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What Is Called Drinking?

Heidegger, Wine, and Loss

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Heidegger's writings are dripping in wine; it occupies a privileged place in his thought, for it is the figure of loss, waste, and squander par excellence. As such, it plays a crucial role in Heidegger's economy of the singular and the replaceable, of the thing and the technological standing reserve. If technology seeks to ensure that everything is replaceable, then loss would be anathema to that agenda. What can be lost is precisely the irreplaceable, the singular. And if contemporary technology stands as the culmination of metaphysics, any effort to deviate from its agenda of replaceability would be an attempt to break with metaphysics itself. Thus, and as astounding as it might sound, wine plays a key role in the overcoming, or "conversion" (*Verwindung*), of metaphysics. Wine against technology? against metaphysics? Yes and yes.

1. *Jeweinigkeit*: Wine in Heidegger's Works

Heidegger's passing references to wine betray a great familiarity with it. Almost every stage of wine production is to be found in them. Heidegger's remarks run from the harvest to the bottling. Let me quickly run through a few of these.

The first is undoubtedly that of "gathering," Heidegger's interpretive translation of the Greek λόγος. The harvesting of grapes is the privileged example here.¹ He is aware of vineyard conditions in repeatedly referencing phylloxera [*Reblaus*], the aphid that feeds solely on the roots of grape vines, inadvertently imported to Europe from the United States in the late nineteenth century.² More broadly, viticulture plays a role in what it means to be mortal. For Heidegger, mortals dwell, and this means that they "build," i.e. they help coax along that which is given. The prime example of such

¹ "Here, now, and for the future we understand 'lesen' in a broader, and at the same time more originary, sense: 'to glean the fields' [*die Ähren auf dem Acker lesen*], 'to gather the wine grapes in the vineyard' [*die Weintrauben lesen im Rebberg*]; 'to gather wood in the forest' [*das Holz lesen im Wald*], λέγειν, lesen, λόγος, die Lese [the gathering or picking]" (GA 55: 266–67). Further references abound: "Die Traubenlese nimmt die Beeren vom Rebstock ab" (GA 7: 215). "denn λόγος gehört zu λέγειν, und dies besagt und ist dasselbe Wort wie unser 'lesen' – Weinlese, Ährenlese: sammeln" (GA 9: 278/XXX). This gathering in the sense of the grape harvest underwrites the gathering of *lesen* as a "reading": "Λέγω, λέγειν, lateinisch *legere*, ist dasselbe Wort wie unser 'lesen': Ähren lesen, Holz lesen, die Weinlese, die Auslese; 'ein Buch lesen' ist nur eine Abart des 'Lesens' im eigentlichen Sinne" (GA 40: 132/XXX). "Ohne dieses Versammeln, d. h. ohne die Lese im Sinne der Ähren- und Weinlese, vermochten wir nie, auch nicht durch ein noch so scharfes Beobachten von Schriftzeichen, ein Wort zu lesen" (GA 8: 211–12/XXX).

² He uses it as an example of a being in need of a ground in *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1935): "Somewhere in the vineyard, for example, phylloxera [*Reblaus*] turns up, something indisputably present at hand. One asks: where does this come from, where and what is its ground?" (GA 40: 30/31, tm). It is even an example of how we use the word "is": "We choose a simple and common and almost careless saying, in which Being is said in a word form whose use is so frequent that we hardly even notice it. We say, 'God is.' 'The earth is.' 'The lecture is in the auditorium.' [...] 'Phylloxera is in the vineyards'" (GA 40: 95/97, tm). See also a remark from the Schelling lecture course (1936): "Admittedly, this indication cannot be of the sort whereby we prove the presence of phylloxera on grape vines" (GA 42: 189/XXX).

“tending and caring” (*hegen und pflegen*) is again the cultivation of the vine.³ Passing remarks of his show that he is aware of the wine crush and the role of dregs in the pressing of wine and is even aware of the need to reduce acidity in the vats (perhaps a reference to malolactic fermentation).⁴ Heidegger is aware of bottling as well, he remarks on the types of wine (the German Spätlese, for example) and also on the effects of aging whereby wine turns to vinegar.⁵

All that leaves is the drinking of wine. Friendly biographer, Heinrich Wiegand Petzet confirms not only that Heidegger drank, but that he did so *critically*:

We had frequent appointments in the city [Freiburg], where Heidegger liked the old Zum Falken wine tavern [*Weinstube*]. This tavern, too, fell victim to modernization; and its setting, transformed into that of a first-class hotel, lives only a borrowed existence as a wine restaurant and has

³ “To be human means: to be upon the earth as a mortal, which means: to dwell. The old word *bauen* [to build] says that the human is insofar as he dwells. But this word *bauen* means at the same time: to tend and care [*hegen und pflegen*], namely to till the soil [*den Acker bauen*], to cultivate the vines [*Reben bauen*]. Such *bauen* merely shelters, it shelters what grows as this ripens into fruit of its own accord. *Bauen* in the sense of tending and caring is no production” (GA 7: 149/PLT 145, tm).

