nature of the debt, highlighting Strauß' adoption and adaptation of ideas central to the philosopher, including his thinking on the work of art, technology, language and poetry. The body of the thesis examines Strauß' views through detailed exegeses of *Beginnlosigkeit*, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* and *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, while drawing extensively on other works and writing. The readings identify and elucidate a number of key terms critical to Strauß' proposed *poetic*. Underpinning these terms, the thesis contends, and bound to the understanding of the *poetic*, is an ontological concern for philosophical truth derived from Heidegger. The thesis concludes that far from a retreat by Strauß into obscurantist mysticism and resignation from a putative cultural, social and political collective, accusations repeatedly levelled at him and here grouped under the rubric of fatalism, Strauß offers in and through his works a *dynamic engagement* with this conception of truth, which the thesis hypothesises as a *poetics of dwelling*.

**For
Antje Johnson
1941-2003**

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Du sprichst als erster aller Mystagogen,
Die treue Neophyten je betrogen;
Nur umgekehrt. Du sendest mich ins Leere,
Damit ich dort so Kunst als Kraft vermehre;
Behandelst mich, daß ich, wie jene Katze,
Dir die Kastanien aus den Gluten kratze.
Nur immer zu! Wir wollen es ergründen,
In deinem Nichts hoff' ich das All zu finden.

Goethe J.W. *Faust. Der Tragödie Zweiter Teil.*

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CHAPTER ONE

OUT FROM THE CHARGE OF FATALISM

1.1 A question of politics

The prose writer, essayist and dramatist, Botho Strauß (1944-) is as renowned now for the controversies that are consistently, inextricably associated with his work as he is for his writing. The question of politics, of assumed implicit or explicit political and ideological sympathies, is now given almost equal consideration in responses to each publication within the press and in the scholarly literature as evaluations of the literary and philosophical qualities and merits of his work. Politics has, at times, come to eclipse all other considerations in understanding of this writer.

The publication in 1993 of his essay, 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang' undoubtedly marks a turning point in critical opinion, as issues surrounding the balance between politics and literature come sharply into focus.¹ From that moment the question of the political identity and nature of Strauß' writing moves to the fore, although the debate has a long precedent.² As Parry notes unequivocally, a number of years after the controversy first erupted, 'Mit dem Spiegel-Essay [...] hat Strauß die Grenze zwischen poetischem und politischem Diskurs verwischt'.³ Each of Strauß' successive works is considered, albeit

¹ Strauß, B. 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang', in *Der Pfahl. Jahrbuch aus dem Niemandsland zwischen Kunst und Wissenschaft* VII (1993), pp.9-25. References are to the extended published version of the essay, which went largely unnoticed, rather than the abridged copy in *Der Spiegel* 6 (1993) or re-issue of the former in Schwilk, H and Schacht, U. (eds.) *Die selbstbewußte Nation* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1994).

² See, Anz, T. 'Modern, postmodern? Botho Strauß' *Paare, Passanten*', in *The German Quarterly* 63 (1990), pp. 404-411 for one of the earliest critical reviews of Strauß.

³ Parry, C. 'Botho Strauß zwischen Kulturkritik und Poetik. Zur Aktualität des konservativen Diskurses', in *Jahrbuch für finnisch-deutsche Literaturbeziehungen* 28 (1996), p.186.

with diminishing ferocity and accompanying vitriol, in reference to the essay and against the background furore of criticism, accusation, claim and counter-claim made after the initial publication and each subsequent version issued.⁴

It is, therefore, appropriate to suggest of ‘Anschwellender Bocksgesang’, as Strauß’ most prominent work, that it retains the greatest influence on critical reception – to say nothing of public understanding – of the author and his writing. As such the essay remains particularly important, aside from questions over its relative position in Strauß’ overall oeuvre and the actual distinctiveness of the arguments presented therein, against which to determine the main viewpoints and approaches that have come to define the critical literature.

In the essay Strauß makes a number of claims to support his critique of contemporary Western society, culture and politics. The various arguments and occasional densely cryptic assertions that he makes in support of this critique are not, though, the principal trigger for the hostile response to the essay. Rather, it is his self-description as a writer of and from the *Rechte* and the connotations of this designation that form the centre of the controversy.⁵ This term, in particular, both arouses the instinctive ire of critics and gives rise to uncertainty surrounding his status as a writer.⁶ Strauß’ refusal to clarify or develop this provocative declaration in the period immediately after issuing the essay in *Der*

⁴ Harbers provides a summary of the more substantial and serious contributions to the debate up to the re-issue in *Die selbstbewußte Nation*. See, Harbers, H. ‘Botho Strauß’ “Bocksgesang”. Oder: Wie die Literatur im Essay ihr Gleichgewicht verliert’, in Labrousse, G. & Kapp, G. (eds.) *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur neueren Germanistik* 38/9 (Amsterdam, 1995), pp.583-608. See also Schneider, I. ‘Reiz und Reaktion’, in *Weimarer Beiträge* 2 (1994), pp.309-315.

⁵ See Strauß, ‘Anschwellender Bocksgesang’, p.13.

⁶ See, Strauß, B. ‘Am Rand. Wo sonst. Ein Zeit-Gespräch mit Botho Strauß’, in *Die Zeit* 23, 2001. The re-issue of the essay in *Die Selbstbewußte Nation*, in particular, prompted feverish speculation on the question of Strauß’ status as a serious writer.

Spiegel, followed by its subsequent revised publication in which the term is again used – though with different emphasis – only serve to consolidate the question of politics as the first, and sometimes only, interpretative issue around Strauß.⁷

The critical reception of ‘Anschwellender Bocksgesang’ and its legacy, as these relate to the weighting of politics, play a more important role than the essay itself. Given the deluge of précis, bearing various relationships to the original, there is little value in setting out again the positions Strauß advances in the essay. Other contributions to the debate on ‘Anschwellender Bocksgesang’ can be judged on the success or otherwise of attempts at systematic expositions of the work and its distinctive, asymmetrical structure.⁸

Moreover, the stimulus for and context of the essay’s publication have, as Strauß himself suggests, long passed. In a preface to the essay written for its re-issue in Figal and Schwilk’s *Die selbstbewußte Nation*, and which again intensified the public polemic, Strauß writes: ‘Ich habe dem Text weder etwas hinzuzufügen noch etwas abzustreichen. Nur seinen Impuls empfinde ich als vergangen’.⁹ Other references by Strauß to ‘Anschwellender Bocksgesang’ and its reception are clearly intended to create distance from both, and serve to underscore the contention that the immediate context of the essay,

⁷ Strauß, B. ‘Refrain einer tieferen Aufklärung’, in Figal, G & Schwilk, H. (eds.) *Magie der Heiterkeit. Ernst Jünger zum Hundertsten* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1995). This essay and the interview in *Die Zeit* 23, 2001 develop the idea of the intellectual *Rechte* where he pointedly declares its non-political nature, including most recently in Strauß, B. *Der Untenstehende auf Zehenspitzen* (Munich/Vienna: Hanser, 2004), p.112. The sense of provocation, though, is not helped by publication of essays with such declarative titles as ‘Wollt ihr das totale Engineering?’. Lack of any reaction to this essay suggests again the contrived nature of the polemic surrounding ‘Anschwellender Bocksgesang’.

⁸ See Harbers, ‘Botho Strauß’ “Bocksgesang” and Berka, S. ‘Botho Strauß und die Debatte um den “Bocksgesang”’, in *Weimarer Beiträge* 2 (1994), pp.165-178.

⁹ Strauß, B. “Kardinal Ratzinger ist der Nietzsche unserer Zeit”. Ein Brief von Botho Strauß,’ in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 27 October, 1994.

and Strauß' identification with it, have lost some of their currency. For example, in the strongly auto-biographical work of 1997, *Die Fehler des Kopisten*, in which Strauß engages in reflections on his then recent retreat to the rural Uckermark from his home in Berlin, he writes: 'Ich sah den hellen Sprüngen der Lämmer zu. Der Bocksgesang, den ich einmal unvorsichtig berief, war vorgerückt bis an mein Haus. Ein heiteres Mecker-Konzert mit obstinaten Bässen'.¹⁰ The collective stampede of critical opinion, for Strauß at least, appears in retrospect analogous to – and seemingly as important as – the gambolling of local wildlife.

Instead, it is the legacy of the essay on the critical reception of Strauß' work that informs the present introduction. The following remarks are intended to offer the basis for a critical assessment of Strauß' reception to date. These consider the growing critical pre-occupation with a distinct set of questions and themes here designated as the charge of fatalism – a misguided charge, according to this thesis – arising from politically-oriented readings of Strauß' work that overlook its philosophical intent. The immediate focus, then, of the remaining section is on reactions to the essay, rather than examining directly the sustainability of views directly or indirectly attributed to Strauß.

Harbers' study is representative of such politically-weighted responses to the essay and to Strauß' wider writing.¹¹ As such, his argument is useful to introduce the nature of the various accusations and what is at stake in the charge of fatalism. Harbers argues that in

¹⁰ Strauß, B. *Die Fehler des Kopisten* (Munich/Vienna: Hanser, 1997), p.36.

¹¹ Harbers is, however, more even-handed than many and concludes: 'Zusammenfassend ergibt sich folgendes Bild: Strauß' Argumentation ist in sich nicht un schlüssig. Ausgehend von der Prämisse einer gefährlichen Bedrohung unserer Gesellschaft durch einen alles verschluckenden aufgeklärt-liberalen Diskurs sind die Hervorhebung des Nicht-Rationalen und der Schritt ins Außenseitertum nicht unlogisch', in Harbers, 'Botho Strauß' "Bocksgesang"', p.601.

‘Anschwellender Bocksgesang’, in contrast to his dramas, Strauß’ writing has lost what he terms its *Gleichgewicht*. The idea of *Gleichgewicht* is frequently applied in interpretations of his theatrical work, because it remains a recurring motif and is also the title of one of his dramas published in the same year as the ‘Anschwellender Bocksgesang’.¹² Harbers, though, uses the term to evoke the specific balance between politics and literature, or rather, as he claims, the lack of it in the prose works and essays. This imbalance lies, for Harbers, in a disjuncture between the target of Strauß’ critiques, whether of contemporary society or the political system, and the self-consciousness of the relative position of any proposed alternatives. A balance is lost, for Harbers spectacularly, when Strauß invokes terms derived from certain past literary or philosophical sources and applies them to the contemporary context in Germany for political and social comment.¹³ Thus, one example is Strauß’ use in the essay of the term *Fremde*. Viewed in conjunction with Strauß’ posited category of a cultural collective, *Unsere*, it is viewed as politically problematic.¹⁴ The putative alternatives that Strauß proposes, according to Harbers, are sought in mysticism and are premised on what he terms non-rational views of the world. In the plays, where these viewpoints are subverted ironically within the framework of the drama, this presents no political difficulty for the *Gleichgewicht* of his work. However, in ‘Anschwellender Bocksgesang’, Harbers suggests, the lack of such balance, and weighting given to such seeming irrational ideas veers his work into intellectual terrain with undesirable political consequences. As a result of Strauß’ loss of literary *Gleichgewicht*, Harbers reasons:

¹² Strauß, B. *Das Gleichgewicht*, (Munich/Vienna: Hanser, 1993).

¹³ Other critics make the same argument citing different examples. See Krajenbrink, M. ‘Das Mißverständnis als Privileg des Kunstwerks’, in *Weimarer Beiträge* 2 (1994), pp.297-309.

¹⁴ See Strauß, ‘Anschwellender Bocksgesang’, p.11.

werden andere als rationale Erkenntnis- und Erfahrungsweisen gesucht, [...]. Die prinzipielle Gefahr, die einer solchen Literatur droht, die immer ans 'Dunkle', und das Nicht-Rationale rührt, ist, daß sie regelrecht ins Irrationale umkippt [...] so endet sie entweder in mystisch-gläubigem Gefühlskitsch oder in einer Verherrlichung von unbewußten Trieben und Gewalt (genau das wird jetzt, explizit oder implizit, über Strauß gesagt).¹⁵

As this thesis contends, such accusations both misunderstand the nature of Strauß' philosophical proposal for his work, and overlook the intellectual antecedents of his views. Harbers concludes that such literary imbalance signals Strauß' final renunciation of 'der liberal-demokratischen Aufklärungstradition'.¹⁶ His writing, therefore, advances counter or anti-enlightenment ideology. In making this claim, the shadow of the political is cast firmly over Strauß.

Of course, Strauß himself invokes the idea of a 'Gegenaufklärung' in 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang' in terms that are less than transparent.¹⁷ Its usage only reinforces the further applications of the counter-enlightenment epithet in the secondary literature.¹⁸ This particular designation is the basis for several studies, each taking a different stance on the political implications of what is, therefore, possibly suggested by his writing.¹⁹ However, use of the term is of questionable interpretative purchase in evaluating Strauß without exploring in detail which particular thinkers or ideas Strauß is supposed to be countering. (Strauß' paean to Lessing supports the contention that his relationship to

¹⁵ Harbers, 'Botho Strauß' "Bocksgesang", p.604.

¹⁶ Harbers, 'Botho Strauß' "Bocksgesang", p.584.

¹⁷ Strauß appears to define the term in opposition to activities of far-right youth groups following re-unification. He claims: 'Daher handelt es sich auch bei den Schändungen, die Neonazis jetzt begehen, im besonderen ihren antisemitischen Ausschreitungen, keineswegs um militante Akte der Gegenaufklärung. Diese, im strengen Sinn, wird die oberste Hüterin des Unbefragbaren, des Tabus und der Scheu sein [...]', in Strauß, 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang', p.22.

¹⁸ See, for example, contributions by Herwig, Kaußen and McGowan, in *Weimarer Beiträge* 2 (1994).

¹⁹ For such different readings see Herwig, H. 'Der Zusammenbruch der profanen Eschatologie. Zum Begriff der Gegenaufklärung bei Botho Strauß', in *Weimarer Beiträge* 2 (1994), pp.282-288 and Wiesberg, M. *Botho Strauß. Dichter der Gegen-Aufklärung* (Dresden: Edition Antaios, 2002).

representatives of the Enlightenment is more involved than is suggested by critics).²⁰ There are, after all, as many different positions of counter-enlightenment as there are projects associated with the broad tradition of European *Aufklärung*.²¹ Such detailed approaches are largely absent from the studies on Strauß. The term, then, serves as shorthand for a particular form of denunciation.

Against Strauß' critiques of contemporary politics and culture, levelling of accusations of *Gegenaufklärung* encompasses a number of criticisms. These include: Strauß' distancing from a functioning social collective, the adoption of marginal positions outside this mainstream grouping and the renunciation of rational principles of communication by which to articulate these motifs. These individual criticisms, for some commentators on Strauß, have their intellectual roots in the Conservative Revolution of the inter-war period.²² By drawing this association the issue of politics is taken in a specific direction.

McGowan, for example, outlines a group of writers from the Twenties and Thirties with whom Strauß shares isolationist traits. His work, he suggests, reveals: 'Parallelen zu einer Reihe konservativer Dichter [...], von der christlichen Mystik von Ernst Kreuder, Elisabeth Langgässer oder Ina Seidel über Ernst Jüngers Kulturkritik zur formalen und

²⁰ See Strauß, B. 'Der Erste, der Letzte. Warum uns der große Lessing nicht mehr helfen kann', in *Die Zeit*, 37, 2001.

²¹ For such a review see Lilla, M. 'Was ist Gegenaufklärung?' in *Merkur* 5 (1996), pp.400-411.

²² 'In mehreren Beiträgen wird überzeugend die [...] Nähe seiner Auffassungen zu den antiliberalen, rationalitätskritischen Positionen der "Konservativen Revolution" dargelegt', in Harbers, 'Botho Strauß "Bocksgesang"', pp.598-599. The first full-length study of this issue by Thomas shows the complexity and problematic nature of Strauß' inheritance from writers of the period. It rightly draws attention to the non-practically conceived, non-political nature of the movement. See Thomas, N. '*Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt*'. *Botho Strauß und die 'Konservative Revolution'* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2004).

oft brutalen Radikalität Gottfried Benns'.²³ And Hagestedt also notes the similarity to the literary and philosophical tradition of the Conservative Revolution, raising what he sees as certain inevitable political implications for Strauß' work. Citing the legacy of the philosophically conservative movement as, in part, laying the intellectual foundations for National Socialist ideology, he suggests that 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang' too, has recourse to metaphors and language that, 'zum großen Teil [...] aus dem 19. Jahrhundert stammen'.²⁴ Such ideas, Hagestedt notes, finally reach their political extreme in their application, 'in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus'.²⁵ Parry goes further, suggesting that Strauß negates the specific responsibilities of certain writers for the collapse of Weimar in the 1930s. He argues that, 'Strauß verdrängt [...] auch die Mitverantwortung der deutschen Intelligenz für die historische Katastrophe'.²⁶ Thus, by intellectual and literary association, the combination of certain identified themes and politically-weighted evaluation move Strauß into areas of deep contention.

Such contributions to the debate surrounding 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang' are significant because they provide scholarly background for the more vituperate political characterisation of Strauß' work. Given the generally accepted view that regards the Conservative Revolution in varying degrees as a mental and spiritual staging post for the subsequent political extremism of the Thirties and Forties, for some critics Strauß' essay fulfils a similar function in post-unification Germany. Such views further contribute to

²³ McGowan, M. "Die schwache Stimme in der Höhle unter dem Lärm". Gedanken zur Büchnerpreisrede von Botho Strauß und zur Politik des Unpolitischen', in *Weimarer Beiträge* 2 (1994), p.199.

²⁴ Hagestedt, L. 'Botho Strauß: Literatur als Erkenntnis. Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben der Postaufklärung', in *Weimarer Beiträge* 2 (1994), p.266.

²⁵ Hagestedt, 'Botho Strauß: Literatur als Erkenntnis', p.266.

²⁶ Parry, 'Botho Strauß zwischen Kulturkritik und Poetik', p.186.

the critical climate that weights interpretation towards an exclusive consideration of the political in the essay and his writing.

Görner, for example, compares ‘Anschwellender Bocksgesang’ with Strauß’ dramatic works and suggests that the ‘neo-reaktionären Thesen’ put forward by the figure of Markus Groth in *Das Gleichgewicht* are ‘nahezu identisch mit der Essenz des “Bocksgesangs”’.²⁷ The difficulty arises, claims Görner, in a parallel argument to Harbers’, when in Strauß’ essay these views are not undercut or relativised within the work. Strauß is thus implicitly portrayed as positioned on the extreme wing of politics. As he notes: ‘die kalkulierte Undeutlichkeit des Botho Strauß ist umgeschlagen in einen Jargon mythisierender Eigentlichkeit [...] um politische Naivität vorzuspiegeln’.²⁸

Similarly, Weilnböck suggests that the structure of ‘Anschwellender Bocksgesang’ betrays what he suggests are its potential political affiliations. In a reading of the narrator figure in the essay, who distances himself from the society he describes, Weilnböck’s psycho-analytically influenced reading seeks to determine, ‘wo und inwiefern diese Texte von jenen Wirkungen einer narzißtischen Beziehungs-Pathologie gezeichnet sind, die in teilweise anderer Form bereits das soziokulturelle Milieu der historischen Faschismen auszeichnete’.²⁹ Such associations with political extremes and the rise of Nazism or neo-fascism, although seen by such critics as latent in the essay, culminate in critical

²⁷ Görner, R. ‘Im Schatten des Mythos. Botho Strauß und die Prägnanz der Undeutlichkeit’, in Knapp, G. P. *1945-1995. Fünfzig Jahre deutschsprachige Literatur in Aspekten* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995), p.559.

²⁸ Görner, ‘Im Schatten des Mythos’, p.559.

²⁹ Weilnböck, H. ‘Die frühe Untertöne des “Bocksgesangs” in Botho Strauß’ ‘Der Park’’, in *Weimarer Beiträge* 2 (1994), pp.205-206.

reception of ‘Anschwellender Bocksgesang’ in Winkler’s apparently serious question, ‘Ist Botho Strauß ein Faschist?’³⁰

The climate of such political denunciation, in turn, feeds through to other studies in the critical literature. Anz, for example, argues of Strauß’ conception of tragedy in ‘Anschwellender Bocksgesang’ that it too has its origin in the period of National Socialism. It is a startling observation, more so for its conjectural tone. Anz mentions the hypothesis, with its damning implications, almost as an aside:

Zu prüfen wäre freilich, wie weit Strauß’ Rekurs auf kultische Ursprünge der Tragödie jenen klassizistischen Wendungen zur Tragödie gleicht, die, inspiriert von der Tragödientheorie und -praxis Paul Ernsts, [...] durch Autoren wie Curt Langenbeck, [...] vertreten wurden. Begriffe wie ‘Verhängnis’ und ‘Opfer’ sind hier von ähnlich zentraler Bedeutung wie bei Strauß.³¹

Moreover, he argues that Strauß’ understanding of the tragedy facing contemporary society in ‘Anschwellender Bocksgesang’ negates the associated experience of collective and individual ‘Schuld’ and so elides the magnitude of National Socialism and its legacy for modern democratic Germany. Concluding with what he contends are the implications of the essay he notes: ‘auch der Nationalsozialismus, so läßt sich folgern, ist nicht die Schande der modernen deutschen Geschichte, sondern der die Erschütterung angeblich mäßigende Umgang mit ihm in der aufgeklärt-kritischen Öffentlichkeit’.³²

The association of Strauß’ writing with political extremism warrants brief consideration, not least because it has gained such currency. Arguments that hold Strauß either as representative of, or responsible for, re-emergent right-wing political extremism are in

³⁰ Winkler, W. ‘Ist Botho Strauß ein Faschist?’ in *die tageszeitung*, 13 February, 1993.

³¹ Anz, T. ‘Sinn für Verhängnis und Opfer? Zum Tragödien-Verständnis in Botho Strauß’ *Anschwellender Bocksgesang*’, in *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 40 (1996), p.387.

³² Anz, ‘Sinn für Verhängnis und Opfer?’, p.386.

profound error, primarily because they entirely over-inflate the nature of literary effect.³³

It is worth underscoring that Strauß' pronouncements on the period of National Socialism are unequivocal, as are the reflections in 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang' on the political violence of far-right groups prevalent in the mid-1990s, and are consistent from his early to his most recent publications.³⁴ That these criticisms should continue despite his explicit condemnation seems close to defamatory. It demonstrates though, how consideration of the political has the potential for interpretative myopia that obscures the question of literary or philosophical intent entirely.

These various accusations, although representative of differing types of scholarship, make 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang' both a defining moment in reception of Strauß and his work, and skew the significance of this particular essay for his overall writing. Many of the arguments and ideas put forward in the essay are already manifest in his early work but have either gone unmentioned, or are interpreted differently. What comes to the fore in respect of the essay's legacy is an interpretative consensus within which his works come to be viewed politically, an impetus that has spread to reception of his other writing. Aside from marking a turning-point in reception of subsequent publications, 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang' has also led to re-evaluations of Strauß' early work in relation to politics. Strauß himself suggests this as the inevitable consequence of the essay. Writing in a letter to the editors of *Die selbstbewußte Nation* he claims:

³³ Ignatz Bubis, then Chairman of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, accused Strauß of being directly responsible for the intellectual climate that led to acts of arson and anti-semitism following re-unification. He subsequently withdrew his comments. See, Bubis, I. 'Wegbereiter wie Nolte', in *Der Spiegel* 16 (1994), p.170.

³⁴ See, amongst others, Strauß, B. *Der junge Mann* (Munich/Vienna: Hanser, 1984), p.186; Strauß, B. *Niemand anderes* (Munich: DTV, 2nd Edition 1994), p.149 and Strauß, B. 'Bekenntnisse eines Unpolitischen?' and the interview with Hage, V. 'Schreiben ist eine Séance. Begegnungen mit Botho Strauß (1980 und 1986)', in Radix, M. (ed.) *Strauß lesen* (Munich/Vienna: Hanser, 1987), pp.214ff.

Man hat mich schon so viele Male geächtet und verpönt, [...] jetzt kann als Steigerung nur noch die damnatio memoriae folgen: diesen Mann hat es als Schriftsteller nie gegeben; er ist von Anfang an immer eine Nichtswürdigkeit gewesen.³⁵

McGowan acknowledges just such a re-evaluation of the early work in his characterisation of Strauß' 'Politik des Unpolitischen'.³⁶ Accordingly, Strauß' presentation of the figure of writer-poet in his writing is regarded, prior to the publication of 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang', as firmly apolitical. As McGowan argues, such motifs are: 'eine Verweigerung ideologiekritischer Stellungnahme zugunsten einer reflexiven Schreibweise, charakterisiert durch ständige Bewegung, Entzug, Bruch, Fragment'.³⁷ However, he posits a number of consequences of what he sees as the denial of ideological conviction in 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang' and concludes retrospectively of the early works that: 'Die Texte der achtziger Jahre wären demnach eine durchaus politisch zu verstehende Suche nach entsprechenden Formen'.³⁸ Seen through the prism of 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang', preceding publications too are similarly viewed in the glare of the political.

Indeed, of the five main articles of the *Weimarer Beiträge* special edition dedicated to consideration of 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang', four evaluate previous work in relation to the essay.³⁹ This is, of course, a legitimate methodological premise and interpretative approach. However, to place undue emphasis on this single and distinct work – in an

³⁵ Strauß, B. "Kardinal Ratzinger ist der Nietzsche unserer Zeit". Ein Brief von Botho Strauß.

³⁶ McGowan, 'Gedanken zur Büchnerpreisrede von Botho Strauß', p.190.

³⁷ McGowan, 'Gedanken zur Büchnerpreisrede von Botho Strauß', p.199.

³⁸ McGowan, 'Gedanken zur Büchnerpreisrede von Botho Strauß', p.199.

³⁹ See *Weimarer Beiträge* 2 (1994).

interview Strauß called it a one-off “journalistischer” Text⁴⁰ – distorts reception. ‘Anschwellender Bocksgesang’ thus not only has an impact on critical understanding but becomes the primary and defining interpretative key to all of Strauß’ work.

The present argument suggests that the impetus towards the political has a broader consequence. The motifs and ideas in the writing that cause the most consternation in terms of their political implications are Strauß’ apparent renunciation of a functioning social collective, his motif of the poet as a necessary marginal figure and his adoption of an exclusive idiom and language. At their root, all of these individual accusations suggest a form of intellectual resignation as his putative response to the ills of late modernity.⁴¹ It is this criticism, which the present thesis contends amounts to a charge of fatalism and leads to a misunderstanding of the philosophical ambition and reach of Strauß’ works.

1.2 Strauß: ‘zutiefst fatalistisch’?⁴²

Discussion of Strauß’ apparent disdain for and rejection of the social collective is not new in the secondary literature. Anz, for example, is amongst the first commentators to develop a critique noting what he views as supposed anti-democratic tendencies. In his reading he brings together an aspect of fatalism relating to the political implications of

⁴⁰ ‘Für ihn ist das ein “journalistischer” Text, wie er ihn so bald gewiß nicht wieder schreiben werde’. Hage, V. ‘Der Dichter nach der Schlacht. Eine Begegnung mit Botho Strauß im Sommer 1993’, in *Weimarer Beiträge* 2 (1994), p.182.

⁴¹ The designation of a period of late modernity is suggested by Strauß, for example, in Strauß, B. *Beginnlosigkeit. Reflexionen über Fleck und Linie* (Munich/Vienna: Hanser, 1992).

⁴² Parry, ‘Botho Strauß zwischen Kulturkritik und Poetik’, p.186.

Strauß' isolationism.⁴³ This specific accusation dominates responses to 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang'. Despite sometimes acknowledging the apparent opening homage to contemporary society in the essay, where Strauß comments on his, 'große Bewunderung für die ungeheuer komplizierten Abläufe und Passungen, für den grandiosen und empfindlichen Organismus des Miteinander', commentators focus on the critique of society.⁴⁴ At issue are Strauß' claims that modern social forms and institutions are fundamentally threatened; that they are systemically flawed, reform futile, that obsessive pre-occupation with materialism only exacerbates the inherent tensions in society and that norms and values are eroding. A significant number of these critical reactions concentrate on Strauß' contention that the so-called 'kritisch Aufgeklärten', his designation of the left-leaning political culture in post-war Germany, utterly dominates both public life and discourse.⁴⁵ Harbers, for example, argues that his totalising arguments on all institutions of civic society, such as the media, lead inevitably, 'zu einer intoleranten Verachtung'.⁴⁶

Strauß' adoption of marginal positions, critics suggest, comes from his elitist espousal of the remote writer-poets who occupy positions outside the mainstream. In this vein Vogel, for example, criticises him for his celebration of the isolated figure of the individual set against the majority, which culminates in what he labels the 'Apotheose des magischen,

⁴³ As he argues: '[...] so haften Botho Strauß' kulturkritischen Beobachtungen und Reflexionen latente, zuweilen aber auch offene antidemokratische Ressentiments an', in Anz, 'Modern, postmodern? Botho Strauß', p.407.

⁴⁴ Strauß, 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang', p.9. Harbers, in turn, notes, 'Da er im folgenden die heutige Erscheinungsform dieser Gesellschaft in Deutschland nur noch kritisiert, haben manche Kritiker diesen Anfang als rein rhetorische *captatio benevolentiae* aufgefaßt', in Harbers, 'Botho Strauß' "Bocksgesang"', p.586.

⁴⁵ See Strauß, 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang', p.15.

⁴⁶ Harbers, 'Botho Strauß' "Bocksgesang"', p.597.

sakralen Einzelgängertums'.⁴⁷ McGowan too stresses Strauß' extolling of a poet-figure, in particular the writer's self-imposed isolation. It is precisely this idea that leads McGowan to question Strauß' political affiliations and intellectual heritage: 'Auch an sich ist dieses Bild des Dichters als eines mutigen Einsiedlers, der seine Kraft und seine Fähigkeit zum Widerstand gerade aus seiner Abgeschlossenheit von der lärmenden Informations- und Medienwelt zieht, keineswegs unproblematisch'.⁴⁸ Schmidt echoes the claim, noting the anti-social tendencies of the poet-figure standing outside the collective. He claims of such a figure: 'das bleibt eine ästhetische Elite, will und kann keine gesellschaftliche sein'.⁴⁹ Going even further Parry suggests that Strauß' poet figure, viewed in the context of post-war democratic Germany, is the expression of marginalisation characterising all of Strauß' work not just 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang'. Writing of the discrepancy between Strauß' poets and the social milieu he claims: 'Im realen Kommunikationszusammenhang, in dem sich Strauß befindet, erweist sich seine "Erinnerungspoetik" in Wirklichkeit als eine Poetik der Verdrängung'.⁵⁰ This thesis argues, on the contrary, for a specific philosophical implication to Strauß' conceit of the poets.

A further component underpinning the fatalism charge lies in critics' contentions regarding Strauß' renunciation of rationally-based principles of communicative action, manifested through obscurantism of his language and prose.⁵¹ There is, the argument

⁴⁷ Vogel, J. 'Tragödie eines Einzelgängers', in *Der Spiegel* 10 (1993).

⁴⁸ McGowan, 'Gedanken zur Büchnerpreisrede von Botho Strauß', pp.193-194.

⁴⁹ Schmidt, T. E. 'Wen betört der Bocksgesang? Über Botho Strauß' metaphysischer Kulturkritik', in *Merkur* 48 (1994), p.739.

⁵⁰ Parry, 'Botho Strauß zwischen Kulturkritik und Poetik', p.186.

⁵¹ It is an unrecognised irony surrounding reception of the essay that Strauß acknowledges the likely difficulties arising from the language and structure of 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang'. Strauß observes: 'Vielleicht hat hier auch die Form, der sprachliche und gedankliche Manierismus, dafür gesorgt, daß die

runs, little or no systematic, inductively-established foundation to the declarations put forward in ‘Anschwellender Bocksgesang’. Weilnböck, for example, reasons that its tone is the necessary outcome of that aspect of Strauß’ fatalism already noted, namely the pathological isolation of the writer from the world. He argues:

Der Unwille darf jedoch nicht davon ablenken, daß jedes peinliche oder unstimlige Adjektiv, jeder der manchmal ambivalenten oder bezugslosen Begriffe und eifernden Sätze Zeichen einer diffus ersehnten und gescheiterten Beziehungsaufnahme des Autors zu seinen Worten und seiner Worte zueinander und zu ihrer Welt ist.⁵²

Görner levels the same accusation at Strauß’ prose suggesting a tendency towards linguistic abstraction and a pointed opacity to his ideas. This culminates, for him, in the prose work *Beginnlosigkeit*, with its transformation of scientific terminology into literary form: as a result his work becomes ‘immer “dunkler”, nebulöser, undeutlicher’.⁵³ This particular objection to the prose work is considered in detail in the conclusion to Chapter Five. Once such a style is established Görner continues, ‘konnte dies in die peinlich genau-verschwommene Provokation des “Anschwellenden Bocksgesangs” umschlagen’.⁵⁴ McGowan too places the issue of obscurantism at the centre of his study. For him, Strauß’ vagueness is defining and is raised to underlying principle. His work, he argues, exhibits: ‘Definitionslosigkeit und Undeutlichkeit als poetologisches Programm’.⁵⁵ Such language is evidence of the non-rational and antiquated origins of his thought and writing. Hagestedt agrees with this view, remarking: ‘Bemerkenswert ist die Stilisierung der Rede, die im sprachlichen Gestus an die dunkle, auslegungsbedürftige

Sache nicht so glatt durch den Tag rutschte’, in Strauß, B. ‘Der eigentliche Skandal’, in *Der Spiegel* 16 (1994), pp.168-169.

⁵² Weilnböck, ‘Die frühe Untertöne des “Bocksgesangs”’, pp.218-219.

⁵³ Görner, ‘Im Schatten des Mythos’, p.549.

⁵⁴ Görner, ‘Im Schatten des Mythos’, p.549.

⁵⁵ McGowan, ‘Gedanken zur Büchnerpreisrede von Botho Strauß’, p.198.

Rabulistik der Orakel erinnert: Es wird nicht offen gesagt, worum es dem Sprecher geht, sondern es wird verschwörerisch verklausuliert.⁵⁶ It is, though, this thesis argues, precisely this indeterminacy, so central to Strauß, that grounds the radical unsettling force and philosophical reach of his writing.

These brief reflections on ‘Anschwellender Bocksgesang’ are intended as an introduction to and an illustration of aspects of his writing that have come in the literature to constitute Strauß’ putative fatalism. The thesis contends that the charge underlying the different accusations is that Strauß’ writing shows only an intellectual resignation and elite aestheticism. It is to a more detailed consideration of this charge and its presentation in the secondary literature on Strauß, that the argument now turns.

1.3 Fatalism and the secondary literature

While responses to ‘Anschwellender Bocksgesang’ illustrate the accusations that constitute the charge of fatalism, the motif of the individual subject detached from and having renounced a wider cultural and social context, and the question of obscurantism remain constant in the three broad identifiable stages of the secondary literature. Although these are often informed by different critical premises and theoretical frameworks, the larger, important studies share certain thematic pre-occupations. These three stages broadly correspond also to Strauß’ writing of the Seventies and early Eighties, the subsequent works up to German re-unification and, thirdly, those publications, including ‘Anschwellender Bocksgesang’, to the present. The different

⁵⁶ Hagestedt, ‘Botho Strauß: Literatur als Erkenntnis’, p.266.

monographs and studies are loosely grouped around preoccupations of ‘Neue Subjektivität’, the postmodern and, lastly, aesthetics. Some of these are engaged exclusively with Strauß’ plays and dramatic work, however, and fall outside the scope of the immediate argument.⁵⁷ Instead, the focus here is restricted to reviewing the secondary literature on the prose works – which has tended anyway to remain marginalized within Strauß criticism – in relation to the fatalism charge.⁵⁸

The studies pre-occupied primarily with the early prose work concentrate on the presentation of the individual human subject and its apparent disintegration in the face of alienating social mores and the disorientating effects of contemporary culture.⁵⁹ Damm, for example, highlights the thematic emphasis of such approaches in the secondary literature:

Als Themenschwerpunkt wird dabei überwiegend der Zustand des isolierten, beziehungslosen Individuums in der modernen Gesellschaft ausgemacht, das in seiner “Daseinsverzweiflung” und “Daseinsverfehlung” nach Perspektiven suche, ohne freilich einen Ausweg aus seiner Misere finden zu können’.⁶⁰

These interpretations of the eroding stable subject follow in the footsteps of Schneider’s early identification of ‘jener melancholischen Erkrankung, von der Strauß’ Protagonisten

⁵⁷ Such studies include: Herwig, H. *Verwünschte Beziehungen, verwebte Bezüge. Zerfall und Verwandlung des Dialogs bei Botho Strauß* (Tübingen: Stauffenberg, 1986); Kapitza, U. *Bewußtseinsspiele: Drama und Dramaturgie bei Botho Strauß* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Literarhistorische Untersuchungen 9, 1987); Kazubko, K. *Spielformen des Dramas bei Botho Strauß* (Hildesheim: Goerg Olms Verlag, 1990) and Plümer, V. *Zur Entwicklung und Dramaturgie der Dramen von Botho Strauß* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Europäische Hochschulschriften Vol.942, 1987).

⁵⁸ Lämmerman highlights the concentration in the secondary literature on the plays rather than the ‘vernachlässigten erzählerischen Prosa’. See, Lämmerman, S. *Für unser Werk mein Liebster. Die Thematisierung von Produktion im Erzählwerk von Botho Strauß*. (Frankfurt-am-Main: Peter Lang, 1996), p15ff.

⁵⁹ These include his first short stories Strauß, B. *Marlenes Schwester* (Munich: DTV, 3rd Edition, 1989) originally published in 1975, Strauß, B. *Die Widmung* (Munich: DTV, 9th Edition, 1993) published in 1977 and Strauß, B. *Rumor* (Munich: DTV, 3rd Edition, 1994), which came out in 1980.

⁶⁰ Damm, S. *Die Archäologie der Zeit. Geschichtsbegriff und Mythosrezeption in den jüngeren Texten von Botho Strauß* (Wiesbaden: Opladen, 1998), p.27.

allesamt affiziert sind'.⁶¹ A sense of melancholy, he argues, pervades all his characters who are negotiating loss, whether material, spiritual, emotional or that of identity. The characters in Strauß' prose are thus seen as figures isolated from society, collective bonds or individual ties.

Strauß' short novel of 1977 and first major success, *Die Widmung*, is read in these interpretations as emblematic of this motif. The fatalism charge is therefore reflected in critical responses to this work in evaluation of the physical decline and mental disintegration of Richard Schroubek, but is also shown by Strauß' figures in other early writing, including *Marlenes Schwester* and *Theorie der Drohung*. As Förster reflects on the apparent collapse of the individual ego: 'Im Zentrum der Erzählungen stehen Protagonisten, denen der Prozeß der Individuation zur [...] selbständigen Monade versagt bleibt, die sich selbst permanent verlieren, deren personale Konturen in den Sog des Fragmentarischen geraten'.⁶²

A pre-occupation with the subject and its relationship to society obviously forms the central thrust of studies interpreting Strauß' early works in relation to the literary trend of 'Neue Subjektivität'. Thus Adelson, in the first major monograph on his prose, identifies a sense of 'diachronic longing' in his characters.⁶³ This is a response to what she terms 'the crisis of subjective agency', a corollary of the so-called 'Ausdrucksnot' arising from

⁶¹ Schneider, M. 'Botho Strauß, das bürgerliche Feuilleton und der Kultus des Verfalls. Zur diagnose eines neuen Lebensgefühls', in Schneider, M. *Den Kopf verkehrt aufgesetzt oder Die melancholische Linke* (Darmstadt: Neuwied, 1981), p.236.

⁶² Förster, J. 'Der falsch verstandene Aufklärer? Die Prosa Botho Strauß und ihre Rezeption', in *Diskussion Deutsch* 107 (1989), p.240.

⁶³ Adelson, L. A. *A Crisis of Subjectivity: Botho Strauß' Challenge to West German Prose of the 1970s* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1984), p.60.

the perceived failures of the student movement of the 1960s in West Germany.⁶⁴ DeMeritt, in turn, takes the designation of ‘Neue Subjektivität’, which she concedes is a term ‘derived from the discourse surrounding it and not from the literature itself’, and considers the treatment of ‘alienation’ and ‘the disconnection of societal reality’ in Strauß’ figures.⁶⁵ These, she suggests, are all ‘motivated by separation or abandonment’: through their ‘new subjective confrontation with self’, characters find their way in the object world against the dominating influence exerted by the ‘reason of contemporary society’.⁶⁶ A recent study has raised the issue of ‘Neue Subjektivität’ again but thrown into question the static application of this periodizing category.⁶⁷ Leal reads *Die Widmung*, along with other texts of the time, in order to question some of the theoretical and interpretative orthodoxies that have arisen around the classification. In respect of the immediate focus though, the issue of marginal figures, illustrated in Strauß’ depiction of the subject in decline or crisis, is seen in these early studies as central to interpretation and understanding of his writing.

In what way does the second broad stage of criticism denoted by the issue of the postmodern show those accusations constitutive of fatalism? A recurring pre-occupation in the literature on Strauß, shown in the accusation of obscurantism in ‘Anschwellender Bocksgesang’, is the self-referential nature of his writing. Willer develops his definition of this literary self-consciousness as: ‘Strauß markiert das literaturtheoretische Potenzial seiner Schrift-Arrangements in den Texten selbst. Seine Erzählungen und Romane sind

⁶⁴ Adelson, *A Crisis of Subjectivity*, p.60.

⁶⁵ DeMeritt, L. C. *New Subjectivity and Prose Forms of Alienation. Peter Handke and Botho Strauß* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Peter Lang, 1987), p.1.

⁶⁶ DeMeritt, *New Subjectivity and Prose Forms of Alienation*, p.238.

⁶⁷ Leal, J. ‘*Neue Subjektivität*’ in *German Fiction: A Reassessment of a Literary Tendency* (Ph.D. thesis, King’s College, University of London, 1999).

hochgradig theoriebewusst'.⁶⁸ He suggests the influence of theories of post-structuralism and postmodernism on reception of Strauß, generic classifications applied to thinkers as diverse as Foucault, de Man and Derrida, in spite of Strauß' overt and repeated distancing from associated systems of thought, what he terms, 'das Imperium der Abschwörung und der Leugnung mit seinen unzähligen radikalen Provinzen und subversiven Satyrspielen des Intellekts'.⁶⁹ Nonetheless, the presence of such theories and theorists persists: these, in turn, have remained influential in developments within the secondary literature.⁷⁰

These interpretations, in turn, continue to emphasise aspects of Strauß' putative fatalism, namely the elision and loss of the subject as a source of meaning, and the difficulties experienced by the individual in attempting to fill the central absence that mankind experiences, however this is theoretically defined: whether of history, time or knowledge.

An early study by vom Hofe and Pfaff is representative of such a theoretically influenced interpretation, going on to argue that Strauß' writing is deeply self-referential in its use of language.⁷¹ Any correspondence between subject and external object-world is, for these critics, shown to be fragmented: characters are interpreted as lost, and only on occasion as they sense the apparently arbitrary nature of meaning, whether of their identities or the external world, can they transcend their relativity. So, for example, in *Die Widmung*

⁶⁸ Willer, S. *Botho Strauß zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius, 2000), p.63.

⁶⁹ Strauß, B. 'Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt. Bemerkungen zu einer Ästhetik der Anwesenheit', in Steiner, G. *Von realer Gegenwart. Hat unser Sprechen Inhalt?* (Munich: Hanser, 1990), p.310.

⁷⁰ Strauß laments the influence of, and decries engaging with theories of deconstruction as early as *Paare, Passanten*: 'Stattdessen begleiten uns nun einige jüngere Denker-Satiriker, die Ethno- und Anarcho-Essayisten, bei denen wir etwas unentwegt Naßforschens in Kauf nehmen müssen, [...]. Wider das sich selbst erledigende Dämliche so viel Kraft zu vergeuden, das zeugt nicht von einem starken eigenen Wissensbegehrt. Man macht keine eleganten Fechtübungen an Vogelscheuchen', in Strauß, B. *Paare, Passanten* (Munich: DTV, 7th Edition, 1994), p.115.

⁷¹ vom Hofe, G. & Pfaff, P. 'Botho Strauß und die Poetik der Endzeit', in Radix, (ed.) *Strauß lesen*, pp. 37-63.

Richard Schroubek's attempts to write about his enforced segregation from the outside world are representative of this subjective condition. Vom Hofe and Pfaff contend of Schroubek's activities that: 'Solche verkehrte Tätigkeit ist der Grundzug der Kunst, die ihr Ende akzeptiert'.⁷² The treatment of the theme of writing, they suggest, in turn reflects the postmodern crisis of signification and the end of the truth-value of poetry. As they reason, the work lays bare: 'die Ohnmacht der Kunst, an irgend etwas außer an sich selbst zu rühren'.⁷³ This thesis argues against such implied nihilism.

Berka's important monograph develops the idea of the process of signification. She argues that 'Strauß' Texte registrieren freilich nicht nur lediglich, "wie ausgelöscht Geschichte im Bewußtsein ihrer Figuren ist", sondern erschreiben sich zugleich das Wissen um die Bedingungen des Verlusts [...]'.⁷⁴ Drawing on deconstructive thought, in particular the theories of de Man and Derrida, she argues that Strauß' work seeks to address head-on the breach between signifier and signified central to the so-called crisis of the postmodern.⁷⁵ He does this, she suggests, by means of allegory. Such allegories are invariably those of writing, particularly as shown in the focus of her study *Der junge Mann*. As she concludes of Leon Pracht, the main figure of that novel: 'alles werde ihm zur Allegorie des Schreibens und verweise so nur auf sich selbst'.⁷⁶ Through the literary device of allegory, which for Berka signifies the absence of the very thing to which it refers, she contends that Strauß seeks to re-inscribe the now marginal power of myth in the contemporary world while accepting its original absent meaning. She goes on to

⁷² vom Hofe, G. & Pfaff, P. 'Botho Strauß und die Poetik der Endzeit', p.58.

⁷³ vom Hofe, G. & Pfaff, P. 'Botho Strauß und die Poetik der Endzeit', p.57.

⁷⁴ Berka, S. *Mythos-Theorie und Allegorik bei Botho Strauß* (Vienna: Passagen, 1991), p.39.

⁷⁵ See, for example, Bertens, H. *The Idea of the Postmodern. A History* (London: Routledge, 1995) and Harvey, D. *The Condition of Postmodernity. An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).

⁷⁶ Berka, *Mythos-Theorie und Allegorik*, p.97.

argue that Strauß does this on the basis of reference to and quotation from the romantics.⁷⁷ In this, Berka maintains, Strauß is of the postmodern yet retains a lineage to writers in the modern tradition: as she claims, ‘Strauß ruft die Moderne zurück, um sie als abwesend zu bezeichnen’.⁷⁸ Berka’s thesis is the stimulus for a large number of studies that take the issue of myth, and the literary and inter-textual allusions of Strauß’ work as their central focus.⁷⁹

Such approaches, which are themselves deeply influenced by post-structuralist developments in literary theory, reach their logical conclusion, and height of abstraction in the literature, in Hárs’ dense study ‘Singularität’.⁸⁰ Taking various selective theories of deconstruction and the postmodern as the starting point, he pushes the theoretical postulate of subjectivity and literary and authorial elision to its extreme. With rhetorical flourish, he throws off the perceived methodological constraints of previous studies engaged with these issues: ‘Warum, so kann man [...] fragen, bleibt für viele Versuche, die ja *aus gegebenem Anlaß* über Poststrukturalismus und Dekonstruktion, *discours* und

⁷⁷ A number of studies consider this specific aspect of Berka’s thesis further. See, for example, Jost, R. ‘Botho Strauß’ “regressive Universalpoesie”. Von der Erzählung *Die Widmung* zum Roman *Der junge Mann*’, in Jost, R. & Hansgeorg, S. B. (eds.) *Im Dialog mit der Moderne. Zur deutschen Literatur von der Gründerzeit bis zur Gegenwart* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Athenäum, 1986), pp.481-500; Krajenbrink, M. ‘Romantiker der elektronischen Revolution? Zur Verwendung romantischer Elemente in Botho Strauß’ *Der junge Mann*’, in Tunner, E. (ed.) *Romantik – Eine Lebenskraftige Krankheit. Ihre literarischen Nachwirkungen in der Moderne* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1991), pp.159-185 and Sommerhage, C. ‘Odeon oder der verschollene Krug. Über Botho Strauß’ romantische Poetik der Erinnerung’, in *Sinn und Form* 43 (1991), pp.177-196.

⁷⁸ Berka, *Mythos-Theorie und Allegorik*, p.207. ‘Eine ganze Serie moderner Autorien (von Baudelaire und Genet bis zu Thomas Mann und Proust) gehören dementsprechend in Strauß’ postmodernes Revier’, in Berka, *Mythos-Theorie und Allegorik*, p.206.

⁷⁹ See, for example, Damm, S. *Die Archäologie der Zeit. Geschichtsbegriff und Mythosrezeption in den jüngeren Texten von Botho Strauß* (Wiesbaden: Opladen, 1998); Krajenbrink, M. *Intertextualität als Konstruktionsprinzip. Transformationen des Kriminalromans und des romantischen Romans bei Peter Hanke und Botho Strauß* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996); Marschall, S. *Mythen der Metamorphose – Metamorphose des Mythos bei Peter Hanke und Botho Strauß* (Mainz, 1994) and Schauburger, S. *Permanenz der Urbilder. Mythische und biblische Anspielungen bei Botho Strauß*. (D.Phil. thesis, Faculty of Linguistics and Literature, University of Bielefeld, 2000).

⁸⁰ Hárs, E. *Singularität* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2001).

écriture handeln, die zentrale Position des Autornamens “Strauß” selbst unproblematisch?’.⁸¹ His thesis is concerned, as he suggests, ‘letzten Endes nicht um Fragen der Interpretationstheorie bzw. des Œuvre von Strauß’.⁸² For him the issue of a literary interpretation is of secondary importance to showing instead what Strauß’ works can suggest about the process of literary interpretation itself. Hárs works from the premise of the total removal of any authorial figure, whether Strauß himself or implied, in either individual works or across Strauß’ writing. His approach is based on a strict refusal, ‘nach auktorialen Vorgaben – die Ganzheitlichkeit des Œuvres mit eingeschlossen – zu fragen’.⁸³ The prose works become, from this exclusively theoretical perspective, simply ‘text’ and are read only, ‘durch deren (manchmal heuristische) intertextuelle Vernetzung mit anderen – in Strauß’ Texten oder in der Forschungsliteratur zu Strauß *nicht vorgesehenen* – Texten’.⁸⁴ The prose works, according to such a reading, in their pure literary focus, are ultimately about nothing but their own status as literary works.

However, as already suggested, Strauß’ explicit rejection of theories associated with the postmodern and deconstruction, whether popularised or not, the programmatic character of his writing and the arguments he offers for the primacy of art and his own ideas of an *Anwesenheit* in the work – the focus of Chapter Two – present these studies with interpretative difficulties for all but Strauß’ early prose. Nevertheless, they each present in different ways aspects of what is here termed the charge of fatalism, both in the

⁸¹ Hárs, *Singularität*, p.69. Emphasis in original.

⁸² Hárs, *Singularität*, p.201.

⁸³ Hárs, *Singularität*, p.202.

⁸⁴ Hárs, *Singularität*, p.202. Emphasis in original.

erosion of the subject figure *per se* and through preoccupation with the self-conscious absence of an immanence to meaning, or the truth-value of the work of art.

The interpretative challenge posed by Strauß' later, philosophically more evocative essays dealing with questions on art and the *poetic*, rather than his earlier literary prose, forms the focus of the third group in the critical literature, concerned largely with aesthetics. Theoretically-inspired reflections and vignettes have, of course, remained a central feature from Strauß' early work. For example, the section 'Schrieb', in *Paare, Passanten*, a series of fragments on the nature of writing and language, assumes a pivotal position in that work. But it is the programmatic tone of the introduction to *Der junge Mann* and, more importantly, the essay 'Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt' where he develops his idea of *Anwesenheit*, that bring the issue of aesthetics sharply into focus for a number of influential monographs. This is an important development in understanding his writing, even if – as this argument goes on to show – the conclusions reached overlook the philosophical scope of Strauß' work.

Bollmann sets the groundwork for such studies with his description, 'Kaum noch etwas', which for him is 'die Grundformel' for Strauß' writing.⁸⁵ His reading of *Die Widmung*, amongst others, straddles the two interpretative approaches considered above: those relating to the erosion of the subject, and those focused on literary self-reflexivity. His designation 'Kaum noch etwas', thus evokes 'die Situation des "erschöpften Autors"', which in turn 'fungiert als Paradigma schlechthin der aktuellen Lage von Subjektivität'.⁸⁶

For Bollmann, the aesthetic underlying Strauß, then, is still formally, rather than just at

⁸⁵ Bollman, S. 'Kaum noch etwas – Zur Poetik von Botho Strauß', in Hörisch, J. & Winkels, H. (eds.) *Das schnelle Altern der neuesten Literatur* (Düsseldorf, 1985), p.89.

⁸⁶ Bollman, 'Zur Poetik von Botho Strauß', p.89.

the level of character and narrative, concerned with elision and removal. It is an idea of aesthetic object premised on an absence. As Bollman remarks: ‘Allgemein, ließe sich sagen, daß die Formel des “Kaum-noch-etwas-seins” die resignative Reaktion auf die Emphase einer Ontologie des Noch-nicht-seins darstellt’.⁸⁷ Noting of this spirit of all-pervading resignation he concludes, articulating directly the charge of fatalism: ‘Fatalismus und Determinismus sind nur die Kehrseite einer Naherwartung, die ständig von Enttäuschung bedroht ist’.⁸⁸

Kaußen, in her monograph on Strauß’ aesthetics, suggests that in the structure of his works and in the emphasis of his theoretical writings Strauß deliberately courts the margins of critical reception, in particular to avoid adoption by any mainstream grouping, whether of commentators or readership. In so doing he exhibits what she terms an ‘Ästhetik der Verweigerung’.⁸⁹ In the early writing this principle of denial arises from the inherent, ‘Irritationsstruktur’ of each work.⁹⁰ The later publications – and here Kaußen draws on Berka’s thesis – also come to form, though differently, ‘eine hermetische Poesie’, constituted by ‘der Dichte und nicht systematisierbaren Fülle von Anspielungen und Verweisen’.⁹¹ These allusions and references in Strauß are reflections of an aesthetic principle of negativity towards the levelling effects on language of contemporary culture. As she describes it: ‘in ihrer äußersten Radikalisierung begründet die Ästhetik der

⁸⁷ Bollman, ‘Zur Poetik von Botho Strauß’, p.91.

⁸⁸ Bollman, ‘Zur Poetik von Botho Strauß’, p.91.

⁸⁹ Kaußen, H. ‘Kunst ist nicht für alle da’. *Zur Ästhetik der Verweigerung im Werk von Botho Strauß* (Aachen: Alano, 1991), p.9.

⁹⁰ Kaußen, *Zur Ästhetik der Verweigerung*, p.352.

⁹¹ Kaußen, *Zur Ästhetik der Verweigerung*, p.11.

Verweigerung eine Metaphysik der Sprache, in der der Literatur die Rolle des letzten Grundes zukommt'.⁹²

The sense of physical renunciation, for example in Strauß' characters' sense of crisis and intellectual resignation, in turn, in appeals for an ostensibly elitist conception of the work of art, remain constant in the literature, whether in relation to Strauß' writings on society such as 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang', the characters in his early works or his theoretical observations such as 'Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt' or *Beginnlosigkeit*. The basis of these accusations in both these prose works is thrown into question in the following chapters.

Janke's monograph, which considers Strauß' writing in relation to Handke's, continues in this vein but begins to signpost a route within the secondary literature out of some of the interpretative strictures of fatalism. For her, the leitmotif to his work – as in the study by Berka – is its articulation of a sense of 'Abwesenheit'. This, she suggests, is a defining condition of the contemporary world, reflected in Strauß at different narrative and philosophical levels. She echoes much of the subject-oriented criticism noted above. Strauß' characters are plagued, she argues, by a sense of loss and absence in relation to experienced reality felt, for example, in the erosion of memory and time. Taking her theoretical lead from Baudrillard she highlights in Strauß' work: 'Was abwesend ist, ist das lebendige Bewußtsein des Ursprungs. Durch den Verlust der Herkunft wird alles gleich gegenwärtig'.⁹³ Similarly, implying an underlying fatalism, man's relationship to the object-world is levelled, resigned and neutralised. In this, she argues, 'beschreibt

⁹² Kaußen, *Zur Ästhetik der Verweigerung*, p.352.

⁹³ Janke, P. *Der schöne Schein. Peter Handke und Botho Strauß* (Vienna: Holzhausen, 1993), p.23.

Strauß die Abwesenheit der produktiven Kräfte. Wunsch, Idee und Erinnerung werden getilgt. Doch das neue Bewußtsein ist letztlich passiv'.⁹⁴ Isolated figures have lost their identity in modern society. 'Der einzelne, der in einer sprachlich "geordneten" Welt lebt, hat jeden individuellen Halt verloren. Seine Persönlichkeit ist durch die Zerstörung des Geheimnisses abhanden gekommen'.⁹⁵

However, and here Janke departs from the interpretative constraints of Berka's and Bollman's respective studies: while Strauß' figures are aware of this loss, it is something that is then shown to be transcended. His characters do not languish in a world with no orientation. The sense of absence in Strauß' characters, 'ist ihre Wunde, die die Sehnsucht nach einer anderen Form des Daseins weckt. Diese Abwesenheit wird als "Leere" empfunden, die schmerzt'.⁹⁶ Here, Janke picks up the arguments advanced by Strauß in 'Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt' and points out the possibility of her own delineation of 'Anwesenheit'. Janke's idea highlights the limitations of critics that argue Strauß has either abandoned the subject to itself and its own terminal dissolution or taken flight in postmodern irony. Rather, in her reading, there is in 'Anwesenheit' some possibility beyond the crisis of the subject or emptying of linguistic signification. She posits the notion of an aesthetic transcendence. From out of the everyday arises an experience for Strauß' characters that lifts the constraints of time, memory and identity sensed as absence and loss. This, she suggests, is found by Strauß through the act of writing: 'Ausgangspunkt des Schreibens ist [...] für Strauß das Bewußtsein einer

⁹⁴ Janke, *Der schöne Schein*, p.52.

⁹⁵ Janke, *Der schöne Schein*, p.60.

⁹⁶ Janke, *Der schöne Schein*, p.71.

Abwesenheit, eines Mangels an Bedeutung'.⁹⁷ It is the specifically ontological nature of this experience that this thesis explores further. Nevertheless, the epiphany is ultimately still defined negatively. As she goes on to claim: 'Doch die "Leere" wird [...] in Strauß Werken nicht affirmativ bestätigt, sondern ist [...] die "Wunde", die durch den poetischen Akt geheilt werden soll'.⁹⁸ Thus, having pointed towards a possible move out of the constraints of fatalism Janke concludes by limiting the tangible possibilities of liberation and salvation in art and literature. Despite rescuing Strauß from the 'Vorwurf einer [...] eskapistischen Grundhaltung', his work is nonetheless, she contends, still caught perpetually in its 'Spiel mit Ambivalenzen' and so in a 'Gefahr einer "postmodernen" Nivellierung'.⁹⁹

Funke takes such arguments one stage further. In an influential study on Strauß' aesthetics she too begins by conceding aspects of fatalism. Literature, for Strauß, is premised on the elitist withdrawal of the poet, the result of which she suggests, taking the idea from Kaufen, 'ist nur für eine würdige, eine elitäre Auswahl von Lesern geschaffen'.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, she notes, Strauß attempts: 'sich als Dichterpersönlichkeit in dieser Verborgenheit einzurichten'.¹⁰¹ However, her argument seeks to suspend the 'klassischen Polarisierungen von Aufklärung und Gegenaufklärung, von Links und Rechts, von Progressismus und Konservativismus, und damit auch von Moderne und Anti-, bzw. Postmoderne' that the present argument maintains characterise the secondary

⁹⁷ Janke, *Der schöne Schein*, p.213.

⁹⁸ Janke, *Der schöne Schein*, p.213.

⁹⁹ Janke, *Der schöne Schein*, p.216.

¹⁰⁰ Funke, P.-M. *Über das Höhere in der Literatur. Ein Versuch zur Ästhetik von Botho Strauß* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1996), p.7.

¹⁰¹ Funke, *Über das Höhere in der Literatur*, p.7.

literature.¹⁰² Funke locates her ‘Versuch zur Ästhetik’, like other studies, in an engagement with what she sees as Strauß’ inheritance from literary and philosophical modernism. For her ‘das “Erbe der Moderne”, auf das Botho Strauß sich beruft ist das Erbe der ästhetischen Moderne’.¹⁰³

The specific theoretical touchstones of her thesis are the philosophies of Lyotard and Lévinas. Though the array of references upon which she draws occasionally threatens to overshadow the argument, Funke points her interpretation of Strauß firmly out of the constraints and accusations of passivity that constitute fatalism.¹⁰⁴ As in other studies, the transition to the postmodern is, she suggests, reflected in his work. She writes:

Das Ästhetische kommt von der Moderne her in das Denken, das heute, da die Krise der Wirklichkeit in der postmodernen Leugnung der Wirklichkeit des Wirklichen gipfelt, in jenem realitätsneutralen Spielraum ansässig zu werden sucht, den die Ästhetik der Moderne erschlossen hat.¹⁰⁵

Critically, though, rather than seeing Strauß’ work as mired in political epithets or abandoned to postmodern relativity, she posits instead the idea of an ethics to his writing. Such an ethics is the centre-point of the transcendent, of the ‘other’, found in literature or the work of art. She argues, then, that the focus of Strauß’ work, what she terms, ‘das Höhere in der Literatur’ is to be found in an ‘Ethik der Ästhetik’.¹⁰⁶ In the so-called ‘playroom’ of the postmodern, which still for Funke defines Strauß’ view of contemporary society, where the relationship of mankind to reality is thrown into

¹⁰² Funke, *Über das Höhere in der Literatur*, p.24.

¹⁰³ Funke, *Über das Höhere in der Literatur*, p.26.

¹⁰⁴ Funke, *Über das Höhere in der Literatur*, p.12. Funke lists various thinkers and their respective theories in her introduction: ‘Die schon genannten Theoretiker Steiner, Bohrer und Lyotard, dann Foucault, insbesondere der Foucault von *Les mots et les choses*, Maurice Blanchot, Octavio Paz, und der Ethiker Emmanuel Lévinas, Denker, die untereinander und auch mit den aufgenommenen Dichtern Mallarmé, Rilke und Borges in vielfältiger Beziehung stehen, bilden die “geheime Vereinigung” dieser Arbeit’.

¹⁰⁵ Funke, *Über das Höhere in der Literatur*, p.10.

¹⁰⁶ Funke, *Über das Höhere in der Literatur*, pp.174ff. Willer also argues such an approach. He posits an, ‘Ästhetik des Anderen’, in Willer, *Botho Strauß*, pp.104ff.

question and made epistemologically problematic, literature and mankind's response to it present the prospect of refuge. As she writes: 'das Ethische im Ästhetischen ist eine genuine Erfahrung, die in ebenjenem Spielraum stattfindet und die [...] mit Wahrnehmung und Empfindung zu tun hat'.¹⁰⁷ Strauß' writing is thus for Funke emblematic of an engagement with others as subjects and with the social environment, rather than the renunciation of either. She concludes her thesis with a description of Strauß' implicit humanism: 'Der Literaturbegriff, den Strauß [...] verteidigt, [...] Ethik als Verpflichtung zur Humanität, die Fragen der Erkenntnis und der Existenz'.¹⁰⁸

However, while Funke's argument does much to show a way out from fatalism, Strauß' writing is still constrained in such readings by a pre-occupation with ideas of the sublime or the good, thereby reflecting the two theoretical touchstones in Lyotard and Lévinas. Both of these notions, which see Strauß' writing as an aesthetics or an ethics, or combination thereof, fall short however of the philosophical concern of Strauß' work and are called into question by the following argument and readings offered in this thesis. In manifesting what is in Chapter Two termed ontological concern, Strauß' writing is not to be understood as alone as offering prescriptions for social action or praxis.

1.4 Thesis prospectus

This thesis builds on these latter studies relating to Strauß' so-called aesthetics. It proposes that the prose work has deep-lying affinities with the late thought of Martin

¹⁰⁷ Funke, *Über das Höhere in der Literatur*, p.10.

¹⁰⁸ Funke, *Über das Höhere in der Literatur*, p.233.

Heidegger (1889-1976). The affinities between writer and philosopher are wide-reaching and influence considerations regarding Strauß' treatment of questions of time, history and death, and defining movements in the Western tradition such as the ancients, certain poets (Hölderlin and Rilke) and philosophers (Nietzsche and Descartes). Although some of these elements are considered, the focus of this thesis is however more defined.

Through detailed readings of Strauß' works the thesis identifies his adoption and adaptation of certain ideas and terms, including the philosopher's critique of modern technological and scientific practice. This involves charting the parallels, for example, in the writer's and philosopher's respective disavowal of the legacy of Cartesianism for modernity on the relationship between mankind and world. However, the thesis concentrates on developing an understanding of the philosophical status of the work of art or *poetic* work founded on what is termed ontological concern. This is the guiding argument for the overall thesis. It explores Strauß' portrayal of language, its current uses and effects, and delineation of mankind's current condition as ontologically homeless.

As a counter to this condition, the argument contends, Strauß proposes certain characteristics of language and particular gestures by mankind that offer grounds of possibility for an alternative experience with language. In turn, bound to this, Strauß stakes a claim for the ontological truth of the *poetic* work: it is in and through the language of the work that truth is manifest. The philosophical status of the *poetic* is shown to be dynamic and indeterminate while it is experienced and manifested only ever as enigma. An understanding of this informs the central hypothesis of a *poetics of dwelling* in Strauß' work.

The aim of the thesis is, therefore, twofold. First, the readings offer a corrective to the widespread misunderstanding of the prose writing that either explicitly or implicitly ascribes to it fatalistic tendencies, both for its tone and in its use of language, and seeming renunciation of the broad, post-war, liberal-democratic social and political consensus. Far from a retreat to a nebulous world of myth, the thesis claims Strauß offers the prospect of what is termed *dynamic engagement* with the relationship between mankind and world understood ontologically. This proposition is grounded in the second, principal intent, which claims that Strauß, through the conceit of the truth of the *poetic*, proposed here as a *poetics of dwelling*, offers a view of the work of art that is profoundly destabilising and unsettling.

The thesis is not, however, advancing the position that Strauß is a Heideggerian. In other words, his prose works are not merely a transposition of philosophy into literature, where certain terms are excerpted and placed into fictional settings. Nor are the works simply a reflection of the philosopher's distinctive idiolect. The argument, therefore, has implications for the status and nature of what is allowed, or rather what is accepted by convention, as literature and philosophy.

Moreover, in laying a particular emphasis on the affinity to Heidegger, the thesis does not deny the possible influence of other thinkers, poets and writers. The present hypothesis of a *poetics of dwelling* is not an argument for exclusivity: in consideration of Strauß, acknowledged as one of Germany's leading polymaths, even by his detractors, such an interpretative path would be as prescriptive as it is myopic. It does, though, provide critical context, through a detailed comparative study of a specific example, of what

Strauß' self-definition as a writer and thinker of and on *der Rechte* denotes. A claim in this thesis for exclusivity would, anyway, only limit the implications of its own conclusion. Instead, by charting the philosophical antecedents of Strauß in Heideggerian thought, an interpretative framework emerges that provides not only corrective but also fruitful and occasionally unexpected readings of Strauß' challenging and unsettling prose works.

1.5 Heidegger in the secondary literature

Notwithstanding the contentious critical responses to 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang' and their legacy for understanding Strauß, the work otherwise seen as defining is *Paare, Passanten*. As Förster notes in a retrospective evaluation of the work: 'Mit dem Prosaband "Paare, Passanten", [...], avancierte Strauß zu einem äußerst kontrovers diskutierten deutschen Schriftsteller'.¹⁰⁹ It is from this publication that the emergence of the underlying, albeit latent, disputes in relation to the charge of fatalism can be dated.

Förster goes on to highlight the key features of Strauß' writing and its reception:

an die Stelle jener uneingeschränkt positiven Resonanz [...] die vornehmlich [...] im Umkreis der 'Neuen Subjektivität' angesiedelt wurde, trat von nun an der Disput. Ans Licht der literarischen Öffentlichkeit geriet damit indessen nichts anderes als Strauß' eigentliches Generalthema [...] nämlich: die Pathogenese des aufgeklärten Zeitalters, seines Subjekts und seiner Vernunft.¹¹⁰

This was, in part, due to the work's form, which comprises fragments, vignettes on contemporary life in Germany, essayistic reflections and philosophical aphorisms ordered

¹⁰⁹ Förster, J. 'Der falsch verstandene Aufklärer? Die Prosa Botho Strauß und ihre Rezeption', in *Diskussion Deutsch* 107 (1989), p.237.

¹¹⁰ Förster, 'Der falsch verstandene Aufklärer', pp.237-238.

into five distinct sections. The work thereby departs from the recognisable, established narrative structure of his very early fiction.¹¹¹ Such an episodic or fragmentary style has, of course, now become one of the defining characteristics of Strauß' writing even in his most recent return to works that have some, however limited, degree of recognisable narrative continuity and integrity. A number of critics on this basis view *Paare, Passanten* as a work pre-occupied principally with theory, whether of writing, politics or society and have consequently neglected the literary elements: a similar skewing of interpretative emphasis to the eclipsing by politics of the aesthetic following 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang'.

One fragment in particular has attracted attention and led to such critical weighting, namely Strauß' apparent distancing from the figure of Theodor Adorno (1903-1969) and negative dialectics. The focus of contention, typical of Strauß' more provocative remarks, is the parenthetical sentence: '(Ohne Dialektik denken wir auf Anhieb dümmer; aber es muß sein: ohne sie!).¹¹² This seeming signal for an intellectual breach with the precepts of Critical Theory is attributed added significance with comments made only shortly before publication in a rare interview in which Strauß avows his continuing debt to the Frankfurt School and associated thinkers.¹¹³ The remark on dialectics remains a defining moment in the larger studies on Strauß. The different perspectives on the abandonment of Adorno are interesting both for what they show of the focus of critical reception and for what they fail to mention.

¹¹¹ See, for example, Modick, K. 'Das Fragment als Methode. Zum Bauprinzip von *Paare, Passanten*', in Arnold, H. L. (ed.) *TEXT+KRITIK 81 Botho Strauß* (Munich: text + kritik, 1984), pp.72-79.

¹¹² Strauß, B. *Paare, Passanten* (Munich: DTV, 7th Edition, 1994), p.115.

¹¹³ Hage, 'Schreiben ist eine Séance', pp.189 and 195.

Berka, for example, suggests that Strauß maintains an intellectual debt to Adorno despite the tenor of his comments in *Paare, Passanten*. Adorno's *Ästhetische Theorie* is central to Strauß' *Rumor*, which develops a dialectical alternative to the strictures of identical thought and positivism. Noting of the tone of decline, of the 'Verfallsdiagnosen' permeating *Rumor*, she claims it is a conceit: 'die sich dem philosophischen Konzept von Adornos ästhetischer Theorie verpflichtet weiß'.¹¹⁴ One manifestation of the non-identical as inspired by Adorno, Berka argues, is the loss of self in Strauß' characters experienced by them as loss. Moreover, it is through the non-identical, also illustrated in Strauß' use of allegory and irony, that she develops her thesis about the re-instatement of myth in contemporary society. The influence of negative dialectics manifest in *Rumor* is not suddenly cancelled out by the single proclamation in *Paare, Passanten*. Further, Adorno's legacy continues through to the introduction in *Der junge Mann* where the idea and experience of history for the narrator and individual characters is relayed and felt in its absence. Berka thus contends that *Rumor* and *Der junge Mann* reflect Adorno's statement that there can be: 'Keine Wahrheit [...] ohne bestimmte Negation. Ästhetik heute hat diese zu exponieren. [...] Ohne Beimischung des Giftstoffes, virtuell die Negation des Lebendigen, wäre der Einspruch der Kunst gegen die zivilisatorische Unterdrückung tröstlich-hilflos'.¹¹⁵

Other studies also take the apparent repudiation of Adorno as the start point of their respective interpretations and as an early defining moment in Strauß' writing. In a sympathetic reading, von Becker suggests that the theoretical reflections in *Paare*,

¹¹⁴ Berka, *Mythos-Theorie und Allegorik*, p.39.

¹¹⁵ Adorno, T. *Ästhetische Theorie* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Suhrkamp, 1973), p.195, cited in Berka, *Mythos-Theorie und Allegorik*, p.39.

Passanten exhibit new relevance for those changed cultural and political conditions highlighted in the work compared to the post-war period, which provided the immediate context to and stimulus for Critical Theory. The work is, accordingly for him, ‘die Minima Moralia der achtziger Jahre’.¹¹⁶

Jörg Drews, in contrast, suggests that Strauß retains a nominal lineage to Critical Theory but betrays the precepts of such thinking, caught instead in his homage to the anti-democratic élitism of writers such as Stefan George. ‘Am verräterischsten in dem Buch erscheinen mir Ausrufe wie “Verfluchte Passanten-Welt!”, wo der [...] Georgesche Gestus der Abwendung von der “feilen Menge” Urständ feiert’.¹¹⁷ Bauer takes a different perspective arguing for the putative misogyny of *Paare, Passanten*. She sees Strauß’ distancing from his intellectual roots in Critical Theory as a symptom of, ‘einem allgegenwärtigen Bewußtsein schmerzlicher Verluste, die – im Gegensatz zur *Dialektik der Aufklärung* – mit nostalgischem Bedauern registriert werden’.¹¹⁸

In an important study, Anz anticipates some of the criticisms levelled against Strauß in relation to his supposed counter-enlightenment, elements of which combine in the charge of fatalism. He laments Strauß’ distancing from ‘die zivilisatorische Moderne bzw. gegen Traditionen der Aufklärung’.¹¹⁹ Strauß’ prose, Anz suggests, sympathetically evokes what he calls a tradition of aesthetic modernism, which in contrast as the preceding

¹¹⁶ Becker, P. ‘Die Minima Moralia der achtziger Jahre. Notizen zu Botho Strauß’ *Paare, Passanten* und *Kalldewey Farce*’, in *Merkur* 2 (1982), pp.150-160.

¹¹⁷ Drews, J. ‘Über einen neuerdings in der deutschen Literatur erhobenen Ton’, in *Merkur* 38 (1984), pp. 949-954.

¹¹⁸ Bauer, K. ‘Gegenwartskritik und nostalgische Rückgriffe: Die Abdankung der Frau als Objekt männlichen Begehrens und die Erotisierung der Kindfrau in Botho Strauß’ *Paare, Passanten*’, in *The German Quarterly* 69 (1996), p.181.

¹¹⁹ Anz, ‘Modern, postmodern? Botho Strauß’, p.411.

review notes, comes particularly ‘aus dem “geistesaristokratischen” Umfeld der “konservativen Revolution”’.¹²⁰

It is surprising, then, in view of the attention paid to the changing relationship of Strauß’ writing to the Frankfurt School, that repeated references to Heidegger in *Paare, Passanten* have not received more than scant notice.¹²¹ For example, even though disagreements between Heidegger and representatives of the Frankfurt School – and Adorno in particular – are sometimes overstated, it is strange that the latter’s engagement with and critique of Heidegger’s style is not considered.¹²² The oversight is still more unusual given the questions raised over Strauß’ own obscurantism and since large sections of *Paare, Passanten* are concerned directly with language and writing.¹²³

Anz is one of a few commentators to note the presence of Heidegger in *Paare, Passanten*. He suggests that Strauß invokes Heidegger’s idea of ‘das Man’ and ‘Gerede’ in his ‘Gegenüberstellungen des einsamen, bedeutenden einzelnen auf der einen Seite und der kruden, belanglos “plappernden” Menge mit ihrem Gerede, ihrer Mittelmäßigkeit auf der anderen’: although he mis-represents the morally-neutral imperative of Heidegger’s argument.¹²⁴ Similarly, emphasising Strauß’ apparent pre-occupation with the subject in dissolution, plagued by inauthenticity, Anz goes on to suggest a parallel with Heidegger’s

¹²⁰ Anz, ‘Modern, postmodern? Botho Strauß’, p.411.

¹²¹ See Strauß, *Paare, Passanten*, pp.68, 76, 113 and 116 respectively.

¹²² See Bowie’s persuasive account of the similarities in thinking in relation to Adorno’s philosophy of music and Heidegger’s hermeneutic, in Bowie, A. ‘Adorno, Heidegger and the Meaning of Music’, in *Thesis Eleven* No.56 (1999), pp.1-23. See also Rosiek, J. *Maintaining the Sublime. Heidegger and Adorno* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Peter Lang, 2000).

¹²³ Anz, for example, notes: ‘[...] versucht sich die Prosa von Strauß nicht zuletzt auch durch seine preziöse, oft archaisierende Wortwahl zu unterscheiden: statt “Schreiben” steht hier “Schrieb”, statt “Dämmerung” “Dämmer” in den Kapitelüberschriften’, in Anz, ‘Modern, postmodern? Botho Strauß’, p.407.

