

# Heidegger's *Gelassenheit* and Our Bodily Encounter with Things

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## Abstract

This article draws on the later Heidegger's thought on *Gelassenheit*, evoking the twofold meaning of "letting," as well as "being-let." For an inquiry into the paradoxical structure of this idea, insights can be obtained, by the bias of a cross-cultural approach, from the ancient Chinese classic *Zhuang Zi* 莊子 and sources concerning the art of ink brush writing. An analysis of the paradoxes of Heidegger's *Gelassenheit*, as seen from the stance of action and body movement, supports the claim that we need to open up ourselves to things, so as to obtain our dignity as those "humans" whose existence means a "being-in-the-world." Our dealing with things ought not to be confounded with technical manipulation of objects. It should be understood as *responsively encountering* things through *Gelassenheit*. Going beyond Heidegger, the *Zhuang Zi* may teach us *why* this encounter with things

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can be accomplished only when a peculiar *temporal structure* is unfolded through *bodily moving patterns*. As to *how* body movement enacts the paradoxes of *Gelassenheit*, this question can be elucidated by the bias of textual evidence concerning Chinese brush writing.

**Keywords:** *Gelassenheit*, Body Movement, Things, Temporality

## **Heidegger's *Gelassenheit* and Our Bodily Encounter with Things**

### **I. How to enter *Gelassenheit*?**

Recently new materialism has turned our attention to the material hardware of life. The attempt to establish a positive view on matter may be the outcome of materialist and consumerist civilization under late capitalism. It may also be a reaction to Marxist thought and Critical Theory, both speaking of “reification” in a pejorative sense. What is at stake is our relation to things. With respect to these debates it seems still worthwhile consulting Martin Heidegger’s reflections on our encounter with things, in order not to get stuck in ideological presuppositions based on a merely ontological opposition between “things” and “humans”.

Instead of asking what an isolated “thing” as such is, or of condemning thingness as not pertaining to the human existence, we should concern ourselves with our *dealing with* things. In what follows I shall argue that we need the things, in order to achieve our own dignity as humans. In other words, contrary to the somewhat naïve conviction of the current theory of reification, our humanity will not be

accomplished by just contrasting ourselves as “living beings” to “dead objects”. Especially in the present materialist age of one-sided technological domination and objectivizing consumption of ordinary “things”, emphasis has to be put on this apparently paradoxical argument: our own humanity will be found *only* by actually opening up ourselves towards the realm of things. The mutual encounter with things ought not to be restricted to our technically manipulating indifferent objects. From the later Heidegger’s thinking on *Gelassenheit* or “releasement”, cross-culturally combined with a consultation of East Asian sources, we may learn how to enter into a responsive relation to our environment. In order to restore our ability of encountering things, we must first learn to do whatever we do in a “letting” (*lassend*), as well as “being-let” (*gelassen*), manner.

This essay is indebted to previous research, primarily referring to classical categories such as action and willing.<sup>1</sup> Affinities between East Asian thought and the later Heidegger, too, have been subject to extensive exploration.<sup>2</sup> Yet I shall not engage in discussions about

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<sup>1</sup> Bret Davis, *Heidegger and the Will: On the Way to Gelassenheit* (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Graham Parkes, ed., *Heidegger and Asian Thought* (Honolulu: Hawaii UP, 1987); Hartmut Buchner, ed., *Japan und Heidegger: Gedenkschrift der Stadt Messkirch Zum 100. Geburtstag Martin Heideggers* (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke, 1989); Reinhard May, *Heideggers verborgene Quellen: Sein Werk unter chinesischem und japanischem Einfluss* (Wiesbaden: Harassowitz,

Heidegger's "intercultural" disposition.<sup>3</sup> Instead, my concern is with *phenomenological* considerations related to the existential significance of the Heideggerian *Gelassenheit*. An astonishing resonance comes about between this stance and pre-modern Chinese texts Heidegger himself either was not acquainted with, or that, at least, have not been taken into account, so far. Here the issue shall be addressed in an oblique manner, contributing insights which are fundamental, albeit quite "technical". I shall demonstrate a way *how* to achieve the task Bret Davis rightly pinpoints as the key to *Gelassenheit*, viz. "to 'twist free' of the domain of the will" by "going *through* a paradoxical 'willing non-willing'".<sup>4</sup> If our "non-willing engagement" actually is a "going through", as well as a "comportment to beings",<sup>5</sup> this can and – with Maurice Merleau-Ponty – should be understood literally as a *bodily attitude* and *behavior*. The question is about how to accomplish *embodied Gelassenheit*.

In order to sharpen philosophical sensitivity regarding the extent

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1989); Lee Yen-Hui, *Gelassenheit und Wu-Wei – Nähe und Ferne zwischen dem späten Heidegger und dem Taoismus* (Freiburg: University (unpublished Diss.), 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Bret Davis, "Heidegger and Daoism: A Dialogue on the Useless Way of Unnecessary Being," in *Daoist Encounters with Phenomenology. Thinking Interculturally about Human Existence*, ed. David Chai (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), pp. 161-196.

<sup>4</sup> Bret Davis, "Will and Gelassenheit," in *Heidegger: Key Concepts*, ed. B. Davis (Durham: Acumen, 2010), [pp. 168-181] p. 176; cf. Davis, *Heidegger and the Will*, pp. 64, 98, 203, 245, 248, 262 and pp. 14-17, 202-204, respectively.

<sup>5</sup> Davis, "Will and Gelassenheit", p. 179; cf. Davis, *Heidegger and the Will*, p. XXXI.

to which Heidegger's *Gelassenheit* actually relies on our being embodied, preliminary clarification with respect to *why Gelassenheit* is to be effectuated within and through *bodily moving patterns*, is obtained by the bias of the Chinese classic *Zhuang Zi* 莊子 (around 300 BCE). As to *how* performing a body movement may teach us the paradoxical way into *Gelassenheit*, this, too, can be elucidated by consulting moving patterns specific to Chinese brush writing. However, though proceeding by the bias of what may well be considered a cross-cultural phenomenological access, this paper cannot – and does not intend to – discuss, in a generalized way, what role especially the *Zhuang Zi* may play in Heidegger's thought.

