

THE IMPLICIT CONCEPTION OF MIMESIS IN HEIDEGGER'S *BEING AND TIME*

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Following the work of Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, this essay argues that there is an implicit conception of mimesis operative in Heidegger's conception of Dasein's being-in-the-world. More specifically, it argues that an examination of Heidegger's theory of repetition (Wiederholung) and play (Spiel) in relation to Dasein's uncanniness (Unheimlichkeit) illustrates Dasein's tendency to turn away from mimesis and, instead, opt for the comfort of "mimetology," the comfort of submitting to a levelled down identification with the ready-to-hand and the they-self. Ultimately this analysis, which itself performs a mimetic re-reading of Being and Time, brings to the fore a counter-force within Heidegger's thought that arguably resists what Lacoue-Labarthe calls Heidegger's inadvertent reproduction of the metaphysics of presence and the worrisome political implications that attend it. Moreover, this re-reading suggests that, precisely when the implicit role of mimesis is emphasized, the temporal possibilities built into Dasein's way of Being might also be understood in a new light.

A guiding question to Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe's collection of essays on mimesis¹ concerns whether Heidegger's metaphysics and "politics" are both essentially linked to a certain type of mimetology, or if they are rather aligned with an "originary mimesis" that at once resists, destabilizes, and is prior to the metaphysics of presence. Without knowledge of Lacoue-Labarthe's oeuvre, one's immediate response to such a question might be to assume that it poses a false choice. For in the case of the former, mimetology, at issue is an appeal to "truth" that, following an onto-theo-logical perspective, claims adequation between a present "subject" and a present "object." It is clear that achieving such *homoiosis* is far from how Heidegger envisioned his task. Even a cursory overview of *Being and*

¹ Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics*, (ed.) C. Fynsk and L. Brooks (Stanford: Stanford University Press). Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as TPY.

*Time*² reveals that avoiding this manner of thinking, which essentially reduces identification to mere imitation, that is, to a rigid hypostatization, was of crucial importance to Heidegger. In the case of the latter, an originary mimesis, strict adherence to the letter of Heidegger's writing hardly suggests that it played a pivotal role in his attempt to uproot the metaphysics of presence or combat the conflation of the ontological difference. How else can we explain Heidegger's apparent reticence to address mimesis in any great depth, or his reluctance to dissociate mimesis from the coercive mode of imitation or "representation" in Plato's *Republic*?³ In short, Heidegger's attempt to break with the tradition of Western metaphysics does not, at first sight, appear to require either an implicit or explicit conception of mimesis, since without directly addressing this alternative, Lacoue-Labarthean conception—what might also be called a deconstructive mimesis⁴—Heidegger has already apparently succeeded in opening up a secure path beyond that which haunts us.

And yet, at the same time, Lacoue-Labarthe's problematic suggests that, despite his intentions, Heidegger's thought does indeed display an immanent tendency to lapse into the very mimetology that he sought to circumvent. For example, in Lacoue-Labarthe's view, Heidegger's inability to "forbid" commitment to National Socialism categorically implies that, on his own terms, Heidegger fails to ward off the metaphysics of presence, and perhaps even in part assists in shoring up modes of hardened identification that troublingly accord with the logic of nationalism or the logic of anthropocentrism. (TPY, 268)⁵ Importantly, this line of questioning proceeds by attempting to explain the internal logic to both Heidegger's "politics" and metaphysics. It aims to discover whether the former—incapable of being compartmentalized or deemed less

² Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Verlag, 1986), tr. by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson as *Being and Time* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962). Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as SZ with the German pagination.

³ See Martin Heidegger, "Plato's *Republic*: The Distance of Art (*Mimēsis*) from Truth (*Idea*)," in *Nietzsche: The Will to Power as Art*, (tr.) D. Krell (New York: HarperCollins, 1984), 171–87.

⁴ For more on this critique of Heidegger from the perspective of deconstruction, see Jacques Derrida, "Introduction: Desistance," in TPY, 28. See also Derrida, "Economimesis," in *Continental Aesthetics: Romanticism to Postmodernism: An Anthology*, (ed.) R. Kearney and D. Rasmussen (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2001).

⁵ For more on Heidegger's nationalism, see TPY, 287. For more on Heidegger's alleged anthropocentrism, see Jacques Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, vol. 1, (ed.) G. Bennington and P. Kamuf (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 307–308.

“essential” (not equiprimordial) by the decree of “ontology”—is unwittingly transposed into the latter. In contrast, then, to the tired biographical debates concerning Heidegger’s Nazism that have recently been reignited by the publication of the *Schwarzen Hefte*, this line of questioning is based on simply attempting to follow out the internal logic of Heidegger’s thought, asking whether there are tendencies within it that resist, but perhaps also help to maintain a dangerous mode of identification. In keeping with Lacoue-Labarthe, we are therefore compelled to ask what is at play in Heidegger’s thought such that he, who saw so much, could also be so blind, or we are compelled to ask what in his thought, *i.e.*, in his metaphysics and ontology, is driven against the devastating political trends of the so-called 1933 episode and thus should have forced a direct proscription.

Bearing in mind this politically charged context, it becomes increasingly difficult to deny the significance of Lacoue-Labarthe’s claim that mimesis is the concept on which the danger or *krisis* of Heidegger’s mode of thinking turns. Coupled with how, unlike other critics, Lacoue-Labarthe remains a thoroughly indebted and generous reader of Heidegger, such a claim about mimesis should at the very minimum call us to re-examine *Being and Time*, to repeat our interpretation of this foundational text—this time with a special sensitivity for Lacoue-Labarthe’s suggestion about the implicit role of mimesis in Heidegger’s project.

