Poetic Saying As Beckoning: 
The Opening of Hölderlin's Germanien

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To read Hölderlin, to read poetry (Dichtung) needs our hesitation. This hesitation arises from our place in history: Thinking that we know the answers and possess solutions (or can know and possess), yet we do not (and cannot).

When engaged in the manner in which it beckons us, reading Hölderlin and poetry leads us directly to the question that makes us hesitate, the question of who we are: Are we engaged in genuine dialogue with the poem; or do we merely—even scholarly—chatter about it? Do we genuinely release ourselves into the root historical unfolding of our Dasein; or do we merely play around with that root unfolding, basically evading its root domain? Do we have a genuine understanding of our being—and thus of being as such, as emergent disclosure—or do we merely totter around giddily in cliches and figures of speech? In a gathering of these issues/questions, we ask: Do we genuinely experience what we do not and cannot know—such that our own thinking might get stronger in an honest-to-goodness encounter with this boundary (of not knowing), a “coming against” such that our own resistance expands into the resistance of the boundary?

The above words are a creative paraphrase and interpretive reading of the closing paragraph of the first part of the text of Heidegger’s lectures on
Hölderlin’s poem *Germanien* (given in the Winter Semester of 1934/35). In heeding these questions, we see the decisive shift *away from* merely reading and then talking about Hölderlin or genuine poetry and *towards* an experience of poetic saying (*das dichterische Sagen*)—grafted, as it were, on a trunk whose root-stock is the root-attunement (*Grundstimmung*) of poetic saying. The tune (voice, *Stimme*) of saying is tuned; the poet speaks, sings, says, from out of this attuning (*Stimmung*); this attuning tunes up (*be-stimmt*) the ground, the place in which poetic saying is attuned from the disclosing/manifesting that is its root tune (*Grundstimmung*) (79).

When elucidating Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Heidegger indicates how Hegel’s work should be read:

> Do not be in a hurry to criticize and to raise objections as they come to mind piecemeal. Instead go along with [mitgehen] Hegel, go along at length, with patience, and with labor.2

Reading Heidegger himself can make the same demand. Should we not “go along with him”? What does it mean to go along with Heidegger in this way? Heidegger’s is no ordinary talk *about* this or that; but rather, in his thinking/saying, disclosure takes place (not mere chatter about, but genuine dialogue from within; not merely playing around and evading the root character of Dasein, but genuine letting go into that root domain; not tottering around near the there of our being and of being/disclosure as such, but a genuine understanding tuned by being and in accordance with it).

What does it mean to go along with Heidegger? Is this going along what philosophy designates as exposition? Is writing an expository essay “going along with Heidegger”? In his text on Hölderlin’s *Germanien*—and in all his texts—Heidegger does not simply talk about disclosure; rather certain phenomena actually get disclosed in Heidegger’s working text (language, death, the art-work, the Gestell of technological comportment, will to power, subjectivity, and much more). To go along with Heidegger comes from understanding this disclosive character of thinking and work that is proper to Heidegger’s text-work. To go along with Heidegger is to think along (*mitdenken*) with him. This thinking along as co-enacting, the working out of what gets disclosed in his thinking, comes from the inherent character of his thinking. Heidegger’s thinking is pregnant with the longing for co-enactment, is *vollzugshaft*.

To heed this longing and to take it seriously, to experience this enactment in thinking, to play a part in what unfolds, to join in actively with the disclosing work of the work of thinking, we must surrender our distance as an observer; and we must see Heidegger’s work, not as “theories” to be compared and counterbalanced with other theories, but as tasks that demand our involvement in their re-working. Such a re-working, our own