

The Tale [*Die Zahl*]

Ivo De Gennaro¹

„so gaben auch die, welche in der zahl der poeten
wolten gerechnet werden, jhre gedichte
anderen poeten zu übersehen“ (Opitz)

*e così coloro che aspiravano a essere annoverati fra i poeti si
facevano rileggere le proprie poesie da altri poeti*

so also those who wanted to be counted among the number of the poets,
gave their poems other poets to look over them²

We ask: How is it with the sense of *Zahl* and *zählen*³ in the German language? Is *Zahl*, as it may seem at first, merely the indication of a quantity, a size, a value in relation to a unit? What speaks in what we refer to as *Zahl*?

The German dictionary by Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm lists a number of meanings that the word stem of *Zahl* has brought forth in various Germanic languages. Subsequent to this list it says this:

the circle of words from which ‘zahl’ originates is common to Germanic languages, but lacks any relatively secure primordial (ur-conversant⁴) relationships. It is assigned words with quite dazzling meanings in the various languages [i.e. meanings which are so diverse that it is sometimes difficult to recognize their relation, or conversancy, and understand how the same stem would give rise to them] ... in contrast to this jumble of meanings that are so far apart from each other and yet conversant at the core, it may well be emphasized as a high likelihood that the old Germanic mother-word was a much-used expression of domestic life, in connection with the economy in house and field, with reporting and calculative accounts of their management and income, together with related instructions for economizing, as all this was the responsibility of the major domus in extended farms ... if the presented assumption is correct, then one can understand – without having to resort to forced hypotheses and quite naturally – the transition of the series of words on the one

hand into the meaning of instruction and teaching^a, on the other hand into that of calculating and presenting reporting and its results, as well as the widening from the original term to that of report in general, of mere telling [*erzählung*], and of speech and speaking in general.^b

So, what is therefore the core, in which the relationship between the meanings, which stand away from one another, rests?

The Duden dictionary of origins cites the Indogermanic [*idg.*] root *del[ə]- “spalten [to split], kerben [to carve⁵], schnitzen [to cut], behauen [to hew]” and thus arrives at the basic meaning “in-carved [things], incision” in the sense of the strokes which are carved into wood for the purpose of keeping recording and remembering. The tale⁶ [*Zahl*] is an “in-carved mind-mark [*eingekerbttes Merkzeichen*]”. *Kerben* (carving), in turn, is the same word as γράφειν [*gráphein*]. The sense of the tale and of telling is related to that of script and of writing. The tale is the tokening-itself-into⁷ of a mindableness [*die Einzeichnung einer Merklichkeit*], a sciency which is carvingly broken open and preserved in the show⁸ of the notch [*Kerbe*].

Another derivation (according to Pfeifer) traces the word tale [*Zahl*] back to the *idg.* root *del- “zielen [to aim], berechnen [to calculate], nachstellen [to prey; lit. to set after], listig schädigen [to cunningly harm], zählen [to count], erzählen [to tell]”, from which the Italian *dolo* [guile, deceit] also comes from. In this reading, tale is the tangible form in which something is singled out (zeroed in on), estimated, calculated into (included) and finally pursued; telling is the calculative seizing with the intention of causing damage.

Unlike the foreign word number [*Nummer*], which belongs to the realm of the mere identification of the already given (cf. house number, telephone number, book number, etc.), tale is a word of saying and disbasconding, of scinding, of letting-mind and presenting [*Darlegen*], the latter as a gathering letting-lie-before in the There of disabscondedness [*als sammelndes Vorliegenlassen im Da der Entborgenheit*]. Whoever is told⁹ [*zählt*] to something, [whoever] belongs to a tale, is revealed in his being, and betokened in his bidding-limit, through this belongingness [*Wer zu etwas zählt, einer Zahl angehört, ist durch diese Zugehörigkeit in seinem Sein geoffenbart, in seiner Wesensgrenze bezeichnet*]. To count someone to a tale means to hold him for

^a The Gothic *talzjan* translates παιδεύειν [*paideúein*], un-tals means ἀπαιδευτος [*apaídeutos*].

^b Cf. the English tale, tell, talk.

something by virtue of an or-bounding¹⁰ sooth-scission¹¹, clearance and gathering [*ihn kraft einer ausgrenzenden Entscheidung, Lichtung und Sammlung für etwas halten*]. Telling [*Das Zählen*] lets become mindable what is from itself disabsconded into a tale [*in eine Zahl entborgen*], in that it simultaneously excludes what shows itself to be unseeming to this tale [*was sich als zu dieser Zahl ungehörig zeigt*].

The fact that the tale of the dighters¹² is small does not primarily mean that one does not reach a high number of members of this guild when telling them out. Rather, tale is here what makes the each-whiling¹³ dighter appear to be the only one he is, by having in itself the trait of smallness [*Kleinheit*], i.e. of inconspicuousness and rarity. A dighter is only someone who is counted into the tale of the dighters: the tale precedes them; [it] is not the result of counting them together. In that, the tale is neither a generic term nor a collective term. Being counted into the tale of dighters does not only mean that one falls into their definition or group. Rather, being counted into the tale of dighters, being told to them [*das Zählen zu ihnen*] (Greek ἐγ [en]- or συγκρίνασθαι [synkrínasthai]), firstly means the belongingness into a reference to the bidding of dighting, which claims the likely tale – but not the number [*Anzahl*] – of recognized and unrecognized, mutually recognizable or unknown dighters for itself.^c

Tale is that which, inconspicuously, keeps the bidding of something from out of its absconded provenance and thus dis-boundingly¹⁴ [*abgrenzend*] out-shows¹⁵ and clearly scinds this something. The tale is out-showing as a primordial carving, i.e. as tokening-itself-into of the schism

^c Hölderlin writes in *Brod und Wein* [*Bread and Wine*] (III, 5ff. [note by the translators: the English translation has been adopted and slightly modified from Friedrich Hölderlin, *Selected Poems*. Translated by David Constantine. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books Ltd, 1996, 37.]):

So komm! daß wir das Offene schauen,
Daß ein Eigenes wir suchen, so weit es auch ist.
Fest bleibt Eins; es sei um Mittag oder es gehe
Bis in die Mitternacht, immer bestehet ein Maß,
Allen gemein, doch jeglichem auch ist eignes beschieden,
Dahin gehet und kommt jeder, wohin er es kann.