This is the task that I would like to begin here. More specifically, I would like to propose that repeating our reading of *Being and Time* through a mimetic lens—something that Lacoue-Labarthe, incidentally, only partially initiates—will begin to highlight just how much the central features of mimesis, especially that of play (*Spiel*) and repetition (*Wiederholung*), are, on the one hand, decisive to Heidegger’s analysis of *Dasein*’s way of Being, and, on the other hand, already point to a conception of mimesis within Heidegger’s work that avoids those moments that slip back into the dangerous metaphysics and politics that Lacoue-Labarthe accuses Heidegger of secretly proffering.

Along these lines, but more directly related to *Being and Time*, we recall that for Heidegger there is, of course, a forgetting or evasion that constitutes our epochal relation to Being. As is well known, this forgetting or evasion is nothing other than a forgetting or evasion of *Dasein*’s uncanniness (*Unheimlichkeit*). If, as I hope to demonstrate in what follows, we posit that this *Unheimlichkeit* is linked to a *play* that exists between determination and indetermination, familiarity and unfamiliarity, presence and absence, then the moment when the

metaphysics of presence comes to dominate experience would be precisely the moment when mimesis regresses to an imitative mimetology. Instead of arguing, however, that this regression is apolitical, that its “implications” are incidental, “after the fact,” or “below” some essential or ontological truth, we can provisionally say that this shift is precisely the point where those “resistant” tendencies or counter-forces (expressed historically or in Heidegger’s own philosophy) to nationalism, to eurocentrism, or to a closed mode of identification, are effaced by counter-forces, or counter-tendencies. Heidegger’s famous depiction of our flight into an identification with both the they-self and the ready-to-hand might, in other words, be something for which Heidegger’s philosophy is itself guilty. In this regard, (mimetological) flight would not only be, as is often claimed, tantamount to a (mis)recognition between *Dasein*’s Being and the being of entities, it would also mark the moment in Heidegger’s thinking that takes the “bad” political turn. The mimetological reply or the mimetic variation that inadvertently upholds the metaphysics of presence would, in that case, be indissolubly linked to the comportment of flight that, in Heidegger’s articulation, cannot bear the burden of never coming to full presence, never completely mastering the play of not being at home.

In returning to Heidegger’s early work I will thus, in the first place, delineate how this response to the instability of play unfolds, *i.e.*, how the response to the uncanniness of being-in-the-world frantically clings to a “present” identity, frantically cuts off the openness of Being. I will then demonstrate how the manner in which Heidegger employs both his notion of the *Spielraum* (the space of play) and *Wiederholung* (repetition or retrieval) in *Being and Time*, as well as his notion of a *Schwingung* (resonance or oscillation) in the *Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*⁶, bring an implicit conception of mimesis at work in Heidegger’s project to the fore. By eventually showing how it is bound up with Heidegger’s understanding of ekstatic temporality, I will conclude by questioning whether this implicit conception of mimesis transforms our understanding of what Heidegger counted among the chief consequences of his investigation, namely a new perspective on the *possibilities* built into *Dasein*’s Being.

⁶ Martin Heidegger. *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, (tr.) M. Heim (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

I. Imitative Identification as a Response to Uncanny Play

In order to grasp Heidegger's famous depiction of *Dasein's* tendency to flee before the uncanny and thereby illustrate how this response is a type of regression from a mimesis attuned to the playfulness of presencing, it is important to begin by briefly analyzing the various anonymous modes of *Dasein's* Being. In describing the worldly character of *Dasein's* comportment in its environment, Heidegger declares that,

Being-in-the-world, according to our Interpretation hitherto, amounts to a non-thematic circumspective absorption [*umsichtige Aufgehen*] in references or assignments constitutive for the readiness-to-hand of a totality of equipment. Any concern is already as it is, because of some familiarity [*Vertrautheit*] with the world. In this familiarity *Dasein* can lose itself [*sich verlieren*] in what it encounters within-the-world and be captivated [*benommen sein*] with it. (SZ, 76; trans. mod.)

The first thing we should glean from this passage is Heidegger's resistance to the theoretical gaze. *Dasein* does not primarily and for the most part deal with categorized objects of perception that are somehow abstracted from the concern of its everyday involvements. Rather, prior to any reflective withdrawal, *Dasein* has already taken flight from itself and become absorbed in the world. This is what Heidegger means by its circumspective absorption or its becoming captivated. Instead of being constantly present to itself, *Dasein* is fundamentally outside of itself, caught up in its activity. In other words, *Da-sein* is not fully there (*Da*), it repeatedly loses itself, or as Heidegger also asserts, it "subordinates itself to the 'in-order-to' which is constitutive for the equipment we are employing at the time." (SZ, 69) *Dasein* is not thematically aware of its use of the hammer, it is hammering before any recognition of the hammering, and in fact, the presence of the hammer will likely not come to its attention unless there is some kind of break in the texture of its involvement. In this respect, we can see how *Dasein* is more an exteriority than the static "Self" that metaphysics has always alleged. *Dasein* is in the world before it has ever found a ground for itself.