⁴ See “that is as necessary as the dregs in the pressing of wine” (GA 42: 46–47/27, tm) and “According to the withdrawal understood in this way, there would then be no being. One would thus be understanding withdrawal in the sense of a process through which, for example, one withdraws acidity from wine so that it doesn’t have it any more. But being is not a thing that some one of us takes away and puts to the side” (GA 10: 104/70).

⁵ “Just as the Greek word λόγος means λέγειν [the verb ‘to gather’] and λεγόμενον [the noun ‘what is gathered’], so does the German word *die Lese* also mean at once the carrying out of the gathering, i.e. in the course of the grape harvest, but also what has been gathered in the sense of the yield of the gathering, such as when we speak of a ‘Spätlese’ as an available kind of wine” (GA 55: 267). “When wine becomes sour and turns to vinegar, it does not become nothing. When we say: ‘It has turned to vinegar,’ we mean to indicate that it came to ‘nothing,’ i.e., not to what we expected. In the ‘vinegar’ lies the escaping, the absencing, of the wine [*das Ausbleiben, die Abwesenung des Weines*]” (GA 9: 297/227, tm).

retained little of its original charm. Heidegger and I often sat in the Thoma-Stüble of the Falken or in one of its deep window corners, along with a bottle whose “label claims” [*Marke*] we tested like experts.⁶

To speak of Heidegger and wine, then, is no arbitrary decision, the texts and the life fully warrant it.

2. To Gather and to Pour

Gathering defines wine. With the harvesting of the grapes and its collection in a jug (or carafe), wine is gathered. But wine also gathers, and in a rather extreme way, for wine is the coming together of nothing less than earth and sky. Earth and sky “abide in the wine that the fruit of the vine provides, in which the nourishment of the earth and the sun of the sky are betrothed [*zugetraut*] to each other. [...] In the gift of wine, there abides [...] the sky and earth” (GA 79: 11/10–11). Earth and sky are “betrothed” or “entrusted” to each other in wine; wine is their bond (GA 79: 11/10). The relation of earth and sky is nothing untethered or free-floating. It materializes in wine. Wine exists as the intersection of earth and sky. Wine is their proof.

And this would be Heideggerian *terroir*, the intersection of earth and sky in the wine. We would taste for this.

⁶ Heinrich Wiegand Petzet, *Encounters and Dialogues with Martin Heidegger, 1929–1976*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 185, tm.

But this gathering would not be a gathering if it were not irreconcilably tied to dispersal. The collective force of gathering in Heideggerian thought would have to be met by just as powerful a thinking of disjointure, loss, and waste. This is a central topic in the lecture “The Thing,” where the prime example is a jug. The jug holds by retaining, but its retention, too, is only thinkable against a possible dispersion, a pouring out. The essence of the jug lies in a holding that is defined by an outpouring.

But we are not interested in outpourings that go to mortals as a libation to satisfy their thirst, for these are put to good use. Rather, we are interested in those outpourings that do not satisfy a thirst, but are wasted.⁷ By Heidegger’s account, this is an oblation to the gods.

The pour is the oblation spent for the immortal gods. The gift of the pour as oblation is the authentic gift. [...] The consecrated oblation is what the word ‘pour’ actually names: offering and sacrifice. ‘Pour’ [*Guß*], ‘to pour’ [*gießen*], in Greek reads: χέειν, Indogermanic: *ghu*. [...] Pouring is: donating, sacrificing, and therefore giving. GA 79: 11–12/11.

⁷ “GUIDE: Although one who is accustomed to drinking beyond thirst is indeed called a drinker, mere drinkers do not know how to drink, which is why we also use a word for their drinking that is used to designate what animals do, even though among animals there are never any drinkers of this type. SCIENTIST: Then ‘to drink beyond thirst’ signifies not merely to get blind drunk, but rather to go out beyond thirst as the usual occasion for drinking, and to drink to conviviality [*zur Geselligkeit*]” (GA 77: 136/88). The conviviality we seek is with what is most other.

