

POSTURE

A NEW PERSPECTIVE

AN EXCERPT FROM HEIDEGGER'S WHAT IS CALLED THINKING?

People still hold the view that what is handed down to us by tradition and what reality lies behind us while in fact it comes toward us because we are its captives and destined to it.

The purely historical view of tradition and the course of history are one of those vast self-deceptions in which we must remain entangled as long as we are still not really thinking.

That self-deception about history prevents us from hearing the language of the thinkers.

We do not hear it rightly, because we take that language to be mere expression, setting forth the philosophers' views.

Yet the thinkers' language tells what is. To hear it is in no easy case. Hearing it presupposes that we meet a certain requirement, and we do so only on rare occasions.

We must acknowledge and respect it. To acknowledge and respect consists in letting every thinker's thought come to us as something in each unique case, never to be repeated, inexhaustible and being shaken to the depths by what is unthought in his thought.

What is unthought is not an inherent lack in his thought. What is unthought is there in each case only as the unthought. The more original the thinking, the richer will be what is unthought in it. *The unthought is the greatest gift that thinking can bestow.*

Nevertheless, to the commonplaces of sound common sense, what is unthought in any thinking always remains merely the incomprehensible. To the common comprehension, the incomprehensible is never an occasion to stop and look at its own powers of comprehension, still less to notice their limitation. To the common comprehension, what is incomprehensible remains forever merely offensive-proof enough to such comprehension, which is convinced it was born comprehending everything, that it is now being imposed upon with an untruth and sham.

The one thing of which sound common sense is least capable is acknowledgment and respect. For acknowledgment and respect call for a readiness to let our own attempts at thinking be overturned, again and again, by what is unthought in thinkers' thoughts.

If we want to go to the encounter of a thinker's thought, one thing is necessary, though, for a face-to-face converse with the thinkers: clarity about the manner in which we encounter them.

Basically, there are only two possibilities: either to go to their encounter, or to go counter to them. Magnify still further what is great in him. Then we will enter what is unthought in his thought.

If we wish only to go counter to a thinker's thought, this wish must have minimized beforehand what is great in him. We then shift his thought into the commonplaces of our know-it-all presumption.