

The Way We Speak*

Preparatory Considerations on the Colloquy of European and East Asian Thinking

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[...] einiges, das immer noch zu fragen oder zu bemerken bleibt
bei diesem wunderbarsten worte unsrer sprache.**

Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm, entry "GE-"

1. *Setting the Theme*

A comparative study requires that what is to be compared should previously be put on a level with each other. Putting on a level that which is to be compared is the presupposition of the comparison. Only what is already in this sense levelled can subsequently be found to be similar or dissimilar. The act of levelling consists in identifying the terms of the comparison so as to constitute these terms as such, that is, as comparable items. The identification itself is achieved by means of an implicit or explicit assumption, or hypothesis. For instance, in order to compare East Asian and European culture, we must first assume a certain concept of culture, thanks to which we can identify, respectively, an "East Asian culture" and a "European culture". The phenomena that eventually enter the comparison can do so only thanks to the assumption that identifies them as "cultural" phenomena in the first place. While providing the identity of what it determines, and thus laying the ground for a comparison, the identifying term itself (in our example: culture) is not interrogated in its sense, but rather taken as given as the comparison proceeds.

An identifying assumption is the condition of possibility of a comparative study. The identity assures, for the purpose of comparison, that what is to be compared be identical both with itself and with what it is to be compared to. In this manner the identity assures the operative possibility of comparison. An identity that assures an operative possibility is itself an operative identity. The latter is a derivative concept. In fact, it derives from an original dimension, wherein

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** "A few things that are still to be asked or remarked with respect to this most wonderful word of our language."

that which is assumed as a cultural phenomenon appears before eventually reappearing as a comparable item. However, that original dimension is surrogated by the derived identity, which occupies its place with itself and with its space of operative possibilities, for instance the possibility of synchronic or diachronic comparison. As a consequence of that subrogation, the original dimension remains forgotten.

We call the forgotten original dimension that precedes the identifying determination “the Same”. The Same is other than the identical. The latter excludes the former. On the other hand, no matter how definite the exclusion, the Same remains ensconced in its earliness and thus cannot be revoked or unsaid by an identifying shortcut. *The Same is irrevocable, in fact, it is the irrevocable itself.* All thinking is, in the first place, for the sake of the Same. While the Same gathers that which appears in it into the space of a colloquy, what is operatively identified is excluded from entering a colloquy. Having been cut short of its reference to the Same, and reduced to a historically scrutinized matter of fact, the identical can only be computed as to its similarities and dissimilarities with what it is being compared to.¹

Here we interrogate the condition of possibility of the colloquy of European and East Asian thinking. Because the very notion of that colloquy appears as something vague and remote, and, in its vagueness, such as to interrogate *us* in the first place, we are in no position of interrogating its condition of possibility in a comparative perspective, in which everything constitutive is already settled by way of identifying assumptions. As a consequence, any assumption or hypothesis that sustains our interrogation is not an identifying surrogate of the Same in which the colloquy unfolds. Rather, what we assume is to some extent analogous to what Plato in his *Politeia* (Book VI) calls a “true hypothesis”. According to Plato, a true hypothesis is a “steppingstone”, or a “springboard”, toward an onset, or inception, which is an-hypothetical, that is, free from hypotheses. A true hypothesis is itself attuned by the an-hypothetical Same, which in the first place interrogates our thinking, and claims its answering endurance for the grounding of its (namely, the Same’s) own truth. Therefore, such hypothesizing is not a way of surrogating the Same with an operative identity, so as to establish an effective ground on which

¹ [The following note is rather technical and draws on previous research results; skipping it will not impair the understanding of the remaining text.] “Absconded” (Ge. *verborgen*, It. *nascosto*) is here heard as a word of thinking. It implies at once the sense of being withdrawn and ensconced in itself; of haltingly withholding itself; of being inconspicuous, ungraspable, and hidden; freeing, refusing, and preserving; attuning, claiming, and puzzling. What is absconded is, in a sense, fugacious, however, absconding is not a fleeing or hiding away of something with regard to something else. In fact, “abscondedness” is said of what is never a given “something” or “someone”: what is absconded ends in the ensconcement of the sameness of the Same. The notions of absconding and absconded apply to what refrains from appearing, insofar as it is, and bears in itself, the free origin of all letting appear. We say that the absconded letting appear is “schismed” (and, in this sense, “different”) from all that appears, in that it is itself the inceptually schisming schism, or the schismatic inception, whose schisming(-itself) grants an appearing in the first place. The schismatic inception *is* the Same itself in its sameness.

to draw conclusions concerning the identified terms; rather, the hypothesis is a run-up for the leap into the Same, that is, a provisional answer which sets the interrogation up for the leap by which it gets off the hypothetical ground and commits itself to the inceptual word of the Same. In fact, the hypothesis' truth is *already* the truth of the Same itself, which in its turn is on the verge of swaying freely as the inceptual "being" of that truth, grounded in thinking. In this manner, the Same, too, is a ground, but one that, by virtue of its own grounding, is "off ground" with respect to all hypothetical grounds. As a consequence, we call the ground that the Same of the colloquy itself is, the "off-ground", while its manner of grounding is, accordingly, an "off-grounding".

Our initial hypothesis is the following: what is in store for European and East Asian thinking, and asks to be prepared by way of an interrogation of its condition of possibility, is a colloquy tuned to the inceptual word of the Same to which both European and East Asian thinking, together, belong. "Colloquy", here, translates the German word *Gespräch*, which, grammatically speaking, is a collective of the noun *Sprache*, formed through the prefix *ge-*. A more common, and ordinarily equivalent, translation of *Gespräch* is "dialogue". For instance, the question of a possible understanding between different cultures or traditions of thinking is typically addressed in terms of a *Gespräch*, or *Dialog*, or "dialogue", that may take place between these cultures or traditions. However, in the present context the word *Gespräch* speaks differently, in that in its very speaking the sphere of *Gespräch* scinds itself from, and thus *is* itself a schism with regard to the sphere of *Dialog*.² Therefore, in our considerations on the *Gespräch* between European and East Asian thinking, in English we say "colloquy" instead of "dialogue", in order to mark a difference with respect to the dialogical sphere, even though the word "colloquy" does not speak in the same way as *Gespräch*.³

The dialogical sphere defines the scope of the thinking and speaking of the philosophical tradition. In this tradition, a dialogue is a speaking (*logos*) that talks-through (*dia*) that which constitutes a being as such, namely its identical being-ground, or identity. Dialogical speaking is gathered on and responsive to identity, while at the same time attempting to gather (that is, to think and, in turn, ground) that identity as such. A derivative form of the identity of the original dialogical sphere is the operative identity which is the basis of a comparative study. The greatness of Humboldt's comparative study of languages is that, while pertaining to the dialogical sphere, it

² This is to be understood as follows: the way in which the word *Gespräch* speaks *is* the schisming-itself of the sphere of *Gespräch* with respect to the sphere of *Dialog*.

³ What is the actual scope of saying "colloquy" instead of "dialogue"? While on the one hand "colloquy" is not merely a terminological marker used for the purpose of establishing or highlighting a given difference, on the other hand the question of the extent to which the same (though not an identical) schisming that is indicated in *Gespräch* is also heard in the word "colloquy", must for now remain unsettled. In other words, it is yet undecided whether or not "colloquy" is a sufficient translation of *Gespräch*.

leaves the identity of language open to the Same that speaks through language itself, though in that sphere the Same cannot say itself in its own truth.

On the other hand, according to our hypothesis, the manner of thinking and the relation to language thanks to which an understanding between European and East Asian thinking is possible do not lie within the scope of the dialogical tradition of philosophy. The words *Gespräch* and, tentatively, “colloquy” indicate a thinking and a relation to language that are not dialogical any more, but imply an openness to the origin of language that the dialogical sphere (that is, the sphere of identity) does not admit as such. In what we call *Gespräch*, thinking is claimed and drawn upon by language *itself* and responsive to language *itself* – namely, its original trait – in a way that is precluded to a dialogue, even though in the dialogical tradition we find unsurpassable examples of a speaking that has an ear for language and its genius.

By saying “colloquy” instead of “dialogue” we have already taken a certain path with regard to the “matter” whose condition of possibility we have set out to interrogate. However, given that this “matter”, being a colloquy and not a dialogue, does not pertain to the domain of the hitherto tradition of philosophy, it becomes questionable to what extent the very concept of “condition of possibility” actually applies to what is provisionally hinted at with that name. In fact, “condition of possibility” is the common translation of *Bedingung der Möglichkeit*, a concept Immanuel Kant introduced into the tradition of philosophy, and therefore a concept that belongs to the sphere in which that tradition unfolds, namely the sphere of identity. Moreover, given the distinction we have made, with regard to European thinking, between a dialogical and a non-dialogical (or, as I would suggest to say, a “colloquial”) thinking, the equivalence of what the word “thinking” implies, respectively, in the phrases “European thinking” and “East Asian thinking” can *a fortiori* not be taken for granted. Finally, the very notions of “European” and “East Asian”, too, are not obvious, given that the geographical or cultural definitions of these notions bear the character of identity, while their “colloquial” meaning is not only as yet not clear and settled, but barely interrogated. Thus, we must conclude that none of the words that compose the formulation of our thematic question – “What is the condition of possibility of the colloquy of European thinking and East Asian thinking?” – can be used without precautions, and that, from the very outset, the path we have taken appears to be strewn with precarious and, possibly, downright insufficient and misleading concepts, that is concepts that preclude a *Gespräch*. Therefore, if our proposed way of interrogation consists in an attempt to bail from the dialogical ground (and its operative derivatives) towards the off-ground of a colloquy attuned by the Same, then, rather than relying on those concepts as operative terms, we must keep these

concepts open for becoming words of the Same, that is words that let us attain the Same that concerns us.