For the pour to be sacrificed as an oblation, it must be wasted. This means poured to the gods. Thus wine links us to the divinities. Without them, there could be no waste, they name the drain to what lies outside the system. But Heidegger complicates things. The divinities would seem to oppose waste and turn our attempts at squander into something profitable. They receive what we would so gladly lose:

In the gift of the pour that is an oblation, the divinities abide in their way,
divinities who receive back the gift of the giving as the gift of a donation [die das Geschenk des Schenkens als das Geschenk der Spende zurückempfangen].

GA 79: 12/11, em.

The divinities here would appear to recuperate all loss and thus establish us firmly in the world of use and sameness, the economic order of replacement.

But what I want to propose today is that wine proves otherwise. For there to be loss, something must be lost, to be sure. But everything must not be lost. I mean that for there to be loss, there must be something that remarks that loss, someone that suffers that loss. And so long as there is that something or that someone, there has not been total loss. Total loss is impossible. To be lost, something must remain. Now for the divinities who would “receive back” the squandered wine, I want to view this as their allowing us our losses. But for this to be the case, much will depend on the nature of the divinity that is receiving back.

3. Markgräfler Gutedel

No one will be surprised that Heidegger's preferred wine is not French, nor even one of Germany's famed Rieslings from the Mosel valley. Heidegger's taste is far more local than this. Freiburg sits in the southern portion of the Baden Württemberg wine district. It lies with France to its west, across the Rhine, with Switzerland to the south, again across the Rhine, and with the Black Forest to the east. Due to its milder climate, Baden Württemberg has even been called the "Tuscany" of Germany. Wine critic Hugh Johnson says of it, "Baden, just over the Rhine from Alsace, produces wines that are invariably dry, very full-bodied...and often oaked. These are incontrovertibly wines to be drunk with food and the best are keenly sought at Germany's well-kept tables, even if they are too rarely exported."⁸ Others are less diplomatic, "Viticulture in Baden possess characteristics that are rarely promoted as part of Germany's international wine identity, some of which are even embarrassing."⁹

Heidegger's preference is for the Markgräflerland subregion of Baden, located halfway between Freiburg and Basel. It is hospitable to the rather humble grape, Gutedel, aka Chasselas, widely grown in Switzerland, limited in France to the Savoie region, with minor applications in the Loire. Wine critic Jancis Robinson says of the region that, "south of Freiburg, the pleasant landscape of the Bereich Markgräflerland is

⁸ Hugh Johnson & Jancis Robinson, *The World Atlas of Wine*, 6th ed. (London: Mitchell Beazley, 2007), 248.

⁹ Dieter Braatz, Ulrich Sautter, Ingo Swoboda, *Wine Atlas of Germany*, trans. Kevin D. Goldberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 159.

known for its easy-to-drink wine from Gutedel (Chasselas)."¹⁰ Johnson agrees, "Far to the south, in the Markgräflerland, the corner of Germany between Freiburg and Basel, the favourite grape has been Gutedel, the local name for the Chasselas planted across the border in Switzerland. It makes refreshing, if rather reticent, wine."¹¹ It can also be worse than reticent, "This grape poses a particular challenge to winemakers, as a mediocre Gutedel is a rather banal wine. The finesse of the best examples often goes unnoticed by casual drinkers. Yet there is phenomenal Gutedel in the Markgräflerland, principally from vines grown in limestone soils, which lend ordinary wines a superb minerality."¹²

The rather neutral and painfully cautious reviews of the grape and the wines do not prevent Markgräfler Gutedel from being Heidegger's wine of choice. He even has a preferred producer, as we shall see.

4. Intoxication, Drunkenness, Sobriety

If it were not for the alcohol, there would be far less interest in wine. The promised intoxication (*Rausch*) is a necessary ingredient, with alcohol levels in wine perfectly pitched, measured even, for mortal consumption, between the lows of beer and the

¹⁰ Jancis Robinson, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Wine*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 60.

¹¹ Johnson, *World Atlas of Wine*, 249.

¹² Braatz et. al., *Wine Atlas of Germany*, 174.

highs of distilled spirits, on the earth and under the sky. The alcohol in wine is our passage to another world, but is it that of Nietzsche or Hölderlin?