## II. “Changing with things” and the paradoxes of body movement

The modern Marxist Chinese rendering of “reification” by *wù huà* 物化 not only cross-culturally obfuscates the concept, it also distorts the original purport of the expression taken from the *Zhuang Zi*. There it means the perpetual “transformation of things”.<sup>6</sup> In the famous story

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<sup>6</sup> Guo Qingfan 郭慶藩, ed., *Zhuang Zi jishi* 莊子集釋 (Beijing 北京: Zhonghua shuju 中華

about the butterfly-dream,<sup>7</sup> the author's concern, employing *wù huà*, is neither with self-identity nor with self-acknowledgment, but with perspectival self-differentiation within change. In a different context occurs the formula "changing with things" (*yǔ wù huà* 與物化). Carpenter Gong Chui 工倕 points out that his skill consists in letting his "fingers change in accordance with things, without any planning of the mind."<sup>8</sup> Well-known is also wheelwright Lun Bian's 輪扁 dictum: "I get [the circular wheel-form] in my hands, responding to it in my mind."<sup>9</sup> Craftsmanship attains perfection when the embodied self leads mind and will. Humans are able to "change with things", as soon as their activity is taken back into body movement.

This way of dealing with things is most profoundly embodied by Pao Ding 庖丁, who dissects an ox in an untrammelled manner, without ever fretting his knife. The popular parable is often misinterpreted as regarding the apogee of skillfulness. In fact, the cook does not pursue any miraculous technique, he rather aspires to personal accomplishment or the "Way" (*dào* 道), by means of his life-long dealing with oxen. His

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書局, 1954), [ch. 13] p. 462.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., [ch. 2] p. 112.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., [ch. 19] p. 662: 指與物化而不以心稽.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., [ch. 13] p. 491: 得之於手而應於心.

secret consists in “entering the void in-between [the joints of the ox] with what has got no thickness [sc. the edge of the blade].”<sup>10</sup> The crucial part of his account, concerning details of his *body movements*, is less obscure. First, he “encounters [the ox] through a spiritual connection, not observing it with the eye”,<sup>11</sup> adding that “the spiritual connection is about to operate as soon as the external senses know they should rest”.<sup>12</sup> However, contrary to relying on “spirituality”, he just returns from the outbound “operative body” to his embodied self which is always already *connected with* things, yet before perception or action set in.<sup>13</sup> He gathers himself into his body’s capacity of *interacting through movement*. Thus it has to be emphasized that only an *embodied* self will actually be able to “counter-turn and take itself back” (*nì zhuǎn shōu huí* 逆轉收回) from its impact on external objects through action, retiring, as it were, into the acting *movement* itself.

This self-referential moving pattern has become a guiding paradigm in pre-modern Chinese culture. No matter how different martial arts or esthetics may be from Confucian and Daoist self-cultivation or Buddhist exercises, in all these diverse fields a kind of

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., [ch. 3] p. 119: 以無厚入有間。

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.: 以神遇而不以目視。

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.: 官知止而神欲行。

<sup>13</sup> Romain Graziani, *Fictions philosophiques du « Tchouang-tseu »* (Paris: Gallimard, 2006), pp. 59-67.



*inward-bound* or *self-reflexive mode of practicing* always plays a major role. Hinging on correspondence instead of unilateral activity, this paradigm is rooted in the *embodied* self and its encounter with things. The corresponsive relation is to be sharply distinguished from any so-called natural attitude, as well as from the occidental subject-object-relation. In order to understand adequately what is at stake here, a brief excursion into art will prove helpful.

In pre-modern China esthetic achievement largely relied on *self-minimalizing motion patterns*.<sup>14</sup> This can best be illustrated with respect to Chinese brush writing, as pre-modern treatises discuss in detail the bodily execution of the writing movement, which unfolds a peculiar temporal structure. Generally speaking, the writer should attempt to “go against the flow” (*nì* 逆) and to “gather” (*shōu* 收) the writing movement. In order to implement such a “reversal” *within* the writing movement, the writer’s *moving style* must change from pushing forward to slowing down. An apocryphal source advises us that, while executing a particular stroke, “vigor and tempo of the movement” (*shì* 勢) should “be preserved” (*cún* 存) in the written line. Hence the dynamic of the whole stroke should issue into a “subtle release and imperceptible

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<sup>14</sup> Mathias Obert, “Chinese Ink Brush Writing, Body Mimesis, and Responsiveness,” *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy*, vol.12, no.4 (2013), pp. 523-543.

gathering” (*qīng jiē àn shōu* 輕揭暗收) of the brush tip. Intriguing is the remark that the writer should “wait” (*hòu* 候) a little, before delivering the final pull. How should “waiting” bring the *dynamic* to completion? Also, how can the final edge of the stroke be accomplished *after* “exhaustion of the dynamical moving pattern” (*shì jìn* 勢盡)?<sup>15</sup>

Such descriptions remain enigmatic, as long as their interpretation is based on the idea of linear vector progression or a simplified action theory. Yet an embodied self may in fact be capable of the seeming paradox of advancing *by* waiting, of preserving or retrieving dynamics *while* being at rest. Here waiting does not mark an interruption, it rather signifies a *delaying*, i.e. a *deferring mode of moving*<sup>16</sup> that arises from within the movement itself. Waiting has to be integrated into the *entire* moving pattern. The tracing should be executed in a waiting manner. This “counter-turning movement” necessarily remains imperceptible from without. An intrinsic resistance emerging from within the movement induces it to “go against the flow”. Thus linear progression

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<sup>15</sup> Hua Zhengren 華正人, ed., “Yong zi ba fa 永字八法,” in *Lidai shufa lunwenxuan* 歷代書法論文選 (*Anthology of Historical Treatises on the Art of Brush Writing*), 2 vols. (Taipei 台北: Huazheng 華正, 1997), vol. II, p. 821.

<sup>16</sup> Due to my focusing on body movement, “to defer” should be understood with a connotation akin to the Derridian “*différer*”, meaning “to produce a slight delay”, not in the sense of “to defer to” and “deferred-willing”, as Davis does in his *Heidegger and the Will*, pp. 18-23.

is transformed into a “counter-turning movement”. As this reversal occurs during “waiting”, it has no influence on the visible path of the brush. It merely changes the *quality of moving*.