However, a path of interrogation such as the one we have just outlined has already been taken. We know this path as the *Denkweg*, that is the “think-way”, of Martin Heidegger. A think-way is an often clear often obscure way that opens for a thinking and is kept open by that thinking, while it remains attentive to the ways of advertence and attunement that are afforded by the absconded and way-giving concern, or “sake”, by which that thinking is claimed in the first place. On this way, thinking itself becomes a “way of thinking”.

Our own attempt at preparing such a way will find its guiding reference in the *Denkweg* itself, notably in a collection of essays first published in 1959 under the title *On the Way to Language*, and, within that collection, especially in a text that has itself the form of a colloquy, and whose German title reads: “Aus einem Gespräch von der Sprache / Zwischen einem Japaner und einem Fragenden”, that is: “From a Colloquy From Language / Between a Japanese and an Enquirer”.⁴ The fact that Heidegger says “von der Sprache”, that is “from” or “(out) of” language, and not “über die Sprache”, that is “on” or “about” “language”, is not accidental, but refers to the above mentioned “different openness to the origin of language” that characterizes a colloquy as distinct from a dialogue. The phrase *Gespräch von der Sprache* indicates that the colloquy is not *about* language, thus merely having language as its object and identical theme; rather, it attempts to speak *from* language, having presaged in language itself the colloquy’s absconded spring, and precisely in such a way as to let itself (as a colloquy) be attuned by that absconded spring in order to preserve it in its own truth.⁵

2. What Is a Colloquy?

Traditionally, asking for the condition of possibility of something means interrogating the element that originates the being of that thing and keeps this being within its original reference, thus allowing the thing to be what it is. Hence, interrogating the condition of possibility of a colloquy implies asking for the element that allows it to be a colloquy within the original

⁴ Martin Heidegger, “Aus einem Gespräch von der Sprache / Zwischen einem Japaner und einem Fragenden”, in: id., *Untenwegs zur Sprache*, Gesamtausgabe Bd. 12 (Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 1985), p. 79 sqq. (hereafter quoted as GVS). The attempt of this colloquy is precisely to think “gesprächsweise” (GVS, p. 117), that is “in the manner of a colloquy” or “colloquially”, and not dialogically any more. While at some point of the colloquy Plato’s dialogue *Ion* is called a *Gespräch* (GVS, p. 115), the Enquirer himself (cf. GVS, p. 143) leaves open the question whether or not Plato’s dialogues are, rigorously speaking, *Gespräche*. – Note that in the complete title of the *Colloquy*, the phrase “Between a Japanese and an Enquirer” is a subtitle and a phrase on its own, and not a continuation of the main title that merely specifies between whom the “Colloquy From Language” takes place. While that specification is certainly also intended, the subtitle, however, indicates in the first place where the colloquy, and the interrogation it involves, has its place, that is, what is its binding origin and domain, namely a “between” that, we must presume, bears a relation to the Same.

⁵ Cf. GVS, p. 141 sq.

reference of what a colloquy is. Put in these terms, the question concerning the condition of possibility of the colloquy of European and East Asian thinking appears trivial. For the element that allows a colloquy to be a colloquy is obviously language. Any colloquy, it seems, including the colloquy of two traditions of thinking, is necessarily “from language”: from where else should a colloquy derive? Indeed, without language as its constant source and medium, a colloquy is not possible, so that finally the expression *Gespräch von der Sprache* appears pleonastic.

However, resolving the question concerning the condition of possibility of a colloquy with a ready reference to “language” provides a very general and at the same time only partial answer. Because of its general and at the same time partial character, the answer doesn’t say much with regard to the peculiar pathways and obstacles, promises and dangers, necessities and possibilities the colloquy of European and East Asian thinking appears to involve. In fact, at a closer look that answer turns out to be not only hasty but insufficient in more than one respect. In the first place, it is not at all clear in what sense language can be considered as the “being” of a colloquy: is language what a colloquy “essentially” is, or is it just the “material substance” of which the colloquy is, so to speak, made? Moreover, even if we admit that language, in a sense, qualifies as the “being” of a colloquy, according to our earlier definition of a condition of possibility we would still have to indicate the origin of that being, in other words, we would have to tackle the issue of the “origin of language”. On the other hand, language might not at all be the being of a colloquy, and that being might have to be found in an altogether different domain.

As we can see, at a closer examination our first attempt at settling the question of the condition of possibility of a colloquy leaves us with little more than the statement that a colloquy “somehow” takes place in “something” like language.

In order to obtain a more sufficient answer to our question, we must begin by indicating explicitly what a colloquy is: in fact, as long as our idea of what a colloquy is remains indistinct in the first place, there is no hope that we can ever obtain a clear answer to the question that asks about its condition of possibility.

In common understanding, a colloquy is a conversation between two or more people. Even a soliloquy is, in a way, a colloquy, namely a conversation that someone has with himself. Moreover, a colloquy implies that the language or languages in which it takes place are to some extent understood by the interlocutors. If we apply this common notion of colloquy to the question at hand, and, for the sake of simplicity, limit ourselves to two speakers, we obtain, as an answer to our question, that the condition of possibility of the envisaged colloquy is that it takes place in a language (or, in fact, in any number of languages) of which both interlocutors have a knowledge, thus allowing both of them to grasp, to some extent, what the other one says.

However, this answer is hardly more satisfactory than the previous one. In fact, that two people talk to each other and “understand”, that is identify, the meaning of the words or phrases the other person says, does not vouch for this conversation being a colloquy rather than, for instance, a mere exchange of information. On the other hand, a colloquy of the kind that is envisaged in our thematic question seems to imply that in and through the colloquy itself a shared understanding be attained, namely an understanding of what the object of the colloquy is as such. In fact, commonly a colloquy is perceived as being “good” or “bad” depending on whether or not, at some point, what the colloquy is about becomes, at least to some extent, “clear”, that is, transparent in its being, to both interlocutors. However, what we ordinarily call “knowing a language” does by itself not warrant such an outcome, nor the emerging of a shared understanding of what the colloquy is about. Therefore, in order to ask for the condition of possibility of the colloquy of European and East Asian thinking we must go beyond the mere formal concept and formulate a notion of colloquy that involves, as a criterion, the attainment of a clarification and thus of a shared understanding of that which is spoken of.

On the basis of what has just been pointed out concerning a “good” colloquy as opposed to a “bad” colloquy, a not merely formal notion of colloquy can be indicated as follows: a colloquy is a speaking in which that which is spoken of is said, or rather says itself, *as the Same* to those who take part in that speaking. Instead of “is said” or “says itself” we can also say “shows”.⁶ “Saying itself (or showing) as the Same” occurs in different modes of clarity, degrees of sufficiency, tones and attunements; however, these modes, degrees, tones and attunements are always those of a “saying *itself* (as the Same)”, where “itself” means: from and out of itself, and therefore, in a sense, independently of the interlocutors, or rather, in such a way that, while the interlocutors respond to and collaborate in that saying, the latter is out of their hands and rather in the hands (or, to be precise, “in the word”) of that which is bespoken. A colloquy is always on its way towards such a saying-itself, which it knows as its only onset and end, and, therefore, as its “principle of movements”. A colloquy sets on and ends as a word of the Same – or else it is not a colloquy.

What, however, is “the Same”? We commonly use the phrase “one and the same”. We say, for instance: “The element in which both the European and the East Asian interlocutor are involved during the colloquy is one and the same, namely, language”. In this case, “one” means: a unity that unifies toward (itself as) the same, while “same” means: a gathering that gathers into (itself as) one. Insofar as that which is spoken of in the colloquy shows as the Same, the

⁶ “To say” comes from the same I.-E. root as “to see”, and originally means: to show, to let appear, to offer to the mind.

interlocutors find themselves unified toward the Same and gathered into its unity. The saying of what is bespoken implies that those who are involved in the colloquy speak and listen to each other while “listening ahead” to the saying-itself of the Same as it announces itself in the colloquy, and thus, in turn, say, or rather “say-in-answer”, that saying-itself. That something is said (or shows) as the Same in the colloquy means that the dimension from which and in which that thing comes to mind – namely, its point of origination – is kept open, so that, in and for the showing of that which is said, that dimension is what must be minded and kept in mind in the first place. The minding that belongs to the colloquy, and therefore to the saying of that which is bespoken, pertains to a mindful togetherness that keeps open the dimension for the showing of the Same. That dimension, which is the Same’s withheld and absconded point of origination, avails itself of the interlocutors’ mindful togetherness. *This very “mindful togetherness” holds the sense in which the understanding of that which is spoken of is “shared”; the shared understanding, in turn, implies a mutual acknowledgement of those who are together in the words and silences of the colloquy.* In that acknowledgment, which consists in a common reference to the Same, each interlocutor recognizes the other as *equal*.

Neither the Same that speaks in the colloquy, nor what is spoken of in view of the Same, is an object assumed as given. With regard to what is bespoken, we could say that a colloquy proceeds (not by positing such objects, but) by true hypotheses, that is hypotheses that are off-springs of the Same’s off-ground. Such hypotheses give (a) way to (and in fact are themselves ways of) the colloquy as it proceeds towards and within the an-hypothetical, in itself absconded, off-grounding Same. Such giving (a) way is not merely the receding or slipping away of an ungraspable, volatile matter, but the very manner in which the Same, as it were, lets have word of itself, and thus grants paths that let us attain it. As the Same more and more ensconces itself in its own origin, it keeps giving (a) way in words. The more flagrantly enigmatic the Same becomes as it rests in its point of origination, the more unifying is its gathering. If we call that point of origination of the Same as such “the sameness of the Same”, we can conclude that it is the sameness of the Same that nourishes the colloquy and enlivens it as such, while the Same itself absconds more and more openly, or, which is the same, shows in an ever more flagrant absconding. Thus, in and through the colloquy, that which is bespoken says itself (as the Same) in its gathering sameness, while the latter is obtained in the own openness of that saying. That openness, however, is borne out in the togetherness of those who belong to the Same, who own this belonging precisely by sustaining, together, the flagrancy of its origin.