Intoxication (*Rausch*) is at the root of Nietzsche's mature aesthetics. Intoxication is "the feeling of increasing force and fullness."¹³ For Heidegger, changes in feeling are changes in the ways in which beings as a whole affect us.¹⁴ Intoxication as an increase of life force thus names a more thorough exposing of ourselves to beings. Intoxication is "the capacity to extend beyond oneself, as a relation to beings in which beings themselves are experienced as being more fully in being, richer, more perspicuous, more essential" (GA 6.1: 100–101/N1: 100). This being out beyond oneself is what distinguishes intoxication from mere drunkenness, as Heidegger is at pains to explain: "Of someone completely drunk we can only say: he 'has' an intoxication; but he *is* not intoxicated [*berauscht*]. Intoxication is here not a condition in which one is out beyond oneself, rather what we call intoxication here, in keeping with the common expression, is a mere 'drunkenness' [*Besoffenheit*], something that deprives us of every possible condition" (GA 6.1: 100/N1: 100, tm). Instead, Nietzsche's aesthetic *Rausch* is a creative condition, a "form engendering force" (GA 6.1: 114/N1: 115), such that, "for Nietzsche intoxication means the most glorious victory of form" (GA 6.1: 120/N1: 119, tm).

¹³ Nietzsche, *Götzendämmerung*, KSA 8: 116/*Twilight of the Idols*, in *Portable Nietzsche*, 518, tm.

¹⁴ "because feeling, as feeling oneself to be, always just as essentially has a feeling for beings as a whole, every bodily state involves some way in which the things around us and the people with us lay a claim on us or do not do so" (GA 6.1: 99/N1: 99).

This victory of form is a victory of idealization. Details are overlooked, if not eliminated (something Winckelmann lauded in Greek sculpture). The world of the intoxicated artist is simplified in the achievement of form: "Whenever form holds sway, as the supreme simplicity of the most resourceful lawfulness, there is intoxication" (GA 6.1: 119/N1: 119, tm). It is a small step from this victory of form to an aesthetic politics, the aesthetic shaping of the masses, and to the crystalline unworld of Ernst Jünger, the last Nietzschean. Simply put, the victory of form would be the end of metaphysics.

Six years later, by 1942, any advocacy of *Rausch* is abandoned. Now simple drunkenness is extolled in its place. The analysis starts from Hölderlin's lines in "Remembrance," that run, "it reaches me, / Full of dark light, / The fragrant cup." For Heidegger, the poet is here not just calling for a drink to get drunk. Rather, the intoxication that the poet seeks is for a mood that allows for a sighting of the "most other":

Is drunkenness merely intoxication [*ist denn Trunkenheit nur Rausch*]? First off, "intoxication" and "intoxication" are not the same. Intoxication as mere inebriation [*Betrunkenheit*] is distinct from the "intoxication" of enthusiasm [*Begeisterung*]. But drunkenness is still different from either of these. It means a being-filled [*Erfülltsein*], which is neither merely blind frenzy nor a senseless rapture [*Hingerissenheit*]. Drunkenness means a being-filled, that includes a proper collectedness and readiness [*Sammlung*

und Bereitschaft]. Drunkenness is that sublimity of mood which has decided itself in favor of the most extreme other [zum äußersten Anderen]; decided not as the result of a calculated conclusion, but indeed decided in being carried along by the mood that fully determines drunkenness. GA 52: 147, em.

Where Nietzschean intoxication revealed a world of beings simplified in accordance with the unceasing increase of life force, Hölderlinian drunkenness instead gives us access to “the most extreme other” (GA 52: 147).¹⁵ For Heidegger, the possibility of any “overcoming” of metaphysics hinges on this difference.

Drunkenness transposes us into a higher awareness (*Besinnung*) and this awareness or mood makes possible the sighting of something other, which Hölderlin identifies as the holy. In drunkenness, then:

the sublimity of mood that carries one along transposes one into the heights, from where one’s awareness [*Besinnen*] can be a higher one. Thus it remains near the highest, which Hölderlin names the holy. The request for “the fragrant cup,” “full of dark light,” is desired not for stupefaction and intoxication, but rather for the mood of higher awareness [*Besinnens*].

GA 52: 147

¹⁵ As Heidegger puts it in the “Remembrance” publication: “Drunkenness [*Die Trunkenheit*] is that sublime elevation of mood in which solely the attuning voice [*die Stimme des Stimmenden*] is perceived, such that the ones attuned by this [*die Gestimmten*] may be decided in favor of the most extreme other to themselves” (GA 4: 119–20/142, tm). The most extreme other is also named “the holy.”