A quite similar self-referentiality within movement in general has been detected by Heidegger<sup>17</sup> and others,<sup>18</sup> too. However, their discussions seem insufficient, as long as they remain on a merely theoretical level, not or not sufficiently taking into account the self as an *embodied* subject of movement. Therefore it will prove to be extremely useful to first discuss the problem in some depth, from a transcultural perspective and on the basis of evidence taken from ancient China, before engaging in a discussion on the later Heidegger's thought. The obvious advantage of the brush writing example consists in its relying on a *concrete experience* of body movement. In addition, as this feature relates to the *time structure* of the writing movement, the operation the movement effectuates within the “temporality” (*Zeitlichkeit*) of the embodied self is at stake, too. Whereas all this will hardly be comprehended through mere observation, it nonetheless becomes accessible in a way, just *as* it occurs, as soon as the

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<sup>17</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik im Ausgang von Leibniz*, 3<sup>rd</sup> rev. ed. [GA 26] (Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 2007), pp. 112, 115, 271; hereafter cited as GA #.

<sup>18</sup> Renaud Barbaras, *Le désir de la distance. Introduction à une phénoménologie de la perception*, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. (Paris: Vrin, 2006), pp. 116-117; Günter Figal, *Martin Heidegger: Phänomenologie der Freiheit* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), p. 183.

phenomenon in question is *enacted*. Here it gives itself literally “in the flesh” (*leibhaftig*) to the embodied phenomenologist. By the way, this is precisely the point where Heidegger’s *Gelassenheit*, as well, comes into view. Chinese brush writing in a way pursues or even achieves what Heidegger termed *Gelassenheit*.

Now, what do these observations amount to, with respect to Pao Ding’s self-account? In fact, the cook handles his knife in close similarity to the writer’s “counter-turning”. When his cutting attains the crucial stage, he equally proceeds by subtle movements, “anxiously taking precautions, the gaze stopping, action slowing down, and the knife moving in a most inconspicuous manner”.<sup>19</sup> As a result of *minimalized body movement*, “[the ox] all of a sudden falls apart, crumbling to the ground like dust.”<sup>20</sup> When the cook’s activity is taken back into the slightest degree of moving, his embodied self takes over. By *deferring* the movement, his embodied self “counter-turns” his dealing with the external ox-thing, gathering the movement back into his own existence. Instead of just doing his job, what Pao Ding pursues is letting his being embodied take over, during his slaughtering activity.

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<sup>19</sup> Guo, *Zhuang Zi jishi*, [ch. 3] p. 119: [...] 怵然為戒，視為止，行為遲。動刀甚微 [...] .

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.: [...] 譙然已解，如土委地.

Such is the “Way beyond technique” he declares “to be fond of”.<sup>21</sup>

The dissecting itself happens like some side-effect. Not the person working on the ox-thing makes the latter disintegrate. By way of his *bodily encounter with* the ox, Pao Ding *lets* the ox split apart. Purposeful action is replaced by “letting it happen”. This event must not be simply regarded as an illustration of the famous Daoist “non-action” (*wú wéi* 無為). For the Cook’s self-account still makes explicit use of “doing” (*wéi* 為). Yet what seemingly pertains to active doing here is transformed, by means of utterly reduced body movement, into the event of “being let”. This mutation from “doing” to “letting” relies on the cook’s being embodied. His deferring movement illustrates what elsewhere in the *Zhuang Zi* is exposed as an *infinitesimal approximation* to “no doing” through “decreasing day by day” (*rì sǔn* 日損).<sup>22</sup> Obviously the formula of “no doing” does not stand for “non-action”. It indicates a counter-turning or deferring *mode of doing*. “No doing” is “doing” which has intrinsically become “letting”. It seems indeed to be just this “no doing” which has been cherished by Heidegger, alluding to a “‘doing’ which simultaneously is a ‘letting’”?<sup>23</sup> Whether this idea

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.: 臣之所好者道也，進乎技矣。

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., [ch. 22] p. 731.

<sup>23</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Heraklit. Der Anfang des abendländischen Denkens. Logik. Heraklits Lehre vom Logos*, 2nd rev. ed. [GA 55] (Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 1987), p. 279: “‘einTun’, das zugleich ein ‘Lassen’ ist”.

of Heidegger's originally stems from East Asian inspiration, is not crucial here. My point is that the structure and context of such "no doing" in the mode of "letting", especially the intimate reference of this Heideggerian notion to embodied movement, can best be understood by means of an analysis of ancient Chinese sources, as these obviously are apt to complement and clarify Heidegger's thought in a rather enlightening way.

The above – indeed very sketchy - account of textual evidence from ancient China, as has been stated already, by no means is apt to prove anything like Heidegger's depending on East Asian thought. What precedes was meant to prepare the field, so as to gain a precise entrance point for a re-discussion of Heidegger's *Gelassenheit*. Although the short excursion into Chinese brush writing and the *Zhuang Zi*, at first sight, may seem to be concerned with some very technical details of bodily moving patterns, as if there only were sort of a "microscopic" view at stake. Yet in fact both the book *Zhuang Zi*, as well as the ethically and politically relevant practice of brush writing in pre-modern China, including the corresponding theories, have, as it were, been attributed "macroscopic" meaning, throughout Chinese history. On the other hand, Heidegger's concern with the "question of being" and our "opening up to the world" may well be regarded as a

“macroscopic” endeavor, like in his early terming of “fundamental ontology”. Yet a couple of the later Heidegger’s writings deal with seemingly very small or “microscopic” issues, such as, for instance, his famous discussion of the “empty jug”. Furthermore, regarding the topic of the present inquiry, Heidegger himself also narrows the focus in an extreme way, not only when taking the very concrete bodily experience of rambling at leisure through the fields as an object of investigation, but even more so in his, so to speak, extremely “microscopic” elucidation of the double-fold formal structure of our “letting-being let”, which in turn is declared to represent the crucial point in our relation with being. With respect to these considerations it may well be claimed that the above discussed materials from ancient China, albeit “microscopic” in a way, have in fact been able to shed some light on three main points, concerning our encounter with things. First, reification may not necessarily mean the negative consequence of humans being dehumanized. Reification may as well indicate the existential possibility for humans to face the world in a corresponsive manner, so as to “change with things”. Second, our actively dealing with things imperatively engages our *being embodied*. Instead of envisaging our relation to the world like a face-to-face, also contrary to the presumption of a fundamental distinction between two ontological

statuses, viz. the “subjective” and the “objective”, our *bodily encounter with* the world must be emphasized. Third, if our “doing” can be transformed into “letting”, by means of a *deferring* way of body movement, this embodied letting endows us with a peculiar *proximity to things*. Based on these cross-cultural correspondences, the following inquiry into Heidegger’s *Gelassenheit* will prove much more insightful. In turn, this examination may advance our understanding of East Asian thinking, too.