Another way of expressing this lack of stability, this lack of substantiality that I am suggesting we understand as the primordial play immanent to experience, is to say that we never come to complete, transparent presence of ourselves or the world. What is more, we do not start as a "Self," and then lose ourselves in our absorbed concern with the ready-to-hand; rather, the reverse is true. Of course, this

touches on the centrality of the thrownness (*Geworfenheit*) that Heidegger expounds in detail, but it also serves as an introduction to how we become absorbed in our relations to others. Whether with equipment or with others, a process is clearly at work that causes us to believe that the familiar is actually what is closest to us. There is, to be sure, a kind of blind repetition operative here. As we will see below, instead of taking hold of this inevitable moment of repetition, taking hold of the coming back (*zurückkommen*) of temporality, in this everyday comportment we readily accept or repeat the familiar possibilities that have been delimited for us in advance. The question regarding our regression to a mimetological imitation thus seems to be tied to the severity of our dispersion into anonymity, or the severity of the blind repetition that continues to flee that which is actually closer to us. If we flee in a manner incapable of lingering with the equally poetic, playful, and uncertain character of our involvements, or we flee in a manner that regards other *Daseins* in the same light as that which is merely ready-to-hand (SZ, 121), then it appears we have regressed into a state that cannot bear the lack of identity between ourselves and other beings.

To better explain this everyday form of turning away (*abkehren*), we need to examine Heidegger's elucidation of the *inauthentic* variation of the "they" self. Heidegger writes,

[n]either the Self of one's own *Dasein* nor the Self of the Other has as yet found itself and/or [*beziehungsweise*] lost itself as long as it is in the modes [of Being-with] we have mentioned. In these modes one's way of Being is that of inauthenticity and non-independence [*Unselbständigkeit*]. (SZ, 166; trans. mod.)

In this inauthentic mode of being-with-others, *Dasein* has not gained its outright independence. That is to say, it has not found itself in a manner that simultaneously heeds what is necessarily lost, not found, or absent in the very process of coming to presence and familiarity. What is more, as opposed to the indifference or *Gleichgültigkeit* that is often characteristic of *Dasein's* comportment, in this inauthentic case of evading the uncanny, *Dasein* remains in what Heidegger often refers to as a state of *Indifferenz*. (SZ, 121) That is, *Dasein* is not simply callous or bored with the inconsequentiality of its involvement, rather it is in a mode, echoing the above relation to equipment, of absorbed undifferentiatedness. Lost in the other, evading its ownmost possibilities, *Dasein* is anonymous. This is what Heidegger means by the inauthentic flight into the "they" self (*das Man selbst*). "The Self of everyday *Dasein*," Heidegger tells us, "is the *they-self*, which we distinguish from the *authentic Self*—that is, from

the Self which has been taken hold of in its own way [*eigens ergriffenen*]." (SZ, 129) Having not differentiated or individuated itself, we can see that this *Dasein*, which has turned towards *das Man*, is likely prone to accept the *doxai* of the present discourse, repeating them in acquiescence. Not far from this mode of passivity is a kind of unthoughtful miming that emulates the idle talk (*Gerede*) of the day, and is constrained by its possibilities. (SZ, 168) For, in such a case, *Dasein* has essentially effaced the indeterminacy immanent to the play of presencing, or to put it in Kantian terms, it has glossed over (*überspielen*) the purposeless moment in purposiveness.⁷ In being absorbed, it has forgotten the ontological difference, it has forgotten that, as Derrida once put it, "[p]lay is the disruption of presence."⁸

From this propensity to unreflectively make oneself identical with the other, to lapse into an anonymity that secretly sutures the condition that would announce *Dasein's* authentic individuation, we can see why Heidegger sums up this discussion by declaring that "[e]veryone is the other, no one is himself." (SZ, 128) To engage in this (mis)recognition, to essentially make oneself, however inattentively, that which one does not have-to-be, is nothing other than a kind of absorbed mimicry. When does it happen, then, that the uncanny or this primordial play comes to dominate us? Heidegger suggests that it is precisely when we can no longer calmly ponder the openness of Being as it appears—in a word, *precisely when we can no longer dwell within the play of mimesis*:

In this averageness with which [the "they"] prescribes what can and may be ventured, it keeps watch over everything exceptional that thrusts itself to the fore. Every kind of priority gets noiselessly suppressed. Overnight, everything that is primordial gets glossed over as something that has long been well known. Everything gained by a struggle becomes just something to be manipulated. Every secret loses its force. This care of averageness reveals in turn an essential tendency of *Dasein* which we call the "leveling down" [*Einebnung*] of all possibilities of Being. (SZ, 127)

This levelling down that cuts off the not-yet, the possibilities that, in truth, comprise the essential structure of what it means to be, is a process that effaces the uncanny play of presencing. Confronting the

⁷ See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, (tr.) P. Guyer and E. Matthews (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 5, 220.

⁸ Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in *Writing and Difference*, (tr.) A. Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 292.

uncanny and the fundamental *Angst* that accompanies it is, in fact, what first brings our freedom to the fore. (SZ, 188) In other words, *Dasein* is primarily possibility, primarily an openness to the indeterminacy of the future that does not need to submit to what simply “is.” However, the common response to the weight of this indetermination consists of opting for the ease of a seeming familiarity. That we are essentially open and do not of necessity have to fall into the passivity of repeating the they’s discourse is, indeed, a great burden to bear. In a gesture of cowardice we can certainly choose what is easier, flatten our horizons, as it were, and once again submit to a mimetology that, as mere correspondence, effectively reduces the world to a tautology. This is also what Heidegger calls the disburdening of *Dasein*’s Being; it is the regression into mere curiosity. (SZ, 172) In Heidegger’s words, “the particular *Dasein* in its everydayness is disburdened by the “they.” Not only that; by thus disburdening it of its Being, the “they” accommodates *Dasein* if *Dasein* has any tendency to take things easily and make them easy.” (SZ, 127–28) Once again, what is lost seems to be a mimesis that can at once identify and displace,⁹ that can, so speak, harness what comes before it and yet still *let play be*. Instead, therefore, of an originary relation to the world and the happening of unconcealment, mimesis has lapsed into the comfort of mimetology.