Drunkenness thus grant us vision of a world clarified, but not simplified. If anything, things are more complex, as oppositions are seen to fall away and contradictions lose their antagonism: “Drunkenness lifts one into illuminated clarity, in which the depths of the concealed are opened up and darkness appears as the sister of clarity” (GA 4: 120/142, tm). Darkness and light are no longer viewed as opposites locked in contradiction.¹⁶

5. Wine at Home in Zähringen

The Heidegger house was welcoming with wine. Petzet reports of the Heidegger household in the 1960s that “in the afternoon, following a good custom from Baden, a glass of wine was served instead of tea up in the study.”¹⁷ Late afternoon is a time of transition, not to say twilight, and a switch from tea to wine reveals something of one’s allegiances. The tea drinker clings to the waning light, the wine drinker accepts the waxing darkness.

Max Kommerell describes visiting Heidegger at his house with Gadamer in 1941:

“Heidegger emerges from a second room and greets me with a prolonged and peculiar

¹⁶ This includes the opposition between drunkenness and sobriety, as numerous citations such as the following would show: “This sobriety is also in no way the sobering up of drunkenness, as if this should be pent up or even set aside. *This sobriety is filled by drunkenness*” (GA 52: 147, em), “Drunkenness confuses the ‘senses’ [*den ‘Sinn’*] so little, that it rather first brings the sobriety needed for the heights [*das Hohe*] and lets one *think of* this [an...denken]” (GA 4: 120/142, tm), and, like drunkenness, which it is, “Sobriety is the fundamental mood that is always ready for the holy” (GA 4: 77/98, tm).

¹⁷ Petzet, *Encounters*, 188.

smile. He invites us to sit, pours us a few healthy glasses of acidic wine from a bottle of Markgräfler, and without much ado begins to recite simply and impressively in a poetic and quite voice.”¹⁸ By Kommerell’s account, Heidegger is pouring the wine before they have even sat down. The wine accompanies the invitation and flows immediately into the recitation. Kommerell notes the acidity of the wine. Assuming a Markgräfler Gutedel, this is a desirable quality, as Gutedel can often taste flabby or watery.

In another instance, Hartmut Buchner recalls how Heidegger hosted a reception at his house in 1957 on the occasion of his friend Alfredo Guzzoni’s promotion and Buchner’s own departure to Japan. In some brief remarks, Heidegger offered his own idiosyncratic translation of the famed passage from Plato’s *Seventh Letter*, 341c–d, concerning the spark in the soul. For Heidegger that spark arises from their shared experience of what is to be thought. Heidegger’s Plato explains “what is to be thought” in the following way:

Namely it is in no way sayable as other teachable and learnable things are; rather it is a blossom in the soul arising from that lavish and varied presencing whereby we are gathered to each other [*vielfältig-reichem gesammeltem einander An-wesen*] (συνουσία [being together]) [...] it plays all about what is to be thought, (a blossom) from their shared entry into the

¹⁸ cited in Petzet, *Encounters*, 193–94, tm.

matter, (blooming) unexpectedly like a light set ashine by the leap of a spark; and this (the blossom) then tends to its own widening emergence.¹⁹

What is to be thought is the “blossom” that arises in the midst of our thinking together and being together (συνουσία). When we gather in thought, each of us is a petal of that blossom.

Then Heidegger said: “That the συνουσία may long endure undamaged, to that we drink wine.” The wine, with which we then sat together, was of an exceptional quality, like all the wine that there was to drink in Heidegger’s house.²⁰

The Heideggerian wine taster would taste for this συν. It constitutes the immediate context of the wine, wine drunk at Heidegger’s house.

6. Dionysus vs. The Crucified

Wine is the product of a gathering, but to all gathering there comes dispersal. Wine must be capable of being wasted, squandered. We noted already that this is something distinct from total loss, which is something that would go unremarked and thus unsuffered. The squandered wine must find its outside, escape utility despite its reception back. It would take a special god to be able to receive this sacrifice without

¹⁹ Hartmut Buchner, “Fragmentarisches,” in Günther Neske, ed., *Erinnerung an Martin Heidegger* (Pfullingen: Günther Neske, 1977), 47–48.

²⁰ Buchner, “Fragmentarisches,” 48.

putting it to use. Or rather, it would take something neither god nor human, but a *Halbgott*, a demigod, to be able to suspend receipt of the sacrifice this way. Just such a demigod is Dionysus.