¹²⁴ Anz, ‘Modern, postmodern? Botho Strauß’, p.407.

‘Existenzphilosophie’ and reflections on the significance of the motif of death for mankind.¹²⁵

One other study on *Paare, Passanten* notes the presence of Heidegger but the reference is fleeting and undeveloped: Förster summarises the subject matter of all the fragments and vignettes in the work as, ‘Die Generalformel [...] lautet: Mangel an Kultur, Mangel an Moral, Mangel an Sein (Heidegger)’.¹²⁶ These few citations present the sum consideration given to the possible influence of early Heidegger in early Strauß.

Further references to the philosopher in the secondary literature are predominantly restricted to citing aspects of his philosophy derived mainly from *Sein und Zeit*. For example, Wiesberg, like Anz, refers to the notion of ‘das Gerede’ in his brief discussion of Strauß’ views on journalism, and the proliferation of such forms of writing and their influence on contemporary culture, remarking in passing: ‘Anklänge an Heideggers Begriff des “Geredes” sind hier unschwer zu erkennen’.¹²⁷ Dunn, in turn, in a study of *Groß und Klein*, highlights such an influence too. He notes of Lotte’s mental state while abroad in Greece: ‘The term “Sorge” evokes the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, [...] , and Heidegger’s distinction between language as a speaking-out [...] and language as “Gerede” addressed to interchangeable components of the impersonal world’.¹²⁸

Such selective and brief reference to Heidegger’s presence culminates in Berka’s reading of the second section of Strauß’ novel, *Der junge Mann*, entitled ‘Der Wald’, in which

¹²⁵ Anz, ‘Modern, postmodern? Botho Strauß’, p.410.

¹²⁶ Förster, ‘Der falsch verstandene Aufklärer?’, p.243.

¹²⁷ Wiesberg, *Botho Strauß. Dichter der Gegen-Aufklärung*, p.95.

¹²⁸ Dunn, J. ‘A Feminist Conservatism? Gender Conflict and the Inadequacy of Communication in Botho Strauß’ *Groß und Klein*, in *Colloquia Germanica* 29 (1996), p.327.

the figure of the ‘Bankkauffrau’ comes into contact with the ‘Seelengroßbesitzer’, guardian of the ‘Turm der Deutschen’.¹²⁹ This grotesque figure, custodian of language and speech is, Berka argues, in allegorical form, the figure and thought of the philosopher: ‘Heideggers Lehre lebt im Donnerrollen seines Doppelgängers weiter, allerdings in kaum kenntlicher allegorischer Verzerrung’.¹³⁰ Although she correctly notes the allusion to Heidegger in the monstrous figure’s declaration – ‘Ich zeite’ – Berka’s discussion falls short in considering the implications of the reference, and also whether Strauß’ citation moves beyond a concern with ideas of time to other elements of the philosopher’s thought.

The contributions to what is here termed the third group in the critical literature, engaged with defining Strauß’ aesthetics and its sources have, however, begun to broaden the frame of reference to Heidegger. Funke highlights aspects of Heidegger’s philosophy developed after the 1930s and 1940s. For example, she documents an allusion at the end of *Rumor* to Foucault’s *Les Mots et les Choses*, as part of her discussion of the crisis afflicting the human subject and its erosion. As she remarks: ‘Die Figur des Menschen scheint nach kaum 200jähriger Geschichte im Begriff, wieder aus dem Feld unseres Denkens zu verschwinden’.¹³¹ She suggests that this allusion also echoes Heidegger’s *Über den Humanismus*: ‘Man denkt hier auch an die Philosophie Heideggers, das Ich als Gast im “Haus des Seins”’.¹³² Funke makes two further references to the eponymous ‘house of Being’.¹³³ It is clear though that in her emphasis on a philosophically centred

¹²⁹ Strauß, *Der junge Mann*, pp. 77ff.

¹³⁰ Berka, *Mythos-Theorie und Allegorik*, p.140.

¹³¹ Funke, *Über das Höhere in der Literatur*, p.85.

¹³² Funke, *Über das Höhere in der Literatur*, p.86.

¹³³ Funke, *Über das Höhere in der Literatur*, pp.100 and 216.

guest, she has misconceived a core tenet of Heideggerian thought. In arguing that Strauß seeks to portray the subject taking up refuge in ‘the house of Being’ she seeks to counter those critics that present Strauß as celebrating the decline or crisis of the centered-subject. However, one of the main bed-rocks of the metaphysical tradition that Heidegger seeks to overcome – and which Strauß adopts directly – is the *ego* of Cartesian philosophy, posited as independent of its ‘being-in-the-world’ or ‘being-with’. This is considered further in Chapter Three below. Furthermore, as part of her argument to ground Strauß’ aesthetic in Lévinasian ethics, what she calls the ‘Gastlichkeit im Ästhetischen’, she overlooks the fundamental philosophical divergence of Lévinas’ philosophy from Heideggerian ontology.¹³⁴

Bellman also considers an aspect of Heidegger’s late thought. He sees in his reading of Strauß’ *Beginnlosigkeit* an irreconcilable tension between language’s capacity for revelation and its role in maintaining a stable relationship between mankind and the experience of the world at any given moment. As he reasons: ‘Insofern also Sprache der Möglichkeit nach Organ neuer flüchtiger Einsichten ist, bleibt sie mit der Haltung des Gegenwärtigen verbunden’.¹³⁵ A contextualised reading of the connection to Heidegger in respect of the term *Gegenwärtigen* is also developed in Chapter Three. This is based, he argues, on the idea developed by Heidegger in the essay *Gelassenheit*. In Strauß’ portrayal of the relationship of language to time in *Beginnlosigkeit* he claims: ‘[...] geht es in den Reflexionen über den Zusammenhang von Sprache und Zeitsinn um das, was

¹³⁴ For a summary of Lévinas’ disagreement with Heidegger, see Davis, C. *Levinas. A Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1996), pp.28-31.

¹³⁵ Bellmann, J. ‘Poetologie und Zeit-Kritik in Botho Strauß’ *‘Beginnlosigkeit’*, in Arnold, H. L. (ed.) *TEXT+KRITIK 81 Botho Strauß: Neufassung* (Munich: text + kritik, 1998), p.48.

Heidegger als “Offenheit für das Geheimnis” bezeichnet’.¹³⁶ This gesture of mankind’s being open to enigma plays a central role in the present hypothesis of a *poetics of dwelling* but not merely, as Bellman proposes, by simply reflecting the motif in Strauß’ work. Finally, Willer, in one of the more suggestive invocations of Heidegger, which this thesis develops in Chapter Four, refers to his ideas on language in relation to a search for a more originary experience of language in Strauß’ *Rumor*.¹³⁷

However, these fleeting references, though of occasional interest in consideration of specific aspects of Strauß’ works, remain undeveloped in their broader implications for the philosophical foundation and ambition of his understanding of the *poetic*.¹³⁸ Nor are these references to Heidegger rooted back in the breadth of the philosopher’s thought, or contextualised within the development of the Western tradition. Bollmann, for example, makes the claim that: “Die eigentlich bewegende Frage” des Dichters Strauß berührt sich mit derjenigen des Denkers Heidegger’ without going on to develop any comprehensive, substantive indication as to what this might be.¹³⁹ He provides no sustained analysis of the possible impact Heidegger has on Strauß’ work and thinking. Furthermore, given the contentiousness of the question of politics in Strauß and the imputation of fatalism, critical association with Heidegger appears by some commentators as an attempt to damn Strauß by association with the controversy surrounding the philosopher in the late 1980s. For example, writing about reception of the language of ‘Anschwellender Bocksgesang’

¹³⁶ Bellmann, ‘Poetologie und Zeit-Kritik in Botho Strauß’, p.48. See Heidegger, M. *Gelassenheit* (Stuttgart: Günther Neske, 10th Edition, 1992), p.24.

¹³⁷ Willer, *Botho Strauß*, p.68.

¹³⁸ The significance of the few notices in the secondary literature that connect specific works by Strauß to those of Heidegger are considered in Chapter Four in discussion of *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*.

¹³⁹ Bollman, ‘Zur Poetik von Botho Strauß’, p.95.

Harbers notes: ‘dazu gehört der immer wieder erwähnte Einwand, daß die Sprache des Essays eher ‘raunende’ Beschwörung etwa in Heideggerscher Weise sei’.¹⁴⁰

There is only one sustained study that considers the relationship between Strauß and Heidegger in the secondary literature.¹⁴¹ Windrich takes the influence of Adorno’s thought as his opening focus, in particular Strauß’ later unequivocal critique of *Die Dialektik der Aufklärung* in the programme notes to *Ithaka. Schauspiel nach den Heimkehr-Gesängen der Odyssee*. It is, he suggests, a notable development from the view articulated in *Paare, Passanten*. Strauß writes:

Beim Wiederlesen des Odysseus-Kapitels in der *Dialektik der Aufklärung* besticht ein gedankliches parlando, [...]. [...] Wenn ein modernes Bewußtsein sich einem wesen- und zeitfernen Gegenstand derart schamlos nähert, birgt das die Gefahr von unfreiwilliger Komik. Doch stößt man bald auf den tieferen Witz des Dilemmas: die Unfähigkeit, den Buchstaben des Mythos stehen zu lassen; zu glauben, was des Glaubens – zu kritisieren, was der Kritik würdig ist.¹⁴²

Windrich argues that this deeper critique of Adorno represents a further transformation of Strauß’ aesthetic, which for him falls into distinct stages. These he classifies as ‘vom Begehren zur Verlusterfahrung, von den binären Zeitigungen bis hin zur [...] Erinnerung, von der diesseitigen hin zur theologischen Andersheit’.¹⁴³ Central to each stage are questions of meaning and the failure – whether in utopian thought, ideas of time or the notions of otherness – of what are conceived within the Western tradition as moments of ‘Sinnstiftung’.

¹⁴⁰ Harbers, ‘Botho Strauß’ “Bocksgesang”, p.592.

¹⁴¹ Windrich, J. *Das Aus für das Über. Zur Poetik von Botho Strauß’ Prosaband “Wohnen Dämmern Lügen” und dem Schauspiel “Ithaka”*. (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000).

¹⁴² Strauß, B. *Der Gebärdensammler: Texte zum Theater* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Verlag der Autoren, 1999), p.67.

¹⁴³ Windrich, *Das Aus für das Über*, p.200.

Through a reading of Strauß' use of the terms 'Erinnerung' and 'Erwartung', indebted in his early works to Adorno, Windrich charts Strauß' changing aesthetic positions showing how these come to touch on elements of Heidegger's late thought, including ideas associated with the terms 'das Geschick', 'der Riß' and 'die Möglichkeit' respectively. The final stage of Windrich's argument draws, like Funke, on Lévinasian ethics, though unlike her he acknowledges the irreconcilable philosophical differences between Lévinas and Heidegger, suggesting the importance of otherness in art for an understanding of 'jene tiefere Wahrheit' that underlies his postulate for a Straußian aesthetic. He writes: 'In dieser Tendenz trifft sich Strauß sowohl mit Heidegger also auch mit Lévinas, so verschieden die beiden Denker ansonsten auch sein mögen'.¹⁴⁴ Through a reading of *Ithaka* and Strauß' prose work *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, Windrich seeks to delineate the status of the work of art in his aesthetics and concludes: 'daß Strauß die Kunst und die Möglichkeit für wahrer als alle Wirklichkeit erachtet'.¹⁴⁵ It is an insight into the relationship of *poetic* work to truth that this thesis develops further.

The proximity of Strauß' writing to Heidegger and distance from Adorno are set out by Windrich in summary: 'Strauß' philosophische und poetologische Ansätze [beruhen] – anders als im Poststrukturalismus oder in der Kritischen Theorie – nicht auf der Negation, sondern auf der Bejahung der sprachlichen Überlieferung'.¹⁴⁶ Although at times the argument lacks coherence – it is unclear, for example, how Strauß' *poetic* ambition aligns with Heidegger's philosophical purpose – and becomes blurred in repeated methodological digressions in support of the posited stages to Strauß' aesthetics,

¹⁴⁴ Windrich, *Das Aus für das Über*, p.200.

¹⁴⁵ Windrich, *Das Aus für das Über*, p.200.

¹⁴⁶ Windrich, *Das Aus für das Über*, p.200.

Windrich's is an important study on Strauß. Like Funke, the argument points a way out of the strictures of fatalism by highlighting instances in the works that count 'als Felder positiver Sinnstiftung'.¹⁴⁷ However, its focus is restricted to a fleeting review of aspects of the philosophy in isolation, and excludes wider reflections on the work of art, technology and the understanding of truth: these limitations are considered further, particularly in Chapter Four, in respect of certain terms, including the central role of *Ereignis* for Strauß. It is the extent of Strauß' adoption of Heideggerian thought, echoing of such terms and a particular lineage of the Western philosophical tradition that the present thesis considers closely; most importantly, it assesses the implications for the philosophical status of Strauß' work arising from adaptation of certain Heideggerian precepts.

The consistency of reference to Heidegger in the secondary literature, albeit largely superficial, undeveloped or selective, lends force to the premise of this thesis that the relationship between Strauß and Heidegger warrants consideration. More intriguingly, the affinity between writer and thinker is also entering critical perspectives in Heidegger scholarship. So, for example, Young's discussion of Heidegger's philosophy of the Twenties and Thirties, in particular the controversial connection between the governmental-state and idea of *Gemeinschaft* cites Strauß for a comparable – what Young terms – “communitarian” critique of the modern, liberal-democratic state’.¹⁴⁸ Stumpe, in turn, in an important argument on the underlying logical structure to Heidegger's

¹⁴⁷ Windrich, *Das Aus für das Über*, p.33. In making such a claim he is, of course, moving the view of Strauß away from Berka's argument that his work 'läßt vor allem (zitierte) theoretische Positionen sich gegenseitig negieren, ohne auf eine einende Metasprache hinauszuwollen', in Berka, *Mythos-Theorie und Allegorik*, pp.58-59.

¹⁴⁸ See Young, J. *Heidegger, Philosophy, Nazism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.47.

language, makes reference to Strauß' use of the philosopher's terminology in, for example, 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang', claiming:

So werden die beiden Begriffe des 'Menschen' und der 'Anwesenheit' innerhalb eines Diskurses über die zu erinnernde Vergangenheit hervorgehoben, was auf die Heideggersche Provenienz hinweist, zumal auch der Name zweimal in diesem Text fällt.¹⁴⁹

These references to Strauß' works in both English- and German-language commentaries on Heidegger, though circumspect, are further confirmation of this most stimulating and provocative of influences.

1.6 Considerations of method

The readings in each of the following chapters are of individual Strauß works, though they also draw widely on his other prose writings for supporting evidence. Each takes its methodological inspiration from Heidegger's transformative hermeneutic, where close attention is given to certain individual terms and phrases upon which larger claims are overlaid. Strauß himself echoes such an approach. For example, in 'Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt' Strauß invokes the immanent presence of the *poetic* work, its *Anwesenheit* and the parallel constraints under which works of art are conventionally interpreted:

Die Kunstwerke sind da. [...] Verborgen, verhindert, verlegen ist allein der Empfänger, der Beschenkte, der Angesprochene. Er hat sich aus der Verantwortung gestohlen und in ein methodisches Drumherumreden geflüchtet.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Stumpe, M. *Geviert, Gestell, Geflecht. Die logische Struktur des Gedankens in Martin Heideggers späten Texten* (Braunschweig: Books on Demand, 2002), p.223.

¹⁵⁰ Strauß, 'Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt', p.317.

Instead, as an alternative, Strauß opens up the idea of a site of refuge within the work – ‘im Kunstwerk Asyl genießen’ – and, critically, of being attendant to, waiting upon its suggestive force so that it can again be experienced, as he describes it, as ‘unenthüllt’.¹⁵¹ This echoes the sense of Heidegger’s encounter with certain poets, in what he terms *Warten*. Heidegger writes: ‘Warten heißt [...]: Ausschau halten und zwar innerhalb des schon Gedachten nach dem Ungedachten, das sich im schon Gedachten noch verbirgt’.¹⁵² The significance of these gestures in respect of the work of art and their characteristics is examined throughout the thesis and their implications evaluated in the concluding chapter.

The approach taken does not imply, though, that what follows imitates Heidegger’s distinctive philosophical heuristic. This would lead inevitably at best only to poor pastiche. There are two approaches taken here to the readings. The first places Strauß’ direct quotation of Heidegger within a context that shows the significance of such citation at important positions or moments in his writing. Thereafter, the principal approach examines critically the many implicit allusions to and adoptions of the philosopher’s thought made by Strauß. These allusions take the form of certain terms and ideas pivotal in his overall writing, or to the specific work under consideration. Thus, for example, in Chapter Two, Strauß’ views on the nature of the work of art in delineation of *Anwesenheit* and the emphasis on *Logos* are shown to be close to ideas Heidegger advances in relation to these terms. Others are more tangential, including, for example, the designations indebted to Heidegger for the conceit of a site for experience of the

¹⁵¹ Strauß, ‘Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt’, p.317.

¹⁵² Heidegger, M. ‘Was heißt Denken?’ in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Stuttgart: Günther Neske, 7th Edition, 1994), p.133.

poetic work, noted above, and denoted by *Wohnen*, *Zwischen* and *Dimension*. The affinity of their respective invocations in Heidegger and by Strauß forms part of the exegesis.

The intention of these readings is first to provide supporting evidence for the premise that the prose writer and essayist Strauß shares affinities with the thought and ontology of Heidegger. Secondly, on the basis of these affinities, the aim is then to deepen interpretative understanding of Strauß: to get, not to a single definable meaning for his writing, but rather, closer to an understanding of the ‘rational nicht erschließbaren Sinn’ that he claims for the work of art.¹⁵³ This is done by following the development of certain ideas to bring cumulatively into consideration certain philosophical questions at stake in Strauß’ work. It is an approach, therefore, of detailed exegesis and cumulative iteration. Such a circumspect way forward, given the writer under consideration, and the influence of Heidegger, seems not only inevitable but also methodologically desirable.

The early section of this chapter raises the question of Strauß’ obscurantism, an accusation, of course, also infamously levelled at Heidegger by Adorno.¹⁵⁴ The delineation of Heidegger’s thinking in this thesis and Strauß’ adaptation thereof, therefore, requires two main caveats.

The first relates to the breadth and reach of Heidegger’s thought. It is practically impossible and intellectually less than desirable to provide succinct expositions of Heidegger’s individual ideas let alone evaluate the importance of certain phrases and words to his overall thought and philosophy. Each term and its articulation are inflections

¹⁵³ Strauß, ‘Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt’, p.307.

¹⁵⁴ See Adorno, T. *Jargon der Eigentlichkeit* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Suhrkamp, 1997).

of others; of supplementary arguments and suggestions. His writings are, as one critic notes, ‘connected fugally’.¹⁵⁵ The metaphor rightly conjures up the idea that taking individual movements in his thought unbalances the integrity and harmony of the whole. Nevertheless, the readings here of necessity concentrate on individual paths taken by his thought, while where possible alluding to related concerns.¹⁵⁶ Leaving elements of Heidegger untouched does not, though, undermine the dual intention of the thesis in relation to Strauß’ works, and importantly goes beyond the restricted consideration of Heidegger’s presence in the majority of existing secondary literature.

The second caveat concerns Heidegger’s philosophical style. It is difficult to discuss his thought, or develop readings from individual monographs and essays, without having recourse also to his terms and language. Not to do so would inevitably risk the possibility of distortion.¹⁵⁷ This has consequences for the tone of the present thesis, which are here acknowledged and must be accepted at the outset. That this thesis is written in English, a language inherently resistant to articulating the etymological force and compacted revelation of the Heideggerian original, and therefore by implication the claims made of Strauß, is only a further justification for the exegetical approach to readings taken and the language in which this is advanced.¹⁵⁸ Moreover, as the endnote to the thesis proposes,

¹⁵⁵ Pattison, G. *The Later Heidegger* (London: Routledge, 2000), p.23.

¹⁵⁶ This means, for example, that in the discussion of Strauß’ views on technology in Chapter Three and the relationship to Heidegger’s idea of *Ge-stell* and τέχνη (technē) a discussion of φύσις (phūsis) is left out of consideration. See, Guignon, C. ‘Being as Appearing: Retrieving the Greek Experience of *Phusis*’, in Polt, R. & Fried, G. (eds.) *A Companion to Heidegger’s Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2001), pp.34-56. Similarly, in developing the argument for Strauß’ portrayal of language, its implications and indebtedness to Heidegger’s ontological prioritisation of language in Chapter Four, consideration is not given to the vital related notion of *Ge-viert*. See, Young, J. *Heidegger’s Later Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp.91ff.

¹⁵⁷ See, Pattison, *The Later Heidegger*, pp.14ff and Jarvis, S. *Adorno. A Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1998), p.201.

¹⁵⁸ As Hartman notes: ‘His style in German is as troublesome as the correlative problem of capturing that style in English. Can we *translate* Heidegger: can Heidegger be Englished, but also can he be Germaned?’

such language is unavoidable if there is to be an understanding appropriate to the philosophical force of Strauß' proposal for the *Undeutlichkeit* of the *poetic* work.¹⁵⁹

Moreover, in referring specifically to Heidegger's late thought in the title the thesis acknowledges the substantial and contentious debate surrounding different classifications of his philosophy.¹⁶⁰ The question of periodization, though, seems secondary to whether the various elements comprising his thought are reconcilable. It is hoped that treatment of those terms arising during the readings of Strauß makes it clear that this thesis assumes an underlying continuity to Heidegger's thought manifested, for example, in the persistence of engagement with ideas of *Logos*, language and, most importantly, ἀλήθεια (alētheia), which explains why each exegesis returns to similar intellectual and linguistic terrain. In making judgements on Heidegger the present thesis draws particularly on the two seminal monographs on the late philosophy: those by Bruns on the relationship to poetry and White on language.¹⁶¹ This is not, however, to overlook the changes in tone through which his thought moves. Notably, it is Heidegger's own inflection of the central

in Hartmann, G. *The Unremarkable Wordsworth* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p.196. See also Polt for similar observations on Anglo-Saxon philosophy's reception of Heidegger's thought, in Polt, R. *Heidegger. An Introduction* (London: UCL Press, 1999), p.122.

¹⁵⁹ The concluding reading in Chapter Five of Strauß, B. *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit* (Munich/Vienna: Hanser, 1989) develops this in detail.

¹⁶⁰ The evaluation of Heidegger's so-called *Kehre* is intricate and involves questions of biographical adaptations and shifts, as well as alterations to his thought. Richardson, for example, posits notions of 'Heidegger I' and 'Heidegger II' but argues that any difference is one of 'focus' rather than substance, in Richardson, W. J. *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963). Habermas, in contrast, locates a change arising from the philosophical limitations he identifies from *Sein und Zeit* and in Heidegger's personal failure and disillusionment with the National Socialist regime, in Habermas, J. *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne: Zwölf Vorlesungen* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Suhrkamp, 1985). Whereas Sheehan de-couples the term altogether from interpretation in respect of the development to his overall thought, interpreting it as the designation for the happening of truth *in* thought, in Sheehan, T. 'Kehre and Ereignis: A Prolegomenon to *Introduction to Metaphysics*, in Polt, R. & Fried, G. (eds.) *A Companion to Heidegger's Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2001), pp.3-16.

¹⁶¹ Bruns, G. L. *Heidegger's Estrangements: Language, Truth and Poetry in the Later Writings* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1981) and White, D. A. *Heidegger and the Language of Poetry* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978).

concern of this thought – *die Frage nach dem Sinn von Sein* – that is influential for the main hypothesis of a *poetics of dwelling* in Strauß. In *Vier Seminare* he describes three inter-related emphases that he designates respectively as, ‘Frage nach dem Sinn von Sein’; ‘Frage nach der Wahrheit des Seins’ and, lastly, ‘Frage nach dem Ort oder der Ortschaft des Seins’.¹⁶² It is this idea of a ‘Topologie des Seins’ of the truth of *Sein* that is particularly influential for Strauß’ prose and his invocation of certain terms noted above.

Similarly, the thesis is not blind to the continuing controversies concerning the extent of Heidegger’s personal involvement with the National Socialist regime and the implications both for the biography of the man and the thought of the philosopher.¹⁶³

These questions, although they lie outside the immediate focus of this thesis, are in part implicitly addressed in the projected defence undertaken here against the accusations of Strauß’ implied fatalism. This implies that a distinction is intellectually sustainable between Heidegger’s thought, which is not finally philosophically bound to Nazism and its legacy for Western and German thought, and the undoubted personal shortcomings of the individual.

As indicated, it is impossible to do full justice to the scope of Heidegger’s thought in the context of such a thesis, which inevitably requires that selection be made from essays and works. There is no Heidegger text with a single, systematic exposition of his ontology. Rather, in his writings, thought is continually in movement: a suggested motto for his

¹⁶² Heidegger, M. *Vier Seminare* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Klostermann, 1977), p.82, cited in Stumpe, *Geviert, Gestell, Geflecht.*, p.210.

¹⁶³ For the original source of the controversy see Farias, V. *Heidegger and Nazism* (Philadelphia: Temple, 1989) and a more recent persuasive counter argument Young, *Heidegger, Philosophy, Nazism*. For a summary of the different contributions see Wolin, R. *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1993).

collected works being ‘ways not works’. As a result, the thesis draws for its touchstones primarily on the collection of essays, *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, though it also considers other works, including *Sein und Zeit*, the collection of essays in *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* and, critically for the argument, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*, which each inflect terms of the late thought vital for the thesis. The individual essays in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* relate, in turn, to technology, language, poetry and the poets. As Heidegger himself suggests in the preface, as a collection of essays it opens perspectives that the individual lectures alone do not provide.¹⁶⁴

With regard to Strauß, the thesis focuses almost exclusively on his prose writing, in particular works that have received less critical attention than others, including recent publications. The argument does not, however, disagree specifically with any one contribution to the secondary literature, although the readings draw attention to limitations in current perspectives. Anyway, what follows is not conceived as a polemic against any of the three groups of secondary literature identified above. The final intention is only to revise the underlying perspective – in the view of this thesis based on an oversight regarding the philosophical claims of his writing and a misunderstanding of its implications – occasioned partly by Strauß’ essays, as indicated in respect of ‘Anschwellender Bocksgesang’, and by less well-disposed critics, around the charge of fatalism.

The individual works under consideration in the following chapters include, in order of exegesis ‘Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt’; *Beginnlosigkeit. Reflexionen über*

¹⁶⁴ Heidegger writes: ‘Für den Leser könnte es zu einer Sammlung werden, [...]. Der Leser sähe sich auf einen Weg gebracht, den ein Autor vorausgegangen ist, der im Glücksfall [...] ein Gedeihenlassen auslöst’, in Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, p.7.

Fleck und Linie; *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* and lastly *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit* but the argument also draws on other works, from the early *Die Widmung*, through the longest, *Der junge Mann* to the most recent *Der Untenstehende auf Zehenspitzen*. Each chapter, though, concentrates on developing a coherent reading of a single prose work. The underlying assumption is of an integrity to each individual work, which moves against a tendency in the secondary literature to excerpt selectively in relation to a specific argument or idea. This often exacerbates the perception of Strauß' work as fragmented and lacking unity.¹⁶⁵ The intention is to argue for just such a unity in each work. Furthermore, the selection implies that there is also overall continuity to Strauß, in particular through his engagement with Heideggerian philosophy, in contrast to some interpretations, which argue for either radical ruptures or discrete periods.¹⁶⁶

Finally, the thesis draws on Strauß' essays. These have risen steadily in number since the 1980s and have, as the discussion of 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang' shows, an important – if, at times, undue – influence on the tenor of discussion surrounding Strauß. The essays act as reference points in the thesis and place the author and interpolation of his views at the centre of the argument. The question of Strauß the author features prominently in the secondary literature, beyond discussions of his putative relationship to the postmodern, particularly since the programmatic and suggestive introduction to *Der junge Mann*. But while studies that elide the figure of Strauß or conjecture on the endless self-referentiality of his works undoubtedly find textual support and have interpretative legitimacy, the

¹⁶⁵ To see the consequences of such an approach see Funke, *Über das Höhere in der Literatur*, pp.204 and 216.

¹⁶⁶ See, for example, Oberender, T. 'Die Wiedererrichtung des Himmels. Die "Wende" in den Texten von Botho Strauß', in Arnold, H. L. (ed.) *TEXT+KRITIK 81 Botho Strauß: Neufassung* (Munich: text + kritik, 1998), pp.76-99.

assumption of this thesis, though critically unfashionable, is one grounded in interpretive common sense, suggesting that in the essays Strauß shows the primacy of certain ideas and that these flow through to the longer prose works. In this way, the thesis seeks to avoid the approach to the work of art lambasted in one such essay where he writes of much contemporary theory:

Diese Poetik hat den esoterischen Poetisten hervorgebracht, dessen familiäres Mitreden am Werk den Poeten von seiner Poesie trennt und in minutiösen Schnitten Zeit, Ort, Sinn, Autorschaft vom Werk abspaltet, um es zu einer autonomen Textualität zu verarbeiten. Die Metapher vom Parasiten ist altgedient, und sie wiegt mehr als ein umwelt-, ein 'logos-bewußter' Protest gegen die Übermacht der sekundären, medialen, indirekten Sprechweisen, die die atmende Sprache ebenso erstickend bedecken wie die Flächenversiegelung den fruchtbaren Boden.¹⁶⁷

In trying to delineate a *poetics of dwelling* and answer the charge of fatalism, this seems an indispensable pre-requisite if, as a piece of secondary writing *par excellence*, this thesis is to do any justice to the originating force of the primary works.

1.7 Thesis overview

Having established a background to the thesis in respect of the general tendencies in reception of Strauß and the latent intent, to cast doubt on the efficacy of accusations making up the charge of fatalism, this introduction moots its principal ambition, namely to propose an understanding of Strauß' philosophical claims for the truth of the *poetic* work. In anticipation of this, Chapter Two goes on to develop further the underlying premise of the affinity with Heidegger through a close reading of Strauß' essay 'Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt'. The reading suggests that in taking on George

¹⁶⁷ Strauß, 'Der Aufstand gegen die sekundären Welt', p.312.

Steiner's thesis of an 'Ästhetik der Anwesenheit' Strauß raises certain ontological concerns over the relationship between language and world shared with the philosopher. The reading concentrates on understanding of the terms *Anwesenheit* and *Logos* in Strauß and Heidegger respectively. The chapter concludes by considering briefly the structural similarities between Strauß' arguments and Heidegger's on the consequences for mankind of what Strauß terms the 'secondary' world of late modernity.

Chapter Three, in turn, considers one pervasive feature of this condition of late modernity in greater detail, namely technology, with a reading of *Beginnlosigkeit. Reflexionen über Fleck und Linie*, and posits that Strauß' view of a fundamental distortion to mankind's dominant experience of the everyday object-world in the application and use of scientific and technological methods has its antecedent in Heidegger. It suggests that the secondary literature misconceives the nature of Strauß' engagement with technology and its particular philosophical basis. The chapter highlights parallels with Heidegger's exposition of the ancient Greek τέχνη and *Ge-stell*, the world-enframing characteristic of metaphysical thought presented in modern technology to show how Strauß agrees with the philosopher's critique of the danger that is posed to mankind. The reading concludes by highlighting certain terms in the work, including *Fleck*, *Zwischen* and *Wohnen*, through which characteristics are proposed by which an alternative engagement or experience with an ontological understanding of world becomes possible.

Counter to the world-distorting and dominating background of technology, Chapter Four re-visits the issue of language, its uses and abuses, and central for Strauß to the secondary condition of late modernity, which are aligned with precepts of science and technology.

The argument highlights the effects on mankind of a degraded, now lost, experience of what is termed originary language. It introduces the idea that mankind is ontologically homeless. Again the intellectual antecedents to Strauß' prose are shown to reside in Heidegger's thought, in particular the underlying concerns of his essay 'Bauen Wohnen Denken' and Strauß' complex reinscription of these ideas in the work *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* where he develops what is characterised as grounds of possibility for a retrieval of such originary language.

In response to the portrayal of mankind's current homelessness in language Strauß offers the ontological conceit of the *poetic* work. Chapter Five is the nexus of the thesis. The close reading of *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit* considers the significance of the poets based on the example of Robinson Jeffers (1887-1962). In a dense series of allusions to Heidegger, in particular the philosopher's delineation of ἀλήθεια, the argument contends that Strauß conceives of the truth of the *poetic* and the work as *Undeutlichkeit*. The chapter concludes by setting out the hypothesis of the thesis, *a poetics of dwelling*, and the alternative offered thereby for mankind of a *dynamic engagement* with the world, in contrast to that circumscribed by the secondary language of science and technology. Rather than withdrawing and resigning, the poet and the work are shown as the site of active ontological concern for the world and so contrast with those accusations that underlie the charge of fatalism.

The thesis concludes by briefly noting the implications of the argument, particularly for an understanding of the philosophical status of Strauß' prose writing.

CHAPTER TWO

FROM AESTHETIC PRESENTATION TO ONTOLOGICAL CONCERN: 'BEMERKUNGEN ZU EINER ÄSTHETIK DER ANWESENHEIT'

2.1 *Von realer Gegenwart*

Strauß' reflections on the status and nature of the work and art are one of the enduring features of his writing and lead variously to consternation and adulation. His essay 'Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt', published as a postscript to George Steiner's *Von realer Gegenwart* presents an exclusive engagement with such considerations and is distinctive amongst his writing.¹ It is widely viewed by commentators as a key text. Oberender, for example, sees it as a transition point, part of what he calls 'ein reinigender Prozeß' for development of 'diese Straußsche Gegenauflärung'.² Bellmann, in contrast, interprets the essay principally as representative of an underlying 'ästhetische Kategorie' defining for all his subsequent writing.³ According to him Strauß experiments in the essay with experiences of time from which a new form of poetic expression is to be found. Bellmann reasons that in this, '[...] scheint Strauß die genuine Chance und Aufgabe literarischen Sprechens zu sehen. [...] um die Sondierung und Ermöglichung neuer fiktiver Zeiterfahrungen'.⁴

¹ Strauß, B. 'Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt. Bemerkungen zu einer Ästhetik der Anwesenheit', in Steiner, G. *Von realer Gegenwart. Hat unser Sprechen Inhalt?* (Munich: Hanser, 1990). Steiner's book was originally published in English as *Real Presences: Is there anything in what we say?* (Faber and Faber: London, 1989). This thesis refers to the German edition.

² Oberender, 'Die "Wende" in den Texten von Botho Strauß', pp.79 and 76.

³ Bellmann, 'Poetologie und Zeit-Kritik in Botho Strauß', p.45.

⁴ Bellmann, 'Poetologie und Zeit-Kritik in Botho Strauß', p.45. A parallel in this new experience of time, Bellman argues, is derived from Paul Ricœur and the particular emphasis he places on literature's role in transforming the dominant 'Zeitbewußtsein'.

Aside from the different arguments and ideas that Strauß puts forward in the essay, what distinguishes it amongst his writing is its explicit engagement with both an individual author and the arguments of a specific work. Although other Strauß essays are, for example, concerned with figures such as Robinson Jeffers or Ernst Jünger they do not consider individual works by these writers, or present the same detailed discussion and augmentation of their ideas and viewpoints.⁵ Even the introduction to Rudolf Borchardt's *Das Gespräch über Formen und Platons Lysis Deutsch*, does not engage specifically with the arguments of the work alongside which it is released.⁶ More importantly, 'Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt' is the one Strauß essay in which he explicitly reflects upon and gives expression to the development of a set of views denoted as *Ästhetik*.

It is significant, however, in contrast to most commentators' suggestions, that Strauß does not at any stage designate his own essay as a tract on aesthetics. The subtitle to the work suggests – as is so often the case with Strauß' essays and works – the intention of philosophical revision. Strauß' parenthetic 'Bemerkungen zu einer Ästhetik der Anwesenheit' of the title relates to Steiner's thesis on aesthetics, not a declaration of his own. These reflections, then, serve as commentary on and also evoke the idea that Steiner's postulate of an aesthetics of *real presences* is the subject of a re-evaluation in the essay.

⁵ See, for example, Strauß, B. 'Jeffers-Akt', in *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit* and Strauß, 'Refrain einer tieferen Aufklärung'.

⁶ Strauß, B. 'Die Distanz ertragen', in Borchardt, R. *Das Gespräch über Formen und Platons Lysis Deutsch* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1987).

Strauß' initial alignment with some of the arguments developed by Steiner in *Von realer Gegenwart* is suggested in a number of ways. He begins his essay by placing the argument on *real presences* against the background of the collapse of the Eastern Bloc. Steiner's book, he suggests, sets out powerful arguments with a force analogous to the massive social and political transformations affecting continental Europe in the late Eighties. As the Wallace Stevens epigram with which Strauß prefaces his essay directly indicates, these represent a caesura in Western European and German history.⁷ The collapse of communism, and specifically German re-unification, signals a deep transformation in the established social and political order. Moreover, Strauß suggests, these changes are a good comparison for the impact that ought to attend Steiner's thesis. The work has the force of *Emergenz*, a term Strauß adopts from the natural sciences – and which he elsewhere brings into close association with a possible alternative way of approaching the world or *Wahrnehmung* in *Beginnlosigkeit* – but which here denotes the unexpected force of an original thesis. In its attempt to articulate the unmediated power of meaning in the aesthetic, what Strauß goes on to describe as the 'Erfahrung des Unmittelbaren', Steiner's *Von realer Gegenwart* is a 'Schneisenschlag' against the established intellectual and aesthetic order.⁸

For Strauß, the argument of *Von realer Gegenwart* has a dramatic tenor that signals a breach with an implied status quo. The title of Strauß' essay, in turn, also suggests an analogy to the revolutionary fervour of 1989: the ideas of *real presences* are an 'Aufstand' and are directly linked with a counter movement to what the essay argues are

⁷ 'The prologues are over. It is a question, now/ Of final belief', in Wallace Stevens' *Asides on the Oboe*. Oberender interprets the Stevens epigram to suggest that Strauß' 'bisheriges Denken als ein langer und vielgestaltiger Prolog erscheint', in Oberender, 'Die "Wende" in den Texten von Botho Strauß', pp.76-77.

⁸ Strauß, 'Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt', pp.317 and 313 respectively.

the dominating conventions of the ‘secondary’ world. It is not, though, equivalent to a manifesto.⁹ Strauß writes of Steiner’s daring in challenging prevailing orthodoxies and traditions in contemporary aesthetics: ‘Ein Wagnis, ja, jetzt noch, ist diese Schrift, da der Autor fast allem, was auf dem Gebiet der ästhetischen Theorie gegenwärtig tonangebend ist, den Rücken kehrt’.¹⁰

A further indicator of Strauß’ particular, partial alignment with Steiner’s thesis comes from his positing of a group of writers who he suggests share a collective creative endeavour, as he labels them ‘Bekennern und praktizierenden Gläubigen’, of *real presences*.¹¹ And although, as this thesis suggests, Strauß develops his own more profound resonances for *real presences* from Steiner’s principal focus on aesthetics, for the moment it is noteworthy that he defines Steiner’s argument in reference to a shared idea.

Strauß begins his understanding of *real presences* with the challenge posed by Steiner at the conclusion to the second part of his book, ‘Der gebrochene Vertrag’.¹² Before considering what this broken contract denotes and suggesting how Strauß inflects and develops Steiner’s arguments, however, it is worthwhile first to set out the central thesis of *real presences*. The contract Steiner invokes, and around which his argument pivots, is that of a correspondence relationship between language and the world. For him, the guarantor of the word – of language – is the world and vice versa, with the world understood here as the totality of everyday objects as they are experienced by mankind.

⁹ Oberender claims that what is new about the essay is its ‘Manifest-Charakter’, in Oberender, ‘Die “Wende” in den Texten von Botho Strauß’, p.77.

¹⁰ Strauß, ‘Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt’, p.307.

¹¹ Strauß, ‘Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt’, p.310.

¹² Steiner, *Von realer Gegenwart*, pp.75-179.

A further digression on the respective understanding of this central notion of *world* is also instructive for the forthcoming argument, not least for the present consideration of Strauß, his specific interpretation of *real presences* and departure from Steiner's thesis. Strauß' view has its basis in the differentiation made by Heidegger in *Sein und Zeit*. There Heidegger establishes an understanding of world in a number of senses, of which three are germane to the present case. First, the world is conceived as the general sum of everyday graspable objects; second, the term denotes such objects as they are found in a particular situation or context; lastly, understood ontologically, *world* refers to the conditions or grounds that bring about or make possible the appearance of the world in the first two senses.¹³ Thus, throughout this thesis a distinction is made between the empirical or ontic object-world and the ontological understanding of *world*. The present argument contends that Steiner's understanding of world is an amalgam of the first two. Strauß, in contrast, shifts the argument onto language and the literary work's capacity and mankind's engagement with it, to bring about, or make manifest, the third sense of *world*. This forms the ontological concern for his proposal of the *poetic*. This delineation is developed in more detail over the course of the present reading.

To return to Steiner's central premise: in the terms of *Von realer Gegenwart* word and world bring about and instantiate the real. This, Steiner argues, is the ultimate metaphysical sanction of meaning; that there is sense in language and our use thereof rather than non-sense. This belief – and for him it is finally a matter of faith – is a deeply intuited, long-held conviction in the Western tradition running back to Plato. As he

¹³ See Heidegger, M. *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 17th Edition, 1993), pp.64-65.

argues of the direct relationship between experience of world and its expression in language:

Der Vertrag zwischen Wort und Gegenstand, die Voraussetzung, daß das Sein in seinem praktikablen Maße ‘sagbar’ ist und daß das Rohmaterial der Existenzialität sein Analogon in der Struktur von Erzählung hat – wir erzählen Leben, wir erzählen es uns selbst –, hat immer wieder Ausdruck gefunden.¹⁴

The power of language to have meaning lies in its immediate relationship to the things making up the object-world around us, a contract – or, to use his term, a covenant – that remains immune to different versions of scepticism until its rupture in the middle of the nineteenth century. As Steiner puts it:

Traditioneller Skeptizismus, die poetische Herausforderung an die ‘Sagbarkeit’ der Welt sind selber Sprachakte und verbale Konstrukte. Sie nehmen den Zugang zu Nachvollziehbarkeit, zu (narrativer) Kohärenz, zu den Mitteln der Überredung, der lexikalischen, grammatischen und semantischen Werkzeuge, durch die sie ihre Zweifel und Negationen vermitteln wollen, voll in Anspruch.¹⁵

Until this major fissure, mankind’s understanding continues to remain ‘in trust’ to language’s capacity to denote the world.

Although Steiner does not locate the origin of this relationship of trust he places the term *Logos* at the heart of the metaphysical correspondence between word and world. For him, the term represents the breadth of language’s capacity to denote, to mean and the possible resonances thereof:

In jedem anderen Bereich ist die Phänomenologie des Sagens seit [...] den Vorsokratikern die einer unerläßlichen Beziehung zur Gegenwart [...] des Seins und der Welt gewesen. Es war diese Unerläßlichkeit, die sich ganz

¹⁴ Steiner, *Von realer Gegenwart*, p.124. Despite the Heideggerian tone of the argument, this thesis argues that Steiner is still bound to a realist, platonic account of the relationship between language and world.

¹⁵ Steiner, *Von realer Gegenwart*, p.127.

zentral im Begriff und in der metaphorischen Reichweite des *logos* dargestellt hat.¹⁶

The principal stimulus for Steiner's argument of *real presences* comes from a break in the hypothesised, metaphysically sanctioned, contract. Steiner asserts that the fissure corresponds to the advent of modernity. The fundamental defining feature of this modernity is, he suggests, the split of word from world; objects and how they are represented in language. The guarantee of trust provided by the contract, Steiner suggests, is now absent and erased. In Western thought, this comes to form the period of what he calls 'epilogue', the after-word, or after-*logos*, which now characterises contemporary culture, philosophy and art. Strauß also adopts this conceit directly in the title of his essay designating the contemporary period as 'die sekundäre Welt'.

The challenge of modernity, for which Steiner seeks to delineate an answer, is how, in light of the broken contract, there can still be meaning *in* what is said and written. If words no longer guarantee the existence of world in the ontic sense, no longer correspond to things, on what basis, Steiner asks, is meaning – which clearly retains an ongoing epistemological legitimacy as a conception underpinning philosophical reason, in spite of the continuing best efforts of sceptics – expressed in language?

Steiner begins his response from the assumption of the pre-eminence of primary forms of expression: of works of art. Notwithstanding the breakdown between the word and that which it represents, Steiner develops his thesis by considering different aesthetic forms, on the basis of a continuing conviction in meaning. Despite the relativity of meaning in theories of the postmodern, or the celebration of its absence amongst deconstructionists,

¹⁶ Steiner, *Von realer Gegenwart*, p.122. Emphasis in original.

both theoretical postulates for Steiner of the age of epi-logue, works of art retain a limitless potential to mean. Something that corresponds to meaning is present in works of art. The sense of something other – whether of an insight glimpsed or a feeling intuited – is given form in a painting, sculpture or piece of music, an unknown lying outside normalised comprehension. It is, claims Steiner, the experience of the aesthetic. Much of *Von realer Gegenwart* is pre-occupied with returning this elusive sense of meaning to the realms of intelligibility, communicating it by the thesis of *real presences*.

In support of Steiner, Strauß evokes a suggestive image: *real presences* is the work of art's 'theophane Herrlichkeit' and in its experience, mankind resides within its 'transzendentalen Nachbarschaft'.¹⁷ The choice of a term that evokes place or a site, in conjunction with *real presences*, is significant in bringing the work of art into association with an idea of *dwelling*.

For Steiner, though, in the manifold of *real presences*, lies the foundation of what it means to mean. What Steiner aims for in posing the question of meaning is a re-discovery of the sense of awe and astonishment in works of art. As he puts it, the amazement at original creation, of the existence of *real presences*, must be sensed anew:

Meine Parabel soll eine fundamentale Frage auf den Punkt bringen: die Frage der Gegenwart (oder Abwesenheit) von *poiesis* in unserem individuellen Leben und in der Politik unseres Gesellschaftswesens, also der Gegenwart des Schöpfungsaktes und der Erfahrung des Schöpfungsaktes in seiner vollen Bedeutung. Welches ist der ontologische Status (kein anderes Epitheton wäre treffend), der 'Seinsstatus' und der 'Bedeutungsstatus' der bildenden Künste, der Musik, des Gedichtes [...]? Diese Frage kann und muß in erster Instanz in Begriffen der Ästhetik [...] gestellt werden.¹⁸

¹⁷ Strauß, 'Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt', p.307.

¹⁸ Steiner, *Von realer Gegenwart*, pp.39-40. Emphasis in original. Steiner's comparison with a deistic notion of a first creation, namely mankind's impetus to create, or re-create the actions of God is pointedly

Amongst all aesthetic forms, Steiner argues, it is the status of the linguistic that has particular significance. There is something *in* language that constitutes, or is suggestive of, *real presences*. It is, he maintains, the specific, “‘Ins-Dasein-Kommen’ des Ästhetischen”.¹⁹ As Steiner urges in support of his argument, the poem or novel is the something, the sense of meaning given or made form: ‘das sind abstrakte Verbalisierungen dessen, wie energie- und bedeutungsgeladene Form aus dem Inneren zum ersten Mal ins Sein tritt’.²⁰ The language is unmistakably Heideggerian, even if Steiner is not philosophically consistent and finally seeks recourse for his explanation in theology.

However, critically, language struggles to convey the encounter in the work of art with *real presences*. The question of how meaning *means* always remains somewhere beyond comprehension. Nevertheless the question persists for mankind: how, Steiner asks, can meaning, as *real presences*, mean? It is with this particular philosophical challenge that Steiner concludes the section on the ‘Broken Contract’ and with which Strauß begins his own ‘Bemerkungen zu einer Ästhetik der Anwesenheit’. Strauß himself quotes the challenge to the second part of *Von realer Gegenwart* in full:

Was würde geschehen, wenn wir unsere Schulden gegenüber [...] der Metaphysik [...] bezahlen müßten? Was wäre, wenn die dem Glauben entnommenen Anleihen an Transzendenz, die wir seit Platon und Augustinus hinsichtlich bedeutungserfüllter Formen erhalten haben, fällig würden? Was wäre, wenn wir die Annahme explizit machten und konkretisieren müßten, daß alle ernstzunehmende Kunst und Literatur, und nicht nur die Musik, auf die Nietzsche diesen Begriff anwendet, ein *opus metaphysicum* ist?²¹

rejected by Strauß elsewhere in his writing. The significance of this for his proposal of the *poetic* is considered in the concluding Chapter Five.

¹⁹ Steiner, *Von realer Gegenwart*, p.205.

²⁰ Steiner, *Von realer Gegenwart*, p.281.

²¹ Steiner, in Strauß, ‘Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt’, p.306. Emphasis in original.

For Steiner the question remains unanswerable without recourse to a transcendental underwriting for *real presences*. Ultimately, as he inexorably concedes: ‘Die Bedeutung von Bedeutung ist ein transzendentes Postulat’.²² That meaning has meaning is a claim necessarily of belief or faith, not one that can be shown philosophically:

Ohne eine solche Voraussetzung hinsichtlich der erlebten Kontinuitäten zwischen dem Schaffen von Dichtung und Kunst auf der einen Seite und dem Residuum oder einer neuen Umsetzung der voraufgegangenen Daseins-schöpfung auf der anderen kann es, so behaupte ich, keine nachvollziehbare Auffassung von unserer inneren Erfahrung des Ästhetischen und unserer freien verantwortlichen Erwiderung auf diese Erfahrung geben.²³

Steiner contends that the central postulate of his thesis ultimately rests, ‘auf der Annahme einer Gegenwart Gottes’, the theological implications of which are considered below.²⁴

Strauß, though, while accepting the challenge of the hypothetical broken contract, significantly broadens its designation beyond the purely theological. For him the persistence of meaning too evokes a presence, though not solely of the Deity, but rather, as he terms it, of ‘*Logos-Gottes*’.²⁵ Moreover, as Strauß summarises Steiner’s argument, he inscribes a further notable revision to Steiner’s language. Describing that sense of meaning that elides rational proof or empirical validation, he writes: ‘Das Unbeweisbare in der Krone jenes Erkenntnisbaums, der durch den Roman, die Skulptur, die Fuge emporwächst, ist Zeugnis Seiner *Anwesenheit*’.²⁶ Thus, Steiner’s deity is aligned by Strauß with *Logos*; and the ‘Gegenwart’ of the former’s object-world becomes for the latter a question of *Anwesenheit*.

²² Steiner, *Von realer Gegenwart*, p.282.

²³ Steiner, *Von realer Gegenwart*, p.278.

²⁴ Steiner, *Von realer Gegenwart*, p.13.

²⁵ Strauß, ‘Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt’, p.307. My emphasis.

²⁶ Strauß, ‘Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt’, p.307. My emphasis.

The creative force of the *real presences* thesis, for Strauß, revolves around these two terms: *Logos* and *Anwesenheit*. Central to both Steiner's and Strauß' respective overall arguments are questions of meaning, of how world is created in and through language – in other words, of understanding – and how this is made manifest by the work of art, in particular the *poetic*. For Strauß, such philosophical questions are the inevitable consequence of a condition in modernity. However, while the majority of critics read the postulate of *Logos* as one finally and only of transcendental theological belief, this thesis contends that, for Strauß, through the revisions of 'Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt', it becomes, in contrast, one of ontological concern. The breakdown of the contract between word and world posed by Steiner, of the Sasseurean fissure of signifier from signified, becomes in Strauß' essay a philosophical problem of the relationship between mankind and an ontological understanding of world. The support for this claim is developed through a detailed exegesis of Strauß' essay.

2.2 *Anwesenheit* and a move from 'Ästhetik'

A consensus has grown in the secondary literature that reads Strauß' essay on *real presences*, based on his partial alignment with a number of Steiner's premises, as his own theologically-founded delineation of an aesthetics. Oberender, for example, defines the work as representative of a 'Kunstreligion', while Parry argues that Strauß understands the thesis of *real presences* only 'in einem religiösen Sinne'.²⁷ Funke suggests that

²⁷ See Oberender, 'Die "Wende" in den Texten von Botho Strauß', p.79 and Parry, C. 'Der Aufstand gegen die Totalherrschaft der Gegenwart. Botho Strauß' Verhältnis zu Mythos und Geschichte', in Arnold, H. L. (Ed.) TEXT+KRITIK 81 Botho Strauß: Neufassung (Munich: text + kritik, 1998). p.63.

Strauß is a ‘gläubiger Christ’ and draws direct parallels between his arguments for meaning in the aesthetic and, ‘das christlich-religiöse Denkmodell’.²⁸ And Willer maintains that Strauß’ arguments on aesthetic forms read like, ‘die christlich-metaphysische Verschärfung der hermeneutischen Prämisse’, namely that, ‘hinter den Zeichen verberge sich ein transzendentes Signifikat’, although he does go on to soften the view that Strauß’ ‘sakrale Poetik’ is based solely on theological precepts.²⁹

These individual interpretations, though, are often partial and are used selectively in conjunction with other works. They thus, amazingly, leave the specific illustrations of *real presences* that Strauß includes in his essay and, in particular, the question as to whether or how these examples inflect Steiner’s postulate unexamined. Moreover, the terms that Strauß emphasises and adapts from Steiner’s book, particularly the philosophical implications of *Anwesenheit* in contrast to the empirical emphasis of ‘Gegenwart’, in relation to the issue of world, remain equally overlooked.

It is noteworthy in respect of Steiner that although he has recourse to the language of theology he does, in fact, attempt to distance his position from adherence to any specific credo. *Real presences*, regardless of the divine transcendental postulate he proposes, is ‘jenseits irgendeiner liturgischen oder theologischen Spezifizierung’.³⁰ Nonetheless, the motif of creation, as is noted above, is central to the argument for *real presences*.³¹ The implicit argument underpinning the claim runs that because there is origin or creation,

²⁸ Funke, *Über das Höhere in der Literatur*, p.121.

²⁹ Willer, *Botho Strauß*, pp.115-116.

³⁰ Steiner, *Von realer Gegenwart*, p.283.

³¹ The importance of the motif creation; of origin and *originary* experience for Strauß’ writing and its adoption of this aspect of the approach in Heidegger’s ontology is developed in detail in Chapter Three in relation to the threat to mankind of science and technology.

therefore, there must be God. In *Von realer Gegenwart* Steiner initially concentrates on the issue of artistic creation and poses a specific question that resists just such an exclusively theologically oriented interpretation. It is not the act of artistic creation itself but rather the existence at all of such a creative act that is the stimulus to answering the challenge posed by the broken contract between word and world. Rather than asking after the meaning of a particular aesthetic object – for example, whether of an image in poetry, a brush stroke in a painting, or for that matter, the influence of a thinker on a writer – at issue is the struggle to articulate that there is meaning at all. Steiner distils his argument to a concern prior to the question of artistic creation: Das Axiom, daß es *poiesis* gibt, ‘weil’ es Schöpfung gibt, ist vermutlich ein Gemeinplatz. Doch es ist dieses ‘weil’, das für das Verstehen eine Herausforderung darstellt’.³² This important premise, curiously eventually lost in Steiner’s recourse to a theological guarantee, points in the direction of what Strauß understands of *real presences*.

Thus, the question of *real presences* is suggested – even by Steiner – to be more philosophically fundamental than an interrogation of the persistence of meaning within the aesthetic, in spite of the erasure of guarantees provided in linguistic signification. The reflections on this deeper issue of the existence at all of meaning in the work of art culminate in the question: ‘Warum soll es Kunst geben, warum dichterisches Schaffen?’.³³ This is, of course, an analogue of the founding question in Heidegger’s thought as he infamously concludes *Was ist Metaphysik?* and opens his *Einführung in die Metaphysik* with the question: ‘Warum ist überhaupt Seiendes und nicht vielmehr

³² Steiner, *Von realer Gegenwart*, p.267.

³³ Steiner, *Von realer Gegenwart*, p.263.

Nichts?’.³⁴ The echo is suggestive and moves the emphasis of *real presences* firmly away from issues of representation in aesthetics to questions of ontological concern.

Strauß develops his view of *real presences* with examples not offered by Steiner in *Von realer Gegenwart*. Although the first of these is theologically inspired – Strauß suggests that the idea of *real presences* has its counterpart in the sacrament of the Eucharist and doctrine of transubstantiation – his further illustrations move ‘Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt’ definitely away from such an exclusive interpretation.

Strauß cites the early twentieth-century Welsh poet David Jones (1895-1974) and his epic poem, *Anathémata*.³⁵ The grounds of *real presences* here shift firmly to anthropology; in other words, the world is god-less. Mankind and his world, rather than the divine, is the subject of the poem. According to Strauß, for Jones it is in man’s daily engagement and through his gestures that meaning is created, to which the poem then gives expression and form. In the *Anathémata* man alone is what he calls ‘Zeichensetzer’.³⁶ Whatever the specific activity, and Strauß highlights two very different examples of building a ship and

³⁴ Heidegger, M. *Was ist Metaphysik?* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 15th Edition, 1998), p.45 and Heidegger, M. *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 6th Edition, 1998), p.1 respectively.

³⁵ Jones, D. *The Anathemata: Fragments of an Attempted Writing* (London: Faber, 1952). Intriguingly, in the preface to the poem, in outline of the term *Anathemata* Jones describes his intent in unmistakably Heideggerian language, which is explored in the following section in consideration of Heidegger’s *Logos*. ‘My intention has not been to “edify” [...], nor, I think, to persuade but there is indeed an intention to “uncover”; which is what a “mystery” does, for though at root “mystery” implies a closing, all “mysteries” are meant to disclose, to show something forth. So that, in one sense, it *is* meant to “edify”, i.e., “to set up”, in Jones, D. *The Anathemata: Fragments of an Attempted Writing* (London: Faber, 1952), p.33. Emphasis in original. For more detail of the influence on Jones of German thought from the turn of the last century, particularly that of Spengler, see Miles, J. *Backgrounds to David Jones. A Study in Sources and Drafts* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1990). Strauß places an accent in Jones’s title.

³⁶ Strauß, ‘Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt’, p.308.

writing a poem, mankind is the origin of creation: the poem happens through man.³⁷ The choice of Strauß' terms is significant.

Alles, was er schafft, ist Darbringung, Opfergabe. Zuerst geben wir etwas ab, dann einander, dann weiter. Die erste Richtung des Werks ist die vertikale, [...]. Die 'Anathémata' *sammeln* [...] in tausend *Benennungen* und Anrufen Votive einer abendländischen Poesis.³⁸

In Jones's poem, a complex dynamic of *real presences* comes to the fore. According to Strauß, the 'Anathémata' gathers gestures of mankind's creation and names them. The invocation of the verbs *sammeln* and *nennen* are developed in the following section, and chapters Three and Four respectively. Through such gathering, the gestures of the figures are brought into existence, or created, again in the poem: it is an instantiation of mankind's gestures through language. Furthermore, the rest of mankind can also experience the original sense of this gathering and naming. As Strauß writes suggestively: 'der heutige Leser wiederum sammelt diese Benennungen selbst als kostbare Gedächtnisstücke'.³⁹ The gestures of creation in the poem are then also gathered in the way the poem is read and experienced.

It is a strange, intangible and elusive notion of *real presences* and the work of art that is suggested here by Strauß, but one developed through subsequent illustrations and throughout this thesis. The sense, though, of how Strauß' claim for the *poetic* unsettles, of how it proposes to uncouple well-entrenched conceptions of the relationship of reader to object-world – in this example, a poem – to retrieve an ontologically more fundamental understanding of the relationship between mankind and world, is here introduced.

³⁷ Strauß, 'Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt', p.308. Strauß writes: 'Für ihn ist der Mensch [...] ein Zeichensetzer in allen seinen Werken, gleich, ob es sich um die Kunst des Schiffsbaus oder eines walisischen Feenmärchen handelt'.

³⁸ Strauß, 'Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt', p.309. My emphases

³⁹ Strauß, 'Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt', p.309.

Strauß concludes the reflections on Jones's 'Anathémata' with a seemingly unrelated example not taken from the poem. However, it provides a succinct and suggestive illustration of his philosophical emphasis in *real presences* and indicates the next step in moving the notion from the purely aesthetic to considerations of ontological concern.

The example he provides is of a painting of a girl, which is itself notable as the visual arts are not considered by Steiner in *Von realer Gegenwart*. Moreover, the emphasis Strauß makes in his description, in particular the verbal stress, is significant.

Die Kunstlehre von der realen Gegenwart [...] ist davon überzeugt, daß das Bildnis des Mädchens nicht ein Mädchen zeigt, sondern daß es das Mädchen *ist* unter der Gestalt von Farbe und Leinwand.⁴⁰

The painting, Strauß contends, does not represent the girl at all, and in this anti-mimetic characterisation he pushes the terms of reference beyond those enlisted by Steiner.⁴¹ Instead the girl actually *is* in the painting. This cryptic formulation does not suggest, as one critic maintains, 'das Bedürfnis nach dem authentischen Erlebnis'.⁴² Rather, it brings into consideration of *real presences* questions on the nature of the object in the work of art, as well as its own philosophical status as object. What is Strauß suggesting by the example of the painting and that of the girl?

The painting is also interesting for an understanding 'Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt' because it is the only example that is not attributed to any creating artist. Strauß does not describe or provide any information about its origins, which invites consideration of this characteristic of the painting.

⁴⁰ Strauß, 'Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt', p.309. Emphasis in original.

⁴¹ Parry also suggests that with this particular example Strauß drives Steiner's thesis, 'auf die Spitze', in Parry, 'Der Aufstand gegen die Totalherrschaft der Gegenwart', p.61.

⁴² Parry, 'Botho Strauß zwischen Kulturkritik und Poetik', p.184.

For the contention advanced here the example evokes that put forward by Heidegger in *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* of van Gogh's portrayal of a pair of peasant shoes and of the ancient-Greek temple. In the latter example, Heidegger describes a painting of a deity that Strauß echoes precisely. Noting of 'das Bildwerk des Gottes' he writes:

Es ist kein Abbild, damit man an ihm leichter zur Kenntnis nehme, wie der Gott aussieht, aber es ist ein Werk, das den Gott selbst anwesen läßt und so der Gott selbst *ist*.⁴³

Moreover, the analysis that Heidegger offers of van Gogh's painting and its implications for traditional philosophical aesthetics appear close to what Strauß is suggesting by his further examples and reading of *real presences* as *Anwesenheit*.

In the essay on the origin of the work of art, which introduces many important ideas for his late thought, Heidegger asks after the essence of the work rather than the meaning of individual aesthetic objects and forms. Heidegger opens his essay declaring: 'Die Frage nach dem Ursprung des Kunstwerkes wird zur Frage nach dem Wesen der Kunst'.⁴⁴ In this, it is worth noting that for Heidegger the mystery of the work of art's existence, 'das einfache "factum est"' of its there-ness or happening at all, is fundamentally of concern.⁴⁵ Heidegger is motivated by wonder at the creation of the work of art, but not in a theological sense. The central mystery in any consideration of art is, he writes, in a parallel question to that asked of an ontological understanding of world: 'daß solches Werk *ist* und nicht vielmehr nicht ist'.⁴⁶

⁴³ Heidegger, M. *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1960), p.39. Emphasis in original.

⁴⁴ Heidegger, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, p.8.

⁴⁵ Heidegger, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, p.66.

⁴⁶ Heidegger, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, p.66. Emphasis in original.

The answer to the question of the essence of art is, for Heidegger, bound up with his guiding overall concern, namely *die Frage nach dem Sinn von Sein*. However, the conclusion to his argument on the relationship between the work of art and truth, and Heidegger's re-interpretation of this as ἀλήθεια or 'Unverborgenheit' fall outside the present argument. This is developed more fully in Chapter Five and is shown as critical to Strauß' *poetics of dwelling*. For the present, it is instead the first section of Heidegger's essay, and the relationship between the work of art and the object or thing, that bears most immediately on Strauß' example of the painting of the girl.

Heidegger begins his essay sketching a view of the aesthetic object based, as he puts it, 'nach der gewöhnlichen Vorstellung'.⁴⁷ This so-called 'familiar' view of the work of art is, he suggests, conceived in relation to the meaning or insight derived from it. This is a recognisable theoretical standpoint suggesting interpretation of aesthetic forms. Such meaning is, he claims, something beyond its attributes, whether of paint, sound or words associated with the canvas, sonata or poem respectively. Thus the work of art, whether as symbol or allegory, refers to some *thing* other than itself. It is in this other thing, this sense of otherness, that it is distinguished from other objects. This 'familiar' view of the work of art is close to Steiner's basic proposition of *real presences* where he articulates the otherness of the aesthetic, which he then seeks to explain. However, it is precisely this distinction, this thing in the work, that Heidegger – and Strauß following him – overturns.

Importantly, Heidegger argues, the meaning of the work of art in the 'familiar' view of aesthetics is understood either as something inherent to it, what he calls its 'Unterbau', or

⁴⁷ Heidegger, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, p.1.

something bestowed on it by artist or perceiving subject, its 'Oberbau'.⁴⁸ Conceived in these terms, the work of art is either a reflection of some ideal or objective truth, or the expression of subjective insight. In this Heidegger is alluding to two broad traditions in German aesthetics going back to Hegel and Kant respectively. Heidegger seeks to redefine the prevailing aesthetic framework by which the work is interpreted in terms of ontology.

His exposition focuses on the work of art as object and excludes from consideration its origins in or through a creating artist. Whilst accepting the contention of the distinctive *something* of the work of art as its defining attribute – its meaning in the 'familiar' view of aesthetics, *pace* Steiner – Heidegger suggests that this does not itself show what this *something* or, as he puts it, its thing-like quality, is. Why, or in what way, is the thing-like quality in art different from other things or objects? From his analysis Heidegger brings into consideration the otherwise irreconcilable: he has narrowed the focus on the characteristics of certain objects and broadened the implications to general attributes. He does this by asking after, 'das Dinghafte des Dinges'.⁴⁹ In so doing, he moves the argument into the realm of ontology. Pattison summarises the implications of Heidegger's ontological approach: the discussion '*calls into question what it means to represent or to perceive anything at all, or, more precisely, to represent or to perceive anything as anything*'.⁵⁰

In order to determine the thing-like quality of the work of art Heidegger traces different conceptions of the thing dominant in Western thought. His focus though is on one notion

⁴⁸ Heidegger, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, p.10.

⁴⁹ Heidegger, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, p.11.

⁵⁰ Pattison, *The Later Heidegger*, p.81. Emphasis in original.

in particular whereby the thing – including, therefore, any work of art – is viewed as formed-material: ‘das Ding ist geformter Stoff’.⁵¹ Heidegger’s exegesis of this conception of the thing is complex and involves the shifting emphases of Greek terms as they are mediated by Latin and Christian thought in the Middle Ages, and is tangential to the present argument. What is interesting, though, is that the idea of formed-material has become indeterminately associated for mankind with utility and a rationalistic-scientific view of the thing, which has in turn also led to its distortion. The significance of the relationship between mankind and object-world and its philosophical basis and implications in relation to Strauß’ conception of science and technology is considered in Chapter Three. For the moment, Heidegger argues that the original thing-like quality of the work of art can, however, still be sensed in van Gogh’s painting. What then is it that is shown or comes to be present in this painting?

Heidegger sees the painting as a way into thinking about the thing-like quality of the work of art that suspends the distortions of mankind’s conception of the thing as instrumental object. The painting by van Gogh is distinguished not by its representation of a pair of shoes. Viewed in mimetic terms the painting and its subject-matter are similarly constrained by questions of utility. Judgements by this aesthetic measure suggest that if the work represents the object faithfully then it may be evaluated as good or of artistic merit. Conversely, a work that fails in its representation of the object – and clearly, this does not just refer to the artistic movements of Realism – is deemed to have little aesthetic value. What is in the painting, its thing-like distinction, actually has nothing to do with whether the shoes in the painting are like or capture the quality of the

⁵¹ Heidegger, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, p.19.

original, or for that matter, any other pair of peasant shoes. Thus, pushing against an understanding of aesthetics and conception of art running back to Plato, Heidegger writes: ‘Meinen wir, das Gemälde entnehme dem Wirklichen ein Abbild und versetze dies in ein Produkt der künstlerischen [...] Produktion? Keineswegs’.⁵² And it is the echo of precisely this line of thought in Strauß’ assertion that the girl in the painting actually *is* the girl that re-casts *real presences* outside the interpretative framework of the aesthetic traditions noted above, and mimetic conceptions of the work of art. Faithfulness, fidelity of work to original is not, either for Heidegger or Strauß, a basis for an understanding of its distinction.

Strauß gestures toward his attempt to conceive of the work of art beyond the measures of subjectivity, utility and mimesis in the lengthy narrative excursus in *Der junge Mann*; ‘Die Geschichte der Almut’.⁵³ Her story is one in the tableau that makes up the fourth book ‘Die Terrasse’, in which questions concerning philosophical aesthetics are given particular prominence.

Originally, Almut is initiated into the artisan craft of restoration involving, as she narrates, ‘die selbständige Restaurierung von ganzen Kirchengewölben, von Ratszimmerdecken und Landschlössern’ by her father who is versed in the ‘Ikonographie des ausgehenden 18. Jahrhunderts’.⁵⁴ At his death she abandons her previous calling and apprenticeship, plagued by ‘eine krankhafte Scheu, mit irgendetwas Kunstschönem in

⁵² Heidegger, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, p.31.

⁵³ Such an emphasis undercuts arguments by commentators who maintain that Almut’s story directly reflects Strauß’ own aesthetic. Instead, the present line of thought contends that in the excursus Strauß offers a satire on emotive, purely theoretical, or realist notions of art rather than endorsing Almut’s ‘Schönheitssinn’. For example, Parry argues that, ‘Die ästhetischen Ansichten der Almut im *Jungen Mann* sind denen des Verfassers auffallend ähnlich’, in Parry, ‘Botho Strauß zwischen Kulturkritik und Poetik’, p.184. See also, Thomas, *Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt*, pp.116-121.

⁵⁴ Strauß, *Der junge Mann*, p.254.

Berührung zu kommen'.⁵⁵ Only when she is again confronted by chance with a painting by Simone Martini on a visit to Florence does the original yearning return. As a result of viewing the work she reflects: 'entkleidete mich der braven Hülle, der bürgerlichen Bedeckung meiner Existenz'.⁵⁶ After this encounter she resolves that her 'Unempfänglichkeit für das Schöne durfte nicht wieder erneuert werden'.⁵⁷

The circumstances of her return to restoration projects allow Strauß to point towards the limitations of a subjectivist response to the work of art, or one constrained by utility or mimetic realism. Drawn to an 'Ausstellung amerikanischer Malerei', Almut narrates how she is again physically overwhelmed after considering a painting; on this occasion a work by Morris Louis. Her response is to attack the canvas, consoled that her act of vandalism cannot destroy a truly creative work.

Ich verspürte keinen Haß auf das Werk. Ich mußte mich nur zur Wehr setzen. Der dunkle übermächtige Puls wollte mich erschlagen. Ich hatte ja nur diese kleine Nagelschere in meiner Handtasche. Und so lächerlich es auch war, ich mußte mich aufbäumen bis zuletzt. Ich nahm die Schere in meine Faust und lief mit erhobener Spitze gegen die Leinwand. [...].
Ich kämpfte um mein Leben. Es hieß, ich hätte versucht, eine großartige Schöpfung der amerikanischen Malerei zu zerstören. Aber eine wahre Schöpfung kann niemand zerstören.⁵⁸

Absolved of formal punishment and sentence, Almut joins the group of restorers charged with repairing the damaged painting. Unlike her father they implement the latest, scientifically-based technologies in their practices. Almut is initially impressed by their systematic, procedural approach: 'Der Zustand eines Gemäldes wurde nicht minder penibel untersucht als ein menschlicher Organismus. Es gab unzählige

⁵⁵ Strauß, *Der junge Mann*, p.261.

⁵⁶ Strauß, *Der junge Mann*, p.264.

⁵⁷ Strauß, *Der junge Mann*, p.265.

⁵⁸ Strauß, *Der junge Mann*, p.270.

Röntgenaufnahmen, Labortests und Früherkennungsdiagnosen'.⁵⁹ However, the more Almut learns of these techniques, the more she is drawn back to the response to works of art she learnt from her father. She laments the effect of the restorers' instrumental, positivistic approach to the aesthetic object. She eventually confronts them with her objections:

‘Mir scheinen unsere Arbeiten [...] je minuziöser sie ausgeführt werden, zugleich auch immer oberflächlicher zu geraten. [...]. Immer weniger bemühen wir uns, ihre gewichtige Gegenwart zu erkennen, ihre Schönheit zu würdigen’.⁶⁰

However, in an attempt to persuade her of their methods the restorers give her a project to complete on her own, according to her more immediate anti-theoretical precepts. Here Strauß shows that neither the technologically-conceived methodologies, nor Almut's motive, ‘Schönheit zu würdigen’, by attempting to re-create the work faithfully, are adequate to the original creation of the work. Having stripped back the object of restoration, she finds herself unable to copy or re-present it. The artifice of ‘die modernste Entwicklung der Kopistentechnik’ leaves her with nothing – no quality or sense – of the original. Almut reflects on her efforts at restoration:

Es war weg. Vor mir war nichts mehr – und ich war nichts. Ich dachte: du kannst nichts dafür geben, du kannst nichts an seine Stelle setzen. [...]. Ich konnte nicht länger in diesen Nichts-Spiegel blicken.⁶¹

The implications of this rejection of platonic aesthetics are considered in the concluding chapter.

In ‘die Geschichte der Almut’, neither the subjective excesses of Almut's emotional and physical response, even when tempered by her father's sober approach, nor the

⁵⁹ Strauß, *Der junge Mann*, p.278.

⁶⁰ Strauß, *Der junge Mann*, p.282.

⁶¹ Strauß, *Der junge Mann*, pp.287ff.

rationalistic detachment of the restorers and their mimetic endeavour to copy paintings back into their original forms, are shown as adequate to the work of art. The narrative thus highlights, in brief, Strauß' delineation of the limitations to some traditional conceptions of and pre-occupations with the aesthetic. What, then, is it that Strauß suggests *is* in the work?

Heidegger's analysis of the van Gogh painting provides the hint of an answer. The portrayal of the shoes oscillates between articulating what is on the canvas and drawing associations from beyond the work, including the life and experiences of the user of the shoes. It is described as showing, 'was im Werk am Werk ist'.⁶² What is in the painting can, then, come to light when it is not considered in reference to the form-material designation of utility. Through what Pattison calls, 'the thick, analytically accentuating articulation' of his essay, Heidegger's description brings out the non-instrumental sense of the thing in the work of art.⁶³

Unter den Sohlen schiebt sich hin die Einsamkeit des Feldweges durch den sinkenden Abend. In dem Schuhzeug schwingt der verschwiegene Zuruf der Erde, ihr stilles Verschenken [...] und ihr unerklärtes Sichversagen in der öden Brache des winterlichen Feldes.
[...].
In der Nähe des Werkes sind wir jäh anderswo gewesen, als wir gewöhnlich zu sein pflegen.⁶⁴

Thus, Heidegger claims, the van Gogh painting shows the shoes as they *are*. As with Strauß' suggested example of the girl in the work of art, the stress on the verbal element is critical. Heidegger claims of the shoes in the painting: 'Hier erst sind sie, was sie

⁶² Heidegger, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, p.33.

⁶³ Pattison, *The Later Heidegger*, p.98.

⁶⁴ Heidegger, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, pp.27 and 29.

sind'.⁶⁵ Only in the work of art can the object of the painting be said to *be*, recalling also Jones's poem from Strauß' illustrations of *real presences*.

The painting is thereby uncoupled from established senses of meaning in the work of art as either inherent to it, its 'Unterbau', or read into it, its 'Oberbau'. The distance from such aesthetic considerations finds echo in Strauß' suggestion that *real presences* is not the expression of an underlying artistic vision. The work of art is, he writes, 'weder [...] ein utopisches Humanum noch ein höherer ästhetischer Gemütsreflex'.⁶⁶ Nor is *real presences* for Strauß the articulation of a subject's intuition or mood. As he puts it: 'irgendwelchen Befindlichkeits- und Betroffenheits-Verifikationen im Umgang mit Kunst'.⁶⁷ The romantic notion of genius and the conceit of an ennobled subject responding to art are ruled out of his *real presences*; just as they are mocked in *Der junge Mann*. It is an important idea in understanding Strauß' unusual delineation of the poets and claims for what it means to be a poet, and the relationship between biography and work are also explored fully in Chapter Five. Instead, in rejecting these aspects of aesthetic interpretation and in articulating what is distinctive in the work, Strauß shares with Heidegger what is here termed ontological concern for how *real presence* is disclosed.

Heidegger introduces the ontological understanding of world in his investigation of the thing and the work of art, which Strauß also draws out and emphasises in his final illustration of *real presences*. It denotes an inflection to the third sense of world noted in the previous section to this chapter: the ontological conditions making the creation of

⁶⁵ Heidegger, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, p.27.

⁶⁶ Strauß, 'Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt', p.317.