II. The *Spielraum* as Resistance to Mimetology

Given everything we have discussed heretofore regarding the play that is linked to both mimesis and its corollary mimetology, we can see why perhaps the most attentive thinker of play in the 20th century, Hans-Georg Gadamer, ultimately goes so far as to assert that “in the presentation of play [*der Darstellung des Spieles*], what *is* emerges.”¹⁰ Although the context in which Gadamer is discussing this notion of the play of presentation appears to be confined to the work of art, this passage goes a long way towards illustrating just how fundamental play is to experience itself. Indeed, if Gadamer is right, the very happening of Being, Being as time, as event, is essentially a type of play. Importantly, this suggests that commentators may be limiting the scope of their insight when they assume mimesis is only

⁹ This simultaneity of identifying and displacing is what Lacoue-Labarthe calls the “double bind” of mimesis. See TYP, 223.

¹⁰ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, (tr.) J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1989), 112; trans. mod., my emphasis.

an aesthetic category in Heidegger's work.¹¹ Even Gadamer arguably neglects to demonstrate a strong link between play and mimesis, and when he does so explicitly, it is still almost always in relation to poetry or art, not experience.¹² My claim, following Lacoue-Labarthe, however, is that the resources for thinking the play of mimesis are actually within Heidegger's analysis of *Dasein's* way of Being, and this mimetic play is elicited not just in exemplary works of art, but in phenomenological analysis as well.

Before grounding *Dasein's* relation to spatiality, that is, before showing that Being-in-the-world must be understood in terms of ekstastic temporality, it could be argued that Heidegger already gives us a hint about an interpretation of spatiality that, in embracing play, resists that mimetology that would have us believe that beings always emerge in a univocal, transparent, or familiar manner:

When one is primarily and even exclusively oriented towards remotenesses as measured distances, the primordial spatiality of Being-in is concealed. That which is presumably "closest" is by no means that which is at the smallest distance "from us." The "closest" lies in that which is desevered [*entfernt*] to an average extent when we reach for it, grasp it, or look at it. Because *Dasein* is essentially spatial in the way of de-severance [*Ent-fernung*], its dealings always keep within an "environment" which is desevered from it with a certain leeway [*Spielraum*]; accordingly our seeing and hearing always go proximally beyond what is distantly "closest." (SZ, 106–07)

Instead of thinking of distance as the spatio-temporal distance of, say, a coordinate plane, Heidegger is calling us to think distance, or better, distancing, as a process of play. What is closest is not closest by virtue of some quantitative measurement, rather it is closest by virtue of our experiential relation to it. When something approaches on the horizon it does not do so in the manner of narrowing a gap, instead it does so in and through the complex texture of the care structure, in and through the equiprimordiality of being ahead of oneself and always already in the world. (SZ, 191) Strictly speaking, this structure is what is closest or most primordial: we only second-

¹¹ For an exception, see Martina Roesner, *Metaphysica ludens: Das Spiel als phänomenologische Grundfigur in Denken Martin Heideggers* (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003).

¹² Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Poetry and Mimesis," in *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 116–22.

arily gloss over (*überspielen*) the play involved in the continual presencing of futural having-been. Thus, for example, the music I listen to serves as background music insofar as it retreats from my awareness and I become absorbed in this or that activity, this or that thought. It is in the same room as me, spatio-temporally “close” to me, but “where” the music is, where “I” am as I listen, is subject to an opening that refuses full determination, an opening that Heidegger calls a leeway or space of play (*Spielraum*).

But what does this have to do with mimesis? Again, this conception of the *Spielraum* begins to illustrate a process of identification that simultaneously is and is not determinate, a process that defies the simple, one-to-one imitation of the object by the subject. This play of distance is thus fundamentally tied, as with all of *Dasein*’s experience, to its relation with the factual. *Dasein*’s relation to the factual only comes to light, however, through what Heidegger calls the projection of the understanding:

Why does the understanding—whatever may be the essential dimensions of that which can be disclosed in it—always press forward into possibilities? It is because the understanding has in itself the existential structure which we call “projection.” With equal primordially the understanding projects *Dasein*’s Being both upon its “for-the-sake-of which” and upon significance, as the worldhood of its current world. The character of understanding as projection is constitutive for Being-in-the-world with regard to the disclosedness of its existentially constitutive state-of-being by which the factual potentiality-for-Being gets its leeway [*Spielraum*]. (SZ, 145)

Without leading us astray and going into too much detail about Heidegger’s conception of the understanding, we can see that the core of Heidegger’s point here is that the factual essentially remains open to how it will be taken up in a significative (*bedeutungsvoll*) manner. *Dasein*’s being-ahead of itself, what we will see is part of its futural ekstastic relation to itself and the world, is actually the condition for the opening up of this space of play. Thus, when something factual approaches us, we are not consigned to take it up in a passive way, even though we are in part constrained by thrown, factual parameters. Again, not being attentive to this opening, to this space of play, amounts to being delivered over (*überantwortet*) to a familiarity that is really only the result of suturing a recognition of a more primordial uncanniness. The comfort entailed in effacing the ontological difference through imitation should now be understood as a derivative response. Antecedent to this seeming familiarity of full

presence is that which exceeds presence. So, although we are, to repeat, limited by our historical and cultural circumstance, that is, although we are necessarily thrown into significative relations with the factual through the always already operative “as” structure of assertion¹³, this thrownness is nevertheless coupled with possibility. For this reason Heidegger is always careful to think this thrownness as “thrown possibility.” (SZ, 144) What could this equiprimordiality be, but the structure of an originary mimesis? Just as, following Lacoue-Labarthe, there is an approach that says, “‘Be like me’/‘Do not be like me’” (TPY, 223), so here, in thrown projection, there is a structure that must in part repeat the same, but that can concurrently respond to a minute opening that displaces the same as non-identical.