### III. Heidegger on *Gelassenheit*

Heidegger’s thinking on *Gelassenheit* is to be interpreted in a broader horizon. Analyzing what he termed “Ge-stell”, that is the functionalism ruling our modern encounter with things,<sup>24</sup> it became his aspiration “to take the technical world back from a dominating to a serving position”.<sup>25</sup> He vehemently opposed to our subject-centered manipulation of things, the fault for which he sought with the inception

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<sup>24</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge*, 2., durchgesehene Auflage [GA 79] (Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 2005), [II.-IV. Bremer Vortrag] pp. 24-77; Martin Heidegger, “Die Frage nach der Technik”, M. H., in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 2000), [GA 7], pp. 5-36.

<sup>25</sup> Heidegger, *Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge*, [III. Freiburger Vortrag] p. 125: Zurücknahme der technischen Welt aus ihrer Herrschaft zur Dienstschaft.



and development of occidental philosophy, since the Pre-Socratics. Heading for “the other inception” (*der andere Anfang*) of the human’s relation to being, he pursued an “inceptual thinking” (*anfängliches Denken*).<sup>26</sup> However, only the “propriative event” (*Er-eignis*)<sup>27</sup> may bring about the “incipience” (*Anfängnis*)<sup>28</sup> or “inceptual emergence” (*anfänglicher Aufgang*).<sup>29</sup> The possibility of an “other inception” lies in the fact that humankind “pertains to” (*gehören*) and “resides” (*sich aufhalten*) in the “propriative event”.<sup>30</sup> Hence a kind of self-recovering is needed.

Furthermore, as all philosophizing should be practiced as an “art of existing” (*Existierkunst*),<sup>31</sup> the new thinking has to be prepared by an “exercise” (*Übung*),<sup>32</sup> so as to “involve itself with” (*sich einlassen auf*) being. We must train ourselves in “learning how to learn” (*das Lernen lernen*),<sup>33</sup> in order to attain a “rehearsed disposition” (*ingeübte Bereitschaft*) for “what is to be thought about” (*das Zu-denkende*).<sup>34</sup> In

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<sup>26</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Über den Anfang* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2005) [GA 70].

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13, 64 et passim.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 47, 59, 64, 118, 147.

<sup>30</sup> GA 79, pp. 125-126.

<sup>31</sup> GA 26, p. 201.

<sup>32</sup> Martin Heidegger, „Aus Gesprächen mit einem buddhistischen Mönch“, M. Heidegger, *Reden und andere Zeugnisse eines Lebensweges* [GA 16] (Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 2000), [pp. 589-593] p. 589.

<sup>33</sup> GA 55, p. 190.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3 et passim. By the way, this expression may also be read as “what comes to

this way thinking “prepares its own conversion” (*bereitet seine eigene Wandlung vor*).<sup>35</sup> Philosophy no longer stands for a quest for truth or wisdom. With the later Heidegger philosophizing has re-become a thoroughly ethical enterprise, seeking conversion and change, out of freedom.<sup>36</sup>

The self-recovering endeavor is not to be confounded with self-reflexive criticism. Instead, the intimate connection between Heidegger’s philosophizing and body movement has to be taken into account. Contrary to inveterate prejudices of academic philosophy, Heidegger has in fact given a quite detailed account of his views on our embodiedness in the *Zollikon Seminars*,<sup>37</sup> claiming that “[we] must consider all human comportment as a being-in-the-world which is determined by the body’s bodying”.<sup>38</sup> Yet throughout his writings he has persistently emphasized the relevance of body movement.<sup>39</sup> Thus

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through thinking” or “what is destined through thinking”, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 61-62, 187, 189, 212.

<sup>35</sup> Martin Heidegger, „Das Ende der Philosophie und die Aufgabe des Denkens“, M. Heidegger, *Zur Sache des Denkens* [GA 14] (Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 2007), [pp. 67-90] p. 75.

<sup>36</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Schelling: Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit (1809)* [GA 42] (Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 1988), p. 17. Concerning freedom as “being able to let” (*Lassenkönnen*): Martin Heidegger, *Feldweg-Gespräche (1944/45)*, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. [GA 77] (Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 2007), p. 230.

<sup>37</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Zollikoner Seminare* [GA 89] (Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 1994), pp. 105-115.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118: [wir] müssen alles Sich-Betragen des Menschen als ein durch das Leiben des Leibes bestimmtes In-der-Welt-sein zu kennzeichnen.

<sup>39</sup> Although Didier Franck has taken a critical attitude with respect to Heidegger’s

his whole description of the structure of Dasein, in *Being and Time*, already clearly hinges on Dasein's being embodied: every-day life "deals with" (*besorgen*) things "ready-to-hand" (*zuhanden*); Existence means "throw" (*Wurf*), "project" (*Entwurf*), "being-thrown" (*Geworfenheit*), "standing in" (*Inständigkeit*). "Leap" (*Sprung*), "turn" (*Kehre*), "reversal" (*Umkehr*), etc. equally evoke the life experience of embodied beings. Even with respect to how we undergo "boredom" (*Langeweile*), we are said to literally "move about" (*wir bewegen uns*) in this state, instead of merely "feeling" bored, becoming aware of it, or just observing it like any other phenomenon.<sup>40</sup> Finally, the notorious "overcoming" (*Überwindung*) of metaphysics is conceived of, with the concreteness of Nietzschean expressions, as "going down" (*Unter-gehen, Unter-gang*),<sup>41</sup> "taking back" (*Rücknahme*),<sup>42</sup> "going back" (*Rückgang*),<sup>43</sup> and "return" (*Rückkehr*).<sup>44</sup> As existence consists in a

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"neglecting" the important issue of the body, yet, by way of accurately retrieving major presumed lacunae in Heidegger's thinking, he actually has convincingly demonstrated, at the same time, to what extent Dasein's being embodied, in fact, is presupposed by a couple of fundamental stances of Heidegger's "fundamental ontology": D. Franck, *Heidegger et le problème de l'espace* (Paris: Minuit, 1986).

<sup>40</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik. Welt – Endlichkeit – Einsamkeit* [GA 29/30] (Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 1983), p. 136.

<sup>41</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)* [GA 65] (Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 1989), p. 397.

<sup>42</sup> GA 70, p. 78.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 21, 28.