In a true colloquy, the Same says itself by gathering the interlocutors into the flagrancy of its absconding, in which (in that flagrancy) the Same itself ends. Both colloquy and *Gespräch* imply

this trait of gathering, which is different from the gathering of *logos*.⁷ Thus, a colloquy is not just the result of an interaction of different speakers, but originally a silently attuning gathering that gathers all speaking in One. The silently gathering One, which precedes the speaking of the interlocutors, is itself not a speaking in the sense of an utterance of words; it is, however, a saying, or rather a saying-itself, and as such the innermost voice of the colloquy, to which the speaking of the interlocutors is attuned and answers. The answer is what it is, namely a saying-again, *for the sake* of the silent saying-itself of the gathering One (that is, of the Same). While bearing the flagrancy of the absconding Same in their attuned speaking, the interlocutors are gathered into a shared understanding of the Same and aware that they are understanding the Same, even though, for each of them, the others' understanding remains absconded and, in a sense, unknowable.⁸ A colloquy that is mindful of, and answers, the sameness and its absconding, grows out of the Same, while letting it ever more openly return into its sameness. The more openly the Same returns into its sameness, the freer is the togetherness of those who, unknown to each other, but knowingly together, and acknowledging their being equal in the schismatic difference of each, belong to that sameness.

The dimension of the sameness of the Same is, in a constitutive sense, vague or non-descript.⁹ In the *Colloquy* we read the following concerning this vagueness (GVS, p. 95):

- J To us Japanese it does not appear strange when a colloquy leaves vague or non-descript [*unbestimmt*] that which is meant in the first place [*das eigentlich Gemeinte*], and when <the colloquy itself> even absconds <what is meant in the first place> back into the non-descript.¹⁰
- E This, I think, belongs to any happily achieved¹¹ colloquy between those who think. Such a colloquy is capable as if of itself to mind that the non-descript not only not slip away, but that it unfold its gathering force in an ever more resplendent manner as the colloquy proceeds.

Not letting the non-descript slip away does not imply fixing it in a definition; rather, the only manner in which the non-descript, or vague, can be kept from slipping away *as such* is to walk the

⁷ The sense of this difference is that the Same gathers as and through the schism itself, and not as a “logical” ground, that is, as a gathering that gathers beings onto (itself as) a ground-for-beings (see above n. 1).

⁸ What the interlocutors who share an understanding agree upon is not, in the first place, “what” each one of them understands; rather, they agree on that which, ever again, lets what the colloquy is about be said. “Understanding”, here, means as much as “holding oneself in the closeness of... while bearing that closeness as such”.

⁹ That the dimension of the sameness of the Same is constitutively vague means that the vagueness itself constitutes, *is*, that dimension.

¹⁰ Angle brackets <...> contain my own explicative additions, which should be read as part of the running text.

¹¹ “(Happily) achieved” translates *geglückt* (cf. *Gluck*, luck), which here indicates the turning out well of what can never be *made* to turn out well, but can only be attempted, and therefore is constitutively in danger of failing.

ways of its vagueness, that is, the ways that its vagueness affords as ways that remain its own, and through which the vagueness therefore lets itself be preserved as such. Hence, walking the ways of that vagueness means: *letting the vagueness "have its way"*. Vagueness, here, is the dimension of the open and longing, to-itself-gathering self-ensconement of the Same in its sameness. The colloquy is "achieved" insofar as it not only preserves the vagueness of "that which is meant in the first place", but lets that vagueness grow through its own ways, so that "what is meant in the first place" may be ever more openly absconded in its gathering openness. However, what is "meant in the first place" is the origin itself of that which the colloquy has in mind, that is, (that origin is) the sameness of the Same.

An achieved colloquy binds those who speak into bearing a togetherness in which and through which the minded Same-in-vagueness is preserved. This togetherness not only does not exclude, but on the contrary implies, that the experience of the Same-in-vagueness remains irreducibly unique and singular for each interlocutor; in fact, the more resplendent the gathering sway of the non-descript, the sharper and "happier", within the communion of understanding, the unknownness of the other's understanding. Such unknownness has nothing to do with ignorance, or doubt, or isolation, nor is it a matter of incommunicability. In fact, precisely the flagrant remaining-unknown bears in itself the high awareness that both interlocutors are, together, understanding the Same as it retreats into its own unknownness. The Same ends in absconding into the origin whose shelter is the vagueness that, in turn, is kept in the togetherness of the interlocutors. The latter are truly inter-locutors – that is, "speakers" of the vague in-between that absconds the sameness of the Same –, insofar as they let themselves be gathered unto the vagueness of that ending, and in this manner end *with* the ending of the Same.¹² The distinctive sign of an achieved colloquy – and thus of any original saying – is the meek sense of coming-to-an-end that seals its accomplishment.¹³ Given that there is no assured path toward such an achievement, nor a way to hope for what always remains an unhoped-for inception, that achievement is, as such, a "happy" one.

Where has the path taken us? The first and obvious answer to our thematic question: "What is the condition of possibility of the colloquy of European and East Asian thinking?" was: this condition is language. However, this answer soon showed itself to be insufficient. Our attempt to find a more sufficient answer to that question was guided by a richer notion of what a colloquy is. This attempt, in turn, led us to divine that the sought-for condition of possibility has to do with the dimension in which the Same shows as such. However, that dimension – which

¹² Ending *with* the ending of the Same is the same as *being* mortal.

¹³ *One* tone of such a coming-to-an-end speaks in the last verse of Leopardi's idyll *L'infinito*.

we called “the sameness of the Same” – is itself nothing linguistic. Thus, the attempt at overcoming the obvious, but insufficient answer to our question appears to have carried us too far away from the point, namely into a domain that is entirely detached from language, which, after all, remains the element in which a colloquy, achieved or not, takes place. Put differently: on the way we have unawares shifted from the native and necessary element of a colloquy (namely, language) to the dimension that is constitutive of what a colloquy is about (namely, the point of origination of the Same). This shift seems to suggest that, simply put, the possibility of the “word” is to be located in the domain of the “thing”. How are we to understand this?

Clearly, “word” and “thing” are not the same: they remain separated by that which our tradition calls a difference in kind. Word and thing are, as to their essence, alien to each other, there is a gap between them. Is there? And, if there is a gap, of what sort is it? Could the nature of the relation between word and thing be such that the Same the colloquy “is about” (that is, something that apparently is not language) be itself the possibility of the colloquy that bespeaks that Same (that is, something that, on the other hand, manifestly does pertain to language)? This kind of relation brings to mind Kant’s famous dictum concerning the conditions of possibility *a priori* of an experience, which reads thus: „Die Bedingungen a priori einer möglichen Erfahrung überhaupt sind zugleich Bedingungen der Möglichkeit der Gegenstände der Erfahrung“ (*Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A 111): “The conditions *a priori* of a possible experience in general are at the same time the conditions of possibility of the objects of experience”. If we were to restate this dictum to fit the terms of our question, it would read like this: “The condition *a priori* of a possible colloquy in general is at the same time the condition of possibility of what the colloquy is about”. This statement can, in turn, be reformulated as follows: “The condition that inceptively originates the biding¹⁴ of a colloquy is nothing but the sameness of the Same that the colloquy means in the first place”. Finally, this – admittedly awkward – proposition is supposed to hold the truth of the phrase “the Same keeps giving (a) way in words”, which was stated above without any further explication.

3. *The Attempt-Character of Language*

What concerns us is the condition of possibility of the colloquy of European and East Asian thinking. The choice of the word “colloquy” indicates that the interrogation of this condition goes back on the dialogical sphere and its philosophical imprinting, that is, the imprinting of

¹⁴ To bide: to stay, live, remain. Here we use “biding” as a translation of the *Denkweg*-word *wesen*.

identity.¹⁵ Identity surrogates the Same to which the interlocutors of the colloquy, together, belong. Differently from a dialogue and its identical ground, a colloquy requires a leap into the vague off-ground of the sameness of the Same that the colloquy means and “has in mind” in the first place. The vagueness, in which the Same as such consists, is borne in the mindful togetherness of those who, in and through the colloquy, belong to the Same and thus end, with the Same itself, in its sameness.

The question remains how the vagueness of the Same, and the togetherness that sustains it, are related to the Same to which European and East Asian thinking are said to belong, and in which, consequently, the possibility of their colloquy is to be found. This question interlaces with the other question of how the thought Same of the colloquy (that is, as we would usually say, the “thing”) is related, as its condition, to language as the element in which a colloquy unfolds (that is, the sphere of the “word”). If we consider where we stand at this point of the way, it appears that the complex of questions that we are facing is afflicted by a bewildering proliferation of “samenesses”, while the relation between “thing” and “word” is still unclear – as is, in fact, the very relevance of that distinction. On the other hand, a circumstance that may bear a clue toward the resolution of those interlaced questions into a simpler insight is the fact that in the text that serves as a guide for our attempt, namely the *Colloquy* “from language” “between a Japanese and an Enquirer”, along the way the focus of what is bespoken shifts from the Japanese word for “art” to the Japanese word for “language”. Presumably, this shift is not accidental, and implies more than a mere change of subject.

According to the richer notion of colloquy that we introduced, a colloquy is a speaking in which what is bespoken says itself as the Same to the interlocutors. This was further clarified as follows: “That something is said (or shows) as the Same in the colloquy means that the dimension from which and in which that thing comes to mind – namely, its point of origination – is kept open, so that, in and for the showing of that which is said, that dimension is what must be minded and kept in mind in the first place.” Hence, the fact that the colloquy says the Same is not just the presupposition for an understanding of the interlocutors, but rather the very bidding and the accomplishment of that understanding. The said Same is ensconced in a vagueness that,

¹⁵ Above it was said that the question of a sufficient translation of the German word *Gespräch* must for now remain unsettled. While that remains so, it appears, however, that the word colloquy can merely hint at, rather than actually say itself, the fact that what Heidegger calls *Gespräch* is not to be equated with dialogue, and that *Sprache*, here, is not the meaningful vocal utterance as which *logos* has been understood ever since the beginning of philosophy. In fact, not only is that which the word *Gespräch* says, and the manner in which the prefix *ge-* (Middle English *y-* or *i-*) speaks in this word, as yet to be sensed and thought in a simpler, that is, inceptual manner, but an English word that indicates the same as *Gespräch* is still lacking. Surely enough, the notion of a word that “indicates the same” as another word is entirely different from that of a term that supposedly “replicates”, in a more or less accurate and exhaustive manner, the “identical meaning” of another.

in turn, is borne in a togetherness sealed by the sense of a coming-to-an-end. We call a saying of this sort “(happily) achieved”.