Along these lines, in another important reference to the *Spielraum*, Heidegger emphasizes the essentiality of a certain closure to *Dasein*’s horizons. If the opening of mimetic play does not have to submit to the, so to speak, will of identity, to a nationalist or anthropocentric tendency, but rather can let absence or difference emerge in and through presence, then the happening of *Dasein*’s Being has to be structurally closed in some way. “In the not awaiting of the making-present which is lost, the ‘horizontal’ leeway [*Spielraum*] within which one’s *Dasein* can be assailed by something surprising is first disclosed.” (SZ, 355) This is not merely to say that *Dasein* is sometimes surprised by situations that go beyond its anticipation, it is also to say that *Dasein*’s horizons are, as such, necessarily cut off at a certain point. Only insofar as this is the case can we grasp how the space of play is first opened up. To state it differently, in order for the happening of unconcealment to first be possible, there always has to be an accompanying concealment. Once again, it would appear that we have the structure of a mimetic play that is not simply imitative. On the one hand, something is concealing, possibilities are constrained by an historical thrownness, and, on the other hand, an opening emerges from out of this very constraint, declaring that experience could nonetheless be otherwise.

This double-bind of recurrence and dislocation is inextricable, then, from what we have heretofore only alluded to, namely

¹³ Much could, of course, be said here about Heidegger’s notions of fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception, but unfortunately this goes beyond the scope of this paper. The crux of Heidegger’s argument about interpretation and its derivative, assertion, can perhaps best be summed up by the following statement: “an interpretation is never a presuppositionless apprehending of something presented to us.” (SZ, 150)

Heidegger's conception of *Wiederholung*, literally fetching again. Nowhere has Heidegger claimed that *Dasein* is absolutely open, nowhere has he asserted that *Dasein*'s horizons are somehow infinite. To put it in the terms of our present discussion, Heidegger's implicit understanding of mimesis is not just based on the moment of displacement, the moment of possibility or openness, it is equally predicated on the necessity of confronting that which has emerged as having-been. In a word, there is always a moment of partial repetition, however much it may eventually leap or spring into something qualitatively different. To be thrown, or better, to be constantly *in the throw* (SZ, 348), means that we are always repeating or retrieving in some manner. Hence it is no accident that in the last instance that play is mentioned in *Being and Time*, Heidegger indicates a direct link between the *Spielraum* and a process that cannot be thought except alongside this notion of *Wiederholung*, namely coming back (*zurückkommen*):

[*Dasein*] is by no means just present-at-hand in a bit of space which its body fills up. In existing, it has already made room for its own leeway [*Spielraum*]. It determines its own location in such a manner that it comes back [*zurückkommt*] from the space it has made room for to the 'place' which it has reserved [*belegt hat*]. (SZ, 368)

Although the task still remains to elucidate fully this process of coming back or repetition in relation to mimesis, such a passage begins to pave the way to grasping the relation. *Dasein* is certainly not a "body" that is simply "in" space, rather it is bound up with the happening of spatiality itself. Because it is always at play, never wholly there (*Da*) in this or that "place," its very existence remains open to how it will have come back. How it takes up this opening is the pressing question. There is, as we have said, an inevitable process of coming back to what has been thrown, but there is also apparently the possibility of actively taking hold of this coming back. My claim is that the latter is a particular variation of mimesis, as opposed to a mimetology that, remaining passive, reduces identity to the tautology of the present. In keeping with my introductory suggestion, I also want to propose that making this process explicit, *i.e.*, resolutely winning control of an implicit play, is precisely that which begins to unveil a conception of possibility that differs from the conception usually associated with readings of *Being and Time*.

III. The Transformed Possibility of Mimetic *Wiederholung*

As we have now observed, for Heidegger, the decision between inauthentically mimicking the talk of the day or that which is ready-to-hand and actively individuating or differentiating oneself is based on a response to the uncanny play of existence. It turns out, however, that opting for the latter, *i.e.*, opting for what we have associated with mimesis, is also bound up with confronting a temporality whose repeatability (*Wiederholbarkeit*) is structured by ekstastic temporality. Uncovering this implicit mimesis requires, therefore, that we think it through in terms of what Heidegger calls the ekstases of temporality. Heidegger begins to illustrate this more resistant, more active repeatability in the following passage:

This bringing-back has neither the character of an evasive forgetting nor that of a remembering. But just as little does anxiety imply that one has already taken over one's existence into one's resolution and done so by a repeating. On the contrary, anxiety brings one back to one's thrownness as something *possible* which *can be repeated*. And in this way it also reveals the possibility of an authentic potentiality-for-Being—a potentiality which must, in repeating, come back to its thrown "there," but come back as something future which comes towards [zukünftiges]. *The character of having been is constitutive for the attunement [Befindlichkeit] of anxiety; and bringing one face to face with repeatability is the specific ecstatic mode of this character.* (SZ, 343; trans. mod.)