For Walter Otto, whose 1933 book *Dionysus: Myth and Cult*, Heidegger claims to have had a hand in shaping, “the divine essence of Dionysus, the basic characteristic of his nature [...] is madness.”²¹ Madness for Otto is basically the admission of contradiction. Wine brings this about as well: “thus of all the earth produces, the vine mirrors best the god’s two faces and reveals most clearly his miraculous nature – both his endearing and his terrible wildness.”²² Dionysus unites the seemingly irreconcilable contradictions of existence. Wine as his emblem does the same.

Heidegger generally agrees with this account of Dionysus, though, in a more ontological register:

Dionysos is not just one demigod [*ein Halbgott*] among others, but the distinctive one. He is the Yes that belongs to life at its wildest, inexhaustible in its creative urge, and he is the No that belongs to the most terrifying death and annihilation. He is the bliss of magical enchantment and the horror of a crazed terror. He is the one in being the other; that is, in being, he at the same time is not and in not being, he is. [...] In

²¹ Walter F. Otto, *Dionysus: Myth and Cult*, trans. Robert B. Palmer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965), 143.

²² Otto, *Dionysus*, 151.

presencing, this demigod is absent, and in absencing he is present. The symbol of the one who is absent in presencing and present in absencing is the mask. The mask is the distinctive symbol of Dionysos – that is, understood metaphysically in a Greek way: the originary relatedness to one another of being and non-being (presence and absence).

GA 39: 189–90/173.

Heidegger thus sees in Dionysus a blending of opposites as well, a coexistence of contradiction, even that between presence and absence. For this reason, he is the god of neither presence nor absence, Dionysus is the god of the trace, of that which lies “between” presence and absence.²³

This allows us to distinguish Dionysus from that other god of wine, Jesus Christ. For the Christians, transubstantiation means the wine has become the blood of Christ as present, not as trace; wine becomes the god. One is not possessed by the god, one imbibes the god, drinks the god. Transubstantiation asserts the reality of Christ’s blood and that is its fatal flaw. The divine unites with the mundane and the miracle of their coincidence is celebrated. As such, the transubstantiated wine occupies the same metaphysical position as Nietzsche’s *Übermensch*, Jünger’s worker, or Rilke’s angel. Like

²³ See also the 1946 essay, “What Are Poets For?”, “According to Hölderlin’s testimony, Dionysus, the wine god, brings this trace down to the god-less ones amid the darkness of their world night. For the god of the vine preserves in both the vine and its fruit the essential reciprocity [*Zueinander*] of earth and sky as the site of the bridal festival for humans and gods. Only in the realm of this site, if anywhere, could there still remain behind traces of the flown gods for the god-less humans” (GA 5: 271/202, tm).

these, transubstantiation merely collapses the difference between the sensible and the super-sensible in the consummation of a reality still nevertheless defined by the poles it would seek to escape. It marks the consummation, not the conversion, of metaphysics.

Heidegger rejects the Christian transubstantiation model at every turn, as in his aptly titled “Sketches and Notes on Hölderlin’s ‘Bread and Wine’”:

To be sure, Hölderlin does not think bread and wine as ‘substances’ of a ‘transubstantiation.’ They reveal something else, in a more arriving way, and *are of an earlier provenance*. The Christian Annunciation is not the end of history. Thought more originally, it is the onset of the mutual completion [in onto-theology] of metaphysics, but therefore likewise the preparation of that between-time [*Zwischenzeit*], which a more inceptual dispensation brings forth [*ein anfänglicheres Geschick heraufführt*].

GA 75: 373, em.

The Christian possesses, the Greek is possessed by, the god. What is required here is not that the god be in me, but that I be in the god. And I am in Dionysus as the medium through which another world may be sighted in greater clarity than before. To taste wine is to learn to taste this clarity. In this medium, what is squandered can never be completely lost nor completely recuperated (it is always underway). Dionysus may not completely receive back what we squander. But for this to be the case, it will have to be the squandering of an object like no other. This will take wine.