Bearing in mind the notion of an achieved colloquy, we are at once reminded that a colloquy can also fail, that is, remain unachieved. A colloquy fails when, no matter how much is spoken, that which is spoken of is not said, and that which is meant in the first place is not absconded back into the non-descript. In other words, in an unachieved colloquy that which is bespoken does not say itself in a speaking that preserves the original vagueness in which the Same openly absconds. As a consequence, the interlocutors remain excluded from the gathering vagueness of the Same, and, instead of releasing each other into an achieved unknownness, merely remain alien to each other as well as to themselves.

The failing of a colloquy cannot be avoided by devising and following appropriate procedures or methods: a colloquy is always, that is constitutively, an attempt, and any preventive procedural assurance as to its “success” is impossible. In fact, the will to assure a “successful” outcome of a colloquy requires a pre-emptive assurance *against* the very dimension in which the colloquy springs and ends (or rather: springs *while* ending, ends up springing), so that the achievement of the colloquy is from the outset precluded. However, even without the intended recourse to such an assurance, to a colloquy as such belongs the danger of remaining an empty speaking, namely a speaking vacated by the Same and its origin.

While the obvious answer to the question of the condition of possibility of a colloquy had been that this condition is language, a closer consideration of what constitutes an achieved colloquy led to this condition being found in the Same that is meant in the first place in what the colloquy bespeaks. However, the fact that the word “Same” has been used to refer both to “what is meant in the first place” in the colloquy and to the dimension to which both East Asian and European thinking belong, together with the fact that it is still unclear how the “Same” is related to the “properly linguistic” element of the colloquy (not to speak of the origin of that element), leaves us with a tangle of puzzles rather than with an answer to the question we are addressing. On the other hand, since the failing of a colloquy ought to be in some way related to the condition of possibility of that colloquy, the phenomenon of failure might provide an inkling as to how that tangle can be resolved.

When a colloquy fails, its speaking is encumbered and the words that are spoken are, as it were, lifeless: while these words may still attempt to get to the point, the attempt is frustrated, and the colloquy falls short of (its achievement, namely of) calling and keeping close what calls and “is meant in the first place”, thereby simultaneously translating *us*, together, into its vague closeness. How can speech, how can language be “alive” or else “lifeless” in this sense? What

enlivens and disencumbers speaking, so that it may, in turn, spark things into life? The answer has long been given: a speech, a colloquy is alive, is “living language”, when that which is bespoken is said, or rather says itself, as the Same; only a “saying colloquy” can be said to be achieved. But how does the “life” and disencumbering that this saying is, so to speak, “get into” and again “out of” language and speech? Is the “life” and “death” of the “letter” merely a matter of correct or incorrect linguistic usage? If only we adequately think that which is bespoken, one could argue, then choose words and phrases that are apt to convey what has thus been thought, and, finally, encounter an attentive ear, an achieved colloquy is bound to ensue. On the other hand, a failing colloquy appears to be the result of a faulty thinking or a faulty choice of words, or else of a default of listening or understanding, or, finally, a combination of these three elements.

There is no denying that, when a colloquy fails, thinking and speaking and listening are to some extent unachieved and not what we expect them to be. Yet, as long as we reason within the scheme of the distinction between meaning and its material conveyance, and of thinking and speaking as human practices, we fail to acknowledge a simple circumstance regarding language itself, which the phenomenon of a failing colloquy – that is, of a speaking that fails to “say” – submits to our attention, namely this: *language and speaking are one thing, saying what is to be said is another*. Differently put: a language’s saying, and hence the possibility of a colloquy, is itself *nothing linguistic* – and yet, as we shall see, it is a matter of the “word”. “Saying” – that is, the trait of “saying”, the “quality” of being a saying, and the associated disencumbering that liberates (us toward) the Same – is entirely different from what is seen as a language’s effectiveness in performing a certain function (typically, that of conveying a given meaning from a “sender” to a “receiver”), nor is it the “essence” of language in the sense of its most general identifying feature. “Saying” is the original “speaking” of language, namely its letting appear and bringing to mind, and offering to a mindful thinking. What comes to mind in the first place in the speaking of language is, however, the Same-in-vagueness. “Saying” is language itself as *the coming to mind of the Same-in-vagueness*, and, within that Same, of whatever is bespoken in a colloquy. On the other hand, the constitutive trait of *human* speaking consists, in turn, in a mindful answer to such bringing and coming to mind.¹⁶

¹⁶ The “mind” is not, in the first place, a human mind, even though the “mind” as such wants and claims, and thus, at times, awakens and arouses, a man’s capacity for minding. “Mind” is the Same itself, namely the Same in its original relation to the bidding of man. Because the Same as “mind”, that is, the Same in its constitutive minding, is in itself wanting (namely, in want of a unique being that mind it and keep it in mind), it always *means* a man; the latter, in turn, finds himself originally meant and minded and interrogated by the “mind” itself, and only thus (he originally finds himself) as being a “who”. – The following passage taken from Henry Miller’s *The Books in My Life* (New York: New Directions, 1969) bears witness of an understanding of the “mind”, which, through its autonomous poetical voice, might help to liberate this word from its present philosophical and scientific notion, so as to make it available

The constitutive, originally minding trait in which something consists as such we call its biding. Hence, saying – letting appear and bringing to mind as the Same – is (language itself as) the biding of language. In the *Colloquy* we read the following in regard to the biding of language (GVS, p. 108):

- J There is a Japanese word that says the *biding* of language, rather than being available as a name for speaking and speech (or language).
- E The sake itself¹⁷ demands that it be that way, if, on the other hand, the *biding* of language cannot be of the order of the linguistic or speechlike. (...)

If we are honest, we must admit: the fact that, in what is spoken, something comes to mind and thus “appears” (or not), in other words, the fact that something is *said* (or not) in the now specified sense, remains enigmatic. In fact, no matter how closely we inspect what is of the nature of speech, no matter how meticulously we describe a language’s so-called semantic features, no matter how accurately we capture the “performative” character of a speaking – we never come across that which is responsible for that disencumbering, and thus of the being said, and saying itself, of that which the colloquy bespeaks. We can keep on speaking, and yet, while our speaking continues, the biding of speech, namely its saying, can fail; on the other hand, that biding (or what we have called the “life” of any speech) can at once “get into” what is spoken, without us knowing precisely whence it came, and without apparent reason, even though we must presume that it does not come accidentally, and that it involves a kind of openness towards the biding of language on the side of those who speak. However, since the speaking of a failing colloquy is forsaken by and devoid of that which is ownmost to speaking, that ownmost trait must be different from speaking itself, namely, it must be of another order than that of human speech or language.

for being heard in an altogether different manner: “It was mind Louis was interested in. Not ‘our’ minds, or any particular mind, but Mind. It was as though Louis was revealing to us the essential nature of mind. Not thought, mind. There was mystery attached to mind. Any one could grapple with thought, but *mind*...? So it mattered not to Louis what the ‘truth’ might be as regards the problems we were then confronting for the first time in our young lives. Louis was trying to make us understand that it was all a game, so to speak. A very high game too. His replies, or observations, cryptic though they were, had for us all the import of revelation. They gave an importance hitherto unknown to the questioner rather than the question. *Who is it that asks? Whence comes this question? Why?*” (p. 174 sq.) “Teachers in the true sense – those who open our eyes. There are those who open our eyes and there are those who lift us out of ourselves. The latter are not interested in foisting upon us new beliefs but in aiding us to penetrate reality more deeply, ‘to make progress,’ in other words, ‘in the science of reality.’ They proceed first by levelling all the superstructures of thought. Second they point to something beyond thought, to the ocean of mind, let us say, in which thought swims. And last they force us to think ourselves.” (p. 184).

¹⁷ “Sake” here translates the German *Sache*. The reason for choosing this word over more common translations such as “issue” or “matter” is given in Ivo De Gennaro, *The Weirdness of Being. Heidegger’s Unheard Answer to the Seinsfrage* (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 168 (n. 8).

If true speaking implies “saying”, and this, in turn, means letting appear in the sense of bringing to mind, then we must say: speaking as such is *attempting* to speak. On the other hand, since speaking, intended as the act of articulating words and phrases, bears no intrinsic danger of failure with regard to the trait of saying, the attempt-character of speaking must pertain not to that “act of articulation”, but to what is ownmost to speaking, that is, saying itself. The bidding of speech, namely saying, is such that speaking (now intended in its full sense) can only be attempted, in that saying and being said is not a possession of what is spoken; rather, it belongs to the non-descript that, in an achieved colloquy, is kept from slipping away, and thus allowed to become ever more resplendent and (from out of its absconded inception and end) gathering.

Language as such bides in and as a colloquy. A colloquy can fail. This happens when, although something is bespoken, what is spoken of is not said. Such failing of the colloquy pertains to the bidding of language. Thus, language itself bears in itself (that is, in its bidding) the danger of failure. Language, as it were, “has it in itself” to be dangerous for itself: it has in itself the trait of an “attempt” *on* itself and, as a consequence, on that which is bespoken, insofar as that which is bespoken, though being spoken of, may not be brought to mind as the Same. It is on the level of this fundamental, non-linguistic trait of language that we are to find the condition of possibility of a colloquy.