⁶⁷ Strauß, 'Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt', p.311.

world possible are drawn together with and resonate with the idea of truth and the work of art. As Gadamer writes in summary of Heidegger's description of van Gogh's painting: 'Die ganze Welt des bäuerlichen Lebens ist in diesen Schuhen'.⁶⁸ This leads to the startling conclusion that the world comes-into-being, or is made manifest, in the work of art. This does not, of course, mean that the painting literally brings a world into being. The artist as God, reconstituting the Creation in the work, or conceptions of art as a theologically-sanctioned source for an absolute deity, as argued above, stand outside the idea of ontological concern. But the work does open the world of the painting to us, rather as in Strauß' view, Jones's poem does for his readership. Gadamer, in his essay on *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* elegantly summarises the idea in relation to the van Gogh painting: 'Das Kunstwerk eröffnet seine eigene Welt'.⁶⁹

This characterisation of the work of art as 'das Welt-Eröffnen' is important for the remaining reading.⁷⁰ Heidegger's use of the term world is not, like the accepted conception of the thing-like object, something useful that can be classified, described and determined. It is not the world understood, for example, by science as the aggregate of objects in any given or specified environment, or for that matter the world as Steiner conceives it. Instead, he claims, world is the coming-into-presence or disclosure of something true.⁷¹ Heidegger describes the work of art thus:

⁶⁸ Gadamer, in Heidegger, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, p.104.

⁶⁹ Heidegger, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, p.105.

⁷⁰ Heidegger, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, p.105.

⁷¹ See Gadamer, in Heidegger, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, p.105. The question of Heidegger's radical interpretation of truth as ἀλήθεια lies outwith the immediate argument, although it plays an important role in discussion of Strauß' views on language, and particularly the *poetic*. It is, however, important to note that the idea of coming-into-presence or disclosure of the work of art is understood as distinct from the revelation of meaning that Steiner conceives of the aesthetic object. Bruns provides a succinct formulation: 'The work of the work is disclosure, but strangely so: call it disclosure as estrangement. [...]. We must shake the idea that disclosure means revelation. [...]. In its self-standing, solitary, nonhuman character, the

die gewohnten Bezüge [...] verwandeln und fortan mit allem geläufigen Tun und Schätzen, Kennen und Blicken ansichhalten, um in der im Werk geschehenden Wahrheit zu verweilen. Die Verhaltenheit dieses Verweilens läßt das Geschaffene erst das Werk sein, das es ist.⁷²

By this measure the work is not a concern with revelation or presentation. Its coming-into-presence or disclosure is an intangible, unsettling idea but that is precisely the intent both of Heidegger's and Strauß' respective ontologically-understood concern for the work of art.

How does Strauß himself introduce his related idea of *world* in *real presences*? Again, the terms deployed by Strauß are significant, particularly for their dense invocation of Heideggerian thought.

Strauß' final illustration of *real presences* comes from writings by the Russian philosopher Florenskij on icon paintings. Florenskij, he notes, argues against any representative or symbolic understanding of painting. For him such aesthetic conceptions of a work do not encapsulate its distinctive quality, its meaning. Moreover, for Florenskij, the category of the work of art itself, its status as an object, is deeply suspect. The painting, whilst unable to transcend its physical character – the work of art still actually has to exist, of course – is conceived as an opening to a vision. Strauß' invocation of Florenskij's writing, though more condensed than Heidegger's lengthy exposition on van Gogh, is recognisable and similarly disconcerting.

work of art is very like the thing. [...]. The work is not an object of art, not an aesthetic object made up of formal properties, but something whose "createdness" reserves the work to itself", in Bruns, *Heidegger's Estrangements*, pp.151-152.

⁷² Heidegger, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, p.67.

Strauß emphasises the importance of light for the vision in the work of art, suggesting that it is the basis for creation in the painting. He distinguishes his use of the term ‘light’ from notions of light and shade associated with traditional categories of aesthetics. Strauß describes that the painting:

[...] wird mit Licht gemalt, und Licht meint keine Form der Beleuchtung und nicht das Eigenleuchten der Dinge: das Licht gründet überhaupt erst die Dinge, es ist ihre Ursache.⁷³

Light is conceived here as *originary*. The work of art, in this example, becomes not the site where an object is shown, or the sublime expressed. Instead, for Strauß, it forms the fluid boundary to the existence of, as he describes it, *die Dinge*: just as in the previous example of the girl in the painting, or Heidegger’s exposition on a pair of shoes. Things are sensed as they are in truth, rather than as they are represented. Furthermore, making the link to Heidegger’s argument complete, Strauß goes on to describe the painting as ‘der Ort, wo [...] das Urlicht hervortritt, es bildet die Grenze zwischen sichtbarer und unsichtbarer *Welt*’.⁷⁴ For Strauß, like Heidegger, the painting opens an ontological concern for world.

Finally, Strauß transposes the term upon which his own ‘Bemerkungen’ and essay regarding *real presences* is founded. Towards the end of ‘Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt’ he touches on the question of what is sensed in the work of art. He dispenses, as already indicated, with both idealist conceptions and the idea of artist-creator. He writes that the work of art is sensed; ‘unabhängig davon, welchen historischen oder biografischen Interessen sich die Entstehung eines Romans oder eines

⁷³ Strauß, ‘Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt’, p.309.

⁷⁴ Strauß, ‘Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt’, p.310. My emphasis.

Gemäldes verdankt'.⁷⁵ Crucially, Strauß' term for this enigmatic sense is different from Steiner's. What comes forth in the work of art is not, as Steiner maintains, *Gegenwart* – the presentation of things as objects – but instead Strauß suggests: 'vielmehr klingt in ihr an oder schimmert durch: [...] *Anwesenheit*'.⁷⁶

Elsewhere, Strauß highlights the manifestation of *Anwesenheit* and introduces a further term to his version of *real presences*. The sense of the work of art's distinctiveness arises, he asserts: 'zumindest für lichte Augenblicke, in denen *Anwesenheit*, [...] *Logos* offenbar werden'.⁷⁷ *Anwesenheit* and *Logos* and the manner of their manifestation, this argument contends, are thus the primary concern of Strauß' essay.

Although Strauß shares with Steiner the same emphasis on the importance of works of art for an age and culture dominated by the secondary, he moves, through his illustrations of *real presences*, away from the aesthetic pre-occupations of *Von realer Gegenwart* towards concern for the ontological possibilities of the work that share affinities with Heidegger. Indeed, the terms *Anwesenheit* and *Logos* are, this thesis suggests, taken directly from an essay by Heidegger, the argument of which supports the contention regarding their inflection for Strauß' own understanding of *real presences*.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Strauß, 'Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt', p.317.

⁷⁶ Strauß, 'Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt', p.317. My emphasis.

⁷⁷ Strauß, 'Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt', p.316. My emphasis.

⁷⁸ Strauß identifies the influence on Steiner's thesis, suggesting how large tracts, 'streckenweise an der Seite Heideggers zurückgelegt werden', in Strauß, 'Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt', p.312. Steiner also acknowledges the unmistakable origin for his terminology, but it is clear that he envisages a distinction between his endeavour for a theology of the aesthetic and the implications of Heideggerian ontology: '[...] schon der Begriff einer *Bedeutungshaftigkeit*, einer Bedeutungsfülle, einer Kongruenz, und sei sie auch problematisch, zwischen dem Bezeichnenden und dem Bezeichneten ist theologisch oder onto-theologisch

2.3 *Logos*: ‘das Anwesen des Anwesenden’

Strauß’ delineation of *real presences* culminates in *Anwesenheit* and *Logos*, and introduces a number of further terms – for example, *Sammeln*, *Nennen* and *Licht* – to suggest the manner in which these become manifest in the work. The following shows how these are also central to Heidegger’s thought. In his essay, ‘*Logos*’, the latter is brought into a consideration of the central question of his philosophy.⁷⁹ Under consideration are questions of how in and through language – for Strauß of course, the pre-eminent form of the work of art – world comes-into-presence. The aim, notwithstanding the obvious differences separating Strauß’ suggestive prose images from Heidegger’s longer re-interpretation of pre-Socratic fragments, is to highlight the intellectual parameters in which their respective discussions of the terms *Anwesenheit* and *Logos* are conducted and, importantly, what is at stake in this.

The reading has a two-fold proposition. First, it suggests that Strauß’ inflection of these specific terms in his essay owes a debt to Heidegger that is not merely one of semantic adoption. Strauß is concerned in his inscription of these terms in ‘*Der Aufstand*’ with the same philosophical question regarding the ontological in respect of the relationship of language to world and how meaning is created, in the sense outlined by the preceding section of its becoming manifest. Second, the reading contends that Strauß’ arguments on the secondary world of late modernity share structural sympathies with Heidegger’s on originating language, a possibility of experience – what in Strauß’ writing is here termed

(der Heideggersche Begriff ist irritierend, verdeutlicht aber wie kein anderer die notwendige Übereinstimmung zwischen der epistemologischen und existenziellen Annahme einer substantiellen Bedeutung auf der einen Seite und einer theologischen Bestätigung auf der anderen)’, in Steiner, *Von realer Gegenwart*, p.160. Emphasis in original.

⁷⁹ Heidegger, M. ‘*Logos* (Heraklit, Fragment 50)’, in *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, pp.199-221.

originary language – that has fallen away from modernity, the loss of which brings with it defining consequences for mankind.⁸⁰

2.3.1 Heidegger and *Logos*

Heidegger's reading of the fragment by Heraclitus intends, like all his essays, to retrieve an aspect of thought forgotten since the pre-Socratics. Heidegger's intention is thereby to approach the overarching question of his philosophy, *die Frage nach dem Sinn von Sein*. It is important to underscore the sometime distinction Heidegger makes between the concern of his thought, *Sein* (Being), and his view of all, for him erroneous, metaphysically-constrained philosophy pre-occupied with the being of beings, or beings in their being. Pattison describes this distinction well. He writes:

Heidegger is not concerned with particular issues in the problem of knowledge but with Being itself, [...], the presencing of what is present. The [...] intuition of fundamental ontology thus becomes [...] a leap into vision, a letting-lie-before and taking-to-heart of [...] Being. In thinking we see what it is for Being to be, for presence to be present.⁸¹

⁸⁰ This thesis uses the terms *originating* and *originary* respectively in relation to Heidegger's and Strauß' understanding of a possible alternative experience with language. The terms do not specify a period or style of language that has a fixed, determinate or purer meaning. As the discussion comes on to show, neither thinker nor writer postulate an eden of unalloyed immanently present meaning, whether in the pre-Socratics or an unspecified Teutonic past. *Originating* and *originary* are intended to invoke the sense of the ontological reach, *as possibility*, in language that both thinker and writer propose.

⁸¹ Pattison, *The Later Heidegger*, p.152. Sheehan delineates the distinctive question thus: 'Heidegger's focal topic was not "being" (*das Sein*) in any of its traditional philosophical meanings. That is, it did not coincide with the three overlapping ways in which classical metaphysics had treated being, namely as a) *ontological*: any entity's thatness, whatness, howness; b) *transcendental*: any entity's status as something, one, distinct from others; c) *theological*: the highest entity's state of perfect self-coincidence [...]', in Sheehan, '*Kehre und Ereignis*', pp.5-6. The validity of the question of *Anwesenheit* lies absolutely at the heart of this thesis, accepted that Strauß' *poetic* is motivated by the same ontological imperative. As Bowie observes: 'Given the success of the scientific method in generating more and more truths on the basis of the presence of entities, what reason is there to ask further questions about this presence, which seems only to lead to an unnecessary obscuring of what is in one sense self-evident?', in Bowie, A. *From Romanticism to Critical Theory. The Philosophy of German Literary Theory* (London: Routledge, 1997), p.167. The discussion involves the legitimacy, philosophically, of such understanding.

What is shown in the reading is how *Logos*, as the focus of an enquiry into *Sein*, is brought into close association with the ontological consideration of *Anwesenheit*.

Heidegger attends on the original sense of the word *Logos* as expressed in the Heraclitus fragment; as he writes, in a place ‘wo wenigstens dieser eine Spruch frag-würdiger zu uns spricht’.⁸² His reading is not concerned with developing or renewing a dictionary definition of Heraclitus’ ὁ λόγος (*Logos*) that updates, or revises classical philology. Nor is it trying to re-establish some lost correspondence between the word and object, whether from antiquity or now still current. In his transformative interpretation, ὁ λόγος does not correspond or refer to a different object or action from our accepted meaning of the word. To think about the word, λόγος, as the essay proposes, is not to use or deploy a critical idiom that will unearth a lost meaning. What he aims to do is re-think what was originally thought by the pre-Socratics in the word. It breaks apart the very understanding and use of propositional language that Strauß proposes by his view of the *poetic* as Chapter Five concludes. Thus, *Being* does not speak *in* language, but *is in* language as *Logos*. In this the emphasis differs from that made by Steiner in *Von realer Gegenwart*. Heraclitus’ ὁ λόγος names something fundamental to, or brings to light an original characteristic of, Western understanding of language, its relationship to the world and how this is conceived by mankind.

Over the essay a range of terms is introduced, some as noted also raised in Strauß’ writing, including *Legen*, *Sagen*, *Hören* and *Sammeln*. Through their inflected usage and resonance in the essay the sense and experience of the worldly manifestation in language are brought into consideration.

⁸² Heidegger, ‘Logos’, p.199.

The guiding word in Heraclitus' thought, ὁ λόγος, is transformed by Heidegger into 'die lesende Lege'.⁸³ Such an interpretation is at first bewildering, Heidegger accepts, but this disorientation itself demonstrates that the power of the original word is lost. This transformation to understanding of ὁ λόγος leads, Heidegger claims, into a new constellation of ideas in which the force of the ancient Greek is re-created through the reading.⁸⁴ Such ideas and associations were in the past attendant on the word.

What does Heidegger bring into consideration in his interpretation of *Logos*? The conclusion to the essay brings together the terms and concerns already highlighted:

Das Wort ὁ λόγος nennt Jenes, das alles Anwesende ins Anwesen versammelt und darin vorliegen läßt. ὁ λόγος nennt Jenes, worin sich das Anwesen des Anwesenden ereignet. [...] wir sagen: das Sein des Seienden. [...]. Im Denken Heraklits erscheint das Sein (Anwesen) des Seienden als ὁ λόγος, als die lesende Lege.⁸⁵

This is a densely suggestive passage not only within Heidegger's essay but also in respect of his overall thought. What is suggested is that *Logos* names the coming-into-presence of *Sein*, as the presencing of presence. This complex formulation brings the argument to the heart of Heidegger's endeavour. For the moment, it is necessary to consider only how the term is thought in the Heraclitus fragment: to show, in relation to Strauß, how in and through the word *Logos*, *Anwesenheit* is manifest.

⁸³ Heidegger, 'Logos', pg. 218.

⁸⁴ This thesis describes Heidegger's readings of the pre-Socratics as *transformation* rather than translation as this better evokes the manner in which such lectures open a sense of the strange and unsettling nature of the original that Heidegger aims to prospect. It is precisely such a disconcerting experience with *originary* language that Strauß too wants to open up. Heidegger's interpretation of the pre-Socratics is not without its detractors. Pöggeler, though, provides a persuasive defence, which delineates exactly what is intended by the readings of Anaximander, Heraclitus and Parmenides, distinguishing his transformative exegeses from the precepts and disciplines of philology: '[...] his concern is not [...] to provide the "historically correct" interpretation; it is rather to *wrest* from original Greek thinking the matter which is in accordance with the most seminal aspect of thinking. [...]. Heidegger does not intend to contribute to historical research which yields what is objectively demonstrable; he would rather like to point to an event, to the event of the other beginning', in Pöggeler, O. *Martin Heidegger's Path of Thinking* (New York: Humanity Books, 1996), pp.163ff.

⁸⁵ Heidegger, 'Logos', pg. 219.

But Heidegger also claims that in Heraclitus $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ is designated by terms evoked by ‘die lesende Lege’. Before returning the argument to Strauß and ‘Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt’, particularly the concern with language that the present exegesis is trying to bring to light, it is necessary first to understand what Heidegger suggests by his transformation of $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ as ‘die lesende Lege’.

Heidegger commences the essay by setting out the sense of Heraclitus’ fragment and each of the words as traditionally translated.

Der Spruch spricht von ἀκούειν, hören und gehört haben, von ὁμολογεῖν, das Gleiche sagen, vom Λόγος, dem Spruch und der Sage, vom ἐγώ, dem Denker selbst, nämlich als λέγων, dem redenden. [...]. Der Spruch des Heraklit scheint nach jeder Hinsicht verständlich zu sein.⁸⁶

From this conventional interpretation two motifs in particular emerge, namely that of *Sagen* and *Hören*: ‘Heraklit bedenkt hier ein Hören und ein Sagen’.⁸⁷ This is important as it concentrates the interpretation through these two motifs onto consideration of language and mankind’s experience thereof. A consideration of $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$, therefore, necessarily involves thinking on language. What though, to return to the question, is ‘die lesende Lege’?

Heidegger dispenses with the sense of $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ conceived as reason and logic.⁸⁸ These interpretations do not consider the originating sense of the term. To do this, Heidegger pushes back etymologically to previous, now unheard, resonances of the word. One such original sense of $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ comes instead from λέγειν (legēin). This, he argues, instead denotes saying: ‘Was $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ ist, entnehmen wir dem λέγειν. Was heißt λέγειν?’

⁸⁶ Heidegger, ‘Logos’, p.199.

⁸⁷ Heidegger, ‘Logos’, p.199.

⁸⁸ Heidegger, ‘Logos’, p.200.

Jedermann, der die Sprache kennt, weiß: λέγειν heißt: sagen'.⁸⁹ Thus, Heidegger initiates his exegesis around the first of the above two motifs.

Leaving aside the question of whether this understanding of λέγειν is philologically accepted, Heidegger divines yet more etymological antecedents. There is a deeper, barely noticed sense of the word that he seeks to draw out. Rather than just *sagen*, λέγειν is akin to the German verb 'legen', which also suggests, from its corresponding latinate root, 'lesen'. Heidegger writes: 'Damit wir den Anhalt für eine Antwort finden, ist ein Nachdenken darüber nötig, was im λέγειν als legen eigentlich liegt. Legen heißt: zum Liegen bringen. Legen ist dabei zugleich: eines zum anderen-, ist zusammenlegen. Legen ist lesen'.⁹⁰ What understanding is Heidegger moving toward? It is important to recognise the emphasis: in the exposition of these terms it is not specific actions or behaviour that are under consideration, but rather the manner of mankind's relationship to the world: how things come about for him.

Lesen, in turn, evokes ideas of gathering together: as in, for example, gathering a thought or a collection of objects. Here Heidegger introduces the term *Sammeln*. His usage is similar to that considered in Strauß' invocation of the term in Jones's poem 'Anathémata', where mankind gathers its creative acts and names them. In order to make this suggestive linguistic leap more tangible Heidegger, rather unusually, illustrates with examples, on this occasion from harvesting of nature. The analysis is densely evocative in its exposition of related root terms but suggests the idea of gathering or bringing together. Heidegger describes the inter-connection of *Lesen* and *Sammeln*:

⁸⁹ Heidegger, 'Logos', p.200.

⁹⁰ Heidegger, 'Logos', p.201.

Die Ährenlese hebt die Frucht vom Boden auf. Die Traubenlese nimmt die Beeren vom Rebstock ab. Auflesen und Abnehmen ergehen sich in einem Zusammentragen. [...]. Das einbringende Verwahren hat schon den Beginn der Schritte des *Sammelns*.⁹¹

Clearly, the example is not meant literally as an action. Heidegger is gesturing at the ontological significance of the world of the pre-Socratics. *Sammeln* is to be understood in a way, similar to how the work of art is approached, that determines its distinctive thing-like quality. The original sense of λέγειν evokes how mankind relates to the world: how things *are* and that they *are* at all. Heidegger expresses it in his distinctive idiolect: ‘Allein das λέγειν, legen, meint in seinem “beisammen-vor-liegen-Lassen” gerade dies, daß uns das Vorliegende anliegt und deshalb angeht.’⁹²

There is one further step Heidegger takes after suggesting how things are in the world and their import for mankind. What he proposes to bring to language, even if only parenthetically, is that which brings about the presence of things. Sheehan offers a concise formulation. For him, Heidegger is concerned with: ‘what enables being as [...] *Anwesen* to be given at all.’⁹³ Heidegger writes: ‘Dem λέγειν liegt bei seinem gesammelt-vor-liegen-Lassen an dieser Geborgenheit des Vorliegenden im Unverborgenem’.⁹⁴ Thought about, first as *Legen* and then as *Lesen*, λέγειν suggests how things are disclosed for and to mankind. Heidegger is tracing etymologically how words come to denote things. What is to be understood by this?

⁹¹ Heidegger, ‘Logos’, p.201. My emphasis.

⁹² Heidegger, ‘Logos’, p.203.

⁹³ Sheehan, ‘Kehre und Ereignis’, p.7.

⁹⁴ Heidegger, ‘Logos’, p.203. As with the work of art, a discussion of truth as ἀλήθεια falls outside the focus of the immediate argument. It is, however, vital to this thesis and is developed fully in Chapter Five where the idea is shown as central to understanding of Strauß’ writing.

Heidegger concludes the threads of his exegesis: of how things come to be disclosed to mankind using the term already familiar from the earlier discussion of Strauß' adoption of arguments from *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*. As he writes of the evocative originating meaning of λέγειν: 'Das [...] ist nichts Geringeres und nichts Höheres als das *Anwesen* des Vorliegenden'.⁹⁵ Thus, in the transformative understanding of λέγειν, Heidegger claims, he has again considered what Pattison describes as the presencing of presence. The associative, fugal connections amongst the terms are now developed to bring out the full sense of λέγειν. As he declares in summary: 'Λέγειν ist legen. Legen ist: in sich gesammeltes vorliegen-Lassen des beisammen-Anwesenden'.⁹⁶

With this dense delineation, the present argument draws towards the first of the above propositions. In his transformation of λέγειν as *Sagen* to λέγειν as *Lesen* and *Legen*, and all that attends on these evocations, Heidegger suggests something fundamental about language, its relationship to things and, more importantly, about the potential disclosure adhering therein for mankind.⁹⁷ The conclusion to the first part of his essay sets out the proximity to the issue of *Anwesenheit* clearly:

Daß es λέγειν ist als legen, [...] enthält den Hinweis auf die früheste und reichste Entscheidung über das Wesen der Sprache. [...]. Denn als sammelndes vor-liegen-Lassen empfängt das Sagen seine Wesensart aus der Unverborgenheit des beisammen-vor-Liegenden. Die Entbergung aber des Verborgenen in das Unverborgene ist das Anwesen selbst des Anwesenden.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Heidegger, 'Logos', p.203. Emphasis in original.

⁹⁶ Heidegger, 'Logos', p.203.

⁹⁷ Clark describes the intent well: 'Heidegger is trying to draw out of the Greek words, *legein* and *logos* a legible trace of the pre-representational, holistic realm [...] presupposed in all understanding. *Legein/ logos* names the pre-rational sense of order in the world of the Greeks, [...], that pre-analytical synthesis whereby the world gave itself as non-chaotic, [...]. Such gathering is not the methodized sequencing of deduction or of analysis, but a more originary and holistic sense of the order of things', in Clark, T. *Martin Heidegger* (London: Routledge, 2002), p.83.

⁹⁸ Heidegger, 'Logos', p.204.

The earliest conception of language brings about, through a gathering of things in the world, the presencing of presence. Thus, for Heidegger, the very question of *Sein*, of its disclosure and, critically, of truth, comes to light for the pre-Socratics in language. This is closely aligned, in the terms used and their philosophical import, to the argument developed in relation to the thing-like quality of van Gogh's painting and Strauß' notion of *Anwesenheit* and the making manifest of world in the work of art. This aspect, the relationship of *Logos* to truth, though for the moment latent to the argument, is critical in development of Strauß' *poetic* set out in Chapter Five.⁹⁹

Heidegger's reading returns to thought the lost sense of Heraclitus' *Logos* and aligns this with language and how things in the world come-into-presence. What, then, of the second motif that Heidegger argues is important to Heraclitus, namely *Hören*? As he continues the essay: 'Was ist dann, wenn es so mit dem Wesen des Sprechens steht, das Hören?'.¹⁰⁰ This term, as it evokes the immanent ontological relationship whereby the world is disclosed to mankind, is also central to Strauß' conceit in *Beginnlosigkeit* and is considered further in Chapter Three. Again, Heidegger distances his reading from the traditional and inherited sense of the word. *Hören* is not here conceived as aural sensation. Such an understanding only elides the suggestions attendant on the word. Heidegger is pushing a different intonation in *Hören*. In a recognisable inversion, he asks instead after 'das eigentliche Hören'.¹⁰¹ The sense of *Hören* is developed first in relation to *Sammeln*: 'Das Hören ist erstlich das gesammelte Horchen'. The term is then brought

⁹⁹ For Heidegger *logos* is also truth: 'Insofern der Λόγος das Vorliegende als ein solches vorliegen läßt, entbirgt er das Anwesen in sein Anwesen. Das Entbergen aber ist die Ἀλήθεια. Diese und der Λόγος sind das Selbe. [...]. Der Λόγος ist *in sich zumal* ein Entbergen und Verbergen. Er ist die Ἀλήθεια', in Heidegger, 'Logos', pp.212-213.

¹⁰⁰ Heidegger, 'Logos', p.205.

¹⁰¹ Heidegger, 'Logos', p.205.

into association with language and *Logos*. As he writes: ‘Wir haben gehört, wenn wir dem Zugesprochenen *gehören*’.¹⁰² What is suggested hereby is not how mankind relates to things in the manner, for example, that the dictates of science and technological theory and practice require. In Heraclitus’ sense of *Hören* the world is not denoted according to concepts or mankind’s ability to grasp it. *Hören* invokes rather an immanent relationship between mankind and things or world. The sense is close to the manner in which the quality of the thing in the work of art comes-into-being for mankind. Strauß describes the same dynamic when he writes in another essay about ‘die einfache Öffnung zum Licht’ as the condition from which works of art are experienced.¹⁰³ For Heidegger, the originating sense of *Hören* for mankind arises in conjunction with language and under certain specific conditions.

Dem Sprechen gehören – dies ist nichts anderes als: jeweils das, was ein vorliegen-Lassen beisammen vorlegt, beisammen liegen lassen in seinem Gesamt. [...]. Es legt dieses als es selbst. Es legt Eines und das Selbe in Eins. Es legt Eines als das Selbe.¹⁰⁴

The relationship to language suggested entails letting things come-into-presence for mankind as they *are*: like the world of the shoes in van Gogh’s painting or the girl in Strauß’ illustration of *real presences*. This does not denote a philosophical question of existence, but rather a fundamental concern for the fact that there is *something* and not nothing.

With this final etymological excursus all the terms of this involved transformation of Heraclitus’ *Logos* are drawn together.

¹⁰² Heidegger, ‘Logos’, p.207. Emphasis in original.

¹⁰³ Strauß, ‘Zeit ohne Vorboten’.

¹⁰⁴ Heidegger, ‘Logos’, p.207.

Damit wird der Λόγος schlichthin genannt: ó Λόγος, das Legen: das reine beisammen-vor-liegen-Lassen des von sich her Vorliegenden in dessen Liegen. [...]. Der Λόγος ist die ursprüngliche Versammlung der anfänglichen Lese aus der anfänglichen Lege. ó Λόγος ist: die lesende Lege und nur dieses.¹⁰⁵

For Heidegger, this is a dramatic insight, or as he puts it an unthought secret.¹⁰⁶ It is a view overlooked in traditional theorisations of *Logos*, conceived only as the practice of language as either communication or in terms of utility, as these develop throughout modernity from the pre-Socratics. Instead, and this returns understanding of *Logos* to the heart of ontological concern: in language as *Logos*, *Sein* as *Anwesenheit* is made manifest. Fóti, although mainly critical of Heidegger's postulate, states that the conclusion on *Logos* does not:

constrain it in conformity with any project (such as the mathematical-metaphysical project of modernity). It is concerned, rather, to safeguard, [...], the unconstrained spontaneity of presencing. [...] *logos*, as this gathering and gathered letting-lie-before does not create or impose the configurations of presencing but rather responds to the (epochal) spontaneity of unconcealment.¹⁰⁷

What such declarations offer are the beginnings of a radically unsettling and disconcerting view and experience: of language, world and mankind's relationship and place that counter the dominance and weight of the Western tradition.

Where Strauß offers intense *poetic* fragments and illustrations of *real presences*, Heidegger develops lengthy philosophical essays. The proposition suggested in the reading of 'Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt' is that in these illustrations, and specifically the emphasis on the terms *Anwesenheit* and *Logos*, they are intimately bound

¹⁰⁵ Heidegger, 'Logos', pp.207-208.

¹⁰⁶ Heidegger, 'Logos', p.205.

¹⁰⁷ Fóti, V. *Heidegger and the Poets: Poiesis, Sophia, Techne* (Atlantic Highlands NJ: Humanities Press, 1992), p.8.

to the delineation by Heidegger. At this stage in the thesis, the terms and ideas and their invocation point towards an ontological concern in Strauß that is more philosophically fundamental than Steiner's correspondence ascription of meaning between word and world, and the mimetic premise of his aesthetic. Before these are explored and grounded in detailed readings of Strauß' works, what then of the second proposition noted above and the structural framework upon which Strauß' and Heidegger's respective conceits are founded?

2.3.2 'aus dem Verlust des [...] Urvertrauens in die Sprache'¹⁰⁸

Heidegger accepts that the transformation of Heraclitus is disconcerting to established sense. One of the reasons why the understanding of the fragment and the word *ὁ λόγος* appears so removed from established interpretative reason is, he argues, that the Western tradition has forgotten the originating power of disclosure in the word.

In the fragment by Heraclitus, *Sein* and the truth of its disclosure are made manifest in language through the word *Logos*. The pre-Socratics were thus able in thought, Heidegger argues, to experience the originating power in language:

Einmal jedoch, im Beginn des abendländischen Denkens, blitzte das Wesen der Sprache im Lichte des Seins auf. Einmal, da Heraklit den *Λόγος* als Leitwort dachte, um in diesem Wort das Sein des Seienden zu denken.¹⁰⁹

However, the force of disclosure is not something of which Heraclitus is aware in the fragment. Pre-Socratic thought does not reflect that it was bringing to expression the

¹⁰⁸ Strauß, 'Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt', p.316.

¹⁰⁹ Heidegger, 'Logos', p.221.

essence of language and, through this, offering the experience of the truth of *Sein*. Rather, the flash of insight in *Logos*, for Heraclitus, is a consequence of how the Greeks then related to and thought in language. But, even at this moment, at the outset of Western thought, the originating power of the word becomes lost. Critically for the onward path of Western thought, the illuminating disclosure then attendant in and on language is passed. It is something forgotten that remains now outside the conventions of thought. As Heidegger writes: ‘dieser Aufblitz des Seins bleibt vergessen’.¹¹⁰ The amnesia of language in relation to this is a defining characteristic of modernity.

Instead of continuing to experience *Logos* as the presencing of presence – ‘Bedenken wir erst, daß “Sein” anfänglich “Anwesen” heißt’ – language is in a process of falling away from its originating state.¹¹¹ It comes to be regarded in terms associated with communication, is codified and correspondingly objectified. As Heidegger notes of this inexorable development:

statt dessen wurde die Sprache [...] von der Verlautbarung her vorgestellt [...] als Laut und Stimme, phonetisch. [...]. Dies besagt: die Sprache gelangt zum voraus in den Grundcharakter, den wir dann mit dem Namen ‘Ausdruck’ kennzeichnen.¹¹²

Language, like the conceptualisation of the object-world developed over the course of Western thought, instead comes to be seen in terms of utility.

Heidegger sketches three main periods in this forgetting of *Sein* as *Logos*.¹¹³ The first is the transition from Greek to Roman languages, particularly in the translation of key philosophical terms and ideas. This was the decisive step in the forgetting of the

¹¹⁰ Heidegger, ‘Logos’, p.219.

¹¹¹ Heidegger, ‘Logos’, p.221.

¹¹² Heidegger, ‘Logos’, pp.220-221.

¹¹³ The structure of Heidegger’s argument applies not just to ὁ Λόγος but also to φύσις and τέχνη.

originating essence of thought experienced by the pre-Socratics. A further stage comes about during the Christian Middle Ages. This is followed by the advent of modernity, in particular in the philosophies of Descartes and Nietzsche and the legacy of their systems, which remain for Heidegger the predominant characteristics of the present age.¹¹⁴

Strauß too adopts the same structure of argument for *real presences*; of an *originary* condition of language replete with revelatory possibility followed by a period of its darkening. His writing is infused by a retrospective gaze towards a first beginning. Although he doesn't quite isolate a single caesura in intellectual history as the precise instance in Western thought of this fading away, his view of language is also that of a state of post-lapsarian degradation. The delineation of this is considered in Chapter Four. Strauß summarises Steiner's argument, already noted, in 'Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt', that the break in the relationship of language to the world began at the end of the nineteenth century. Before this moment there exists an assumed correspondence between word and world reflected by conviction in the signification of meaning. Steiner marks this breach in the poetry of Mallarmé and his assertion that the word 'rose', designates, '*l'absence de toute rose*'.¹¹⁵ This places Western thought, as Steiner argues, 'an der Quelle philosophischer und ästhetischer Moderne, am Punkt, an dem mit der Ordnung des *Logos* gebrochen wird'.¹¹⁶ It is the defining point at which the era of an immanence between word and world breaks apart, although of course, Steiner's philosophical touchstones are different from Strauß'. Interestingly, underscoring the

¹¹⁴ For a summary account see Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, pp.10-11.

¹¹⁵ Steiner, *Von realer Gegenwart*, p.131. Emphasis in original. For a contrary reading in respect of Mallarmé that takes issue with Steiner's thesis, see Bischof, R. 'Das Buch nach dem Buch – Figuren des Widerrufs', in manuskripte 32, Vol. 115, (1992), pp.115-125.

¹¹⁶ Steiner, *Von realer Gegenwart*, p.131. Emphasis in original.

specific Heideggerian emphasis of *Logos*, Strauß too describes the previous unchallenged immanence of word and world as, ‘die Logos-Stiftung der Sprache’.¹¹⁷

In ‘Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt’ Strauß offers his own broader influence for the linguistic and philosophical fissure, suggesting a shared central premise with Heidegger over the development of modernity. Although its consideration falls outside the present defined focus, Strauß highlights Nietzsche’s declaration of the death of God as a defining legacy for the current age, thereby inflecting Steiner’s dating of the period of ‘epilogue’. According to Strauß ‘dieser setzte zwar mit Nietzsches Todesurteil für den Logos-Gott schon früher ein’, a view he has articulated elsewhere in his writing.¹¹⁸ What, then, are the consequences of this falling away of an immanence in language for Strauß and Heidegger, and to what extent do they share the same premises?

In the rupture between the word and world, an ontological affinity is unbalanced. Although the philosophical bases for his argument differ from those of Strauß, Steiner describes the linguistic agnosticism in the era of the secondary in terms with which he agrees:

[...] gibt es in den Worten und Sätzen keine prästabilisierte Affinität mit Gegenständen, gibt es nicht das Mysterium eines Einklangs mit der Welt. Keine *persona* der Dinge, ob wahrgenommen oder noch der Offenbarung harrend, haftet der (rein willkürlichen) Artikulation der Syntax an.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Strauß, ‘Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt’, p.316.

¹¹⁸ Strauß, ‘Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt’, p.310. Strauß places a similar emphasis on Nietzsche in other works. In ‘Anschwellender Bocksgesang’ he writes of his hope for a ‘Wechsel der Mentalität’ from that which, ‘im Gefolge Nietzsches unseren geistigen Lebensraum mit unzähligen Spöttern [...] übervölkert und eine bigotte Frömmigkeit des Politischen, des Kritischen und All-Bestreitbaren geschaffen hat’, in Strauß, ‘Anschwellender Bocksgesang’, p.15. In *Beginnlosigkeit* the sentiment is similar: ‘Der Mime, Nietzsches Histrione, Trickster der modernen Bewußtseins, dem es gelang, sich der Affekte früherer Epochen zu bedienen, deckt eine Weile noch seinen zerrissenen Zustand mit gerissenen Gebärden ab’, in Strauß, B. *Beginnlosigkeit. Reflexionen über Fleck und Linie* (Munich/Vienna: Hanser, 1992). p.25.

¹¹⁹ Steiner, *Von realer Gegenwart*, p.143.

A radical scepticism is brought into play: the change signals an alteration in the way the world is viewed. As Strauß suggests: ‘Die Sprache verläßt uns nicht im Schweigen, sondern nur im A-Logos, in der Entbundenheit von Form, Sinn, *auctoritas* der Bedeutung’.¹²⁰

The fall away from an originating or *originary* language suggested by Heidegger and Strauß respectively, has consequences in modernity for our relationship to the object-world. The falling away from language, and a forgetting of the originating essence of language – both aspects of the same dynamic – have a distorting effect on mankind’s ontological concern for world. Strauß describes this as: ‘Nichts ist unmittelbarer mit dem Schicksal der Erde verbunden als die Sprache’.¹²¹ Heidegger, in turn, details the consequences of this change for the relationship to the object world:

Wir aber überspringen jetzt diesen ganzen Verlauf der Verunstaltung und des Verfalls und suchen die unzerstörte Nennkraft der Sprache und Worte wieder zu erobern; denn die Worte und die Sprache sind keine Hülsen, worin die Dinge nur für den redenden und schreibenden Verkehr verpackt werden. Im Wort, in der Sprache werden und sind erst die Dinge. Deshalb bringt uns auch der Mißbrauch der Sprache im bloßen Gerede, in den Schlagworten und Phrasen um den echten Bezug zu den Dingen.¹²²

Strauß expresses the same distorted relationship, and draws the implication: ‘In der Sprache können wir Tag für Tag weniger Welt bewältigen’.¹²³ What is thereby evoked is an erosion of the possibility of experience in and of the work of art. This is, he claims, an inexorable process whereby the very structures of mankind’s experience of world, his *Wahrnehmung* are dismantled. Strauß’ idea of mankind’s *Wahrnehmung* in relation to the

¹²⁰ Strauß, ‘Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt’, p.317. Emphasis in original.

¹²¹ Strauß, ‘Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt’, p.317. The thesis considers in the development of Strauß’ *poetics of dwelling* how the idea of nature and the earth is important, and is bound up with the issue of *poetic* language in Chapter Five.

¹²² Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, p.11.

¹²³ Strauß, ‘Zeit ohne Vorboten’.

use and practice of science and technology and proposal of an alternative are considered in Chapter Three. Strauß notes of the un-coupling of language from the sense of world: ‘Aber die Worte entfernen sich unaufhaltsam von dem, was Gestalt ist an uns’.¹²⁴

For Strauß, the changed ontological status of language defines the present period of late modernity where the primary position of language is replaced by a state of the secondary, and its continual mediation. Competing discourses and idioms – understood as Heidegger conceives language as formalised after the pre-Socratics – are ceaselessly articulated and disseminated, making it difficult to distinguish or experience any substantive sense of an *originary* alternative. Journalism, Strauß contends, is the pre-eminent form of this language for the period. As Steiner, in turn, remarks of such language in the era after *logos*:

Jeden Tag werden durch den Journalismus, durch das Journalistisch-Akademische der inhärente Wert, die Produktivkräfte, die in einer schöpferischen Währung, nämlich in der Vitalität des Ästhetischen verkörpertens Ersparnisse entwertet.¹²⁵

For Strauß, everyday discourses are similarly dominated by practitioners of the secondary such as the media. The effect on language is corrosive, its power absolute, and it alters the way the world comes to be viewed. Its very success means that this is not called into question. As Strauß declares:

Der uns beherrschende Text, die tagtägliche Zeitung, entlarvt indessen überall das scheinhafte Wort, er macht das Gewebe der *Welt* fadenscheinig. Nichts anderes ist freilich ihre Aufgabe, und man brauchte kein Wort darüber zu verlieren, wären die Dienstleistungen des Durchschauens und des Mißtrauens

¹²⁴ Strauß, ‘Zeit ohne Vorboten’.

¹²⁵ As Steiner goes on to write: ‘Der Papierleviathan sekundäre Gesprächs schluckt nicht nur das Prophetische (in aller ernstesten dichterischen und künstlerischen Erfindung gibt es Prophezeiung und die Prophezeiung von Erinnerung): er spuckt es wieder aus, und zwar reduziert und zerkleinert’, in Steiner, *Von realer Gegenwart*, p.71. It is against this particular challenge that the present thesis on Strauß’ primary works is in continual tension.

nicht beinahe das alleingültige, konkurrenzlose Angebot, das heute allem öffentlichen und privaten Verstehen der Welt aufgenötigt wird, in und mittels der Sprache.¹²⁶

Heidegger too has argued for the inevitability of certain consequences on modern society and culture of such a use of language. His description of language as communication, conceptualised in terms of its utility and a corresponding specialisation of intellectual labour, bears the early hallmarks of Strauß' classification of the secondary as a distinctive approach to language from the primacy of the work and the *poetic*. Heidegger describes the consequences thus:

Sobald diese werkzeugliche Mißdeutung des Geistes einsetzt, rücken die Mächte des geistigen Geschehens, Dichtung und bildende Kunst, Staatsschaffung [...] in den Umkreis einer möglichen *bewußten* Pflege und Planung. Sie werden zugleich in Gebiete aufgeteilt. Die geistige Welt wird zur Kultur [...]. [...] Die Kultur-Werte sichern sich im Ganzen einer Kultur nur dadurch Bedeutung, daß sie sich auf ihre Selbstgeltung einschränken: Dichtung um der Dichtung, Kunst um der Kunst, Wissenschaft um der Wissenschaft willen.¹²⁷

It is noteworthy that this conception of language and its uses also has consequences for mankind in both Heidegger's and Strauß' writing, although they clearly refer to and describe very different historical contexts.

Strauß shares a deep conviction in the consequences. Aside from the characterisation in 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang' of a tragic trajectory for Western culture and society, the tone in which the secondary condition of late modernity is couched is unmistakable:

Vom Finger bleibt nichts als der Fingerzeig. Der Körper verflüchtigt zum Digital, der Sozialkörper zum Medial. Ein geschlossener Austausch von Täuschungen [...]. Was ist das Blau des Himmels anderes als eine Lichtbrechung, was der Kummer mehr als ein Mangel an Serotin ... ? Die

¹²⁶ Strauß, 'Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt', p.312. My emphasis.

¹²⁷ Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, p.36. Emphasis in original.

Erde mehr als ein Ort immer höher steigender Abstraktion? Der Wissenswille ist als Fluch nicht einschränkbar, der ewige Rückenwind vom Paradies [...].¹²⁸

Heidegger's thought, of course, is stimulated by a conviction in the myopia of Western thought, a myopia he regards as nearing its apotheosis, leading to a bleak characterisation of modernity.

Der geistige Verfall der Erde ist so weit fortgeschritten, [...] denn die Verdüsterung der Welt, die Flucht der Götter, die Zerstörung der Erde, die Vermassung des Menschen, der hassende Verdacht gegen alles Schöpferische und Freie hat auf der ganzen Erde bereits ein Ausmaß erreicht, daß so kindische Kategorien wie Pessimismus und Optimismus längst lächerlich geworden sind.¹²⁹

The consequences of these considerations is of a danger to mankind arising from the relationship to world manifested in language. The philosophical nature and origin of this threat is considered in the following chapter. This is the main characteristic of modernity, its legacy, and it is viewed by Strauß and Heidegger in similarly critical terms.

For Strauß there is much more at stake in the discussion of *real presences* and the dominant and distorting influence of a secondary conception of language than a loss of status and position of the aesthetic. In a telling image he delineates the consequences of the lost immanence, which places the ontological primacy of *Anwesenheit* under erasure and elides the power of disclosure in *Logos*. Mankind is, Strauß maintains, reminded by the arguments concerning these terms, 'daß nicht nur das natürliche, biologische Haus der Erde, sondern ebenso das geistige beschädigt und bedroht ist und nicht minder dringend

¹²⁸ Strauß, 'Zeit ohne Vorboten'.

¹²⁹ Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, p.29. Strauß uses the same image of the absence of the Gods in an essay published after 'Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt'. See Strauß, 'Wollt ihr das totale Engineering?'.

der Erhaltungs- und Schutzmaßnahmen bedürfte'.¹³⁰ In Heidegger's 'Logos' essay a cognate of the image of home plays a defining role in suggesting how language is originally experienced. Describing the manner of the pre-Socratic disclosure of *Sein* in language he writes:

Ὁ Λόγος wäre dann der griechische Name für das Sprechen als Sagen, für die Sprache. [...]. In der Tat: die Griechen *wohnten* in diesem Wesen der Sprache.¹³¹

The Greeks, according to Heidegger, dwell in language and in dwelling come to experience the luminous presencing of presence, as *Anwesenheit*. It is a characterisation, or rather conceit, particularly in relation to the work of art and the potential salvation from the pervasive threat of modernity offered specifically by the *poetic*, that is central to this thesis. The *poetic* is the site for mankind of an alternative approach to the world.

Before evaluating the characteristics of *originary* language and the *poetic* as Strauß brings them to light, it is necessary to consider further the nature of the threat arising from the disappearance of such language and its philosophical basis. As Strauß writes in another essay:

Die Moderne geht keineswegs mit Parodie oder Postmoderne zu Ende, sondern sie verschwindet im Bruch mit der Poesie unseres Denkens insgesamt. Mit der Ablösung der Reflexion durch ein technisch-informatives Wissen, dem Wissen mit der geringsten geschichtlichen Ekstase und dem universellsten Anspruch.¹³²

¹³⁰ Strauß, 'Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt', pp.312-313. Steiner too anticipates Strauß' particular critique and formulation: 'Ich meine, daß wir uns nicht einrichten können mit den Tatsachen unserer *Unbehaustheit*, unserer Vertriebenheit aus einer zentralen Humanität, angesichts der flutartigen Provokationen politischer Barbarei und technokratischer Sklaverei, wenn wir nicht das Lebendige der Bedeutung in Text, in Musik, in Kunst neu definieren, neu erfahren. Wir müssen zur Erkenntnis, recht eigentlich also zur Weidererkenntnis einer Bedeutungshaftigkeit gelangen', in Steiner, *Von realer Gegenwart*, p.73. My emphasis.

¹³¹ Heidegger, 'Logos', p.220. Emphasis in original.

¹³² Strauß, 'Zeit ohne Vorboten'.

The demise of language first arises, Strauß maintains, through the dominion of technological knowledge and, second, from its distorting effects. It is to Strauß' treatment of science and technology in late modernity, its transformation of the object-world and mankind's *Wahrnehmung*, and the philosophical foundations for this that the argument now turns.

CHAPTER THREE

IN NEED OF ORIGIN: REFLECTIONS ON *BEGINNLOSIGKEIT*

3.1 The enigma of beginning

The bibliophile's conflicting sense of fascinated wonder and confused frustration at the thought and experience of a book without end is conveyed in the short story by Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986), 'The Book of Sand'.¹ In the short work, the first-person narrator exchanges his treasured 'Wycliff black-letter Bible' and presumably less valuable pension for the enigmatic book of the title.² After repeatedly confirming that his new acquisition indeed has no end – and therefore no beginning – he marvels: the 'number of pages in this book is literally infinite. No page is the first page; no page is the last'.³ However, at this realisation, the attractive prospect of prose without limit shades into the obsessive anxiety of narrative without beginning.

The idea of beginning – whether of a cause to events or an origin for things – lies deeply embedded in the Western tradition. The philosopher David Hume (1711-1776), for example, argues in his challenge to the generally accepted principle of causality that the impression of a causal relation, and therefore of an explanatory beginning for experienced phenomena, has no necessary basis in formal logic, but is rather the experience of what he terms a 'constant conjunction'.⁴ Hume provides various illustrations, one infamously of striking billiard balls. A parallel example is fitting for the

¹ Borges, J. L. 'The Book of Sand', in *Collected Fictions* (London: Penguin, 1999), pp.480-485.

² Borges, 'The Book of Sand', p.482.

³ Borges, 'The Book of Sand', p.482.

⁴ Hume, D. *The Treatise of Human Nature* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), in particular the section 'Of Knowledge and Probability'.

conclusion to Strauß' challenging prose work *Beginnlosigkeit. Reflexionen über Fleck und Linie*. It is noteworthy for unsettling convention and accepted beliefs regarding the object-world. Hume reasons that, just because in the past sunrise follows night, and the latter event is, in turn, preceded by sunset, there is no reason why this should continue to be so in the future.⁵ There is no philosophically necessary connection between the end of one event and the beginning of another. It is simply the experience of such a 'conjunction' in the past that gives rise to the supposition that it will be so in the future. Leaving to one side the implications for scepticism and the precepts of inductive reason of Hume's argument, the principal point here is that the conceptual tenets of cause-effect, of beginning and end, are profoundly rooted in the Western tradition's view and understanding of the world and mankind's place in it. Consequently, its questioning is destabilising for long-held, seemingly self-evident truths. This is critical to Strauß' plea for the persistence of an idea of beginning as origin. Other thinkers too experience such a confusion arising from its questioning. In his Frankfurt lectures, Peter Sloterdijk, for example, reflecting on the status of beginning in narrative, expresses a similar bewilderment. He reflects: 'Das Anfangen ist eine seltsame Sache. Wenn ich nicht darüber nachdenke, weiß ich, was anfangen ist, denke ich aber darüber nach, weiß ich es nicht'.⁶

⁵ Strauß ends *Beginnlosigkeit* with a fragment where the boundaries between night and day are suspended. See section 3.3. below.

⁶ Sloterdijk, P. *Zur Welt kommen – zur Sprache kommen. Frankfurter Vorlesungen* (Munich: Suhrkamp, 1988), p.31.

The uncertainty engendered by Borges's story and Sloterdijk's succinct articulation of the disorientation arising from thinking about beginning, and the beginning of beginning, are a good place to commence a reading of Strauß' *Beginnlosigkeit*.⁷

3.1.1 The demise of beginning: *Linie*

Published in 1992 shortly after 'Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt', *Beginnlosigkeit* shares a number of characteristics with that essay. The parenthetic addendum to the title – 'Reflexionen über Fleck und Linie' – suggests a philosophical engagement with its subject matter and indicates too that the work is not conventional, either as a work of fiction or in creation and delineation of recognisable character and narrative. Moreover, in its many explicit scientific and technological touchstones, which in turn evoke continuity with *Niemand anderes* published a year before 'Der Aufstand', *Beginnlosigkeit* raises again an idea with which Strauß begins the essay, namely *Emergenz* noted in the preceding chapter. In 'Der Aufstand', Strauß uses *Emergenz*, which he derives from the biological sciences, to convey the idea of the original creation of the art work and, more fundamentally, of ontological categories such as world.⁸ In *Beginnlosigkeit*, Strauß explores these concerns further, specifically in relation to current intellectual, scientific and technological paradigms.

⁷ Sloterdijk playfully argues for the 'Unterschied zwischen Anfangen und Amanfangenanfangen'. The distinction is useful in thinking about Strauß' argument for a retrieval of an originary experience in *Beginnlosigkeit*. See Sloterdijk, *Zur Welt kommen – zur Sprache kommen*, p.35.

⁸ 'Was geschah, besaß vielmehr etwas von jener Ereigniskraft, die man in den biologischen Wissenschaften mit dem Ausdruck, "Emergenz" bezeichnet: etwas Neues, etwas, das sich aus bisheriger Erfahrung nicht ableiten ließ, trat *plötzlich* in Erscheinung und veränderte [...] die Welt', in Strauß, 'Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt', p.305. Emphasis in original.

Another distinctive attribute of *Beginnlosigkeit* is the plethora of writers and allusions littering the work. While such referencing is a well-documented feature of Strauß' writing, the frequency of citations reaches new heights here. The role of cited authors and their respective theories has come to dominate the relatively limited reception of this prose work.

Lämmerman draws particular attention to these references, cataloguing writers by intellectual discipline.⁹ Drawing on this, Hárs, in turn, highlights the associated scientific and technological theories. As he remarks:

die Liste der anvisierten Theorien ist an sich erstaunlich: Chaosforschung (Fraktale), kosmologische Theorien (Steady-State-Theorie; anthropisches Prinzip), Kybernetik, Neurobiologie, Radikaler Konstruktivismus, Theorien physikalischer Zeit, Wahrnehmungspsychologie etc.¹⁰

These studies are noteworthy because they concentrate interpretations of *Beginnlosigkeit* on its incorporation of scientific and technological theory, with each commentator emphasising one particular referenced discipline.¹¹

Furthermore, a number of studies argue that in *Beginnlosigkeit* Strauß is attempting to merge scientific disciplines and precepts with literary practice to create a distinct fusion of science and poetry. Thus, Daiber in his full-length monograph, which aims, 'so schnell wie möglich einen Bezug zwischen der naturwissenschaftlichen Theorie und den Strauß-Texten zu schaffen', shows how Strauß incorporates different theories, including the 'enorme Komplexität' of 'Quantenmechanik' and 'Chaostheorie' respectively, across his

⁹ She includes German, French and British writers, painters, composers, theatre producers, film makers, philosophers (curiously she excludes Heidegger from her original list even though he is mentioned explicitly at three points in *Beginnlosigkeit*), scientists including physicists and cosmologists, psychotherapists and cognitive psychologists. See Lämmerman, *Für unser Werk mein Liebster*, pp.78ff.

¹⁰ Hárs, *Singularität*, p.170.

¹¹ Accordingly, Lämmerman highlights cybernetics, Neumann emphasises chaos-theory while Daiber focuses on steady-state cosmology. See Hárs, *Singularität*, p.176.

plays and prose works.¹² At one stage in his argument though, Daiber questions whether some of the scientific and technological theses he presents are in fact highly speculative. Of one such theory, which he argues is adopted by Strauß for *Die Zeit und das Zimmer*, he writes: ‘Eine Vorstellung, die nach Science-fiction klingt (aber) von einigen Naturwissenschaftlern für durchaus plausibel gehalten wird’.¹³ Overall, in spite of the ambitious breadth of Daiber’s reference, none of these disparate, mathematically complex models is really adequately considered. Although Daiber and others undoubtedly illustrate that Strauß uses such theories as reference points in his writing, the implication of each idea and its incorporation in his work remains open. It isn’t sufficient to address questions of how or why theories are mediated in *Beginnlosigkeit* by fleeting reference only to non-specialist monographs. On technical explanations of general relativity theory or bio-genetics, for example, *Literaturwissenschaftler* are perhaps best silent.¹⁴

Nonetheless, Daiber’s overall conclusion that ‘Botho Strauß bildet Analogien zwischen den getrennten Sphären von Wissen und Mythos’, which picks up on the relationship with the Romantics, remains influential for commentators. Thomas, for example, contends that Strauß aims for a ‘Verschmelzung von Wissenschaft und Glaube’.¹⁵ Funke makes much the same claim and suggests that the work represents a ‘Verschmelzung von Poesie und Wissenschaft’.¹⁶ And finally, Bellmann follows suit, arguing that

¹² Daiber, J. *Poetisierte Naturwissenschaft. Zur Rezeption naturwissenschaftlicher Theorien im Werk von Botho Strauß* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Peter Lang, 1996), p.21.

¹³ Daiber, *Poetisierte Naturwissenschaft*, p.111.

¹⁴ See Daiber, *Poetisierte Naturwissenschaft*, pp.62 and 116. Berka makes a similar point about what substantive contribution, if any, is made by literary critics to the understanding of the science in discussing the very short contribution by Riemer on *Beginnlosigkeit* whom she describes as ‘einer der wenigen Germanisten mit einem Doktor in Physik’. See Berka, ‘Botho Strauß und die Debatte um den “Bocksgesang”’, p.175.

¹⁵ Thomas, *Botho Strauß und die ‘Konservative Revolution’*, p.220.

¹⁶ Funke, *Über das Höhere in der Literatur*, p.78.

Beginnlosigkeit signals a possible ‘Versöhnung von Mythos and Wissenschaft’.¹⁷ These commentators are pre-occupied in their respective readings with Strauß’ incorporation of scientific and technological theory by the validity or otherwise of each referenced epistemology, rather than their possible philosophical implications.¹⁸

Those commentators who do chase the sources in greater detail indicate that although Strauß’ references to such theories are precise and scholarly, he often either simplifies or distorts the intent or argument of the original.¹⁹ Such observations are interesting and indicate that Strauß’ adoption of referenced theories may not, after all, be primarily concerned with either the development of a technologically-grounded form of writing, or a poetic reconciliation of *Naturwissenschaft* and *Literatur*.

Conversely, other more hostile critics condemn what they regard as Strauß’ unconsidered or naïve subsumption of scientific and technological theory, and in this variously echo the charge of fatalism. Drews, for example, asserts that his reckoning with ‘den allerneuesten Denkmodellen und Weltentstehungstheoremen’ in *Beginnlosigkeit* is negated by developments within the discipline of modern physics.²⁰ As he argues: ‘Strauß [...] hat sich an ein rasch vorübergehendes – [...] gerade in Mode befindliches – astrophysikalisches Theorem gehalten, und nun fehlt seinem Buch eigentlich die

¹⁷ Bellmann, ‘Poetologie und Zeit-Kritik in Botho Strauß’, p.42.

¹⁸ This thesis refers to theories and epistemologies to indicate that what are under consideration are not individual, specific scientific or technological theses but, rather, the assumptions and precepts underpinning the range of such intellectual disciplines.

¹⁹ Lämmerman, for example, highlights citation of Keidel’s work on cybernetics (see *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.74), extracts from which are taken almost verbatim, as well as Strauß’ quoting from Prigogines and Hofstadter respectively (see *Beginnlosigkeit*, pp.40 and 48).

²⁰ Drews, J. ‘Ein bißchen erschüttert, aber immer lebenswürdig’, in *Neue deutsche Literatur* 9 (1992), pp.141-142.

Grundlage'.²¹ Furthermore, he asserts that Strauß' referencing is uncritical, noting of *Beginnlosigkeit*: 'zum Teil macht sich [...] eine Art depressive Ratlosigkeit breit'.²² This criticism is also made by von Randow who states that the work, 'ist ein Typ unvermittelter Übersetzung von Naturwissenschaft in Sozialphilosophie, ein naiver Szientismus, von dem man eigentlich glauben durfte, er sei endgültig überwunden'.²³ Hagedstedt, in his study, echoes such sentiment and argues, in line with the different aspects of fatalism outlined in the preceding chapters, that the work, 'einen Vertiefungsweg nach innen beschreitet', retreats into subjectivism and so fails to incorporate or refer to the social and political context of its creation, and its status as art work.²⁴ As he writes, Strauß, 'negiert [...] die Möglichkeit, die Emergenz von Kunst aus sozialen und kulturellen Bedingungen herzuleiten'.²⁵ Raising the political implication suggested by fatalism he claims Strauß' prose thus reflects views, 'die als "rechts" eingestuft werden'.²⁶

Finally, Bergfleth, in one of the most favourable readings of the work, pushes beyond the dominant interpretative emphasis on Strauß' adoption of science and technology. He describes *Beginnlosigkeit* principally as 'philosophische Theorie', arguing that Strauß posits a post-technological world where the intellectual constraints arising from the

²¹ Drews, 'Ein bißchen erschüttert', p.141.

²² Drews, 'Ein bißchen erschüttert', p.143.

²³ von Randow, G. 'Postmodernes Wortgeklingel', in *Die Zeit* 30 December, 1994.

²⁴ Hagedstedt, 'Botho Strauß: Literatur als Erkenntnis', p.279. The philosophical provenance of this subjectivism and its implications, manifested, for example, in Strauß' treatment of theories of 'radical constructivism', is dealt with in section 3.2 below.

²⁵ Hagedstedt, 'Botho Strauß: Literatur als Erkenntnis', p.279.

²⁶ Hagedstedt, 'Botho Strauß: Literatur als Erkenntnis', p.279. Hagedstedt also argues that the 'Reflexionen' of the work's subtitle alludes to Adorno's *Minima Moralia* and confirms 'Strauß' anti-aufklärerische Wende'.

general application of science and technology are lifted.²⁷ However, although he raises the issue of an implicit critique of modern technology running through the work, Bergfleth leaves this important issue undeveloped. Moreover, the emphasis of the study on a projected post-technological utopian environment leaves the dynamic potential of Strauß' re-conceptualisation of origin marginalized. It takes the idea of 'Beginnlosigkeit' as telos, rather than the manifestation of an intellectual condition that is actually lamented by Strauß and subjected to critique. Bergfleth, in his argument for a 'statische Welt', although recognising the outline of Strauß' radical counter-postulate in *Beginnlosigkeit* nevertheless furthers the idea of the subject's renunciation of object-world embodied by fatalism.

In conjunction with the focus on scientific theory, some commentators also claim other themes as central to *Beginnlosigkeit*, such as the treatment of 'time', 'production', or the work's status as literature.²⁸ However, leaving the partialities of interpretive emphasis aside, all commentators concur on the pervading sense of crisis in the work, and the view that the loosely drawn character only referred to as 'Er' (any biography is left oblique and it is noteworthy that the 'Er' is at no point conceived as an individual character), experiences or is the focus of that crisis.²⁹ The second very short fragment to *Beginnlosigkeit* evokes this clearly:

In der Ferne tuten die kleinen Signalhörner und melden, daß eine Sprengung
in der Schlucht bevorsteht.³⁰

²⁷ Bergfleth, G. 'Die statische Welt und die Technik. Überlegungen zur *Beginnlosigkeit* von Botho Strauß', in *Der Pfahl. Jahrbuch aus dem Niemandsland zwischen Kunst und Wissenschaft* VI (1992), p.250.

²⁸ See Bellmann, Lämmerman and Hárs' studies respectively.

²⁹ Further references in this thesis to this 'Er' are to the 'Er'-figure to emphasise that 'he' should not be regarded as embodying a single person or set of attributes but instead stands, more generally, for mankind.

³⁰ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.7.

However, the crisis is not readily identifiable with any one of those themes noted by commentators. Just as subsequent fragments veer off in seemingly disparate directions – the next fragment begins ‘die Neuronenverbände feuern im Gleichtakt, bis zu vierzigmal in der Sekunde [...] Wahrnehmung beginnt’ – so the ‘Er’-figure is also confined to an unstable world reflected in the overall fragmentary structure of *Beginnlosigkeit* itself.³¹ As Strauß writes: ‘Mit einem Wort: sein Denken existiert gewissermaßen nur in der Gedankenflucht’.³² Thus, the disorientation felt by the ‘Er’-figure appears to have no readily identifiable cause or beginning. As the final fragment on the opening page of the work confirms, despite his best efforts the ‘Er’-figure remains caught – significantly – within a turmoil that pre-dates both the opening of the book and the specific announcement of ‘eine Sprengung’. What then is this crisis, and is there anything to point to its cause?

One fleeting but suggestive instance of orientation comes mid-way through *Beginnlosigkeit*. Here Strauß writes:

Kommen und Gehen, Auf und Ab, Wiege und stetes Schwanken. Dieselben Dinge nähern sich, entfernen sich. Dieselben Dinge sind heute ein Geheimnis, morgen eine öde physische Gegebenheit. Das Erkennen schaukelt wie ein leerer Kahn auf den Uferwellen.³³

While this does not obviously suggest a cause of the crisis it hints at its experience: the disorientation relates, on one level, to perception. The present argument suggests however – picking up on the fragment quoted above where Strauß notes that ‘Wahrnehmung beginnt’ – that at a more fundamental level the crisis is concerned with how the external world *is*, how it is manifested in the terms set out in the previous

³¹ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.7.

³² Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.8.

³³ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.57.

chapter, for the 'Er'-figure. The thesis also calls this his *Wahrnehmung*. The following discussion sets out a number of Strauß' terms, which lead to two distinctive structures or forms of *Wahrnehmung* postulated in *Beginnlosigkeit*. Key to each, though, is the relationship between mankind and thing: the cognisant 'Er'-figure and the object-world, albeit ostensibly with few substantive points of orientation. The philosophical basis of this dualism, and the relationship of this schism to the critique of science and technology forms the focus of this chapter. In this, *Beginnlosigkeit* is not concerned with the detail, let alone empirical validity, of differing epistemologies but continues Strauß' engagement with more fundamental ontological concerns.

To suggest the disjuncture of subject and object, Strauß introduces neologisms in *Beginnlosigkeit* that disconcert some commentators and again reflect the criticism levelled at him following publication of 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang'.³⁴ Strauß writes concerning the 'Er'-figure: 'Ihm war nicht et-was, sondern ab-was vorhanden'.³⁵ What do these charged and philosophically evocative terms suggest? The experience of *Abwas* is contradictory, with the object simultaneously absent and present to the subject. Thus, the world is present as *Abwas* yet, contemporaneously, signals its absence as thing. Strauß is here setting out the philosophical basis for *Beginnlosigkeit*. He describes *Abwas* further:

Das Abwas ist ein Ding der Abwesenheit und scheinbar ein Ding der Erinnerung. Doch ist seine Aktivität die eines Trichterlochs: es tilgt, es saugt,

³⁴ See Görner, 'Im Schatten des Mythos', pp.548ff and Chapter One.

³⁵ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.57.

es entwendet [...]. Ein Abwas besitzt tausend Saugmünder, ist ein einziges weltabsaugendes Plasmodium.³⁶

Although these terms still provide no explanation as to the cause of the crisis, Strauß invites comparison with two precedents. He conjectures: ‘Müßte es ihn nicht in ebenso tiefe Unruhe versetzen wie einst den Dichter Kleist die Lektüre Kants?’³⁷ However, Strauß is not saying that the crisis is identical to that of Kleist, although the comparison supports the contention that it is ultimately concerned with *Wahrnehmung* and, therefore, the relationship between subject and object-world. Extending the philosophical reach of the dichotomy, Strauß introduces another literary precedent in Hofmannstahl’s Lord Chandos.³⁸ The ‘Er’-figure experiences a similar dissolution between word and world:

Zuerst hatte er nichts mehr berühren wollen, dann nichts mehr benennen können. Er war vor den Dingen zu den Wörtern geflohen, dann von den Benennungen zu den Beziehungen, die die Wörter untereinander herstellen.³⁹

The crisis, then, as well as the relationship between subject and object-world also involves language. The implications of this are considered in the concluding section of this chapter.

What is suggested by these two literary precedents for the ‘Er’-figure’s experience of intellectual turmoil and crisis is a development in his frames of reference. Thus, in these two examples, where the first relates to the relationship between subject and object-

³⁶ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.57.

³⁷ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.13. Drews suggests that it is Strauß’ intent to precipitate a similar crisis in the reader: ‘Man hat den Eindruck, daß Strauß willentlich bei sich etwas herbeiführen will, was die sogenannte “Kant-Krise” bei Heinrich von Kleist [...] war’, in Drews, ‘Ein bißchen erschüttert’, p.142.

³⁸ ‘Jener schmerzhafteste Bewußtseinsschub, den Hofmannsthal’s Lord Chandos zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts ertrug, da ihm die Wörter, die Dinge in Teile und diese wiederum in Teile zerfielen, erweist sich am Ende desselben als Gleichnis [...] des komplexen Begreifens’, in Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.117. See also p.13 where Chandos is mentioned in connection with Valéry’s ‘Monsieur Teste’.

³⁹ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.128.

world, the second suggests the historically later fissure that Steiner takes as the central premise of his argument, namely a breach in covenant between word and world: both involve mankind's experience of the world. For Strauß, as noted above, it is not the specific detail of each of these crises that is of immediate concern. Rather, they show a development in the 'Er'-figure's *Wahrnehmung*. This development is described by Strauß as part of mankind's nature, a conceit central to Western civilisation, based on a Faustian impetus to grasp the world:

Er wollte seinerseits keine Lücke bilden im fleißigen Gewebe der Mitteilungen, der unterschwelliger Verständigungen, die möglicherweise eher zum Innersten gehören, das die Welt zusammenhält [...].⁴⁰

Strauß is suggesting that the moderation and negotiation between different intellectual structures or epistemologies, whether of Kantian metaphysics, Hofmannstahl's scepticism or different technological theory, is a defining experience for the 'Er'-figure of differing epistemologies. As he notes of the figure: 'In seiner spätmodernen Verfassung, [...] war er ausgerüstet für das Absolute wie für das äußerst Relative'.⁴¹ Strauß goes on to describe this conceptualisation of this form of mankind's *Wahrnehmung*:

Ging nicht also Entwicklung von Rund zu Rund, von Fertigsein zu Fertigsein, war nicht jede Etappe ein kleiner Kosmos für sich, eine kleine geschlossene Weile, ein jeweils angemessenes Verstehen und *Wahrnehmen* der Welt, das so lange beibehalten wurde, bis sich gewisse Unstimmigkeiten einstellten?⁴²

The fragment portrays a conceptual framework for knowledge premised on incremental development of different theories suggesting dialectical progression in *Wahrnehmung* toward enlightened, if impermanent, resolution: of movement between successive worldviews, their inherent partiality and subsequent resolution through a novel synthesis.

⁴⁰ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.33.

⁴¹ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.47.

⁴² Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.133. My emphasis.

This thesis argues that scientific and technological theory, as referenced and presented in *Beginnlosigkeit*, conforms to such a dialectic. The development is also imaged in Strauß' prose work, like Borges's 'Book of Sand', as necessarily without end.

The significance of this implicit philosophy of science for the overall intent of *Beginnlosigkeit* and Strauß' critique of technology is considered in detail below. At this stage it is necessary only to note it, in order to introduce a number of other terms, in addition to *Abwas*, important in the understanding of the work, Strauß' move to reinscribe origin and his adoption of Heideggerian ontology.

Notwithstanding the proposed dialectic along which mankind's knowledge of himself and object-world is suggested to be progressing, an unsatisfied, inexplicable intellectual longing endures. Strauß writes of this sense in the 'Er'-figure:

Etwa zwischen der Ahnung, daß sich das meiste in weit komplizierteren Formen bewegt und erhält, als es uns, deren Bewußtsein übersät ist mit Skotomen, schützende Blindheiten, gegenwärtig erkennbar sein kann.⁴³

Neither the dissolution nor momentary stasis offered by various explanatory scientific and technological epistemologies can obviate a yearning, innate to the figure and, therefore Strauß suggests, to mankind.⁴⁴ The 'Er'-figure is drawn back by the persistence of an alternative *Wahrnehmung*, which doesn't conform to the explanation and resolution embodied by empiricist and positivist theory. It is, however, neither easily definable, nor ever satisfactorily contained by language. The experience draws close to the elusive quality set out in the previous chapter, and it is the aim of the present argument to delineate its philosophical parameters.

⁴³ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.47.

⁴⁴ This is developed further in the discussion of the 'Nanos' motif in section 3.3 below.

Importantly, these alternate forms or structures of *Wahrnehmung* are the basis for the two motifs central to *Beginnlosigkeit*. Strauß terms them *Fleck* and *Linie* respectively and defines them thus:

Der Fleck und die Linie.

Er ist alles seelisch Gemeinte, nicht konturierbar, in mehrdeutiger Gestalt sich verlaufend.

Sie ist die gebündelte Helle, und ihr Mysterium ist ihr offenes Ende, ihre Unabsehbarkeit'.⁴⁵

It is notable that *Fleck* and *Linie* appear irreconcilable. Greiner, for example, argues of the two terms: 'Dem Paradigma "Linie" wird das Paradigma "Fleck" entgegengesetzt'.⁴⁶

Lämmerman, in turn, claims that they are the 'leitmotivischer Gegensatz des gesamten Textes'.⁴⁷ Bergfleth, however, is more suggestive in his delineation of the contradictory affinity between the two: 'daß der undeutliche Fleck aufschlußreicher, die vereinfachende Linie jedoch erhellender ist. [...]. Wir haben es hier also mit einem Verhältnis wechselseitigen Ausschlusses zu tun'.⁴⁸

Each, though, retains a strong, ostensibly different influence on the 'Er'-figure. In particular, *Linie* appears to be the dominant structure – 'das Gitter der Wahrnehmung' as Strauß puts it – and represents the manifestation of differing epistemologies of science and technology.⁴⁹ Moreover, it seems to elide that alternative, latent *Wahrnehmung* associated with *Fleck*. As Strauß comments:

Wäre so manches nicht bis zum Ersticken komplett und zugespitzt dahingeschrieben, er hätte gewiß beim Lesen leichter atmen können, hätte hin

⁴⁵ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.70. Emphasis in original.

⁴⁶ Greiner, B. "'Beginnlosigkeit' – "Schlußchor" – "Gleichgewicht". Der "Sprung" in der deutschen Nachkriegsgeschichte und Botho Strauß' Jakobinische Dramaturgie', in *Weimarer Beiträge* 2 (1994), p.245.

⁴⁷ Lämmerman, *Für unser Werk mein Liebster*, p.77.

⁴⁸ Bergfleth, 'Die statische Welt und die Technik', p.251. Emphasis in original. The argument goes on to suggest the nature of this affinity.

⁴⁹ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.125.

und wieder ‘es öffnet sich’ sagen dürfen statt abgerichtet immer nur ‘es stimmt’.⁵⁰

Not only do the epistemologies embodied in *Linie* constrain the ‘Er’-figure but they are, Strauß is suggesting, deeply engrained, and reign as ‘der begradigte Menschenverstand’ against which all *Wahrnehmung*, including by implication that associated with *Fleck*, are measured.⁵¹ Inevitably, though, any reading of *Beginnlosigkeit*, including the present argument, succumbs to the same inexorable tendency as that suggested by *Linie*-structured *Wahrnehmung*. As Strauß describes the dynamic: ‘Alles Unübersichtliche läuft indessen Gefahr, eines Tages dem groben Schnitt, der begradigten Linie zum Opfer zu fallen’. Such a tendency arises, he suggests, from mankind’s, ‘tiefster Sehnsucht nach der Linie’.⁵²

Some commentators dismiss these terms entirely. Drews, for instance, suggests their use only confirms a suspicion that: ‘Strauß ist ein schwacher und wenig radikaler Denker; sein Denkgestus ist oft merkwürdig unsouverän und in den Formulierungen recht parfümiert’.⁵³ However, although disorienting – and given the crisis suggested by *Beginnlosigkeit* their effect is unlikely to be different – these terms have an important philosophical origin that is entirely overlooked in a move to condemn them as whimsy or dilettantism. For example, the term *Linie* and its evocation is an important motif in a tradition of German thought relating to the discussion of the nihilism of modern

⁵⁰ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.17.

⁵¹ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.61.

⁵² Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.61.

⁵³ Drews, ‘Ein bißchen erschüttert’, p.145.

technology during the inter-war period that it is not possible to elaborate further here, but that is richly suggestive given the ideas under discussion.⁵⁴

The above observations hint at the explanatory basis to the crisis that the ‘Er’-figure experiences within the parameters of *Beginnlosigkeit*; of a distortion between subject and object-world and an incapacity in language adequately to express that schism. The crisis is manifested between different irreconcilable forms of *Wahrnehmung*, one of which leads to the suspension of the other as *Linie*’s forward-moving project toward enlightenment casts the darker, indeterminate *Fleck* into shade. Strauß writes of this tendency: ‘die Linien und Gründe bedeckt der diffuse Fleck eines vielgestalteten Verstehens’.⁵⁵ These tensions coalesce in an important fragment that introduces the defining motif of *Beginnlosigkeit*.

Der Trichter, in dem all seine Gefühle und Gedanken abströmten:
DER STERBENDE ANFANG
Steady state und Beginnlosigkeit.⁵⁶

Strauß’ categorical assertion here returns the argument to the introductory observations on the enigma of beginning and origin. It is this enigma that the ‘Er’-figure appears unable to retrieve: reason is immune to its influence. It appears then that ‘Beginnlosigkeit’ is the cause of the figure’s crisis: or more precisely, the erosion of origin is its cause.

⁵⁴ For example, Heidegger’s *Zur Seinsfrage*, originally published as *Über ‘Die Linie’*, a commemorative essay in honour of Ernst Jünger’s own commemorative essay for Heidegger entitled *Über die Linie*, sets out the philosophical potency of the term in relation to technology. As Heidegger writes: ‘Die Zone der kritischen Linie [...] wäre sonach dort zu suchen, wo das Wesen der Metaphysik seine äußersten Möglichkeiten entfaltet [...]. Das geschieht dort, wo der Wille zum Willen alles Anwesende einzig nur in der durchgängigen und einförmigen Bestellbarkeit seines Bestandes will, d.h. herausfordert, *stellt*’, in Heidegger, *Zur Seinsfrage*, p.34. Emphasis in original. See also Jünger, E. ‘Über die Linie’, in *Betrachtungen zur Zeit* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1982).

⁵⁵ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.30.

⁵⁶ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.36. Strauß’ capitalisation of ‘DER STERBENDE ANFANG’ makes the notion a further subtitle to the work *Beginnlosigkeit*.

