Of sex, one can readily remark, yes, Heidegger speaks as little as possible, perhaps he has never spoken of it. Perhaps he has never said anything, by that name or the names under which we recognize it, of the “sexual-relation,” “sexual-difference,” or indeed of “man-and-woman.” That silence, therefore, is easily remarked. Which means that the remark is somewhat facile. A few indications, concluding with “everything happens as if . . . ,” and it would be satisfied. The dossier could then be shut, avoiding trouble if not risk: it is as if, in reading Heidegger, there

*First and wholly preliminary part of an interpretation by which I wish to situate Geschlecht within Heidegger’s path of thought. Within the path of his writings too, and the marked impression or inscription of the word Geschlecht will not be irrelevant. That word, I leave it here in its language for reasons that should become binding in the course of this very reading. And it is indeed a matter of “Geschlecht” (sex, race, family, generation, lineage, species, genre/genus) and not of the Geschlecht: one will not pass so easily toward the thing itself (the Geschlecht), beyond the mark of the word (Geschlecht) in which, much later, Heidegger will remark the “imprint” of a blow or a stamp (Schlag). This he will do in a text we shall not discuss here but toward which this reading will continue, by which in truth I know it is already magnetised: “Die Sprache im Gedicht, Eine Erörterung von Georg Trakls Gedicht” (1953) in Unterwegs zur Sprache (1959, pp. 36 ff.).
were no sexual difference, nothing of that in man, or put otherwise in
woman, to interrogate or suspect, nothing worthy of questioning,
*fragwürdig*. It is as if, one might continue, sexual difference did not rise
to the height of ontological difference, on the whole as negligible, in
regard to the question of the sense of being, as any other difference, a
determinate distinction or an ontic predicate. Negligible for thought, of
course, even if not at all for science or philosophy. But insofar as it is
opened up to the question of being, insofar as it has a relation to being, in
that very reference, *Da*sein would not be sexed. Discourse on sexuality
could then be abandoned to the sciences or philosophies of life, to
anthropology, sociology, biology, or perhaps even to religion or morality.

Sexual difference, it was said, could not rise to the height of
ontological difference. If one wished to find out what height is in
question, the thought of difference not rising to any, the silence would not
be lacking. That could then be found arrogant or, precisely, provoking, in
a century when sexuality, common place of all babbling, has also become
the currency of philosophic and scientific "knowledge," the inevitable
*Kampfplatz* of ethics and politics. Not a word from Heidegger! It could
even be found a matter of grand style, this scene of stubborn mutism at
the very center of the conversation, in the uninterrupted and distracted
buzzing of the colloquium; for in itself it has a waking and sobering value
(but what exactly is one speaking about around this silence?): Who,
indeed, around or even long before him has not chatted about sexuality as
such, as it were, and by that name? All the philosophers in the tradition
have done so, from Plato to Nietzsche, who for their part were
irrepressible on the subject. Kant, Hegel, Husserl have all reserved it a
place; they have tried at least a word on it in their anthropology or in their
philosophy of nature, and really everywhere.

Is it imprudent to trust Heidegger's manifest silence? Will what is thus
ascertained later be deranged from its pretty philological assurance by
some known or unedited passage when, while searching out the whole of
Heidegger, some reading machine will hunt out the thing and snare it?
Still, one must think of programing the machine, one must think, think of
it and know how to do it. Relying on which words? Only on names? And
on which syntax, visible or invisible? Briefly, in which signs will you
recognize his speaking or remaining silent about what you nonchalantly
call sexual difference? What do you think by those words or through
them?

In order that such an impressive silence be today remarked on, to let it
appear as such, marked and marking, what, on the whole, would be
satisfactory? Undoubtedly this: Heidegger would have said nothing
about sexuality by name in the places where the best educated and