Language as a whole, if considered in its ownmost trait, that is, in its bidding as a saying, is an attempt in the twofold sense of an “attempt on” and an “attempt at”. When we speak, we attempt a saying, or rather, we attempt to collaborate in a saying-itself. Saying means showing, letting appear, bringing to mind and keeping in the open of and for the mind. On the other hand, what is to be said is what is “meant”, or minded, “in the first place”, that is, the Same in its sameness. The colloquy attempts to mind and keep in mind the Same. When the Same says itself, the colloquy is “happily achieved”. The element of such a saying, and thus the element of the achievement and failing of a colloquy, we call “the word”. It is through “the word” (namely, each time the word of a language) that a speaking obtains or loses its constitutive trait of saying. Note that “the word” in the now indicated sense is to be distinguished from “the words” of a language.

Above it was found that the condition of possibility of a true colloquy resides in the “dimension of the sameness of the Same”, of which we noted that it is “nothing linguistic”. That insight raised a difficulty, as it was not clear how something “non-linguistic” (that is, the non-descript that ensconces the Same) could be the condition of possibility of something “linguistic” (namely, the speaking of the colloquy). Once it is seen that speaking itself, namely the *biding* of speech, is nothing linguistic, the difficulty seems to vanish, since the colloquy as such, insofar as

it is the sphere of a saying, implies a constitutive reference to a non-speechlike trait, while, in turn, the dimension of the sameness of the Same implies a relation to the speaking of the colloquy, as it is in that speaking that the Same (whose appearing is itself the bidding of language) does or does not show. As a consequence, not only is there no unbridgeable gap between “word” and “thing”, but the two spheres are intimately intertwined, or rather, they are one and the same sphere – provided we understand as “word” the dimension of the bidding of speech, and as “thing” that which comes to mind in the first place – though abscondedly – in all there is.

Having placed the bidding of language within the vague dimension of the condition of possibility of the Same allows us to determine more closely the intrinsic attempt-character of language. This character implies at once the following three traits:

(a) speaking, and therefore any colloquy, is always exposed to the danger of failing, and thus intrinsically remains an attempt; this circumstance, however, is owed to the fact that,

(b) while the bidding of speech (now traced back to the vagueness of the flagrant absconding of the Same) is itself an attempt of the Same at saying itself through the word of a language, the dimension of saying “has it in itself” that it can turn on itself, that is, “attempt” – and thus endanger – itself, and, at once with endangering itself, endanger that which, in being bespoken, attempts its own showing; finally, this “essential” attempt-character makes of language

(c) a temptation for man, in that man is tempted to overlook and neglect the non-descript and absconded attempt-character and merely make use of language, now reduced to a system of performative functions, as an implement for exerting a command over (then) “dead” things (that is, things deprived of the sameness for whose sake they appear), while those who speak, in turn, remain excluded from “the word” through which they are called into the belongingness to the Same, and thus (while not saying anything, remain) isolated in a selfless untogetherness.

By virtue of its constitutive attempt-character, language as such is a tempting danger, or, which is the same, a dangerous temptation. The poet Friedrich Hölderlin knew of the temptingly dangerous ground-trait of language. In a sketch entitled *Im Walde* he characterizes that which the German language calls *die Sprache*, and which we are used to translating as “language” or “speech”, as *der Güter gefährlichstes*, that is, “of (all) goods the most dangerously tempting”.¹⁸ What is a good? A good is what is good for something. To be good for something, in turn, is to liberate it into its being, to let it be. Language itself is a good in that it lets things be: it is the very element in which each thing attempts its own being and truth. Nothing *is*, if not by attempting the truth of its being. “No thing be, where the word fails”, sings the poet Stefan George.¹⁹ All

¹⁸ In “tempting” we must always hear, in the first place, the original attempt-character of language itself, and only in the second place the temptation that from there ensues for man.

¹⁹ Stefan George, *Das Wort*.

goods are dangerous, for all letting be is an attempt in which the letting-be itself, and, together, that which is attempting its being, are at stake. (For instance, love is a good in this sense: it lets two hearts [let each other] be out of the same love for love itself that both lovers, together, attempt in the closeness [of love itself] in which they are close.) Of all dangerous goods, however, language is the most dangerous, in that its attempting-itself, or self-attempting, *is* itself the self-attempting of all goods. The italicized “is” means that the self-attempting of all goods “consists” in the self-attempting of language, that is, in its attempting itself *as* saying. However, language as such (that is, as saying) attempts itself in and as a colloquy, in other words, it *is* but as a colloquy, in which what is spoken of is to be said as the Same. This is why a colloquy is the first of goods. The most dangerous of goods is the first of goods. In what we call a colloquy, *in einem Gespräch*, language plays with itself a dangerously tempting play, in which man is in his turn a player, in that he is needed for the achievement of that play.

4. *The Danger of the Colloquy*

The tempting danger of language is explicitly mentioned in and minded throughout the colloquy between a Japanese and an Enquirer. Early in the colloquy, the Japanese mentions the danger that the richness of concepts, which the European language-genius holds in store, may tempt and mislead the Japanese to debase that which speaks to their being, and calls upon their being, to something undetermined and blurry (GVS, p. 84). To this the Enquirer replies that there is, however, a much bigger danger, which concerns both of them, and which is the more menacing the more inconspicuous it remains. This danger, says the Enquirer, became clear during the colloquies he used to have with the Japanese’s master, Count Kuki. The danger became clear, he adds, insofar as the colloquies with Count Kuki “were colloquies”. In fact, the more a colloquy is (truly) a colloquy, the more its attempt-character, and with it the danger that the colloquy bears, becomes explicit.

In what follows, the “much bigger danger” is spelled out by the Enquirer and then further clarified by the two interlocutors (GVS, p. 85):

- E The tempting danger of our colloquies was absconded in language itself: not in *what* we were going through in speaking, and not even in *how* we were attempting this.
- J But Count Kuki mastered the German language, the French and the English language extraordinarily well.
- E Certainly. *He* could say that which was to be traced back to its point of origin [*was zur Erörterung stand*] in <various> European languages. However, that which we were tracing

back to its point of origin was the *iki*; in this attempt, to *me* the genius of the Japanese language remained inaccessible; and it is to this very day.

J The languages of the colloquy shifted everything into the *European* element.

E On the other hand, what the colloquy was attempting to *say* was the biding of *East Asian* art and poetry.

J Now I understand better where you sense the tempting danger. The language of the colloquy kept disrupting the possibility of saying that which was being bespoken.

E Some time ago I called language, rather awkwardly, the house of being. If man, through his language, dwells within the claim of being, then we Europeans presumably dwell in an entirely other house than East Asian man.

J Supposing that here and there languages are not just different, but from the ground up of another biding.

E Thus, a colloquy from house to house remains almost impossible.

The tempting danger that is absconded in language itself is formulated once more later on in the *Colloquy*, this time by the Enquirer and relatively to the present attempt of the two interlocutors (GVS, p. 98):

E [...] now I see *yet* more clearly the tempting danger that the language of our colloquy keeps disrupting the possibility of saying that which we are bespeaking.

What precisely is the danger said to consist in? Not, as it could appear on the face of it, in the fact that a colloquy about the constitutive trait of East Asian art and poetry takes place in “German”, while it should much rather take place in “Japanese”, or, for that matter, in another East Asian language (provided that both interlocutors understand that language). The Enquirer is definite in indicating the “much bigger” danger that concerns *both* interlocutors: this danger, namely the disruption of the possibility of saying that which is being bespoken, resides in language itself, insofar as the language of the colloquy that attempted to trace back to its point of origin the *iki* (that is, the biding of *East Asian* art and poetry) shifted everything into the *European* element, with the consequence that the genius of the Japanese language remained inaccessible for the Enquirer. Now, the “European element” is different from the “German language”, just as the “genius” of the Japanese language is different from the Japanese language, and just as the “possibility” of saying what is spoken of is different from the speaking of a language. The words “element”, “genius” and “possibility” point to the dimension that is itself not linguistic, but rather concerns the biding of language.

The danger to which the colloquy remains exposed is more inconspicuous, but also more profound than the German language or the Japanese language considered as historical entities. Why? Because the fact that “*he* (scil. Count Kuki) could say that which was to be traced back to its point of origin” in German (as well as in other European languages) was not sufficient for averting the circumstance that “the language of the colloquy kept disrupting the possibility of saying that which was being bespoken”. “Saying the *iki* in German”, on the side of the Japanese interlocutor, is not sufficient for “saying that which was being bespoken” *in the colloquy*, namely the *iki* insofar as it “was to be traced back to its point of origin”; in other words, that German saying is not sufficient for the *iki* to say itself as the Same, that is from out of the openness of the Same kept in the togetherness of the interlocutors.²⁰ The German of the colloquy, in which the genius of the Japanese language remains inaccessible for the Enquirer, and which (that German) disrupts the possibility of saying the point of origination of the *iki*, is a German that “shifted everything into the *European* element”. The danger of the colloquy is more profound than the German or the Japanese languages: it pertains to what in the *Colloquy* is called their “element” and their “genius”, that is, their word. The danger concerns German as a language of the *European* element. What, however, is the “European element”?

We might wonder if it is actually necessary to ask that question. Indeed, the fact that the Enquirer adds that, while everything was shifted into the European element, “what the colloquy was attempting to *say* was the bidding of *East Asian* art and poetry”, could tempt us to readily close the argument by observing that, obviously, “the bidding of *East Asian* art and poetry” can only be said from within the “East Asian element”, that is, the East Asian tradition and way of thinking as opposed to the European tradition and way of thinking. In short, it seems evident that “the bidding of *East Asian* art and poetry”, can only appear in the context of East Asian “culture” as opposed to European “culture”. However, that would be too ready a conclusion. Why? Because in this manner we would merely be locating the condition of possibility of the colloquy in some operative notion of an “East Asian element” (with the word “element” somehow understood as “culture”), thereby leaving non-interrogated the “European element” *insofar* as in that element the attempt at tracing the *iki* to its point of origin is frustrated.