What, then, does Strauß intend of the term ‘Beginnlosigkeit’ and the work of the same title? How is it possible to overcome the crisis experienced by the ‘Er’-figure and the challenge articulated by Sloterdijk, namely to think about the beginning of beginning? Why does Strauß focus on certain epistemologies and theories, including steady-state cosmology, and how does he explain the persistence for mankind of a notion of a beginning in light of its apparent absence, what he terms, ‘der heilige Urzustand oder dessen ersehnte Wiederherstellung’?⁵⁷

3.1.2 The beginning of enigma: *Fleck*

‘Beginnlosigkeit’ is not another theory of science or technology. Rather, it is a term denoting an hypothesised condition determined by the erosion of beginning in the ‘Er’-figure’s *Wahrnehmung*. Its demise is the challenge, Strauß suggests, facing mankind in late modernity. Moreover, it is the different epistemologies – examples of *Wahrnehmung* associated with *Linie* – that result in the erosion of mankind’s ability to conceive origin, as Strauß suggests it. The question as to whether this is empirically verifiable, whether individual theories do indeed destroy origin is not, for the moment, at issue, nor is whether *Linie* indeed progresses along the admittedly slightly crude characterisation of dialectics proposed in the prose work. *Beginnlosigkeit* is a literary-philosophical work and not ultimately a treatise of science, an intellectual distinction most commentators neglect to consider. To consider the work, its dense network of images and metaphors, or to test the validity of the conceit and use of epistemologies by reference to current theory

⁵⁷ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.36.

is, ironically, to conform to that very structure of *Wahrnehmung* represented by *Linie* with which the work takes issue. Although such an interpretive approach is entirely legitimate on one level, its deeper philosophical resonance is missed and it overlooks entirely Strauß' overall objective in re-inscribing a different *Wahrnehmung* in *Fleck* and origin. It is a term of ontology not empiricism.

Each different scientific or technological theory represents the next thesis manifesting *Linie*, its negation or eventual dialectic synthesis. This explains, for example, why Strauß includes a theory of cosmology, e.g., steady-state, valid in the late 1940s but which was discredited less than a decade later. Strauß is not re-rehearsing a debate long obsolete in physics. Furthermore, his adoption of theories from entirely unrelated disciplines is not concerned with their inherent truth claims, nor with advancing some poetic fusion of a grand-unified theory.⁵⁸ Anyway, the destruction of origin that is the fundamental premise of *Beginnlosigkeit* cannot be verified by reference to theory that is putatively responsible for the condition.

Nevertheless, such deductive fallacies aside, if Strauß' challenge is to be met at all, the theories themselves represent a good starting point for considering what is at stake in Strauß' notion of origin and if its absence – ‘das Dogma der Zeiten’ as he terms ‘Beginnlosigkeit’ – is to be overcome.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Bergfleth is one of the few commentators to advance this view: ‘Es ist jedoch gar nicht die kosmologische Theorie als solche, die Strauß interessiert; sie dient ihm bloß als Beispiel, an dem er [...] den Konflikt mit der alten Wahrheit, den die technische Realisierung dieser Welt heraufbeschwört’, in Bergfleth, ‘Die statische Welt und die Technik’, p.256.

⁵⁹ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.36.

Two theories ostensibly contributing to the crisis in *Beginnlosigkeit* are steady-state cosmology and cybernetics. Both correlate in their respective macro and micro frames of reference to the 'Er'-figure's pre-disposition, noted above, for absolutes and the absolutely relative. How do these two theories, though, necessarily lead to the condition of 'Beginnlosigkeit'? Notwithstanding the comments above regarding sensible constraints on *Literaturwissenschaftler*, a very brief summary of each is necessary here to show how Strauß suggests these theories manifest *Linie* and the condition of 'Beginnlosigkeit'.

Steady-state cosmology posits a static macro model of the universe in contravention of the then nascent 'Big Bang' theory. The latter thesis is the necessary implication of the supposition, since empirically verified, that the universe is expanding from an original instance defining its beginning.⁶⁰ In contrast, steady-state cosmology holds that 'the number of galaxies' in the universe remains at a constant; as such, the gaps formed as the universe expands are filled by new objects.⁶¹ 'New matter' according to this thinking, as Hawking summarises, is 'being continually created'.⁶²

At the micro level of scientific study, Strauß highlights developments in cybernetics, although its general theory and application are not specifically relayed.⁶³ Strauß' postulate is clear: cybernetics leads to a suspension of deep-seated beliefs concerning human agency. Strauß cites examples, of Oedipus, Ibsen and psychoanalysis, with its

⁶⁰ See Hawking, S. W. *A Brief History of Time. From the Big Bang to Black Holes* (London: Bantam Press, 1988), p.39.

⁶¹ Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*, p.47.

⁶² Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*, p.47.

⁶³ Daiber considers Strauß' use of cybernetics in relation to his treatment of time in the prose works *Kongreß. Die Kette der Demütigungen* and *Der junge Mann*, and the play *Trilogie des Wiedersehens*. See Daiber, *Poetisierte Naturwissenschaft*, pp. 137ff.

methodological precepts of an explanatory foundation for behaviour. The enigma of motive, he writes, ‘verschwindet mit dem Reduktionismus im Weltbild der Kybernetik’.⁶⁴ Instead, cybernetic models of behaviour postulate a theoretically infinite regression in explanation of human action.⁶⁵ Accepting, as *Beginnlosigkeit* presents it, that cybernetic models are examples of *Linie*’s ‘offenes Ende’ then beginning – in this particular instance as human motive – is thrown into doubt by the hypothetical prospect of endless explanatory possibility. As Strauß suggests, according to a cybernetic model of explanation:

Bevor also [...] ein Grund geboren wird, gehen zahllose zufallsgesteuerte Entscheidungsprozesse voraus. Was wir den Anfang nennen, ist bereits das Resultat langwieriger vor- und zurückfragender Selektionen.⁶⁶

What are the implications of Strauß’ referencing of these two specific epistemologies?

Both steady-state and cybernetic theories obviate the idea of a first-cause, however it is termed, whether as creation of the universe or as human agency. Strauß notes the implication: ‘Nicht im Anfang schuf Gott [...], sondern irgendwann’.⁶⁷ Similarly, as a result of theories such as cybernetics, mankind’s view of the world is newly engendered: ‘Dies alles gibt es nicht in der erkennbaren Wirklichkeit: prima causa, Urschuld, Erstes

⁶⁴ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.38.

⁶⁵ Heidegger only considers the then emerging discipline of cybernetics briefly but his description captures the nature of such models: ‘Der Grundzug des kybernetischen Weltentwurfes ist der Regelkreis, in dem die Rückkoppelung der Information verläuft. Der weiteste Regelkreis umschließt die Wechselbeziehung von Mensch und Welt’, cited in Stumpe, *Geviert, Gestell, Geflecht*, p.162.

⁶⁶ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.38.

⁶⁷ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.9. Interestingly, Hawking highlights the anti-theological impetus of steady-state, in contrast to the ‘Big-Bang’, which was he says ‘seized on’ by the Catholic Church, which ‘officially pronounced it to be in accordance with the Bible’, in Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*, p.47.

an sich'.⁶⁸ The idea of beginning is, thus, at worst destroyed entirely, or at best left suspended in perpetuity.

The consequences are far-reaching. For example, the philosophical concepts of 'nothing' and 'becoming', highlighted in the previous chapter as central to ontological concern, are rendered meaningless, subject to the same destruction as the 'Er'-figure's worldly disorientation. As Strauß remarks of a static universe without origin: 'Hier fand sich kein Platz mehr, weder für ein Nichts noch für ein aus dem Nichts Geschaffenes'.⁶⁹ The focus of the present argument means that it is not possible to consider the specific philosophical origin of these terms in Heidegger. Bergfleth, though, in his reading, suggests this influence. He writes of steady-state theory: 'In metaphysischer Hinsicht gehört es zu ihren Glanzlichtern, daß sie Nichts im Sein anwesend sein läßt, denn ohne das Nichts käme kein Seiendes je zu seinem Sein'.⁷⁰

It appears that models of science and technology, conceived in accordance with *Linie*-structured *Wahrnehmung* of the object-world, the culmination of which is a condition of 'Beginnlosigkeit', are unavoidable and insuperable. Strauß sets out the challenge facing mankind:

Alles, was er vorbringt, ist der unausgesetzt vergebliche Versuch, seine Gedanken auf einen einzigen Gegenstand zu richten und daran festzuhalten, nicht nachzulassen in der Frage: Wie kann der Mensch mit der Erkenntnis der

⁶⁸ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.38.

⁶⁹ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.9. Similarly, commenting on the implications of cybernetics Strauß writes: 'Die Schöpfung wie das Verbrechen sind zwar emergente, plötzliche Akte, entstehen aber weder aus dem Nichts noch aus einer einzigen Ursache', in Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.38. (My emphasis). Interestingly, in *Was ist Metaphysik?* Heidegger makes a similar claim regarding the impact of 'Wissenschaft' on 'die Ausarbeitung der Frage nach dem Nichts'. See Heidegger, *Was ist Metaphysik?*, pp.29ff.

⁷⁰ Bergfleth, 'Die statische Welt und die Technik', pp.255-256. There appears to be a similarity between 'das Nichts' and Strauß' idea of 'Abwas', of a present object-world that is absent as thing. Heidegger, for example, elaborates his conception of nothing: 'Dieses Nichts, das nicht das Seiende ist und das *es* gleichwohl *gibt*, ist nichts Nichtiges. Es gehört zum Anwesen', in Heidegger, *Zur Seinsfrage*, p.39.

absoluten Beginnlosigkeit, die eine Beginnlosigkeit nicht nur der Schöpfung, sondern, davon ausgestreut metastatisch ins Geäder des Bewußtseins, eine Beginnlosigkeit von *allem und jedem* sein muß – wie kann er in einem solchen Erkenntnisstand sich und die Welt erleben und welche Folgen hat dies unweigerlich für alles und jedes?⁷¹

The ‘Er’-figure is abandoned to the experience of a fragmentary world, of which *Beginnlosigkeit*, the work, is itself a manifestation. Is there any basis upon which that alternative, latent *Wahrnehmung* sensed by the ‘Er’-figure, associated by implication both with *Fleck* and origin, can be retrieved in light of *Linie*’s all-encompassing ‘gebündelte Helle’? Does Strauß abandon mankind to the teleologically infinite dimension – a world without beginning – of contemporary scientific theory?

Most commentators concede the difficulty of discerning a recognisable structure to the approximately two hundred and fifty individual fragments of *Beginnlosigkeit*.⁷² Riemer, for example, remarks that ‘es gibt kein zwingendes Ereignis, mit dem das Buch beginnt, kein offensichtliches Ende; die Abschnitte sind durch keine eindeutige Handlung oder Entwicklungslinie geordnet’.⁷³ It seems remarkable, however, to note in a critique of such a distinctive work, concerned with the absence of beginning, that it lacks the narrative conventions or form of beginning, middle and end.

Nonetheless, Strauß does offer certain points of orientation in the work, including the ‘Nanos’ motif, considered in detail below, and an attempt by the ‘Er’-figure to give form to his otherwise dissolute experience of himself and world. The intensity of his disintegration culminates in a corresponding physical breakdown. As Strauß writes: ‘Es

⁷¹ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.8. Emphasis in original.

⁷² See Hárs, *Singularität*, p.170. He notes that even identifying the number of fragments is problematic as it is unclear whether those running across pages have concluded or not.

⁷³ Riemer, W. ‘Problematik des Ursprungs. Kosmos und Chaos in Botho Strauß’ *Beginnlosigkeit*, in *Weimarer Beiträge* 2 (1994), p.318.

versagte ihm die Position in den Knien. Vielleicht waren es Anzeichen einer tieferen Schwächung [...].⁷⁴ The ‘Er’-figure’s response though is to embark on what commentators have come to call the ‘Sondenexperiment’.

Er war jedenfalls bereit, der ‘Schwächung’ nichts entgegenzusetzen – außer seinem empfindlichsten Bemerkten. Wie Forßmann, der Arzt, einst seinen Katheter, so wollte er nun ebenfalls im Selbstversuch die Sonde des Gedankens einführen ins Herz der Unvernunft.⁷⁵

The *Sondenexperiment* is of crucial interest in getting closer to that alternative *Wahrnehmung* associated with *Fleck* for three reasons. First, on the surface the experiment follows the very methodological precepts associated with *Linie* in successive experimentation. Of course, accepting the dominance of such *Wahrnehmung*, this would seem to be inevitable. But, Strauß in *Beginnlosigkeit* suggests that *Linie*, if re-traced in the *Sondenexperiment*, also opens up an alternative *Wahrnehmung*. The two – *Fleck* and *Linie* – are, then, not as mutually exclusive as first appears. Moreover, as he conducts the experiment, the ‘Er’-figure becomes aware that the approach entails a threat.

Jede Form für das Unformbare, das sich nur ausbreitet, um die unbekannte, unwiderstehliche Frequenz wiederkehrender Motive zu ermöglichen, jeder Versuch, dem Fleck und der Diffusion eine *andere* Form aufzuzwingen, würde den sofortigen Sturz der gesamten Schwingung, den Abbruch der Lebenslinie zur Folge haben.⁷⁶

Second, he emphasises the reason for undertaking the experiment at all; namely the distorted relationship to the object-world, and correspondence between word and world. As the second of the three fragments directly concerned with the *Sondenexperiment* suggests:

⁷⁴ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.45.

⁷⁵ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.45.

⁷⁶ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.56. The danger or threat in relation to the critique of modern technology is considered in section 3.2 below.

Er war inzwischen mit seiner Sonde zu den gezackten und fetzenreichen Rändern des Bewußtseins vorgedrungen und stieß nur immer auf den einen Widerstand: alles in ihm wehrte sich gegen die von festen Dingen sprechenden Worte. In seiner Unvernunft hielt er es für das Werk des Durcheinanderwerfers, [...]. Beginnlosigkeit: die Tilgung, die das Versucher-Wort in all seine Begriffe gestreut hatte, ging auf.⁷⁷

Lastly, the experiment brings to the fore further terms, including *Gewärtigen*, *Gehör*, *Zwischen* and *Ereignis* that are brought by Strauß into conjunction with *Fleck*.⁷⁸ Most importantly, the final fragment of *Beginnlosigkeit* represents the culmination of the ‘Sondenexperiment’ and suggests the advent of that *Wahrnehmung* associated with *Fleck*. As Strauß writes: ‘Die Sonde war nun eingedrungen, der Gedanke stand im Herzen und maß den Druck der Unvernunft’.⁷⁹ At this point, the dominion of *Linie* is lifted and the ‘Er’-figure experiences ‘das Unformbare’; origin; *Fleck*. Thus, the ontological grounds for what this thesis calls Strauß’ *poetics of dwelling* are glimpsed. But this is to anticipate the argument to follow. The reading requires greater circumspection.

The results of the *Sondenexperiment* bring the ‘Er’-figure nearer the *Wahrnehmung* in *Fleck*. The argument, thus, moves *Beginnlosigkeit* away from interpretations that see it as an engagement with science and technology. Nor does the work represent an alchemic combination of poetry with *Naturwissenschaften*. Instead, such epistemologies serve only as a foil, providing a critique of a structure of *Wahrnehmung* that Strauß suggests is

⁷⁷ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.72. The other two fragments concerning the *Sondenexperiment* are on pp.45 and 83. It is interesting to note, given the invocation of a mephistophelean ‘Durcheinanderwerfers’, the parallels in *Beginnlosigkeit* to Faust’s search for an order of knowledge distinct from that rational, graspable *Verstand* or form of understanding represented by Wagner in Goethe’s *Faust*.

⁷⁸ Hárs refers to others, including ‘der Nebel’, ‘das Netz’ and ‘die Witterung’ but confuses terms describing the crisis, and those associated with the alternative, non-linear *Wahrnehmung*, into which the experiment is attempting to draw him. See Hárs, *Singularität*, pp.178-179. A number of these terms, of course, echo those introduced in the discussion of the ‘Logos’ essay.

⁷⁹ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.133.

embedded in the Western tradition, and against which he seeks to bring an ontologically-grounded alternative to light.

Strauß, however, provides no ready definition of this alternative *Wahrnehmung*: to do so would, of course, succumb to the dominion of *Linie*. He offers instead an outline form, incorporating terms that suggest *Fleck* and arise from the *Sondenexperiment*. Instead of imposing onto the object-world, arising from mankind's 'ausgeprägten Ordnungssinn', Strauß evokes a complex and suggestive idea – as the 'Er'-figure previously comments: to say 'es öffnet sich' instead of 'es stimmt' – conceived as formed formlessness, as a re-consideration of origin, in contrast to the erosion of beginning by *Linie*. As Strauß writes of the counter-point:

Ein wesentlicher Trug unserer Erfahrungs- und Sinneswelt besteht darin, daß sie eine kreatürliche Tendenz besitzt, stets mehr Ordnung, auf Anhieb größere Schlüssigkeit und Kontinuität herzustellen, als tatsächlich vorhanden ist. [...]. Das Bewußtsein will sich etwas merkbar machen und überzieht ein gestaltloses oder ein gestaltoffenes Ding mit schnellen, festen Umrissen. Das *Gewärtigen* hingegen, [...], beläßt es bei dem Gespür für das *vorereignishafte* diffuse Geschehen, für die unfertige Gestalt.⁸⁰

Like the delineation of Heidegger's Λόγος, the description defies convention and the constraints of formal logic. But, as Strauß contends, according to the terms of *Beginnlosigkeit*, such convention results from the dominion of *Linie*-structured *Wahrnehmung*. The experience of origin, or of an originary experience in *Fleck*, which Strauß proposes in the work, entails instead a *dynamic engagement*: its *Wahrnehmung* is of a different philosophical order. Moreover, he claims, ideas cannot be judged on the basis of use or reason alone. Other criteria need to apply: 'Die Schönheit einer Idee ist für

⁸⁰ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.130. My emphasis. These terms are considered in more detail below.

Seele und Geist ebenso nützlich wie die rationale Erkenntnis für den Umgang mit dem Organismus'.⁸¹

The chapter has begun iteratively to suggest the significance of Strauß' elaborate conceit in *Beginnlosigkeit*. The remaining sections continue to deepen the argument of Strauß' affinities, for example in his use of language and choice of terms, with Heidegger's thought. Notably, Strauß' critique of modern technology is shown to align with that which Heidegger develops, particularly in the lecture, 'Die Frage nach der Technik': although the argument suggests that Strauß intensifies the threat presented by modern technology in the current age of cybernetics. In this approach Strauß' alternative, ontological *Wahrnehmung* is described, central to which is a re-consideration of origin: culminating in Strauß as *Anfang*, in Heidegger as *Aufgang* or *Anfängnis*. First, though, it is necessary to understand Strauß' views on science and modern technology, how he has drawn on Heideggerian thought and why this is important for the proposed alternative in *Fleck*.

3.2 Modern technology: end or beginning?

One feature of the crisis facing mankind that Strauß proposes in *Beginnlosigkeit* is the dissolution and re-establishment of a relationship between the 'Er'-figure and the object-

⁸¹ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.29. Strauß anticipates the idea in *Niemand anderes*, a work that proposes many of the motifs advanced in *Beginnlosigkeit*: 'Man möchte eine Verbindung herstellen zwischen dem Satz Schwedenborgs: "Je mehr Engel, desto mehr freier Raum", und der Frage des Teilchenphysikers, ob nicht das Zehnfache unserer Masse in Gestalt unsichtbarer Neutrinos uns umgibt. Der schöne Gedanke, daß Engel niemals raumfüllend, sondern stets nur raumschaffend sein können, erscheint widergespiegelt in der Hypothese, das Unsichtbare enthalte um vieles mehr Materie als die greifbare Welt', in Strauß, *Niemand anderes*, p.143.

world. This manifests itself, for example, in the precarious connection to the objects the figure encounters, what is evoked by the sense of ‘stetes Schwanken’: things stand in flux between the tangible and the dissolute. The ‘Er’-figure is also shown constrained by the differing epistemologies associated with *Linie*. Each particular heuristic model posits a perceiving or theorising subject set against, or antagonistic to, the material world. The central premise in such theory is that of the independent and freely-observing subject: whether in cognitive psychology, radical constructivism, or for that matter cosmology, the subject is the defining foundation of cognition, experience or knowledge. In terms of philosophical understanding: without subject there is no object-world. As Strauß contends: ‘Alle physikalischen Gesetze bedürfen des Beobachters, der sie formuliert. Ein Universum, das den Menschen nicht hervorgebracht hätte, könnte gar nicht existieren’.⁸²

This defining premise underlying *Linie*-structured *Wahrnehmung* is significant primarily for its effect on the relationship between subject and object-world. In one fragment Strauß describes the ‘Er’-figure’s reception of the object-world based on subjective data or sensation:

Was wir als bewußte Wahrnehmung empfinden, ist in Wahrheit die Fokuseinstellung des Gehirns auf eigene, in einem bestimmten Augenblick besonders stimulierte interne Prozesse. [...]. Nicht der Gegenstand löst die angenehme Empfindung aus, ihn betrachten zu wollen, sondern eine namen-, bild- und scheinlos streuende Empfindung sucht sich eine Selbsterfüllung, in der ein Gegenstand betrachtenswert erscheint.⁸³

As he goes on to suggest, the absolute focus on existence of mind – or the brain, according to the particular theory of cognitive psychology cited – necessarily implies scepticism in relation to the object-world. Moreover, such *Wahrnehmung* denotes a

⁸² Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.10.

⁸³ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.11.

tendency toward subjectivism, a weighting of the subject over and against the object-world. Strauß notes of the consequences of such epistemologies: ‘Alles was überhaupt ist, geschieht unter der Schädeldecke’.⁸⁴ Furthermore, according to the strict parameters of such epistemologies, the perceiving subject mirrors the dominion of *Linie*. The ‘Er’-figure is conceived as controlling the object-world both in terms of its absolute existence, and how it appears to the perceiving subject. This dualism – of mind and object-world – has specific philosophical antecedents that bring Strauß’ prose work and its views on science and technology into line with the critique made by Heidegger of the Western philosophical tradition.

3.2.1 ‘Res cogitans, res extensa’⁸⁵

Strauß describes the search for explanation of the ‘Er’-figure into mind or brain in relation to the experience of the object-world as defining for mankind’s *Wahrnehmung* as structured by *Linie*. This withdrawal has its intellectual origins in the philosophy of René Descartes (1596-1650), as it is propounded in both the *Discourse on Method* and *Meditations*. As Strauß builds to suggest the cause of mankind’s crisis in *Beginnlosigkeit* – the erosion of origin as ‘DER STERBENDE ANFANG’ – he places Descartes’ thought among the epistemologies that the ‘Er’-figure is seen to negotiate.

Nun schon seit Descartes: res cogitans, res extensa. Und diese letztere eben begriff er nicht’.⁸⁶

He describes the philosopher as a critical influence in the bifurcation of mind and world.

⁸⁴ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.11.

⁸⁵ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.24.

⁸⁶ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.24.

The 'Er'-figure's inability to conceive properly the extended world of objects has a number of consequences. First, such scepticism of the object-world relativises it in relation to the subject. Second, by implication, as a result of the withdrawal into mind, the subject becomes the basis of all and any knowledge whether of itself or of the world. That the legacy of Descartes' thought has enduring consequences for mankind's conception of himself and world is a view held by thinkers that might otherwise not share the ontological presuppositions of either Strauß or Heidegger. Writing from the analytical Anglo-Saxon philosophical tradition Bertrand Russell, for example, points out: 'There is thus, in all philosophy derived from Descartes, a tendency to subjectivism, and to regarding matter as something only knowable, if at all, by inference from what is known of mind'.⁸⁷

Strauß' identification of the challenge posed by Descartes and its implications for Western man's intellectual frames of reference brings his affinity with Heidegger into focus. As is suggested in the previous chapter, Descartes represents, for Heidegger, a key moment in the forgetting of the *Seinsfrage* in Western thought, the development of modernity and corresponding dominance of what he eventually terms metaphysics, of which modern technology is a manifestation. Moreover, Strauß' presentation of Cartesian dualism and its influence in *Beginnlosigkeit* is a re-statement of the problem and its legacy set out originally by Heidegger in *Sein und Zeit*.⁸⁸

Heidegger's engagement with Cartesianism is, of course, highly involved: for the present argument it is necessary only to highlight the intent of Division I of the work rather than

⁸⁷ Russell, B. *A History of Western Philosophy* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1984), p.548.

⁸⁸ See Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, pp.89ff.

the detail of each engagement with Descartes' *Meditations*. Heidegger seeks to overturn, through the analysis of *Dasein* – the term for mankind's being-in-the-world – the bifurcation of subject over and against the object culminating in dualism that runs through and defines the philosophical tradition. Heidegger sets out one of his fundamental objections to Descartes' infamous sceptical premise:

Mit dem 'cogito sum' beansprucht *Descartes*, der Philosophie einen neuen und sicheren Boden beizustellen. Was er aber bei diesem 'radikalen' Anfang unbestimmt läßt, ist die Seinsart der *res cogitans*, genauer der *Seinssinn des 'sum'*.⁸⁹

For Heidegger, the subject cannot be detached from object-world as Descartes hypothesises but is always already immanently involved in it as: 'das In-der-Welt-sein überhaupt als Grundverfassung des Daseins'.⁹⁰ Polt summarises Heidegger's objection to the binary postulate of dualism: 'Human existence is not inside a private precinct at all, but is "in the world", so we have to jettison the crude dichotomy of inner and outer'.⁹¹

Heidegger's investigation of *Dasein* and its ontological status as 'in-der-Welt-sein überhaupt' raises an interesting interpretative path for Strauß' prose works and offers a re-assessment of the fatalism charge levelled, and his putative retreat into subjectivism. The relationship between man and world that Strauß proposes by and inscribes in *Beginnlosigkeit* in the 'Er'-figure, for example, but also in other works, is of what this thesis terms a *dynamic engagement*. *Paare*, *Passanten*, for example, with its numerous

⁸⁹ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p.24. Emphasis in original.

⁹⁰ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, pp.52ff.

⁹¹ Polt, *Heidegger*, pp.56-57. Heidegger offers a critique of a dualism between internalised perception and experience of outside world in the following terms: 'Im Sichrichten auf [...] und Erfassen geht das Dasein nicht etwa erst aus seiner Innensphäre hinaus, in die es zunächst verkapselt ist, sondern es ist seiner primären Seinsart nach immer schon "draußen" bei einem begegnenden Seienden der je schon entdeckten Welt. Und das bestimmende Sichaufhalten bei dem zu erkennenden Seienden ist nicht etwa ein Verlassen der inneren Sphäre, sondern auch in diesem "Draußen-sein" beim Gegenstand ist das Dasein im rechtverstandenen Sinne "drinnen", d.h. es selbst ist es als In-der-Welt-sein, das erkennt', in Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, pp.62ff.

vignettes, picks out an important Heideggerian phrase suggesting how individuals *engage* with, or *are* in their environments. There Strauß writes:

[...] das Antlitz eines Gangs, und sogleich wird das ‘erfahrene Vermuten’ (Heidegger) tätig, durch das wir mit Hilfe weniger Blicke, weniger Sinnesdaten den gesamten Verhaltens-Raum eines Menschen plötzlich hochberechnen können.⁹²

This immanent *engagement* contrasts with the philosophical detachment between subject and world postulated by Descartes. The interpretative suggestion here anticipates the philosophical basis or ontological grounds of what is later in this thesis termed Strauß’ *poetics of dwelling*, and implicitly revises readings that either see a discontinuity in the early prose work, or that hold to an exclusive indebtedness to precepts of Critical Theory. It is a hypothesis, though, that assumes and requires exploration of other Strauß works and their specific indebtedness to aspects of Heidegger’s thought as yet unconsidered.

Heidegger’s *magnum opus* engages with a range of questions defining the Western tradition.⁹³ However, the defined focus of this thesis precludes consideration of the treatment of space, understood as extension, and the problem of other minds – to say nothing of the nature of time – all of which are posed by Strauß in *Beginnlosigkeit* and draw in different ways on Heidegger. Instead, the argument is restricted to consideration of that *Wahrnehmung* associated with *Linie*. What is the connection, then, between

⁹² Strauß, *Paare, Passanten*, p.68. The phrase ‘erfahrene Vermuten’ is taken by Strauß from Heidegger’s *Was ist Metaphysik?*, which describes the nature of mankind’s immanence in and experience of world. Heidegger argues: ‘[...] im Dienst der Frage nach der Wahrheit des Seins, wird eine Besinnung auf das Wesen des Menschen nötig; denn die unausgesprochene, weil erst zu erweisende Erfahrung der Seinsvergessenheit schließt die alles tragende Vermutung ein, gemäß der Unverborgenheit des Seins gehöre der Bezug des Seins zum Menschenwesen gar zum Sein selbst. Doch wie könnte dieses *erfahrene Vermuten* auch nur zur ausgesprochenen Frage werden, ohne zuvor alle Bemühung darein zu legen, die Wesensbestimmung des Menschen aus der Subjektivität [...] herauszunehmen?’, in Heidegger, *Was ist Metaphysik?*, p.14. My emphasis.

⁹³ See Dreyfus’ celebrated commentary on *Sein und Zeit*, which did much to attract interest in Heidegger within the analytical, Anglo-Saxon world and helped partially to dispel a view that sees his thought as unphilosophical, at least by accepted, established measures. Dreyfus, H. *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger’s Being and Time, Division I* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1991).

Descartes' experiment in worldly and material scepticism and the *Wahrnehmung* evidenced in scientific and technological theory?

There are two stages to Descartes' meditations from which he seeks to rebuild a basis for truth about the world faced with the destructive scepticism of his hypothesised evil demon. The first is the priority given to certain types of knowledge, the second is the *cogito*. In order to understand the impact of Cartesianism on science and technology, according to Strauß and Heidegger, these are best considered in reverse order.

Descartes first seeks to establish a foundation beyond doubt and postulates the self-certain mind of the subject. The implications of this, which both Strauß and Heidegger highlight, are already noted. For example, the *cogito* leads to a prioritisation of *ego* as a result of attributions of its own certainty. Furthermore, the certain mind standing over and against an uncertain object-world fosters a relationship of detachment between perceiving 'I' and material thing. The significance of the sense of sight and Strauß' emphasis upon alternative gestures as the grounds of possibility for an alternative *Wahrnehmung* are developed in Chapters Four and Five. When considering any substance in the object-world, its attributes – in Descartes's example, the resistance, colour, hardness of wax before a roaring fire – the subject always views by way of a dispassionate and objectifying gaze. The subject is thus always at a remove.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Heidegger writes: '*Descartes* weiß sehr wohl darum, daß das Seiende sich zunächst nicht in seinem eigentlichen Sein zeigt. "Zunächst" gegeben ist dieses bestimmte gefärbte, harte, kalte, tönende Wachsding. [...]. Die Sinne lassen überhaupt nicht Seiendes in seinem Sein erkennen, sondern sie melden lediglich Nützlichkeit und Schädlichkeit der "äußeren" innerweltlichen Dinge für das leibbehaftete Menschenwesen', in Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, pp.96-97. Emphasis in original.

Second, Descartes places a priority on certain forms of knowledge, in particular mathematics and geometry. These epistemologies offer him the promise of deductive certainty. Having doubted the existence of all things in the object-world, he hypothesises what is called, ‘the mathematism of nature’.⁹⁵ There exists, he reasons, a correlation between the discipline of mathematics and reality because, ‘the external world is also mathematical in its structure’.⁹⁶ The two disciplines provide – in conjunction with the certainty of the *cogito* – the basis for mankind’s experience of world. From the application of mathematical sciences, mankind is able to establish certainty regarding the object-world. The consequences of these two aspects of Descartes’s answer to scepticism are far-reaching and give rise for mankind to what Dreyfus terms a ‘priority of disinterested knowledge’ and, therefore, a continuing weighting towards certain epistemologies.⁹⁷

For Heidegger, Descartes’s dualism and the posited certainty from mathematical knowledge alter mankind’s relationship to the object-world. On this view, things are conceived as ‘vorhanden’. It is noteworthy that for Strauß the *Abwas*, which denotes the distorted relationship of the ‘Er’-figure to thing, is also imaged as ‘vorhanden’. Things are regarded as ‘present-to-hand’ for the rational mind.⁹⁸ Mathematics and geometry are the theoretical frames of reference of this objectification of reality. Such a *Wahrnehmung* in relation to object-world, according to Heidegger, comes in turn to dominate both the

⁹⁵ Sutcliffe, F. E. in Descartes, R. *Discourse on Method and The Meditations* (London: Penguin, 1968), p.17.

⁹⁶ Sutcliffe, in Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, p.17.

⁹⁷ Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, p.45.

⁹⁸ ‘Present-to-hand’ is the standard translation of *Vorhandenheit* and contrasts with *Dasein*’s alternative form of *Welterkennen*, *Zuhandenheit*, usually conceived as ‘readiness-to-hand’. See Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, pp.59ff.

philosophical tradition and mankind's view of the putatively real.⁹⁹ As Zimmerman notes in his detailed commentary on Heidegger's philosophy of technology:

Descartes claimed that for a thing 'to be' meant for it to be re-presented by the self-certain subject. Descartes thus helped to define modern science as the quest to formalize everything, to make everything totally present for knowledge.¹⁰⁰

The implications of such mathematically-based knowledge, Heidegger concedes, are already clear to Descartes. What offers the promise of certainty for Descartes, though, reveals the threat of instrumentalism for Heidegger and Strauß. Scientific theory aligns knowledge of object-world with questions of utility. Descartes recognises the potential application of his view of science. Writing of the 'principle' of correspondence between theory and object-world Descartes claims:

I could not keep them hidden without sinning considerably against the law which obliges us to procure, by as much as is in us, the general good of all men. For they have made me see that it is possible to arrive at knowledge which is most useful in life, and that, instead of the speculative philosophy [...], a practical philosophy can be found by which, knowing the power and the effects [...] all the other bodies which surround us, as distinctly as we know the various trades of our craftsmen, we might put them in the same way to all the uses for which they are appropriate, and thereby make ourselves, as it were, masters and possessors of nature.¹⁰¹

Mankind comes to view itself first as the basis then as controller of all that there is, *pace* Descartes' experience and description of wax melting before the fire-place. The object-world is thus conceived primarily in reference to the subject and what is of instrumental benefit. As Zimmerman again notes of Cartesianism and its legacy:

⁹⁹ Steiner adopts this very argument in *Real Presences*: 'Die Wissenschaften und Technologien, die die westliche Zivilisation des 20. Jahrhunderts dominieren, sind in exaktem Verhältnis zu ihrer mathematischen Formalisierung "modern" und beherrschend geworden', in Steiner, *Von realer Gegenwart*, p.154.

¹⁰⁰ Zimmerman, M. *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), p.152.

¹⁰¹ Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, p.78.

In effect, Descartes started the process whereby humanity came to conceive of itself as the God-like source of the reality, truth, and value of all things. Descartes enabled humanity to interpret the world [...] the reality of which was assessed according to how the image stood in relation to the standards of the productive-measuring subject.¹⁰²

It is but a short step to the development and application of such precepts in modern technology.

For Strauß, the theory of cybernetics is one example of the continuing influence of Cartesian metaphysics. It represents the logical outcome of both the subjectivist turn and positivist-structured view of the world. As he writes in *Niemand anderes*:

Die Vorstellung Descartes' von der Maschine Tier kehrt eigentlich in der kybernetischen Symbolik wieder. [...]. Unsere Wahrnehmung wird einseitig bestimmt von den Modellen, die wir technisch gerade selber herstellen und vorrangig gebrauchen. So folgt das mechanische, das organische, das informationstheoretische Modell. Und jedesmal schlüssig und unwiderleglich, bis zum nächst klügeren Modell.¹⁰³

His description of mankind's condition through the 'Er'-figure at the outset of *Beginnlosigkeit* echoes Heidegger's critique of Cartesianism. Strauß suggests that its legacy is that of a 'harten anthropischen Solipsismus'.¹⁰⁴ The modern subject has turned in on itself and so transformed the direct unmediated relationship to object-world, which is subsequently regarded as controllable and available for use. In *Beginnlosigkeit* Strauß describes the subjective emphasis and corresponding utilitarian conception of the world:

Unser Gehirn besitzt keinen unmittelbaren Zugang zur Welt. Es ist vollkommen auf sich selbst bezogen. Es liefert die selektiven Muster, konstruiert die Modelle [...] das gesamte evolutionsgeprüfte Programm zur Herstellung einer uns verfügbaren Wirklichkeit.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Zimmerman, *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity*, p.172.

¹⁰³ Strauß, *Niemand anderes*, p.144. Strauß' view on the philosophy of science is considered in section 3.3.2 below.

¹⁰⁴ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.10.

¹⁰⁵ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.10.

Such instrumentalism, Strauß notes with acerbity, posits mankind, wrongly, ‘als Krone der Schöpfung’.¹⁰⁶ What Strauß ultimately proposes and offers by his work is a more circumspect approach to and modest understanding of the relationship between mankind and world.

3.2.2 The threat of modern technology

Strauß, then, shares Heidegger’s thesis on the continuing influence that Cartesian metaphysics exerts on modernity in terms of the emphasis on the subject and the dominance of mathematically-based epistemologies. Moreover, the application of such theories leads to distortion of the object-world, which Strauß suggests of *Linie*, and Heidegger of modern technology. How, for Strauß and for Heidegger, does this dominance and distortion constitute a danger to mankind, and to what extent does Strauß adapt and develop this understanding of a threat for the post-industrial science and technology of late modernity?

Heidegger’s thinking on technology and its influence on modernity evolves from his thinking of *Sein und Zeit* and the critique of Descartes in the Twenties through to the engagement with the nihilism of technology in *Zur Seinsfrage* in the Fifties. Some of his pronouncements are not without controversy.¹⁰⁷ The present argument concentrates, therefore, on the lecture eventually published as ‘Die Frage nach der Technik’, included

¹⁰⁶ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.10.

¹⁰⁷ See Young for a discussion of the first-version of ‘Die Frage nach der Technik’ presented in 1949, then entitled ‘Das Ge-stell’, in which detractors of Heidegger claim, erroneously, that he draws a moral equivalence between modern technology in agriculture, the atomic bomb and the extermination camps of National Socialism, in Young, *Heidegger, Philosophy, Nazism*, pp.171ff.

in *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, widely acknowledged as the most succinct formulation of Heidegger's thesis on technology and the concomitant threat to mankind.¹⁰⁸

Heidegger's essay begins by emphasising what he terms, 'die instrumentale und anthropologische Bestimmung der Technik', a phrase that Strauß adopts in describing the Cartesian legacy on the subject.¹⁰⁹ This, he writes, is 'die gängige Vorstellung von der Technik, wonach sie ein Mittel ist und ein menschliches Tun', and is, in turn, based on an understanding of causality inherited from Aristotle.¹¹⁰ This conception of technology is utterly bound up with modern man's impetus to control and dominate his environment and the object-world. For mankind, Heidegger claims: 'alles liegt daran, die Technik als Mittel [...] zu handhaben. Man will, wie es heißt, die Technik "geistig in die Hand bekommen". Man will sie meistern'.¹¹¹ Heidegger proceeds in his exegesis, as in the essay on Λόγος, formulating arguments that draw technology back, through analysis of the ancient Greek conception of τέχνη, to truth as ἀλήθεια.¹¹² These suggestive inter-connections between technology, truth and the *poetic* fall outside the immediate discussion but are considered fully in the final chapter. Rather, for now, it is the impetus underlying Heidegger's argument for an originating return, whether in the pre-Socratics or an idea of *Aufgang*, to overcome the dominance and distortion of modern technology,

¹⁰⁸ Heidegger, M. 'Die Frage nach der Technik', in *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, pp.9-40.

¹⁰⁹ Heidegger, 'Die Frage nach der Technik', p.10. As cited above, Strauß refers to the 'harten anthropischen Solipsismus' of Cartesian-based epistemologies.

¹¹⁰ Heidegger, 'Die Frage nach der Technik', p.10. It is noteworthy that Strauß, like Heidegger, seeks to overturn this dominant view of causation.

¹¹¹ Heidegger, 'Die Frage nach der Technik', p.11.

¹¹² Heidegger's exegesis touches on the related question of the *poetic*. Originally, in pre-Socratic thought, τέχνη invokes poetry: 'Einmal ist τέχνη nicht nur der Name für das Handwerkliche Tun und Können, sondern auch für die hohe Kunst und die schönen Künste. Die τέχνη gehört zum Her-vor-bringen, zur ποιησις; sie ist etwas Poietisches', in Heidegger, 'Die Frage nach der Technik', p.16.

and its echo in Strauß' plea for a reflection on the necessity of *Anfang* that are under review.

The conception of technology as anthropological utility, i.e., a subject-centered instrumentalism, is merely, Heidegger claims, a description of a particular set of historical circumstances – the conditions of modernity, for example – that do not reveal the true essence of technology. Instead, technology or its essence, as he proposes it, is regarded as a manifestation of the relationship between subject and object-world, and is fundamentally concerned with forms of disclosure. As Pattison notes of Heidegger's conception of technology: 'The fact is, Heidegger says, that *technē*, understood in the Greek sense, means neither art nor craft nor anything technical (in the modern sense) at all. Instead, *technē* is "a mode of knowing"'.¹¹³ The terms of the argument are shifting to questions of ontology. Based on an etymological analysis of the ancient Greek *τέχνη*, Heidegger maintains that technology, originally, is a form of disclosure, as *Her-vor-bringen*. It is similar to that disclosure suggested in discussion of *Λόγος*: of the in-gathering, in *λέγειν*, of what *is* in the world. As Heidegger sets out:

Die Technik ist also nicht bloß ein Mittel. Die Technik ist eine Weise des Entbergens. Achten wir darauf, dann öffnet sich uns ein ganz anderer Bereich für das Wesen der Technik. Es ist der Bereich der Entbergung, d.h. der Wahrheit.¹¹⁴

Thus, more than any epistemology or theory, technology is rather the coming-into-presence of truth. Thinking about the essence of technology, its antecedent as *τέχνη*, is thus also consideration of the same ontological concern articulated in the preceding

¹¹³ Pattison, *The Later Heidegger*, p.49.

¹¹⁴ Heidegger, 'Die Frage nach der Technik', p.16.

chapter. But to return to the immediate argument: if technology, conceived as originating *τέχνη*, is a form of disclosure, what does Heidegger suggest of modern technology?

In modern technology, what is different, he claims, is the manner of the disclosure of things in the object-world. Here, the conjunction with the arguments on the defining influence of Descartes on modernity comes to the fore. The disclosure that characterises technology in modernity is a *Herausforderung*, rather than the gathering disclosure of *Her-vor-bringen*, as in *Λόγος*. Heidegger writes:

Das in der modernen Technologie waltende Entbergen ist ein Herausfordern, das an die Natur das Ansinnen stellt, Energie zu liefern, die als solche herausgefördert und gespeichert werden kann.¹¹⁵

Two examples are provided that illustrate the difference between these respective disclosures for mankind and the object-world in modern technology. The windmill, he writes, requires nature to make it function and make it useful. However, ‘die Windmühle erschließt aber nicht Energien der Luftströmung, um sie zu speichern’.¹¹⁶ The windmill just *is* in the object-world: it stands in relationship to nature. This is in contrast to ‘das Wasserkraftwerk’ where its presence is stamped onto nature for two ends only: for calculation and control. Heidegger denotes this way-of-being by the term *stellen*:

Das Wasserkraftwerk ist in den Rheinstrom gestellt. [...]. Das Entbergen, das die moderne Technik durchherrscht, hat den Charakter des Stellens im Sinne der Herausforderung. Diese geschieht dadurch, daß die in der Natur verborgene Energie aufgeschlossen, das Erschlossene umgeformt, das Umgeformte gespeichert, das Gespeicherte wieder verteilt und das Verteilte erneut umgeschaltet wird. Erschließen, umformen, speichern, verteilen, umschalten sind Weisen des Entbergens.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Heidegger, ‘Die Frage nach der Technik’, p.18.

¹¹⁶ Heidegger, ‘Die Frage nach der Technik’, p.18.

¹¹⁷ Heidegger, ‘Die Frage nach der Technik’, pp.19 and 20.

Every thing in the object-world is thus disclosed in relation to its applicability and usability for mankind.

Technological practice though is often mistakenly emphasised as one of the principal objects of Heidegger's critique.¹¹⁸ The ultimate concern, however, of ontology is with how the world is; how it is manifest for Strauß or comes-into-presence for Heidegger. The latter develops his views on technology with an exposition of the form of disclosure in modern technology. It is, he writes: 'Überall [...] bestellt, auf der Stelle zur Stelle zu stehen, und zwar zu stehen, um selbst bestellbar zu sein für ein weiteres Bestellen. Das so Bestellte hat seinen eigenen Stand. Wir nennen ihn den Bestand'.¹¹⁹ Moreover, and importantly, in relation to how Strauß conceives of science and technology, *Bestand* entails the fundamental distortion of things in the object-world. *Bestand* for Heidegger: 'kennzeichnet nichts Geringeres als die Weise, wie alles anweist, was vom herausfordernden Entbergen betroffen wird. Was im Sinne des Bestandes steht, steht uns nicht mehr als Gegenstand gegenüber'.¹²⁰ World, thus, does not come-into-presence on its own terms or its own right, but is viewed by mankind as available only for instrumental use and exploitation: it appears *as* object-world.

What is remarkable in Heidegger's analysis of modern technology is the exclusion of any description of those conditions of industrial technology that characterise the period of writing, in contrast to writers of the same era such as Spengler, Klages and Scheler.¹²¹ It

¹¹⁸ Young, for example, argues: 'Modern technological practice, so the idea would then run, is uniquely violent', in Young, *Heidegger's Later Philosophy*, p.45.

¹¹⁹ Heidegger, 'Die Frage nach der Technik', p.20.

¹²⁰ Heidegger, 'Die Frage nach der Technik', p.20.

¹²¹ See, for example, Zimmerman, *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity*, pp.3-34 and Safranski, R. *Ein Meister aus Deutschland. Heidegger und seine Zeit* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Fischer, 2001), pp.454ff.

is an approach Strauß' presentation of science and technology echoes, where the detail of post-industrial or computer-based technological practice is largely absent. This absence again enforces the present contention that Strauß is not ultimately concerned with technology's manifestations in practice or scientific theories themselves, but rather the underlying *Wahrnehmung*: in other words, their philosophical assumptions and determinations.

The reason for the absence of specific examples in Heidegger – and at this point the substantive yet elusive, disconcerting core of his critique of modern technology emerges – is his claim that the essence of modern technology is, in fact, nothing technological. Rather, building on prior claims that technology is actually a form of disclosure, Heidegger argues that the essence of modern technology is *Ge-stell*. Again, it is worth underscoring, these considerations are a matter of ontology rather than empirical observation. *Ge-stell* is that manner of disclosure from which the object-world is seen as *Bestand*. Heidegger writes:

Ge-stell heißt das Versammelnde jenes Stellens, das den Menschen stellt, d.h. herausfordert, das Wirkliche in der Weise des Bestellens als Bestand zu entbergen. Ge-stell heißt die Weise des Entbergens, die im Wesen der modernen Technik waltet und selber nichts Technisches ist.¹²²

Heidegger intensifies his critique, which Strauß adopts directly and refines in *Beginnlosigkeit*. The real threat to mankind does not come from machines or the application of theory. As he notes: 'Die Bedrohung des Menschen kommt nicht erst von den möglicherweise tödlich wirkenden Maschinen und Apparaturen der Technik'.¹²³ The

Both commentators consider Heidegger's thinking on technology in relation to the similarity of views to, but divergent approach from, such contemporaries.

¹²² Heidegger, 'Die Frage nach der Technik', p.24.

¹²³ Heidegger, 'Die Frage nach der Technik', p.32.

proposal, therefore, does not falter by providing examples of science and technology's benefits and successes. Instead, the threat of modern technology arises for mankind from the persistence and dominion of disclosure that is *Ge-stell*. Heidegger claims:

Wo dieses herrscht, vertreibt es jede andere Möglichkeit der Entbergung. Vor allem verbirgt das Ge-stell jenes Entbergen, das im Sinne [...] das Anwesende ins Erscheinen her-vor-kommen läßt. [...].
So verbirgt denn das herausfordernde Ge-stell nicht nur eine vormalige Weise des Entbergens, das Her-vor-bringen, sondern es verbirgt das Entbergen als solches und mit ihm Jenes, worin sich Unverborgenheit, d.h. Wahrheit ereignet.¹²⁴

Therein is shown the most fundamental threat to mankind: *Ge-stell*, even though a manner of disclosure, precludes the experience of other, alternative disclosures – critically, as the thesis concludes, the disclosure of truth – of coming-into-presence of world as, for example, is brought to light in Λόγος and *Anwesenheit*. How does Strauß echo and develop this aspect of Heidegger's thought in *Beginnlosigkeit*?

3.2.3 The (increasing) threat of modern technology?

In *Beginnlosigkeit*, Strauß details an implicit philosophy of science in respect of *Linie*-structured *Wahrnehmung*, which further counters the argument that he offers either an uncritical celebration of science, or a poetic fusion of literature and *Naturwissenschaften*. In addition to showing the 'Er'-figure negotiating different epistemologies – from the macro to the micro – Strauß also suggests that a vital element to the inevitable disorientation the figure experiences is the speed with which such theories and corresponding *Wahrnehmung* develop in late modernity. This shows itself, in turn, in two

¹²⁴ Heidegger, 'Die Frage nach der Technik', p.31.

ways. First, new paradigms, which previously defined an age or epoch, for Strauß, now occur with regularity and lack the impact of the past.

Sie sondern Weltbildtheorien ab wie die Raupe ihren Kokon. Wir haben die Alltäglichkeit der kopernikanischen Wende erreicht: heute ein neues Weltbild in der Physik, morgen ein neues Menschenbild der Neurobiologie, übermorgen die Auflösung der Erde in einem neuen Erkenntnisraster der Geologie.¹²⁵

Second, as well as the progressive accumulation of new theories and paradigms, scientific knowledge is also becoming ever more integrated. Strauß notes the propensity for an alignment in epistemologies with moves toward a so-called grand-unified theory, what he terms: ‘die Suche nach der einheitlichen Wechselwirkung, nach der Einheit der Natur’.¹²⁶ Again, the empirical validity of theories is not at stake in the present argument, but the intellectual purchase and philosophical implications of their underlying *Wahrnehmung* as *Linie*. These result, he suggests, in the suspension of significant intellectual disagreement beyond the surface squabble within disciplines, a condition he describes in a subsequent essay on technology. ‘Der Fausthieb der Gewißheit, plötzlich die Welt nicht mehr zu verstehen. [...]. Der Derwischentanz sämtlicher Fixpunkte. Die unzähligen Verknüpfungen zusammenhangloser Einzelheiten’.¹²⁷ However, the dominant *Wahrnehmung* also has recourse to those paradigms and theories previously either discounted or discredited. Thus, Strauß speculates of what he terms reductive theory – by which he means specialised epistemologies narrow in focus as opposed to a contrary tendency towards ‘Holismus’, or unified theories noted above – that, though presently marginalized, such conceptualisations will inevitably have a renaissance.

¹²⁵ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.14. Elsewhere he comments on this trend: ‘Das hermetische Wissen befindet sich im Spinnpunkt, in der unerforschlichen Gewebemitte all der 6000 heute ausgeübten Fachdisziplinen’, in Strauß, ‘Wollt ihr das totale Engineering?’.

¹²⁶ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.39.

¹²⁷ Strauß, ‘Wollt ihr das totale Engineering?’.

Nun verabschiedet man allerwege den Reduktionismus und setzt ihm das ‘Ganzheitliche’, den Holismus [...] entgegen. Obgleich es gewiß unvermeidlich ist, daß auch der Reduktionismus in irgendeiner Abwandlung sein Comeback erlebt, wie fast jede Großform in der Geschichte des Wissens seit den Vorsokratikern.¹²⁸

Strauß, therefore, proposes a qualitatively different influence on development of that form of disclosure that Heidegger denotes by *Ge-stell*, reflecting the intervening contexts and scientific and technological circumstances of their respective writing. As Strauß remarks, making the comparison and contrast with Heidegger explicit:

In den Wörtern, den Wissensmodellen – Holismus, Selbstbezüglichkeit – liegt eine andere Witterung, als die Heideggerschen ‘Machenschaften’ besaßen. [...]. Die Netzwerk-Maschine ist hier bereits philosophisches Gerät.¹²⁹

In what way does Strauß portray the threat of modern technology increasing?

The accumulation and development of epistemologies and theories is imaged, in accordance with the *Wahrnehmung* associated with *Linie*, as an endless elliptical progressive movement from novelty to stagnation, further innovation and (re)discovery followed by epistemological stasis, reflecting the dialectic outlined in the introduction to this chapter. Moreover, Strauß claims, the forward velocity of each such cycle is continually increasing. As he can’t help but note with irony: ‘Schon jetzt ist man geneigt,

¹²⁸ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.118.

¹²⁹ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.49. By *Machenschaften* Heidegger intends to invoke the ontologically fallen condition, following the pre-Socratics, whereby truth becomes conceived by mankind as the ‘correct-ness’ of the state of the object-world of beings and man’s relationship thereto. He writes: ‘Machenschaft als Herrschaft des Machens und des Gemächtes. Hierbei ist aber nicht zu denken an menschliches Tun und Treiben und dessen Betrieb, sondern umgekehrt, solches ist nur möglich in seiner Unbedingtheit [...] aufgrund der Machenschaft. Dies ist die Nennung einer bestimmten Wahrheit des Seienden (seiner Seiendheit). [...]. Descartes’ Schritt ist bereits eine erste und die entscheidende Folge, die Folgeleistung, wodurch sich die Machenschaft als gewandelte Wahrheit (Richtigkeit), nämlich als Gewißheit, in die Herrschaft setzt’, in Heidegger, M. *Beiträge zur Philosophie. (Vom Ereignis)* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Vittorio Klosterman, 2003), pp.131ff.

mit einer gewissen paläontologischen Neugier die Denk-Skelette des Marxismus zu betrachten'.¹³⁰

Such development in the *Wahrnehmung* associated with *Linie* as it shows itself in scientific theory, and the speed of its development – ‘Und morgen eine neue lichte Blindheit’ – is, Strauß suggests, far from the Popperian ideal of deductive falsification, influential in theorising exactly that incremental, progressive view of scientific-based knowledge.¹³¹ As Steiner, for example, notes of the continuing influence of Cartesian thought on such epistemological developments: ‘Physik, Molekularbiologie, Astrophysik gehen so vor, als sei der kartesianisch-kantianische Vertrag zwischen Theorie und Versuch (Karl Poppers Kriterium der Falsifizierbarkeit) nach wie vor gültig und universal’.¹³²

A fragment at the mid-point of *Beginnlosigkeit* portrays the ageing representative of this philosophy of science now struggling adequately to conceptualise the current nature and speed of change in science and technology. The vignette portrays an interlude in the prose work when the ‘Er’-figure travels to Venice to hear Popper lecture at a symposium.

Strauß writes:

Sir John, der Freund und Denkgefährte, saß in der ersten Reihe, nickte leicht ein, als der gute Karl, über sein Manuskript gebeugt, unter einer eigens angebrachten, niedrigen Tischlampe vorlas, was die Welt so und nicht anders schon seit vielen Jahren von ihm gehört hatte.¹³³

Popper’s philosophy is imaged as outdated and unable to reflect the pace of modern science and technological innovation: ‘Die Heroen der Wissenschaftstheorie sprachen für

¹³⁰ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.82.

¹³¹ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.93.

¹³² Steiner, *Von realer Gegenwart*, p.100.

¹³³ Strauß *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.85.

Laien – es war aber nur ein verschwindend kleines Publikum anwesend und beiseite eine einsame regionale Fernsehstation'.¹³⁴ The Popperian epistemology of science is itself thoroughly influenced by the legacy of Descartes.¹³⁵ Of course, given the domination of *Linie*, any such philosophy of science would inevitably also succumb to its constraining influence.

However, Strauß suggests in *Beginnlosigkeit* that in late modernity, for the 'Er'-figure, the frequency of scientific and technological transformation is intensifying and harmonising the previous clashes between competing paradigms. Asking after the validity of such a claim, though, in relation to scientific theories is again not the principal issue and overlooks the suggestion of Strauß' conceit: one cannot prove or disprove an inference concerning *Linie* with an appeal to verifiable evidence, itself a manifestation of *Linie*. Strauß writes of such theories: 'Sie suchen nur: Dichte, Zerreifestigkeit. Die Mathematik erstrebt die reine Stimmigkeit'.¹³⁶

For Strauß, just as scientific paradigms are generated at ever-increasing frequency so technology also develops to obviate any alternative to the *Wahrnehmung* of *Linie*. Strauß describes the dominion in terms similar to Heidegger:

Der technische Kult frit auf Dauer jede Regung von Differenz. Noch einmal begegnet uns das Groe Tier des Platon, das schon war: [...]. Jetzt hockt es als das Ganze in der Knstlichkeit ... und wir knnen uns seinen *nchsten* Ort

¹³⁴ Strauß *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.85.

¹³⁵ Writing in his autobiography Popper asserts: 'I think that I was always a Cartesian dualist [...]'. Moreover, his description of the basis for scientific method is unmistakably Cartesian in its emphasis on the subject standing over and against the object-world: 'Experience is the result of active exploration by the organism. [...] we have inborn expectations; we have latent inborn knowledge, in the form of latent expectations, to be activated by stimuli to which we react as a rule while engaged in active exploration', in Popper, K. *Unended Quest. An Intellectual Autobiography* (London: Flamingo, 1986), p.52.

¹³⁶ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.66.

nicht einmal mehr vorstellen! Unerfindlich, wohin es jetzt noch weiterwandern könnte.¹³⁷

Strauß indicates an ever-narrowing bandwidth to *Linie*-structured *Wahrnehmung*. Just as in the development of scientific theory, this affects technological progress too. There is a blurring of distinction and greater integration of technologically-founded epistemologies and views of the object-world, in the end leaving no space for any other approach to it.

Die magische Welt: die technische in vollendeter Selbstbezüglichkeit. Ein plötzlicher Zusammenschluß, der uns ausschließt, in Verständnislosigkeit zurückließe vor einem Wissen, das über sich selbst verfügt. [...].

Magischer Begriff der consensus. Der emergente Zusammenschluß der Systeme, der das Verstehen ausschließt, wäre der technologic consensus.¹³⁸

As Strauß comments in *Beginnlosigkeit*, in direct reference to Heidegger: ‘Der Igel der Technik ist längst am Ziel, bevor sich der Hase des “Gestells”, der Vergegenständlichung und der Ausleibung auf den Weg macht’.¹³⁹

Strauß emphasises the adaptive qualities of technological innovation and change: ‘die Technik konstruiert immer organischer und konvergiert am Ende mit der Natur’.¹⁴⁰ Just as technology becomes ever-more integrated as theory so its practice, its imposition on the object-world, appears less invasive or violent.

In ihrer romantischen Periode überbietet sich die Technik an Sanftmut und Feingefühl. Entfernt die Schloten aus den Himmeln, läßt die Telegrafmasten in den Wiesen und Tälern verschwinden und ersetzt sie durch unterirdische Glasfaser-Kabel. Heilt die Landschaft, verschönt die Städte, die Fabriken selbst werden kunstschoen, sie nimmt alles zurück, was sie an Brutalität, Krankheit und Häßlichkeit früher einmal in die Welt gesetzt hat.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.25. Emphasis in original. The allusion and relationship to Plato is considered in Chapter Five.

¹³⁸ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.44.

¹³⁹ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.108.

¹⁴⁰ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.108.

¹⁴¹ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.49.

Such descriptions of the development of technology are often seen by commentators as a positive endorsement by Strauß. Bergfleth for example, argues that Strauß is sketching the outlines of a post-technological utopia where the antagonisms of competing theory are suspended; what he terms Strauß' *'antikopernikanische Utopie'*.¹⁴² Strauß acknowledges the impetus: 'Man sehnt den doppelten Sprung herbei: Den Sprung in die Technik und den der Technik aus sich selbst heraus'.¹⁴³ However, although such a condition could indeed theoretically lead to a 'meta-, statt antitechnischen Betrachtungsweise', it is conceived as part of that very *Wahrnehmung* ascribed to *Linie*.¹⁴⁴ Such a structure would inevitably, Strauß notes, only lead to a 'noch umfassenderen Technik-Modell'.¹⁴⁵ Moreover, such a utopian condition, even if desirable as Bergfleth argues, is inconceivable, Strauß contends, within constraints imposed by *Linie*. He concludes the thought: 'Vorerst allerdings verbietet sich die Floskel, da gegenwärtig dem Denken nichts Anspruchvolleres zugemutet wird als seine technische Selbstbegegnung'.¹⁴⁶ The threat posed by *Linie* is that it permits no alternative *Wahrnehmung* to itself. Strauß' critique is that mankind is constrained utterly by technological thought; even where it hopes for its adaptation, such change still falls within the parameters of technology and *Linie*.

Strauß adopts Heidegger's reading of the defining influence on modernity of Descartes' twinned postulated certainties. Nonetheless, the nature and experience of technology and science are currently such that the consequences for mankind – its threat – are of

¹⁴² Bergfleth, 'Die statische Welt und die Technik', p.253. Emphasis in original.

¹⁴³ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.89.

¹⁴⁴ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.91.

¹⁴⁵ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.91.

¹⁴⁶ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.91.

differing intensity to those that Heidegger suggests. Strauß then adapts the Heideggerian critique of Cartesian metaphysics and offers the particular changed characteristics of modern technology as he hypothesises them in *Beginnlosigkeit*. Is there, then, any foundation for its overcoming?

3.2.4 Grounds of overcoming

The prognosis for the ‘Er’-figure and so for mankind that Strauß signals in *Beginnlosigkeit* appears constrained. Viewed in light of ‘Anschwellender Bocksgesang’, with its critique of cultural, political and social norms in Western society, Strauß seems to offer only a prospectus of a continuity to the ever-same. Such a reading is enforced by more recent essays characterised by apparently equally constrained terms of reference.¹⁴⁷ This view underpins the more uncharitable critics and certainly contributes to the charge of fatalism. But this perspective overlooks Strauß’ explicit distancing from philosophies that propose the inexorable deterioration of Western civilisation. For example, in *Beginnlosigkeit* Strauß distinguishes his work from a long-established conceit of decline in the Western tradition, epitomised by thinkers such as Spengler. As he writes: ‘Nun, das Schema der Bewußtseinskrise ist wohl an sich schon ein überholtes, parodiert von einer Sintflut unablässiger Weltbildstürze. Krise ist immer’.¹⁴⁸ Such pessimism is, he claims, ‘letzlich eine feinere Variante der biedereren Altersweisheit, daß jedwedem Ding sich zum

¹⁴⁷ See Strauß, ‘Wollt ihr das totale Engineering?’.

¹⁴⁸ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.13.

Schlimmeren wende'.¹⁴⁹ Strauß' view is instead ontologically conceived and not prescriptive or denotative of action.

This is, of course, not to deny the obvious fundamental exposition Strauß makes of late modernity, namely the threat of mankind's scientific and technological myopia established in the previous section. However, placing undue emphasis on a putative pessimism, whether in *Beginnlosigkeit* or other prose works, risks losing sight of those foundations of *dynamic engagement* and ontological concern present in Strauß' prose writing. Even though his view of science and technology is far-reaching, its conclusion is not that of renunciation or despair. As he reasons in another essay: 'Gegen das Können hilft kein Könnenverweigern'.¹⁵⁰ Again, a comparison with Heidegger, which feeds a similar misunderstanding, is instructive.

Heidegger too differentiates his thought from the contention that the response to the threat of technology is to be found in its abolition. His critique of modern technology is not, Pattison rightly notes, that of 'a philosophically articulate Luddite'.¹⁵¹ Heidegger argues:

Wenn wir jedoch das Wesen der Technik bedenken [...]. So halten wir uns schon im Freien [...] auf, das uns keineswegs in einen dumpfen Zwang einsperrt, die Technik blindlings zu betreiben, oder, was das Selbe bleibt, uns hilflos gegen sie aufzulehnen und sie als Teufelswerk zu verdammen.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.120. In a subsequent essay, Strauß directly refutes the idea that he formulates a *Verfallspessimismus*: 'Ich bin ein Sonderling, und der ist am wenigsten berufen, eine allgemeine Niedergangstheorie zu entwickeln. Ich sehe die Verluste und zähle sie'. See Strauß, 'Am Rand. Wo sonst'. In 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang', Strauß makes the same distinction between 'Der Kulturpessimist' who regards 'Zerstörung für unvermeidlich' and the engagement of 'der Rechte'.

¹⁵⁰ Strauß, 'Wollt ihr das totale Engineering?'.

¹⁵¹ Pattison, *The Later Heidegger*, p.55.

¹⁵² Heidegger, 'Die Frage nach der Technik', p.29.

After all, the threat of technology as Heidegger proposes it is not something technological, i.e., concerned with its practice, but instead arises from the particular form of disclosure that is *Ge-stell*. To seek to dismantle technology merely presupposes an instrumentally-conceived objective itself resonant of *Ge-stell*.

Alle Versuche, das bestehende Wirkliche morphologisch, psychologisch auf Verfall und Verlust, auf Verhängnis und Katastrophe, auf Untergang zu verrechnen, sind nur ein technisches Gebaren. Es operiert mit der Apparatur der Aufzählung von Symptomen, deren Bestand ins Endlose vermehrt und immer neu variiert werden kann.¹⁵³

If the threat posed by technology is not to be addressed or overcome by some form of direct action against technological practice, what does Heidegger propose as the foundation of a response?

His answer to this has recourse, significantly, as the discussion in Chapters Four and Five shows, to poetry and a fragment by Hölderlin. Heidegger contends:

So ist denn, wo das Ge-stell herrscht, im höchsten Sinne *Gefahr*.
‘Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst
Das Rettende auch’.
Bedenken wir das Wort Hölderlins sorgsam.¹⁵⁴

Heidegger claims that *Ge-stell*, which presents the greatest threat to mankind, also presents a glimmer of its salvation. As he goes on to suggest:

Wenn das Wesen der Technik, das Ge-stell, die äußerste Gefahr ist und wenn zugleich Hölderlins Wort Wahres sagt, dann kann sich die Herrschaft des Ge-stells nicht darin erschöpfen, alles Leuchten jedes Entbergens, alles Scheinen der Wahrheit nur zu verstellen.¹⁵⁵

However, Heidegger claims that the threat of *Ge-stell* is its dominion over other forms of disclosure between subject and world. Yet he appears also to suggest that this very

¹⁵³ Heidegger, M. *Die Technik und die Kehre* (Stuttgart: Günther Neske, 1996), pp.45-46.

¹⁵⁴ Heidegger, ‘Die Frage nach der Technik’, p.32. Emphasis in original.

¹⁵⁵ Heidegger, ‘Die Frage nach der Technik’, p.32.

dominion does not entirely eclipse the disclosure of that truth attendant on the ancient Greek, τέχνη. The gesture is important to Heidegger's ontology and critical for illustrating Strauß' adoption of the tenor of his thought: from this emerges the more profound philosophical reach of Strauß' engagement with modern science and technology than most critics allow.

Salvation must, if Hölderlin's epigram is taken as Heidegger intends, lie in the description of the threat of modern technology as *Ge-stell*. Though allusive, the suggested foundation is unmistakable:

Die Herrschaft des Ge-stells droht mit der Möglichkeit, daß dem Menschen versagt sein könnte, in ein *ursprünglicheres* Entbergen einzukehren und so den Zuspruch einer *anfänglicheren* Wahrheit zu erfahren.¹⁵⁶

The basis of salvation then, for Heidegger, lies in consideration of origin; in an originating disclosure of a truth, revealed, of course, in pre-Socratic thought. Heidegger, at the end of his essay, returns his analysis to the possibilities of his reading of technology in the ancient Greek term τέχνη: a structure of argument that touches on the tautological. The originating sense and experience of technology, as τέχνη, offers an opening through which to think about the possible salvation of mankind. Salvation lies for Heidegger, both at a moment of origin – from a source as indicated, ‘am *Beginn* des abendländischen Geschickes’ – and also in beginning to engage in thinking on this disclosure. Concluding his lecture on technology, Heidegger makes the claim: ‘Darum liegt alles daran, daß wir den *Aufgang* bedenken und andenkend hüten’.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ Heidegger, ‘Die Frage nach der Technik’, p.32. My emphasis.

¹⁵⁷ Heidegger, ‘Die Frage nach der Technik’, pp.38 and 36. My emphases.

Just as Strauß intensifies Heidegger's conception of the threat posed by modern technology to reflect the changed nature of its development so, unsurprisingly, the postulated salvation for mankind is also held at a remove. In a later prose work, his adoption of Heidegger's Hölderlin epigram is direct, the adaptation unequivocal: 'Nicht wo Gefahr droht, sondern wo vollzogene Zerstörung überhaupt erst entziffert werden kann, wächst auch das Rettende'.¹⁵⁸ The distancing of mankind's possible salvation is portrayed, though more obliquely, in *Beginnlosigkeit*.

The argument returns to Strauß' reflections on the cause of the crisis afflicting the 'Er'-figure: the erosion of origin, or as he puts it, 'DER STERBENDE ANFANG'. The ever-increasing frequency with which epistemologies are produced in accordance with *Linie*-structured *Wahrnehmung* has reached into attempts to illuminate the very apex of mankind's existence: its creation; the beginning of the beginning. Strauß sets out the ambition of such epistemologies: 'Nun, sagen die einen, wenn es das Einzige gibt, so wird es auch zu finden sein. Der Beginn der Welt, der in ihr versteckt wurde und den niemand fand bis heute'.¹⁵⁹ Yet, notwithstanding the forward propelling dialectic of *Linie*, its 'gebündelte Helle', or mankind's search for a theoretical explanation of 'die erste Billionstelsekunde im Ursprung der Schöpfung', Strauß maintains that the 'Er'-figure is still left with, 'die Frage, nichts als die Frage ...'.¹⁶⁰ Empirical knowledge and related understanding have their limits. Strauß pointedly leaves the answer hanging in

¹⁵⁸ Strauß, *Der Untenstehende auf Zehenspitzen*, p.116.

¹⁵⁹ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.40.

¹⁶⁰ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.40.

silence. But what does Strauß suggest is the question? The ‘Er’-figure reflects: ‘Wozu dann die philosophische Plage des Seins?’.¹⁶¹

Strauß, then, presents the ‘Er’-figure as drawn back to that alternative *Wahrnehmung* associated with *Fleck*. Crucially for the present argument, it is defined as beginning, as originary. He writes: ‘Auch die Frage des *Anfangs* wird eine Frage des Glaubens sein: lebensnotwendige Beibehaltung einer gedanklichen Wohltat’.¹⁶² Even though the explanatory structure of *Linie* promises so much, it does not – Strauß, like Heidegger, contends it cannot – eradicate both mankind’s continuing constraint and ongoing unsatisfied need for reflection on originary possibility. Strauß, though, unlike Heidegger, does not specify a particular period or instance from the past. Rather, for him, the philosophical impetus is one of abstract intellectual necessity. As Strauß reflects: ‘wir bedürfen des *Anfangs*, der Geist bedarf dieser Gewißheit und wäre nicht lebensfähig, wenn sie nicht [...] erhalten bliebe’.¹⁶³ Having posited the necessity of an originary possibility, how does Strauß portray the alternative *Wahrnehmung* of *Fleck*, and how does he suggest is it experienced by the ‘Er’-figure?

3.3 ‘Was ist zwischen Schein und Sein?’¹⁶⁴

If the implications of Strauß’ *Linie* are accepted, his invocation of the necessity of an originary experience for mankind seems founded on a contradiction. The epistemologies

¹⁶¹ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.39.

¹⁶² Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.29. My emphasis.

¹⁶³ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.29. My emphasis.

¹⁶⁴ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.68. Emphasis in original.

associated with *Linie* have, he claims, led to the eradication of beginning for mankind: ‘DER STERBENDE ANFANG’. The explanation of this originary enigma through scientific and technological theory, whether of the Big Bang or the human genome, only further intensifies mankind’s crisis arising from the demise of beginning. What is different about Strauß’ *Anfang*? Surely, any attempt to re-inscribe the need of origin will inevitably succumb to the dominion of *Linie*, which, in turn, leads according to the conceit of *Beginnlosigkeit* to the very erosion of mankind’s experience of beginning?

Strauß’ response is to conceive of this *Anfang* as the possibility of an alternative *Wahrnehmung*, as *Fleck*. *Fleck*, however, is not to be understood as a single idea or method: nor is it a term in isolation, but is continually redefined by Strauß in relation to others, including *Gewärtigen*, *Ereignis* and *Zwischen*.¹⁶⁵ It is, therefore not, as with *Linie*, traced back to a singular cause. Origin conceived in this way, Strauß claims, does not arise, ‘aus einer einzigen Ursache’.¹⁶⁶ Instead, such an alternative retains the indeterminability of *Fleck*. He goes on to note: ‘Das Vielfältige strebt keiner Lösung entgegen. [...]. Das Mannigfaltige war von Anbeginn, es ist irreduzibel’.¹⁶⁷ An originary experience is thus, for Strauß, always already ‘diffuse’ and ‘nicht konturierbar’.¹⁶⁸

Commentators differ in their respective interpretations of Strauß’ use of the motif of *Fleck*. Greiner, for example, associates the term with Chaos Theory in the sciences, but

¹⁶⁵ Others include: ‘Nebel’, ‘Entgleiten’ and ‘Poesie’. See, for example, Hårs, *Singularität*, p.178 who categorises the terms by association with either ‘Fleck’ or ‘Linie’, although he fails to account for some and mis-classifies others.

¹⁶⁶ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.38.

¹⁶⁷ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.30.

¹⁶⁸ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.30.

thereby only serves to read *Fleck* in terms of an epistemology representative of *Linie*.¹⁶⁹ Bellmann, similarly, while acknowledging Strauß' attempt to define anew 'die unterschwellige Wahrnehmung, der Anklänge' suggests that this ultimately remains a 'technisch inspirierte neue Einbildungskraft'.¹⁷⁰ Most tantalising is Bergfleth's reading, which notes the 'Er'-figure's continuing propensity for what he terms his '*metaphysisches Verlangen, das nach wie vor unstillbar ist*'.¹⁷¹ The 'Er'-figure, he claims, is reaching for something that lies outside the relentless progress of *Linie*; this may reside in 'einer Umkehrung, die einer Wende zum Sein gleichkommt'.¹⁷² However, Bergfleth goes on to assert 'daß diese lebensmäßige Fassung des Metaphysischen sich weder mit der traditionellen Metaphysik noch mit Heidegger vereinbaren läßt'.¹⁷³ Instead, for him, *Fleck* still reflects a theoretically structured view of the world: the term 'fungiert [...] als der sprechende Name für Komplexität'.¹⁷⁴ It is ironic, then, that Strauß disavows that very comparison in a subsequent essay: 'Wir sprechen von den komplexen Abläufen im Hirn, im Gemüt, im endokrinologischen Bereich – [...]: Komplexität. Nichtssagender geht es kaum. Solche Wörter sind uns nur im Weg'.¹⁷⁵ In the end, Bergfleth's posited, so-called meta-technical, 'statische Welt', an '*antikopernikanische Utopie*', misses the *dynamic* nature of beginning for Strauß. Strauß argues:

Irgendwo müssen wir dem Ersten und Bloßen begegnen in einem Raum, der nur aus Ornamenten [...] der einen Vielfältigkeit besteht. Gewiß, man wird

¹⁶⁹ Greiner notes: 'Was hier "Fleck" genannt wird, ist das Feld der Chaosforschung: nicht lineare Prozesse', in Greiner, "'Beginnlosigkeit" – "Schlußchor" – "Gleichgewicht"', p.246.

¹⁷⁰ Bellmann, 'Poetologie und Zeit-Kritik in Botho Strauß', p.47.

¹⁷¹ Bergfleth, 'Die statische Welt und die Technik', p.262. Emphasis in original.

¹⁷² Bergfleth, 'Die statische Welt und die Technik', p.259.

¹⁷³ Bergfleth, 'Die statische Welt und die Technik', p.262.

¹⁷⁴ Bergfleth, 'Die statische Welt und die Technik', p.251.

¹⁷⁵ Strauß, 'Wollt ihr das totale Engineering?'

sich damit abfinden: alles schwelgt, webt und bezieht sich, aber der Einschlag der Unlösbarkeit – ¹⁷⁶

The alternative *Wahrnehmung* that Strauß seeks to describe is not passive or static, both of which Bergfleth and other commentators suggest and which, of course, combine into implicit ascriptions of fatalism. Whatever the experience of origin in *Fleck* it is not, Strauß suggests, understandable by conventional measures. Elsewhere in *Beginnlosigkeit*, for example, he notes of attempts ‘das Unbegreifliche in Erfahrung zu bringen’ that ‘die endlosen metaphorischen Versuche, das Numinose einzuberaumen in unsere Sprache, grenzen ans Lächerliche oder an Asebie’.¹⁷⁷ Strauß acknowledges the provisional nature and fraught difficulty of bringing the intangibility of this alternative *Wahrnehmung* to light. How, then, does he inscribe his revision of *Anfang*?

First, Strauß’ reflections on *Fleck* do not proceed systematically by syllogistic exposition – *Fleck* is not, after all, propositional – but move, like *Beginnlosigkeit* itself, through iterative increment. The alternative spirit of reflection is delineated through a network of water imagery in the work. *Wahrnehmung* associated with *Fleck*, for the ‘Er’-figure moves slowly but precisely.

Der Geist bohrt unendlich langsam sein Verstehen [...].
Das Wasser sprengt den Fels, das Wasser rollt den Stein, es zerkleinert ihn zu Geröll, es rollt ihn weiter und schleift ihn ab, zerreibt ihn zu Kies, er wird fruchtbares Ackerland.¹⁷⁸

This description serves two functions. *Wahrnehmung* associated with *Fleck* is distinguished from that structured by *Linie* where: ‘alles Denken ist ein

¹⁷⁶ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.30.

¹⁷⁷ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.45.