<sup>44</sup> GA 77, pp. 171, 175.

“turning-towards” (*Zukehr*) and “turning-backward” (*Rück-kehr*), “reflexion” represents a degenerate mode of these original moves.<sup>45</sup> We ought to “leap and release ourselves” (*springen und uns loslassen*), so as to get back to the place “we are already admitted to and embedded in” (*wohin wir schon eingelassen sind*).<sup>46</sup>

Although it cannot be the aim of this paper to elaborate more extensively and in a more fundamental and convincing way on the question to what extent Heidegger’s thinking actually is enrooted in the embodiedness of *Dasein*, yet what follows may be considered as kind of exemplary evidence for the fact that this aspect of Heideggerian thought has much more to be taken into account, by its interpreters. It is crucial not to disregard the striking similarities between Heidegger’s *embodied commitment* for self-transformation and the problems discussed in the previous chapter. In order to take ourselves back from mere manipulation of objects into a corresponsive relation to things, what is requested is not solely a changed *attitude*. Heidegger’s concern with the history of philosophy, our relation to the things, and our being embodied, are condensed into the complex issue of *Gelassenheit*, which is to fundamentally reshape our *embodied encounter with things*.

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<sup>45</sup> GA 55, pp. 209-210, 220-221.

<sup>46</sup> GA 79, p. 122.

Generally standing for “tranquil serenity”, the Heideggerian *Gelassenheit* must not be reduced to a state of mind. Referring to our access to the world, *Gelassenheit* indicates a peculiar style of *actively dealing with* ourselves, others, and things. Paradoxical is the way this notion fuses “letting” (*lassen*) into “being let” (*gelassen werden*). The *active* sense of “letting”, being distinct from the usual meaning of “abandoning”, becomes intertwined with a *passive* connotation. Origin and impact of *Gelassenheit* concur as *correlated perspectives on the same event*. The kind of “solution” for this problematic to be discussed now tries to develop *Gelassenheit* with respect to the temporality of body movement.

Already in *Being and Time* Heidegger claimed that our existence consists in “letting”, much more than in “doing” or “disposing of”. Dasein means “letting be relevant” (*Bewendenlassen*). Endowing each thing with being, Dasein “lets be” (*sein lassen*).<sup>47</sup> Heidegger also states: “Letting-be means to involve oneself with beings. Letting be – i.e. the beings as the beings they are – is a becoming involved with the opening and its openness each being intrudes into, as if it were brought along

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<sup>47</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 16. Auflage, (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1986), [§ 18] p. 84; cf. Figal, *Martin Heidegger*, p. 67.

together with that openness.”<sup>48</sup>

After all it is the “propriative event” itself which “lets become present” (*anwesen lassen*): “‘There is being/ it gives being’ in the sense of: ‘it lets being’. [...] Then the *letting* is the pure giving which points back to the It which gives, this It being understood as the propriative event.”<sup>49</sup>

In his famous essay on the artwork Heidegger expounds in detail on the signification of this “letting be”:<sup>50</sup> we “let” things “go counter to us” and “be encountered” (*Begegnenlassen*).<sup>51</sup> Yet this means “the thing has to be left in its resting-in-itself”.<sup>52</sup> We then find our existence being “admitted to and embedded in” (*eingelassen in*) the “reliability” (*Verlässlichkeit*) of the things.<sup>53</sup> As the artwork embodies the event of “letting be” par excellence, art does not amount to the skillful creation

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<sup>48</sup> Martin Heidegger, “Vom Wesen der Wahrheit”, M. Heidegger, in *Wegmarken* [GA 9] (Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 1976), [pp. 177-202] p. 188: “Sein-lassen ist das Sicheinlassen auf das Seiende. Seinlassen – das Seiende nämlich als das Seiende, das es ist – bedeutet sich einlassen auf das Offene und dessen Offenheit, in die jegliches Seiende hereinsteht, das jene gleichsam mit sich bringt”.

<sup>49</sup> Martin Heidegger, “Vier Seminare (Seminar in Le Thor 1969)”, M. Heidegger, in *Seminare*, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. [GA 15] (Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 2005), p. 365: “‘Es gibt Sein’ im Sinn von: ‘Es läßt Sein’. [...] Das Lassen ist dann das reine Geben, das selbst auf das Es, das gibt, zurückdeutet, das als das Ereignis verstanden wird”.

<sup>50</sup> Martin Heidegger, “Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes”, M. Heidegger, in *Holzwege* [GA 5] (Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 1977), p. 16.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11: “Das Ding muß bei seinem Insichruhen belassen bleiben”.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

of a product, but to a world disclosure. “Letting come forth” (*Hervorgehenlassen*)<sup>54</sup> whatever “is”, art “lets the advent of the truth of beings occur”.<sup>55</sup> At stake in esthetics is “the existing human’s letting themselves be admitted to and embedded in the unconcealment of being”.<sup>56</sup> Although Heidegger attempts to re-think the ancient Greek ποίησις (*poiesis*) in terms of “letting”,<sup>57</sup> his artwork-essay still relates to a more or less hermeneutical connotation of “poetry” (*Dichtung*) as the “unveiling” (*Entbergung*) of beings.

In several later essays and fictional dialogues, “letting” is endowed with a more complex signification, becoming the title for our multi-faceted *correspondence with the world*. This allows for an exploration of *ways into Gelassenheit*.<sup>58</sup> The focus has shifted from the question of the sense of being to our bodily moving encounter with things. The earlier fixation on ontology and a hermeneutics of Dasein, within the

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 59: “Geschehenlassen der Ankunft der Wahrheit des Seienden”.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 55: “Sicheinlassen des existierenden Menschen in die Unverborgenheit des Seins”. Cf. Fagal, *Martin Heidegger*, pp. 69, 352.

<sup>57</sup> GA 5, pp. 70-72.