7. The Württemberg Farmer and Wine Growers' Political Party in 1932

In his editorial afterword to GA 16, *Reden und andere Zegunisse eines Lebensweges*, the volume that first brought Heidegger's rectoral speeches to the *Gesamtausgabe*, Herrmann Heidegger notes of his father that "Basically he was non-political" (GA 16: 835). In support of this claim, he offers something that should alert us to a further importance of wine for Heidegger. He says of his father, "in the 1932 Reichstag vote he chose the small, insignificant party of Württemberg wine growers [*Weinbauern*]" (GA 16: 835). In the 1932 elections, in which the NSDP rocketed to victory, Heidegger voted for the *Württembergischer Bauern- und Weingärtnerbund*, in an election that left them at their weakest in party history.²⁴

8. *Auggener Schäf*

Günther Neske recollects his times with Heidegger, presumably in the late 1950s–1960s:

Unforgettable are the evenings in Meßkirch. We often went over when Heidegger had billeted himself there with his brother, usually for some special work that concerned the editions. When the pressing questions were clarified, there then resulted long evenings, occasionally even nights,

²⁴ See the Geschichts- und Kulturverein Köngen website, in the document, "Württemberg 1918–1933," <http://geschichtsverein-koengen.de/Gesch1918-1933.htm>

around the table, mostly at Molls in the “Hofgarten” with “Auggener Schäf” and other Markgräfler wines.²⁵

Heidegger’s favorite wine was the Markgräfler wine, “Auggener Schäf,” a Gutedel. Other sources confirm this. The wine is still in production. A recent statement by the winery director, Thomas Basler, entitled “Wine is Poetry in a Glass,” states in its first sentence that “Auggener wine is a natural product” before going on to explain that:

All our investment in modern cellar technology, in stainless steel tanks and traditional wood casks pursue just the one goal: to produce at peak quality an authentic, original [*urwüchsig*], natural product full of character.

Auggener wines show an unmistakable profile and bring the characteristic of the terroir – the soil, the location, and the climate – to expression in multiple taste clusters. The noble drops of the Auggener Schäf wine cellars regularly range among the pinnacles of Baden wines and achieve international acclaim.²⁶

The grape of choice at Auggener Schäf, as in all of Markgräflerland, is Gutedel. Their website explains its prominence:

In 1780 Margrave Karl Friedrich of Baden – the later Großherzog of Baden – brought the varietal to Markgräflerland from Vevey, Switzerland on

²⁵ Editors afterword in Günther Neske, ed., *Erinnerung an Martin Heidegger* (Pfullingen: Günther Neske, 1977), 295.

²⁶ *Auggener Schäf Preisliste 2016/17*, 2.

Lake Geneva. Today Gutedel regularly makes up approximately 42% of the varietal plantings in Markgräflerland, and is thus also often called simply “Markgräfler.” Its wines are impressed with delicate and, as a rule, neutral aromas (nut, almond, bitter almond) with simple and agreeable character, accompanied by a mild but exhilarating acidity. Composed mostly dry, this very digestible wine is cherished as much for eating as for an uncomplicated quaffing wine.²⁷

Gutedel is intimately linked to the Markgräflerland, indeed it is “Markgräfler” *simpliciter*. The Markgräfler self-conception comes through in a brief article in the Auggener Schäf catalog entitled, “Markgräflerland – ‘Little Garden of Paradise’ in the Sun Spoiled Southwest,” which states, “where the fruits of nature are offered everywhere with such squander [*verschwenderisch dargeboten*], the gastronome [*Genießer*] is at home.”²⁸

Despite the Markgräfler emphasis on squander, Auggener Schäf is not an expensive wine. The Gutedel we have been discussing costs the gastronome €4,40 for the Qualitätswein and €6,90 for the Spätlese.

²⁷ From website of Auggener Schäf, re: Gutedel, at: <http://www.auggener-wein.de/gutedel/>

²⁸ *Auggener Schäf Preisliste 2016/2017*, 16.

9. The Dark Light of Wine

Wine is sacrificeable. It can be squandered. You cannot say this about everything. And with wine, it is only because it can be received back that wine can be squandered in the first place. Wine is tied to Dionysus, god of the trace and contradiction. Only he can allow this squandering and receiving to coexist. But only wine is capable of occupying such a fraught position, due to its own contradictory nature.

Heidegger's analysis of the contradictory nature of wine is guided again by those lines from Hölderlin's "Remembrance" that we have already encountered: "but it reaches me, / full of dark light, / the fragrant cup." Common thinking cannot envision a way for dark and light to go together without cancelling each other. When we think antagonistically, we think pure bright light, on the one hand, and pitch-black darkness, on the other, as antipodes. The dark light of wine that Heidegger attends to is not based on such antipodes.