¹⁷⁸ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.110.

Begradigungsdelirium'.¹⁷⁹ It is negatively defined. As Strauß notes of the 'Er'-figure: 'er sehnte sich nach [...] der Botschaft vor dem Code, dem Fleck vor der Linie, er sehnte sich nach einem Verstehen von nicht absehbarem Entgleiten'.¹⁸⁰ Strauß' description of mankind's need for *Fleck* offers an interesting contrast to the sense of bewildered disorientation – so symptomatic of crisis – imposed by the ever-increasing speed of change of *Linie*. *Fleck* is *Wahrnehmung* liberated from the requirements of innovation, progress and unshackled from a first cause. Strauß describes the 'Er'-figure's longing: 'auf dessen Welle das Bewußtsein dahintreiben konnte ohne Ziel und Schlußfolgerung, ohne verfrühte Figürlichkeit'.¹⁸¹ This characteristic of the experience, its sense of attunement and lassitude, is developed over the following chapters.

Moreover, Strauß suspends the metaphysical dualism underpinning the 'Er'-figure's dominant *Wahrnehmung* that is, in turn, structured and controlled by *Linie*. Things are manifested differently. As Strauß describes, using a metaphor central to Steiner's postulate regarding the fissure between mankind and world: in *Fleck* 'das vor den Augen stillsteht, der ganz und gar geäußerte, (wieder) einfältig gewordene, wunderliche Gegenstand – die Rose unter den Dingen'.¹⁸²

Second, Strauß offers a succession of related, mutually-reflexive terms to describe the suspension of Cartesian metaphysics indebted to Heidegger's thought. Once the 'Er'-figure gives himself up to the indeterminacy of *Fleck*, largely as a result of the *Sondenexperiment* and his approach 'ins Herz der Unvernunft', the forward-moving

¹⁷⁹ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.65.

¹⁸⁰ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, pp.19-20.

¹⁸¹ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.20.

¹⁸² Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.29.

structure of *Wahrnehmung* in *Linie* becomes unstable. As Strauß notes: ‘Menschen, Handlungen und Gegenstände verloren ihre festen Umrisse, er sah nur noch Flecken und Hupfer’.¹⁸³ On the surface, the experience of *Fleck* is similar to the disorientation of *Linie*. His *Wahrnehmung* appears unsettled just as in the description of the break-down in the relationship between subject and world. However, as Strauß goes on to describe, the experience is fundamentally different. Instead, the transformation in *Wahrnehmung* of *Fleck* affects both subject and environment. Rather than a means-end conception of object-world: ‘bemerkte er ein Bewegungsmuster von ziellosen, sprunghaften Veränderungen sowohl seiner Umgebung wie seiner inneren Konzepte’.¹⁸⁴ The positive characteristics of this *Wahrnehmung* are portrayed along with the ancillary terms for *Fleck*:

Jede Fähigkeit, eine stetige Abfolge zu begreifen, war ihm zerstört. Aber war es eine Zerstörung? War es nicht vielmehr das Vordrängen eines anderen, unterdrückten Sinnesvermögens, das keine Erklärungen, Zusammenfassungen, Schlüsse erlaubte und das ihn zu einer Station für ein unausgesetztes *Gewärtigen* umrüstete?¹⁸⁵

The introduction of *Gewärtigen* brings the argument back to Heidegger’s critique of Cartesianism in *Sein und Zeit* where it refers to an originating experience of world or thing as *Gegenwärtigen*. The term also draws together the argument of Chapter Two regarding the similarity of ontological concern in Heidegger’s Λόγος and Strauß’ *Anwesenheit*.

Highlighting the sources for Descartes’ dualism of subject and object-world – which he claims is a distortion of the scholastics and their own misuse of Aristotle – Heidegger

¹⁸³ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.128.

¹⁸⁴ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.128.

¹⁸⁵ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.128. My emphasis.

proposes, in contrast, an ontological, grounded experience of world in λέγειν. Λέγειν evokes, for Heidegger, an immanent relationship of subject and object, although such categories do not apply in the pre-Socratics, in the disclosure of things. Such coming-into-presence is in contrast to the detached observing subject proposed by Cartesian metaphysics. As Heidegger writes in *Sein und Zeit*:

Das λέγειν [...] das schlichte Vernehmen von etwas Vorhandenem in seiner reinen Vorhandenheit [...] hat die [...] Struktur des reinen ‘Gegenwärtigen’ von etwas. Das Seiende, das sich in ihm für es zeigt und das als das eigentliche Seiende verstanden wird, erhält demnach seine Auslegung in Rücksicht auf – Gegen-wart, d.h. es ist als Anwesenheit begriffen.¹⁸⁶

Gegenwärtigen, then, for Heidegger denotes the originating ontological condition for the experience of world as *Anwesenheit* by *Dasein*.

Strauß develops the notion of *Gewärtigen* and the relationship of ‘Er’-figure to world with reference to another term: *Zwischen*, which in turn denotes the manner of the experience of *Fleck*. Describing the progress of the *Sondenexperiment* and move toward *Fleck*, Strauß has recourse to terms that are unmistakably Heideggerian:

Er selbst hielt sich an das Wort ‘gewärtigen’, das dem Gebrauch nach soviel wie ‘gefaßt sein auf’ bedeutet, jedenfalls etwas *zwischen* ‘erwarten’ und ‘vergegenwärtigen’, eine besondere Form der Präsenz, eigentlich die Aura vor dem *Ereignis*.¹⁸⁷

Strauß signals how the *Wahrnehmung* of *Fleck* lifts the constraints of Cartesianism and *Linie*. As he notes in parenthesis in relation to *Gewärtigen*: ‘Es ist daher wichtig auf das Versprengte [...] zu achten, auch wenn sie scheinbar noch so kausal, zusammenhängend,

¹⁸⁶ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, pp.25-26.

¹⁸⁷ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.128. My emphases: terms in quotation marks in original.

schlüssig sich darbietet'.¹⁸⁸ Instead, in this alternative the 'Er'-figure moves towards what is delineated as: 'Die gemeinsame Her-vorbringung eines Gegenübers'.¹⁸⁹

The resonance of *Zwischen*, in turn, is extended in a fragment that lies at the centre of the prose work. It shows the 'Er'-figure overcoming the *Abwas* of *Linie*: the absence of thing in the object-world. Thus, at the heart of *Beginnlosigkeit*, subject and world are immanently united:

Etwas ist oder etwas ist der 'Mond im Wasser', der vollkommene Widerschein – *zwischen* den Dingen. Denn der 'Mond im Wasser' ist weder der Mond selbst noch ist, wo seine Phantomschicht aufliegt, Wasser.¹⁹⁰

The present exegesis of Strauß' *Fleck*, of related terms *Zwischen* and *Gewärtigen*, brings into consideration characteristics defining for Strauß' prose writing.

Zwischen, as Strauß conceives it, has a topographic dimension, an association conveyed too by *Gewärtigen*.¹⁹¹ It is not, however, a tangible place. The former term is also adopted directly from Heidegger's late thought and in order better to define this difficult constellation of terms around *Fleck* it is necessary briefly to highlight the philosopher's own notion of *Zwischen*.

¹⁸⁸ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.129.

¹⁸⁹ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.96.

¹⁹⁰ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.50.

¹⁹¹ Interestingly, the etymological root of *Gewärtigen* (*Gegenwart*) denotes a spatial dimension rather than one of time. 'Denn der Begriff der Gegenwart wurde nicht immer im zeitlichen Kontext verwendet. Noch im 18. Jahrhundert wurde der Begriff der Gegenwart "in räumlichen Bezügen zu Orten und Personen als Anwesenheit (praesentia), als physisch und psychisch gefasstes räumliches Befinden, als Wirkung an einem Ort verwendet"', in Osterle, I. 'Innovation und Selbstüberbietung: Temporalität der ästhetischen Moderne', in Vietta, S. and Kemper, D. (eds.) *Ästhetische Moderne in Europa. Grundzüge und Problemzusammenhänge seit der Romantik* (Munich, 1997). Cited in Thomas, *Botho Strauß und die 'Konservative Revolution'*, p.216.

Of course, in Heideggerian thought, the term retains manifold suggestions bringing together disparate elements of his philosophy.¹⁹² The treatment of the term is most detailed in his readings of Hölderlin's poetry.¹⁹³ For the focus of the present argument, though, the limited discussion of *Zwischen* in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* is instructive. Like Strauß' example of moon and water, *Zwischen* signals the union of nature, for Heidegger of earth and sky specifically, where mankind experiences this conjunction. As Heidegger writes of this topographic dimension:

Aber dem Menschen ist zugleich verstattet, in diesem Bezirk, aus ihm her, durch ihn hindurch zu den Himmlischen aufzuschauen. Das Aufschauen durchgeht das Hinauf zum Himmel und verbleibt doch im Unten auf der Erde. Das Aufschauen durchmißt das *Zwischen* von Himmel und Erde. Dieses *Zwischen* ist dem Wohnen des Menschen zugemessen.¹⁹⁴

It is worth noting that Heidegger's term *Zwischen* brings to the fore two elements or characteristics that are given emphasis in *Beginnlosigkeit*: first, mankind and world, and second, the site of their immanent relationship. For Strauß, *Wahrnehmung* associated with *Fleck* necessitates mankind, just as it requires a site where the possibility of *Fleck* is to be experienced.

¹⁹² Pattison notes: 'This "Between" can be envisaged in various ways. As the site where mortals and gods meet, it also marks the boundary that separates them, the extreme point of human possibility occupied by the poet, a point at which the question concerning the gods, the question of transcendence [...] becomes pressing. [...]. The middle of Being might also be spoken of as the "Between" of Being and non-Being, and as such equivalent to possibility, the "possibility that belongs to actuality" in the sense of that which does not exist in the manner of objects but has the potential to be realised in and through the freedom of action. [...]. The idea of possibility also points to the role of the "Between" as the middle of time, the point of transition between past and future. What is to be shown forth in poetry is historicity in the sense of becoming in the midst of transiency', in Pattison, *The Later Heidegger*, pp.176-177. White describes the immanent essence of *Zwischen* well: 'We must first think the relation between world and thing as a unity. [...]. World as world and thing as thing are retained in the unity of world-thing, yet each comes to its own nature through the separation and unification circumscribed by the between', in White, *Heidegger and the Language of Poetry*, p.64. The idea is developed in conjunction with Strauß' views on language and invocation of the notion of *Dämmern* in the next chapter.

¹⁹³ See, in particular, Heidegger, M. 'Hölderlins Erde und Himmel', in *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 6th Edition, 1996), pp.152-181.

¹⁹⁴ Heidegger, 'dichterisch wohnet der Mensch', in *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, pp.188-189. My emphasis.

Before exploring how these two elements of *Fleck*, mankind and site, culminate in the work, and showing how Strauß thus re-inscribes the notion of *Anfang*, it is worth touching briefly on the other Heideggerian terms that are alluded to in the description of *Fleck*. These demonstrate Strauß' further indebtedness to Heidegger and augment understanding of the term. One, in particular, is notable: *Gehorchen* and its cognates *Ohr* and *Hören*.¹⁹⁵

As part of the *Sondenexperiment* Strauß suggests that the 'Er'-figure sets aside the conventional *Wahrnehmung* of *Linie*. This retains the classificatory attributes made by the subject of the object-world enshrined in dualism: 'Überzeugungen, Gesinnungen, ideelle Bekenntnisse, Programme und Weltbilder, all die provisorischen Abgeschlossenheiten, die aus dem Ungleichgewicht des Geistes resultieren'.¹⁹⁶ Instead, the 'Er'-figure seeks refuge in another of his senses, that of *Hören*.

Er ließ sich nicht lumpen und begann wider seine natürliche Skepsis, unter Verleugnung seines einzig wirklich fähigen, aktiven, zuverlässigen Organs: seines Ohrs, den alles verbindenden Mund zu öffnen.¹⁹⁷

But Strauß does not mean by *Ohr* the 'Er'-figure's auditory system. Rather, the term suggests the two characteristics defined above as central to *Fleck*; namely mankind and world. To understand better the 'Er'-figure's *Gehorchen*, one of his 'zwei Verhaltensweisen', it is necessary to consider again Heidegger's *Λόγος* essay.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.46. Space prevents consideration of Heidegger and Strauß' respective use of *Ereignis*, for example. This is developed in detail in relation to consideration of Strauß' portrayal of language and the *poetics of dwelling* in Chapters Four and Five.

¹⁹⁶ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.44.

¹⁹⁷ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.33.

¹⁹⁸ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.46.

Heidegger claims of Heraclitus' fiftieth fragment that Λόγος is bound with *Hören*, as shown in the preceding chapter. In the essay he asks after 'das eigentliche Hören' in Λόγος and argues that *Hören* denotes the manner in which things in the world come-into-presence for mankind. Chapter Two considers this in relation to the making manifest of world in the art work. Now though, the implications run deeper and extend to the present suggested suspension of dualism, and posited immanence of mankind and world. *Hören* and its cognate describe how originally in pre-Socratic thought mankind had a different experience of world. As he claims: 'Das Hören ist erstlich das gesammelte Horchen. Im Horchsamen west das Gehör. Wir hören, wenn wir ganz Ohr sind'.¹⁹⁹ Mankind, he suggests, originally attended to things, to the world, rather than defining or grasping them as he comes to do in all subsequent philosophical or mathematically-based theory. Such attending necessitates mankind's immanent belonging to things under consideration. As he writes: 'Wir haben gehört, wenn wir dem Zugesprochenen *gehören*'.²⁰⁰

It is just this involvement of mankind and world, their respective immanence, that Strauß suggests of *Fleck*. He defines it negatively: devoid of the immanent relationship to the world, relating only in terms of its object-status, he notes that the 'Er'-figure is: '(untrammelled, ganz entbunden), *gehört* keinem Einzigen, sondern der Unzahl'.²⁰¹ But to return to *Fleck*: what is it that the 'Er'-figure experiences and how is it described?

Fleck is denoted according to terms that hint variously, in their indeterminability, at the proposed alternative *Wahrnehmung*. The originary experience though – Strauß' response to the condition of 'Beginnlosigkeit', the theoretically endless and origin-less teleology of

¹⁹⁹ Heidegger, 'Logos', p.206.

²⁰⁰ Heidegger, 'Logos', p.207. Emphasis in original.

²⁰¹ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.23.

Linie – is less clear from the terms *Gewärtigen* and *Zwischen*. To bring this closer, Strauß introduces a third narrative motif to those of the ‘Er’-figure and *Sondenexperiment*, highlighted in the opening to this chapter: that of the child, Nanos. The motif of childhood is important in uniting *Fleck* and the re-experience of origin. Interestingly, Sloterdijk in his Frankfurt lectures too highlights the experience of birth as central to the philosophically enigmatic delineation of a ‘Poetik des Anfangens’.²⁰²

The three fragments in *Beginnlosigkeit* dealing with Nanos occur in reverse chronology over the course of the work. The child is, thus, first mentioned when it is developing into that *Wahrnehmung* redolent of *Linie*, which already constrains the ‘Er’-figure. In the child’s acquisition of language, for example – an, as yet, unconsidered characteristic of both *Linie* and *Fleck* – the ‘Er’-figure reflects how the child loses its early experience of world, which he himself can no longer sense. Moreover, the child is already precariously close to becoming detached from this *Wahrnehmung*, which inevitably diminishes during a childhood development constrained by *Linie*. Strauß writes:

Es zeigte sich, daß die einsetzende Sprache dem kleinen Sohn, seinem Nanos, etwas Schönheit geraubt hatte. Das Auge war weniger geworden. [...]. Ja, man mochte sogar annehmen: diese Sprache des Widerscheins war bereits die vollendete Passung überhaupt, der ganze Ausdruck für etwas, das sich später nur unendlich vermittelt und stückhaft wiedergeben läßt.²⁰³

The constraint of *Linie* is the inevitable default state: the world comes to be structured according to *Linie* and mediated both by parents and, Strauß suggests, the general environment. As he goes on to describe:

²⁰² Sloterdijk notes: ‘Vielleicht liegt in der Unmöglichkeit, mit dem eigenen Anfang anzufangen, der Ursprung der mythischen Tätigkeit [...]. Der “Mensch” ist das erzählende Tier, weil er das zum Anfangen verurteilte Wesen ist, das sich in der Welt orientieren muß, ohne am “wirklichen” Anfang als wacher Zeuge dabeisein zu können’, in Sloterdijk, *Zur Welt kommen – zur Sprache kommen*, p.39.

²⁰³ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.73. My emphasis.

Sein Lernen, das ihm zunächst eine Welt vermittelt, die seinen Eltern vertraut scheint, verfolgt bereits den Aufbau von Dispositionen, Rezeptoren, Passungen für eine Welt nach den Eltern, Zurüstungen, die aus der Entelechie der allgemeinen Lebensbedingungen [...] Module der Bereitschaft erstellen, nach denen Ich und Zukunft sich gemeinsam bilden.²⁰⁴

The second portrayal shows the child back at an earlier developmental stage. In contrast to what Strauß terms the ‘lange Reise der Sublimation’ of childhood, he sketches instead Nanos’ ‘erstes Begreifen’.²⁰⁵ What is proposed though is not, as some commentators argue, a sentimentalisation of childhood in a state of pre-lapsarian naivety.²⁰⁶ The child figure, like the depiction of scientific and technological theory, is a conceit that brings to light something philosophically more fundamental. Nanos portrays emblematically the *Wahrnehmung* of *Fleck* now lost to mankind. The child, ‘in den ersten Lebensmonaten’, it is suggested, in contrast to the adult world of the ‘Er’-figure, is still able to have such an experience.

Die Augen wurden groß, der Mund schleckte, er wollte näher an die Erscheinung heran, wich dann aber auch plötzlich zurück oder sah verschämt beiseite, lachte freudig oder fürchtete sich greinend. Er stand offenbar mit dem Scheitel-Geist, in dem alles Wesentliche, Fühlbare, die gesamten Gemütskräfte der Person zusammengefaßt waren.²⁰⁷

It invokes an alternative relationship to world.

The final fragment in Nanos’ reverse chronological development describes the moment of his birth, his own beginning. In this, *Fleck* and the originary are in union in the work. It is also, significantly, the penultimate fragment in *Beginnlosigkeit* before the culmination of the ‘Er’-figure’s own fleeting experience of *Fleck*. The birth of the child

²⁰⁴ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, pp.93-94. My emphasis.

²⁰⁵ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.74.

²⁰⁶ Marcel Reich-Ranicki levels this charge at Strauß during a review of *Die Feher des Kopisten* in the popular ZDF television programme, *Das literarische Quartett*, broadcast in late 1997.

²⁰⁷ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.94.

temporarily suspends the established structures of *Wahrnehmung*. For the ‘Er’-figure: ‘Der Anblick war so unwahrscheinlich, so fremdweltlich, daß ihm vor Ehrfurcht Zeit und Raum entchwanden’.²⁰⁸ Similarly, the first moments for the child – ‘wo war der Beginn?’ he asks – evoke an experience of world outlined in discussion of the term *Gehorchen*. Strauß describes the child’s response to the world as one of continual manifestation or creation:

Übte, sonderte, sondierte, schaffte, ob im Traum oder im Wachen. Kein Spiel war das. Die Augen waren noch reine *Höraugen*, wobei *Hören* die diffuse Achtsamkeit auf inneres wie äußeres Geschehen bedeutete.²⁰⁹

At the instance of birth, the defining terms for mankind and of the prose work, *Fleck* and *Linie*, are contrasted. As Strauß writes: ‘Es ist das Alles-auf-Einmal, aus dem wir kommen, um uns zum Ende zu fädeln. Erst ist das Knäuel, und zuletzt der gerade Faden, der irgendwann abreißt’. Birth is the brief instance of beginning where *Fleck* is sensed by man in its originary form. Thereafter, the child, like the ‘Er’-figure, emerges into a world dominated by *Linie*. The child is, Strauß writes: ‘aus unendlicher Weisheit vertrieben’.²¹⁰ He describes the inevitability of subsequent development of *Linie*-structured *Wahrnehmung*: ‘Von solchem Rund zu Rund schreitet man später weiter, etwa: von einer Illusion zur nächsten’.²¹¹

The possibility of an alternative *Wahrnehmung* that Strauß proposes to the dominion of *Linie* and its instrumentality is a re-inscription of an originary experience and, as such, is a manifold occurrence. *Fleck*, by implication, is not a unitary phenomenon: it is not a one-off event or a single thing and is denoted and invoked by a range of different,

²⁰⁸ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.131.

²⁰⁹ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.33. My emphases.

²¹⁰ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.132.

²¹¹ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.133.

sometimes antagonistic, terms. The present argument notes some of these but many are left for the readings of different works that follow. Each contributes, though, to the diffuse, enigmatic nature of *Fleck* and is shown to unsettle the dominance of Cartesianism and dualist metaphysics: the schism between mankind and world – subject and object – is suspended and their respective immanent relation evoked. Moreover, this immanence is conceived as a site at which mankind again experiences that alternative *Wahrnehmung* as *Fleck*. The argument shows the affinity of these terms and difficult, often intangible ideas with Heidegger's thought and idiolect, and how Strauß adopts these to offer his own searching renewed revision to science and technology precepts in late modernity.

The conjoined characteristics manifest by and in Strauß' *Fleck* – mankind and site – culminate in the final passage of *Beginnlosigkeit*. The fragment presents an instance, a moment in the work for *dynamic engagement*, an epiphany with equivalents in other Strauß prose works, including *Paare*, *Passanten* and *Niemand anderes*. These offer interesting comparisons and indicate both the continuity and development of these motifs throughout Strauß' prose writing.

The final passage of *Paare*, *Passanten*, for example, which most commentators view as confirmation of Strauß' departure from Adorno's dialectic, is marked by the same characteristics. The figure portrayed in the fragment has an experience, which like the encounter with Karl Popper in *Beginnlosigkeit*, takes place in Venice. It is midnight on New Year's Eve, evoking the end and beginning of both day and year. The figure stands 'nur wenige Meter [...] entfernt von einem Fleck' where he previously saw the figure of

Adorno.²¹² The conventional experience of surroundings – of place, time, space – is temporarily suspended; the boundaries are blurred:

Der gewohnte Schutzraum der Bewegungen, die charakteristische Proportion, die der Gänger zu seiner Umgebung, zu Häusern und Passanten, Straße und Verkehr bildet, ist hier aufgehoben oder mindestens gestört.²¹³

Instead, ‘ein heimlicher Riß tut sich auf’, as he hears a woman sing, ‘ein starker, heller Gesang’.²¹⁴ The sound reverberates: aus einem kindlichen Mund steigen unter Atemdampf diese reinen Töne’.²¹⁵ An alternative sense of experience is glimpsed:

‘Ja [...] es ist bekannt genug; und gewiß aus dem einfachen Grund, daß wir hier ungleich verwunderter blicken müssen als anderswo, und davon kommen dann Unbekanntes, Unsichtbares in uns selbst zum Vorschein’.²¹⁶

Likewise, Strauß describes a passage in the ‘Odeon’ section of *Niemand anderes*, which shares many characteristics with *Beginnlosigkeit*. The critique of technology is more explicit in this work:

Die engerichtete Ding-Welt hat unser Bewußtsein schokkiert, gelähmt oder in die nackte Sorglosigkeit versetzt. Seine Not, sein Mangel zieht aber auf sich das Nu, den Blitz, der es umordnet plötzlich zu nächster Überlegenheit, die dem Vorhandenen angemessen ist.²¹⁷

Amongst the cycles of scientific and technological innovation that are described, ‘Odeon’ – an image of a building in ruins – remains a constant: ‘Odeon, Leeres Gemäuer, verfallene Säle’.²¹⁸ Like *Fleck* though, in spite of the transformations around it, the ruin suggests the site for alternative experience. Strauß concludes the Odeon series: ‘Odeon

²¹² Strauß, *Paare, Passanten*, p.203.

²¹³ Strauß, *Paare, Passanten*, p.202.

²¹⁴ Strauß, *Paare, Passanten*, p.203.

²¹⁵ Strauß, *Paare, Passanten*, p.203.

²¹⁶ Strauß, *Paare, Passanten*, p.204.

²¹⁷ Strauß, *Niemand anderes*, p.139.

²¹⁸ Strauß, *Niemand anderes*, p.156. Emphasis in original.

aber, nicht: Ideen. Nicht nur der Streit, sondern das Überwindende auch in allen Dingen. Man steht auf unterste Stelle und hebt den Kopf zum Hören. Und zum Gesang.²¹⁹

Beginnlosigkeit ends with a vivid, fragmentary portrayal of the 'Er'-figure's immanent experience of *Fleck* combining terms and characteristics delineated above. It is worth quoting at length:

Er ging hinaus und beobachtete die großen Verwehungen am Himmel, ungeheure Fahrten kurz vor Sonnenuntergang, ein Himmel, der wie das Spiegelbild, auf den Kopf gekehrt, von einem anderen erschien, den man nicht sah, und die langen Wolken, Schleifen, Schlieren, Federn mußten rückwärts zum Beginn der großen Sprengung ziehen. [...].
Friedlich wie vordem lag der Abend auf den Uferhöhen, das Licht hob seinen Schweigefinger, so daß auch im Unruhigsten der Tag sanft ausklingen mußte. Die Dämmerung sank in die Ebene ein, alle Farben wurden fahl, bis dann das Land der jungen Mandelblüten ganz unter rosa Rauhreif lag. [...]. Da trat der rauchige Abend auf einmal in die Symmetrie zur Morgenfrühe, die gleichermaßen kühl und fahl beginnt, und man hätte gerade erwacht sein können, wäre die Sonne nicht den verkehrten Weg gezogen.
Im aufblassenden Grau des Himmels erschien die lange Dünung, kleine Wellenfalten, die gleichen, die das Wasser in den Schlick gräbt, der Wind über den Sand wirft, so sanft, so tuchen und gedämpft, mit Maserungen, die zart und ungestalt wie farbige Cremes ineinanderliefen, mattblau und silbernes Türkis ... der lange Sog des Sonnenuntergangs löste Fetzen aus den Wolken, die wiederum zum Keil verwehten, einer Phalanx angehaltener Stare ähnlich oder wie ein einziger aus Dampf geformter Riesenvogel, der reglos schwebte ... Aber welcher Himmel wäre so grau, daß er nicht am Ende noch errötete, den freundlichen Ocker, ein irdenes Licht aufsteigen ließe? Danach noch einmal erhöhte sich die Tönung, verdickte, wurde kobaltblau, bunt begann die Nacht.²²⁰

The fragment shows the union within the alternative *Wahrnehmung* as *Fleck* of the otherwise fragmented and irreconcilable: mankind and world; earth and sky; day turning to night and night returning to day; beginning and end. In *Beginnlosigkeit*, Strauß thus offers – far from a treatise on technology or science – the beginnings of an understanding

²¹⁹ Strauß, *Niemand anderes*, p.156. Emphasis in original.

²²⁰ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.134.

of the *poetic*, based on Heidegger's fundamental revision of the Western philosophical tradition, that is the focus of the present thesis.

However, before moving on to a more detailed examination of this notion of the *poetic* – its portrayal of such ideas and inscription of its own philosophical status – it is first necessary to highlight another characteristic, briefly mentioned but as yet unconsidered, in the 'Er'-figure's *Wahrnehmung* and crisis. The final fragment with its evocative conjunction of the irreconcilable – 'irdenes Licht' and 'bunte Nacht' – gestures towards its nature. Willer, for example, cites these two oxymorons to conclude, rightly, that they present the underlying 'Widersprüchlichkeit' to Strauß' whole creative oeuvre. But the implications of such apparent opposites are more far-reaching than describing a principle of literary contradiction as Willer appears to suggest.²²¹ Strauß himself parallels the conceit of an oxymoron with that alternative *Wahrnehmung* in *Fleck*. He notes of the device:

da lebt das Oxymoron, das Untier des Geistes. [...]. Das Oxymoron – wörtlich: der stumpfe Scharfsinn – ist der in unsere Vernunft eingeschlagene Lichtstein der Offenbarung.²²²

Critically, for the present thesis, the 'Er'-figure's experience of *Fleck* is *in* language. This is not, however, simply to relay the tautology that a character's experience in a prose work must necessarily be described in language. The relationship between language, the 'Er'-figure and the experience of *Fleck* is more fundamental, and picks up the counter-nominalism of Strauß' position. As Strauß has the 'Er'-figure reflect: 'Aber ist Sprache

²²¹ See, Willer, *Botho Strauß*, p.141.

²²² Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.119.

dem Unsichtbaren nicht wesensnah verwandt?'.²²³ Language is, thus, for Strauß, itself intimately bound up with *Fleck*.

3.4 'In the beginning was the Word'²²⁴

If the argument of the previous two chapters is accepted – first, that Strauß' *Anwesenheit* shares affinity with Heidegger's Λόγος (*Anwesenheit*, of course, like *Fleck*, evokes the *Wahrnehmung* of world lost to mankind); second, that *Fleck* is concerned with such an originary experience – then it follows that *Fleck* must also be intimately bound up with language. Strauß points to just this similarity between the diffuse *Wahrnehmung* of *Fleck* and language, noting of the latter: 'In der Sprache ist Verstehen der unterdrückte Anklang tausendfältigen Verstehens. [...] Aller Beginn ist Wiederhall'.²²⁵

Throughout *Beginnlosigkeit*, language is portrayed in terms that suggest its intractability and resistance to the dominating effects of *Linie*. Strauß stresses language's particular status. This raises the more substantial point noted at the end of the last section: the epiphanic experience of *Fleck* in the final fragment, at one level, is obviously expressed in language. But Strauß posits language, by implication, as more profound, as a substantiated realm (a realm, of course, suggests a site invoked in the experience of *Fleck*) in which man *is*, and in which he experiences the possibility of world. In language, there is that *Wahrnehmung* associated with *Fleck*. As Strauß claims: 'In der Sprache geht

²²³ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.67. This image of *Nähe* in relation to language is developed in Chapter Four and the presentation in *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* of an absent experience of originary language.

²²⁴ The Gospel according to St. John, v.1, *The Bible*. Authorized King James Version (Oxford: OUP, 1997), p.114.

²²⁵ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.36.

es, was den Zuwachs an Komplexität betrifft, geschichtlich offenbar umgekehrt zu wie bei der Entwicklung des Wissens, der technischen oder biologischen Formenwelt'.²²⁶

Language, for Strauß, manifests the characteristics that the argument above attributes to *Fleck*. As he claims in direct reference to Heidegger:

Ältere Sprache befördert ein komplexeres Verstehen als neuere, technisch angepaßte. Sie ist einfach reicher, nicht unbedingt im Vokabular, sondern reicher in der 'Vernetzung' des Verstehens. Besitzt mehr 'Anklang', wie Heidegger sagen würde.²²⁷

So, for Strauß, there is that in language, which moves back to an originary condition: it is imaged in regression toward an unspecified past, in direct contrast to the forward trajectory of *Linie*.

Gerade dort, wo sie gewahrt, [...], wo sie auf eine prinzipielle Fremd-Sprache stößt, [...], reagiert sie mit einer Verdichtung von Bild und Gedanke, mit einer Steigerung ihrer internen Spannkraft. Das komplikative Verstehen, das eingefaltete, anstelle des explikativen, wird dann zu ihrer 'Neuheit'. Ältere Sprache also im Entstehen [...].²²⁸

This older, originary language acts, Strauß suggests, using an analogy of a windmill resonant of Heidegger in 'Die Frage nach der Technik', contrary to the technological prerogatives of modernity. Language is restorative of the relationship between subject and thing. Strauß contends:

Es ist, als benötigte die Sprache [...] ein gewisses Maß an Anachronismen und Überlieferungsbestandteilen, um ihre Konventionen zu sichern. Es bleibt beim Vergleich mit dem Mühlrad, auch wenn dieses schon seit Generationen außer Schwung und Betrieb ist. Vielleicht ist Vergleichen ursprünglich so sehr an Dingliche, [...] gebunden, daß es in einer handlosen Arbeitswelt nun gar keine Entsprechung mehr findet.²²⁹

²²⁶ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.78.

²²⁷ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.78.

²²⁸ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, pp.78-79.

²²⁹ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.93.

Importantly for the present argument, language is characterised, like *Fleck*, as a site offering potential refuge. However, it is also constrained by the technologically *Linie*-structured *Wahrnehmung* of world. Writing of language, Strauß claims: ‘Ihr “heiliger Bezirk” wird um so stiller und anziehender, je ohnmächtiger draußen in der Breite mit ihr operiert, herumgewörtert wird’.²³⁰

Thus, notwithstanding the possibility of language – as Strauß notes in an interesting image resonant of the argument in ‘Der Aufstand’, ‘die Sprache soll keiner Kommunikation “dienen”, sie soll *communio* sein jederzeit’ – and the provisional, contingent epiphany of the final fragment in *Beginnlosigkeit*, Strauß contends that the relationship to language remains deeply problematic.²³¹ As he remarks of the ‘Er’-figure: ‘Er wurde der Abgleiter – sein Ohr fand keinen Halt mehr, es schlidderte [...] von Sätzen und Wörtern hinab’.²³² Language continues to be constrained by *Linie* and is thus viewed, like the object-world, in terms of instrumental use and value. Furthermore, in a notable fragment that alludes to one of Wittgenstein’s central premises from the *Tractatus* – ‘Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt’ – Strauß suggests that the established view of language precludes the description, let alone the hypothesised existence, of a world beyond the limits that it denotes.²³³ Strauß writes:

Man spricht [...] auch zum Zweck der gemeinsamen Stimmföhlung und der Grenzbestimmung. Wie der Gesang den Walen, das Klickgeräusch den Delphinen dazu dient, die Grenzen ihrer Umgebung abzutasten, so gibt es auch menschliche Sprache, die horcht, indem sie verlautet.²³⁴

²³⁰ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.108.

²³¹ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, pp.108-109.

²³² Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.21.

²³³ Wittgenstein, L. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Routledge, 2002), p.148.

²³⁴ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.32.

A view of language based on the philosophical precepts of that *Wahrnehmung* associated with *Linie* – whether Cartesianism, Platonic or Popperian – is utterly irreconcilable with the enigma denoted by *Fleck*, and which Strauß inscribes in the work and proposes to bring to light. Strauß describes mankind's problematic, but defining, relationship to language in a further telling image:

In der Sprache klingen die Signale nach, wie in der Wohnung des gerade Verstorbenen das Telefon noch hin und wieder läutet. Doch der (in der Sprache) Angerufene ist nicht mehr da.

[...].

Das Wesen des Sprechenden besteht nun aus Flucht. [...]. Da man in kein Zimmer hineingehört, sondern in diesem unsäglichen Haus nur laufen kann, nicht wohnen, einem unbekanntem Ausgang zustrebt, während Haut und Geist schon verderben und nur der Flur sich unabsehbar verjüngt, [...], wird man, wenn's einer bezeugen müßte, hier auch nie gewesen sein.²³⁵

Just as language and *Fleck* are conceived respectively as offering a site for a possible alternative *Wahrnehmung*, mankind's current relationship to language is described as one of homelessness. It is this important motif in Strauß' prose work, as yet unconsidered in the literature, that is the focus of the penultimate chapter.

²³⁵ Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, pp.42 and 43.

CHAPTER FOUR

GROUNDS OF POSSIBILITY: LÜGEN DÄMMERN WOHNEN

4.1 Originary language: *die Sprache des Dritten*

The previous two chapters consider Strauß' adoption of aspects of Heidegger's thought through linguistic allusion and affinity in the structure of argumentation. The prose work that most obviously evokes such parallels is *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* published in 1994, which comprises a series of fragments.¹ The invocation through the tri-partite title of Heidegger's 1951 essay 'Bauen Wohnen Denken' both in denotation and structure – three verbal nouns conjoined by no grammatical relation – appears overwhelming.² It is, however, an allusion that remains largely unremarked, at least amongst critics delivering literary reviews of the work immediately following publication: perhaps, in part, due to the continuing rumbling disquiet and critical pre-occupation with the 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang' debate. Such is certainly the suggestion Strauß makes implicitly in an interview accompanying the release of his later prose work, *Das Partikular*.³ He expresses surprise at the generally favourable reviews of a work that for him is thematically similar to *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*. Critical response to *Das Partikular* was, he notes, 'jedenfalls anders als ich befürchten musste. So verschieden sind meine

¹ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.192.

² Heidegger, 'Bauen Wohnen Denken', in *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, pp.139-156.

³ Strauß, B. *Das Partikular* (Munich/Vienna: Hanser, 2000).

vorangegangen Bücher ja nicht, dass es Grund gäbe, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* in den Orkus zu stoßen, wie es ja geschehen ist'.⁴

The failure to recognise the allusion of Strauß' title also goes some way to explaining Korte's representative response to the work. In one of the few serious critical commentaries he succumbs to a reaction familiar from those noted of *Beginnlosigkeit* and other Strauß writing. He highlights the apparent lack of continuity or recognisable narrative integrity in *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*: just as the fragments are made up of 'heterogenstem Material' so there is also 'keinen erkennbaren roten Faden, der die Sequenzen miteinander zu einer sinnkonstituierenden Gesamtkomposition verbindet'.⁵ The present reading challenges this notion and argues for a deep, underlying concern with language in *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, about which the allusion to Heidegger in the title gives an important indication. Moreover, it is the philosophical nature of this concern that gives important guidance to Strauß' *poetics of dwelling*.

Even among the selected critics who note the allusion it remains almost always undeveloped. For example, Wiesberg declares that, 'die Assoziation, die mit dem Titel des Buches *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* verbunden ist, verweist auf Martin Heideggers Arbeit', without going on to consider either the nature of the connection for Strauß' writing overall, or its significance for this particular prose work.⁶ Thomas too postulates a connection to Heidegger but not to the essay 'Bauen Wohnen Denken'. Instead, she claims *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* is pre-occupied with 'der tragische Kampf um die

⁴ Strauß, 'Am Rand. Wo sonst'.

⁵ Korte, H. 'Auf dem Weg zur "Tagesordnung des Ewigen"? Botho Strauß' Prosa "Die Widmung" und "Wohnen Dämmern Lügen"', in Arnold, H. L. (ed.) *TEXT+KRITIK* 81 Botho Strauß: Neufassung (Munich: text + kritik, 1998), p.18.

⁶ Wiesberg, *Botho Strauß. Dichter der Gegen-Aufklärung*, p.115.

Heidegger'sche Eigentlichkeit' developed through what she rather generally calls the intertextual referencing of *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*.⁷ The inclusion in her argument of the authenticity of *Dasein*, central to *Sein und Zeit*, which is explicitly absent from the essay 'Bauen Wohnen Denken' and overall in the late thought, and the specific connotations of the term in relation to Strauß' prose work are left unexplained by Thomas other than in reference to a loose notion of Strauß' proposed 'radikal humanistisch motivierte Kritik an der Jetztzeit'.⁸

To confuse reception of the allusion to 'Bauen Wohnen Denken' further, Willer picks up the main themes articulated by Heidegger in the essay and suggests that these are developed by Strauß not in *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* but in another work altogether: namely in 'die Einstiegssätze der *Fehler des Kopisten*'.⁹ The opening sentences of this biographical prose work of 1997 in which Strauß sketches the construction of his new house in the Uckermark present Willer with, he claims, 'einen entscheidenden Hinweis: Es handelt sich um das "Bauen"'.¹⁰ The linguistic echo and structural correspondence between *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* and Heidegger's essay are then mentioned by Willer as an aside as 'dessen offenkundige Parodie in der Verzeichnung des Titels' without, for example, considering further the significance of the shift in terms between both titles.¹¹ If Strauß is offering a parody of the Heideggerian essay, it would be as well to know of what and to what end.

⁷ Thomas, *Botho Strauß und die 'Konservative Revolution'*, p.186.

⁸ Thomas, *Botho Strauß und die 'Konservative Revolution'*, p.186.

⁹ Willer, *Botho Strauß*, p.119.

¹⁰ Willer, *Botho Strauß*, p.119. Strauß opens the work: 'Auf einem Hügel in der Uckermark baute ich ein weißes Haus, und eigentlich sind es zwei, ein größeres mit dem Blick in eine weite Wiesensenke, begrenzt vom Wald im Süden, dem Jakobsdorfer Forst. Und ein kleineres in seinem Rücken für Gäste, die nie kommen, mit einem Heizungsraum und einem Zimmer fürs Klavier', in Strauß, *Die Fehler des Kopisten*, p.7.

¹¹ Willer, *Botho Strauß*, p.120.

Hage, a commentator personally closely associated with Strauß, particularly as editor of two of his prose works and through the latter's publications and interviews in *Der Spiegel*, does raise the question of how Strauß has amended the three-fold designation of Heidegger's essay.¹² He not only mentions the specific allusion to 'Bauen Wohnen Denken' but also intriguingly raises the question of the changes Strauß introduces. He refers to 'die semantische Verschiebung zwischen den Titeln': but although these appear, as he says, 'aufschlußreich' he fails to develop this further.¹³

The significance of the transformation in terms – notably the continuity of *Wohnen* and the absence of 'Denken' and 'Bauen' and their replacement by *Lügen* and *Dämmern* – as well as their relative prioritisation is an important consideration in this chapter. The reading suggests that the shift in two of the terms and retention of *Wohnen* signal important further characteristics for mankind's – distorted – ontological relationship to world and its experience outlined in the preceding chapter, and the involvement of language for both. Moreover, Strauß' particular understanding of the terms *Lügen*, *Dämmern* and *Wohnen*, as the argument shows, deepens the view of his incorporation of Heideggerian thought, specifically in relation to language.

Aside from the persistence of the single designation *Wohnen* and Strauß' introduction of two different terms, the other obvious connection between both titles is the structural relationship between the three words: this is retained in Strauß' title exactly as in Heidegger's. The absence of commas, dashes, colons or any other grammatical signifier

¹² The Strauß works with a postscript by Hage include, Strauß, B. *Über Liebe. Geschichten und Bruchstücke* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1989) and Strauß, B. *Gedankenfluchten* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Suhrkamp, 1999). His main interviews with Strauß include Hage, 'Schreiben ist eine Séance', in Radix, (ed.) *Strauß lesen*, pp.188-217 and Hage, 'Der Dichter nach der Schlacht', pp.179-189.

¹³ Hage, 'Nachwort', in Strauß, *Gedankenfluchten*, p.92.

denoting a specific relation between the verbal nouns suggests their relative interdependence. In Strauß' title, just as *Wohnen* invokes a particular experience for mankind with language as the present chapter concludes, it also evokes an association with the other two designations, *Dämmern* and *Lügen*. Each term stands alone yet is bound with the others in relation to the suggested absent and forgotten experience with language.¹⁴ Moreover, importantly, the trilogy does not signal a movement from one designation, *Wohnen*, to another, *Lügen*, by way of a third, *Dämmern*, each suggesting either a regression or progression from one state to another. Thus, Strauß' title is not, for example, a tri-partite descriptor of decline. Nor, in keeping with the argument developed in respect of *Linie*-structured *Wahrnehmung* in *Beginnlosigkeit*, does it represent a dialectic leading towards a synthesis in *Wohnen* of concerns associated with *Lügen* or *Dämmern*. The heading for this chapter, therefore, pointedly inverts the trilogy of Strauß' work with a view to considering the relationship of each term to the underlying thematic concern of the fragments of the work, namely mankind's relationship in late modernity to language, its impoverished philosophical status and the possibility for an originary alternative.

¹⁴ The present argument uses the more evocative, if opaque, notion of an 'experience *with*' language, rather than the more conventional formulation, namely to have an 'experience *of*' something. This is intended to invoke characteristics of mankind's retrieval and immanent experience with an originary, forgotten and absent sense of language, derived from Heideggerian thought, that comes to be associated by Strauß with the term *Wohnen*. Heidegger describes this as: 'Mit etwas, sei es ein Ding, ein Mensch, [...], eine Erfahrung machen heißt, daß es uns widerfährt, daß es uns trifft, über uns kommt, uns umwirft und verwandelt. Die Rede vom "machen" meint in dieser Wendung gerade nicht, daß wir die Erfahrung durch uns bewerkstelligen; machen heißt hier: durchmachen, erleiden, das uns Treffende empfangen', in Heidegger, M. 'Das Wesen der Sprache', in *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, p.159. As the argument shows, like the experience with *Fleck*, it is not experience in the Faustian sense of *greifen* described by Goethe, conceived as definitively understanding something, but rather as being open in understanding to that which is.

Amongst critics, Windrich provides the most detailed consideration of Strauß' relationship to Heidegger, charting the development of his thinking from an early involvement with Critical Theory through to a debt to the 'Freiburger Philosoph'.¹⁵ The analysis, as it is highlighted in Chapter One, charts this transition from Strauß' *Paare*, *Passanten* through the play *Ithaka* and onto *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*. Windrich, however, in contrast to the argument just outlined, does contend that Strauß envisages a progressive movement through the title's three-fold designation in the different figures of the prose work. This change, he reasons, results from the figures' respective relationships to language and each other. Thus, while he rightly posits that Strauß' aim in the work is to hypothesize as he puts it, 'ein neues Sprechen', Windrich's is a conception of language viewed directly as communication.¹⁶ As the following discussion shows, this is antithetical to Heidegger's thinking on language and Strauß' adoption of such ideas.

The desire amongst Strauß' figures for a change to language arises, Windrich suggests, from a failure to create meaningful relationships through establishment of a new code of linguistic conventions and uses. Windrich locates this semantic crisis – namely the inability to create a sustainable, collectively agreed notion of meaning and, therefore, of communicability – in the philosophical breach arising from structuralist arguments on the arbitrary linguistic relation of signifier to signified. This is, of course, an argument central to Steiner's conception of the crisis of *real presences* and the status of the word in modernity after Mallarmé. Windrich argues that in the different episodes in Strauß' work:

deutet sich an, inwiefern *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* die [...] Konzeption der Bipolarität aufgreift. [...] darin spiegelt sich aber der Appell, die

¹⁵ Windrich, *Das Aus für das Über*, p.106.

¹⁶ Windrich, *Das Aus für das Über*, p.105.

innersprachliche Bedeutung nicht mit dem wirklichen Gegenstand zu identifizieren, sondern deren Auseinander zu unterstreichen.¹⁷

Thus, what he classifies as the absence of meaning in language – of ‘die Struktur der konkreten Benennung’ – acts as the defining influence on Strauß’ figures and their sense of language in *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*.

Furthermore, Windrich describes figures in the work trying to re-connect to a lost form of language, the source for which he identifies in Heidegger, and posits that Strauß is searching instead for ‘sprachliche Enklaven’ within which to constitute meaning and meaningful relationships.¹⁸ Critically, after advancing the idea of limits to signification of contemporary language, Windrich contends that the search for a new language – although it ultimately remains unclear wherein its novelty lies – is to be found in the way exchanges between the figures in the work are portrayed. Thus, he argues of certain fragments that: ‘Die Erforschung der neuen Sprache gestaltet sich also als Frage nach [...] dem intentionalen Bereich des Gegenübers’.¹⁹ Windrich contends that the conversational exchanges between Strauß’ figures variously function ‘als Beispiel für das neue Sprechen’.²⁰

However, it is precisely in these dialogues and the attempt to ground a new language that Windrich is forced to concede that Strauß signals his departure from Heideggerian thought. He thus argues for Strauß’, ‘Abweichung gegenüber Heideggers Konzeption von

¹⁷ Windrich, *Das Aus für das Über*, p.74.

¹⁸ Windrich, *Das Aus für das Über*, p.96.

¹⁹ Windrich, *Das Aus für das Über*, p.99.

²⁰ Windrich, *Das Aus für das Über*, p.99.

wahrem Sprechen' in favour of an idea of the *other* found in Lévinas' *l'Autre*.²¹ Based specifically on Lévinas' philosophical rejection of Heidegger's conception of *Ereignis* – which for this thesis is fundamental, or foundational, for Strauß' writing as the following two chapters show – Windrich claims that Strauß projects the idea of a new order of language, as 'das authentische Sprechen', only in conjunction with the *other*, in 'die Berührung mit dem Anderen'.²²

The interpretive significance and value of Windrich's thesis lies not only in initiating critical moves to resist the fatalism charge against Strauß, highlighted in Chapter One, but also in the attempt to address the specific Heideggerian allusion of Strauß' *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*. He makes the first case in the secondary literature for showing the philosophical provenance of the terms in Strauß' work, which goes some way to clarifying the apparent lack of continuity that troubles critics such as Korte. For Windrich, Strauß intends the title 'als Huldigung' to Heidegger notwithstanding what he sees as his major 'Änderungen und Abweichungen' from the philosopher.²³

However, this chapter argues that Windrich overlooks the philosophical imperative of *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, given the proximity of Strauß' portrayal of language to Heidegger's thought not only in adoption of terms but also in the exploration of his ideas in the narrative fragments. Strauß does not extricate himself from such thinking on

²¹ Windrich, *Das Aus für das Über*, p.103. He links Lévinas' *l'Autre* to structuralist arguments on language: 'Da [...] die Überschreitung hingegen auf die diesseitige Alterität verweist, kann man die [...] Veränderungen (in respect of Heidegger [MJ]) als zwei Gesichtspunkte ein und desselben Prozesses begreifen. Das in *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* entwickelte sprachphilosophische Modell hat vom Ausgangspotential – dem mit Lévinas' Gedankengut aufgeladenen Komplex der ursprünglichen Wortstiftung – also eine klar bestimmte Schicht abgestoßen, nämlich all das, was mit der Möglichkeit zur binären Verständigung korrespondiert', in Windrich, *Das Aus für das Über*, p.103.

²² Windrich, *Das Aus für das Über*, p.105.

²³ Windrich, *Das Aus für das Über*, p.106.

language with recourse to an ethics found in Lévinas' *other*. Central to the contention presented here is an understanding of the significance of Strauß' portrayal of couples in the different episodes as the site both for the overt symptoms of a crisis in language and the prospect of communicative exchange – or rather, the lack of it – in overcoming this.

Strauß shows the crisis of language in late modernity through a portrayal of the failure of dialogue – in a riposte to Habermasian notions of communicative language – thereby limiting the prospect of any meaningful, founded communion between individuals. He does not, therefore, suggest a basis for salvation, be it linguistic or otherwise, in the potential exchange with the *other* as Windrich maintains. Strauß' views on language have a deeper philosophical reach.

Instead, the argument contends, it is the individual severed from the corroding conventions of social and dialogical intercourse, and a corresponding normative view of language, that enables Strauß to portray the figures glimpsing or retrieving a now absent experience with what is termed originary language. Furthermore, it is specifically the monological characteristic – and not the dialogical conventions – of language that manifests the possibility of such an experience. The monological nature of such language, in turn, is deeply connected to Strauß' thinking on the *poetic*.

The extent of Strauß' indebtedness to Heidegger, thus, leads to an interpretive divergence from Windrich. As Windrich re-inscribes a Steinerian view of meaning on the basis of dialogue or the encounter with the *other* he needs to introduce the Lévinasian ethical relation and the notion of *l'Autre* to his argument even though he acknowledges the

contradictory philosophical foundation of his position.²⁴ Moreover, although Windrich rightly notes that Strauß' main pre-occupation in *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* is with language, the precise connection to Heidegger's 'Bauen Wohnen Denken' remains unformulated, just as it is amongst those other commentators that identify the allusion of prose work to philosophical essay. Critically, this turns on Heidegger's notion of *Ereignis*. This is largely because, on a casual reading, the two works appear concerned with quite distinct ideas.

Amongst commentators of Strauß, Wiesberg is typical in offering a synopsis of the opening, explicit intent of Heidegger's essay. He summarises this as asking after 'was das Wohnen sei und inwiefern das Bauen in das Wohnen gehöre. Das Hören auf das Wort Bauen erschließt dieses als eine Grundbefindlichkeit des Menschen'.²⁵ According to Wiesberg, Heidegger goes on to argue that:

Bauen ist nicht nur Mittel zum Wohnen, sondern in sich selber bereits ein Wohnen. Bauen markiert die Weise, in welcher sich der Mensch [...] einrichtet. Das Bauen als Wohnen verstanden entfaltet erst ein Bauen, das pflegt, und ein Bauen, das Bauten errichtet.²⁶

While this is certainly acceptable as a cursory summary of the overt transformation in terms through which Heidegger's exposition moves – although it does not illuminate much of its philosophical import – what it leaves out of consideration is the important emphasis Heidegger makes at the outset of the essay. 'Bauen Wohnen Denken' does not just offer either an etymological exegesis of three words that brings to light their mutual

²⁴ See section 1.5. See, also, Davis' considerations on the notion of Lévinas' *l'Autre* and the implication for the philosophical relationship to Heidegger in Davis, *Levinas*, pp.34-62.

²⁵ Wiesberg, 'Botho Strauss', p.115. Heidegger himself sets out the direction of his argument: 'Wir fragen: 1. Was ist das Wohnen? 2. Inwiefern gehört das Bauen in das Wohnen?', in Heidegger, 'Bauen Wohnen Denken', p.139.

²⁶ Wiesberg, 'Botho Strauss', p.116.

inter-connection or a manifesto for the right life as Wiesberg appears to claim.²⁷ The propensity to attribute an ethics to Strauß, as both Wiesberg and Windrich do, whether directly or through inference, appears irresistible. The affinity between Strauß' prose work and Heidegger's late essay, though, resides elsewhere.

Rather, the argument of Heidegger's essay is developed around more fundamental concerns and in this draws closer to thinking about or on language. Critically, Heidegger continues, to reflect on the questions that signal his intent – 'Was ist das Wohnen?' and 'Inwiefern gehört das Bauen in das Wohnen?' – is actually to engage in and reflect on language. Heidegger thereby inflects the focus of the essay away simply from 'Bauen' or 'Wohnen' as conventionally conceived:

Der Zuspruch über das Wesen einer Sache kommt zu uns aus der Sprache, vorausgesetzt, daß wir deren eigenes Wesen achten. Inzwischen freilich rast ein zügelloses und zugleich gewandtes Reden, Schreiben und Senden von Gesprochenem um den Erdball. Der Mensch gebärdet sich, als sei *er* Bildner und Meister der Sprache, während *sie* doch die Herrin des Menschen bleibt. [...]. Unter allen Zusprüchen, die wir Menschen von uns her *mit* zum Sprechen bringen können, ist die Sprache der höchste und der überall erste.²⁸

The passage raises a number of issues in relation to language central to *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* and the question as to how Strauß adopts and adapts Heidegger's thinking. Strauß' treatment of language and its portrayal in the form of narrative vignettes or *poetic* fragments not only shows the limits of mankind's current language use and corresponding state of exile. It also raises what in Chapter Two is called ontological

²⁷ 'Dieser Zusammenhang von Bauen und Wohnen bestimmt das Wohnen als einen Grundzug des Seins. [...] Aus dem Wohnen ergibt sich eine Aufgabe. Sie besteht darin, das Wohnen in das Volle seines Wesens zu bringen. Das Wohnen in das Volle seines Wesens bringen heißt, aus dem richtig verstandenen Wohnen bauen und für das Wohnen denken', in Wiesberg, 'Botho Strauss', p.116.

²⁸ Heidegger, 'Bauen Wohnen Denken', p.140. Emphasis in original. The passage is repeated almost verbatim in Heidegger's other essay dealing with *Wohnen*, '... dichterisch wohnet der Mensch ...', in Heidegger *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, pp.181ff. This suggests the importance for *Wohnen* for poetry and the *poetic*, a motif and characteristic of originary language and its experience developed fully in Chapter Five.

concern for how the world is disclosed for mankind in language: and how mankind stands in a particular relationship of openness to and withdrawal from this originary experience with language. It is, of course, a claim central to this thesis and leads to a sense of a *poetics of dwelling* in Strauß' works.

Before considering further Heidegger's thinking on language as it is raised in 'Bauen Wohnen Denken' – how 'das Wesen einer Sache zu uns aus der Sprache [kommt]' – and reflecting how Strauß incorporates this in *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* it is worth illustrating those terms already highlighted of the experience with language, the relationship between language and mankind and how these are manifested through Strauß' figures. It will then become clearer how the enigmatic fragments in *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* are best understood in the light of Heideggerian thought.

Of the thirty-eight episodes making up *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* one in particular is emblematic for Strauß' underlying thematic and philosophical concern with language. It is a shorter fragment and shows an elderly couple waiting alone in a café, removed from any recognisable social context or milieu. They are described by Strauß as 'alte Übersetzer' who sit during twilight hours 'auf der abendlichen Straße': they are imaged as 'Gestelle der Dauer'.²⁹ In a further simile, they are portrayed as statues permanently united by a joint endeavour: 'Aufgeschlossene, Ragende. [...] des gleichen Schritts, der runden Beugung über das gemeinsame Tagwerk'.³⁰ What is it that this 'Paar allein' is doing or hoping to experience?

²⁹ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.32.

³⁰ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.32.

As they wait in a condition of passivity – what is shown over the coming reading to be a vital characteristic of attempts to retrieve an experience with a now absent, originary language – they are described as listening out for, or rather attending to, something unconventional: ‘etwas [...] aus der sich ständig entziehenden Sprache’.³¹ Strauß deepens the enigma surrounding the couple. He writes: ‘Die lange in die Sprache lauschen, schweigen, verhoffen wie das Wild auf der Lichtung [...]’.³² The simile is evocative. The manner of attending to language lacks the recognisable parameters of human cognition, for example, sight. Sound, as in *Beginnlosigkeit*, is the important sense for experiencing language as they hope to enact it. Their response is not mediated first or exclusively by reason. As Strauß notes later in the fragment, the couple wait in a state of ‘animalischen Schweigens’, a preparatory, anticipatory way of being for the experience with language.³³

The couple attempt what is described as ‘einen neuen Versuch’: it is implied that previous failed efforts precede the beginning of the vignette.³⁴ In total, the fragment portrays two such attempts. As noted, Windrich claims this as paradigmatic of the search for new orders of language based on the couple’s encounter. But this is to misunderstand Strauß’ delineation of language, which is developed with greater circumspection. As he writes of the couple’s mysterious efforts:

Sie suchen beide das zu erreden, was fehlt, spärlich zwar, unzufrieden mit jedem zu früh ergriffenen Wort.³⁵

Significantly, their attempt at retrieval is neither dialogue nor a joint or collaborative articulation. Strauß declares this unambiguously: ‘Nicht er spricht zu ihr, nicht sie zu

³¹ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.32.

³² Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.32.

³³ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.33.

³⁴ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.32.

³⁵ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.32.

ihm'.³⁶ The couple is most definitely not trying to speak to one another in a way that could be characterised as conventional communication. Language is imaged as absent and withdrawn from the couple and, therefore, it is suggested, from mankind. Their agency over it is lost: language is, thus, something not directly linked to mankind, although some connection or relation prevails.

In the attempt to approach this absent language the couple seek a transformation of their conventional language uses. Strauß notes of their efforts: 'es handelt sich um Übersetzung'.³⁷ Transformation is a good rendering of 'Übersetzung', suggesting both a spatial character to their endeavour and unsettling of habituated linguistic categories, and pointedly for the present reading evokes Heidegger's transformative method briefly described in relation to his essay on Heraclitus' 'Logos'. As there, so in this fragment, Strauß clearly differentiates the couple's attempt to regain this missing language from a rationally-based exercise in linguistics or philology. He notes emphatically that their efforts are 'nicht die eines literarischen oder wissenschaftlichen Werks'.³⁸ Transformation also evokes the flash, or momentary sense, of the experience.³⁹

³⁶ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.32.

³⁷ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.32.

³⁸ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.32.

³⁹ Strauß' writing is replete with similar examples, including: 'Zwei Gänger, der eine schwächig und mittelgroß, der andere aber hager und leicht gebeugt, nickend beide, wie immer, wenn einer den anderen nur bestätigen konnte. Sie gingen vernunftbetont und in sich gekehrt. Doch unversehens, ohne sich gegenseitig an den Ärmel zu greifen, jeder aus dem ureigenen Entsetzen heraus, blieben sie gleichzeitig stehen. Da sagte zuerst der schwächige Mann: "Das ist er! Der sprichwörtliche Zusammenbruch. Der Fausthieb der Gewißheit, plötzlich die Welt nicht mehr zu verstehen. Das Hereinbrechen von Weltfremde"', in Strauß, 'Wollt ihr das totale Engineering?'. The extract repeats many motifs of the 'Alte Übersetzer' fragment.

The old couple move in their transformation of certain words towards what Strauß terms ‘die Sprache des Dritten’.⁴⁰ This is the first of three delineations from the fragment that the present argument contends are central to understanding the presentation of language in *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*. This *Sprache des Dritten* is the term for that absent language, long forgotten, enigmatic and without recognisable form. However, despite its absence, for the old couple it still resonates with significance. As Strauß writes: ‘Was sein unbarmherziger Nachhall den beiden Alten zu verstehen gibt, ist dunkel, schwer zu ordnen’.⁴¹ Like the characteristics of *Fleck* described in the previous chapter the sense of this absent language is of something numinous and dark.

The fragment relays two moments when the couple try to experience and attend on this elusive language.⁴² A number of words, significantly each classical in origin, arise during their silent vigil. Each evokes an indeterminate meaning before prompting another equally suggestive but imprecise uttering. The manifestation of this language in the form of ancient Greek suggests its originary source: elsewhere in the episode Strauß refers to its ‘Urweise’. The couple’s first attempt is described:

In den Katalekten ... heißt soviel wie ... im Aufhörenden überliefert ...
 ἀνθήρος ... ein blühend Ende ... ἀνθεμιζομαι γοεδνα ... soviel wie des
 Jammers Blüte pflücken ...⁴³

Importantly, aside from the idea of a final and inexorable end to life suggested by ἀνθήρος, each successive word evokes the sense of an erosion to fixed and stable meaning: each phrase and subsequent revision is an approximation of the last. As Strauß

⁴⁰ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.32.

⁴¹ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.32.

⁴² Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.33.

⁴³ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.32. See the related roots, ἀνθέω: to bloom or burst into flower; ἀνημόεις: flowery, flowered; γοερός: lamentable, mournful, of persons mourning, in Liddle & Scott *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon. Founded upon the Seventh Edition of Liddle and Scott’s Greek-English Lexicon*. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1889).

goes on to reflect of the couple's first failed attempt, conjuring up the arguments advanced in relation to *Anwesenheit* in 'Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt': 'Dii verba invertunt. Wörter, die neinen, was sie nennen ...'.⁴⁴ The language that the old couple attempts to retrieve cannot be articulated by conventional linguistic measures. Once this absent, originary language is formed into words by either one or other in the couple, and is spoken in accordance with the normal precepts of conventional language, understood as dialogue, it negates the naming – *das Nennen* – of language. Strauß has the couple reflect: 'Si comprehendis non est Deus. Nicht sagen, wovon man redet'.⁴⁵ The distinction made here between language as speaking, and *Reden* understood as *uttering* is the second characteristic of this originary language and forms an important consideration in this chapter, unifying each of the three terms of the title. It is the latter experience with language, as *uttering* – as Strauß puts it, language 'erreden' – that has a particular force for Strauß and the figures in *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*.

The approach taken by the old couple in their search for the *Sprache des Dritten* bears direct comparison with the 'Er'-figure in *Beginnlosigkeit*. Forming part of the *Sondenexperiment*, the experience of *Fleck* is not mediated by conventional physical sensation. As in Jones's poem 'Anathémata', mankind's response originally is one of being receptive to world and things; of belonging to them, hence the emphasis by Strauß on Heideggerian notions of *Gehören* and *Hören*. So too in *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, the *Sprache des Dritten* manifests itself in certain words that defy conventional mechanisms for conceptualising language. Strauß writes:

⁴⁴ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.32.

⁴⁵ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.32.

Das Wort wird auf den Lippen, im Ohr, im Sinn, in der Fügung geprüft – und von beiden verworfen. [...]. Sie sinnend stundenlang auf ein gemeinsames Wort. Welchen Hof, welchen Beiklang, welche Urweise, welcher verschollenen Ruf streift das Wort?⁴⁶

Instead, the old couple respond in a particular way to each manifestation of this originary language.

The old couple wait for the second of the attempts to draw near to and experience the enigmatic manifestation of language. Notions of causation and volition are suspended in trying to isolate the source of the experience. The couple do not initiate it but wait. All they do is sit passively, occasionally making small hand movements and gestures: ‘die alten Finger berühren sich in der Mitte des Tisches, tippen sich an, wenn etwas zu kommen scheint’.⁴⁷ But importantly, the absent language – ‘die sich ständig entziehende Sprache’ – is not the source for contact between the couple either.⁴⁸ The *Sprache des Dritten* is not imaged as a hypostasized subject in its own right, deciding on its presence or absence, its proximity and removal from the couple and mankind. Instead such language is shown as a constant: ‘die Sprache des Dritten, der so lange mit ihnen war und sie plötzlich verließ’.⁴⁹

Under these circumstances the couple attempt the second experience with originary language. Words manifest themselves from an unknown source and draw near for the couple. As Strauß describes:

⁴⁶ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.32.

⁴⁷ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.32. The repeated motif of how originary experience with language is granted to mankind is considered briefly in section 4.4.3 below.

⁴⁸ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.32.

⁴⁹ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.32. My emphasis.

Sie klauben's einander von den Lippen, den umherirrenden Blicken, den tappenden Fingern. Und während der eine vielleicht im Zustand des innersten [...] Schweigens verharrt.⁵⁰

One of the couple sinks into a deep lassitude just as the other briefly glimpses, or rather utters, the third designation important for Strauß' presentation of language in *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, which along with *die Sprache des Dritten* and *Reden* underpins the present reading. Just as one part of the couple waits silently:

streift gerade die andere ein Wind von Stimmen, so daß es ihr leicht, ohne Zutun, zweisilbig von den Lippen fliegt ... 'Laßkraft!' ruft sie schnell und zieht eine neue Grenze, 'soviel wie Laßkraft', es beginnt eine neue Versuchsanordnung.⁵¹

Laßkraft, appears to denote the manner in which mankind retrieves the possibility of originary language. Moreover, the designation – *Laßkraft*, a union of passivity and activity in the imperative of the verb *lassen* and noun *Kraft* – is similar to the culmination of the experience of *Fleck* in *Beginnlosigkeit* in certain oxymorons: in the conjunction of the rationally irreconcilable in certain words.⁵² However, at the moment the word is uttered, it is qualified. Just as in the couple's first attempted experience with originary language and the indeterminate revision of the ancient Greek, ἀνθρώπος and ἀνθεμιζομαι γοεδνα, so this particular manifestation is sensed as failing. The old couple's second attempt falls short like the first. Concluding his portrayal, Strauß reflects: 'Aber auch dieses Wort, erzeugt von einer Unzahl vermiedener, trifft es nicht'.⁵³

⁵⁰ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.33.

⁵¹ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.32. Emphasis in original.

⁵² In Grimm's *Wörterbuch* 'lasz' is defined as: 'müde, matt; die eigentliche Bedeutung zurückstehend, [...] ist nhd. auf das schlaffwerden der körper- und geisteskräfte eingeschränkt worden', in Grimm, J. & W. *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, Vol.VI (Leipzig: Hinzel, 1885).

⁵³ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.33.

The failure, though, is not absolute. In an image resonant of *Beginnlosigkeit*, the manifestation of *die Sprache des Dritten* as *Laßkraft* shines some light on the darkness associated earlier in the fragment with the withdrawal of language. As Strauß describes, while the word does not directly manifest originary language, in the attempt the word ‘funkelt [ein wenig] wie das Positionslicht der Fähre auf dem nächtlichen Fluß’.⁵⁴ However, the word *Laßkraft*, as the conclusion to this chapter shows, offers a sounding for, and is brought by Strauß in the final longest fragment of the work into a momentary conjunction with, an experience of the originary *Sprache des Dritten* as *uttering*, in turn, itself invoked as *Wohnen*.

Nevertheless, in this particular fragment, the individual words ἀνθρώπος and *Laßkraft*, partial manifestations of an originary language, uttered in isolation by one of the couple, contrary to what Windrich claims, offer no sustainable insight into or communicative praxis for the *Sprache des Dritten*. As Strauß concludes the short vignette on the ‘Alte Übersetzer’ and their experiences: ‘Doch es gelangt nicht über sich selbst hinaus, führt nicht zu einer Aussage, die dem Wesen der Vergangenheit des Dritten im mindesten *entspräche*’.⁵⁵

In this final observation by Strauß lies an important suggestion as to the nature of the underlying concern with language in *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*. Herein lies the fundamental allusion to and affinity with Heidegger’s essay. At issue is a reflection on what is termed *das Wesen* of the *Sprache des Dritten*: a reflection that – and Strauß’ choice of the verb *entsprechen* is further significant – denotes both a relationship to

⁵⁴ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.33. See also Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, pp.126-127.

⁵⁵ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.33. My emphases.

originary language and also suggests that it is this *Sprache des Dritten* that speaks. What does Strauß propose by this? With each of his fragments, which are often startlingly similar both in motifs and terms used, an attempt is made in his writing to bring out or make manifest the characteristics of this originary language.

It is the contention of this chapter that these difficult, allusive and elusive terms in *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* can only be understood as references to Heideggerian ontology, in particular his thinking about and on language. Once recognised, only then can a better attempt be made, in what is a mirroring of the old couple's experience of drawing near to language, to offer a reading of what Strauß himself proposes thereof in *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* – its originary forms, contemporary conventional uses and mankind's relationship to both – and what he means by the *Sprache des Dritten*, language as *Reden* as *uttering* and *Laßkraft*. The argument, therefore, initially returns to Heidegger's 'Logos' essay.

4.2 Heidegger and language: *Das Wesen der Sprache (des Dritten)*

The attempt to draw out how Strauß has taken up Heidegger's thinking on language is made problematic by the absence of a discrete set of ideas or system in Heidegger's later writings that can be described as a philosophy of language conceived, for example, in the analytical or positivist traditions. There is no single exposition on language that can be viewed as a categorical statement of a position. Rather, language remains a continual concern, from *Sein und Zeit* to the later works. As the collection of essays most overtly

concerned with this issue makes clear: in his writing Heidegger's thinking on language remains *Unterwegs zur Sprache*.

The reflections, however, do undergo a distinctive shift as the emphasis of thought moves away from a primary consideration of *Dasein* as the basis for reflecting on *die Frage nach dem Sinn von Sein*. Although interpretations differ as to the motives of this transition in relation to language the import of the change is not in dispute.⁵⁶ The transition can be described as a movement from certain problems in the language of philosophy towards a reflection in language of the concerns of his philosophy, the distinction between the content of the arguments and the form of their presentation in the later writings becoming almost impossible to determine. As Thomä notes: 'Was Heidegger von der Sprache hält, wird nicht einfach *mitgeteilt*, sondern zeigt sich in seiner philosophischen Sprache selbst'.⁵⁷

To bring thinking on language close to the guiding philosophical question, Heidegger brings into consideration terms that touch on the relationship between language and mankind. These include; *Sage(n)*, *Nennen*, *Heißen*, *Ruf(en)*, *Ge-Hör(en)*, *Rede(n)*, *Läut(en)* and *Ge-schick(en)*. Each is understood both as noun and verb and all are refined and inflected across the later lectures and essays. The adoption of some of these terms by

⁵⁶ Rorty, for example, claims of the changing emphasis on language: 'the stock of language rises as that of *Dasein* falls, as Heidegger worries more and more about the possibility that his earlier work has been infected with the "humanism" characteristic of the age of the world picture, [...], and that Husserl had had a point when he said that *Being and Time* was merely anthropology', in Rorty, R. 'Wittgenstein, Heidegger and the reification of language', in Guignon, C. *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp.350.

⁵⁷ Thomä, D. 'Die späten Texte über Sprache, Dichtung und Kunst. Im "Haus des Seins": eine Ortsbesichtigung', in Thomä, D. (ed.) *Heidegger Handbuch. Leben-Werk-Wirkung* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2003), p.308. Emphasis in original.

Strauß is already noted in the brief exegesis of the ‘Alte Übersetzer’ fragment. Others, as the reading comes to show, arise elsewhere in *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*.

Any attempt that seeks to re-tread the path of Heidegger’s thinking on language, then, is fraught with expository lacunae. Bruns, for example, in his seminal study on language and poetry in the late lectures remarks that his thought ‘is impossible to explicate coherently because it is, structurally, a wayward mixture of metaphors. Heidegger’s language doesn’t cohere into a self-interpreting system. It is language that confounds the reader’.⁵⁸ The following excerpt taken from the lecture ‘die Sprache’ illustrates both the intimate connection between certain terms or notions – the complex inter-relation of language and mankind suggested by, for example, *sprechen*, *Sage*, *Stille*, *Ereignis* and *das Wesen der Sprache* – and the expository tensions that inhere in such thought:

*Die Sprache spricht als das Geläut der Stille. [...]. Das Geläut der Stille ist nichts Menschliches. Wohl dagegen ist das Menschliche in seinem Wesen sprachlich. Das jetzt genannte Wort ‘sprachlich’ sagt hier: aus dem Sprechen der Sprache ereignet. Das so Ereignete, das Menschenwesen, ist durch die Sprache in sein Eigenes gebracht, daß es dem Wesen der Sprache, dem Geläut der Stille, übereignet bleibt. Solches Ereignen ereignet sich, insofern das Wesen der Sprache, das Geläut der Stille, das Sprechen der Sterblichen braucht, um als Geläut der Stille für das Hören der Sterblichen zu verlauten. Nur insofern die Menschen in das Geläut der Stille gehören, vermögen die Sterblichen auf ihre Weise das verlautende Sprechen.*⁵⁹

Delineating the dense involvement of such thinking, as the introduction to this thesis notes, can easily lead to a pastiche that does not convey the iteratively formed distinctions or philosophical import of the original.⁶⁰ However, for some commentators

⁵⁸ Bruns, *Heidegger’s Estrangements*, p.83.

⁵⁹ Heidegger, M. ‘Die Sprache’, in *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, p.30. Emphases in original. The further significance of the excerpt is considered in the following chapter.

⁶⁰ See, for example, Barbaza, R. E. *Heidegger and a New Possibility of Dwelling* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Lang, 2003). For a helpful contrast in English see Pöggeler’s discussion of the distinction between speaking, saying, silence and stillness, in Pöggeler, *Martin Heidegger’s Path of Thinking*, p.225.

such passages, in which Heidegger attempts a re-inscription of language, its profound involvement with silence and stillness, its fundamentally different ways of saying and speaking, and the manner of its disclosure – engagements with language that are echoed by Strauß – are not the triumph of linguistic solipsism or philosophical nihilism but present a radical engagement with the Western tradition, or collapse previously upheld distinctions between poetry and philosophy, at least as the latter is traditionally conceived.⁶¹

Heidegger's aim is to bring language *as* language into consideration. This necessitates, as he notes in 'Das Wesen der Sprache', to attempt 'mit der Sprache eine Erfahrung zu machen'. However, in immediate qualification of this idea of experience, he reflects in parenthesis on the impossibility of simply retreading the same path:

Sobald wir versuchen, dem nachzusinnen, haben wir uns schon für einen Denkweg entschlossen. Hier gelingen uns jetzt nur wenige Schritte. Sie führen nicht fort, sondern zurück, dahin, wo wir schon sind.⁶²

Between Heidegger's original and any subsequent exposition resides an irreconcilable tension.

Nevertheless, in the spirit of Heidegger's methodological aside, the following re-examines the 'Logos' essay, familiar from Chapter Two, in light of selected positions advanced in the collection of essays on language in *Unterwegs zur Sprache*. The

⁶¹ For example, Bruns who writes of this particular passage: "The peal of stillness", he says, "is not anything human". We ought to allow this line to sink in. [...]. So it is no wonder that we are in the dark. [...]. It is just possible that all that Heidegger has to say about language is contained in (the passage [MJ]). What is it, after all, for us to belong to language? What is belonging when *gehören* is a pun on listening? What is it for us to be taken up [...] to language in the event called *Ereignis*? What does the expression *das Wesen der Sprache* mean when it is characterized as "the peal of stillness"?', in Bruns, *Heidegger's Estrangements*, pp.96 and 97. The passage and relation of language to silence and stillness is developed in relation to Strauß' most cryptic work, 'Sigé' in *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit* in the following chapter.

⁶² Heidegger, 'Das Wesen der Sprache', p.208.

particular defined focus of the present thesis necessitates a degree of selective excerption, identifying those terms adopted by Strauß and showing their underlying philosophical concern while passing over others. Such an exposition, it is hoped, demonstrates the close parallel between aspects of Heidegger's thought and the ideas suggested by Strauß in the 'Alte Übersetzer' fragment. At that point the argument returns to *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* to consider how Strauß himself transforms the language of Heidegger's thought in the literary vignettes or *poetic* fragments of the work.

4.2.1 *Logos as Ereignis: das Wesen der Sprache*

The exegesis of Strauß' 'Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt' and Heidegger's 'Logos' essay shows the import of *Anwesenheit* and *Logos* for both writer and philosopher. Moreover, after establishing the distinctive emphasis that Strauß makes for these terms in his examples of *real presences*, particularly in deepening the philosophical resonance to Steiner's hypothesis of a correspondence relationship between word and world, Chapter Two sets out the premise to this thesis by suggesting the affinity to Heidegger of Strauß' particular inflection of these terms. Although Strauß' and Heidegger's essays are ostensibly engaged with distinct enquiries – Strauß primarily considers the work of art and Heidegger the word Λόγος – the argument delineates the affinity around what is called ontological concern with the making manifest or the coming-into-presence, variously, of world, word, poem or painting. However, the chapter also highlights the issue of language, and broadly shows how this is bound to the main questions of Heidegger's thought. The present aim is to develop these ideas and deepen their import.