<sup>58</sup> Martin Heidegger, “Zur Erörterung der Gelassenheit”, M. Heidegger, in *Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens*, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. [GA 13] (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2002), pp. 37-74; M. Heidegger, “Ἀγγιβασίη. Ein Gespräch selbstdrift auf einem Feldweg zwischen einem Gelehrten, einem Forscher und einem Weisen”/ “Abendgespräch in einem Kriegsgefangenenlager in Rußland zwischen einem Jüngeren und einem Älteren”, GA 77, pp. 1-159/ pp. 203-245. With respect to its rich “Daoist” connotations, Davis, too, has explored these source materials: Davis, “Heidegger and Daoism”, pp. 167-172.

heritage of metaphysics and transcendentalism, has turned into a keen attentiveness to simple body movement amidst “things” (*Dinge*) used in everyday life.<sup>59</sup> The new debates on “letting” encompass the previously coined “dealing with” and go beyond the earlier “letting be”. Now “letting” is envisaged as an ingredient of “action”. It marks a peculiar *mode of doing*.<sup>60</sup> Enhancing our activity, “*Gelassenheit* maybe conceals a higher activity than all exploits of the world and the machinations of the shapes of humanity in history.”<sup>61</sup>

This shift in Heidegger’s thought allows for connecting it to the problem pin-pointed previously, namely the question of how to move in a letting manner. A sound resonance between Pao Ding or the brush writer and Heidegger is brought about, wherever the latter stresses the importance of “abiding” (*verweilen*)<sup>62</sup> or “waiting” (*warten*).<sup>63</sup> This “waiting” must not be confounded with “waiting for something”. Also instead of “stopping” or “resting” *before* renewed activity, this “waiting” just holds our existence open: “While waiting we let open

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<sup>59</sup> “*Das Ding*”, GA 7, pp. 165-184.

<sup>60</sup> GA 79, p. 146.

<sup>61</sup> GA 77 (Due to a different orientation, I rely on my own translations, while consulting the English translation by Bret Davis: *Country Path Conversations*, Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2016), p. 108: “Vielleicht verbirgt sich in der Gelassenheit eine höhere Aktivität als in allen Taten der Welt und in den Machenschaften der Menschentümer.”

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>63</sup> GA 13, pp. 49-50, 54-57; GA 77, pp. 110, 115-117, 120-122, 216-217, 226-229.



what we are waiting for. [...] For waiting lets itself be admitted to and embedded in the open itself.”<sup>64</sup>

Open waiting must be *incorporated in movement*, so as to induce *Gelassenheit*. Instead of being actively driven by a “subject” (*Subjekt*) or relying on a “substance” (*Substanz*), the *waiting way of moving* receives all support from “hovering” (*Schweben*).<sup>65</sup> Although waiting is conceived of as “waiting (not hoping) secludedness”,<sup>66</sup> it does not mean a retreat into pure inwardness. On the contrary, it essentially represents a “responding” (*antworten*) to the outside, whence it “lets come” (*kommen lassen*), not only whatever comes, but, in a self-referential manner, “coming” itself.<sup>67</sup> As waiting opens up, it is the *relation* to what is encountered in the opening.<sup>68</sup>

Entering *Gelassenheit* by a waiting manner of moving neither passively occurs to us, nor does it originate in our intentionally striving for it. As a self-recovering occurs within our moving amidst the things, *Gelassenheit* “becomes admitted” (*zugelassen werden*), and we “are

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<sup>64</sup> GA 77, p. 116: “Im Warten lassen wir das, worauf wir warten, offen. [...] Weil das Warten in das Offene selbst sich einläßt”.

<sup>65</sup> GA 79, p. 154.

<sup>66</sup> GA 14, p. 20 note at the bottom of the page: “wartende (nicht hoffende) Abgeschlossenheit”.

<sup>67</sup> GA 77, p. 217.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

admitted” (*zugelassen sein*) to it, too.<sup>69</sup> Equally, we may enter into the “present” (*Gegenwart*) only by waiting. While “waiting at the encounter of coming” (*dem Kommen entgegenwarten*), we become “pure counter-waiting” (*reine Gegenwart*).<sup>70</sup> Then the things are brought into their proper mode of “presence”, meaning that they, too, are “counter-waiting”, with respect to us.<sup>71</sup> Waiting reveals a paradoxical temporal structure. The waiting way of moving, and being moved, reshapes our temporality.

Heidegger’s former analysis of the temporality of Dasein, by now, obtains a radicalized interpretation. In *Being and Time* Dasein is always “ahead of itself” (*sich voraus*), founding its own “coming-towards” (*Zu-kunft*) in this ek-static movement. The paradoxical pattern of Dasein “coming back to itself” (*auf sich zurückkommen*) discloses the other modes of temporality, viz. “having-been” (*Gewesen*) and “preparing for the encounter” (*Gewärtigen*), which eventually “presences” (*gegenwärtigen*) the surrounding world and things encountered. Dasein’s “temporizing” (*Zeitigen*) signifies that “being-possible” (*Möglich-sein*) founds reality as such.<sup>72</sup> In contrast, in the

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 227.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 229.

<sup>72</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, [§ 65] pp. 325-326.

context of *Gelassenheit*, the *encounter with things* becomes foundational for the temporal structure of our existence. Instead of Dasein's isolated "coming back to itself", Dasein apparently withdraws from selfhood into the *relation to the world*, established through *Gelassenheit*. The earlier paradox of a future founding past and present is transformed into the paradox of "counter-waiting", i.e. a "waiting activity" directed *towards the things*. Only if we are capable of waiting in the sense of deferring our doing, the encounter with things may occur. The temporal structure is merged into a paradoxical mode of encountering things. The ek-static temporizing becomes incorporated in a body movement that "presences" things by means of a deferring way of "preparing for the encounter". The dimension of the possible – the "potential-being" (*Seinkönnen*) essential to Dasein – becomes integrated into the more original event of Dasein's responsively *opening up to the encounter*.

According to the *Contributions to Philosophy*, Dasein inaugurates a chiastic "time-space" (*Zeit-Raum*), being an "abyss" or "non-ground" (*Ab-grund*) prior to "space and time".<sup>73</sup> From the perspective of the discussions on *Gelassenheit* it should be asked if this "time-space" has

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<sup>73</sup> GA 65, pp. 371-388.

not imperatively to *be enacted* by the bodily moving paradoxes of *Gelassenheit*. If the ek-static “temporizing” (*zeitigen*), the unfolding of time by Dasein itself, cannot be separated from Dasein’s unfolding space or “spacing-in” (*einräumen*), then it will be the eminent role of *Gelassenheit* to set the place for this event, intertwining space and time in a crucial way. Hence it should belong to our *bodily* disclosure of an “encountering area” and our *lived-out encounter with things*, to actually take us back to the only place where the event of “time-space” becomes possible, namely the *embodied situation* of our existence. As soon as embodied *Gelassenheit* is conceived of within the horizon of our encounter with things, thus becoming a “*Gelassenheit* towards the things”, Heidegger’s enigmatic statements “time spaces in” and “space temporizes in”<sup>74</sup> may make sense. As *Gelassenheit* effectuates the paradoxical pattern of a “lettingly being let” as a chiasmic twist between space and time, *Gelassenheit* seems in fact to be the place where “time-space” occurs.