The first thing to note here is that if we were correct regarding how that which is uncanny is inseparable from the play of presencing, then Heidegger's point about the possibility of taking over (*übernehmen*) the process of repetition also implies taking over or harnessing the opening of play. In the face of this anxiety one could flee towards the mimetological stance, but one could just as well embrace or abandon oneself to the indeterminacy of playful presencing. Furthermore, the anxiety with which one is burdened calls one to assume not only this or that determinate possibility, but possibility as such, or the possibility of possibility. To do so is, no doubt, to come face to face resolutely (*entschlossen*) with one's being-towards-death, but this also stipulates that, in being open, the coming back or repeatability of one's thrown "there," is continually emerging in a futural light. In other words, the repeatability that Heidegger is here trying to distinguish from passive repetition is a retrieval that does not turn away (*abkehren*) from ekstastic temporal-

ity. It does not, that is to say, turn away from the fact that the “past,” having-been, only is what it is in relation to the “future,” being-ahead.

Yet another way of expressing this complex phenomenon is to say that the repetition or retrieval that Heidegger has in mind, and that we have linked to mimesis, is a repetition or retrieval that accords with the future-anterior structure of ekstastic temporality. This is why at a point that could arguably be called the summation of *Being and Time*, Heidegger proclaims that

[o]nly an entity which, in its Being, is essentially futural so that it is free for its death and can let itself be thrown back upon its factual “there” by shattering itself against death—that is to say, only an entity which, as futural, is equiprimordially in the process of having-been, can, by handing down to itself the possibility it has inherited, take over its own thrownness and be in the moment of vision [*augenblicklich*] for “its time.” (SZ, 385)

The moment (*Augenblick*) mentioned here is the last of the ekstases of time with which Heidegger grapples. It can be understood as the intersection between having-been and futurity. But this does not mean that it is merely the “now” that, following a linear progression, has unfolded from out of the past into the future. Nor should it be conceived as a present that comes after, as if “accumulating [a] dead weight I haul behind me.”¹⁴ The *Augenblick* is rather the tension-filled emergence of a presence that springs up between the future and having-been. The present that emerges in authentic temporality is thus the moment that has come-back-futurally in a type of rapture (*Entrückung*)¹⁵, not a present that will soon be irretrievably gone, or that will soon remain unchanged or static in a discrete “past.” It is the moment where one ponders the openness of what has been in the light of futural possibility, where one ponders the openness of the happening of Being.

That we have to conceive this moment as constituted by a tension can help us account for why Heidegger also calls the relationality or unity of the ekstases of temporality an oscillation (*Schwingung*). In his words, “the essence of time lies in the ecstatic unitary oscillation.”¹⁶ It is important that we heed the etymological play that Heidegger employs with this term. *Schwingung* implies a type of

¹⁴ Heidegger, *Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 206.

¹⁵ For more on Heidegger’s notion of *Entrückung* see *ibid.*, 205 and SZ, 338.

¹⁶ Heidegger, *Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 208.

oscillation, but it also connotes a type of swinging, a to-and-fro movement. Even further, it could, in certain contexts, be used to translate the English sense of "vibration." This reminds us of the tension between the two equiprimordial constituents of time, and therefore conjures up the last connotation of *Schwingung*, namely "resonance." This resonance between the future and having-been solidifies everything we have said about an authentic mimetic play. For, given that it is always already in a process of appropriation and disappropriation, the "past" continues to reverberate. The mimetic character of ekstastic temporality should not, accordingly, be thought only in terms of the medial play that Gadamer rightly identifies¹⁷; rather, hearing the translation of *Schwingung* as "resonance," it should also be thought in terms of *Dasein's* musicality, i.e., its *Stimmung* and *Befindlichkeit* (attunement).

Briefly reviewing this musicality, we can once more discern something of a mimetic structure. Attunement concerns the comportment of *Dasein's* thrownness. As we stated earlier, instead of being a subject first, and subsequently losing his or herself, *Dasein* is already in the world. This means that *Dasein* is already attuned to the world. More specifically, *Dasein* repeatedly finds itself (*sich befinden*) after the fact, already at the mercy, so to speak, of a melody (*Weise*) or way of being. "In having a mood," Heidegger writes, "*Dasein* is always disclosed moodwise as that entity to which it has been delivered over [*überantwortet*] in its Being; and in this way it has been delivered over to the Being which, in existing, it has to be." (SZ, 134) This passage is particularly important because it highlights how *Dasein* will never be in complete control of itself: it *has* to be, and this having-to-be is not a choice that somehow springs from the pure, transcendental subject of reflection. As we previously expressed it, there is an inevitable process of repetition or coming-back in experience. Hence *Dasein* is delivered over (*überantwortet*), or, to play on the German, *Dasein* has already been called upon to *respond* or *answer* the condition in which it finds itself. The question we keep returning to, then, is the question concerning whether, in being delivered over and finding oneself constrained, *Dasein* responds mimetologically or mimetically.

The active response, the mimetic one that seizes the implicit possibilities that remain open, is a type of rhythmic reply that catches hold of the approaching caesura.¹⁸ There is good reason why mime-

¹⁷ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 105.