Heidegger often begins his essays with simple questions that raise an issue with apparently little philosophical resonance. The comments already made of ‘Bauen Wohnen Denken’ point to Heidegger’s deployment of just such an approach. The apparently naïve interrogatives – for example, ‘was ist das Wohnen?’, ‘was sagt die Formel A=A [...]?’ or, elsewhere, ‘wie steht es mit der Nähe?’ and ‘was ist ein Ding?’ – all serve as the starting point for investigations of what come to be fundamental concerns of ontology.⁶³ Thus, the essay, ‘Bauen Wohnen Denken’, far from just a narrow consideration on the nature of *Bauen* and *Wohnen* as Wiesberg suggests, also reflects on ‘den Zuspruch der Sprache’ as the observations above make clear. To get close to answering the question of what *Wohnen* is, it is necessary to attend also to language: in posing the question of *Wohnen* as related to language the essay reflects the erosion of the distinction between content and form in his thinking.⁶⁴

It is primarily a consideration of the simple opening interrogative in the ‘Logos’ essay that guides the exegesis in the earlier chapter. At the outset Heidegger asks: ‘Inwiefern gelangt der eigentliche Sinn von λέγειν, legen, zur Bedeutung von sagen?’⁶⁵ On the surface the essay considers the transformation in meaning of certain words.

Heidegger’s intent is, of course, to experience again Heraclitus’ fragment. As the argument shows, he re-thinks *ὁ Λόγος*, from λέγειν, as ‘die lesende Lege’: first taking λέγειν as *sagen*, then – more originally as he puts it – as *legen* and *lesen*, and the latter

⁶³ See, for example, Heidegger, M. ‘Der Satz der Identität’ in *Identität und Differenz* (Stuttgart: Günther Neske, 11th Edition, 1999), p. 9, and Heidegger, M. ‘Das Ding’ in *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, pp.157-179.

⁶⁴ Heidegger, ‘Bauen Wohnen Denken’, pp.143ff.

⁶⁵ Heidegger, ‘Logos’, p.201.

two as forms of *Sammeln*.⁶⁶ Thus, λέγειν evokes how the world discloses itself, in pre-Socratic thought, to mankind, ‘als gesammelt-vorliegen-lassen’.⁶⁷ Similarly, Heidegger reconsiders *Hören*: *Hören* is not, as it is now conceived in the Western tradition, the ‘Auffangen und Weiterleiten von Lauten’ but conveys attunement to λέγειν, as ‘das eigentliche Hören im Sinne der Horchsamkeit’.⁶⁸ Thus, *Hören*, in turn, shows how mankind originally relates to the disclosure of world in λέγειν: ‘Solches Liegenlassen legt das Vorliegende als ein Vorliegendes’.⁶⁹ On the basis of his exegesis on these terms, prompted by the initial question of how the original sense of λέγειν comes over the course of the Western tradition to denote language, Heidegger reaches his interim conclusion:

Der Λόγος ist die ursprüngliche Versammlung der anfänglichen Lese aus der anfänglichen Lege. ó Λόγος ist: die lesende Lege und nur dieses.⁷⁰

Thus far the emphases of and argument in relation to the ‘Logos’ essay are familiar from the earlier chapter.

However, for Heidegger, the re-interpretation of Heraclitus’ Λόγος brings to light something more fundamental than the ancient, original sense of the word and fragment. As he writes, in the transformation of ó Λόγος: ‘sind [wir] vielmehr auf ein *Ereignis* gestoßen, dessen Ungeheures sich in seiner bislang unbeachteten Einfachheit noch verbirgt’.⁷¹ The present argument proposes that it is a fundamental characteristic of this *Ereignis* – of the enownment of the truth of *das Sein* in and through language – that is

⁶⁶ See Heidegger, ‘Logos’, p.200f.

⁶⁷ Heidegger, ‘Logos’, p.218.

⁶⁸ Heidegger, ‘Logos’, pp.205 and 206.

⁶⁹ Heidegger, ‘Logos’, p.207.

⁷⁰ Heidegger, ‘Logos’, pp.207-208.

⁷¹ Heidegger, ‘Logos’, p.204. My emphasis.

important for an understanding of Strauß' *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*.⁷² For Heidegger, 'das unausdenkliche Geheimnis' that attends the *Ereignis* of Heraclitus' fragment is the making manifest in Λόγος of 'das Wesen der Sprache'. As he writes of his transformation of Λόγος as 'die lesende Lege': 'Ο Λόγος [...] ist die lesende Lege. [...] Ο Λόγος wäre dann der griechische Name für das Sprechen als Sagen, für die Sprache'.⁷³ In order to trace this characteristic of *Ereignis* it is necessary to consider Heidegger's lectures relating to *das Wesen der Sprache* collected in *Unterwegs zur Sprache*. The argument is, thereby, taking the next step towards its central thesis in relation to Strauß.

4.2.2 Absent and proximal language: *die Sprache spricht*

At the conclusion of the 'Logos' essay, Heidegger makes the claim that the originating experience mankind has with *das Wesen der Sprache* is lost from the period of ancient Greek civilisation onwards. Thereafter, language is conceived over the course of the

⁷² The notion of *Ereignis* is developed further in Chapter Five, specifically in respect of the truth claims that Strauß makes for *poetic* language and the work. In the present chapter, the discussion concentrates instead on the wider portrayal of language.

The use of the English 'enownment' for *das Ereignis* reflects the most current translation of Heidegger's *Beiträge zur Philosophie. (Vom Ereignis)*, which breaks with the conventional rendering of the defining idea of Heidegger's late thought as 'the event of appropriation'. See Emad, P. & Maly, K. *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999). For a discussion see the introduction in Scott, C. E. & Schoenbohm, S. M. et alia (eds.) *Companion to Heidegger's Contributions to Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001). Alternatives include Wood's rendering of the term as *Eventuation*, see Wood, D. *Thinking after Heidegger* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002), pp.153ff.

The resonance and scope of *Ereignis* is described by Seubold: 'Wie kann man *Ereignis* in nichtheideggerischer und nichtheideggernder Sprache definieren? – Es ist nicht zu definieren. Welche charakteristischen Eigenschaften kommen dem Ereignis zu? Es hat keine Eigenschaften, wie ein Ding, eine Substanz Eigenschaften hat. Welche Funktion hat es dann? Es erfüllt keine Funktion in der Weise, wie eine Sache oder ein Mensch eine Funktion übernehmen kann. Was macht es dann, dieses ominöse *Ereignis*? "Das Ereignis ereignet". Eine schöne Tautologie also, die uns Heidegger da wieder einmal zuzumuten scheint. [...]. Läßt sich nichts weiter darüber sagen? Doch – und das ist das Problem: fast alles. [...]. Also ist das Ereignis der 'grundlegendste Begriff', den man sich überhaupt denken kann', in Seubold, G. 'Stichwort: Ereignis. Was immer schon geschehen ist, bevor wir etwas tun', in Thomä, D. (ed.) *Heidegger Handbuch. Leben-Werk-Wirkung*, p.302.

⁷³ See Heidegger, 'Logos', p.220.

Western tradition as expression, as an activity undertaken that designates objects and things in the world. For the Greeks:

wurde die Sprache [...] von der Verlautbarung her vorgestellt als φωνή, als Laut und Stimme, phonetisch. [...]. Die Sprache ist φωνή σημαντική, Verlautbarung, die etwas bezeichnet.⁷⁴

It is this conceptualisation of language that still dominates, regardless of which idiom, convention, style, theory or idiolect is used. As Heidegger goes on to note of this transition in the relationship to language: ‘Sprache gilt als Ausdruck und umgekehrt. Jede Art des Ausdrückens stellt man gern als eine Art von Sprache vor’.⁷⁵ It is such forms of language, however they present themselves, that Heidegger wishes to distinguish from his attempts to experience language *as* language. As Thomä notes: ‘die Auffassungen von der Sprache als “Mitteilung” oder “Mittel zur Verständigung”, als “Tätigkeit” als “Aussage” über etwas “Wirkliches oder Unwirkliches”’, are to be differentiated from the experience that the pre-Socratics had with language.⁷⁶

Heidegger thus makes a distinction between the cumulative, habituated conceptualisations and corresponding conventional uses of language and a deeper, originating experience of *Sprache*. The distinction, though, is not formally of register or an order of semantic profundity. As he writes in the opening lecture of *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, in a formulation intended to bewilder just these established conventions in relation to language: ‘Die Sprache selbst ist: die Sprache und nichts außerdem. Die Sprache selbst ist die Sprache’.⁷⁷ Language, regardless of the theoretical or linguistic system within which it is inscribed, is always still language. There are not different types

⁷⁴ Heidegger, ‘Logos’, p.220.

⁷⁵ Heidegger, ‘Logos’, p.221.

⁷⁶ Thomä, ‘Die späten Texte über Sprache’, p.310.

⁷⁷ Heidegger, ‘Die Sprache’, p.12.

of language.⁷⁸ Instead what is key in Heidegger's understanding is the relationship that mankind – who is a linguistic being through and through – has to language and the different experience attendant on that relationship.⁷⁹

However, mankind clearly retains an ongoing relationship to language through current uses: self-evidently language remains something familiar from everyday experiences. Yet paradoxically, and critically for the present reading of Strauß, it is also something strange and remote. Heidegger encapsulates the relationship thus:

Wir sprechen die Sprache. Wie anders können wir der Sprache nahe sein als durch das Sprechen? Dennoch ist unser Verhältnis zur Sprache unbestimmt, dunkel, beinahe sprachlos.⁸⁰

As the argument below substantiates and the above excerpts make clear, Heidegger's delineation of the complex relationship between mankind and *Sprache* resonates with terms and the portrayal of language that Strauß adopts in the 'Alte Übersetzer' fragment from *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*.

In spite of the contention that in its current uses language is something close to mankind, for Heidegger, the conventions of language as they are inscribed in the Western tradition do not offer the basis for an experience with *das Wesen der Sprache*. It is just this experience that is attempted in the opening essay in *Unterwegs zur Sprache*. In it he describes the approach to re-experiencing the originating nature of language. Heidegger writes:

⁷⁸ In discussing his attempt to experience '*die Sprache als die Sprache zur Sprache*' Heidegger writes: 'Dies klingt wie eine Formel. Die Formel gebraucht das Wort "Sprache" dreimal, wobei es jedesmal Anderes und gleichwohl das Selbe sagt', in Heidegger, 'Der Weg zur Sprache', p.242.

⁷⁹ Heidegger writes of mankind's relationship to language: 'Der Mensch spricht. [...]. Wir sprechen ständig in irgendeiner Weise. Wir sprechen, weil Sprechen uns natürlich ist', in Heidegger, 'Die Sprache', p.11.

⁸⁰ Heidegger, 'Das Wesen der Sprache', p.160.

Wir wollen nicht die Sprache überfallen, um sie in den Griff schon festgemachter Vorstellungen zu zwingen. Wir wollen *das Wesen der Sprache* nicht auf einen Begriff bringen, damit dieser eine überall nutzbare Ansicht über die Sprache liefere, die alles Vorstellen beruhigt.⁸¹

To do this Heidegger needs to break with established conceptualisations of language. Central to this is the convention of language understood as *expression*, evidenced of course, in conversation and dialogue. Again, the echoes of the idea resonate in Strauß' fragment where the sense of a lost, originary language is not to be experienced in exchanges between people. Heidegger, unsurprisingly, dispenses with conventions that view language as the expression of internal states of mind (relating to the subject), the articulation of conditions between individuals (inter-subjectivity) or as a system of reference to things (relating to the object-world).⁸² Whilst such different theoretical systems are in themselves 'richtig' they don't allow mankind to draw near to language *as* language.

Rather, for Heidegger – and herein lies the break with conventional linguistic theory – it is language itself and not mankind that speaks.⁸³ He deploys an infamous tautology

⁸¹ Heidegger, 'Die Sprache', p.12. My emphasis.

⁸² Heidegger writes: 'Niemand wird wagen, die Kennzeichnung der Sprache als lautliche Äußerung innerer Gemütsbewegungen, als menschliche Tätigkeit, als ein bildhaft-begriffliches Darstellen für unrichtig zu erklären oder gar als nutzlos zu verwerfen. Das angeführte Betrachten der Sprache ist richtig; [...]. Dennoch lassen sie die älteste Wesensprägung der Sprache völlig unbeachtet. So geleiten sie denn trotz ihres Alters und trotz ihrer Verständlichkeit niemals zur Sprache als Sprache', in Heidegger, 'Die Sprache', pp.15-16. The particular significance of Heidegger's description of conventional language as 'bildhaft-begriffliches Darstellen', the form of language necessary for the technologically-enframed era of the *Weltbild*, is developed below in section 4.3 in relation to Strauß' notion of *Lügen*.

⁸³ 'Für [Heidegger] spricht primär die Sprache, nicht der Mensch. Das menschliche Sprechen ist nur ein Ent-sprechen. [...]. Damit kehrt sich das Verhältnis von Mensch und Sprache um: Der Mensch ist nicht länger der Beherrscher der Sprache, sondern die Sprache die Herrin des Menschen. In eins damit erweist sich sowohl die instrumentale als auch die anthropozentrische Deutung der Sprache als hinfällig', in Kettering, E. *NÄHE. Das Denken Martin Heideggers* (Pfullingen: Günther Neske, 1987), p.280.

intended to unsettle ‘der logisch geschulte, alles durchrechnende und darum meist hochfahrende Verstand’.⁸⁴ But this reflects his approach. Heidegger writes:

Wie west die Sprache als Sprache? Wir antworten: *Die Sprache spricht*. Ist dies im Ernst eine Antwort? Vermutlich schon; dann nämlich, wenn ans Licht kommt, was sprechen heißt.⁸⁵

How, though, is mankind supposed to draw near to language if it is, after all, language that speaks? This involves attending to the *Sage*, or *saying* of language. The experience with language as *saying* – in the manner in which mankind be-speaks this (*die Sprache ent-sprechen*), or as Strauß terms it ‘erreden’, as *uttering* – is distinct from language conceived as *expression*. Heidegger writes:

Aber spricht denn nicht die Sprache selbst? [...]. Indes die *Sprache* spricht. Sie befolgt zuerst und eigentlich das Wesende des Sprechens: das Sagen. Die Sprache spricht, indem sie sagt [...]. Ihr Sagen entquillt der einst gesprochenen und bislang noch ungesprochenen Sage, die den Aufriß des Sprachwesens durchzieht. [...]. Im Sprechen als dem Hören auf die Sprache sagen wir die gehörte Sage nach.⁸⁶

If it is language and not mankind that speaks, now understood as *saying* or *uttering*, how does this manifest itself?

To answer this Heidegger develops the sense of language as *Sage*, as *saying*. Based on a reading of the Stefan George poem entitled ‘Das Wort’ and, in particular, the line ‘Kein ding sei wo das wort gebriht’, Heidegger claims *saying* as it occurs in and through language is, in fact, also *ein Nennen*, a *naming*.⁸⁷ Strauß, of course, adopts this very designation in the ‘Alte Übersetzer’ fragment where the couple’s attempt to articulate the

⁸⁴ Heidegger, ‘Die Sprache’, p.12. For a discussion of Heidegger’s use of tautologies specifically in relation to language see Scheier, C. A. ‘Die Sprache spricht. Heideggers Tautologien’, in *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 47, (1993), pp.60-74.

⁸⁵ Heidegger, ‘Die Sprache’, p.12.

⁸⁶ Heidegger, ‘Der Weg zur Sprache’, pp.254-255. Emphasis in original.

⁸⁷ See Heidegger, M. ‘Das Wesen der Sprache’, pp.162ff and ‘Das Wort’, pp.219ff, in *Unterwegs zur Sprache*.

Sprache des Dritten ends in failure. He comments of their efforts to transform this absent, originary language into a language that they can both comprehend: ‘Wörter, die keinen, was sie *nennen*’.⁸⁸ *Nennen* for Strauß is, then, inextricably associated with the *uttering* of originary language. Importantly, for both Strauß and Heidegger, *Nennen* is distinct both from Steiner’s view of a correspondence between word and thing and structuralist claims for the ultimately arbitrary relationship between signifier and signified. Rather, the *naming* of language, as *saying*, calls world – understood ontologically – into language: it calls that which *is* – whether thing, object, poem or painting – into presence: ‘Im Nennen sind die genannten Dinge in ihr Dingen gerufen’.⁸⁹ The exegetic contortions are unavoidable. *Nennen* and *Anwesenheit* are, unsurprisingly, intimately bound. As Heidegger writes:

Das Nennen verteilt nicht Titel, verwendet nicht Wörter, sondern ruft ins Wort. Das Nennen ruft. [...]. Der Ruf ruft zwar her. So bringt er das Anwesen des vordem Ungerufenen in eine Nähe. Allein, indem der Ruf herruft, hat er dem Gerufenen schon zugerufen. Wohin? In die Ferne, in der Gerufenes weilt als noch Abwesendes.
[...]. Das Rufen ruft in sich und darum stets hin und her; her: ins Anwesen; hin: ins Abwesen.⁹⁰

The argument in respect of language and an acceptance of its ontological status as Heidegger proposes and Strauß develops it in his *poetic* fragments is central to this thesis. It is a vital idea for their respective views on language and intimately bound to the conjunction of the presencing and absencing, or disclosure, of truth. The full implication of the *saying* of language, its truth, is developed in the final chapter on Strauß’ *poetics of dwelling*.

⁸⁸ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.32. My emphasis. See section 4.1.

⁸⁹ Heidegger, ‘Die Sprache’, p.22.

⁹⁰ Heidegger, ‘Die Sprache’, p.21.

Given the complexity and obscurity of these ideas it is easy to dismiss the thought as either a tortuous retreat into empty mysticism or, worse still, embarrassing intellectual errancy. Though lightly made, such judgements fall short of recognising the substantive engagement – its highly unconventional approach acknowledged – with key precepts in the Western tradition. As well as seeking to resist the dominating influence and legacy of established, conventional theories of language and the distortions arising from these, the thought also presents a challenge to the philosophical assumptions underpinning that tradition.

Thus, the *saying* and *naming* of language proposed here counters the representational character and presuppositions of the tradition. In the discussion of how it is that language speaks as *naming*, using the example of the Trakl poem ‘Ein Winterabend’, Heidegger questions, in the iterative neology of his reading, how mankind comes to speak at all in the stanzas. As he writes of one particular couplet:

Doch wir fragen: Inwiefern spricht der Mensch? Wir fragen: Was ist Sprechen?

Wenn der Schnee ans Fenster fällt,
Lang die Abendglocke läutet,

Dieses Sprechen nennt den Schnee, der spät am schwindenden Tag, während die Abendglocke läutet, lautlos das Fenster trifft. Bei solchem Flockenfall währt alles Währende länger. Darum läutet die Abendglocke, die täglich ihre streng begrenzte Zeit hindurch ertönt, lang. Das Sprechen nennt die Winterabendzeit. Was ist dieses Nennen?⁹¹

Heidegger inverts what he contends is the orthodox philosophical bias that names are arbitrary or independent of the thing named. Rather, for mankind to be able to name these things, the things must first speak to mankind before they can, in turn, be named. In this example, the snow, window and vespers-toll speak as *saying* so that their presence

⁹¹ Heidegger, ‘Die Sprache’, p.20.

comes-into-being, which can then be named in and through mankind's own speaking (*Ent-sprechen*). Thus, what is argued for is the ontological priority of language and its attendant disclosure for mankind. Such a line of argumentation attempts to establish conventional, philosophical arguments for Heideggerian precepts in relation to language. Although possible, as White for example shows in greater detail, such an approach is to overlook the more profound and unsettling nature of the ideas.⁹²

For the moment, though, central to the reading is the way in which Strauß' views on language are portrayed: how the absent originary language speaks to mankind as *saying*, and mankind in turn momentarily be-speaks language, in a continuing movement of proximity and removal; nearness and distance.

As well as Strauß' debt to the deep structures of Heideggerian thought he continues to echo other terms. For example, in a related notion from the 'Logos' essay that invokes the conceit of language Heidegger writes: 'Das menschliche Denken erstaunte weder jemals über dieses Ereignis, [...], das eine wesenhafte *Schickung* des Seins an den Menschen verbirgt'.⁹³ The *Ereignis* in and of language is also a sending – or as the term is usually translated, a destining – of *Sein*. The notion of a *Schickung* is repeatedly incorporated by Strauß into the vignettes of *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, including its cognates as *Geschichte* and *Geschick*, and is considered in the following section.

The originating experience with *das Wesen der Sprache* is conceived by Heidegger as absent for mankind – absent from current, conventional uses – but also possibly present

⁹² For a fuller discussion of the relationship between *saying*, *speaking* and *naming* see White, *Heidegger and the Language of Poetry*, pp.35ff.

⁹³ Heidegger, 'Logos', p.205.

as *saying*. The adoption by Strauß of this conceit in relation to originary language seems clear. The summary account of aspects of Heidegger's thinking on language highlights two elements described in Strauß' 'Alte Übersetzer' fragment. First, the orthodoxies and conventions surrounding conceptualisation of language have diverged at a fundamental philosophical level from a sense of 'die anfängliche Wesensprägung der Sprache'.⁹⁴ While Strauß, of course, does not identify a specific moment for this as Heidegger does in the pre-Socratics, his sense of originary language is always sourced from a lost past. Second, although originary language is, as it were, absent as a result of this divergence, it can also be retrieved on certain grounds. Mankind is still able to overcome prevailing and dominant language uses to draw near and open the possibility of an experience with language; of an originary language. How else does Strauß portray these ideas and go on to adapt such thinking in *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*?

4.2.3 'einem ewig sich entziehenden letzten Wort'⁹⁵

Before discussing the trilogy of terms in *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen – die Sprache des Dritten, erreden* and *Laßkraft* – and the treatment of the underlying concern with language it is worth considering another fragment from the work. This serves to illustrate some of the characteristics by which Strauß portrays language and the suggested possible retrieval of its deeper origins; in particular the emphasis on couples and the respective limitations of their conversational exchanges for such an experience.

⁹⁴ Heidegger, 'Logos', p.204.

⁹⁵ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.135.

Just as with the ‘Alte Übersetzer’ vignette, the following equally short fragment portrays a couple; the opening sentence raising the issue of language, its uses and felt constraints.

Am Geräumten Tisch unter dem blassen Strahler, gestützt auf seine Unterarme, hing der stille Mann zwischen den eigenen Schultern wie ein schweres nasses Kleid.⁹⁶

The man is evidently unable to communicate with his wife: he is imaged as silent and immobile. Aware of a breach between the two, although this is not explicitly articulated, the woman is described as preparing to overcome the barrier between them: her aim, to release him from silence.

Auf ihrer Stirn leuchtete der Wunsch, daß sie dem Harrenden, Ausharrenden eine Erheiterung verschaffte, daß ihr Mann zwischen seinen Schultern endlich auftauche und sie sehe.⁹⁷

Like the ‘Alte Übersetzer’ couple, the attempt to establish contact beyond conventional means comes not, in the first instance, in the form of dialogue, but rather through alternative senses. Strauß describes the woman’s actions:

Also ging sie um seinen Tisch herum. Tock tock tock. Tock tock tock. Setzte sich dem Niederblickenden gerade gegenüber auf einen Stuhl. Dann griff sie mit ihren Händen so passend unter die seinen, daß alle vier einen fest verschlossenen Kreuzgriff bildeten.⁹⁸

Strauß’ choice of terms for the wife’s gesture is significant: ‘So trat sie vor ihn als die Geschickte und auch die Ungeschickte’.⁹⁹ Although, at one level, this denotation suggests the woman’s behaviour, the comment also invokes Heidegger’s term *Geschick* and its cognates noted above from the ‘Logos’ essay.¹⁰⁰ What does Strauß propose by

⁹⁶ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.133.

⁹⁷ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.133.

⁹⁸ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.133-134.

⁹⁹ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.133.

¹⁰⁰ Heidegger writes of his transformation of ‘σοφόν ἐστιν’ part of Heraclitus’ 50th fragment: ‘So bedeutet denn σοφόν dasjenige, was sich an das Zugewiesene halten, in es sich schicken, für es sich schicken (auf den Weg machen) kann. Als ein schickliches wird das Verhalten geschickt. [...]. So treffen wir eher die eigentliche Bedeutung von σοφόν, das wir durch “geschicklich” übersetzen. Aber “geschicklich” sagt im

this? For Windrich the designation, ‘liest sich indessen als Aufforderung, ihre Darbietung als eine Art von stummer, gleichwohl dem Sein entsprechender Rede zu verstehen’.¹⁰¹

Leaving aside the question of the viability of a personification or representation of language corresponding to, or hypostatisation of, Heidegger’s *Sein*, Windrich’s comment is plausible, at least in as far as it suggests the man’s problematic relationship to conventional language uses and the role his wife plays in overcoming this. The same term, *Geschick*, is invoked again by the man as he recovers from his initial physical lassitude. As he begins to articulate a previously absent language he comments of his wife:

‘Doch einzig das ist das Wunder, daß du nie aufgabst und ungeschickt eine von fern Geschickte darstellst, die sich mit unbegreiflicher Schönheit und Güte mir nähert ...’.¹⁰²

However, the woman’s success in her husband’s physical restoration does not necessarily also signal an unqualified experience of a retrieval of language. After all, as Strauß initially suggests, the woman comes before her husband both as ‘die Geschickte’ and as ‘die Ungeschickte’. The movement that the man thus makes towards a re-connection with language is clearly described by Strauß as occurring in isolation or as an individual, not as part of the couple. A retrieval of originary language is, then, not to be regarded as a collective act: a communal or social basis for accessing such absent language is unequivocally denied.

vorhinein mehr als “geschickt”. Wenn das eigentliche Hören [...] *ist*, dann ereignet sich Geschickliches, dann schickt sich das sterbliche λέγειν in den Λόγος’, in Heidegger, ‘Logos’, pp.209-210. The density of the passage, even for Heidegger’s later writing, resists the extrapolation of anything resembling propositions in relation to language.

¹⁰¹ Windrich, *Das Aus für das Über*, p.86.

¹⁰² Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.135.

Importantly, in support of this interpretation, at the close of the fragment the woman is shown as repulsed by her husband. As his language develops, so his isolation increases. He pays no attention to ‘ihrem erschrockenen Zurückweichen’.¹⁰³ Finally, as he continues to talk she removes herself completely from him:

Da nahm sie ihren Hut in die eine [...] Hand und schlich ungesehen unter seinen verdrehten Augen ins Nebenzimmer, um ihr Kostüm abzulegen und ihre Füße zu cremem.¹⁰⁴

The banality of her action conveys the suggested limits of language as dialogue and, more importantly, the failure of dialogical exchange as the basis for a retrieval of originary language.

However, the man’s isolation does suggest a breakthrough. Once his monologue begins, he is described as overwhelmed by language, a motif that occurs over and again in *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* and elsewhere in Strauß’ writing. It is an idea that dates back in his prose works to *Rumor* and Bekker’s antipathy toward the idioms and clichés of public language and his yearning, instead, for ‘Sprachballungsräume’; a condition in which he is exempted from everyday language and its uses. As he exclaims, a desire for a place exempted from convention where he is ‘Raus aus der Sprache’.¹⁰⁵

In *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, Strauß describes the man’s response to overcoming his ‘Stille’: ‘Nun konnte er nicht mehr einhalten in seinem Lob, fand [...] immer neue Wörter und Wendungen und wiederholte sie in immer höherem Ton’.¹⁰⁶ It is as though the man is connected to a groundswell of language; is overwhelmed by it. Strauß’

¹⁰³ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.135.

¹⁰⁴ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.135.

¹⁰⁵ Strauß, *Rumor*, p.76. The spatial characteristics of language suggested here are picked up in the notion of *Wohnen*.

¹⁰⁶ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.135.

characterisation of this experience with language is significant and again connects the argument back to the ‘Alte Übersetzer’ fragment:

So *redete* er ohne Unterbrechung, aber auch ohne Ende und Ziel, strebte vielmehr einem ewig sich bildenden, *ewig sich entziehenden letzten Wort* entgegen, dem nie endgültigen¹⁰⁷

Notably, Strauß breaks off the excerpt in silence: the *uttering* of language returns to a condition of stillness. In moving towards this *ewig sich entziehenden letzten Wort* – echoing directly the old couple’s attempt with ‘der sich ständig entziehenden Sprache’ – Strauß proposes some of the characteristics of mankind’s retrieval of originary language. This is experienced, in part, as *Reden* or *uttering*, and as the argument develops, also as silence.

Before considering how Strauß shows and develops these characteristics and the possibility for a retrieval, the argument continues setting out the portrayal of some of the dominant conventions of everyday language uses in the first of the inverted trilogy of the title: *Lügen*.

4.3 *Weltbilder* and language: ‘Die Lüge des Lebens selbst’¹⁰⁸

Strauß’ view on the pervasiveness of a debased, collective use of language in late-modern society is long recognised. Moreover, since ‘Anschwellender Bocksgesang’ it has become a commonplace in the literature and in discussion of his writing. The essay invokes an unspecified period of what is called ‘verschwätzten Zeiten, in Zeiten der

¹⁰⁷ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.135. My emphasis.

¹⁰⁸ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.183.

sprachlichen Machtlosigkeit': of a waning in the creative force of language regarded as defining of the current age.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, Strauß claims 'heute benutzen Majorität und Minderheit, gleich welcher Sparte, durchweg dasselbe konforme Vokabular der Empörungen und Bedürfnisse', asserting a uniformity of use and ubiquitous disenfranchisement from the possibilities seen in language. Though forcefully and dramatically expressed, such views on the poverty of contemporary expression, taken in isolation and only as a critique of its uses in modern society and culture, are far from original in post-war German letters and thought. They are variously shared by diverse sets of thinkers, including Böll and Grass, or Enzensberger and Habermas, none of whom are usually associated with a writer such as Strauß.

However, in contrast to claims by most commentators of 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang', such views on contemporary language use have a long background in Strauß' writing. Already in *Die Widmung*, Richard Schroubek's isolation and detachment are described as based on estrangement from language as he initially, briefly emerges into the wider social world. For example, at the opening of the short novel Schroubek leaves the isolation of his flat and overhears various conversations going on around him. During one of these a hairdresser comments on a news report on middle-eastern politics, a story Schroubek also reads in the newspaper. Strauß describes the faltering attempts of the figure to articulate an independent viewpoint:

Sie erregt sich und findet im politischen Eifer die treffenden Worte des Abscheus nicht. [...]. Man spürt, es ist nicht ihr eigener Eifer, der sie packt. [...] Sie redet ihm nach dem Mund, und zwar um so ausfälliger, je länger dieser ruhig bleibt und schweigt.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Strauß, 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang', p.17.

¹¹⁰ Strauß, *Die Widmung*, p.6.

The remarks are described as not her own: the thoughts entirely derivative of an unspecified collective. It is no coincidence that the conversation reflects what Schroubek reads in the paper. Public consumption of views and their continual mediation – whether by individuals or the established channels of mass communication such as television or newspapers – is the background for Strauß’ thinking on contemporary language and its use. His experience prompts a more general reflection.

Nun beginnt wieder, am frühen Morgen, um ihn herum das allgemeine Sprechen, das in Wahrheit ein vielfaches Durcheinandersprechen ist, worin sich das meiste wechselseitig bedeutungslos macht, [...], denn es wird ohne Einhalt weitergesprochen und der Chor eines nicht abreißen Geredes steigt über den Köpfen auf und es hallt, wie in einer mächtigen Kuppel, auf deutsch über Deutschland.¹¹¹

The excerpt not only points to the longevity of Strauß’ overt suspicion of the status accorded language in contemporary society but is also emblematic of a view he articulates repeatedly including, for example, in ‘Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt’ noted earlier, with his designation of an all-pervasive, persistently mediated culture of the secondary.¹¹² For the remaining argument of this chapter such language is termed as conventional in its uses. However, Strauß’ engagement with language runs deeper than such a position immediately suggests. As he writes in *Gedankenfluchten*:

Wenn ich mich frage, was ich überhaupt in der Sprache zu suchen habe, so ist es gewiß nicht die Sprache selbst und noch viel weniger ihr schöner Zweck,

¹¹¹ Strauß, *Die Widmung*, p.6.

¹¹² There are numerous such instances. For example, in the ‘Odeon’ fragment in *Niemand anderes* Strauß writes: ‘So wie sie redeten, hört man den ganzen Markt tönen. Sie sprachen eigentlich nicht, sie schalteten sich ein in die laufende Sprache. Sie sprachen nicht, sie tauschten Schibbolethe der Befindlichkeit. [...]. Sie sandten sich Zeitzeichen. [...]. Sie sprachen nicht, ihre Stimmen wurden bewegt wie Puppen an den Schnüren nur noch als volksweite Absprache darüber, was verständlich und sagbar wäre. Sie sprachen nicht, sie streiften durch die verlassene Öde des ausgesprochenen Sprechens’, in Strauß, *Niemand anderes*, p.154. See also Strauß, *Paare, Passanten*, pp.86-90 and from the later writing Strauß, *Die Fehler des Kopisten*, pp.74ff.

den sie etwa beim Erzählen verfolgt. Mir macht Sprache [...] etwas, das uns letztlich aus ihr heraus- und hervortreten läßt.¹¹³

The status of language is philosophically more problematic.

Intriguingly, the last term of the title under consideration in this chapter, *Lügen*, is only occasionally explicitly raised over the course of the work. This suggests that *Lügen* is perhaps not, as Schomann rather unimaginatively maintains, to be understood as the dissembling between individuals in a society denigrated by the effects of such behaviour, but rather a much deeper, latent condition.¹¹⁴ Not surprisingly, none of the three designations is intended by Strauß to be understood literally, either as prescriptive for or denotative of specific actions.¹¹⁵ The urge to attribute an ethics needs resisting.

Of the thirty-eight fragments in *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, it is the longest and last of these that offers the most evocative and provocative delineation of *Lügen*. In the episode Strauß' background critique of language, its ubiquity, uniformity and unrelenting mediation, as described above, prompts an unnamed figure, the 'Schimpfer', to launch into a sustained tirade. It is this outburst, or rather as this argument characterises it, the monological *uttering*, that eventually brings about a manifestation or experience, albeit heavily qualified, of *Laßkraft* and the absent *Sprache des Dritten*.

¹¹³ Strauß, *Gedankenfluchten*, p.60.

¹¹⁴ Schomann, S. 'Hie noch Feindbild, da noch Gewohnheit', in *Berliner Zeitung*, 2 December, 1994, cited in Windrich, *Das Aus für das Über*, p.97.

¹¹⁵ In the same vein, Korte claims that *Wohnen* denotes the practices of living and habitation in modern society: "Wohnen" fixiert den typischen Umraum, verweist auf die zivilisatorische Sphäre der Handlungsorte und deren Spektrum, das von der Sterilität postmoderner Wohnstätten bis zum unbestimmten Hochglanz exotischer Ferne reicht', in Korte, 'Auf dem Weg zur "Tagesordnung des Ewigen"?', p.19. Rather, as section 4.5 below contends, *Wohnen* denotes the manner in which mankind relates to a retrieval of originary language and its experience. As the argument then shows in Chapter Five, the term *Wohnen* is ultimately concerned with the status and nature of *poetic* writing.

The *Schimpfer*, who is described by his female counterpart – Strauß again presents a couple undergoing some kind of crisis in their normal routines of communication – as ‘ein philosophischer Streithammel’, storms out of a film arguing with his partner.¹¹⁶ Although it is not made explicit what the film shows, it is the overall levelling depiction of its subject-matter that offends the *Schimpfer*. The film is, he exclaims: ‘Alles Reklame, nur noch ein Fetisch, [...], nur selbstgenügliche Reklame für ein Handelsgut, das es nicht mehr gibt: Die Sinnenfreude!’.¹¹⁷ Moreover, after leaving the screening, the *Schimpfer* stops briefly at a small bar, where he ends up in another fractious exchange. As his companion notes: “‘Wo wir auch hinkommen, schimpfst du’”.¹¹⁸ What further antagonises the man beyond the film is that the people in the bar are talking about and praising precisely those aspects of the film he finds contemptible. The *Schimpfer* exclaims: “‘Und diese Barbaren dort in der Spelunke loben genau den Film, den wir beide fluchtartig verlassen mußten’”.¹¹⁹ Thus, just as Schroubek laments the universality and undifferentiated nature of public opinion and the language in which it is expressed, so too does the ‘intellektueller Vagabund’ of the concluding fragment of *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*.

However, the polemic on the film and the exception he takes against his compatriots are not the main focus of his outburst. As his monologue gets underway, he pointedly dismisses ‘die Frage der Sinnenfreude’ and questions over the nature and legitimacy of the sensory experience elicited by the film. Such pre-occupations, though current and

¹¹⁶ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.179.

¹¹⁷ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.179.

¹¹⁸ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.178.

¹¹⁹ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.179. Emphasis in original.

dominant for the majority, for him fall short. He is not interested in such trivial sensationalism:

Die Frage der Sinnenfreude, die für uns die zentrale und lebendigste ist, muß gegen die ungeheure Masse an sozialer Zeit erwogen werden, in der sie keinerlei Bedeutung besitzt, in der die nackte Unsinnlichkeit den Alltag [...] beherrscht.¹²⁰

In his monologue, the *Schimpfer* articulates deeper-lying concerns.

At the heart of these are what Strauß has the *Schimpfer* term ‘Weltbilder’ by which he means the whole range of intellectual epistemologies, frameworks and methodologies devised and deployed by mankind to conceive of and understand the object-world. Strauß’ invocation of ideas from *Beginnlosigkeit* and choice of term are not coincidental. Underscoring the central premise of this thesis, Heidegger, in a parallel to the argument developed in ‘Die Frage nach der Technik’, maintains that the manner in which mankind relates to the world in metaphysics and modern technology – *die Stellung des Menschen* – in particular his search for novelty, is through construction of *Weltbilder*. Heidegger writes:

Was ist das – ein Weltbild? Offenbar ein Bild von der Welt. Aber was heißt hier Welt? Was meint da Bild? Welt steht hier als Benennung des Seienden im Ganzen. Der Name ist nicht eingeschränkt auf den Kosmos, die Natur. Zur Welt gehört auch die Geschichte. [...]. Doch Weltbild besagt mehr. Wir meinen damit die Welt selbst, sie, das Seiende im Ganzen, so wie es für uns maßgebend und verbindlich ist.¹²¹

Mankind is compelled towards such epistemological constructs. As Strauß notes: ‘Die Natur des Menschen ist eine bildnerische’.¹²² The particular sense of *Weltbilder* in the final fragment of *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* is, of course, further comparable with that of

¹²⁰ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, pp.180-181.

¹²¹ Heidegger, M. ‘Die Zeit des Weltbildes’, in *Holzwege* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 8th Edition, 2003), p.89.

¹²² Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.183.

Linie-structured *Wahrnehmung*, which the ‘Er’-figure seeks to overcome in *Beginnlosigkeit*.

The *Schimpfer* denigrates the efficacy of the different *Weltbilder* engendered to explain the object-world. Such epistemological structures necessarily lead to a distortion of things. Specifically, it is the very adaptive and cumulative progression of each such *Weltbild* that he calls into question: ‘Aber was, frage ich, ist ein Weltverstehen wert, das im Lauf der Geschichte fortwährend schwankt, sich korrigiert und widerspricht’.¹²³ Moreover, in spite of mankind’s best efforts, there remains a fundamental disconnection between the postulated *Weltbilder* and the underlying actual ontological nature of world. The significance for Strauß of *Lügen* now begins to become apparent. As he notes in the fragment: ‘Hirn und wirkliche Welt stehen sich näher als Weltbild und Welt oder das Hirn und seine Vorspiegelungen’.¹²⁴

Moreover, Strauß’ proposed era of *Weltbilder* described in the concluding monologue bears the characteristics of *Linie*-structured *Wahrnehmung*, in the increasing speed and frequency of change in scientific and technological theories in late modernity. As he writes, ‘die Welt [wird] immer gewandter, geschickter, technisch-behelfsmäßiger’.¹²⁵ The various revolutions in the structure of scientific and technological discovery span all disciplines as Heidegger proposes in the essay.¹²⁶ So, for example, the *Schimpfer*

¹²³ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.182.

¹²⁴ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, pp.182-183.

¹²⁵ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.189. Strauß has the *Schimpfer* describe this as the frenetic change in *Weltbilder* ‘vom Hundertsten ins Tausendste’ (p.200) exactly as the ‘Er’-figure does in *Beginnlosigkeit*. There Strauß writes: ‘Der Geist besteht aus Entgleiten. Wo er an etwas festhält, verstößt er gegen seine Natur, das ewige glissando der Erkenntnisse. Seine einzige und ursprüngliche (sic) Leidenschaft ist es, vom Hundertsten ins Tausendste zu gelangen’, in Strauß, *Beginnlosigkeit*, p.48.

¹²⁶ See Heidegger, ‘Die Zeit des Weltbildes’, pp.77ff in which he broadens understanding of what counts as *Wissenschaft* and *Forschung*.

highlights the ‘sogenannten Retikulisten’ whose theories in the history of neurology are overturned by Cajal’s discoveries – a revision of a prevailing epistemology described in *Beginnlosigkeit* – as well as the incumbent paradigms of August Mach, Louis Agassiz or Margaret Mead.¹²⁷ The exclusivity of such theoretical *Weltbilder* for mankind’s understanding of the world now leads, the *Schimpfer* conjectures, to a period where his *Wahrnehmung* is dominated by a new stranglehold: ‘die Überblicker [...] die Gedächtnis-Zyklopen, die eiskalten Mutanten der Mnemosyne, die aus der Kreuzung von technischem und kollektivem Gedächtnis entstehen’.¹²⁸ In a suggestive analogy, he describes the fundamental effect of this intensified period of scientific and technological innovation on the relationship between mankind and world. The monologue continues:

Gefäße, die nichts wiedergeben, statt [...] der Krüge, die einst überliefen. An ausgewählten Gemarken stehen Köpfe auf der Erde, die inwendig hohler werden vom Behalten. Die endlos zu sich nehmen und nichts wiedergeben. [...]. Womit man die geizenden Gefäße auch füllt, es steigert nur die Dichte ihrer Leere.¹²⁹

The present period is one of an unprecedented disruption to the relationship between man and thing: in this example, a jug. Strauß’ invocation of original ‘Krüge, die einst überliefen’: things free from the distorting effects of science and technology, can best be understood as a direct allusion to Heidegger’s ‘Das Ding’, in which he develops an alternative understanding of the thing. There he provides the example of a jug as the coming-into-presence of the thing *as* thing and not object, which gathers in the manner of λέγειν. Heidegger writes:

¹²⁷ Mach, Agassiz and Mead are each associated with past dominant paradigms in their disciplines – physics, biology and anthropology respectively – before these were overturned by subsequent theoretical innovations. For a discussion of Mead see Ridley, M. *The Origins of Virtue* (London: Viking, 1996), pp.256ff.

¹²⁸ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.198.

¹²⁹ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.199. Interestingly, Strauß repeats this passage almost verbatim in Strauß, *Die Fehler des Kopisten*, p.56.

Der Krug west als Ding. Der Krug ist der Krug als ein Ding. Wie aber west das Ding? Das Ding dingt. Das Dingen versammelt. [...]. Wir geben dem so erfahrenen und gedachten Wesen des Kruges den Namen Ding.¹³⁰

As Strauß has his *Schimpfer*-philosopher exclaim against the age of *Weltbilder*, in a formulation again inherited directly from Heidegger, on this occasion from *Über den Humanismus*: ‘Im Haus des Seins werden polternd die Möbel gerückt.’¹³¹

In mankind’s continual impetus to construct novel *Weltbilder* – what Strauß describes as ‘seine rastlose Emsigkeit’ – he is in thrall to an approach to world constrained by ‘Apparate der permanenten Täuschung’.¹³² *Lügen*, therefore, describes what for Strauß is a state, not of falsehood but rather of un-truth, of ontological distortion in which mankind necessarily finds himself as a result of the constrained relationship to the object-world.¹³³

This is, as he has the *Schimpfer* go on to claim: ‘Das *Geschwätz* des Lebens selbst! Die *Lüge* des Lebens selbst ... die eine und ganze Rodomontade!’¹³⁴ Strauß’ association of the condition of un-truth with *Lügen* and *Geschwätz* raises the question of how the dominant *Wahrnehmung* relates to language.

However, as Strauß has the *Schimpfer* describe, like the ‘Er’-figure in *Beginnlosigkeit*, things *are* differently for mankind in the present age under the structures arising from imposition of *Weltbilder*. The relationship to the world is: ‘von einer nicht abreißenden Geschäftigkeit des Herstellens beherrscht, [...] der Fabrikation von Farbe, Form, Sinn,

¹³⁰ Heidegger, ‘Das Ding’, p.166.

¹³¹ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.182. See Heidegger, *Über den Humanismus*, pp.48ff.

¹³² Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.183.

¹³³ Korte is broadly on the right track with his delineation but still locates Strauß’ thinking on language at the level of an overt social or politically-based critique, therefore missing the philosophical significance of the term. For him *Lügen* denotes: ‘die Bewußtseinsphäre der Individuen und die Konventionen ihres gesellschaftlichen Zusammenlebens [...]: eine Welt der Täuschungen, der Illusionen, der verklärten Selbstbilder, der Ideologien und des Jargons’, in Korte, ‘Auf dem Weg zur “Tagesordnung des Ewigen”’, p.20.

¹³⁴ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.183. My emphases.

Gestalt und Zusammenhängen'.¹³⁵ Critically, and unsurprisingly, it is in and through language that the charged relationship to things becomes most apparent. The two threads of the present argument are running together.

Es ist da, es ist vorhanden, nahe, dingvoll, konkret, plastisch, aber nicht mehr berührbar, nicht mit Begriffen zu benennen oder, wenn benannt, dann nicht mehr in seiner Eigentümlichkeit, nicht mehr so, wie es zu uns 'spricht' [...] ... wir besitzen nicht mehr die geheime furchtsame Art der Benennung [...]. Wenig Wort für viel Ding. [...] ... die Dinge zu glänzend, zu neu, ständig erneuert [...] ... diese Dinge strahlen nur noch, sie sondern einen hellen, kalten Glanz ab, den man nicht berühren-beschreiben kann [...] die Wolke von Chromglanz und Abstraktion rückt gegen das Innerste vor, um es unbenennbar zu machen, unbenennbar für den Betrachter, Erleider, was empfindet er noch? Blitzblank, Blitze ohne Feuer ... Ich kann *es* wohl sehen, es hebt sich ab von der roten Straße, aber das Auge ist nicht das messende Organ. Ich kann *es* erleiden, das ist das messende Organ ... Alles entfallen ... an diesen *Dingen* ... Wie heißt *das*? Wie nennt *es* sich? Was *ist* das? An diesen Dingen fehlen die Namen ... die Dingwörter ... wie kann *ich* es nennen? Was ist daran überhaupt nennbar? Fast nichts ... Du wirst sehen, es wird immer schwieriger, die Dinge bei ihrem Namen zu nennen.¹³⁶

In language mankind is currently no longer able to experience the *naming* of things in the object-world, understood in the sense suggested above by the 'Alte Übersetzer' fragment and in the delineation of Heidegger's thinking of the originating *saying* of language as *Nennen*. Rather, as the *Schimpfer* describes, language is presently conceived, in accordance with an era of ever-increasing scientific and technological innovation, within the conventions deployed for relaying such different theoretical conceptions of the world.

Strauß notes:

Ein Universum des Sichherausredens ... Das Ziel, das zwanghaft und hilflos angestrebte, aller Sprache ist der *eine* Laut des Verständigtseins zwischen Himmel und Erde und aller Kreatur.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.183.

¹³⁶ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, pp.190-191. Emphases in original.

¹³⁷ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.192. Emphasis in original.

The ontological distortions of science, technology and language as conventionally used are finally bound together: ‘das Sprach-Biest und das Menschen-Gestell ... So furchtbar es scheint, es gibt keinen Ausweg aus der anagogischen Sinnennatur’.¹³⁸

The present argument deepens the resonance of the overt critique that Strauß makes of the levelling and universalizing tendency in the conventions of language and its mediation. In accordance with the earlier premise of an absent originary experience, Strauß suggests that mankind is cast out from an immanent relationship to world and such language. Mankind is, he writes: ‘von Anbeginn auf der Flucht, im Verstoßensein-, Vertriebensein. [...] Die Sprache verlautet das Schicksal des Verstoßenseins’.¹³⁹ The ontologically distorted relationship to world shows itself, therefore, in mankind’s homelessness from originary language and current state of exile in its conventional forms.

However, the *Schimpfer*-figure senses the constraints and impoverishment of such conventional and established language uses. Accordingly, under the conditions of late modernity, mankind’s language remains inadequate to its originary possibility. As the monologue continues: ‘Wir hätten [...] in der Sprache nichts Ent-Sprechendes zu bieten’.¹⁴⁰ This, of course, invokes the Heideggerian notion of mankind’s (in)ability to be-speak the saying of language: ‘Der Mensch spricht, insofern er der Sprache

¹³⁸ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.193.

¹³⁹ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.192. Elsewhere Strauß writes invoking the ambiguous nature of language: ‘Immer fahlere Worte begleiten das Schwere und das Gewöhnliche [...] in unserem Leben ... So viel an jedem, das besser zu nennen wäre! Aber die Worte entfernen sich unaufhaltsam von dem, was Gestalt ist an uns. Auf solche Weise bestehen wir aus Unveränderlichem und ständiger Verflüchtigung zugleich’, in Strauß ‘Zeit ohne Vorboten’, pp.104-105.

¹⁴⁰ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.199.

entspricht'.¹⁴¹ Thus, the *Schimpfer* wants to move nearer to that experience with language now lost.

Like the 'Er'-figure in *Beginnlosigkeit* Strauß has the *Schimpfer* push beyond the boundaries of the dominant scientific and technological structuring of object-world. The choice of the *Schimpfer*'s description is suggestive, highlighting the spatial characteristics of a possible experience with originary language. Having described the exile and homelessness of the majority of mankind – with their 'gelenkige Schablonen voyeurhaft-technisch' – he denotes the alternative towards which he is striving:

Nahsprache suche ich, nicht das ferne Geräusch unter den Menschen. Frei und nah dem Unbegreiflichen [...] Der einzige, der über die Sprache etwas Rechtmäßiges sagen kann, ist der, der sich von ihr ergreifen, stoßen [...] erschüttern läßt – der von ihrer ganzen Größe angefallen wird ... von ihrer *Unmenge*.¹⁴²

The purpose of this search for a retrieval and experience, an intent notably not expressed in the previous fragments considered, is here directly articulated. The move towards originary language is, the *Schimpfer* extols, the creative counterpoint to a compulsion to fabricate, and the rationality of modern *Weltbilder*. His aim is to unsettle the philosophical underpinnings assumed by such theoretical constructs, namely event, meaning and causality. The *Schimpfer* states his approach: 'Ich bin tat-tilgend, sinnlösend, zusammenhang-spaltend'.¹⁴³

Just as in *Beginnlosigkeit*, Strauß' use of water imagery is suggestive. The *Schimpfer* does not follow normal precepts: rather, his thinking halts or diverts the established forward momentum of reason and associated language manifested by scientific and

¹⁴¹ Heidegger, 'Die Sprache', p.33.

¹⁴² Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.192. Emphasis in original.

¹⁴³ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.199.

technological theories and their corresponding *Weltbilder*. As he notes: ‘Ich bin das Staubecken: in mir enden [...] die stürmischen Handlungsverläufe. [...] Ich sage dir, alles, was mich erreicht, mündet in ein stehendes Gewässer ...’.¹⁴⁴

Having highlighted what it is the *Schimpfer* hopes to achieve in respect of language – the resonances of Heideggerian thought in the monologue extend to the experience of time and memory; the allusion to Hölderlin’s ‘Mnemosyne’ is particularly suggestive – the question remaining open is how, or rather on what grounds, Strauß proposes that this be accomplished. How, if at all, is an experience with originary language in *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* shown?

At this juncture, the issue of the limits of conventional language in the efforts of couples to communicate by dialogue and agree on meaning comes to the fore. After the initial trigger for his outburst, the *Schimpfer* begins the lengthy monologue. Whilst the overall significance of such a monologue and its structure for Strauß’ understanding of the characteristics of originary language must wait for the conclusion to the chapter, it nonetheless enforces the contention that relationships in *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* fail, as do the opportunities for dialogical exchange. Thus, any social nexus and corresponding language uses are not regarded by Strauß as sufficient grounds for overcoming the distortions in mankind’s *Weltbilder* and, therefore also, for a retrieval of originary language.

A brief look at another fragment shows the emphasis Strauß places on the portrayal of couples and in particular the failure of dialogue. The fragment also points towards the

¹⁴⁴ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.199.

significance of the second term in the trilogy of the title, *Dämmern*, for Strauß' thinking on language.

The relationship between the figure, here characterised only as 'der Mann', and his wife is in difficulty in the 'Bordstein' fragment, just as it is in others considered. The man is described leaving for work into a dystopian and featureless urban environment with a physical lassitude resonant of the adjective *lasz*:

Aus der Eisentür einer bewohnten Fabriketage tritt ein Mann mit seinen Fachbüchern unter dem Arm auf die Brüstung der Feuerwehrtreppe und verabschiedet sich von seiner Frau mit alltäglicher Bedrückung.¹⁴⁵

As he goes downstairs to street level it is with 'hängendem Kopf, beschwertem Herzen. Unten, auf ebenem Weg, geht er wieder langsamer, gebeugt und zerstreut'.¹⁴⁶ The couple's daily routine has become that of habituated estrangement with little, if any, connection remaining between them. As Strauß writes:

Er wendet sich nicht noch einmal hinauf zu seiner Frau, die am Treppengeländer steht und ihn davongehen sieht, ohne auf einen abschließenden Gruß zu warten, der nie erfolgt, der Regel entsprechend.¹⁴⁷

The man's physical exhaustion is mirrored in the woman's own sense of numbness. It is the everyday experience of the man's departure that engenders what is described as her 'aufsteigende Benommenheit'.¹⁴⁸ However, Strauß goes on to relate the exception to their eternally recurring morning ritual.

First, for the woman, the cognitive certainties of her everyday, habituated experience of her environment – as they are highlighted above in discussion of the philosophical

¹⁴⁵ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.67.

¹⁴⁶ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.67.

¹⁴⁷ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, pp.67-68.

¹⁴⁸ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.68.

underpinnings to scientific and technological theory, namely event, meaning and causation – are shown to loosen their hold. Strauß portrays the breakdown in accrued experience as the sound of her departing husband’s footsteps recedes:

... wenn seine Schritte sich von ihr entfernen ... diese Vermehrung von selbstläufigen Prozessen, die jede Ursache und Wirkung, jeden Antrieb und Einhalt ineinander verschlingen, [...] so viel Zusammenwirken so vieler Kräfte – in niemandes Hand! ... Man sieht, was man tut, nicht wieder als Getanes [...] es steigert die Dichte der Flechte.¹⁴⁹

The change to her normalised experience has a parallel in the transformation of her husband’s familiar world. As he walks down the stairs from the apartment as usual the ground opens up and he descends into a darker, hitherto unknown place. The boundaries of experience for the man and woman are blurred from anything recognisable as an everyday reality.

As the man continues down the steps into the earth, he is met by a woman ‘der seinen zum Verwechseln ähnlich’.¹⁵⁰ The issue of language and *Lügen* and their inter-relation is raised. The woman asks the man: “Lügen Sie nie?”¹⁵¹

If the preceding account is accepted, in which *Lügen* denotes the condition of un-truth in the relationship between mankind and world and corresponding conventional language uses, then the woman’s question and the man’s response are significant for what they suggest of the possibility of a retrieval of originary language.

The man’s reply alludes to the so-called Epimenides paradox where the philosopher, citizen of ancient Crete, declares all his compatriots to be liars. He appears not to accept

¹⁴⁹ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.68.

¹⁵⁰ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.68.

¹⁵¹ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.69.

the implied characterisation, *Lügen*, of his normal relationship to and use of language. In response to the question, he says: “In dem Augenblick, da ich mir die geringste Lüge gestatte [...] beginne ich der *Wahrheit* [...] eine besondere Bedeutung beizumessen”.¹⁵² His reply – as Strauß describes it, ‘diese eitle Antwort’ – must, however, confirm the validity of the woman’s implied designation of his language use. If he does not give credence to truth, as he concedes, then he must, when speaking, always be in thrall to *Lügen*.

Moreover, at the moment he retorts that his language is not so distorted, Strauß portrays the woman making a fleeting connection to an alternative language denoted as the *Sprache des Dritten*.

Doch kaum war seine kleine abgezielte Anmerkung heraus, da erwiderte ihm die Frau, die zwar das reine Ebenbild der seinen war, jedoch eine vollkommen andere Sprache im Mund führte, unverzüglich, [...], so schoß es aus ihr heraus: “... – – – ...”.¹⁵³

Strauß’ invocation of the experience is even more opaque than in the other fragments considered. The originary *Sprache des Dritten*, on this occasion, is not even formed into a word. It is manifest as silence.

The man, unable to conceive of the un-truth of his habituated use of language, has a very different experience. At the same instant that the woman utters an enigmatic, silent, wordless language, he, in contrast, is engulfed by ‘ein Wirbel von Stimmen wie Staub, [...], laute Gesprächsfetzen, alles schallende Hin und Her’.¹⁵⁴ He is consumed by a language, which he recognises as constituted from his own words and everyday

¹⁵² Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.69. My emphasis.

¹⁵³ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.69.

¹⁵⁴ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.69.

conventional idioms and expressions, like Schroubek's wakening sense of being inundated by the mediated spoken word in *Die Widmung*. As Strauß continues:

Er [...] bemerkte, daß das ganze Palaver, das er da von fremden Stimmen hörte, aus seinen eigenen Worten bestand, die er irgendwann, zu den höchsten und niedrigsten Gelegenheiten, in allen möglichen Lebenslagen ausgesprochen hatte.¹⁵⁵

The man is thus forced, as part of his experience in the recesses of the earth, to re-live every conversation and dialogue had in the past with his wife: 'er mußte noch einmal von vorn beginnen, sich ihr zu erklären, und alles wiederholen, was er die langen Jahre über zu ihr gesprochen hatte'.¹⁵⁶

The 'Bordstein' fragment illustrates again some of the motifs on which Strauß develops his thinking on language. At the centre is the breakdown in conventional language uses in the form of dialogue and the necessary isolation of mankind, the sole experience of an absent originary language. Moreover, the fragment introduces a further characteristic to the possible retrieval of such language. For the couple, this takes place outside recognisable physical space or at the outer boundaries of familiar environments.¹⁵⁷

As the *Schimpfer* sets out in his monologue, such a breakdown of established physical parameters is a necessary characteristic of an experience of 'Nahsprache':

Aber so wird es immer sein: die einen schaukeln sicher am Tag und stürzen ab in der Nacht, die anderen fallen durch den Tag und steigen in der Nacht.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, pp.69-70.

¹⁵⁶ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.70.

¹⁵⁷ Strauß, of course, develops this motif, particularly in his essays, in relation to the position of the poet. See the following Strauß essays and interviews: 'Die Distanz ertragen'; 'Isolationen'; 'Am Rand. Wo sonst' and 'Der Erste, der Letzte'. This crucial characteristic for the *poetic* is considered further in Chapter Five.

¹⁵⁸ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.192. Strauß' imagery provides a further suggestive echo of Heidegger's description of the attempt to bring *die Sprache als die Sprache zur Sprache*. Heidegger writes: 'Die Sprache ist: Sprache. Die Sprache spricht. Wenn wir uns in den Abgrund, den dieser Satz nennt, fallen

The analogy between the blurring of night and day – of course, noted in the culminating fragment of *Beginnlosigkeit* – the move towards the margins of recognised space, all grounds making possible an experience of originary language, provide a good basis to consider Strauß' evocation of the related term, second in the title of the work, *Dämmern*.

4.4 Die Sprachen-Dämmerung?

The argument so far contends that in the stories of *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* Strauß portrays different experiences of language, here delineated as conventional and originary respectively. The former covers the range of habituated discourses, structured and constrained by an underlying distorted metaphysical relationship to world. It is such everyday language, its vagaries and limits arising in the familiar communicative idioms, particularly between couples, that are stressed as a motif in the works. Most of the fragments in *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, for example, portray vignettes between couples. It is through the couples' attempts at and negotiation of conversations – the permutations, evolutions and, ultimately, always the failure of communication between such figures – that Strauß sets out the philosophical grounds of his own thinking on language, and ultimately, as this chapter begins to suggest, for his writing.

lassen, stürzen wir nicht ins Leere weg. Wir fallen in die Höhe. Deren Hoheit öffnet eine Tiefe. Beide durchmessen eine Ortschaft, in der wir heimisch werden möchten, um den Aufenthalt für das Wesen des Menschen finden', in Heidegger, 'Die Sprache', p.13.

4.4.1 *Dämmern*: limits of conventional language as dialogue

The comparatively lengthy episode ‘Monotropie’ in *Niemand anderes* provides an early example of an encounter between two individuals, the shortcomings that Strauß suggests reside in the associated dialogical exchange, and the implications for language and its uses.

The fragment describes two strangers passing one another, but a fleeting, chanced glance breaks ‘die Schleier des feinen Desinteresses, der zivilen Bemerkensscheu, die zwei fremde Menschen umgibt’.¹⁵⁹ Can the couple experience something beyond the apparent absolute constraints and veneer of social intercourse? Both individuals become aware of the other’s presence:

Es öffnet sich, es entblößt seine Gegenwart, seinen wehrlosen Ernst und dunkle Frage, deren Antwort nur eine lange Geschichte geben kann, das Fragen-Entsetzen: ‘Wer bist du?’.¹⁶⁰

As the fragment continues, the possibility of an experience beyond social conventions and dialogical exchange appears to be sanctioned. It is initially described as ‘das schöne Gespräch’, which it is suggested has a particular power in contrast to ‘kunstvoller Dialog’.¹⁶¹ Strauß describes the characteristics of such an exchange in terms already familiar. It is:

eine offene Komposition ohne Ziel und Absicht. Es wird von Rhythmen, Wellen, Reizen hingetragen, von nächstem Widerhall, wie sie nirgends sonst in der Geselligkeit vorkommt. Schweigen, Hören, Fragen, Sprechen. Verschiedene Arten der Stille können entstehen: das aktive Schweigen

¹⁵⁹ Strauß, *Niemand anderes*, p.40.

¹⁶⁰ Strauß, *Niemand anderes*, p.40.

¹⁶¹ Strauß, *Niemand anderes*, p.45.

während des Zuhörens. [...]. Der Anblick ist einander als das Wort, aber entgegenger als Schweigen. Geeintes Schweigen sieht nicht.¹⁶²

Nevertheless, in spite of its apparent promise, the attempt by the couple to ground such language fails. Strauß goes on to describe the constraints within which the couple use language generally and articulate themselves.

Das viele Reden, das langsam versiegt. [...]. Sie haben den ganzen Atem der Sprache ausgehaucht, sie haben ihn verbraucht. Der Hauch, [...] Menschengesprache, verbraucht, verpufft, vergeudet. Nach der Beschwörung wurde das Wort Gesetz. Nach dem Gesetz wurde das Wort Gespräch. Nach dem Gespräch wurde das Wort Kommunikation. Nach der Kommunikation wurde das Wort – ausgestoßen [...]. Sinnlos irrt es nun von Mund zu Mund [...]. Wir vergehen in Ausgesprochenheit.¹⁶³

The couple in the ‘Monotropie’ fragment cannot ultimately delimit or overcome the influence of conventional language uses. These are simply overwhelming.

Strauß’ focus on couples in his writing is long recognised. The titles of the prose works themselves convey, either implicitly or explicitly, the importance of relationships, even if only notional, with other people, although significantly these are always conveyed as failing or absent.¹⁶⁴ Meyer’s comment on *Paare, Passanten* is representative of critics for whom the inter-personal relationships of Strauß’ figures are most important and dominate interpretive perspectives:

¹⁶² Strauß, *Niemand anderes*, p.46. The passage directly parallels the inter-relation of language as *Sage* and *Stille*, and *Sprechen* and *Schweigen* described by Heidegger. The relationship in Strauß’ writing between silence as one manifestation of the experience of ordinary language is developed in section 4.4.2 below. Heidegger, in turn, writes: ‘Wie aber sind Sprechen und Gesprochenes in der [...] Erzählung des Sprachwesens gedacht? Sie zeigen sich schon als solches, wodurch und worin etwas zur Sprache, d.h. zu einem Vorschein kommt, *insofern etwas gesagt ist*. Sagen und Sprechen sind nicht das gleiche. Einer kann sprechen, spricht endlos, und alles ist nichtsagend. Dagegen schweigt jemand, er spricht nicht und kann in Nichtsprechen viel sagen’, in Heidegger, ‘Der Weg zur Sprache’, p.252. Emphasis in original. The relationship between stillness, silence, language and poetry is developed in Chapter Five. From this emerges Strauß’ *poetics of dwelling*.

¹⁶³ Strauß, *Niemand anderes*, pp.46–47.

¹⁶⁴ For example, *Die Widmung* is a dedication by Richard Schroubek of his diary to his absent partner Hannah. *Paare, Passanten* evokes the fleeting connection and inevitable impermanence of couples. Lastly, *Niemand anderes* suggests the necessity of social and linguistic isolation.

In dem [...] Buch von Botho Strauß sind die [...] Geschichten bloß Teile für das Mosaik. Ihr metaphorischer Charakter ist unbestritten; nicht weniger wirklich ist die Aura des Alltags, dem sie gehören. Liebe und deren Erschöpfung, Verzweiflung, und was sie auslöst.¹⁶⁵

For many critics, the works, their difficult, fragmentary form and underlying engagement with sexual politics present a commentary on the moral condition of either post-war or post-unification Germany, and as the introduction contends, thereby inevitably place him in some relationship to ethics and politics. As Blöcker notes: ‘Strauß bleibt nie im bloß Stimmungshaften hängen, so vollkommen ihm das auch zu Gebote steht. [...]. Das sprechende Detail weitet er zum Sittenbild, aus wenigen Sinnesdaten entwickelt er den Charaktertypus’.¹⁶⁶ But as the opening interpretation of the fragment from *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* and the specific remarks in respect of *Lügen* show, this overlooks the philosophical significance of Strauß’ proposal for an alternative, here described in terms of an experience with originary language.

The ‘Monotropie’ excerpt from *Niemand anderes* highlights the ambiguous, complex relationship in Strauß’ work between language and mankind. The figures in each fragment are constrained by its conventional, everyday uses, but critically, in spite of this, an ongoing, barely perceivable continuity with originary language prevails. The possibility of its retrieval, as the opening section in this chapter claims, is both absent and proximal for mankind as shown in the ‘Alte Übersetzer’ fragment. It is worth underscoring that conventional and originary language are both still conceived here as language. They are not to be understood as different forms, e.g., one prosaic and the other

¹⁶⁵ Meyer, M. ‘Vergeblichkeit des Orts. Zu *Paare, Passanten*’, in Radix, (ed.) *Strauß lesen*, p.263.

¹⁶⁶ Blöcker, G. ‘Zwei Fußbreit über der Leere. Zu *Paare, Passanten*’, in Radix, (ed.) *Strauß lesen*, p.261.

poetic. Instead, it is their experience – how the relationship between mankind and world manifests itself philosophically in and through language – that differs.

Strauß outlines this deep tension early in his writing in the ‘Schrieb’ section of *Paare, Passanten*. There he writes: ‘Es schafft ein tiefes Zuhause und ein tiefes Exil, da in der Sprache zu sein’.¹⁶⁷ It is this tension in the nature of the relationship, and the ambiguous grounds upon which an experience with originary language and corresponding overcoming of the constraints and distortions of its conventional uses are manifest, that informs Strauß’ notion of *Dämmern*.

A number of fragments from *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* illustrate the deep ambiguity suggested by the term. One, for example, portrays the epilogue to a one-off sexual encounter between a young woman, Myriam, and an older, unnamed man, and shows the faltering attempts by the former to establish some communication or bond between them. Myriam tries repeatedly to create common ground with the man throughout the course of their night together whilst yearning for, and repeatedly checking to establish, ‘ob nicht der erste Faden des Morgens zu glühen beginne’.¹⁶⁸ Myriam’s desire for a connection beyond social convention mirrors that described from the ‘Monotropie’ episode in *Niemand anderes*: to address the challenge posed by the presence of someone else and associated question ‘Wer bist du?’.

The man meanwhile avoids what he views as the clichéd form and inevitable movement of their conversation, which is restricted to the conventional banalities of psychological sensationalism. As he comments: ‘Nur nicht in die Nähe des von ihr ersehnten

¹⁶⁷ Strauß, *Paare, Passanten*, p.101.

¹⁶⁸ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.87.

“Erfahrungsaustauschs” kommen!’.¹⁶⁹ Strauß remarks elsewhere in *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* of another of his figures who is portrayed in similar circumstances:

Natürlich mußte man sich, wie es üblich ist, aussprechen über alles, was vorgefallen war. Aber da dies mit Worten und auf eine Weise geschah, die grundvernünftig und einsichtig war, wurde das eigentliche machtvolle Dunkel gar nicht berührt.¹⁷⁰

The expectations, formalities and compulsion arising from social intercourse are unavoidable in the encounters Strauß describes in *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*.

Myriam, however, persists in her efforts to engage her partner of that one night. Despite his reluctance he is drawn into her insistence upon conversational intimacy: ‘Ich erwachte schließlich unter ihrer eintönigen Stimme, die mich leise anredete und nicht mehr versiegen wollte’.¹⁷¹ The man eventually succumbs and offers a few personal observations to the partner. But Strauß makes clear, through the stress of the narrative, that the man’s comments, far from a genuinely founded exchange, are rather a pointed obfuscation. Nevertheless, they raise the issue of language: the man’s offer of dialogue is confirmation of both its failure and its limits.

Sie hörte zu, als erzählte ich eine intime Geschichte. Dabei waren es nur ein paar abstrakte Bemerkungen, die mir dazu dienten, mein Herz fest zu ummanteln. Ich fürchtete, sie habe sofort die zerschlissene Stelle, das Loch in meinem Redemantel entdeckt, durch das sie nun stumm vor Entsetzen auf meine Blöße, meine ungeheure Verdorbenheit und Herzensleere starrte.¹⁷²

Myriam’s response underscores the final elision of any connection between the couple.

As the fragment continues she reconciles herself, after all, to silence: ‘Ohne ein Wort zu

¹⁶⁹ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.91.

¹⁷⁰ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.24.

¹⁷¹ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.88.

¹⁷² Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.91.

erwidern, nachzufragen oder hinzuzusetzen, legte sie sich zu Bett und streckte sich [...] aus'.¹⁷³

Significantly, Myriam's efforts at establishing dialogue and conversational exchange through everyday discourse are associated at each juncture with *Dämmern*. As Strauß describes: 'Sie schritt wieder, [...] schritt wieder am Fenster vorbei, hob den Vorhang, suchte den Morgen'.¹⁷⁴ Finally, as the fragment concludes, at the point when conversation between the couple stalls irretrievably, the first light of dawn breaks through: 'Nicht lange, nachdem sie das Nachtlcht gelöscht hatte, entdeckte sie draußen, nun endlich ... "wie der erste Faden des Morgens zu glühen begann"'.¹⁷⁵ The breakdown of language as dialogue and the isolation of the individual is here inimitably associated with *Dämmern*.

The suggestion that *Dämmern* evokes a site – through the indeterminacy and ambiguous status of daybreak and nightfall – where conventional forms of language break apart is supported by numerous other episodes from *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*. Moreover, the idea has a long continuity in Strauß' writing. Thus, one fragment in *Paare, Passanten* in the section entitled 'Dämmer' anticipates this denotation in the later prose work.¹⁷⁶

The episode describes a similar fleeting sexual encounter, although in this earlier work it is more explicit, between a young unnamed woman and equally uncharacterised older

¹⁷³ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.92.

¹⁷⁴ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.88.

¹⁷⁵ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.92.

¹⁷⁶ Anz, of course, declares the notion of *Dämmer* in *Paare, Passanten* as one of many 'veredelten Abweichungen von der Normalsprache' and in this critique underscores the charge of fatalism, in Anz, *Modern, postmodern?*, p.407. However, this is to mistake the deep ambiguity and enigma suggested by the term, which evokes both the removal from so-called normal conventional language and the possibility of its originary retrieval.

man.¹⁷⁷ Having picked up the woman, the pair is described as driving into, ‘*Morgendämmerung* am steingrauen Himmel’.¹⁷⁸ On this occasion, there is no attempt at communication or dialogue. Their sexual encounter provides the only connection, which is socially defined and shown as artificial:

Wir sprachen nicht. Verschlossen sah sie zur Seite, legte das Kinn auf ihr Knie. Die Schweißperlen des einsamen Sich-überlassen-Seins. [...]. Verschlossene Menschen, tief versonnen, weit woanders in ihrem ganzen Wesen, tauchen ruhig und schwerelos an die Oberfläche des Menschlichen, [...] tauchen auf, nur um ein vorgespiegeltes Bild, ein reizvolles Figurenspiel zu erfüllen, und tauchen dann wieder hinunter.¹⁷⁹

As well as illustrating *Dämmern* as the condition of linguistic breakdown between couples, the fragment from *Paare, Passanten* deepens the significance of the motifs considered from *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* by associating the couple’s encounter with an overwhelming mental and physical lassitude for one another and themselves. As the man in the ‘Myriam’ fragment repeatedly describes his fatigue and passivity in respect of his failure to respond in dialogue to his female companion, similarly, the equivalent figure in *Paare, Passanten* ends his encounter reflecting: ‘Die menschliche Sexualität und ihre Kultur waren das Mythenreservoir – die stumme Götterwelt dieser untergetauchten, geheimnisvollen Wesen. Ein müdes Bedürfnis zu lieben und dabei müde zu bleiben, hob sie dann und wann zu uns empor’.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ Such fragments have prompted accusations of misogyny in Strauß’ work. See, for example, Adelson, L. A. ‘Der arme Mann und “diese solidarischen Löcher”’. Zu Begriff und Funktion von Weiblichkeit bei Botho Strauß’, in Stephan, I. & Weigel, S. (eds.) *Weiblichkeit und Avantgarde*, (Hamburg: Neue Folge, 1987). Such an accusation seems unfounded not only because it overlooks the presence of strong female characters, for example in his dramas, but because such selective highlighting overlays his work with a contemporary political dimension absent from the original works and, therefore, places his writing in a context that leads to the very sort of distortions Strauß seeks to bring to light.

¹⁷⁸ Strauß, *Paare, Passanten*, p.127. My emphasis.

¹⁷⁹ Strauß, *Paare, Passanten*, p.127.

¹⁸⁰ Strauß, *Paare, Passanten*, p.128.

The work is replete with invocations of this state of individual lethargy. As the argument in the final section of this chapter shows, it is the inversion of such passivity, as *Laßkraft*, that comes to be associated by Strauß with a retrieval of originary language and also with *Wohnen*. For example, Strauß describes another group about to recognise the irretrievable dissolution in their relationship:

Wie man einem elektronischen Bild die Farben entziehen kann, so hatte hier den dreien ein schützender Dämmer, der aber aus der Mitte ihrer unschlüssigen Lage über sie kam, jede Kraft zu beschließen und zu handeln entzogen.¹⁸¹

Dämmern and lassitude are intimately bound for Strauß.

But the term *Dämmern*, notwithstanding its association with conventional language, breakdown between couples, sense of emptiness and physical inaction evokes more in Strauß' writing than Korte suggests by 'die Transformation des Realen in die "Dämmer"-Sphäre des Undeutlichen und Rätselhaften'.¹⁸² The ambiguity, indeterminacy and enigma invoked by the term also holds out – contradictorily – the promise of a retrieved experience of originary language.¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.13.

¹⁸² Korte, 'Auf dem Weg zur "Tagesordnung des Ewigen"?', p.21.

¹⁸³ The development of Strauß' ideas on language in respect of the term *Dämmern* in his poetry bears suggestive comparison with a number of Heidegger's poems to Hannah Arendt, in its association with many of the motifs and characteristics of language considered here. See Heidegger's 'Müdigkeit' and 'Dämmerung' in Arendt, H. & Heidegger, M. *Briefe 1925 bis 1975 und andere Zeugnisse* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Vittorio Klosterman, 2002), pp.368 and 373 and Strauß, B. *Diese Erinnerung an einen, der nur einen Tag zu Gast war. Gedicht* (Munich: DTV, 1992). Moreover, Heidegger also discusses the profound ambiguity of *Dämmern* in his exegesis of Trakl's poem 'Geistliche Dämmerung', in Heidegger, M. 'Die Sprache im Gedicht', in *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, pp.48ff. The constraints of the present thesis prevent further consideration of this evocative conjunction of *poetic* forms and ideas.

4.4.2 *Dämmern*: retrieval of originary language in *silence*?