Whereas bright light can only reveal the unconcealed, dark light can let something else appear:

Here on the contrary is an illumination that *comes to shine through its darkness, such that here something appears in that it conceals itself*. It refuses publicity and thus raises the presentation into something daring [*Kühnheit*], the dark illumination not to be replaced by an empty

brightness, but rather to come into accord with it in the increasing clarity of presentation. (GA 52: 149, em).

Darkness does not cancel the light, but helps shape it. The darkening of the light allows for the appearance of what bright light would otherwise miss, concealment. Bright light demands that the concealed show itself as unconcealed and in the light. Dark light need not be so insistent. It is able to allow concealment to show itself, without thereby unconcealing it. Where all other light shows the uncovered, this light would let us see *more*, or rather *less*, in that this light would let us see concealment itself. This non-showing takes place under the auspices of "clarity."

The "dark light" is the light of clarity, a measured light, a mediating light, conductive light greased with the darkness. Bright light and the pitch black are equally foreign to it.²⁹ The dark light of clarity is a softer light:

The poet asks for the donation of the dark light, in which the brightness is softened. But this softening does not relieve the light of brightness. *For the darkness allows the appearing of what conceals, and thus preserves in appearing what is concealed therein.* The darkness preserves for the light the fullness of

²⁹ In *Basic Principles of Thinking* (1957): "Thus the dark reigns distinct from the pitch-black as the mere and utter absence of light. The dark however is the secret of the light. The dark keeps the light to itself. The latter belongs to the former. Thus the dark has its own limpidity. Hölderlin, who truly knew the old wisdom, says in the third strophe of his poem 'Remembrance': But extend to me, / full of dark light, / the fragrant cup." (GA 79: 93/88).

what it has to bestow in its shining. The dark light of the wine does not take away awareness [*Besinnung*]; rather it lets awareness climb beyond the mere illusion of clarity, which everything calculable and superficial also has, up into the heights, near to the highest. So this filled cup does not produce a stupor [*Betäubung*]. It does not get one inebriated [*betrunken*], but it does get one drunk [*trunken machen*]. GA 4: 119/141–42, tm, em.

The dark light of wine ushers us into the clarity of daring. This is the daring willing to risk loss in an act of extreme squander. It would need to be remarked, but minimally. What divinity would receive it back without objectifying it? Only one adept in traces, themselves torn and reborn, eternally between life and death. And what could Dionysus receive in this way – so as not to receive it? Only an object that itself is a contradiction, and the one dearest to him, the dark light of wine, a wine that would grant access to a clarity beyond “everything calculable.” Only a contradictory object squandered before a contradictory halfgod has any chance of being lost.

10. End of the Wine

In 1963, Heidegger received a bottle of wine from the rector of Freiburg on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of Heidegger’s doctorate. Heidegger’s thank you letter is disheartening, particularly given the wine: “Thanks, too, for the special wishes concerning my working strength and health. To my great regret, I cannot yet enjoy the

friendly gift from Markgräflerland, since I am bound to a strict diet as a result of a severe jaundice. But my thanks for the wine are for that reason not any less" (GA 16: 588). The sick Heidegger must forego his favorite wine.³⁰

But the deprivation of wine, of illness, the aging of wine in the thought of *sterêsis*, such figures accompany Heidegger in death as well. His burial was accompanied by wine, this time in the form of lines he chose to be read from Hölderlin's elegy "Bread and Wine," asking how the gods have flown from our cups:

But where are the thrones and the temples, *where are the vessels*

Brimming with nectar, the songs delighting the gods?

Cited at GA 16: 749, em.³¹

Hölderlin would detect this in the wine, this would be what he has to teach us about taste. He tastes the flight in the cup. He tastes what is not there. And this would be the only way to articulate a taste, not to mention a life.

³⁰ Heidegger has his wine a few years later, celebrating the conclusion of the *Spiegel* interview in 1966 with a "Markgräfler wine served in old rummers [*Römern*, traditional German wine glasses]" (Petzet, *Encounters*, 97).

³¹ Friedrich Hölderlin, *Selected Poems*, ed. and trans. David Constantine (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1996), 37.

11. Poem

“Thinking”

A counter glance to the lightning flash of being
is thinking.

Then, smote by this,

thinking casts it into the figure

of a phrase: glance and lightning flash,

which – never possessions –

make gifts of themselves [*sich überschenken*]

from the jug

of a wine

of hidden vines.

They float away

from an earth

that becomes heaven for the shepherds.

[Late 1930s–40s; GA 81: 266]