Like Pao Ding or the brush writer, Heidegger, too, shows precisely *how* waiting becomes an integral part of body movement, as soon as the

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 386: “Die Zeit räumt ein [...] Der Raum zeitigt ein.”

latter is understood as a corresponsive event with its peculiar temporal structure, instead of being reduced to linear action. For instance, going for a stroll reveals several important aspects:<sup>75</sup>

First, when our rambling through the fields becomes a “waiting movement”, our simple “moving on” (*Bewegung*) metamorphoses into what he calls “Be-wägung”, which means “setting in motion”, as well as “inaugurating a path”.<sup>76</sup>

Second, a landscape originally discloses itself as something we “encounter” (*begegnen*), while leisurely walking in nature. Our movement lets the landscape become what Heidegger, alluding to “Gegend”, i.e. “area”, calls “encountering area” (*Gegnet*). Our moving on lets the area endow us with our path. Thus our movement is not a precondition of, but rather an occasion for, our encountering a landscape and being endowed with a path.

Third, we have to “let ourselves in” and “become involved with” the “encountering area”. Yet this is to be achieved only by *actually walking* on just those paths inaugurated for us by the area.

Fourth, when we ramble through the fields in a “letting” way, we “are let in”, i.e. “admitted to and embedded in” the “encountering area”.

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<sup>75</sup> GA 13, pp. 45-59.

<sup>76</sup> Martin Heidegger, “Das Wesen der Sprache”, M. Heidegger, in *Unterwegs zur Sprache* [GA 12] (Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 1985), [pp. 147-204] pp. 186-187.

This “coming-close” (*In-die-Nähe-kommen*) lets us meet with things.

Finally, Heidegger’s attempt to grasp the event of *Gelassenheit* by the “Be-wägung” that occurs to us when walking at random, obviously is circular and paradoxical. Like movement in general, “coming out from rest and remaining embedded in rest”,<sup>77</sup> our rambling, too, is as much conditioned by a corresponsive “letting”, as such “letting”, in turn, originates within the movement. Although a transformation, as to both the mode and the signification of our rambling, seemingly results from a *previous* change of our attitude, yet this transformation is claimed to come about *subsequently*, i.e. only after our movement has already started. Our rambling itself enables us to involve ourselves in a “waiting”, i.e. “letting *while* being let”, manner of rambling. In a way the change must have occurred already, yet before it has become possible. Only our actually performing the movement as a “movement remaining at rest”, as a “coming to rest *while* moving”, will be able to dissolve this temporal paradox.

Apparently nothing has changed – we just continue to ramble at leisure. Yet something has happened: through our *moving on*, we

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<sup>77</sup> GA 13, p. 51: “aus der Ruhe kommt und in die Ruhe eingelassen bleibt”.

actually *embody Gelassenheit*. By now this has become a “*Gelassenheit* towards the things” (*Gelassenheit zu den Dingen*).<sup>78</sup> A crucial premise, for sure, is our “being-in-the-world”, preventing us from falling into pure inwardness. Only our fundamental “being-in-the-world” enables us “to let ourselves in”, as well as “to be let in”. However, another premise, though remaining implicit throughout, is more interesting. It is crucial to appreciate the poetic image of our “walking on a path”. This image evokes the fundamental signification of body movement, not taken as a natural precondition of rambling, but as a *field of effectuation* of *Gelassenheit*. Body movement is the *site where Gelassenheit* is said to come about. Intertwining “serenely being at rest” with “moving on a path”, *Gelassenheit* is “not only the path, but the movement”.<sup>79</sup> After all, *Gelassenheit* is the title for the *temporal twist* that occurs between “moving”, and “being moved/ endowed with a path”: what cannot but be thought of as a succession of two corresponding events, in fact becomes *enacted* by body movement, as one single event. Within a *twofold moving manner* – moving by being moved, moving *as* being moved – the two corresponding faces of the encounter between ourselves and the world are twisted together, issuing

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<sup>78</sup> Martin Heidegger, “*Gelassenheit*”, GA 16, [pp. 517-529] pp. 527, 529.

<sup>79</sup> GA 77, p. 118: “nicht nur der Weg, sondern die Bewegung”.

into “*Gelassenheit* towards the things”.

Heidegger attempts to conceive of thinking according to the paradigm of rambling. As thinking should become “gelassen”, it essentially relies on the connection between temporality and body movement. In order to “become involved and engage with thinking”,<sup>80</sup> we need “to blaze the trails into *Gelassenheit* towards thinking”.<sup>81</sup> As thinking moves into the open, it should become similar to the self-referential movement of rambling. For only in this way thinking will “let itself explicitly become involved with and embedded in the propriative event”.<sup>82</sup> Being summoned to overcome “thinking by representations and arguments” (*vorstellend-begründendes Denken*), as well as “propositional saying” (*aussagendes Sagen*),<sup>83</sup> should we not just *learn to think in a bodily moving way*?

At last, with respect to our encounter with things, the excursion into nature also has revealed something: when we “let ourselves” encounter the concrete things out there in the world, we “let the things” come across. However, they cannot be *requested* to “let us in”, their coming towards us cannot be forced on – or else our strolling would not

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<sup>80</sup> GA 79, p. 134: “uns auf das Denken und mit dem Denken einlassen”.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.: “Wege in die Gelassenheit zum Denken bahnen”.

<sup>82</sup> GA 14, p. 30: “das sich eigens in das Ereignis einläßt”.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 28.



be *at leisure* anymore, but rather sort of an exploration, a survey instructed by preconceptions and guided by intentions and goals. In this case we would rather prevent ourselves from encountering things just “as they happen to be”, that is just as they actually emerge from and pertain to the world.