¹⁸ This approaching caesura implies a close connection between Heidegger's conception of time and Aristotle's conception of *phronesis*. For more on this

sis, as Walter Benjamin once emphasized, is intimately bound up with dance.¹⁹ Playing once again on the answer (*Antwort*) to being delivered over (*überantwortet*), Heidegger claims that

[a]rising, as it does, from a resolute projection of oneself, repetition does not let itself be persuaded of something by what is "past," just in order that this, as something which was formerly actual, may recur. Rather, the repetition makes a *reciprocative rejoinder* [*erwidert*] to the possibility of that existence which has-been-there. But when such a rejoinder [*Erwiderung*] is made to this possibility in a resolution, it is made *in a moment of vision; and as such* it is at the same time a *disavowal* [*Widerruf*] of that which in the "today," is working itself out as the "past." (SZ, 386)

The most important part of this passage for our purpose is the manner in which Heidegger utilizes the terms *Erwiderung* and *Widerruf*. The former could be translated as a kind of response or reply, and the latter a type of revocation, or, taken literally, a kind of call (*Ruf*) against something. In both cases Heidegger is playing on the German word *wider*. There is something particularly mimetic about this type of resolute repetition. On the one hand, *wider* echoes with *wieder*, the "once more" or "again" of experience. Yet, on the other hand, it conjures up something that we are *against* and something *towards* which we are simultaneously drawn. The above quote, therefore, suggests that Heidegger is attempting to elicit the concurrence of critique and retrieval built into a mimesis that harmonizes with ekstatic temporality. He is trying to unfetter the comportment that, anticipating Foucault²⁰, resists both the present and presence. Hence,

subject of "the moment," see William McNeill, *The Glance of the Eye: Heidegger, Aristotle and the Ends of Theory* (New York: SUNY Press, 1999).

¹⁹ See Walter Benjamin "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version," in *Selected Writings*, vol. 3, (ed.) H. Eiland and M. Jennings (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996). For more on this interrelation between dance, play, and mimesis, see Gadamer's discussion of Herman Köllers theory in *Truth and Method*, 112–13: "The classical theory of art too, which bases all art on the idea of mimesis, *imitation*, obviously starts from play in the form of dancing, which is the representation of the divine."

²⁰ See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, (tr.) A. Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 31. Foucault's famous statement about attempting to do the "history of the present" could be, in this regard, described as a tactical struggle against a discourse that all too readily accepts the inevitability of the present configuration of power. In a paradoxical manner that parallels Heidegger's conception of ekstatic temporality, this would mean that it is the

Heidegger asserts that “[t]he authentic existentiell understanding is so far from extricating itself from the way of interpreting *Dasein* which has come down to us, that in each case it is in terms of this interpretation, *against it, and yet again for it*, that any possibility one has chosen is seized upon in one’s resolution.” (SZ, 384; my emphasis) Once again, we see the double-bind of mimesis, the with and against movement that playfully calls us to both resist and affirm simultaneously.

In the end, the two-sided character of Heidegger’s implicit conception of mimesis reminds us of analyses that, as we noted before, are frequent in relation to Heidegger’s “aesthetics.” For example, Gadamer claims that “[t]he mimetic is and remains a primordial phenomenon in which it is not so much an imitation that occurs as a transformation.”²¹ And, in a similar vein, Tom Huhn, referring to the “Origin of the Work of Art,”²² argues that the happening of truth occurs, “specifically when mimesis turns against itself as simple *imitation*.”²³ In both of these cases we have a comportment that veers from the imitation we have tried to associate with mimetology. Yet in both cases, it appears that only the work of art elicits the resistance that confronts thrownness while still being open to possibility. If my thesis is correct, then, this taking hold is, on the contrary, not merely art’s historical movement away from representation or its movement away from that which simply imitates or corresponds with nature. It is also an experiential resistance to the imitation involved in falling prey to the they-self and the ready-to-hand, the

mimesis of the present, not the subsumed findings of the “past,” that best elicits the truth of the past.

²¹ Gadamer, “Poetry and Mimesis,” 121.

²² Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, (tr.) A. Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).

²³ Tom Huhn, “Heidegger, Adorno, and Mimesis,” *Dialogue on Universalism*, vol. 13, no. 11/12 (2003): 43–52. Huhn’s analysis parallels Lacoue-Labarthe’s distinction between genuine mimesis and an imitative mimetology, but he goes further by historicizing the moment of rupture whereby mimesis takes experiential precedence. He has thus gone a long way toward showing how much Heidegger’s and T. W. Adorno’s thought might not be as antagonistic to one another as is often assumed. This is especially evident in what could be read as their mutual understanding of the fetishism of the “subject” or “self” that desperately hypostatizes its relation to the “object” in a bid for mastery. Nonetheless, the question still remains whether this fetishism, *i.e.*, this metaphysics of presence that fosters the semblance of an undivided subjectivity, is not obscured by trying to understand its development in ontological terms, instead of appealing to the concrete analysis of the present mode of production and the alienation it generates.

(politically) “bad” levelling of identification that disburdens itself with familiarity. This resistance does not involve somehow completely extricating oneself from the structures of Being-with and Being-in, it rather involves being *against* them, yet only in and through being in relation *towards* them.