Instead of taking the easy way out, we therefore ask: “What is the European element?” Indeed, we don’t have to look far for the answer to this question, for the text itself spells it out: “European” indicates the element in which “the most dangerously tempting of goods” bides in such a way as to disrupt the possibility of saying (from out of its point of origin) the bidding of

²⁰ The point here is: Count Kuki *could*, in a sense, say the *iki* in German, *and yet* he *could not*, insofar as the European element would constantly inhibit that saying to be accomplished, that is, in itself “colloquial”.

the art and poetry of another tradition. Thus, “European” is the name of a bidding of language, in which the danger that language itself is has come to an extreme point. In fact, a “European” language, for instance German, does not simply not enter the colloquy, but it disrupts the very possibility of a colloquy; as a consequence, the genius of the other language cannot have its say for the Enquirer. That is why the danger of the colloquy is in fact “much bigger” than the danger mentioned by the Japanese: giving in to the temptation of the conceptual richness of European thinking, and attempting to adopt and adapt it, may be an ultimately sterile endeavour; however, it does not endanger the *possibility of saying* itself.

In fact, the danger of the colloquy, as the Enquirer says, lies in “language itself”, that is in its bidding. The bidding of language is its (possibility of) saying. The *manner* of saying is what the *Colloquy* calls a language’s genius. While the genius of each language is peculiar to that language, the *Colloquy* mentions the one and only “Wesensquell der grundverschiedenen Sprachen” (GVS, p. 109), that is, the unique common “biding-spring of languages that are from the ground up scinded”. These languages share one and the same ground, namely, the only off-ground, but neither that ground’s manner of off-grounding nor the first roots that reach into that ground. It is at the level of that only spring or source that we ought to find the condition of possibility or impossibility of a colloquy. What menaces to disrupt the possibility of saying the Same that is bespoken in the colloquies between the Enquirer and his Japanese interlocutors is not the fact *per se* that these colloquies take place in “German”, but that they take place in a language that shifts “everything into the *European* element”, in which a colloquy (in the rigorous meaning that we have meanwhile given to this word) cannot be achieved. This failure implies that the genius of the Japanese language – its manner of saying the *iki* – cannot come into the open for the Enquirer, and, as a consequence, that the *iki* is not said as the Same in the colloquy.

What kind of German is the German that shifts “everything into the European element”? Answer: a German that is, in a sense, not free with regard to its own genius; or, which is the same, a German that does not freely avail itself of its own genius; or again, a German whose genius is not (yet) free. This unfree German cannot translate itself into its own inceptual word, and therefore cannot speak in such a way as to give access to the genius of the Japanese language. Consequently, *for the Enquirer* the genius of the Japanese language remains inaccessible, and hence the *iki* cannot say itself from its point of origin in the open absconding owed to the vagueness borne in the togetherness of the interlocutors.

The Japanese indicates in the following manner the reason for the danger that the language of the present colloquy “keeps disrupting the possibility of saying that which we are bespeaking”:

J Because language itself rests on the metaphysical difference of the sensorial and the non-sensorial, insofar as the fundamental elements that carry the construction of language are, on the one hand, sound and writing, and, on the other, meaning and sense.

The language that does not freely avail itself of its own genius, and therefore implies the “much bigger” danger for the colloquy, is the language of metaphysics: it is not the German language “per se”, but metaphysical, or, which is the same, dialogical German. “Metaphysical German” is the German of metaphysical thinking – not in the sense of German philosophical terminology, but as a speaking that attempts to convey an identical meaning or sense in the identical medium of sound and writing, rather than letting the Same say itself in a speaking attuned to a language’s inceptive word. The metaphysical German of the colloquy is the “European” German, if by “European” we mean the tradition issued from the Greek onset of thinking, which (that tradition) begins, in a decisive sense, with the translation of the Greek onset into the Roman element.²¹ That tradition, however, while it remains forgetful of the Same, is still on the way to the vague off-ground whence it sprang, and whose memory is held in the yet unspoken genius of its languages.²²

5. *The Genius of Language and the Condition of Possibility*

What is meant when we speak of the *Geist*, or, as we have been translating this notion, the “genius” of a language? In common understanding “genius” refers to an identifying character or “spirit”, but also to a peculiar capacity or attitude. Here, and with regard to language, “genius” indicates the unique manner in which the trait of saying informs (of itself) a language, and thus the Same “speaks” through that language. In other words, the genius is the peculiar word-character of a language.

The Same itself is, *as* the “word”, the attunement by which we attain that which means us (namely our being) in the first place. Such meaning is not “the” identical “meaning” (that is, a signifiable “essential” content) of something, but the Same itself in its open meaning (us). However, the word of the Same, insofar as it speaks through a language, does so as the genius of that language. If we pay attention to the instantaneous concerning and attaining that takes place thanks to the genius of a language, we can see more concretely how, as stated above, the genius is a language’s unspoken and unique manner of saying (that is, showing, letting appear, bringing

²¹ On the sense and implications of this translation see Ivo De Gennaro and Gino Zaccaria, “*EYΔAIMONIA FELICITAS BEATITUDO*. La romanità allo specchio della *Seinsfrage* (Heidegger e Roma)”, in: Hans-Christian Günther (ed.), *Augustus und Rom: 2000 Jahre danach*, Verlag Traugott Bautz, Nordhausen 2015, p. 315 sqq.

²² Tentatively, we can say that the fundamental trait of the European tradition of metaphysical and dialogical thinking consists in the translation of Greek metaphysics into the Judeo-(Roman-)Christian element.

to mind), namely, of saying the concern that is each time in play as a meaning (us) of the Same. That the Same “speaks through a language” as that language’s genius means: it stirs and “enlivens” that language, and inceptually disencumbers its speaking, as a (manner of) saying. Conversely, only in a language whose genius bides freely, the Same is said, so that the one and only spring of “houses of being” that remain fundamentally different may be attained. That is why, as long as the “possibility of saying” keeps being disrupted by the German (that is, European, metaphysical, dialogical) language of the colloquy, the genius of the Japanese language, and hence the point of origination of the *ikei*, remains inaccessible for the Enquirer, and does not find a shelter in the vagueness or truth borne by the togetherness of the interlocutors.

The German language which does not yet freely avail itself of its genius, in that this genius cannot yet spring freely from the “possibility of saying” in the first place, is the German of European thinking, in other words, the German of the tradition of philosophy. As such, it is a language of categories and concepts that owe themselves to a certain experience of being, which is dialogically said and grounded. The dialogically said and grounded being is the “being of beings”. “Of beings”, here, means: providing a ground for beings as beings demand, while the inceptual relation of man to the off-ground of being itself is forgotten.

The fundamental scheme of the categories and concepts of European thinking, whose attempt is to ground the being of beings, is the (itself unminded) difference of the sensorial and the extra-sensorial. This difference is the basis for the distinction that constitutes the structure of language in the European tradition, namely the distinction between sound and writing, on the one hand, and meaning and sense, on the other. The latter distinction, which, as the Japanese notes in the *Colloquy*, fails to capture the genius of the Japanese language, determines the modern notion of language as expression, that is, as a vehicle for uttering contents of the mind (which is in its turn “naturalized” as a system of brain functions) by means of canonized rules of encoding for the purpose of conveying those contents from a sender to a receiver. Moreover, the difference of the sensorial and the extra-sensorial shapes the European reflection on art, known as aesthetics, which, as is also said in the *Colloquy*, is entirely alien to East Asian thinking, with the consequence that, when East Asian thinking recurs to the categories and concepts of aesthetics elaborated within the European tradition in order to say that which concerns East Asian man as art and poetry, that art and poetry is forced into European mind-sets, and therefore not said in its bidding.

The duality of the sensorial and the extra-sensorial, on which rests the entire tradition of European thinking, bears in itself “the source of the danger” (GVS, p. 97) that the language of

the colloquy keeps disrupting the possibility of saying that which is bespoken. In other words, as long as the language of the colloquy is the language of that duality, the very condition of possibility of the colloquy is turned into the condition of its impossibility. Why? Because in the dialogical language of that duality the constitutive trait of language, namely its being “a house of being”, is constricted within a sphere that excludes the word of the Same. Dialogical language is a house only of that duality, that is, of the (extra-sensorial) being of (sensorial) beings, whereas it does not yet speak as the house of being *itself*. What, however, is being itself? Answer: “being itself” – which we ought to distinguish from the “being of beings” – *is itself the Same in its sameness*. As such, being itself is not dual but simple, or onefold. In fact, it is the Onefold that bides, as its origin, in the twofold of “that which abides” and its “abiding”. The twofold, whose biding is the onefold Same, is not the same as the duality of the sensorial and the extra-sensorial, in other words, it is not the same as the dual sphere of the being of beings, which, on the other hand, excludes the Same.

“That which abides” is a provisional name for “things”, while “the abiding” is a provisional name for a same thing’s in-gathering of world-traits, which a logical regard, on the other hand, merely perceives, and consequently construes, on the basis of an identical ground. Let us call the world-ensconcing abiding of things, namely that gathering of world-traits in which it consists, “inscape”. We thus avail ourselves, for the purposes of our interrogation, of a word coined by the English poet Gerard Manley Hopkins²³, without thereby implying that this poet necessarily experiences in this word the same as we do in our thinking, insofar as this thinking attempts to bail from the dialogical ground. When the twofold of thing and inscape openly bides, the meaning of that biding (and therefore that which in the first place, though abscondedly, comes to mind in a thing’s world-gathering “selving”²⁴) is the onefold Same. Because language is, in its biding, the house of being, namely the dwelling of the condition of possibility of a colloquy, language is intrinsically dangerous, in that, independently of *what* is bespoken and of *how* this is done, language itself may not only impair but disrupt that possibility. In fact, the language of European thinking – insofar as it is the dialogical language of the being of beings, which excludes the meaningful biding of the onefold Same – is such a disruption.