The profound equivocation of *Dämmern* and the condition it denotes are suggested by the fragment relaying the vignette of ‘Dr. Gertraude Laszek, Orientalistin, und ihr Lebensgefährte Armin Rust, Heizungsinstallateur’.¹⁸⁴ Unusually, both figures are named. Their story draws the present interpretations back to the motifs raised in the ‘Alte Übersetzer’ fragment. The couple is shown deeply divided, the man as physically expended. Strauß writes:

Der Mann geht torkelnd hinter der Frau, die ihm nicht den Arm leiht. Der Vorschwapp des sich umstülpenden Magens springt aus seinem Mund. Die Frau, die nur das Geräusch hört, dreht sich nicht um, sie fragt in einem harschen, spöttischen Ton: ‘Geht es schon los?’¹⁸⁵

However, the animosity and division between the couple contrasts with the description Gertraude Laszek offers to an old acquaintance in conversation immediately following the opening. As she exclaims: “Einen besseren Mann hätte ich gar nicht finden können!” sagt sie tags darauf zu einer Freundin, fast in einem Jubelruf, jedenfalls in einem Ausbruch von Frohsinn, der sie selber überrascht’.¹⁸⁶ Strauß shows the constraints on individuals, on this occasion the pressure of social conformity, arising from the conventions of dialogic language and exchange.

Frau Laszek läßt, bis auf die oberflächlichste Erkundigung, keinerlei Interesse an den Lebensumständen der anderen erkennen. Sobald diese ein wenig vom Auf und Ab der vergangenen Jahrzehnte einstreut, schweift der Blick [...] ab und offenbar auch ihr Gehör, sie gibt ein falsches Lächeln bei und fragt nicht nach. In die Unterhaltung verirrt sich kein einziger unbefangener, warmer Ton.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁴ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.36.

¹⁸⁵ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.36.

¹⁸⁶ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.36.

¹⁸⁷ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.37.

This is, however, the prelude to a terminal fissure in this language and between the woman, Laszek and man, Rust.

The fragment continues as the man returns home drunk – ‘Am Abend öffnet sie ihrem betrunkenen Mann die Tür’ – the woman leaving him in his stupor: ‘Seine Frau nimmt mit einer durch Gewohnheit nicht geschwächten Geste des stummen Ekels ihr Buch von der Kommode und zieht sich zurück’.¹⁸⁸ As in previous fragments the circumstances are not exceptional but recount their normal habits and experience. The woman sits apart from her partner but becomes aware of and senses a change. She calls to him but he does not hear, and returns to find him about to launch himself off the balcony. With supreme effort she pulls him back from the abyss: ‘Es gelingt ihr, ihn aus dem gefährlichen Überhang zurückzureißen, auf den Boden zu zerren’.¹⁸⁹ Strauß describes the man lying semi-conscious and her barely able to speak. At this point, when they are no longer able to communicate, there is a transformation in their experience with language.

Until this change the woman’s only contact with her partner is, ‘mit einem Mann, der nicht anwesend, der nur noch in ihrer Erinnerung ein mit ihr sprechender Mensch war’.¹⁹⁰ She is reconciled ‘nie mehr mit ihm redenkönnen! Laß Gott, ihn noch ein einziges Mal zu mir sprechen!’.¹⁹¹ They can clearly not communicate by any normal, recognisable measure. However, as she brings him back into the room the couple undergoes the transformation. Strauß’ description is as enigmatic as previous fragments considered. The man utters a silent scream:

¹⁸⁸ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.38.

¹⁸⁹ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.38.

¹⁹⁰ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.39.

¹⁹¹ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.39.

Die angewinkelten Arme waren wie erstarrt und ließen sich nicht bewegen. Sie sah seine verzerrten Gesichtszüge, die geschlossenen Augen, nur der Mund war aufgerissen: er schrie. Er schrie lautlos, mit aller Kraft, aber er schrie aus einer Entfernung, in der seine Stimme für niemanden mehr zu hören war.¹⁹²

It seems at first that the man's voiceless exhortation is merely confirmation of the breakdown in conventional language. But this is to overlook Strauß' pointed suggestion made in linking his silent *uttering* with *Dämmern*.

Sie ging in die Küche und füllte Kaffee in die Maschine. Der Morgen dämmerte schon am Himmel. Plötzlich hörte sie, wie er nach ihr rief. Ganz deutlich hörte sie ihren Namen, den er rief. [...]. Er lag aber unverändert, das Gesicht erfüllt von dem [...] stillen Schrei, der keinen Raum für ein Wort, einen Namen mehr ließ. Dennoch war es unmöglich, daß sie sich getäuscht hatte.¹⁹³

Dämmern is here shown as fathomless and indeterminate. Although it does not denote a reconciliation of the couple's division or an irrevocable overcoming of conventional language, it shows a possibility of a retrieval of an absent, deeper experience of originary language beyond the constraints of a normative linguistic order, its conventions, grammar and syntax. The fragment though, critically, remains baffling and enigmatic. How else does Strauß portray the possibility of such a retrieved experience?

¹⁹² Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.40.

¹⁹³ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.40. The work is replete with other examples. Strauß offers a similar conjunction of silence and *Dämmern*, describing a scene of a man walking alone at an indeterminate site, at the boundary between sea and land, to which he is inexorably drawn: 'die ungeheure Ebene, die kahle Fläche [...] an meinem räumlichen Körper, meine Kleinheit und Einsamkeit stemmte sich gegen den Sog, der meinen Körper in die unermesslichen Fläche hineinziehen wollte'. The man encounters a woman with whom he attempts to converse. Strauß writes: 'Es war aber eine Frau in vierfarbigem Jogginganzug, Farben der Dämmerung, [...], und sie folgte mir auf dem leeren Strand'. But their exchange fails by any conventional standard. She utters a sound that is animalistic and silent. Moreover, the fragment suggests that this *uttering* of language was given her, or that she is, in fact, merely the site for its expression, invoking the dynamic, absent-proximal movement of the *Sprache des Dritten*: 'Ihr Mund ging auf im selben Augenblick, und das langgezogene "Miääää", Ruf der Möwe, kam aus ihrem Hals. [...]. Vielmehr war sie eigentlich stumm. [...]. Er war ihr anstelle der Stimme – ja gegeben worden? Eher doch wohl: in sie eingeschlagen', in Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, pp.30-31. Emphases in original.

4.4.3 *Dämmern*: retrieval of originary language in *uttering*?

In the ‘Bordstein’ and the ‘Laszek’ fragments the dissolution of conventional language for the figures corresponds with a glimpse of an absent *Sprache des Dritten* that manifests itself in an enigmatic silent articulation. However, in other episodes from *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, not least in the ‘Schimpfer’ monologue, the momentary retrieval of absent originary language is associated with a torrent of words, equally beyond recognisable rational linguistic precepts, as though the individual is overwhelmed and barely able to formulate the experience. What both share is the enigmatic nature of that experience, and the sense that language is somehow given or granted rather than being appropriated for use.

In some episodes, the words, manifestations of such language, have a long etymological heritage that directly invokes Heidegger’s method. For example, in one mysterious fragment, an unnamed documentary filmmaker makes contact again with a subject of an earlier film, ‘Loredana de Waard’, a ‘Beauftragte der holländischen Regierung für Zivilschutzfragen’.¹⁹⁴ During their meeting, in which they exchange ‘die üblichen Erkundigungen’, the producer raises a suspicion that the figure he originally knew and the person whom he later meets ‘auf gar keinen Fall ein und diesselbe Person sein konnten’.¹⁹⁵ It becomes clear to the journalist that the woman has, in fact, murdered her erstwhile namesake. As she finally confesses her crime Strauß relays how she is ‘von einem Sturzbach hagiographischen Plunders überschüttet, den ich nicht zu durchdringen

¹⁹⁴ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.55.

¹⁹⁵ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.56.

vermochte'.¹⁹⁶ There is a breakdown in the normal parameters of communication and understanding. The choice of word to describe her crime is notable:

Ich fragte mich, ob sie auch geschwitzt hatte, als sie Loredanas *Fleischhemd* auftrennte. [...]. Sie sagte Fleischhemd statt Leiche, Leichnam, und es kam vom althochdeutschen lih-hamo, hamo gleich Hemd. Weiß der Teufel, wie es in ihr aufgetaucht war.¹⁹⁷

The words, manifestations of the *Sprache des Dritten*, are imaged as given or granted to the individual to enable the possibility of its experience.

In Strauß' early prose work *Rumor*, one of Bekker's many senses of this absent experience with language highlights again the profound ambivalence that Strauß intends by the condition of *Dämmern*. Bekker is both afflicted by a torrent of words and by silence: he is a 'Mann, der an einem Tag einen fürchterlichen Redeschwall ausschüttet, um dann an den folgenden den Mund gar nicht mehr aufzumachen'.¹⁹⁸

Faced with an impending return to his former employer, Zachler's 'Institut', a quasi-commercial research organisation labelled 'ein Scheißhaus des Geistes und eine Züchtstätte des Idiotismus', Bekker experiences a widening fracture in his everyday, normal spoken language.¹⁹⁹ The characteristics are recognisable from other fragments considered. He becomes physically debilitated as the relationship to objects in his environment deteriorates. His daughter, Grit, with whom he is staying notices:

[...] wie in seinem Gesicht Veränderungen sich abzeichnen, wie die Haut fahler und faltiger geworden ist. [...]. Die Augen haben einen seidigen Glanz, scheinen offen für alles Ferne, müde fürs Greifbare, auch im übrigen für die nächstliegenden Pflichten. [...]. Manchmal *redet* er unklar und

¹⁹⁶ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.59.

¹⁹⁷ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.58. Emphasis in original.

¹⁹⁸ Strauß, *Rumor*, pp.94-95.

¹⁹⁹ Strauß, *Rumor*, p.9. Some critics suggest Zachler's institute as symbol for Horkheimer's Institut für Sozialforschung, centre for Critical Theory, in Frankfurt-am-Main.

zusammenhanglos auch, wenn er gar nicht betrunken ist. Dann schleicht, was er sagt, dicht an der Grenze zu *Dämmer* [...]. Das Seltsame ist nur: in solchen Augenblicken meint man einen Verfall seiner gewohnten ebenso wie zugleich einen Aufstieg bisher noch unbekannter Kräfte des Geistes wahrzunehmen.²⁰⁰

The experience is imaged, in conjunction with *Dämmer*, as a place at the margins or outer boundaries of normal behaviour, but also in obvious contradiction to his physical decline and expression of apparent non-sense, as a powerfully creative force. *Rumor* does not, then, as Laemmle suggests of the work's title, denote 'mit einem in unser Leben, in unser Denken hineinwirkenden allgemeinen Diskurs, den Foucault das "unendliche Murmeln" genannt hat, obwohl es mehr ein unaufhörliches Plappern zu sein scheint', but rather language as *Reden*, an uttering of the absent *Sprache des Dritten*.²⁰¹

The examples from Strauß' prose work are numerous but all inflect the ambivalence of mankind's experience, in and through language, of a distorted relationship to world, whether in respect of objects or other people. One further lengthy fragment from *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* serves to highlight another important characteristic to this relationship. It shows the couple 'Helty', a failed 'Baugeschichtler', and Stella, an impecunious single mother and divorcee, 'Psycholinguistin, promoviert', whose academic training and approach to language is certainly not without a suggestion of irony.²⁰² They begin a relationship that quickly runs into difficulties. Like Bekker in *Rumor*, Helty takes flight from the worsening situation, seeks sanctuary in isolation and, similarly, undergoes a transformation in his use and experience of language. In this state of apparent mania he can no longer conceive previously recognisable objects or familiar views of language.

²⁰⁰ Strauß, *Rumor*, p.54. My emphases.

²⁰¹ Laemmle, P. 'Von der Notwendigkeit, böse zu sein. Zu *Rumor*', in Radix, (ed.) *Strauß lesen*, p.256.

²⁰² Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, pp.15-16.

Morgens saß er brettgerade am Tisch und nahm die Zeitung vor. Lange nichts gelesen. [...]. Teilweise begriff. Zusammenhänge verfolgen konnte. Dann wieder gab's nichts, was zusammenhing. Es waren nur Lücken, eine Strecke mit unberechenbar vielen Lücken, durch die man woandershin denken mußte.²⁰³

His response is instinctively to withdraw further, this time into nature and there, away from social contact, he experiences a different sense of meaning. Significantly, this is imaged in terms of an origin.

[...] wo einst keinerlei Sinn für die Schönheit der Landschaft bestand, wurde diese Schönheit jetzt zu einem hegenden Versteck der Anfänge, die er zwischen den Zweigen überall flüstern hörte. Und plötzlich in dieser tiefen Vereinsamung der Rückkehr, schien es fast gleich, ob er damals mit der einen sprach oder heute mit einer anderen: man sprach jeweils aus Gelüsten, die nichts mit den Wörtern, dem Sprechen zu tun hatten, und sie allein ließen einen übermütig werden, [...] mit ihrem viel schnelleren, aufgeregteren Geräusch.²⁰⁴

Language as *Geräusch* here parallels the indeterminacy associated with *Rumor*.

The different experience with language inevitably signals the irreconcilable breakup of the relationship with Stella. The two are no longer able to communicate. As Strauß writes: 'Als seine neue Geliebte ihn nach tagelanger Suche [...] erreichte, redete er [...] und lallte nur in dumpfen Brocken. Stella konnte ihn nicht wiedererkennen'.²⁰⁵

However, although the selected examples show how Strauß conveys a crisis of language in the limits and constraints of its conventional uses, and an alternative, occasionally glimpsed absent originary language, it is clear that no resolution is offered. The different figures in *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* do not overcome the all-pervasive state denoted by *Lügen*. Claims by critics such as Windrich or Lämmerman that Strauß presents a

²⁰³ Strauß *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, pp.21-22.

²⁰⁴ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.22.

²⁰⁵ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, pp.22-23.

synthesis to the crisis in language are misplaced, fall short of Strauß' intent and limit the implications of the form or presentation of his ideas.²⁰⁶

Each of the fragments considered thus far shares similar characteristics in respect of the *Sprache des Dritten*: of isolation, spiritual and physical lassitude, either silence or maniacal *uttering* and a corresponding displacement to the margins.²⁰⁷ However, all deny the encounter between couples – or with an *other* – as the basis for its experience. Each attempt to near or retrieve originary language appears ultimately to fail. This, the argument contends, is inherent to the indeterminate condition invoked by *Dämmern*.

However, the question previously raised remains: whether Strauß ever shows an experience of the originary *Sprache des Dritten*, like the glimpse he proposes elliptically of *Fleck* in the culmination of the *Sondenexperiment* in *Beginnlosigkeit*, and by the epiphany in the 'Odeon' section in *Niemand anderes*, both considered at the close of the previous chapter. Perhaps, unsurprisingly, to delineate this, the present reading of *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* returns to the concluding 'Schimpfer' monologue to consider the significance of the last term in the trilogy, *Wohnen*, for Strauß' thinking on and portrayal of language.

²⁰⁶ Lämmerman, for example, claims: "Somit ist eigentlich die "Sprachkrise" als solche erledigt: denn zwar ist immer Krise – bei den allermeisten Benutzern der Sprache; aber die Sprache selbst und der kleine Kreis derer, die mit ihr wirklich umgehen können, hat sich von dem Schock der Jahrhundertwende erholt und neue Ausdrucksmöglichkeiten gefunden", in Lämmerman, *Für unser Werk mein Liebster*, p.355.

²⁰⁷ The constraints of the thesis prevent a consideration in *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* of the related motif of music and its relationship to language raised briefly at the close of the previous chapter and its conjunction with these characteristics.

4.5 *Wohnen: dwelling in originary language?*

In addition to showing the distorted relationship between mankind and object-world and associated conventional language uses as *Lügen*, the ‘Schimpfer’ monologue is also readily identifiable with one of the manifestations of originary language set out above, namely the experience with language by the individual as *uttering*.

Following his initial disagreement with both partner and compatriots in the bar, the *Schimpfer*’s monologue continues uninterrupted for almost thirty pages. But to describe this stream of words only as *uttering* is to mistake its structure, and consequently to overlook that other manifestation of the *Sprache des Dritten* as *silence*. The *Schimpfer*’s tirade is continually broken up; halts, moves forward again – is interrupted by digressions and tangential remarks – lingers over a particular idea before continuing with the relentless outpouring of words. It is important to consider the way Strauß has structured the concluding narrative of *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*. It does not flow ceaselessly like Molly Bloom’s concluding stream of words in Joyce’s *Ulysses*. The interchange between categorical assertions and uncertain digressions, the exclamations and interrogatives, *uttering* and *silence*, offer a disrupted rhythm to the fragment.

The reading given here of *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* shows the motifs that are covered in the *Schimpfer* monologue: the initial disdain for the sensual pleasures of mass entertainment culture; his positioning on the margins of such a collective; the deepening of a critique of language in relation to the ever more dominant and pervasive scientific and technological systems of thought; and the attempt to overcome these constraining influences to retrieve an experience with originary language. Finally, in the tension

between the *Schimpfer*'s sense of an eruption in language and frequent silences, Strauß' conceit of the deep-lying ambiguity, the indeterminacy at the retrieval of originary language is structurally made manifest.

It is the very status of the fragment as monologue that signals its proximal relationship to originary language. The present argument takes issue with interpretations of *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* that posit Strauß as seeking to transcend the impoverishment of conventional language uses either through dialogue or social or linguistic encounters. By these measures, each attempt to experience or retrieve originary language is shown to fail. Rather, it is the very monological character of the *Schimpfer*'s language that distinguishes it in the prose work. What is meant by this? The philosophical source for Strauß' characterisation and structuring of the *Schimpfer* fragment as monologue is again to be found in Heidegger's thinking on language.

In his concluding lecture in *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, Heidegger attempts to show an experience with language as *Sage*, as *saying: die Sprache als die Sprache zur Sprache bringen*. He begins his lecture with an excerpt by Novalis bearing the title 'Monolog'.²⁰⁸ For Heidegger, the essay denotes a possible path towards an experience with language. As he writes of Novalis' work: 'Der Titel deutet in das Geheimnis der Sprache: Sie spricht einzig und einsam mit sich selber'.²⁰⁹ As might be expected in light of earlier comments on Heidegger's approach, the exegesis around Novalis' fragment does not proceed by formal propositions. This would merely lead to an experience succumbing to

²⁰⁸ Heidegger, 'Der Weg zur Sprache', p.241. Heidegger is concerned with a single sentence from Novalis. 'Ein Satz des Textes lautet: "Gerade das Eigentümliche der Sprache, daß sie sich bloß um sich selbst bekümmert, weiß keiner"'.
²⁰⁹ Heidegger, 'Der Weg zur Sprache', p.241.

the dominant formal conceptualisations of language. Heidegger's exegesis deepens the notion of language understood as *Sage* to *Zeige*; language as *showing*.²¹⁰ This, in turn, is the way in which the *Ereignis* in and of *das Wesen der Sprache* comes-into-presence.

Heidegger writes:

Die Sage ist Zeigen. In allem, was uns anspricht, was uns als Besprochenes und Gesprochenes trifft, was sich uns zuspricht, was als Ungesprochenes auf uns wartet, aber auch in dem von *uns* vollzogenen Sprechen waltet das Zeigen, das Anwesendes erscheinen, Abwesendes entscheiden läßt.
[...].
Die im Ereignis beruhende Sage ist als das Zeigen die eigenste Weise des Ereignens. Das Ereignis ist sagend.²¹¹

The implications of this difficult conflation of terms and ideas are developed in the following chapter in considering the truth claims made by Heidegger – and following him Strauß – for language and, in particular, the *poetic*. For the moment what is of concern is his delineation of language as monologue. As Heidegger concludes: ‘Aber die Sprache *ist* Monolog. Dies sagt jetzt ein Zwiefaches: Die Sprache *allein* ist es, die eigentlich spricht. Und sie spricht *einsam*’.²¹² The monological character of language as *saying* denotes both the distinctive originating experience in which things or world come-into-presence or are disclosed in and through language, and the manner in which mankind must attend on this if he is to retrieve an experience with it.

The formulation, though unavoidably opaque, if accepted, opens up the sense of Strauß' final fragment and the apex of the *Schimpfer* monologue. The different ideas in relation

²¹⁰ Heidegger writes: ‘*Der Wesende der Sprache ist die Sage als die Zeige*’, in *Der Weg zur Sprache*, p.254. Emphasis in original. Etymological support for the conjunction of saying and showing is offered from ‘das griechische δεικνῦμι (deiknūmi), das lateinische dicere’, in Heidegger, ‘Das Wort’, p.222ff.

²¹¹ Heidegger, ‘Der Weg zur Sprache’, pp.257 and 262. Seubold describes the reach of the relationship between *Ereignis* and language as *Sage* thus: “‘die Sage’ ist die Weise, in der das Ereignis spricht. Erst in dieser und durch diese Sprache spricht sich dem Mensch das Sein zu’, in Seubold, ‘*Stichwort*: Ereignis’. P.305.

²¹² Heidegger, ‘Der Weg zur Sprache’, p.265.

to contemporary culture, science and technology gradually recede as the *Schimpfer's* halting stream of language builds to what can be termed a vision – although this does not adequately capture the excerpt, and pre-supposes a bias towards the clarity of perceptual senses: if it is vision, it is as enigma – resonant of the culminating experiences shown in *Paare, Passanten, Niemand anderes* and *Beginnlosigkeit*. The monologue, on this view, far from a ‘Brechung der dialektischen Struktur’ and ‘eine Relativierung des Verstehens an sich’ as Thomas for example claims, presents instead the delta from where conventional language, and all its metaphysical association, is shown to be overcome as possibility.²¹³ In the fragment the characteristics noted here and in earlier chapters – of site, *Laßkraft* and *Zwischen* – culminate as the excerpt moves paratactically between originary language as *uttering* and *silence*.

Bin mit den Ästen in die Dürre gezogen ... Aufrecht steht das Land im Winter. Aufrechtes Weiß. Pantomime alles, was ruft. Und die Krähe, ein Drohfinger der Nacht ... Es kommt keine Sonne. Wir sind ganz allein, Weiß und Schwarz ... Das Gerüst strebt in die Höhe, das Kopfhaar zu Berge. Alles vergeht aufwärts. Selbst der Schnee steigt, sobald wir ihn nicht sehen ... Gemarkungen, Brandzeichen, Ketten und Pfähle: was hat man nicht alles erfunden, um die furchtbare Ununterscheidbarkeit, das Grundblatt des Himmels von der Erde zu tilgen! ... Die große Glocke kniet ins Tal ... Die Erde nur Startplatz. Anagoge alles, was lebt. Von hier steigt es hinauf. Laßkraft. Allem, was sich entzieht, reglos nachziehen. Heute will ich mich auswohnen! ... So, gegen die eigenen Wände gepreßt, halb vor Entsetzen, halb vor ekstatischem, prassenden Wohnen ... Es ist alles anders, als ich es sehe ... Nur ein Tropfen kosmischer Zeit, der sich in unseren irdischen Stundennapf mischte, und es würde, nur zum Beispiel, etwa alle zehn bis fünfzehn Minuten (irdisch) *ein* Bild vor unseren Augen vorbeischweben, [...] ein Bild, einsam, lautlos, vielgestalt, zöge im Bogen herauf und sänke wieder ins Leere, ohne Folge. Nichts vorher, Nichts nachher. Ereignisleere, Schwarz minutenlang (irdisch). Dann wieder der schwache Hof, der schimmernde Halo, aus dem schließlich gestochen scharf, einmalig und undurchdringlich, das Bild heraufzöge ... zwei Hände, eine Obstschale ... Galavision. Ikone des Tages. Ein Brocken aus der unendlich langsamen Sprengung. Und – genau hinsehen! – es kehrt nie wieder. Unaufhaltbar und unwiederbringlich verfliegt

²¹³ Thomas, *Botho Strauß und die 'Konservative Revolution'*, p.186.

der Körper, das Bruchstück einer einzigen unermeßlichen BILDSTÄNDIGKEIT
... O das Weiterreden!²¹⁴

The excerpt gestures towards the last of Strauß' trilogy, *Wohnen*, as well as the structural significance of the terms and spaces in the work's title. In that elusive instance in which originary language is manifest and experienced – in which the momentum of ever-renewing *Weltbilder* is momentarily suspended by 'BILDSTÄNDIGKEIT' – Strauß has the *Schimpfer* declare this as *Wohnen, dwelling*.

Finally, then, *Wohnen* invokes the retrieval of originary language and its experience, suggested as possibility by *Dämmern*. For Strauß it puts into words an understanding of the relationship to language that presents the possibility of overcoming mankind's continuing state of exile in the accrued habits of its conventional uses, invoked in turn, by *Lügen*, and corresponding ontological homelessness in a scientific and technological structuring of object-world.

Of course, in trying first to articulate the philosophical antecedents of such ideas in Heidegger and second to develop an understanding of Strauß' thinking on language and transformation into a complex of inter-related fragments, both in *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* and from across his prose works, it is important also not to forget that these are ultimately examples of *poetic* writing. In other words Strauß' prose, whilst obviously spanning a range of tones, styles and registers, is ultimately made up of works of narrative. The *poetic* is not philosophy: at least not by traditionally understood measures. A distinction, therefore, needs to be made between the *poetic* nature of these works on the one hand and what is claimed for them and on the other the precepts of the

²¹⁴ Strauß, *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, p.196. Emphases in original.

established philosophical tradition and its discursive practice. Thus, the ideas that Strauß advances in respect of language, of its conventional uses, as it is here defined, and its originary experience and ambiguous, enigmatic absent and proximal status, cannot be subject to tests of validity, or enclosed by the strictures of logical induction or deduction. The truth value – if it is that – or the intellectual force of Strauß’ ideas, this thesis contends, cannot be ascertained by appeals to empiricism. This is to overlook the ontological tenor of the works. This, of course, in no way leaves the argument relative or judgement-free. Such an approach would anyway be entirely antithetical to the motivating impulse of Strauß’ work, which demands judgements be made and positions taken. An assessment can, indeed must, be reached of the *poetic* characteristics of his writing, central to which is the validity of Strauß’ distinctive views on the particular philosophical nature of the *poetic*; and for that matter, an understanding of the poetic nature of such philosophical thought. But this is to anticipate the overall conclusion of the thesis.

To return to the initial line of thought: the claim that Strauß proposes a retrieval of originary language – with its philosophical provenance in and ontological understanding from Heidegger – and his association of this with *Wohnen*, raises the question as to the particular status, or otherwise, that he ascribes to the *poetic*. This is the ultimate consideration of this thesis and subject of the concluding chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

A POETICS OF DWELLING: *FRAGMENTE DER UNDEUTLICHKEIT*¹

5.1 The *poetic* work and truth

The *poetic* work, however manifest, whether as poem, play or prose, and its relationship to the real and thereby to the true, remains an ongoing philosophical problem in the Western tradition. The original inflection given to this question in *The Republic* by Plato retains enduring influence and acts as a perennial reference point in its consideration. So, for example, Erich Auerbach's defining engagement with the question of *mimesis* acknowledges the impetus of the Socratic dialogue with Glaucon on 'Art and Illusion' for his exhaustive discussion of 'the representation of reality in Western literature', even though he seeks to resist the conclusion and philosophical implication of the dual platonic constellations of truth, appearance, representation, and creator, artisan, artist.² In these related hierarchies, the work and its creation by the poets – so strongly contrasted with the utility and, therefore, the philosophical priority accorded the work of the artisan – are described as nothing more than imitations of that which is already a re-creation of the truly real. As Plato has Socrates surmise:

'And what about the artist? Does he make or manufacture?'

'No'.

'Then what does he do?'

'I think that we may fairly claim that he represents what the other two make'.

'Good', said I. 'Then you say that the artist's representation stands at third remove from reality?'

¹ Strauß, B. *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit* (Munich/Vienna: Hanser, 1989).

² Auerbach, E. *Mimesis. The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), p.554. In the epilogue, in a discussion of his methodology and selection of literary works, Auerbach writes: 'My original starting point was Plato's discussion in book 10 of the *Republic*'.

‘I do’.

‘So the tragic poet, if his art is representation, is by nature at third remove from the throne of truth; and the same is true of all other representative artists’.³

On this line of reasoning, assuming that the work of art represents the appearance of the real, it must always remain, in what it presents, separated from truth or any form thereof.

However, for Auerbach the totemic works of the tradition do reveal, either in their depictions of the personal and social condition of their creation, or in reflection of the cultural, historical and political dynamics and upheavals of their age, insight into the reality of each period of their creation. For example, of the modern realist novel, he writes that this presents to the reader ‘the elementary things which men in general have in common’.⁴ There is, for Auerbach, a truth about the way in which the external occurrences of individuals’ lives in literature are presented and yet felt somehow to be universally valid. The presentation of events and themes – for example, the unbridled catastrophe of war in Thomas Mann or the inherent uncertainty of such external circumstances in Virginia Woolf – provides a correspondence in literature to truths about each age, even though the idea of the real differs during the unfolding of the Western tradition. With this argument, Auerbach circumvents a stratum of the platonic tier, bringing the work closer to an idea of truth than the constellation in *The Republic* allows. Nevertheless, notwithstanding its inversion of the activities of artisan and artist and their respective creations, Auerbach’s analysis of each of the many aesthetic artefacts and works he includes, whether from late antiquity, the Middle Ages or modern realism,

³ Plato, *The Republic* (London: Penguin, 2003), p.339.

⁴ Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p.552.

remains bound to the structure of the platonic notion of truth. Truth remains always at one remove from work.

It is this conception of truth and its legacy for the philosophically impoverished status of the *poetic* that this thesis contends Strauß is trying to engage with critically – and overturn – in his writing. Such a claim suggests an explanation for the title of the work, *Die Fehler des Kopisten*, in which a range of theoretical positions on the nature of the aesthetic are portrayed, in particular those emphasising its social and political imperatives. Such conceptualisations are shown wanting. By contrast, in this autobiographical prose work, which reflects the changes and movement of the seasons in its four-part structure, Strauß offers to bring out in language what he describes as: ‘das Unvermittelbare, für An-Spruch und An-klang’.⁵

On the proposal of this thesis, an intention that runs counter to the imperatives of contemporary theory, Strauß is opening a re-connection to a long-established view of the *poetic* described, for example, of the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins as enactment of an ‘ancient philological imagination’.⁶ In and through the language of the work, Strauß suggests, some thing resides that resonates and sounds. Notably, it cannot be manifest as any version of communicative practice. The *poetic* work is more linguistically enigmatic.

⁵ Strauß, *Die Fehler des Kopisten*, p.98. Strauß’ engagement with precepts of realism go back to his earliest publications. For example, already in *Die Widmung* he has the central figure reflect: ‘Zum anderen kann ich kaum das Wort “Realismus” aussprechen oder “realistische Methode”, ohne dabei als erstes schreckhaft an die Wahrnehmungspflichten zu denken’, in Strauß, *Die Widmung*, p.67. See also *Paare, Passanten* in which Strauß is more explicit, denegrating *mimetic* conceptions of the work of art: ‘Die Unsitte aber, ein Kunstwerk ausschließlich auf seinen kritischen Gebrauchswert hin durchzumustern, es auf dem Prüfstand entweder einer subjektiven “Betroffenheit” oder eines flachen Sozialkritizismus zu messen, untergräbt gewissermaßen die freiheitliche [...] Grundordnung der Kunst’, in Strauß, *Paare, Passanten*, pp.109-110.

⁶ See Bruns, *Heidegger’s Estrangements*, p.40.

The work, then, is not first concerned with the truth or otherwise of representation, understood as *mimesis*. As the earlier discussion in this thesis of the term *Anwesenheit* begins to set out, Strauß' writing seeks to establish a different philosophic claim for certain works, whether poem, prose or painting, namely ontological concern.

The conclusion to Strauß' portrayal of language in the previous chapter pointedly raises the question as to the status of the *poetic* work and the relationship between such manifestations of language – and, thus, of his own writing – and the understanding of truth. The implications of this portrayal, of the proximal and absent experience of language, the un-truth of its conventional and established uses, particularly arising from the distortion of things in the structuring of object-world (and, therefore, the corresponding distortion implicit in *mimesis*), the outline of a deep ambiguity of its originary retrieval both as *silence* and *uttering* and, finally, the characteristics of such an experience with language, albeit only momentarily sensed, are now coming to the fore of the argument. The concern of the *poetic*, which Strauß therefore is claiming for his work, is ultimately concern for the manifestation of truth. The main hypothesis of this thesis, a *poetics of dwelling*, is its momentary, occasional and dynamic experience in and through the work.

However, Strauß' writing develops such a designation – the truth of the *poetic* – with great circumspection, so qualifying the appearance of any absolutizing claims. In accordance with those characteristics and gestures associated with, for example, *Fleck*, *Dämmern* and *Wohnen*, a *poetics of dwelling* is not comparable with the inductive or deductive certainties of classical, idealist and analytical philosophical system building,

nor with the assurances derived from the empirically repeatable and verifiable positivism of, for example, scientific and technological theory and practice. Rather, the truth of the work, when manifest, is always provisional, contingent upon some element in and of language that always remains absent. Critically, truth is always and only manifest as enigma.

The ‘Alte Übersetzer’ fragment in *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, which shows Strauß’ views on the relationship between language and mankind as a vignette, is emblematic also of the way he inscribes this enigma in his writing. Just as the couple barely, fleetingly retrieve an experience with ordinary language, so too the manifestation of truth in the *poetic* is only ever sensed before it becomes withdrawn. Truth, for Strauß, is always in movement, always *dynamic*: it is never a static matter of correspondence. A *poetics of dwelling* in Strauß’ work, as the chosen designation for the barely glimpsed experience of truth, therefore, also necessarily involves being open to, being able to retrieve, and attend on and to the enigma of the work, its structure and language. It is to experience the *dynamic* nature of truth as *engagement*. It is this notion of *dynamic engagement* that offers the counterpoint to the charge of fatalism.

However, the designation – the truth of the *poetic* – is therefore perhaps also a misnomer, suggesting as it does a definable idea or tangible experience that is to be either abstracted from Strauß’ works, or recovered through its language. It remains, however, always elusive. A more appropriate way of approaching the truth of the *poetic* is maybe, therefore, to reflect the inherent unfathomability of the work, its enigma, in its consideration.

It is apposite then, that the focus for this chapter is Strauß' most obscure and suggestive work, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*. It is a publication critical to understanding his intent: indeed, the title suggests itself as a descriptor for all Strauß' writing. It not only alludes to the structure of his prose works – even *Der junge Mann*, while not physically fragmented, is disjointed at the formal level of narrative continuity – but also formulates the nature of the enigma, or as the discussion of various critical responses to other works notes, what is felt to be the bewildering obscurantism of his writing. This is certainly the view of Lämmerman who declares that *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit* 'enthält einen großen Teil der Dichtungstheorie von Botho Strauß – versteckt in poetischen, zum Teil kryptischen Bildern und Gedankensplittern'.⁷

Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit is formed from two very different works: it opens with 'Jeffers-Akt' and closes with 'Sigé'. The former is the first part of a longer play, which Strauß has published elsewhere in its entirety.⁸ 'Jeffers-Akt', as it appears in *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit* introduces the American poet of the title, Robinson Jeffers. It does so through prose passages narrating details of his biography, interspersed with quotations from Jeffers' long prose poems. The second work, 'Sigé', is constructed from five discrete, apparently unrelated episodes that offer fragmentary observations and reflections on the figure of the poet, who is not necessarily Jeffers, language and the *poetic*. It is this latter work that is vital to and decisive for understanding Strauß as it is

⁷ Lämmerman, *Für unser Werk mein Liebster*, p.45.

⁸ The full play appears in the third volume of Strauß' collected dramas. See Strauß, B. *Theaterstücke III* (Munich/Vienna: Hanser, 1999), pp.153-205. The first part, 'Jeffers-Akt', as it appears in *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, is not structured as a drama at all but a prose work and presents substantive theatrical difficulties were it to be performed. The second part, 'Jeffers-Akt II, Mara. Szenische Fassung des gleichnamigen Gedichts von Robinson Jeffers', follows a more conventional theatrical structure, for example in presentation and use of characters and dialogue.

here proposed. However, the two – ‘Jeffers-Akt’ and ‘Sigé’ – are intimately bound as the argument below on the relationship between the poet’s life and *poetic* work makes clear.

For Lämmerman *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, published at the same time as the essay ‘Bemerkungen zu einer Ästhetik der Anwesenheit’, is certainly amongst Strauß’ most demanding and difficult. She makes the claim that its structure places it beyond all interpretive understanding: ‘Der Titel ist dabei bereits Programm: das Buch liefert Fragmente, also Bruchstücke, kein geschlossenes Ganzes’.⁹ Interestingly, the premise upon which she classes the work beyond literary coherence and unity is its lack of adherence to precepts of *mimesis*. As she sets out in respect of the work’s structure:

Eingestreut [...] sind stets noch allgemeinere Reflexionen, die gar keinen Erzähler mehr zu haben scheinen; so entsteht durch die Rücknahme aller realistischeren Bezüge auf Figuren, Ort oder Zeit das Bild überzeitlich gültiger Weisheit’.¹⁰

Lämmerman is not referring to a periodizing use of the term ‘realism’, but rather an implicitly platonic constellation of work to truth. Although she tries to construct some meaningful correspondence, or rather correspondence of meaning, between ‘Jeffers-Akt’ and her thesis on the theme of ‘production’ by considering the presentation of the poet Jeffers, the nature of the second work, ‘Sigé’, is left entirely unconsidered. Her conclusion that Strauß ultimately develops a ‘sehr poetisch formulierte “Theorie”’ – in other words, a work that reflects only its own production and, therefore, status as work – feels as though it falls short of the enigma, as it is suggested above, that is manifest in and through *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*.¹¹

⁹ Lämmerman, *Für unser Werk mein Liebster*, p.46.

¹⁰ Lämmerman, *Für unser Werk mein Liebster*, p.48.

¹¹ Lämmerman, *Für unser Werk mein Liebster*, pp.166-167.

In the first of the five episodes of ‘Sigé’, which is made up of seventeen fragments, some no more than a short sentence in length, Strauß does raise the question of interpretive method in respect of the *poetic*; of the legitimacy and distortions of approaches to works of art that view them purely as artefacts or objects, for example, from a particular culture or time.¹² It is particularly ironic, then, that Lämmerman leaves the second work from *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, ‘Sigé’, languishing in the interpretive cul-de-sac of self-reference, which she herself suggests leads some critics to a presumption of fatalism in Strauß’ seeming neglect of mimetically-grounded themes.¹³ The opening episode raises arguments familiar from discussion of the status of the aesthetic object in Chapter Two and the consequences arising from application of positivist theory to every aspect of the object-world in Chapter Three. In these fragments of ‘Sigé’ Strauß attempts, in the *poetic*, to make manifest a different relationship to world in the sense of ontological concern.

The episode relates the story of ‘Arne und Jora’ who are possibly archeologists who appear engaged in excavation of an ancient city. Strauß introduces them thus:

Arne und Jora in der Stille der Reste *messen*, *verzeichnen*, *zählen*. Ihre Wanderung entlang der halben Mauer, der geschichteten Scheiben einer gestürzten Säule. Entlang der Fundamente der ausgegrabenen Stadt. Città-memoria, città-desiderio.¹⁴

The doubt over their professional status and activity is intended to resist the tendency to read the poetic fragments of ‘Sigé’ exclusively in terms of realism. Attributing functionality to both figures, whilst necessary to show the context of the fragments, is not

¹² Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, pp.35-39.

¹³ Lämmerman notes: “‘Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit’ zeigt also verschiedene Beispiele für Selbstbezogenheit und Wiederkehr’. However, she maintains: ‘Trotzdem entsteht letztlich kein fatalistisches Bild einer fortschrittslosen Welt’, in Lämmerman, *Für unser Werk mein Liebster*, p.54. Although she does not finally countenance the charge of fatalism it is not clear on what basis she rejects it.

¹⁴ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.35. My emphasis.

really alone adequate to show the basis of the enigma of the opening episode in ‘Sigé’. Declaring the two figures to be archeologists and leaving it at that does not go any way to explaining the *poetic* nature of the work.¹⁵ The argument in this chapter proposes that the fragments of Strauß’ work are instead to be sensed as are the outlines of the ancient city’s ruined buildings: *as* enigma and with circumspection.

Strauß describes an approach that the figures Arne and Jora adopt towards the city, and thereby raises the philosophical question over the status of the *poetic*. The echoes of the Almut episode in *Der junge Mann* are manifold. As they wander through the deserted edifices and structures he describes how their method is premised upon trying to control the site. In a crucial term, which the subsequent argument contends is vital for Strauß’ view of the *poetic* and is emphasised in the previous citation, he suggests the pair attempt to understand the city through application of *measures* associated with scientific theory.

Strauß describes their approach:

Sie wechseln den Blick nur, um sich *Maße* – Elle, Fuß und Handbreite – anzuzeigen. Und Zahlen, Winkel für Bögen und Radien. Die Vertiefung einer Kannelüre, die Stärke einer Bodenplatte, die Kämpferlinie einer Torlaibung.¹⁶

The key word is *Maß* and its cognate *Messen*, which occur throughout the work, and describe the manner of their response to the object-world of the city. For Arne and Jora, the approach is empirical and practical, a taking of measurements underpinned by a desire to control or re-create the ruins.

Arne bleibt stehen. Langsam, [...], breitet er die Arme aus, um Jora die Spannweite einer Tonnenwölbung anzugeben – aber zeigt er nicht das *Maß* einer leeren, schmerzhaft leeren Umarmung, [...] ?¹⁷

¹⁵ See Leal, J. ‘The End of Fiction: Botho Strauß’ *Kongreß. Die Kette der Demütigungen* and *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*’, in *Seminar* 35 (1999), p.135.

¹⁶ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, pp. 35-36. My emphasis. It is noteworthy that all these measurements refer to types of dwelling.

It is an approach based on methodologies that believe in mankind's ability to equate his actions with original creation, and one motivated by a desire for domination.

Er sagt: Wenn wir es wiederhergestellt haben, so werden wir allein entscheiden, was davon bleibt und was für immer zerstört werden muß.¹⁸

However, in making himself the equal of God, through Arne and Jora mankind is shown wanting. The similarity to Steiner's postulate of mankind's counter creation is instructive. The results of the figures' activities are not commensurate with the object of their enquiry. The sheer presence of the ancient city's structures, which they are trying to re-constitute, is imaged, on the basis of such methods alone, as irretrievably lost. Strauß writes: 'Die Ausgräber antiker Städte haben nur eine Verlassenheit zutage gefördert, niemals eine Vergangenheit'.¹⁹ Bischof correctly identifies that the episode shows Strauß' renunciation of empirically-grounded interpretive approaches, which is precisely the unsettling direction the argument contends that his writing proposes, although she equates this wrongly with a fatalistic mien.²⁰

However, although Jora remains wedded to the idea of a re-creation of the ancient city as fidelity to the original, in this way adhering to the precepts of *mimesis* – as Strauß has her declare: 'Ich bin auf der Such nach dem zweiten Mal' – the limitations of such an approach are sensed by Arne.²¹ Arne is shown resigning himself to loss of sight, the physical sense that is, of course, practically and symbolically associated with the certainties of scientific method and practice. Strauß writes: 'Er hatte ihr nicht wieder bis

¹⁷ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, pp. 36-37. My emphasis.

¹⁸ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.37.

¹⁹ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.35.

²⁰ Strauß' depiction of the failure of modern methodologies, Bischof argues, leads him to seek refuge in the anachronisms of the literary work, wherein, for her, 'liegt ja zugleich seine (Strauß' [MJ]) Fatalität', in Bischof, R. 'Das Buch nach dem Buch – Figuren des Widerrufs', in *Manuskripte* 32, Vol. 115, (1992), pp.122.

²¹ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.38.

ins Auge geschaut'.²² In its stead, in a compelling parallel to the monological experience with originary language of the 'Alte Übersetzer' fragment and the reliance on touch, Strauß shows the first instance in the work of the indeterminacy, the enigma associated with the title *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*. Arne fleetingly glimpses the experience.

Er aber spürte die Bewegung des Zerrinnens, die durch ihre neuerliche Umarmung lief. Ein unbezwingliches Nachgeben, eine Milde, deren sie nicht mehr Herr wurden, *das Greifen war Lassen*.²³

The characteristic of passive renunciation and attunement that, it is suggested, is appropriate for a true retrieved experience of the city is an equivalent of that portrayed in the previous chapter as *Laßkraft*. The full implications of this alternative gesture – 'das Greifen war Lassen' – are developed in the concluding section below. However, such an experience is inevitably only momentary and partial. As Strauß notes:

Das Paar taucht die wiedergefundene Ortschaft in neue, unwandelbare Dunkelheit. Die Wiedererwecker verhüllen ihr Gut, Schöpfer des Schwarz. Das reine Schwarz, der Ruß der Verlassenheit.²⁴

The 'Arne-Jora' episode not only raises doubts over an approach to works of art that view them as readily definable aesthetic objects and, therefore, as subject to control. Such methods are, of course, an extension of the logical precepts associated with the dominant *Wahrnehmung* of *Linie* as delineated in Chapter Three. The fragments also show the possibility of an alternative *Wahrnehmung* seemingly realised by 'Arne' at the close of the section, of a gesture that offers the possibility of *engagement* with things or world – in this episode, the ancient city – that are otherwise lost or forgotten. Moreover, it underlines the claim of this thesis that such experiences are always contingent – are only

²² Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.39.

²³ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.38. My emphasis.

²⁴ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.36.

ever sensed as the inherent *Undeutlichkeit* of enigma – before the inevitable relapse into the void of established paradigms and conventional *measures*.

The opening observation to the above discussion introduces a suggestive idea: it parenthetically equates the partial ruins of the city with the fragments of the ‘Arne-Jora’ episode in Strauß’ work. It contends that the actual fragments of the work are to be sensed as the outlines of the ancient city’s ruined buildings: namely *as* enigma. This parallel, though, runs deeper than formal allegory. Strauß invites just such a comparison through the motifs of *Stille* and *silence* invoked, of course, by the title of the work ‘Sigé’, and which are repeatedly manifest throughout *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*. It is on an acceptance of this provocative and contentious idea regarding the status of ‘Sigé’, Strauß’ most enigmatic notion, that this thesis ultimately turns. But, in and through this, the force of the *poetic*, the unsettling of established approaches to interpreting work and world, is coming into view.

The ‘Arne-Jora’ episode begins with a fragment that sets out the nature of the absolute *Stille* that surrounds the two figures. The excerpt invokes *silence* as an all-encompassing condition from out of which the world is manifest and comes to be sensed. Clearly, this is a ridiculous idea by any normal standard. But this is not a question of empiricism but of ontological concern: it cannot be proven by normal standards. Strauß wants to bring into language, in the *poetic*, a different *measure* of the world. For the moment, therefore, the idea is to be understood as a claim made of the *poetic* – in other words, it is expressed poetically and needs to be accepted simply as metaphor – before its validity is assessed by charting its intellectual provenance, and a view is reached on its philosophical validity

and ontological scope. Strauß describes a conceit whereby every thing in the world – in the following excerpt it is a tree – emerges from out of *stillness*.

Zwischen den Fingern das kaum hörbare Fauchen [...], ein unendlich zartes Gebrüll aus der Welt der *Stille*, aus der Welt der anderen Eile. [...]. Todesangst treibt die Stille über die äußerste Grenze zum Laut. Irgendwann ganz leise, aus dunkelster Entfernung, aus Chaos fast, brüllt auch der Baum.²⁵

The passage adopts those arguments made in the preceding chapter about the ontological priority of language as *saying* and *naming*.²⁶ Things *are* in the world for mankind because they are first named in and through language. Significantly, the stones that make up Arne and Jora's ruined city themselves originate from *stillness*; are then manifest as words and are formed from language. Strauß writes:

So wie Licht zu uns dringt aus maßlosem Einst, erreicht uns der Schall aus der Urgründen der *Stille*, aus der Wahnzeit der Dinge, und selbst der Stein umschließt einen heiseren Hauch. Auch er ist aus Stimme verwittert.²⁷

The words of the fragment in the work are thus the same – in the sense that they have the same status – as the stones of the ruined city do for Arne and Jora. Important claims are being put forward for the ontological significance of language.

The 'Arne-Jora' episode is defining for the argument of the present chapter because it strikes a note of caution in relation to received understanding of, or normal approaches to, the work, in this example 'Sigé'. In showing the distortions and dangers of adhering to methodologies that try to re-present the city – to re-create the original – in conjunction with the oblique, yet unmistakable, claim for the status of words in the work, Strauß is proposing a radical and unsettling understanding of the *poetic*. It is a distinctive hermeneutic of the work.

²⁵ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.35. My emphasis.

²⁶ See section 4.2 above.

²⁷ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.35. My emphasis.

The above initial brief consideration of the early fragments points towards the experience of a *poetics of dwelling*. Its delineation is in complete contrast to interpretation of a work of art that seeks to establish a definitive correspondence between the particular work and referent, no matter how broadly this is understood. Its experience is not about establishing a meaning that is then grasped and understood. As Strauß clearly inscribes in the ‘Arne-Jora’ episode: ‘Ist die Inschrift entziffert, so wird sie für immer unkenntlich gemacht’.²⁸ There is no single interpretive key that unlocks the enigma of the work. The writing is inscribed with a profoundly de-stabilising view of language that allows its deep enigma to remain and for it to be experienced as just that; not in order that it is resolved or explained away through reference, but rather to endure in its very indeterminacy.

Before developing this argument and exploring in further detail the complex relationship of language to *silence*, the alternative *measure* of the *poetic* compared to scientific methodologies, and the experience of a *poetics of dwelling*, it is necessary first to outline the sense of language that Strauß is thereby attempting to overcome.

If the supposition is correct, namely that Strauß proposes an ontological basis to the *poetic*, then such a position must also be reflected in his views on language. Furthermore, should this philosophical alternative have validity it must be clearly contrasted with an existing, dominant and, – as far as Strauß is concerned – impoverished understanding of language. Such views are considered in the preceding discussions both of *Beginnlosigkeit* and *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, but the basis of the differing positions on language is already anticipated and starkly contrasted in *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, the

²⁸ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.37.

chronologically earlier prose work. In ‘Sigé’, Strauß distinguishes this unequivocally. He writes:

Kein härterer Wechsel, kein tieferer Gegensatz als der zwischen Treiber und Wächter. Taraché oder Sigé.²⁹

The second work in *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, ‘Sigé’, is then clearly conceived as itself the manifestation of the alternative: in this sense, ‘Sigé’ the work *is* the *poetic*. The reading returns in detail to this vital characteristic of the *poetic* in the following section.

For now, it is worth re-visiting the views of language against which Strauß composes his alternative as this is given scant consideration in the secondary literature.³⁰ For example, Lämmerman gives no due attention to the possible implications or senses of ‘Taraché’: and of its counterpart, Sigé, she defines exclusively in the very terms set out by Strauß in the work.

The term *ταραχή* (*taraché*), from the ancient Greek, is delineated by Strauß against the assumption of a certain relationship to language.³¹ Notably, however, *ταραχή* is not the designation for this relationship, but rather, evokes its consequence. In *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, significantly, it denotes the condition of homelessness. Strauß writes: ‘Die Worte sind die Treiber, Quelle von *ταραχή* *taraché*, Verwirrung und Ortlosigkeit’.³² The idea is familiar from the reading of *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*. What, then, is suggested of the relationship between mankind and language, and its current uses? Strauß writes:

²⁹ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.44.

³⁰ See Lämmerman, *Für unser Werk mein Liebster*, pp.45-54.

³¹ Liddle & Scott’s definition of *ταραχή* suggests a de-stabilising relationship to language: ‘*ταραχή* ή: trouble, disorder, confusion, commotion, tumult’, in Liddle & Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*.

³² Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.43.

Jede Epoche hat ihre Ausgesprochenheit, ihr geschicktes und erschöpfendes Sich-Selbst-Benennen. Dieser herrschsüchtigen Ausgesprochenheit, die die Gesamtheit der Begriffe kontrolliert, [...].³³

But, as the argument in respect of *Linie*-structured *Wahrnehmung* highlights, it is a relationship devoid of significance more fundamental than its maintenance. On this view, language is constructed and used to enable the perpetual renewal of the grounds that make such language possible. Strauß alludes to Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, which is, of course, also again picked up in *Beginnlosigkeit*.³⁴

Man spricht nur, [...]. Wie der Wal singt, um im Echo Grenze und Widerstand seines Raums zu erfahren.³⁵

Language is thereby conceptualised as acts of speech whereby the world comes to be defined: its motive is the determination of facts about the real. Language incorporates that which is in the object-world and comes, therefore, to be intimately connected to questions of utility and instrumentality. Significantly, according to the dramatic concluding proposition of this line of reasoning, it admits no place for silence. For example, as the *Tractatus* famously concludes: 'Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen'.³⁶ *Silence*, by this argument, denotes all that lies outwith mankind's experience and, therefore, defines the limits of the knowable: a position in marked contrast to Strauß' thinking where *stillness* and *silence* manifest the originary possibility of the *poetic*.

For Strauß, the compulsion of such conceptualisations of language and its uses is absolute and binding:

³³ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.46.

³⁴ See, section 3.4 above.

³⁵ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.43.

³⁶ Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, p.188.

Wir wissen, daß wir nichts sagen. Daß alle Sätze vollkommen hauchdicht untereinander verbunden sind und sich in dunkler Abgeschlossenheit ohne jeden Reflex von außen bewegen. Wir sagen nichts: wir spechen weiter.³⁷

Despite the occasional sense of its ontological vacuity, its un-truth remains the defining condition for mankind from which there is no obvious recovery. Its logical endpoint is in the abbreviations and conclusions of scientific and technological knowledge. As Strauß notes, the ‘Hetze und Hitze der Feststellungen und deren Verkürzungen sind kaum noch zu steigern’.³⁸ For the individual, there is little possibility for experience with any alternative, of language or *Wahrnehmung*. For example, as the unnamed figure in the third section of ‘Sigé’ abruptly declares, again anticipating *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*: ‘Ich wache auf und weiß, ich werde lügen, lügen, lügen’.³⁹ There is no obvious respite from or overcoming of ‘der Überfluß der Rede’, at least not conceived in terms of practical action, empirical methodologies, conventional discourses or other associated measures.⁴⁰

Deleted: ¶

The aim of this chapter and, therefore, also of the thesis, having delineated some of the characteristics and grounds of the possible experience with the alternative, whether as *Anwesenheit*, the *Wahrnehmung* of *Fleck* or originary language, is to establish the philosophical basis for these in the *poetic* work and the intellectual origins and implications of such claims. In *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, this is to be found in consideration of the difficult and elusive notion of *Sigé*: of *Stille* or *stillness*, and *Schweigen* or *silence*. As the reading develops, in this, Strauß’ indebtedness to and adaptation of Heideggerian thought is at its most provocative.

³⁷ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.45.

³⁸ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.46.

³⁹ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.45.

⁴⁰ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.46.

5.2 Σιγή: the disclosure of ontological truth⁴¹

Despite the dominance of language uses corresponding to scientific and technological practice and theory, and constitutive of a distorted relationship between mankind and world, Strauß does not absolutely preclude the possibility of an alternative. This is relayed variously in the fragmentary writing, for example as *Anwesenheit*, *Fleck* or originary language, which bring into focus the question of the status of the *poetic*. Given the totalising claims made of the conventional uses of language and the universalising constraints under which mankind operates, it is difficult to conceive how this alternative can be manifested. In order to assess the claims Strauß makes for certain works, including of course his own, it is necessary, before considering the nature of the *poetic*, to determine its origin or source. Since the social collective, as Strauß portrays it, appears unable to overcome the trajectory associated with the dominant structures of language, if the alternative is to have any substantial foundation, or hope of retrieval, he must necessarily exempt some individuals or groupings from the absolute binds within which the majority of mankind is left constrained.

Strauß offers a counterpoint to the conceit where words are postulated as the source for the state of un-truth in which mankind finds itself; instead words are the *Treiber* of mankind's *Ortlosigkeit*.⁴² This is invoked by the contrasting notion of *Wächter*; although Strauß interchangeably adopts the less antiquated synonym *Wärter* and verbal cognate *Warten*. As cited, there is 'kein tieferer Gegensatz als der zwischen Treiber und

⁴¹ Σιγή denotes both nominal and verbal conditions of worldly *stillness* and mankind's *silence*. Both senses are vital to the following argument: 'σιγή, σιγα ή: silence, a being silent; σιγήν έχειν: to keep silence; σιγήν ποιεισθα: to make silence', in Liddle & Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*.

⁴² 'Die Worte sind die Treiber, Quelle von παραγή taraché, Verwirrung und Ortlosigkeit', in Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.43. See section 5.1 above.

Wächter'.⁴³ In opposition to the ontological emptiness of *ταραχή*, the *Wächter* point towards the alternative.

Die Wächter aber strecken die Arme aus und weisen über die Runde hinaus:
Dort ist etwas anderes!
Dort herrscht der Unterbrecher!
Alles umtaufen!⁴⁴

Strauß' conception of the poets here assumes critical importance.

5.2.1 Robinson Jeffers: man, poet, work

The shadow of certain individual poets, and from this a more abstract conception of the poet-figure, looms large throughout Strauß' writing, quite aside from the wealth of citations and referencing of specific authors and their works. In *Niemand anderes*, this includes individual fragments showing his own fictional creations such as the artists 'Littwang und Woyte'; other characters from within the Western canon, for example, Flaubert's 'Bouvard et Pécuchet' and actual writers and thinkers from different cultures and traditions, including Montaigne, Senancour and Buber.⁴⁵

The particular importance that Strauß ascribes to the poets, the most explicit identification of *Wächter*, is not really at any point worked out or argued for systematically in his writing. Their status remains an underlying assumption and is never, if it ever could be, proven.⁴⁶ This is not, however, necessarily a limitation in Strauß'

⁴³ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.44.

⁴⁴ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.44.

⁴⁵ See Strauß, *Niemand anderes*, pp.175ff., 121ff. and 191ff. respectively.

⁴⁶ Strasser, for example, questions the status accorded the *Wächter*: 'Es scheint, als ob die Gestalt des Wächters einzig von den Treibern beschworen werden kann. Und die Treiber sind ganz unter sich. Bedeutet

position if it is accepted that he does not, in delineation of the poets, subscribe to aesthetic postulates, which claim for certain individuals alone either greatness of character or brilliance of insight. In selecting a group of individuals, the poets, he is rather making a number of specific philosophical claims, which are often misunderstood solely as forms of aesthetic, political or social élitism. As the earlier exegesis of ‘Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt’ argues, he does not adhere to ideas of the creative or individual genius, a conceit reaching its apotheosis in the Romantics. The work of art or *poetic* work, and critically the possibility mankind has to approach such works, are not manifest through the trials and tribulations of a rarified subject. This, in turn, raises the issue of the manner in which poet-figures are exceptional – in other words, exempted from the condition of *ταραχή* – or, of what they are emblematic.

It is worth also revising another widely held view of Strauß’ conception of the poets. The essay ‘Anschwellender Bocksgesang’, as so often with Strauß, is again the source of misconception or ill will. One of the principal reasons for the felt provocation of the essay lies in the specific examples of so-called ‘Dichter-Philosophen’ that Strauß provides from the German tradition.⁴⁷ As a corrective, it is worth emphasising the overall breadth of the poet-grouping. The poets are never alone promoted on grounds of nationality. Heidegger and Jünger are singled out not so much as exclusive representatives of an ideal but rather as examples of a wilful and unwarranted neglect that follows from interpretive approaches to the poets that conceive their intellectual and philosophical importance by political and social criteria alone.

dies etwa, daß es gar keine Wächter gibt, nirgendwo?’, in Strasser, P. ‘Treiber und Wächter – die Welt des Botho Strauß’, in *manuskripte* 32, Vol. 115, (1992), p. 93.

⁴⁷ ‘Sie haben Heidegger verpönt und Jünger verketzert’, in Strauß, ‘Anschwellender Bocksgesang’, p.16.

Strauß is deliberately broad in his delineation of who might constitute the poets, and as poet or *Wächter*, open further the grounds of possibility for exemption from a dominant and normative language use and its consequences. These, Strauß suggests in ‘Anschwellender Bocksgesang’, range widely, indeed somewhat vaguely, ‘von Homer bis Hölderlin’, a delineation that is equally broad in earlier essays.⁴⁸ Elsewhere he writes of the poet-figure:

Er spricht folglich – [...] – am liebsten zu Entfernten, zu seinesgleichen, so wie er stets auch von ihnen gesprochen wurde. Sein Volk erstreckt sich von Dante bis Doderer, von Mörike bis Montale, von Valéry zurück zu Hamann und zu Seneca – ein zählbares Volk [...].⁴⁹

The particular emphasis on the figure of the poet, Jeffers, and the way in which he is portrayed in the first of the works from *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, ‘Jeffers-Akt’, suggests that Strauß seeks to raise a number of very specific concerns about this group.

Strauß draws particular attention to Jeffers’ biography. ‘Jeffers-Akt’ opens with a summary of the personal life of the poet and general understanding of his writing, which precisely reflects the tenets of both Jeffers’ reception by his contemporaries and pre-occupations of later critics.⁵⁰ Stress is laid first on his self-imposed physical isolation.

Strauß introduces Jeffers thus:

Robinson Jeffers, Dichter der amerikanischen Westküste, lebte von 1887 bis 1962. Mit seiner Frau Una verließ er in jungen Jahren die Städte und siedelte abgewandt auf einer Klippe vor dem pazifischen Ozean.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Strauß, ‘Anschwellender Bocksgesang’, p.13.

⁴⁹ Strauß, B. “‘Die Erde – ein Kopf’”. Dankrede zum Georg-Büchner Preis’, in *Büchner-Preis Reden 1984-1994*. (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994), p.131.

⁵⁰ See the collection of articles and essays on Jeffers’ published works in Karman, J. *Critical Essays on Robinson Jeffers* (Boston, Massachusetts: Hall & Co., 1990), for example ‘Hunt, T. ‘Robinson Jeffers: The Modern Poet as Antimodernist’, pp.245-252, as well as, more recently, Chapman, S. “‘De Rerum Virtute’”: A Critical Anatomy’, in *Jeffers Studies* 6 (2004), pp.1-14.

⁵¹ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.9.

The opening fragment goes on to note the varying fortunes of his work: from early success – ‘Berühmt wurden seine frühen Erzählgedichte’ – rejection by the then mainstream of twentieth century American letters to final opprobrium. Strauß ends the fragment: ‘Der intellektuellen Moderne des New Criticism galt er als der verächtlichste Poet des Landes’.⁵² On the basis of the way Jeffers’ life and work and their interdependence are shown in this first part of *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit* Strauß makes his specific claims for poets and their relationship to dominant and normative language uses.

The personal biographical details of Jeffers’ life are developed, in part, through the projected narrative perspective of his wife, Una. Following an excerpt from one of his poems, the figure of Una describes the history of their lives: their original meeting, her first marriage, their eventual union, the birth of their children, construction of their home (Tor House and the evocative Hawk Tower) on the remote west coast and the habits of their daily lives in old age. All the examples are scrupulously faithful to biographical detail.⁵³ Apart from a brief interlude of dialogue, a scene between Jeffers and Una in keeping with the classification of ‘Jeffers-Akt’ as a drama, throughout the remaining fragments Strauß has the poet speak almost exclusively in the first person, frequently interspersed with ‘wörtlichen Jeffers-Zitate aus Gedichten, Briefen, Vorworten’.⁵⁴ Strauß repeatedly deploys this narrative approach of citation to have Jeffers’ own voice emerge directly. (Of course, at the level of biography, their physical isolation and experience with the implied mainstream, the parallels between Jeffers and Strauß are themselves extremely suggestive. It is as though Jeffers is emblematic of all poets).

⁵² Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.9.

⁵³ See, amongst others, Powell, L. C. ‘The Double Marriage of Robinson Jeffers’, in Karman, *Critical Essays on Robinson Jeffers*, pp.206-212.

⁵⁴ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.9.

Over the course of Jeffers' monologue, Strauß has the figure reflect on the main views attributed to the poet during his lifetime. It is suggested: "“Er will ja, daß alles untergeht! Die Städte, die Erde, die Menschheit!”".⁵⁵ So, for example, one fragment refers to Jeffers' seeming anti-modernism in his disavowal of the growth of the twentieth-century phenomenon of the city. Similarly, Strauß has the imputed figure refer to his ostensible rejection of social and political precepts, for example, those making up the consensual beliefs and value systems during the Second World War, embodied in his so-called philosophy of 'inhumanism'.⁵⁶ Again, Strauß reflects closely the critical views published during Jeffers' own lifetime. Strauß writes incorporating citations from Jeffers:

Man hat meinen Pessimismus verurteilt. [...]. Man haßte mich, weil ich nicht an den menschlichen Menschen glaubte. Die Sozialen verdammen den, der zu sagen wagt, daß Gottes Welt schön ist außer dem Menschen. Und daß die ohnmenschliche Schönheit der Dinge keiner Verbesserung bedarf [...]. Denn ich sagte nicht: Liebt euch um des Friedens willen. Sondern ich sagte: Laßt euch in Frieden, *turn away from each other*. Und ich sagte: *It would be better for men/ To be few and live far apart, where none could infect another ...*.⁵⁷

What emerges from the portrayal of Jeffers is an insistence on the absolute intimacy of biography with writing. In this Strauß counters the critical tendency in contemporary literary theory to excavate the man from the work, noted in his paeon to Steiner's polemic against the parasitic nature of the academic, a fate that he elsewhere laments has befallen other poets.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.22.

⁵⁶ See, for example, Kunitz, S. 'The Day is a Poem', in Karman, *Critical Essays on Robinson Jeffers*, pp.143-147, originally published in *Poetry* 49 (1941), pp.148-154.

⁵⁷ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.23. Strauß describes a similar critical response in the post-war period to Ernst Jünger. See Strauß, 'Refrain einer tieferen Aufklärung', p.324.

⁵⁸ Strauß also makes an identical argument in respect of critical approaches to the dramatist Georg Büchner. He writes: '... ausgiebig hat man Büchner, den Dichter des Vormärz, im Spiegel der Gegenwart betrachtet und für die Jugendlichkeit der eigenen Epoche in Anspruch genommen. Ein Seminar-Idol ist er geworden, Held einer beispiellosen Editions-geschichte, Heiliger des kritischen Literaturunterrichts, man kann ihm kaum noch selbst begegnen ...', in Strauß, "Die Erde – ein Kopf". Dankrede zum Georg-Büchner Preis', p.127.

Moreover, Strauß blurs any simple distinction between life and the work. In a sense, Jeffers' life – at least in the way it is manifested in *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit* – is like the work. Thus, in the work 'Jeffers-Akt', the two become indistinguishable: through Strauß' writing the life of Jeffers becomes *poetic* work. The sense of this is underscored in the final fragment when Strauß has Jeffers reflect on the construction of his home:

Was kann ein Mann allein auch schaffen angesichts der Schönheit des Seins!
Nichts. Absolut nichts. Aber ein Haus habe ich gebaut. Und einen Turm dazu.
Una und ich haben hier gelebt. Eine Frau und ein Mann. [...]. Ich denke, wir
haben den Raum, den man uns gab, anständig ausgefüllt. Was können
Menschen Besseres tun, als ihren Raum [...] gut zu nutzen?⁵⁹

The fragment by Strauß ends by seamlessly merging into a fragment from Jeffers' poetry.

The suggestion of the indeterminacy between poet's life and *poetic* work highlights again the philosophical breach with mimetic conceptions of the creative object. It suggests that the portrayal of Jeffers in the work cannot be understood solely in reference to the actual facts of his life. It is a question of hermeneutical limits. Rather, the life – made up of certain gestures and characteristics – comes in Strauß' work to be part of the *poetic*.

Thus, he writes of Jeffers' cultivation of the land around his home:

Die Zypressen, [...] die das Haus schützen vor Seewind, werden
hinauswachsen über unsere Zeit, wie sein Werk, seine Verse, seine *Stille*.⁶⁰

Strauß is thereby tentatively offering a radically alternative approach to the work: in this instance it just happens to be Jeffers' poetry. It is not an interpretive hermeneutic founded on Dilthey's or Schleiermacher's presumptions of regression through authorial personae to an ultimate meaning of the work, whether intended or not. Nor is it an analysis of

⁵⁹ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.32.

⁶⁰ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.13. My emphasis.

writing endlessly lost in the postulate of work as text.⁶¹ It is, instead, a proposal for the *poetic* that encompasses characteristics and gestures invoking the relationship between mankind – in this example a poet – and world. Strauß then inscribes these within the *poetic*.

Notwithstanding this claim, the poet Jeffers appears entirely unexceptional. As noted, the figure of ‘Jeffers-Akt’ is not a poetic genius in the Romantic tradition. If the poet’s biography is actually a life of normality – in other words, that no differentiation can be made between the poet and the rest of mankind, at least not on the overt level of action – how, does Strauß suggest, is the poet distinguished from the social and political collective and the rest of mankind and, more particularly, is he able to invoke the grounds of possibility for an alternative experience with language? What does the poet bring to light or exhibit in his life and work through which the *poetic* is manifest?

Here the characteristics and gestures associated with the figure of Jeffers come to the fore. In this he is emblematic of all *Wächter*, the poet-figures and what it means for the rest of mankind to be a poet: in and through the characteristics and gestures shown. The aspect of Jeffers’ biography and work most stressed is the separation from an implied collective. As Strauß’ introductory fragment emphasises, the poet’s physical removal, his retreat and self-imposed exile, becomes a defining characteristic of his life. The house, which he constructs himself, is its physical manifestation.

Ja, wir kamen zurück, [...], das Tor House stand in der Sonne, am Hawk-Tower flatterte eine Fahne zur Begrüßung: wieder zuhaus! Mehr als gerettet!
Wir, [...], haben dieser Erde, auf sie hörend, ein Leben abgetrotzt.⁶²

⁶¹ See, for example, Leal, ‘The End of Fiction: Botho Strauß’, pp.134-154.

⁶² Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.26.

The house stands as counterpoint to ‘die Städte’ and ‘die Städter’.

Jeffers’ physical removal has its equivalent in an antipathy towards the dominant intellectual, political and social movements of his age, all of which are defined collectively in contrast to his marginal position as poet. Strauß has the figure intone against critics:

Darauf fielen sie wieder mit ihren rastlosen Aufgeregtheiten über mich her und von allen Seiten entlud sich prasselnd Intelligenz. Die Gesellschaftsgläubigen stritten mit den Wissenschaftsgläubigen, die Entropisten fielen den Naturanbetern ins Wort.⁶³

The only way suggested that it is possible to overcome ‘diesen Basar der Erkenntnismoden’, a designation for a state where ‘*what fills men’s mouth is nothing*’, is from the intellectual and physical margins.⁶⁴ This is the characteristic or gesture upon which all the poets and thinkers are to be evaluated. For example, in respect of those poets whom Borchardt lauds, Strauß writes:

Dies Volk ist gewiß ein sagenhaftes und nicht unter der Bevölkerung zu finden, auf Straßen und Sportplätzen nicht, die die beschäftigte Menge füllt; es ist vielmehr mit seinen Königen tief in den Berg gesunken und schlummert dort, bis seine Stunde kommt.⁶⁵

Similarly, of Büchner and related figures, significantly picking up on the motif of site and home, Strauß notes:

Sie suchen die Asyle da und dort, suchen Unverletzliches. Unverletzliches Einst, das auf der langen Wanderung, auf der Suche nach Wohlsein verloren und vergessen wurde: Dichtung, Land, das nie faßlich, aber doch da ist, bewohnbar, fruchtbar, [...], lebensschützend, lebenspendend. [...]. Der Dichter ist die schwache Stimme in der Höhle unter dem Lärm. [...].

⁶³ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.30.

⁶⁴ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.31. Emphasis in original. The citation is from Jeffers.

⁶⁵ Strauß, ‘Die Distanz ertragen’, p.108.

Am Rand der einzigen allgewaltigen Terrapolis bietet er den verborgenen Auslaß [...]; aus der Stadt gelangt man nur durch ihn.⁶⁶

The characteristics of the margins and marginal gestures are defining of the *poetic* and the poet.

These considerations help to explain the claims laid out in ‘Anschwellender Bocksgesang’ in which one of the reasons offered for the projected diagnosis of an elision to ordinary language in late modernity is the ever-increasing homogenisation of the political and social, centralisation around consensus norms and values and erosion of the possibility of residing at the margins. Widening the potential group beyond just the poets, Strauß claims:

Der Abgesonderte war immer und ständig von den Gewalten des Blödsinns, die in seiner Zeit entfesselt waren, umgeben und bedrängt. Heute sind die Kräfte nur appellativer geworden, es schallt aus allen Ecken – [...].⁶⁷

However, the site at the margins is not to be understood in terms of realism. As the reading makes clear in arguing for a blurring in distinction between biography and writing in respect of the portrayal of Jeffers, it is not specifically the actions of individual poets that explain their proximity and relationship to the *poetic*. In other words, Jeffers’ position vis-à-vis the mainstream is not to be understood literally: his physical isolation is only one characteristic of the marginal that Strauß conveys as essential for mankind to overcome the dominant and dominating conventions of language.

Poeta otiosus. Der zurückgetretene, der nutzlos gewordene, der in Vergessenheit geratene Ursprüngliche.
Seine Muße ist die ganz entbundene, ruhend-ruhlose Wache.
Seine Ataraxie: die Wörter sich finden zu lassen und nicht einzugreifen. [...].
Der Untätige *jetzt*.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Strauß, “‘Die Erde – ein Kopf’”. Dankrede zum Georg-Büchner Preis’, p.130.

⁶⁷ Strauß continues: ‘Der Außenseiter-Heros wird aber heute und künftig andere Züge tragen als der verdiente poète maudit [...]’, in Strauß, ‘Anschwellender Bocksgesang’, pp.15-16.

It is now clearer how the poets are *Wächter*. Not only do they reside at or on the margins, a site ‘der unveränderten Lage der Dinge’ but they wait for ‘die Schönheit des Seins’.⁶⁹ They attend or are open to the occurrence of this alternative. The gestures of the poets are not, though, intended as a litany of prescribed actions and behaviours.

It follows, therefore, that the writing of the *poetic* work is not conceived by Strauß as an activity either: being a poet is not something that an individual person does. Again, this is a disconcerting notion but, as the argument shows in defending Strauß against the fatalism charge, it points towards the idea of *dynamic engagement* attendant on a *poetics of dwelling*. Rather, the poets, including Strauß himself, only ever continue to make manifest a *poetic* work that is always already written. This equally elusive idea guides Strauß throughout his writing. Already in *Paare, Passanten* he sets out: ‘Man schreibt nicht über etwas, man schreibt *es*. [...]. Man schreibt unter Aufsicht alles bisher Geschriebenen’.⁷⁰ Later, in ‘Sigé’ the same motif is shown:

Nach der Lehre der Poetisten waren alle Werke von Anbeginn bereits geschaffen, und der Dichter konnte nur ihr Umräumer sein.⁷¹

The question, of course, remains how such language – the *poetic*, *Fleck* or originary language – is made manifest.

Having pushed the parameters of received ideas of the poet and writing, and their relationship to the *poetic*, to the limit of traditional conceptions and understanding, it is

⁶⁸ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.45. Emphasis in original.

⁶⁹ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, pp.32 and 44.

⁷⁰ Strauß, *Paare, Passanten*, pp.102 and 103. Emphasis in original. The emphasis is an allusion to Heidegger’s ‘Es gibt’.

⁷¹ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.46. Strauß invokes the idea frequently. In his Büchner lecture he writes of the poet: ‘Er ist zuerst und zuletzt ein marginales Vorkommnis eines längst gefüllten Buchs. Sein Werk begleitet randabwärts eine Weile jene immerwährende Schrift, aus der er hervorging und in die er wieder einmünden wird’, in Strauß, “‘Die Erde – ein Kopf’”. Dankrede zum Georg-Büchner Preis’, pp.131-132.

now possible to return to those reflections outlined above, namely how Strauß' understanding of the status of the *poetic*, of its language, is informed by a different conception of philosophical truth.

5.2.2 'Σιγή *Sigé ist das Schweigen der Ideen*'⁷²

The previous chapter, through a reading of *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*, develops a view of Strauß' portrayal of language: its established conventions and impoverished uses, and explores grounds of possibility for an alternative experience with originary language. The fictional fragments, the argument suggests, adopt key elements of Heidegger's thinking on language. The exegesis thus presents a series of distinctions arising from the philosopher's inversion of the originating source of language. It is not mankind that speaks but rather language itself. The orthodoxies of traditional conceptualisations, of how language is understood in the plurality of idioms and discourses making up the modern world are conceived as examples of language as *expression*. In turn, the speaking of language originates as *Sage*, as *saying*, in and through which the ontological plenitude of world comes-into-presence. White summarises the significance of this defining term:

language as saying becomes the 'relation of all relations', that relation from which all derivative relations draw their linguistic and ontological significance. [...] saying is the basic coordinator of those ontological features inherent in language which Heidegger wishes to make visible.⁷³

Of course, for language as *saying* to be present at all – i.e., to *name* all the things in the world as White describes – mankind must itself reside in some sort of relationship to

⁷² Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.44. My emphasis.

⁷³ White, *Heidegger and the Language of Poetry*, p.41.

saying. This experience with language Heidegger designates as *Ent-sprechen*, as *be-speaking*. Mankind speaks language – not as *expression* – inasmuch as he *be-speaks* language as *saying*: mankind’s *speaking* is, Heidegger writes, ‘ein sagendes Entsprechen’.⁷⁴ Critically, the site of such *speaking* is in and through the language of the *poetic*.