#### **IV. Conclusions**

A couple of conclusions can be drawn now. First, Heidegger's *Gelassenheit* for sure does not stand for a “serene mind”. Neither does it merely amount to “releasement”, “non-will”, or “non-action”. Classical action theory and the dialectics of willing/ non-willing or doing/ no doing both prove to be insufficient, in order to adequately grasp the *existential* signification of *Gelassenheit*. Within such theoretical frameworks the performative paradoxes implied by *Gelassenheit* are hardly to be described correctly. Instead, the issue of has to be taken back into the horizon of our *living encounter with things*. This encounter *originates* in a multi-layered event of reciprocal or corresponsive “letting”: Dasein may be “let in”, it may become “admitted to and embedded in” the things, only if it “lets itself in”, i.e. “involves itself in” the things. Due to this circular structure, due to

*Gelassenheit* meaning “being let *while* letting”, it can best be conceived of as a *mode of moving*. With the aid of the paradigm of self-referential body movement, the paradoxical structure of *Gelassenheit* can be explicated adequately. As a movement may “counter-turn and take itself back” into the moving which has already begun, by means of a *deferring manner of moving*, this phenomenon is apt to clarify *Gelassenheit*.

Second, the paradoxes of *Gelassenheit* are intimately related to the paradoxical structure of temporality, according to which the future founds past and present. The intriguing twist between willing and non-willing, or doing and “no doing”, can best be understood in the light of the apparent reversal of time which is inherent in the *moving patterns* of “being ahead of one-self” and “coming back to oneself”, used by Heidegger in order to deconstruct our common notion of the future. Instead of regarding *Gelassenheit* as a transformation of our attitude, doing or will, occurring *in time*, *Gelassenheit* ought to be considered as *a shaping or actualization of temporality* itself. According to Heidegger’s *Contributions to Philosophy*, Dasein inaugurates a chiastic “time-space” (*Zeit-Raum*), which is an “abyss” or “non-ground” (*Ab-*

*grund*), prior to space and time.<sup>84</sup> From the perspective of the above discussions it may be asked if the original “time-space” has not imperatively to be *enacted* by the moving paradoxes of *Gelassenheit*. If the ek-static temporizing of Dasein cannot be separated from its “spacing-in” (*einräumen*), then *Gelassenheit*, originally intertwining space with time, should be an eminent site for this event to occur. Our lived-out encounter with things actually takes us back to where “time-space” comes about. As soon as embodied *Gelassenheit* is conceived of within the horizon of our encounter with things, i.e. as “*Gelassenheit* towards the things”, Heidegger’s enigmatic statements “time spaces in” and “space temporizes in”<sup>85</sup> make sense. *Gelassenheit* effectuates a paradoxical “lettingly being let” as the chiasmic twist between space and time.

Third, merely taking advantage of body movement as a theoretical figure is not sufficient. Combining the two preceding stances, it may be claimed that *Gelassenheit* has to be *effectuated through body movement*. Otherwise it will remain a utopian idea. Only the paradoxes occurring within a deferring, i.e. “counter-turning” and “waiting”, body movement can teach us *how to enter Gelassenheit*. Due to Dasein’s

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<sup>84</sup> GA 65, pp. 371-388.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 386: “Die Zeit räumt ein [...] Der Raum zeitigt ein”.

essentially being embodied, the ek-static paradox of temporality has to be “lived-out” through bodily moving *Gelassenheit*. Our entering *Gelassenheit*, of course, does not depend on the actual performance of some obscure body movement which may be called “gelassen”. Evidently the point is not about our actually practicing *Gelassenheit* by way of specific body exercises. Instead, the fundamental *embodiedness* of our existence<sup>86</sup> necessitates *Gelassenheit* to become *embodied Gelassenheit*. *Gelassenheit* imperatively must be integrated in the way we live our being embodied.

Fourth, Heidegger’s *Gelassenheit* by no means ties Dasein to the intimacy of a traditional self. To the contrary, *Gelassenheit* endows Dasein with its essential openness disclosing the world. Through *Gelassenheit* we accede to the things. In order to induce the seemingly paradoxical event of our “*Gelassenheit* towards the things”, both “counter-turning” and “waiting” become crucial as *modes of movement*. Only by *letting ourselves* encounter things, we *let them* come across. The things must *not* be requested to “let us in”. Otherwise our thinking them would not be *open* to them, turning into a purposeful exploration,

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<sup>86</sup> The fundamental situation of our existing as *embodied beings*, not solely as conscious beings, becomes very evident, as soon as we consider our imagination or our dreams. Even here we inevitably appear as bodily moving beings, endowed with a specific spatial and temporal opening.

instead. In this case we would prevent ourselves from encountering the things *just as they are*. Ultimately we thus deprive ourselves of the essential *opening* the dignity of our human existence consists in.

Finally, Heidegger's discussions on *Gelassenheit* attempt to elucidate "inceptual thinking". Thinking in the manner of *Gelassenheit* cannot be sought as a method or result. It has to come about by itself while our thinking is *going towards the things*. Moreover, our thinking movement *must have begun already*, so as to endow us with paths towards the "what is to be thought about". We shall be "let in" by being, only *after* our thinking has *started to move*. Such is the temporal twist inherent in "inceptual thinking", in compliance with *Gelassenheit*. The "what is to be thought about" should not be regarded as a precondition of our philosophizing, but as its *consequence*.<sup>87</sup> Only to our thinking *movement* will being disclose itself, also only if this movement is *open to* the world and *responsive* to the things.

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<sup>87</sup> GA 14, [pp. 31-66] p. 38.

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## 論海德格的「任讓情境」和身體與物的相遇

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### 摘要

本文主旨在後期海德格有關「任讓情境」——即「讓」與「被讓」——的思想。為了解析「任讓情境」所包含的弔詭和悖論，本文採取一種跨文化式進路，引入取自《莊子》與中國古代書論的文本根據作為佐證。透過從行為與身體運動這個角度來分析海德格論「任讓情境」的方式，本文主張的是：只有當我們將我們的存在向「物」敞開時，我們才會為了我們作為「人類」，即作為「在世界中存在者」爭取尊嚴。我們與萬物打交道的這種情況，不可以被視為我們藉由技術來操作、操縱萬物。毋寧將其理解為：在我們經由「任讓」的方式對「物」給出回應時，我們其實「與物相遇」。於是，《莊子》比起海德格更讓我們明白的是，「與物相遇」這種情形為何必須經由身體運動及其獨有的時間性結構被展開。至於身體運動最終如何能夠實質地展開「任讓情境」的諸種弔詭這個疑問，書論資料則有助於更深入解答此課題。

Mathias Obert    Heidegger's *Gelassenheit* and Our Bodily Encounter with Things

**關鍵詞：**任讓情境、身體運動、物、時間性

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