From the voice of the Japanese in Heidegger’s text we hear the presentiment that, while the constitutive trait, that is, the genius, of East Asian languages and European languages is from the

²³ In a letter Hopkins writes: “There is one notable dead tree . . . the inscape markedly holding its most simple and beautiful oneness up from the ground through a graceful swerve below (I think) the spring of the branches up to the tops of the timber. I saw the inscape freshly, as if my mind were still growing, though with a companion the eye and the ear are for the most part shut and instress cannot come.” See also his poem *As Kingfishers Catch Fire* (“... Each mortal thing does one thing and the same: / Deals out that being indoors each one dwells; / Selves – goes itself; *myself* it speaks and spells, / Crying *Whát I dó is me: for that I came. ...*”).

²⁴ See previous note.

ground up different, precisely the peculiar attunement of the two languages may spring from the same absconded spring to which these languages – each resting in its own word –, together, belong. That spring is not only the source of their difference; rather, it *is* itself *the* “difference”²⁵, namely the schism that, as the unifying Same, informs their respective untranslatable genius. *The spring is the withsaid onefold Same of the twofoldness, in which (viz. in that Same) consists the twosomeness (and, in a wider perspective, the “number”) of the languages of the colloquy; in the word “colloquy” we must hear, in the first place, the biding of the onefold Same that unifies the two of the twofoldness in their schism while gathering the two of the twosomeness into their difference.*

However, the European element does not allow to think towards that absconded source as such. It does not allow that because it remains unaware of the onefold Same. This unawareness, the lack of an understanding of the onefold Same as such, *is* the enclosure in the said duality, which causes European thinking to think “language” as a means of expressing “states of the mind”; “being” as the most general and undetermined notion, merely functioning as a grounding supplement to beings; “the constitutive trait” as the supra-sensorial essence of a sensorial being; “house of being” as an image for language, conceived as a material container carrying in itself the immaterial meaning of things; the one and same “spring” of two manners of saying being as a general linguistic system that comprises particular specifications of that system; finally, “possibility” as an as yet unactualized power, or “essence”, awaiting actualization, and “condition”, in turn, as the empowering ground of that power.

The categorial language of European thinking bars us from sharing the sense and tone of the Enquirer’s cautiousness when he admits (cf. GVS, p. 89) that he still cannot see whether or not that which he thinks as the constitutive trait of language, and which the name “house of being” tentatively hints at, suffices to indicate the constitutive trait of East Asian languages as well. The reason for the fact that we do not have a sense for that cautiousness is that the European element, whose concern is the being-ground of beings, is alien to the mindful errancy in the vagueness of the Same. For the same reason, we are hardly concerned when the Enquirer wonders whether the constitutive trait of language will ever be experienced in a thinking in such a manner that European saying and East Asian saying may enter a colloquy in which what “streams from out of an only” absconded “spring” “sings” (*ibid.*). Because the European element is an enclosure that is excluded from a true colloquy, European thinking and its language are not only deaf with regard to East Asian thinking, and themselves a temptation for that thinking, but they unknowingly bear the extreme attempt of language on itself.

²⁵ “Difference” comes from Latin *differre* “to carry apart”.

Language consists in saying. That which stirs this saying is being itself as the Onefold in which rests the twofold of the abiding and that which abides, that is, the twofold of inscape and thing. Being itself as the constitutive trait of language is “the word”, which tunes man to the sameness of the Same. Human speech, in turn, is engendered as an answer to the original (speech-less) tune of the word. However, in human speaking “speaks” – openly or retained, sung or said – the word. The sway of the word in the speaking of a language is that language’s genius. When the genius breaks freely, the speaking of a language is translated into its original word, so that that speaking may, for its own part, build the house of being. Thus, the condition of possibility for language as the house of being is being itself in its relation to mindful thinking. The house of being is a dwelling, borne in man’s attuned speaking, where being – the Same in its sameness – can come to “have its dwell”. When the speaking of a language is such that being comes to “have its dwell” in that speaking, that which is spoken of in a colloquy says itself as the Same.

What does it mean that, according to the hypothesis we are following, being is the “condition of possibility” of language? Is “condition of possibility” a fitting name for the relation of being to language as it has been elucidated so far? By coming to have its dwell in the answering speech of a language, being itself in the first place constitutes that language as its own dwelling. It does so as that language’s word-character or genius. Being itself, as the language-genius, “conditions” the “possibility” of a language as the house of being. This conditioning we now call a “stressing”. Stressing, here, means attuning the speaking of a language to the stress of the Same, thanks to which (namely, that attuning) is said (namely *as* the Same) that which is bespoken. Such stressing, the stress itself, dwells in a language as its innermost silent tune, and as such speaks through that language as its word-character or genius in its meaning the unique being that we are (or not). The innermost stress, or “instress”²⁶, of a language is being itself. However, the instress does not “cause” the “possibility” of a language, where “possibility” is intended as a power that can be actualized. Rather, the instress attunes a language as a *likely*, that is apt and fitting, manner of speaking, namely a speaking in which the Same itself *likes* to have its dwell. In other words, the instress of a language stresses the *likelihood* of that language *as* a language, that is, as a house of being²⁷. Being itself – the onefold Same – is not the “condition of possibility” of language, but rather the *instress of the likelihood* of any language as such.

²⁶ The word “instress”, too, was first coined by the poet Gerald Manley Hopkins. See above n. 23.

²⁷ Likelihood, here, does not refer to a calculable probability, but to the trait of aptness, seemliness, fittingness. What is “likely” is “credible” because it is in accordance with how we expect it to be. While possibility turns into actuality and is replaced by actuality, likelihood remains that which lets any concreteness (*viz.* any concrete selving) appear as such.

The European element, that is the element of the hitherto philosophical tradition, is the unlikelihood of letting that only self-withholding and absconded spring come to mind and attune man's thinking and speaking. As a consequence, European thinking, and the manhood of its language, is still not (what it already is, namely) a colloquy, that is, a *Ge-spräch*, or a gathering onto the constitutive trait of language and its spring, namely the only off-grounding instress. European thinking is not a thinking that springs from, rests in and remains mindful of that spring. In this sense, its speaking is not yet an achieved *Ge-spräch*, or colloquy, *from* language. As long as the German language speaks as a language of the European element, its genius is enclosed in a metaphysical form and mind-set. Hence, that German – just as any language of metaphysics – cannot be the language of a colloquy in which the only spring of “European” and “East Asian” thinking openly scinds itself into (itself as) the off-ground, thus carrying those manners of thinking apart as unique and untranslatable manners of letting the Same have its dwell in a likely answer. “The spring that openly scinds itself into (itself as) the off-ground” fulfils the sense of what we may call “the onset” or “the inception”. Consequently, “thinking” would finally be this: standing the Same's stress, to which man is intraneous, and thus thanking the scinded Same by preserving its open vagueness in a mindful saying; in other words, (thinking is) understanding the Same as the only instress and inception. As long as European thinking not only does not understand the Same, but effectively excludes itself from it, it is, rigorously speaking, not yet a thinking.

The latest and extreme form of this ununderstanding thinking is the thinking of modern science and technology, whose language is, accordingly, not only “uncolloquial”, but the most “advanced” unlikelihood of a colloquy. In fact, the thinking of modern science and technology is a consequence of philosophical thinking which is not only entirely oblivious of its philosophical provenance, but indeed negates that provenance. “Entirely oblivious” means: not just oblivious, but oblivious of its own obliviousness. Since, as shown before, European thinking is, in its hitherto tradition, unawares a thinking within the unlikelihood of a colloquy, and therefore, strictly speaking, not yet a thinking, the thinking of modern science and technology can be characterized as a thinking that negates its forgotten provenance from the unlikelihood of a colloquy that is itself unaware of being such an unlikelihood.

Now, *this* thinking – an oblivious offspring of methodical rationality – implements what, in the colloquy between a Japanese and an Enquirer, is called “the complete Europeanization of the earth and of man” (GVS, p. 98). Europeanization is the process of progressive enclosure into the European element, which (that process) not only causes an assimilation and levelling that may only touch the surface of East Asian being while leaving its roots intact; more dangerously, that

progressive enclosure corrodes in its very source anything constitutive, and, in the first place, the likelihood of a colloquy of different geniuses for the sake of their only spring and its singing. The dominance of the oblivious methodical thinking that drives the complete Europeanization of the earth and of man is corroborated every day by the coercive successes of technical progress. That dominance, in turn, enhances the temptation for East Asian thinking to seek in the concepts and categories that are at the basis of this overpowering thinking the tools for understanding itself in what concerns and attunes it in the first place. This temptation, however, bears and absconds the “much bigger” danger that concerns both interlocutors. The danger is the bigger the more compelling the appearance that, on the other hand, “that which speaks to [East Asian] being, and calls upon [this] being” is not at all debased “to something that is undetermined and thus becomes blurry”, but that in fact it is “revaluated” as a “resource” within a universal “discourse” of “progress” that agrees on the “value” of “difference” and on the necessity of fostering a “productive” “dialogue” at all levels. In fact, the language of that “discourse” disrupts the likelihood of tracing anything constitutive to its point of origin, and thus of saying that which, in a colloquy, is “meant in the first place”.

6. *Language and Say*

Our initial question meanwhile sounds thus: What is the instress of the likelihood of the colloquy of European and East Asian thinking? In light of the richer notion of colloquy, which implies that what is bespoken be said, we can now answer this question as follows: that instress is being itself in its constitutive mindful relation to man. However, this answer, rather than bringing our interrogation to an end, raises anew the following question: Are we capable of thinking the constitutive trait of language, which is itself nothing linguistic, in a manner that opens us toward the likelihood of a colloquy *from* language, and this means: from its bidding as the gathering saying of the Same, ending in its sameness? An indication of such an unprecedented thinking of language can be found in a series of three lectures that are also included in Heidegger’s *On the Way to Language*, and whose title is simply *Das Wesen der Sprache*, that is, as we may provisionally translate, *The Biding of Speech*. The third of these three lectures contains one of Heidegger’s most explicit references to East Asian thinking, more particularly, to the meaning of Tao.