However, as the brief discussion of the ‘Arne-Jora’ fragment proposes, the deep affinities that undoubtedly exist between Strauß’ writing and Heidegger’s thought, whether in respect of certain terms, technology or language, whilst interpretively fruitful, do not alone address the deeper ontological claims that the former makes for the *poetic* work and its philosophical significance. Resolution to this question is, therefore, bound to the postulate made in the preceding section, namely that the work ‘Sigé’ – and therefore, the argument contends, all manifestations of the *poetic* – like the ruined city in the fragment, emerges from *Schweigen* and *Stille*. The motifs of *silence* and *stillness*, of course, are long established, and are important *topoi* in literature and poetry treated by a number of the poets in the Western tradition, not least Celan, Mallarmé and Rilke, all of whom Strauß includes in the exceptional poet-grouping. But these notions in Heideggerian thought and as Strauß invokes them, are not just a literary *topos*. Strauß’ conceit in the work ‘Sigé’ and of the term Σιγή – of *silence* and *stillness* – have ontological connotations.

The earlier delineation of Heideggerian thinking on language shows the originating notion of *saying* whereby the ontological coming-into-presence of things and world in

⁷⁴ Heidegger, M. ‘Aus einem Gespräch von der Sprache. Zwischen einem Japaner und einem Fragenden’, in Heidegger, *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, p.151.

and through language is invoked. The argument returns to the dense excerpt cited in the preceding chapter in which the *saying* of language is bound to *stillness*: language sounds from out of *stillness*.⁷⁵ The fundamental idea is recast with yet further associations in another lecture: ‘Wir nennen das lautlos rufende Versammeln, als welches die Sage das Welt-Verhältnis be-wägt, das Geläut der Stille’.⁷⁶ Bruns notes of this mysterious delineation a particular inflection critical for the present argument:

The question of what the stillness is takes us into, or toward, *the essence of truth* – [...] – of language. Stillness is not, it turns out, simply the absence or negation of sound. [...]. The question, ‘What is stillness?’ is not empirical.⁷⁷

The rich, allusive complexity of Heidegger’s thinking is utmost here in respect of the question of truth.

The *saying* of language denotes every thing that comes-into-presence for mankind: understood ontologically as thinging ‘das Ding dingt’. However, and this is crucial for a *poetics of dwelling*, *saying* is only ever provisional or contingent. The *saying* of language is never thought without also thinking its counterpart, *stillness*. As White, for example, notes: ‘stillness names the *prelinguistic* mode of existence of all those entities insofar as they are linked together within the limits of saying’.⁷⁸ In theological terms – perhaps, after all, the most instructive analogue – such an idea might present itself as: before *saying*, there is *stillness*. It is, of course, a claim that is not meant to, nor could it ever, be proven by an appeal to evidence.

⁷⁵ ‘Die Sprache spricht als das Geläut der Stille’, in Heidegger, ‘Die Sprache’, p.30. See section 4.2 above.

⁷⁶ Heidegger, ‘Das Wesen der Sprache’, p.215.

⁷⁷ Bruns, *Heidegger’s Estrangements*, p.94. My emphasis.

⁷⁸ White, *Heidegger and the Language of Poetry*, p.47. Emphasis in original.

The implications of the earlier postulate regarding the comparable status of the ruins in the ‘Arne-Jora’ episode and the fragments of the work ‘Sigé’ are becoming more defined. Given the relationship between *saying* and mankind’s ability to *be-speak* this it is not surprising that there is also, therefore, an affinity between mankind’s own *speaking* of language and *silence*.⁷⁹ Again, the idea is already briefly alluded to, although at that stage pointedly left undeveloped, in analysis of Strauß’ term *Dämmern* and ‘das aktive Schweigen’.⁸⁰ There the reading cites Heidegger’s cryptic formulation, based on the differentiation of *saying* and *speaking*, that it is possible to speak nothing – i.e., be silent – and yet still say something: ‘Einer kann sprechen, spricht endlos, und alles ist nichtssagend. Dagegen schweigt jemand, er spricht nicht und kann im Nichtsprechen viel sagen’.⁸¹

The ideas are bordering on the very limits of intelligibility in relation to language but this is appropriate both to Heidegger’s and Strauß’ respective philosophical ambition. Following this idea to its extreme, Heidegger draws the conclusion that the only true *speaking* possible for mankind is to be silent about *silence*.⁸² Nonetheless, the import of *silence* is not a denotation for a regressive movement to a point of absolute resignation

⁷⁹ White notes of this parallel: ‘Heidegger infers that stillness and silence serve as essential counterparts to their complement, [...] language, just as rest is complementary to motion. [...]. The notions of silence and rest must be understood in conjunction with one another and in complementary relation to their respective opposites. The intended correlation is that stillness (and, in its own way, silence) is to saying and speaking as rest is to motion’, in White, *Heidegger and the Language of Poetry*, pp.47-48.

⁸⁰ See section 4.4.1. above.

⁸¹ Heidegger, ‘Der Weg zur Sprache’, p.252. See section 4.4.1 above.

⁸² Heidegger relays the following: ‘Fragender: “Geschwiegen vor allem über das Schweigen ...” Japaner: “weil das Reden und Schreiben über das Schweigen das verderblichste Gerede veranlaßt ...” F: “Wer vermöchte es, einfach vom Schweigen zu schweigen?” J: “Dies müßte das eigentliche Sagen sein ...” F: “und das stete Vorspiel zum eigentlichen Gespräch *von* der Sprache bleiben” J: “Ob wir so nicht das Unmögliche versuchen?”’, in Heidegger, ‘Aus einem Gespräch von der Sprache. Zwischen einem Japaner und einem Fragenden’, p.152. The dismantling of the structure of dialogue conceived in the platonic tradition within this exchange, where each participant completes the other’s sentence as though partaking in a monological stream of thought is, of course, immensively suggestive given the earlier arguments made of Strauß’ *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*.

invoking the charge of fatalism. In suggesting that mankind can speak and yet say nothing Heidegger draws attention to impoverished uses of language that overlook the ontological depth of an originating alternative.⁸³ Conversely, *silence* can be active in the manner of its relationship to the ontological force of *saying*. Heidegger writes: ‘Das Schweigen entspricht dem lautlosen Geläut der Stille der ereignend-zeigenden Sage’.⁸⁴ This sense of an *engagement* in the *dynamic* nature of mankind’s attunement to *saying* is central to a *poetics of dwelling*.

More importantly, Heidegger underscores an idea critical to this thesis, that even when mankind *be-speaks* language, namely is true to language as *saying*, for example in the *poetic* work, there always remains that in language which is absent or concealed. Language can never reveal all that there *is* about a thing or the world. This is not to be understood, however, as White rightly notes, as ‘a structural imperfection’ in and of language that could ‘somehow be rectified’ by further clarification or use.⁸⁵ An additive approach to language does not beget the ontological reach of *saying*. Rather, in the relationship of *silence* to *speaking*, and its counterpart in *stillness* and *saying*, there is always absence in coming-into-presence, concealment in disclosure. Strauß, of course, deploys just this conceit throughout *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* in relation to the possibility of experience in the portrayal of the absent and proximal movement of originary language.

⁸³ Despite a critique of Heidegger’s views on truth, in turn based on Tugendhat’s objections (see section 5.3 below), Bowie accepts the import of the relationship of *silence* and *stillness* for an understanding of language. ‘[...] the growing sense in Heidegger’s later work that silence is the only real answer to the attempt not to slip back into a ‘metaphysical’ language of entities should not be dismissed out of hand. [...] In [...] language [...] the very possibility of articulation is dependent, [...], upon the – silent – gaps between the moments of the articulation’, in Bowie, A. *From Romanticism to Critical Theory. The Philosophy of German Literary Theory* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp.186.

⁸⁴ Heidegger, ‘Der Weg zur Sprache’, p.262.

⁸⁵ White, *Heidegger and the Language of Poetry*, p.45.

The significance of this portrayal of language is now becoming clearer and, crucially, aligned with Heidegger's re-thinking of truth as *ἀλήθεια*. It is this radical interpretation that is the implicit assumption guiding the readings of Strauß' prose works in the preceding chapters, in discussion of his ideas on *Anwesenheit*, *Fleck* and originary language.

While a full evaluation of Heidegger's interpretive transformation of the ancient Greek term falls outside the defined argument of this thesis, there are a number of characteristics to the notion of truth as un-concealment that warrant consideration.⁸⁶ Firstly, Heidegger elides the static basis of the platonically-inspired conception of truth. The truth of a proposition, on such accounts, is assessed on the basis of its correspondence to a situation or state of affairs. Similarly, truth in the work of art, based on the measure of *mimesis*, involves its fidelity or otherwise to its subject matter. In contrast, truth as un-concealment remains always *dynamic*, is never fixed or certain. Secondly, and intrinsically related to the first, the disclosure of truth as *ἀλήθεια* is always moving back to concealment: un-concealment is always concealment, or more dramatically as Heidegger writes: 'Die Wahrheit ist in ihrem Wesen Un-Wahrheit'.⁸⁷ Truth is, therefore, never simply present but is always coming-into-presence. Yet in this

⁸⁶ For differing views on the changes to and continuities in Heidegger's understanding of *ἀλήθεια* see Frede, D. 'Wahrheit. Vom aufdeckenden Erschließen zur Offenheit der Lichtung', in Thomä, D. (ed.) *Heidegger Handbuch. Leben-Werk-Wirkung* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2003), pp.127-134; Lafont, C. *Heidegger, Language and World-Disclosure* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp.109ff and Biemel, W. *Martin Heidegger. An Illustrated Study* (London: Routledge, 1977), pp. 172-177.

⁸⁷ Taken as a proposition, 'the truth is un-truth' is clearly inflammatory (although it highlights the sense of the unfamiliar and unsettling at stake in this discussion). However, it is not intended to be understood propositionally. Heidegger writes: 'So sei es gesagt, um in einer vielleicht befremdlichen Schärfe anzuzeigen, daß zur Unverborgenheit als Lichtung das Verweigern in der Weise des Verbergens gehört', in Heidegger, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, p.53.

presencing there is that which is absent. Truth is also, then, always already withdrawing-into-absence. Gadamer describes this memorably:

Denn Wahrheit ist als Unverborgenheit stets ein solches *Gegeneinander von Entbergung und Verbergung*. Beides gehört notwendig zusammen.⁸⁸

Importantly, in Heidegger's late thought the concealment in and of ἀλήθεια is given greater emphasis so that the disclosure of truth is always secretive in concealment.⁸⁹

Again, the adaptation of these ideas in Strauß' *Dämmern*, the inherent indeterminacy and enigma of the term, forms one of the proposals in the previous chapter, and is vital too for the present reading of *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*. Strauß describes just this dynamic movement in relation to the shifting intelligibility in understanding of the relationship between mankind and world. He writes:

[...] weder mit Weisheit noch mit der Alraune [...] ist zu entschlüsseln die nochmals veränderte Welt. Aus Undeutlichkeit trat sie hervor und wird sich zurückziehen in die Undeutlichkeit.⁹⁰

On this thinking, truth becomes an occurrence: an unsurprising contention given the previous argument in respect of the central role of *Ereignis* in Strauß' presentation of language.

Critically, how are all these terms and inter-related notions – of *silence*, *stillness*, truth, *Dämmern*, *Undeutlichkeit* and *Ereignis* – brought together, and how, in turn, are they bound to the overriding question under consideration, namely the philosophical status of the *poetic* work and Strauß' own writing? The various unavoidable digressions charting

⁸⁸ Gadamer, in Heidegger, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, pp.110-111. Emphasis in original.

⁸⁹ Heidegger emphasises the withdrawing secret of ἀλήθεια, its 'entziehenden Verbergung'. Kettering notes of this characterisation: 'Diese Betonung des bergenden Charakters der ἀλήθεια [...] gewinnt im Spätwerk zunehmend an Bedeutung. "Geheimnis", "Versagen" und "Vergessen" entsprechen im großen und ganzen einander; sie bezeichnen die λήθη, die am Anfang der ἀλήθεια steht', in Kettering, *NÄHE*, p.354.

⁹⁰ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.60. The significance of Strauß' notion of *Undeutlichkeit* is explored in section 5.3 below.

the affinity of different terms offer the necessary backdrop to the final reading on which the main argument of the thesis turns.

The *Ereignis* in Heideggerian thought forms the unifying term for his thinking on language, truth and, of course, Being.⁹¹ The *enownment* of *Ereignis* is the happening of world, understood ontologically, from which all that *is* becomes manifest. Young in his work on Heidegger and the work of art captures the breadth of its resonance:

Ereignis is, for Heidegger, the happening of, as he variously calls it ‘truth’, ‘the clearing’, ‘being’, ‘the being of beings’, ‘presence’ or ‘presencing’. It is, in other words, the happening of that ultimate horizon of disclosure which defines the ‘world’ [...].⁹²

The most involved of Heidegger’s works dealing with the happening of *Ereignis* is the controversial, posthumously published work, *Beiträge zur Philosophie. (Vom Ereignis)*, which is still relatively unknown outside Heidegger scholarship; his so-called other *magnum opus*.⁹³ The work not only offers interesting parallels in terms of its structure to Strauß’ *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit* – a series of episodes each grouping together a collection of fragmentary writing – which it is not possible to explore further within the constraints of this thesis, but it also offers defining support for Strauß’ indebtedness to Heideggerian ideas on language, truth and the *poetic* work.

In *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, in its content and structure, Heidegger attempts to bring truth as the *enownment* of Being to language, in this work denoted by the antiquated *Seyn*, as *Beyng*. Heidegger writes in the preface of his attempt:

⁹¹ See section 4.2.1. above.

⁹² Young, J. *Heidegger’s Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p.106.

⁹³ Pöggeler makes this claim in Pöggeler, O. ‘Heidegger und die hermeneutische Theologie’, in Jüngel, E. (ed.) *Verifikationen: Festschrift für Gerhard Eberling* (Tübingen: Mohr Verlag, 1982), p.481.

Nicht mehr handelt es sich darum, ‘über’ etwas zu handeln und ein Gegenständliches darzustellen, sondern dem Er-eignis übereignet zu werden, [...]. Die gemäße Überschrift lautet daher *Vom Ereignis*. Und das sagt nicht, daß davon und darüber berichtet werde, sondern will heißen: Vom Ereignis ereignet ein denkerisch-sagendes Zugehören zum Seyn und in das Wort ‘des’ Seyns.⁹⁴

The first of the seven parts that make up this bewildering work, the ‘Vorblick’, establishes the parameters of this attempt.⁹⁵ Of critical importance for the present argument is the section concerned with language, silence and the truth of *Beyng*. This Heidegger terms ‘das Seyn und seine Erschweigung’, which brings-into-presence the contingent nature of *Beyng* in and through language as *saying*. Heidegger writes of this ambivalence:

Wir können das Seyn selbst, gerade wenn es im Sprung ersprungen wird, nie unmittelbar sagen. Denn jede Sage kommt aus dem Seyn her und spricht aus seiner Wahrheit.⁹⁶

As the discussion of *Sage* shows, *saying* always emerges from out of *stillness*, as does mankind’s *speaking* from *silence* and, given the dynamic nature of truth as ἀλήθεια, always returns to, is concealed in, *stillness*, here termed *die Erschweigung*. Heidegger finishes the fragment: ‘Die Erschweigung entspringt aus dem wesenden Ursprung der Sprache selbst’.⁹⁷

Critically, Heidegger furnishes the fragment with a subtitle: *Beyng* and *Erschweigung* and their inter-relation, the dynamic movement from and to concealment and disclosure, in this work, is termed ‘die Sigtetik’. The *Erschweigung*, a word or term invoking the

⁹⁴ Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie. Vom Ereignis*, p.3. Emphasis in original.

⁹⁵ Schoenbohm writes: ‘In the “Preview”, Heidegger also points in an abbreviated way to the fugal character of the text’s structure and lists certain basic organizing words [...]. Each of these words says – or means – the very coming-to-meaning of the question of the truth of beyng’ in, Schoenbohm, S. M. ‘Reading Heidegger’s *Contributions to Philosophy: An Orientation*’, in Scott, & Schoenbohm, *et alia* (eds.) *Companion to Heidegger’s Contributions to Philosophy*, p.17.

⁹⁶ Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie. Vom Ereignis*, p.79.

⁹⁷ Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie. Vom Ereignis*, p.79.

dynamic attempt to experience truth *is*, for Heidegger, *die Sighetik*. Heidegger describes the *Sighetik* thus:

Sie (die Sighetik [MJ]) sucht die *Wahrheit der Wesung* des Seyns, und diese Wahrheit ist die winkend-anklingende Verborgenheit (das Geheimnis) des Ereignisses (die zögernde Versagung).⁹⁸

The *Sighetik* is, then, the term for the attempt to bring to language the happening of truth as the event of un-concealment. This is the turning point for the thesis.

The reading is now closer to an understanding of the significance of Strauß' claims for the *poetic* work through his adoption of the cognate Σιγή and adaptation of Heideggerian ideas on language. However, in accordance with the indeterminate nature of ἀλήθεια, Heidegger immediately elides the applicability of the term 'Sighetik' for philosophy, to say nothing of literary interpretation or hermeneutics. As Heidegger notes: 'Aber "Sighetik" ist nur ein Titel für jene, die noch in "Fächern" denken'.⁹⁹ Nonetheless, a sense of its suggestive force endures. Only in thinking on the philosophical reach of *Sighetik*, and by engaging with the ontological significance of associated ideas, can mankind hope to retrieve the happening of truth and its coming-into-presence in language. Pöggeler, one of the first interpreters of *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, claims: 'Whoever develops Sighetics as the "logic" of the truth of Being is "on the way towards language"' and, therefore, 'the truth as un-concealment'.¹⁰⁰

The outline of the intellectual provenance and philosophical implication of the notion of *stillness*, *silence* and *Sighetik* in Heidegger lends vital support to the postulate in respect of Strauß' own invocation of Σιγή and the work. On the most basic level, Σιγή denotes the

⁹⁸ Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie. Vom Ereignis*, p.78. Emphasis in original.

⁹⁹ Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie. Vom Ereignis*, p.79.

¹⁰⁰ Pöggeler, *Martin Heidegger's Path of Thinking*, pp.224 and 225.

ontological plenitude of *stillness* and *silence*; an ontological condition in contrast to that of *ταραχή*, a state of un-truth where the endless prattle of words and discourses dominates. Strauß' proposed alternative could not be more marked. He writes:

Σιγή Sigé *ist* das Schweigen der Ideen. Die Stätte. Der Schweigende, der Wächter.¹⁰¹

The threefold characterisation of Σιγή – as site, as being silent and as the poet and work – is the heart of the hypothesis of a *poetics of dwelling*. Notably, there is no verbal relationship between the three. All three are each themselves, and in union, manifestation of Σιγή.

There is, however, a seeming tension between delineation of Σιγή as the condition of ontological *silence* and the actuality of the work 'Sigé', the fact that there are fragments in which such a denotation can be written; that there is a work entitled 'Sigé' at all. It is in this apparent paradox that a hint as to the philosophical status of the *poetic* is grounded. The postulate in the reading of the 'Arne-Jora' fragment suggests that the fragments *are* like the ruins of the ancient city; they are manifest out of, are created from *stillness*. The subsequent analysis of Heidegger's thinking on language and the notion of *saying* and mankind's *speaking* brings into consideration the ontological reach and significance of the relationship of such language to *stillness* and *silence*. Strauß locates the force of language in just this inter-relationship. For example, of Borchardt's admiration for the language of Hölderlin he writes about 'wenn Macht in der Sprache sich davon herleitet, [...], aus ruhloser Noch-nicht-Sprache gewinnt'.¹⁰² The argument returns to ideas only tangentially raised in the earlier exegesis of Strauß' understanding of

¹⁰¹ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.44. My emphasis.

¹⁰² Strauß, 'Die Distanz ertragen', p.101.

Anwesenheit and later in discussion of *Ereignis*. The contention here, supported in the deep-lying affinity of Strauß' Σιγή with Heidegger's reluctant definition of *Sigetics*, is that the former shares with the latter ontological concern regarding the manifestation or coming-into-presence respectively of truth and its dynamic, indefinable nature.

This is not to claim, though, that Strauß, like Heidegger, is concerned specifically with the meaning of the question of *Being*. The present thesis does not suggest that Strauß' writing is identical to Heidegger's thinking, or as suggested in Chapter One that Strauß is an exclusive Heideggerian in his philosophical views. However, it advances the contention that the *poetic* – in this example the work 'Sigé' – as a series of fragments, manifestations of language from out of 'das Eisig-Stille' and the speaking of a poet-figure, *is* for Strauß the manifestation of truth. Moreover, the thesis claims that this sense of the truth of the work is profoundly indebted to Heideggerian thought.¹⁰³

However, as the thesis comes to show in the concluding section in delineating a *poetics of dwelling* and given everything that Strauß writes about the contingent nature of *Fleck* and originary language the declaration is less absolute and hubristic than it at first appears. Thus, considered in this light, the first exhortation in *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit* – 'Wißt Scherben ... !' – becomes a proportionate uttering that privileges the philosophical status of the fragment argued for here.¹⁰⁴ It is the absolute antithesis of the endlessly flickering ephemera that defines modern culture and society of which television, for Strauß, is the representative par excellence.¹⁰⁵ In contrast, what is offered in and by the work is an ontologically-conceived alternative – whether as *Anwesenheit*, *Fleck*,

¹⁰³ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.43.

¹⁰⁴ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.56.

¹⁰⁵ See, for example, Strauß, 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang', pp.17-18.

Dämmern, originary language as *die Sprache des Dritten* or, as this chapter concludes, *Undeutlichkeit* – to the proliferation of scientific and technological facts and theories that continue to encroach into every area of the natural world and mankind’s place therein, and so define the late-modern. As a result of such epistemologies, as Bowie cogently argues of much contemporary theory, ‘the philosophical question of truth can [...] become reduced to the attempt to give an adequate explanation of how it is that we can generate valid evidence for ever more [...] theories’.¹⁰⁶ Or as Strauß notes: ‘Wir wissen, wie man weiß, und wachen im Vergessen’.¹⁰⁷ However, the measure Strauß proposes, truth, manifest as the *poetic* in and through the language of the work, offers a site for, or prospect of, *Wahrnehmung* not pre-occupied with the calculation, determination and verification of the object-world for instrumental and quantifiable ends alone.

Nevertheless, the philosophical status of the *poetic* work, the priority given to the notion of *Stille*, the dark enigma of Strauß’ Σιγή and the limits of the expressible suggested by the stricture of the written word all appear to confirm the perspectives of commentators that implicitly or explicitly charge him with fatalism. Lämmerman certainly reaches just such a conclusion, interpreting the motifs of *Stille* and *Schweigen* literally and within the parameters of *mimesis*, suggesting a final nihilism to *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*.

Weit abseits von jedem Gedanken an echte Publikumswirksamkeit findet sich die Dichtung an der Grenze zur Stille und zum Schweigen in einer fast vollendeten Selbstbezüglichkeit wieder. Poesie wird zu einem hermetischen Gebilde, das seine Dunkelheit in diesem Fall nicht nur bespricht, sondern auch im fragmentarischen Charakter des Textes inszeniert.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Bowie, *From Romanticism to Critical Theory*, p.164.

¹⁰⁷ Strauß, *Diese Erinnerung an einen, der nur einen Tag zu Gast war*, p.59.

¹⁰⁸ Lämmerman, *Für unser Werk mein Liebster*, p.55.

The present reading of ‘Sigé’ does indeed lead to a position, if the argument of the necessity of *stillness* for any true *saying* is accepted, where the former plays a significant, and for Strauß currently neglected, role in an understanding of the uses of language and the particular importance of the *poetic*. He writes: ‘Und was ich noch sage, bringt redlich die eigene Stille hervor’.¹⁰⁹ (It is perhaps interesting to reflect whether such an interpretation of Strauß’ writing offers any explanation of his steadfast refusal to speak directly about his work). It seems tempting, therefore, to misrepresent Heidegger’s observation, cited above, that it is perhaps best not to speak at all about *silence* as confirmation of a deep fatalism. This is too easy, however. To make such an inference of a renunciation in communicative practice and, therefore, collective agreement – and, in turn, the consequences of certain gestures – is entirely to overlook the wider context and implications of Strauß’ understanding of the *poetic* and its continual offering in each new work, just as taking Heidegger’s isolated observation on the (im)possibility of *speaking* is to misunderstand the dynamic nature of truth. Strauß is taking anything but an absolute or fatalistic position as shown in the final section of this chapter, in which the hypothesis of this thesis, a *poetics of dwelling*, its scope and implication of *dynamic engagement*, is developed.

5.3 ‘Mein Haus ist nur eine Warte’¹¹⁰

The previous section develops the philosophical claim that Strauß ascribes to the *poetic* through a cumulative exegesis based on elucidation of the term Σιγή and its status in the

¹⁰⁹ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.63.

¹¹⁰ Strauß, *Die Fehler des Kopisten*, p.188.

work of the same name. In conjunction with his views on language, the portrayal of its absent and proximal status, as well as the echo of Heideggerian terms, the argument shows the deep, underlying indebtedness of Strauß' writing to the philosopher's ontological concern for and postulate of the un-concealment of truth. This argument partly explains the emphasis on the notions, replete through the work, of *Stille* and *Schweigen*. The seeming mysticism of these ideas, the profoundly elusive notion of truth, in light also of the other priority he accords the necessary marginal characteristics and positioning of the poets, all raise the question of Strauß' putative fatalism. Is his writing really the obscure self-referential musings of a poet who renounces any relationship between his works and any sense of a real world beyond? Or put in the terms that this thesis develops from readings of Strauß' works, does concern for manifestation of ontological truth proscribe the possibility of the alternative experience being understood at all, at least by accepted standards? Key to this question is the manner in which truth is manifest as the *poetic* and, in turn, how the experience thereof is inscribed within Strauß' works.

The inspiration for the main hypothesis of the thesis, a *poetics of dwelling* in Strauß' writing, comes perhaps unsurprisingly from the Heidegger essay of 1954, '... dichterisch wohnt der Mensch ...', in which the philosopher extends his thinking on language around an exegesis of couplets from the Hölderlin prose poem 'In lieblicher Bläue ...'.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Heidegger, M. '... dichterisch wohnt der Mensch ...', in Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, pp.181-198. Heidegger excerpts the following fragment from the poem: 'Darf, wenn lauter Mühe das Leben, ein Mensch aufschauen und sagen: so will ich auch sein? Ja. So lange die Freundlichkeit noch am Herzen, die Reine, dauert, misset nicht unglücklich der Mensch sich mit der Gottheit. Ist unbekannt Gott? Ist er offenbar wie der Himmel? dieses glaub ich eher. Des Menschen Maß ist's. Voll verdienst, doch dichterisch, wohnt der Mensch auf dieser Erde. Doch reiner ist nicht der Schatten der Nacht mit den Sternen, wenn ich so sagen könnte, als der Mensch, der heißt ein Bild der Gottheit. Gibt es auf Erden ein Maß? Es gibt keines', in Hölderlin, F. *Gedichte* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 2003), p.120. Interestingly, Heidegger

A consideration of the essay shows, in line with the approach taken to readings in earlier chapters, Strauß' adoption of terms and ideas from Heideggerian thought.

However, the hypothesis of a *poetics of dwelling* goes further than just broadening understanding of the extent and range of Strauß' allusions and references to Heidegger. More importantly, the thesis argues that in adaptation of such ideas Strauß attempts, in his prose works, to enact their philosophical import. In other words, for Strauß the work is not merely an object by which to narrate motifs or relay ideas. Rather, the *poetic* is the site for the manifestation of ontological truth: it is itself the happening of truth. But to wrest this claim from the heights of abstraction – his writings, after all, are works and can and should be enjoyed as just that – a *poetics of dwelling* inscribes the manner of the experience of such truth. In this, the thesis stakes a claim for the *dynamic engagement* of his works and so proposes a counter to the charge of fatalism.

Heidegger's essay opens with the approach familiar from earlier chapters. An understanding of the Hölderlin epigram comes from language and how mankind *be-speaks* its *saying*.¹¹² He goes on to broaden the argument beyond the couplet of the title. In order to substantiate the interpretation of Hölderlin's poem he needs to connect notions of *Dichten* and *Wohnen* with the ontological structure of world. He does this by invoking the idea of the place wherein and whereby the world is experienced for mankind. This is

changes the original fragmentary form of the poem into verse and ignores question marks over its authorship. On this issue see Jamme, C. "“Dem Dichten vor-denken”. Aspekte von Heideggers “Zwiesprache” mit Hölderlin im Kontext seiner Kunstphilosophie”, in *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 38 (1984), p.202.

¹¹² Heidegger notes: 'Die Sprache winkt uns zuerst und dann wieder zuletzt das Wesen einer Sache zu. Dies heißt jedoch nie, daß die Sprache in jeder beliebig aufgegriffenen Wortbedeutung uns schon mit dem durchsichtigen Wesen der Sache geradehin und endgültig wie mit einem gebrauchsfertigen Gegenstand beliefert. Das Entsprechen aber, worin der Mensch eigentlich auf den Zuspruch der Sprache hört, ist jenes Sagen, das im Element des Dichtens spricht', in Heidegger, '... dichterisch wohnet der Mensch ...', p.184.

the *Dimension*, mysteriously undefined, akin to the *Zwischen* or site considered in Chapter Three.¹¹³ The *Dimension* is that site from where every thing in the heavens and on earth is designated. Heidegger writes:

Das Wesen der Dimension ist die gelichtete und so durchmeßbare Zumessung des Zwischen: des Hinauf zum Himmel als des Herab zur Erde.¹¹⁴

Critically, the terms shift. According to the transformative interpretation, for Hölderlin, at least in this *poetic* work, mankind is ultimately distinguished by measurement of himself: in other words, how he conceives of or understands his being-in-the-world. Normally, Heidegger implies, mankind assesses himself against the heavens and the God-head. God is, thus, always the implicit measure in every encounter between mankind and world.

Given this assumption, Heidegger re-configures *Dichten* and *Wohnen* – the terms of the Hölderlin epigram – in accordance with *Messen*:

Die Vermessung des menschlichen Wesens auf die ihm zugemessene Dimension bringt das Wohnen in seinen Grundriß. Das Vermessen der Dimension ist das Element, worin das menschliche Wohnen seine Gewähr hat, aus der es währt. Das Vermessen ist das Dichterische des Wohnens. Dichten ist ein Messen.¹¹⁵

Dichten, the *poetic*, is now understood as *Messen*. But Heidegger is not proposing this transformation in understanding of *Dichten* as *Messen* as a new standard of practical measurement. The notion of *Messen* is to be distinguished from established and conventional ideas underpinning scientific theory and practice, familiar from earlier

¹¹³ See section 3.3. It is important to note again that neither Heidegger nor Strauß in sympathy with him conceives of this as a literal physical site. As Bruns' rhetorical question in respect of the notion of site wryly notes (although he deploys the philosophical term space): 'Would it sound too silly to say that Heidegger's notion of space is no longer, strictly, 'spatial'? [...]. Space here has nothing to do with the logical space (topology) of the philosopher, which is to say, for example, the space of such indispensable concepts as extension [...]. Space becomes an event, [...] as a worlding and a thinging; literally, it is a taking *place* (Ereignis)', in Bruns, *Heidegger's Estrangements*, p.93.

¹¹⁴ Heidegger, '... dichterisch wohnet der Mensch ...', p.189.

¹¹⁵ Heidegger, '... dichterisch wohnet der Mensch ...', p.190.

discussions through which the object-world is made serviceable for instrumental ends.

Heidegger describes an approach to the world similar to that suggested by Strauß in the

‘Arne-Jora’ fragment:

Da wird mit Hilfe von Bekanntem, nämlich den Maßstäben und Maßzahlen,
ein Unbekanntes abgeschritten, dadurch bekannt gemacht und so in eine
jederzeit übersehbare Anzahl und Ordnung eingegrenzt.¹¹⁶

Hölderlin, Heidegger maintains, is suggesting a different conception of *Messen* in the epigram, where it is brought into association with the happening of truth.

Im Dichten ereignet sich, was alles Messen im Grunde seines Wesens ist.
[...]. Im Dichten ereignet sich das Nehmen des Maßes. Das Dichten ist die im
strengen Sinne des Wortes verstandene Maß-Nahme, durch die der Mensch
erst das Maß für die Weite seines Wesens empfängt.¹¹⁷

Dichten, or the *poetic*, is thereby dramatically re-interpreted as the *Maß-Nahme*, the taking-Regard.¹¹⁸

The *poetic* is not, though, understood as superior to the methodologies of the sciences and their related measures. Rather, it allows Heidegger to suggest, after introducing God as the implicit measure against which mankind always conceives of himself, a God that always remains unknown – ‘Gott ist als der, der Er ist, unbekannt für Hölderlin, und *als dieser Unbekannte* ist er gerade das Maß für den Dichter’ – that in *taking-Regard*, through the measure in and of the *poetic*, mankind experiences the unknown and indefinable.¹¹⁹ Bruns describes the implications of Heidegger’s interpretation well:

¹¹⁶ Heidegger, ‘... dichterisch wohnt der Mensch ...’, p.193.

¹¹⁷ Heidegger, ‘... dichterisch wohnt der Mensch ...’, p.190.

¹¹⁸ *Taking-Regard* is a better rendering in English of Heidegger’s *Maß-Nahme* than the convention, which translates it as *the measure*. *Taking-Regard* not only suggests the ontological difference to *Messen* understood as the application of scientific practices, and thereby avoids unnecessary confusion arising from designating the two by the same word in English. It also invokes a sense of mankind’s immanent relationship to world in the *poetic*, for example, conveyed in the phrase ‘having regard for someone or something’.

¹¹⁹ Heidegger, ‘... dichterisch wohnt der Mensch ...’, p.191. Emphasis in original.

Poetry, [...], takes the measure [...] only it does so ‘with a different stress’ that takes measure strangely, turns it, so to speak, against itself so that measuring is no longer a project of familiarization, of making sense of the place, shedding light on it, mapping it out, [...]; rather it is as if measuring were now a reversal of this process [...]. For poetry measures the world not in terms of the familiar but in terms of what is alien and inaccessible.¹²⁰

The *poetic*, in *taking-Regard*, is concerned, then, with a sense of deep, unfathomable alterity.

Heidegger invokes a sense of this alterity in the adverbial root of *Dichten*. There is a density to *Dicht-en* and its language, a closing down, that moves mankind in the opposite direction from the imperative of language’s conventional uses, pre-occupied with demystification, explanation and elucidation. Where language is traditionally deployed to en-lighten mankind’s encounter with the object-world, thereby declaratory of his domination, for Heidegger, and Strauß with him, the sense of *Dicht-en*, underscoring the ontological priority of language, is of an en-veloping and points towards the manner of the experience of world. Bruns unsurprisingly finds an exegetical echo of this sense of *Dichten* in the concealing dynamic of truth:

[...] *the truth of poetry* or *Dichtung lies in its dichten*. [...]. Something essential to language (and, indeed, to poetry) – something not said, perhaps not sayable – can be heard in its sounding.¹²¹

It is this sense of *Dicht-en* that Strauß offers when he writes about the condition of *viel Sprache* essential to the *poetic* work: ‘Viel Sprache ist kein Mengen-, sondern ein Dichtewert’.¹²² It is beginning to become clear how the language of the *poetic*, if it is the manifestation of truth, is actually deeply disconcerting to established understanding.

¹²⁰ Bruns, *Heidegger’s Estrangements*, p.184.

¹²¹ Bruns, *Heidegger’s Estrangements*, p.3. My emphasis.

¹²² Strauß, ‘Die Distanz ertragen’, p.117.

Importantly, Heidegger does not propose by *Dichten* a theosophy of poetry in the way that Steiner argues for in *Von realer Gegenwart*. Whereas for Steiner it is the mystery of the *poetic* that leads him to impute the existence of God, and therefore ultimately to explain the source of its secret and thus to enlighten the very enigma or secret here under consideration, Heidegger's suggestion is resolutely ontological and is bound to the un-concealment of truth as ἀλήθεια. Heidegger writes:

Das Maß besteht in der Weise, wie der unbekannt bleibende Gott *als* dieser durch den Himmel offenbar ist. Das Erscheinen des Gottes durch den Himmel besteht in einem Enthüllen, das jenes sehen läßt, was sich verbirgt, aber sehen läßt nicht dadurch, daß es das Verborgene aus seiner Verborgene herauszureißen sucht, sondern allein dadurch, daß es das Verborgene in seinem Sichverbergen hütet.¹²³

God, as the measure of the *poetic*, remains unknown. It is, therefore, the unknowability of God that Heidegger suggests is the originating secret of the *poetic*, not the inverse. As he continues: 'Der Dichter ruft in den Anblicken des Himmels Jenes, was im Sichenthüllen gerade das Sichverbergende erscheinen läßt und zwar: *als* das Sichverbergende'.¹²⁴ Moreover, it is the poet, in response to the unknown God, that lets the secret of the work come-into-presence as just that, *as* secret. What mankind is confronted with in the *poetic* work as the un-concealment of truth is, therefore, profoundly unsettling, rather than the soothing confirmation of a final theological sanction.

It is just this conjunction of *Messen* and God in the work that Strauß proposes, albeit fleetingly, in *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*. The significance of the earlier description in the 'Arne-Jora' fragment shows the limitations of a conventional, scientifically-structured approach to measuring the ruined city.

¹²³ Heidegger, '... dichterisch wohnt der Mensch ...', p.191. Emphasis in original.

¹²⁴ Heidegger, '... dichterisch wohnt der Mensch ...', p.194. Emphasis in original.

Arne tritt neben einen leeren Sockel, auf den eine Statue oder Herme gehörte. Jora steht gut zwei Meter entfernt auf einer letzten Treppenstufe, um den gleichen Sockel aus einigem Abstand zu ermessen. [...]. Den Bruch der Statue noch einmal brechen, die zerstreuten Teile noch einmal zerstreuen [...].¹²⁵

In another essay, Strauß underscores the prevalence of such conceptions of *Messen* and *Maß* as involving the control and domination by mankind of the object-world.

Strauß writes:

Vor allem Sein ein Maß. [...].
Man kann heute den Hauch einer Kraftveränderung in der Maßeinheit Pictonewton messen. [...]. So werden die Maße der Technik immer feiner und die des Geistes immer gröber.¹²⁶

In *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, Strauß proposes Σιγή as the alternative, ontological approach to the world. In the final fragment, the culmination of ‘Sigé’, he writes of the suspension of standardised conceptions of *Messen*:

Was war? Was in der Zwischenzeit? [...].
Wir sind [...], Wesen ohne jede Ausdehnung, weniger als ein Punkt in die Dauer, und immer zu dritt und unzertrennlich [...]. Es ist nichts geschehen; unser Leben – die Zwischenzeit – war ein Ereignis auf der untersten, unbestimmbarsten Szene der Materie. Ein Ich, ein Haus, ein Gast. Masselos und ungemessen.¹²⁷

In the conclusion to the work, the poet-figure raises the question of the manner in which the truth of the *poetic* is manifest. The issue is given further impetus by the referent of God in *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*. Thus, Heidegger’s reading of Hölderlin’s poem where it is the deity, as unknown, from which the *poetic* takes its unique measure, finds its counterpoint in ‘Sigé’. Strauß shows the poet-figure defining God as the source of the *poetic*:

Ich kann nur vor Gott treten, nur vor die allergrößte mir versagte Gegenliebe.
[...].

¹²⁵ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.36.

¹²⁶ Strauß, ‘Wollt ihr das totale Engineering?’, p.12.

¹²⁷ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.65. My emphasis.

Was kann ich noch tun? Ich kann nur zu Dir sprechen. Haltlos, hemmungslos abfließend wie der Strom. [...].
Du aber bist das unerweichliche Schweigen, dem der Begriff meiner Verworfenheit entsprang.¹²⁸

However, the conceit is not, as Bischof argues, the hubristic declaration of a self-selecting elitist poet who compares himself with God, but rather a tentative expression of the provisional limits of the sayable in the *poetic*.¹²⁹ For Strauß, the *poetic* work may well be the manifestation of ontological truth but its truth is never clear, obvious or transparent. The truth of the work is not ever directly intuited or grasped but, rather, is always oblique and remains finally impenetrable. It is manifest *as* the deepest enigma; in this sense, it resists being known. It is this suggestion that begins to explain, given the preceding argument and portrayal of the absent and proximal movement of language, the particular importance of Strauß' title, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, for an overall understanding of his writing.

The few critics that consider the significance of *Undeutlichkeit* take positions in direct relation to their view on Strauß' fatalism. Görner, for example, asks rhetorically of the term: 'Was signalisiert das? Eine Umkehr in den Traum? Bloßen Eskapismus als Ausdruck übersteigerter Subjektivität?'.¹³⁰ Although he does acknowledge that 'gemeint ist demnach eine andere Art der Wahrnehmung', for him *Undeutlichkeit* is finally only 'eine Sammlung ästhetischer Unschärfebeziehungen [...] die sich mit dem Dunklen begnüg[en]'.¹³¹ Lämmerman, in turn, is less willing merely to adduce gnostic abstraction to Strauß' prose and is more open to the possible philosophical complexity of the notion,

¹²⁸ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.53.

¹²⁹ Bischof, 'Das Buch nach dem Buch – Figuren des Widerrufs', p.123.

¹³⁰ Görner, 'Im Schatten des Mythos', p.547.

¹³¹ Görner, 'Im Schatten des Mythos', p.547.

although she overlooks the deeper ambition by describing the term only as a self-referential textual strategem. She writes: ‘Die “Undeutlichkeit” durchzieht als Motiv [...] – es wird die Absicht erklärt, den Text so zu formulieren, daß er nicht mehr interpretierbar ist in dem Sinn, daß ihm eine eindeutige Festlegung zu unterstellen wäre’.¹³² Finally, Bischof, in contrast, in a reading that gets close to a sense of the experience of the *poetic* for which this thesis argues, claims: ‘so entsteht eine Welt, in der [...] die Wesen und Dinge im Ungefähren, Uneindeutigen gehalten werden. Und nicht so sehr Undeutlichkeit ist hier gemeint, als vielmehr bestimmte Unbestimmbarkeit’.¹³³ However, her elision of just that unsettlingly open and indeterminate understanding of *Undeutlichkeit* and its re-definition as ‘precise imprecision’, even if this is itself less than clear, suggests a propensity to attribute concrete meaning to or to formulate the term. In absolute contrast, this thesis contends that with *Undeutlichkeit*, Strauß, like Heidegger’s reading of Hölderlin and his own development of the idea of *Fleck* and the *Sprache des Dritten*, suggests that the manifestation of truth is always enigmatic, where the unknown enigma remains *as* unknown. He declares this intention as:

Der Poet wird die Metaphern einer entzückten Nüchternheit nicht noch einmal übertragen. [...] bis beide, Wissen und Schauen, mit ihren offenen Enden sich berühren, der Poet, [...], um sie zu brechen, zu öffnen, wieder einschweigbar zu machen und den Geist vor einer abrupte, unergründliche Schönheit zurückzuführen – .¹³⁴

But, for Strauß, the *Undeutlichkeit* of the *poetic* is not a classification of or term for something else: it is not literature as allegory or symbolism. In other words, *Undeutlichkeit* does not simply mean the unknown, is not representative of an idea, at least

¹³² Lämmerman, *Für unser Werk mein Liebster*, p.46.

¹³³ Bischof, ‘Das Buch nach dem Buch’, p.125.

¹³⁴ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, pp.47-48.

understood propositionally. In other words, it does not stand for any-thing. Rather, *Undeutlichkeit* for Strauß is the manner in which the truth of the *poetic* is manifest.

Nicht, als wäre nur eine nächste Umschrift zu leisten; die abermalige Metapher zu finden. Es mußte schlechthin *alles* zurückübersetzt werden in die Undeutlichkeit.

Das poetische Umlauten gedachte der widerständigsten Verborgtheit, aus der man nichts mehr würde ‘herausholen’ können.¹³⁵

Critically, *Undeutlichkeit* cannot be delineated by language that seeks to define or conceptualise: it resists the categorising impulse of dominant scientific and technological languages and idioms, to say nothing of literary theoretical or interpretive endeavour. *Undeutlichkeit* is not a proposal for a hermeneutics that seeks to define a meaning or the nature thereof. Moreover, the present reading does not imply either that the *poetic* presents a regressive instance of absolute or blinding illumination of truth. It is not possible to extract or experience single or multiple meanings and then conclude at a particular point. As the preceding argument establishes, for example, in discussion of *Fleck*, what Strauß claims for the work is only the necessity of the enigma. The truth of the *poetic*, therefore, is without limits: the evocativeness of terms such as *Fleck* and *Dämmern* here come into their own.

It is in this sense that Strauß’ second fragmentary exhortation is to be understood: ‘Zurück ins Nicht-Verstehen!’¹³⁶ Despite its ostensible disavowal of principles of rationality – for Görner the exclamation does not represent ‘wirkliche Einsichten in das Dunkle, sondern [...] die Kultivierung des Mythischen’ – it is not to be read as an abdication of thought, or declaration of an end in itself, but as a loosening of the distorting

¹³⁵ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.50. Emphasis in original.

¹³⁶ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.50.

strictures of reason alone.¹³⁷ Thus, Strauß does not intone against understanding. On the contrary, through the injunction he advocates concern for the absolute condition of nothing: like *stillness*, the condition out of which what *is*, is manifest. Strauß identifies his inspiration for this sense of nothing and understanding from Eliot's 'Four Quartets':

Nichts – nichts wär in mir erklingen
ohne die *Vier Quartette* von Eliot.
‘hier nicht/ Nicht hier das Dunkel,
in dieser schwirrenden Welt’
in dieser tiefsten Stille der Wege
in diesem Unsinn des Herzens
in diesem bergeversetzenden Staub.
Nur Sand, Sand ist unser Verstehen,
Darin mit deutendem Finger gemalt
eines Fremdlings undeutbarer Krakel.¹³⁸

The terms of the allusion are resonant of the fundamental question first posed in consideration of the girl in the painting in 'Der Aufstand gegen die sekundäre Welt' in Chapter Two, namely the overwhelming fact of existence, of *Anwesenheit*, manifest in and through the work of art. The conjunction of terms in the exhortation – 'Nicht-Verstehen' – is not, therefore, a terminus for, or end-state to, understanding but its beginning: an understanding that never attains the status of certainty. Strauß goes so far as to call it – albeit with a fair degree of provocation – an enlightenment. Citing Jünger on the truth of the work and its enigma as it is brought to language by certain poets he writes that its force “beruht auf Offenbarung, nicht auf Erkenntnis, und auf Sprache, nicht auf Logik; ihr Stammvater ist Heraklit”.¹³⁹ Jünger's suggestion of the originating source in Heraclitus, of course, is supportive of this thesis. For Strauß the emphasis on

¹³⁷ Görner, 'Im Schatten des Mythos', p.547.

¹³⁸ Strauß, *Diese Erinnerung an einen, der nur einen Tag zu Gast war*, p.61. Strauß cites in the quoted passage from the first part of Eliot's poem, 'Burnt Norton'. See, Eliot, T.S. *Collected Poems 1909-1962* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), pp.189-195.

¹³⁹ Strauß, 'Refrain einer tieferen Aufklärung', p.323.

indeterminacy rather than conviction, on the open evocativeness of language rather than the binding strictures of logic forms, for him, the ‘Refrain einer tieferen Aufklärung’.¹⁴⁰

If the *poetic* is the manifestation of truth, yet as *Undeutlichkeit* is always enigma, the second part of the question noted above arises, namely how can it ever be experienced? Strauß, after all, writes in order to be read. In what sense is it possible, then, to know the experience of the truth of the work if it is only ever manifest as *Undeutlichkeit*: how is it to be understood? The further inspiration for a *poetics of dwelling* again comes from Heidegger’s essay on Hölderlin’s poem.

The short discussion above shows how the essence of *Dichten* is thought as *taking-Regard*, the measure whereby the unknown is made known as unknown in the *poetic*. But this is only one element of Hölderlin’s couplet. As Heidegger is at pains to emphasise:

Das Dichten erbaut das Wesen des Wohnens. Dichten und Wohnen schließen sich nicht nur nicht aus. Dichten und Wohnen gehören vielmehr, wechselweise einander fordernd, zusammen.¹⁴¹

Wohnen as a possibility for mankind arises only when the *poetic*, and its truth, is experienced. How is this apparent contradiction to be resolved? Heidegger writes:

Das Wohnen aber geschieht nur, wenn das Dichten sich ereignet und west und zwar in der Weise, deren Wesen wir jetzt ahnen, nämlich als die Maß-Nahme für alles Messen. [...]. Das Dichten läßt das Wohnen des Menschen allererst in sein Wesen ein. Das Dichten ist das ursprüngliche Wohnenlassen.¹⁴²

Wohnen when it is open to the *poetic*, then, invokes the grounds of possibility whence mankind is able to experience its truth. Dwelling is central, therefore, to establishing

¹⁴⁰ Strauß, ‘Refrain einer tieferen Aufklärung’, p.323.

¹⁴¹ Heidegger, ‘... dichterisch wohnet der Mensch ...’, p.196.

¹⁴² Heidegger, ‘... dichterisch wohnet der Mensch ...’, p.196.

some understanding of the question raised regarding how the experience of truth is known.

It is important to underscore that *Wohnen* is not conceived instrumentally. Such an interpretation is to misunderstand entirely the specific movement of the argument in relation to a *poetics of dwelling*, and this thesis contends, the entire direction in which Heidegger's late thought takes ontological understanding of the *poetic*. To imagine *Wohnen* in practical terms explains why those few commentators of Strauß who do posit a connection to the philosopher highlight what appears to be the literal treatment of the motif and also of *Bauen*, for example, in *Die Fehler des Kopisten*.¹⁴³ Focusing on the activities of Strauß' homebuilding in the Uckermark and suggesting that the fragmentary descriptions of life in the depths of Brandenburg somehow simply mirror these Heideggerian motifs is, however, to overlook the philosophical claims of the work, to which the earlier suggestion of the title's counter-platonic impetus alludes. Similarly, when Heidegger thinks on *Wohnen* he is not concerned with practicalities of human habitation. Indeed, what he hears out of the Hölderlin poem are 'nicht Zustände des heutigen Wohnens. Es behauptet vor allem nicht, Wohnen bedeute das Innehaben einer Wohnung'.¹⁴⁴ Those interpreters attempting to excavate ethical precepts that are then re-evaluated to suggest latent prescriptions for either the deep-ecology movement or even architectural praxis, no matter how well-intentioned or imaginative, misconceive the

¹⁴³ See section 4.1 in particular the remarks by Wiesberg and Willer.

¹⁴⁴ Heidegger, '... dichterisch wohnet der Mensch ...', p.182.

nature of such thinking.¹⁴⁵ As Kettering rightly argues in respect to such applications for his ideas:

Weil Heideggers Seinsdenken kein zwingendes Wissen hervorbringt, hat es kein Ergebnis und keine Wirkung im strengen Sinne dieser Begriffe. Ebenso fällt es aus den Kategorien des 'Nutzens' und des 'Zwecks' heraus. [...]. Offensichtlich kann bei Heidegger von einer ethischen Maßgeblichkeit im üblichen Sinne ebensowenig die Rede sein wie von einer logischen Verbindlichkeit.¹⁴⁶

Neither of the two encompassing categories of the philosophical tradition – ethics or logic – as conventionally conceived is appropriate for that understanding of ontological concern and, therefore, of the *poetic*.

Heidegger never defines the conditions invoked by *Wohnen*.¹⁴⁷ This absence is, for many critics, the principal structural flaw in such thought: no criteria are provided in the development or exposition of terms to enable its validity to be assessed. If there is no clear single determination of what *Wohnen* is, how is it possible ever to ascertain whether the condition is realised and the truth of *Dichten* experienced? Such an apparent lacuna parallels the influential critique by Marx, shared by Tugendhat, of truth as ἀλήθεια.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ See, for example, the conclusion to Young entitled 'Fostering the growth of the saving Power', in Young, *Heidegger's Later Philosophy*, pp.122-127. See also Biella, B. *Eine Spur ins Wohnen Legen. Entwurf einer Philosophie des Wohnens nach Heidegger und über Heidegger hinaus* (Düsseldorf: Parerga, 1998) and Führ, E (ed.) *Bauen und Wohnen. Martin Heideggers Grundlegung einer Phänomenologie der Architektur* (Berlin: Waxmann, 2000).

¹⁴⁶ Kettering, *NÄHE*, p.367.

¹⁴⁷ The notion of *Wohnen* is, of course, developed throughout his later writings, for example in *Über den Humanismus* and the essay 'Bauen Wohnen Denken' but always in relation to and inflected by other terms. Young explores the elusive nature of *Wohnen* in Young, J. 'What is Dwelling? The Homelessness of Modernity and the Worlding of World', in Wrathall, M. & Malpas, J. (eds.) *Heidegger, Authenticity and Modernity. Essays in Honour of Hubert L. Dreyfuss* Volume 1. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2000). See also Kettering who interprets *Wohnen* against his overall postulate of 'Nähe', in Kettering, *NÄHE*, pp.257ff.

¹⁴⁸ See Marx, W. *Heidegger und die Tradition. Eine problemgeschichtliche Einführung in die Grundbestimmung des Seins* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1980) and Tugendhat, E. *Der Wahrheitsbegriff bei Husserl und Heidegger* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1970), cited in Kettering, *NÄHE*, pp.352-367.

Marx argues that it is precisely in the relationship of concealment to disclosure in *ἀλήθεια* that such difficulties arise. Given the inherent secrecy of truth, Marx enquires as to how it is possible to ensure the truth of the secret, rather than its errancy. In other words, if Heidegger emphasises the ultimate secret in the dynamic movement of *ἀλήθεια* from concealment to disclosure, is there any basis upon which the nature of un-truth in un-concealment – whether it is in fact error – can be established? Marx writes of the need:

[...] das ungeheuer Gefährliche von Heideggers Auffassung des Wesens der Wahrheit ans Licht zu rücken und zugleich die Frage aufs dringlichste hervorzurufen, ob Heidegger eigentlich richtig gesehen hat, als er nicht nur ‘das Geheimnis’, sondern auch die Irre, den Schein [...] als ‘ebenbürtige Partner’ innerhalb des Wahrheitsverhältnisses anerkannt hat.¹⁴⁹

However, seeking to identify such criteria is to repeat the same misunderstanding as extrapolating an ethics or other guidelines for action. The elaboration of *Dichten* and *Wohnen*, just as with *ἀλήθεια*, is instead to be sensed as a movement in thinking and through language where such thinking and language may not lead to truth at all but the continual prospect of concealment. Truth as *ἀλήθεια* does not, in the end, provide an inviolable set of propositions whereby its infallibility can be assessed and verified.

Kettering reasons of such thought:

Ebensowenig lehrt Heidegger eine nach festen Regeln lernbare Methode, sondern weist einen Weg, der stets in der Gefahr ist, ein Irrweg zu werden. Ein solches Denken, das bewußt auf alles Begründen und Ausweisen verzichtet, [...], kann nur *Möglichkeiten* aufzeigen, keine Notwendigkeiten liefern.¹⁵⁰

All that is offered, then, are possibilities of the *poetic* rather than the necessity of logic for its identification. In this the argument returns to consider the implications of those

¹⁴⁹ Marx, *Heidegger und die Tradition*, p.247, cited in Kettering, *NÄHE*, p.355.

¹⁵⁰ Kettering, *NÄHE*, p.366. My emphasis.

characteristics associated by Strauß with the terms *Dämmern* and *Wohnen* and the grounds of possibility for an experience of the *poetic*. Kettering continues, these lie ‘an der Einübung der Achtsamkeit des Hörens [...], der Besinnlichkeit des Nachdenkens sowie der Sorgfalt des Ent-sprechens’.¹⁵¹

There are, then, still identifiable and recognisable characteristics that enable mankind to reflect on truth. They are, however, only ever gestures that point mankind towards its occurrence: for Strauß its manifestation in the *poetic* work as the enigma of *Undeutlichkeit*. The above digression considering certain critiques of such thought is important in respect of the observations on *Wohnen* and, therefore, for understanding how Strauß himself sets out the grounds of possibility for experiencing the truth of the work.

Although Heidegger never defines *Wohnen* he does, however, propose – it is only ever suggested, not established as certainty – that mankind currently fails to dwell poetically.¹⁵² The only way out of this is by enacting certain gestures such as *hearing*, in considering *Dichten* and the nature of the *poetic*.

Ob uns und wann uns eine Wende des undichterischen Wohnens trifft, dürfen wir nur erwarten, wenn wir das Dichterische in der Acht behalten. Wie unser Tun und Lassen und inwieweit es einen Anteil an dieser Wende haben kann, bewähren nur wir selbst, wenn wir das Dichterische ernst nehmen.¹⁵³

It is in thinking about the *poetic*, by being attuned, *hearing* it and attempting to *be-speak* it, that *dwelling* becomes possibility: such gestures, in turn, are the grounds from where the truth of such a *poetic* is experienced. To dwell poetically is to dwell on the *poetic*.

The argument again nears the tautological.

¹⁵¹ Kettering, *NÄHE*, p.366.

¹⁵² Heidegger writes: ‘Wohnen *wir* dichterisch? Vermutlich wohnen wir durchaus undichterisch’, in Heidegger, ‘... dichterisch wohnet der Mensch ...’, p.196. Emphasis in original.

¹⁵³ Heidegger, ‘... dichterisch wohnet der Mensch ...’, p.197.

Strauß proposes a response to the question posed regarding the knowability of the experience of the truth of the *poetic* in sympathy with the reading of Hölderlin's poem. As he, in turn, writes of Hölderlin's 'Patmos', the poem from which Heidegger draws out the couplet on the potential salvation in understanding of τέχνη:

Es gibt solche Worte, die machen dich wieder leer, zum hohlen Krug, der empfängt und wiedergibt, [...]. Und keinen Abgrund oder Bauch.
Wenn ich ihn (H.) in einer anderen Sprache lesen müßte, [...]. Ich kenne ihn nicht.
Nicht mehr die Sehnsucht ist die aufs äußerste gespannte Saite, sondern zu haben, was man nicht ist, [...]. Sich vorzutasten zwischen Bergen ungeräumt
Erinnertem.¹⁵⁴

Throughout *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit* Strauß incribes the characteristics or gestures by which dominating approaches to the object-world are suspended, albeit fleetingly. For example, in the fragments following the 'Arne-Jora' episode he offers a third, final exhortation: 'Nicht sehen!'.¹⁵⁵ The work 'Sigé' invokes the suspension of mankind's sense of sight, replaced instead by a twilight dream-like condition.

Traum ist nur ein unerschöpfliches Wort, [...].
Jede Nacht legt nahe, daß du alles Erblickte umkehrst und Sehen an sich ein anderes wär. Jede Nacht geschieht Umwälzung bis zur Schöpfung. Und jeder Schlaf hinterläßt einen Dichter, der sein Werk versäumte ... und wie es in der Morgenfäule zerfällt. Denn die Nacht ist hell und trüb in den Tag.¹⁵⁶

Sight is understood as the sensation associated with scientific methods and practices: above all with repeatable and verifiable knowledge. Seeing, like *Linie*-structured *Wahrnehmung*, is pre-occupied with the cumulative appropriation of the object-world.

¹⁵⁴ Strauß cites the following excerpt from Hölderlin: 'Und Freude war es/ Von nun an./ Zu wohnen in liebender Nacht und bewahren/ In einfältigen Augen unverwandt/ Abgründe der Weisheit', in Strauß, *Der Untenstehende auf Zehenspitzen*, p.57. See Hölderlin, *Gedichte*, p.91 and also section 3.2.4 above.

¹⁵⁵ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.41.

¹⁵⁶ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.50.

Mit jedem Augenaufschlag steigt die Unwissenheit, und das sonnenklare, erobernde Wissen steigt auf der Leiter der Unwissenheit empor, die sich um jede genommene Sprosse doppelt nach oben verjüngt.¹⁵⁷

The gesture that Strauß proposes – anticipating the contingent success of the *Sondenexperiment* ‘ins Herz der Unvernunft’ in *Beginnlosigkeit* – is through the senses of the heart. Rather than sight, mankind should be open:

Das Herz ist das Ganze.
Wessen Herz dann? Sind wir eines anderen Mitte? [...].
Wenn man das Herz vollkommen erforscht zu haben glaubt, gehört es einem unbekanntem, neu zu erforschenden Organismus.
Die Mitte ist da, sie hält sich verborgen. Ausgesprochen, ist sie stets schon an anderer Stelle.¹⁵⁸

The spatial characteristics associated with *Herz* in the extract are again central to that gesture ultimately concerned with a non-rationally based approach to world. It resonates with characteristics inherent to the proposal of *Fleck*.

These motifs in *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit* coalesce around the same proposed alternative experience: it is not surprising that it is not defined or specified as a unitary term. So, the dream-like condition, similar to the emphasis on *Hören*, is concerned not with notions of correspondence, whether mimetically or positivistically conceived – Strauß writes, ‘kein Traum ist ein Gleichnis’ – but, rather, with a letting go of the structures of perception, an abandonment of the notion of an individual subject encountering the object world.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.47.

¹⁵⁸ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, pp.47 and 48. Heidegger invokes the idea of *Mitte* for the opening *Lichtung* of the truth of *Sein* out of *das Nichts*: ‘Inmitten des Seienden im Ganzen west eine offene Stelle. Eine Lichtung ist. Sie ist, vom Seienden her gedacht, seiender als das Seiende. Diese offene Mitte ist daher nicht vom Seienden umschlossen, sondern die lichtende Mitte selbst umkreist wie das Nichts, das wir kaum kennen, alles Seiende’, in Heidegger, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, p.51.

¹⁵⁹ Kauten is the only commentator to note this dimension of the work. She writes: ‘Mit der “Entfernung” [...] ins Auge der Undeutlichkeit wird der Subjekt-Objekt-Gegensatz zwischen Text und Rezipient

Traum ist: Unterschlupf suchen in Umbildung und Umtaufe. Das sicherste Gelaß des Selbst ist der unfeste Raum.¹⁶⁰

The dream-like condition is, of course, akin to the indeterminacy of *Dämmern*.

Importantly, the gestures of *Hören*, *Herz* and *Traum* are precarious, just as the truth of the *poetic* remains always enigmatic. The grounds of possibility that Strauß offers for the experience of truth are always in danger of inexorably turning back towards the conventions of language, its uses and abuses, and an objectifying approach to the world.

Strauß writes of the figure in ‘Sigé’:

Wacht er? Nein. Er döst. Durch ihn hindurch geht der Schlummer der unveränderten Lage der Dinge. Darin bemerkt er weder Raum noch Mensch noch Bild. Wird er aus diesem Schlummer gerissen, ist es stets schon zu spät: er erreicht es nicht, und wenn er noch so schnell auffährt, er wird es nie erreichen: ein Wächter gewesen zu sein.¹⁶¹

If this is the default state within which mankind finds himself, earlier designated by *Lügen*, is there really any prospective to show how truth is to be experienced?

In ‘Sigé’ it is the poets who are exemplary in this regard. It is now clearer why the discussion in the preceding section argues for an erasure of the difference in philosophical status between the biography of the poet and the work of the *poetic*.

Through the lives of the poets mankind learns what it is to be a poet, to dwell and thereby open, and be open to, the possibility of an experience of the *poetic*. The characteristics and gestures of the poets are already familiar from earlier readings. For Strauß, they are those individuals who take up positions on the margins. This is not, however, a question

eliminiert’, in Kaußen, H. ‘Der Sündenbock als Gärtner. Oder: Warum verstiegenem Blöken nicht mit Begriffen beizukommen ist’, in *Weimarer Beiträge* 2 (1994), p.292.

¹⁶⁰ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.49.

¹⁶¹ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, pp.44-45.

of physical removal to be understood literally – or in terms of realism by asking to what extent or how the poets are isolated – but as a defining characteristic or gesture of ontological concern. Strauß writes in ‘Sigé’ of the poet-figure:

er der langsam Andersredende, Fürsprecher weder des Chaos noch der denkbaren Ordnung, bewohnt entgegen der allgemeinen Annahme nicht das Reservat einer erlöschenden Spezies, sondern hält den verborgenen Vorposten, die Erwartungstille, [...], da weder Wissen noch Wissenschaft sich bewegen [...].¹⁶²

The role of the poet is to wait and, in waiting, to be open to language. These ideas echo the manner in which Strauß portrays individual figures in *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen*. Language, its originary experience, comes to the poet, is manifest in and through him. But he does not seize it or attempt to control it. The poet allows it to become manifest.

[...] so sprach ich;
nicht unverständlich,
sondern so, daß Schall und Verstehen in mich zurückkehrten. [...].
Es klang nicht anders als die Geräusche in jedem Hintergrund, in dem etwas Wichtiges undeutlich wird.¹⁶³

Such language is also, of course, manifest out of *stillness* and can be shown through the poet’s own *silence*. Strauß has the poet-figure reflect:

Schweigen aus Gründen, Schweigen zu Zwecken ist etwas anderes.
Aber dies stoßende Knien der Stimme ins Herz –
worum schweige ich? Um mein Leben? [...].
Stille, die vergaß, was sie fleht?¹⁶⁴

It is easy, however, in view of the shadow of fatalism that falls over Strauß, to dismiss these gestures as a celebration and advocacy of a species of quietism, an abandonment of all resolute action and behaviour. It is an accusation long levelled at the perceived disruption of creating artists and poets from Plato to critics of the Romantics. But this is

¹⁶² Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.48.

¹⁶³ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.52.

¹⁶⁴ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.60. Emphasis in original.

to misunderstand the nature of the characteristics and gestures essential to the poets amongst whom Strauß includes himself.

The manner of waiting, of seeming passivity, of being attuned to language – earlier delineated as *Laßkraft* – and, therefore, being open to the *dynamic* nature of truth is, on the contrary, this thesis contends, to propose a fundamental *engagement*. An acceptance of this hangs on allowing revisions to conventional, established philosophical positions regarding what constitutes the *poetic* or, at least, offering concessions in relation to the ontological understanding of truth.

The truth of the work, of the *poetic*, is for Strauß always enigmatic: it is manifest as *Undeutlichkeit*. What this thesis proposes is that being a poet – in other words, the characteristics and gestures associated with his poet-figures – is emblematic for mankind and involves showing unconditional openness to the unreconcilable, the indeterminacy, the absolute alterity of the enigma that is the *poetic*. Strauß inscribes these characteristics in one of the fragments from ‘Sigé’:

Sein Lebtage war er durch die Straße gewandert, ruhlos, abseits und gehorsam, als wäre ihm aufgegeben, nur ihm allein, ein Labyrinth auszusprechen, das nur einen Ausgang hat, während alle anderen in Unkenntnis und Gleichmut es bewohnten, da sie alle Durchgänge für Ausgänge hielten und die unzähligen verschachtelten Bahnen, auf denen sie sich bewegten, für ihre Wege ins Freie.¹⁶⁵

Like the slow, circumspect movement at each stage of the *Sondenexperiment* towards *Fleck*, its sense of diffusion, non-linearity, purposelessness even, so too the fragments of Strauß’ works are to be experienced. Just as the poets, so too is mankind, if he is to experience the truth of the *poetic*, to give himself over to the work, not in order to

¹⁶⁵ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.40.

determine its meaning, describe its creation, elucidate its character, or narrate its form – or whatever interpretive methodology or theory is applied – but rather, to let the *poetic* be manifest.

Ziellos wirbelt das Ex-Wort durch das Geraune der Flure, Kammern und
Zimmer. An Stimmen stößt es, an Fenster und Lampen; unbändig prallt es von
einem zum anderen, verläßt die Schwerkraft der Stiftung.
Im Raum sein Eigenlauschen.
und die Atemlast:
hier gelebt zu haben und so still gehalten
hier am dunklen Fuß der Sonne.¹⁶⁶

Strauß invites into the work. The work is a site in and with which to dwell. As he writes: ‘Mein Haus ist nur eine Warte’.¹⁶⁷ The fragments, erupting from the blank whiteness of the pages – this physicality, of course, enacts the ontological emergence of the *poetic* from *stillness* – offer a place where it is possible to pause, linger, listen, engage with language and the enigma of the *poetic*, as this thesis proposes it. It is thereby redolent of the paratactic movement of the final monologue in *Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* and the other equally circumspect portrayals of such an experience, whether *Fleck, die Sprache des Dritten, Odeon, Dämmern* or *Undeutlichkeit* encountered in the present delineation of *Paare, Passanten, Beginnlosigkeit, Niemand anderes, Wohnen Dämmern Lügen* and *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*.

Any attempt to infer an ethics or interpretive praxis (even one premised on pure self-reflexivity) in Strauß’ works is – as delineated in the three stages to the secondary literature in Chapter One – therefore, misplaced. Such readings serve only to re-establish a philosophical structure and interpretive hermeneutic premised on methods and intent invoked by *Linie*-structured *Wahrnehmung*. Such examples of the secondary run counter

¹⁶⁶ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.51.

¹⁶⁷ Strauß, *Die Fehler des Kopisten*, p.188.

to Strauß' claims and intent. As the possibility of the experience of *Fleck* suggests, Strauß proposes a different *Wahr-nehmung* by and in the work: literally, an alternative taking-of-truth where nothing is certain any more, where conviction is abandoned, or rather where it abandons mankind. Consequently, what is inscribed in and through the work is radically unsettling. The sense of this is again inscribed within the fragments.

Sein lesen stieg, bis es dichter und dichter wurde, an Undeutlichkeit rührte und er mit lesendem Finger zu deuten begann. Er konnte nicht aufhalten, daß sich sein Auge entfernte bis ins Auge der Undeutlichkeit.¹⁶⁸

The established certainties through which mankind engages with the object-world, tries to understand – for example, as a reader of a work of literature – are suspended, or at least momentarily thrown over.

This understanding of the *poetic* can easily be misrepresented as errant mysticism, a resignation from that very object-world. But this is to fall short of the profound philosophical force of Strauß' works within contemporary letters. By inscribing certain ontological claims within his writing and proposing grounds of possibility for their experience through a complex series of allusions to and adaptations of Heideggerian thought, he is re-invigorating a long-standing and fundamental debate on the *poetic*: what is cast open are questions over the nature of the *poetic* and through this, issues of how to respond to what is thereby and therein made manifest. His writing is not a critique or oppositional in the sense of the established philosophical tradition, at least not by conventional measures. It is, though, radical still in proposing grounds for *engagement* with the *dynamic* nature of the *poetic*.

¹⁶⁸ Strauß, *Fragmente der Undeutlichkeit*, p.42.

There is, however, unsurprisingly no great revelation at the close of the experience of the *poetic* so understood; no culminating illumination or final insight akin to the subjective satisfactory recognition of a syllogistic sequence of deductive logic or inductive inference. What Strauß offers is inscribed early in his poetry:

Darum bitte ich noch: daß mir das Wollen
[...] nie vergehe, daß ich hören darf
und aufleben, wenn ich schon lange
ängstlich verstummt bin. Und daß mir
in den Gedichten das große Nicht-Wissen
niemals aufhöre zu klingen.

Was alles zwischen der Stille des Sands
und der Stille des Himmels bist du, Musik
ohne Vergleich, Musik mit der Delta des
Blitzes in die Wortnacht?¹⁶⁹

There is only ever the contingent, provisional manifestation of the *poetic* as *Undeutlichkeit*. In the end, a work such as ‘Sigé’ perhaps does not express anything, at least not discursively or propositionally, but proposes a site for truth to be experienced, no matter how enigmatic. To be open to this is, perhaps, a first step towards a *poetics of dwelling*.

¹⁶⁹ Strauß, *Diese Erinnerung an einen, der nur einen Tag zu Gast war*, p.62.

ENDNOTE

The implicit stricture accredited to the philosopher Stanley Cavell (1926-), and since repeated in various guises, namely the question of ‘what would constitute understanding Heidegger without a conversion to his way of thinking’ is applicable equally to Strauß.¹

It appears to follow from Cavell’s interrogative that any response to Strauß’ works is left on the wrong side of an insuperable intellectual chasm. Either the accusations – *pace* the charge of fatalism – of obscurantism and resignation prevail, in which case, according to corresponding premises of what is accepted as rationally understandable, Strauß’ work becomes at best the target of vitriol or at worst discarded as below consideration. Alternatively – the stricture appears to demand – responses acquiesce to the rhetorical allure and siren-call of each work, in which case they too fall outside the collective parameters of acceptable method and practice. The former operates on the assumption that the experience of a work or argument in philosophy results in an understanding in which something is necessarily extracted: subjective agreement is based on objective categories that are consensually pre-determined. The latter is then damned through a characterisation entirely in reference to the former.

¹ Cavell, S. ‘Politics – As Opposed to What?’, in Mitchell, W.J.T. (ed.) *The Politics of Interpretation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p.197, cited in Bruns, *Heidegger’s Estrangements*, p.7. Gadamer makes a similar observation: ‘Man hat Heideggers Begriffsbildung in seinem späteren Werk oft den Vorwurf gemacht, daß sie sich nicht mehr ausweisen lasse’, in Gadamer, in Heidegger, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, p.108; while Wood makes the same point, but intriguingly opens the question in relation to philosophy and its history: ‘understanding another philosopher, [...], is indispensable in becoming philosophically educated, as well as being educated about philosophy. What we are still unclear about is what it is to follow in the footsteps of other philosophers in the sense of doing what they did, by philosophizing’, in Wood, *Thinking after Heidegger*, p.62.

The implied critical bifurcation between rational thinking on the one hand and mystical excess on the other is, though, based on a distinction that does not accept the tentative nature of Strauß' proposal regarding the *poetic* and its experience delineated here as a *poetics of dwelling*. Strauß is offering something else in and through the work. The sense of *dynamic engagement* grounded in a *poetics of dwelling*, is not understanding from which precepts, statements and theories can be projected. Understanding Strauß involves giving oneself over to the work with all its attendant indeterminacies and critically, the prospect of no resolution and no final agreed meaning. Of course, critics less willing to allow such concessions can reasonably respond that such a statement only confirms the suspicion that his works promote a disavowal of collectively agreed standards by which claims and proposals in relation to a work are followed and verified. Importantly, though, the understanding Strauß proposes does not lead inexorably to an interpretive narcissism where whatever is projected onto the works finds its echo. Not anything goes. The affinity with Heidegger is germane.

The ideas that Strauß advances in relation to technology, language, the *poetic* and truth are not merely random musings without context. Each idea and term, its respective development and reciprocal iteration as originally delineated and inflected by Heidegger and adapted and re-inscribed by Strauß, offers a detailed and compelling engagement with the long history of Western thought: its traditions, art, artists, philosophies and philosophers, and beyond this with different cultures and movements not even considered here. The importance of this context is often overlooked in judgements that rush to condemn the isolationism of Strauß' work and ideas. A *poetics of dwelling* in and of the work, and its experience, is in continuous engagement with that tradition.

Perhaps then, ironically, the question of critical legitimacy comes back again to language and its limits, namely to an understanding of what counts as understanding. It is a debate endlessly refracted in German thought and captured in Wittgenstein's injunction that language, conceived philosophically as a series of propositions, 'kann nur sagen, wie ein Ding ist, nicht was es ist'.² The logic of the premise demarcates clearly where legitimacy of understanding begins and ends.

The key to the question, then, seems to hinge on the position taken or deemed acceptable in relation to language, which is why the present thesis attempts at least to acknowledge traditional philosophical arguments for its ontological priority before delineating the claims for truth that are made of the *poetic* in the work. But, as is emphasised repeatedly, the proposal in respect of Strauß is not something that can be finally resolved with appeals to empiricism or logic. What is offered by and in the *poetic* is the possibility of an experience of truth that, accepting all the preceding qualifications, remains bound to the possibility also of un-truth and, of course, error. *Undeutlichkeit* is not certainty or conviction. The conceit is not only compelling intellectually, as the preceding argument and readings hopefully show, but also has implications for the present thesis.

A hypothesis is here put forward for Strauß' prose: whether it is sustainable in relation to future prose publications remains, fittingly, an open question. Its efficacy, or rather fruitfulness, in respect of the theatrical writing remains also a further interesting,

² See Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, p.48.

unresolved issue: although Strauß' own delineation of the theatre, which is developed and explored in each subsequent drama, perhaps points to the promise of such an approach.³

Strauß' works offer a site for a disconcerting and unsettling view of what is accepted as fiction, its relationship to what is acknowledged as philosophy and the inheritance of the tradition. Finally, in so much of the discussion surrounding Strauß – both the figure of the poet and his work – what is overlooked is an underlying tone of humility for the proposal. The works might be uncompromising but are always guided by a modesty regarding ontological concern. Perhaps like the poet David Jones, the example Strauß gives of *real presences*, his works are only ever 'fragments of an attempted writing'. There are ways of approaching the relationship between mankind and world that are less circumspect and more certain in their understanding: but they are not necessarily always less fallible.

³ Strauß writes: 'Das Theater ist der Ort, wo die Gegenwart am durchlässigsten wird, wo Fremdzeit einschlägt und gefunden [...] wird. [...]. Wo es aber gelingt und das Fernste [...] in unfaßliche Nähe rückt, gewinnt Theater eine verwirrende Schönheit und die Gegenwart Augenblicke einer ungeahnten Ergänzung', in Strauß "'Die Erde – ein Kopf". Dankrede zum Georg-Büchner Preis', pp.136-137.

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