To embody a mimesis that, at bottom, awaits, lets play happen, and does not frantically flee into a ready-made identity means that for Heidegger *Dasein* has taken hold of itself or won itself from the mimetological character of inauthenticity. (SZ, 337, 344) Play and repetition are, indeed, primordially linked to what it means to be. The goal consists of avoiding the all-too-common flight from this play and repetition; it consists in finally making explicit what was previously only latent, and thereby unleashing a transformative potentiality. As we conclude, then, we can observe that a transformation of meaning is possible by nothing other than a repetition of that which remains playfully open. In a passage from §74 of *Being and Time*, which Lacoue-Labarthe suggests might be the most dangerous of moments in Heidegger, the liminal point where he flirts with the mimetological choice, Heidegger writes:

“[t]he resoluteness which comes back to itself and hands itself down, then becomes the *repetition* of a possibility of existence that has come down to us. *Repeating* [mimetically] *is handing down explicitly*—that is to say, going back into the possibilities of the *Dasein* that has-been-there.” (SZ, 385)

The reason Lacoue-Labarthe is so troubled by this section and this passage is that it seems to echo with the German nationalism that, for example, in the “Rectoral Address,”²⁴ calls for an attempt to *refound* the (nationalist) pursuit of science with the Germans as the proper heirs to the Greeks. To say nothing of the much-discussed “hero” worship that also arguably constitutes this preservation of tradition (SZ, 385), this preservation of an anachronistic identity, such a borderline reactionary attempt to maintain something that had, in truth, already been radically blown apart by the torrent of capitalist social crises of the period likewise conjures up a worrisome impulse at play in *Being and Time*. I am referring, of course, to the attempt to *refound* metaphysics *à la* Kant as fundamental ontology, instead of at last breaking with or going beyond this tradition of ontology while embracing, as the late Heidegger insisted, the new

²⁴ Martin Heidegger, “The Self-Assertion of the German University,” in *The Heidegger Controversy*, (ed.) R. Wolin (Cambridge: MIT Press), 29–39.

horizons or “saving power”²⁵ that the crisis of this historical moment opened up.

At the same time, when we understand this effort as a handing down or a coming-back that heeds everything that we have discussed regarding the mimetic gap, the with-and-against, to-and-fro rhythm constitutive of identity, then this resolute decision starts to appear in a far less problematic manner. Indeed, if the handing down is a handing down that, as our insertion suggests, repeats mimetically, instead of repeating in accordance with the flattening or myopic tendency of mimetology, then perhaps we can say that *Being and Time* already points to its own self-overcoming, to the failure, or immanent dissolution that Heidegger himself eventually attributed to it for having not wholly shed the “old fabric” of the metaphysical tradition.²⁶ Expressed in yet another way, perhaps we can say that this implicit conception of mimesis already gestures to what Heidegger would himself say about his project after *Being and Time*, namely that now he was guided by the realization that there is a “step that incommensurably separates the question of the sense of Being from the question of the essence of Being, or the enterprise of the restoration of metaphysics from the attempt to ‘pass beyond’ metaphysics.” (TPY, 296–27) If, in short, there is already a propensity that resists fundamental ontology and the politically problematic inclinations that arguably accompany its reductionistic, systematizing desire for apodicticity, its drive for “essence” or firm grounds, in a word, its longing for “greatness,”²⁷ then Heidegger’s implicit conception of mimesis might be precisely that concept or counter-force which propels him beyond fundamental ontology, beyond the conservative metaphysics that he himself ultimately denounced.

For what, in the end, have we learned from this conception of mimesis? Has highlighting its role in ekstastic temporality not taught us that, as we suggested from the start, *Dasein*’s possibilities must be seen in a new light? In contrast to both abstract possibility, and the concrete possibilities of “instrumental” rationality, *i.e.*, in contrast to the possibility of possibility, which, however important, is devoid of content, as well as the possibilities prescribed in advance by a na-

²⁵ Martin Heidegger, “The Question concerning Technology,” in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, (tr.) W. Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 28–35.

²⁶ For more on Heidegger’s self-criticism of *Being and Time* see Dieter Thomä, “Being and Time in Retrospect: Heidegger’s Self-Critique,” in *Heidegger’s Being and Time: Critical Essays*, (ed.) R. Polt (Lanham, MD: Roman and Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 217.

²⁷ TPY, 288; Heidegger, “Self-Assertion,” 34.

ture-dominating technicity (*Technik*), has not this (re)reading of *Dasein's* being-in-the-world brought to the fore a conception of possibility that is equally concrete and abstract, equally ontological and ontic, and, above all else, equally receptive to difference and similarity as they spring forth, together, in the tension of the present moment)? Have we not seen, along these lines, especially after highlighting the play of mimesis, just how much everyday, ontical experience is a necessary moment in the recognition of ontological authenticity, how difference itself requires a juxtaposition to the familiarity of sameness in order to express the truth of its ownmost possibility? This would mean that precisely that which the history of Western metaphysics has, from its inception, subordinated as “inessential,” as “accidental,” must in actuality be indispensable to grasping the opening of Being, the moment that evades the mimetological threat. We might accordingly go so far as to say that, echoing Walter Benjamin’s formulation, for Heidegger too it is the “smallest detail,”²⁸ *i.e.*, the least discernable and seemingly most irrelevant, *ontical* fissure that, in repetition, makes all the difference. If harnessed, mimesis might therefore show us how the elusive play between identity and difference, the caesura to the blind recurrence of the same, waits for the chance to force open a new constellation, a new world—one that has, in truth, always been latent in the matter itself, and one that, if recognized, might radicalize still further our understanding of the event of Being, the opening of identity that could one day finally part ways with the haunting lineage of mimetology.

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²⁸ For more on the “smallest detail” or “smallest link” in Benjamin’s thought, which I am here suggesting provokes, with the aid of mimesis, an appreciation of the essentiality of the *ontical*, or intra-mundane moment so often tossed aside by a “higher level” metaphysics, see Walter Benjamin, “Berlin Chronicle,” in *Selected Writings*, vol. 2.2, (ed.) H. Eiland, M. Jennings, and G. Smith (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 597.