East Asian thinking and European thinking are neighbours. Their neighbourhood is not merely a formal relation, but a vicinity or nearness to which they both belong as a thinking. That nearness is not constituted by those who are neighbours in it, nor is it the measurable distance between them. On the other hand, the nearness does not pre-exist the neighbours as some given domain that one may or may not approach, enter or exit. The neighbours themselves, too, are

not “there” on their own, independently of their neighbourhood; rather, they are originally from and in that neighbourhood, and this means: the belongingness to that neighbourhood is constitutive of their biding. In fact, the neighbouring ways of thinking are what they are by *being*, that is, by sustaining or bearing, the nearness to which, together, they natively belong, while the nearness itself, which originates the neighbours as such, needs to be borne in a neighbourly thinking. This implies that the neighbours – here, European and East Asian thinking – already *are* a colloquy; their thinking already is – *ab initio* – an understanding togetherness. What is this thinking and what does it think? “Thinking” means: owning and bearing the belongingness to the nearness, that is, understanding the Same. It is still hard for us to see how thinking, which supposedly has to do with the analysis and synthesis of concepts, should consist in owning and bearing the belongingness to the nearness, and how this should be tantamount to understanding the Same. On the other hand, if we attempt to experience the nearness whose neighbours we are, and then attempt to answer that nearness, we might come to realize that precisely such answering is what in the first place ought to be called a thinking, and that the likelihood of human speech, in turn, resides in that answer.

Thinking is owning man’s belongingness to the nearness. Such owning answers the need of bringing to mind and keeping in mind that which, in the first place, comes to mind as the nearness of the only instress. In this manner, thinking is already involved in language, namely in its biding, before any writing or speaking takes place. However, this “being involved” in the biding of language never occurs “in general”, but always according to a unique silent attunement. While that attunement silently attunes man’s thinking to the tune of the Same, it wants the *voice* of thinking to answer in an attuned speaking, that is, in a speaking that falls in tune with the word of the Same. Thus, the voiceless word of the Same speaks as the want of a voice, which, in turn, obtains its tone from that voiceless word. The genius of a language is the unique reference to the attuning instress of the Same, thanks to which that language answers, in sound and writing, the silent tune of the Same.

Because thinking is always already within (the instress of the likelihood of) a language, there is no thinking “in general”, but a “German” or “Japanese” or “Italian” thinking, that is, a thinking that “speaks German” (or, respectively, another language). In fact, “speaking a language” in an achieved manner means this: answering the attuning instress, holding (oneself in) its nearness and saying that nearness, and this according to the genius, that is, the unique word-character, of that language. “Speaking a language” in an achieved, that is “colloquial”, manner is an answering that, in whatever is bespoken, in the first place “speaks the nearness”, that is, lets the instress of the Same say itself as that nearness. In an achieved speaking breaks what is “schismatically”

other than the language that is spoken, namely the genius of that language, insofar as it bears the schism itself. However, such speaking owes itself to the attuning which tunes man to the Same in its sameness; which thus “shows” man and the Same to each other; which, finally, while letting man be minded and meant by the only Same, claims man himself to “mind it back” and “mean it back” in his own being. Therefore, “speaking the nearness” means: letting oneself be tuned to the silent tune of the nearness, bearing it in an attuned silence, finally, letting it flagrantly abscond in mindful, understanding words. Saying the nearness always implies liberating a language’s genius toward its spoken words, so that speech itself *is* the breaking of that genius. A speech that does not, in one way or another, say the nearness, does not say anything. When the nearness is not said, words are uttered, yet nothing appears as “one and the same”.

Heidegger calls the bidding of language, which attunes man to the nearness of the Same, thus letting things appear in their inscape, *die Sage*, that is “the Saying” or “the Say”. The Say is not a language, nor the general concept or essence of language. The Say is the attuning instress of the Same (namely, the Same itself *as* the only instress), which grants to each language its unique genius. The genius is the ground-trait or ground-tone by virtue of which, in the attuned speaking of a language, the saying of the Same lets each thing be said, that is, show itself as one and the same inscape.

The Say attunes each one of our languages. Our colloquies are capable of saying what they bespeak only insofar as the Say stirs their speaking as a breaking of the word of the Same. The Say stirs the genius of our languages. The Say is what is meant with the word “language” in the phrase “a colloquy *from* language”. The Say gathers toward itself the speaking of all languages, releasing each of them unto its untranslatable genius. The Say is the speechless instress of the likely *Gespräch* whence languages, each thanks to its unique genius, speak with each other as neighbours of one and the same neighbourhood. Now we can see why, if a language’s genius is not free, that language must keep disrupting the likelihood of saying that which is bespoken in the colloquy. We understand that not language in its metaphysical meaning, but the Say, which speaks through all languages, is the instress of the likelihood of a colloquy.

7. *Say and Way*

Saying means: showing and letting appear, and this thanks to an original minding that, in the first place, lets come to mind and brings to mind. In fact, the original minding, in which being itself and man “mind each other”, is itself that which “says” in the first place. (With a formula, we could say: the Mind *is* the Say.) Thus, the Say is not independent of man. On the contrary, man is natively involved in the Say in that his being is open to its constitutive trait (namely, the original

minding), and called upon to carry out the Say in answer to that trait. When the Say lets appear a thing in its world-gathering inscape, it does so by letting man attain that which in the first place concerns him in the twofold and wants him to carry out the letting-appear in a fitting answer. This letting attain is the minding “in” the Say, which calls upon man to own his belongingness to its (namely, the Say’s) absconded spring. Such owning consists in thinking the nearness of that spring, that is, in letting that nearness say itself. Without such owning, there is no likelihood that, in the speaking of a colloquy, that which is bespoken be said as the Same; however, that owning can only own what it has previously been let attain.

Letting attain is what characterizes a Way. Attaining is not merely the movement from one point to another along a connecting line, just as a way is not simply a connection of points. We only attain that to which we are already originally drawn. “The way”, Heidegger says, “is that which lets us attain what concerns us” (GVS, p. 186). What concerns us in the first place is the inceptual claim that reaches out for our being, obtains it and lets it attain that to which it natively belongs. Thus, what concerns us is itself the way, or rather, that which gives (a) way, namely toward itself as the inceptual concern. “To give (a) way” means: to retreat, or withdraw, in such a manner as to afford a way through the nearness itself of that retreating, namely a way *of* the Same and *for* the Same to say *itself*. The Say consists precisely in such a way-giving of what concerns us (and therefore is minded) in the first place, in other words, the Say has its instress in the “mindsome” withdrawing that affords the ways for the manifold attaining of what concerns us. Man as such is in the first place called upon to own his belongingness to that mindsome withdrawing. In man’s answering to that call, the world and its things find the ways of saying themselves and attempting their being.

The nearness in which European and East Asian thinking are near as neighbouring houses of being, is the neighbourhood of the Say and its constitutive way-giving, which from the only inception binds both traditions of thinking into a colloquy. The way in which these traditions may carry out that colloquy is that, in a transformed speaking, they call each other into the – from the ground up different – ways of their being claimed by and attaining the same withdrawing spring that sets them apart into their earlier togetherness. These ways – the ways of the Mind – shine and attune through the free swaying of a language’s genius. These ways of thinking rest in rare words that let us attain the way-giving nearness itself, which is the absconded spring of all ways. Such words are way-words in an eminent sense, and as such the ground-words of a mindful thinking.

One of the ground-words of East Asian thinking is *Tao* [*dao*]. Heidegger notes that usually one admits that, “actually”, *Tao* means “way”, but that this translation is seen unfit to name what

Tao indicates in the thinking of Lao-tzu [*lao-ʒa*]. For this reason, one prefers to translate *Tao* with more “substantial” and “important” concepts such as Reason, Spirit, *Raison*, Sense, *Logos*. However, Heidegger adds, “the *Tao* could be the Way that gives ways to all (*der alles be-wögende Weg*), <and thus> that from out of which we are, in the first place, capable of thinking what reason, spirit, sense, *logos* originally might like to say from out of their own bidding” (GVS, p. 187).

As all ground-words of thinking, the word *Tao* is untranslatable. In fact, Heidegger does not translate the Chinese word *Tao* with the German word *Weg*. However, he names a German word (namely *Weg*) that answers the word of the Same within a colloquy *from* the Say with the thinking of *Tao*. He says: “*Tao could be the Way...*”. In this manner he suggests that *Tao* might be the Chinese name for the spring of the bidding of language, and thus for the instress that stirs the saying of our languages: *not* the source of “language” “in general”, but the ever withsaid, because in-itself and to-itself ensconced, origin of the untranslatable geniuses that constitute our different ways of speaking. These ways of speaking we may call “mother-languages”. “Mother-language”, as opposed to what is commonly intended as a “mother tongue” or a “native language”, is the name of a language insofar as its genius, that is, its word-character and likely saying, preserves the original reference to the Say as the common source, or “mother”, of all languages.

Our languages are mother-languages insofar as their saying lets the Say have its way, so that the Way has its say in all appearing.

Heidegger thinks towards the Tao, the Way, as the “language-mother”, thanks to which a colloquy can be a colloquy of mother-languages, because the Way is that which, in one way or another, all speaking in all languages understands and says in the first place. Meanwhile we may have gained a vague sense for what the title “The Way we Speak” indicates. This title should remind us that “the way” we speak consists in the manner in which, in all speaking, we “speak”, that is, answer and let break, the only Way. Reason, spirit or *logos* are words of ways of speaking that, in the colloquy of European and East Asian thinking, disrupt the likelihood of saying what needs to be said in the first place, because those manners of speaking do not openly speak the Way of the colloquy as such. However, that colloquy “from house to house” is necessary, if, as the Japanese remarks, in the time of the total Europeanization of the earth and of man the encounter of the East Asian and the European world has become “unavoidable” (GVS, p. 83).

In a colloquy that speaks from the Say, the Same has its Way as the likely country for that encounter.