So come, let us face into openness,
seek out a thing that is *ours*, far as it may be.
This much is certain: be it at midday or should it
Reach into midnight a measure remains
Common to all, but to each is due also his own,
There goes and gets anyone, whereto he can.

in a *thus*¹⁶ cleared whole of ytold things¹⁷ [*als Einzeichnung des Unterschieds in ein gelichtetes Ganzes von Gezähltem*], each of which itself stands in the show of the tale. We say: the tale of the countrymen, of the wives, of the protector gods, the high mountains, the world oceans, the healing plants, the farm animals, the stone hammers, and by this we mean the preceding whole of the likely sights of each. The sight of the tale, in which what is told (the ytold) [*das Gezählte*] is – in an each-whiling wise – what it is, is based on the minding adreeing¹⁸ of the tokening (of the jointing rift) of the four angles¹⁹ of the world [*im merkenden Austragen der Zeichnung (desfügenden Risses) der vier Weltgegenden*]; this adreeing, in turn, is founded on the onsetting minding of the schism, which weirds itself – [as] the primigenial tale [*Ur-Zahl*; lit. ‘ur-tale’; ‘or-tale’²⁰] and the one-tale [*Ein-Zahl*] – into the unifying-scinding fay²¹ of the four-tale of the world-quadrifugue [*die einend-scheidende Fuge der Vierzahl des Welt-Gevierts*]. The sight of the tale as clearing one-tale [*Einzahl*] and more-tale [*Mehrzahl*]²² is the own-tempered telling [*das eigentliche Zählen*], in which only all en-telling (reporting, proclaiming, presenting), all telling up and telling down, is founded. On the other hand, the telling which has been severed from this sight and has been lowered to the purely calculative operation of the tale, can only determine numbers. Each number, however, reaches at best to the full number of what lies before (of what is present), without ever reaching the simple (the onefold) [*das Einfache*] of the tale.

Originally, tale is the clearing of the schism as one-tale, as two-tale, as three-tale, the weirded, sense-opening and sense-setting carving [*Kerbung*]. This carving is not first carried out by the hand of man, but it is the cut of the schism, which is – in each respective way (each-whilingly) – already carried for man, weirding itself in instantaneous versatility [*in augenblicklicher Gewandtheit*]^d. For *gewandt* [versatile], *geschwind* [swift], *geschickt* [skillful, fit, keen], the German language also says *hurtig* [quick]. Tale is the *quick handwriting of the schism*. [*Zahl ist die hurtige Handschrift des*

^d The versatility of the cut [*Die Gewandtheit des Schnittes*] shows into the in-itself ab-scindly and ab-scinded bidding of the schism. Versatile [*gewandt*] means agile, free and light, namely in the in-halting versing-toward from the decidedness of the denying-itself [*in der innehaltenden Zuwendung aus der Entschiedenheit des Sichversagens*]. In this versatility, the tale has its bidding and its wisening-power as the ground and say of everything bidesomely con-versant [*In dieser Gewandtheit hat die Zahl ihr Wesen und ihre Weisungskraft als Grund und Sage alles wesenhaft Verwandten*]. The versatility itself is un-conversant [*unverwandt*] in the multiple sense of the fremd and single-unique (unicum sui generis), of the inevitable and ceaseless, the, in its minding, through and through immediate and unhindered. The evidence, what is “natural” about the tale, rests upon the at all times un-conversant versatility [*der allzeit unverwandten Gewandtheit*] of the tale, hence its likely perversion [*Verkehrung*] into “language” and a medium of valuation and value increase in the tradership of the will to will. <The perversion of the tale indicates how the tale *perverts itself* and is perverted into becoming the language and medium of valuation, value trading, brute computing.>

Unterschieds.] In that the schism quickly writes itself into the between and onsettingly enheartens (awakens) man to his telling bidding, every thing clears itself into its own ytoldness [*Gezähltheit*]. Thus, the tale writes itself, as that which is ubiquitously (all-wardly) meetening [*allwärts eignend*], through the whole of the beënt²³. Tale is now the disensconcing cut, the cut of disabscondment; ytold [*gezählt*] is: inscribed, out-cut into the light of meetness [*eingeschrieben, ausgeschnitten ins Lichte der Eignung*]. We say: three lindens (a three-told group of lindens) are told in the courtyard, mountain after mountain (a flight of mountains) is told in the land, people are (in the circle of family) told in the freeness of their concord, gods (as celestial race) are told into the harmony of their multitude. Where there is no tale, there is no appearing. The tale, however, does not first speak categorically, but onsettingly belongs into the building of the say of being.

Man tells insofar and as long as he is. He tells in response to the tale that is at all times telling into the abiding. Out of original enheartenment he adrees its meetening bidding and thus lets thing and world rest in their tellability and talkability [*Er trägt aus ursprünglicher Ermunterung deren eignendes Wesen aus und lässt derart Ding und Welt in ihrer Zählbarkeit ruhen*]. Thus adreeing, man pays the due [*Gebühr*] to the tale. But man can also forget the bidding of the tale and fall into a blind and self-forgetful counting-rage and number-addiction. In such a sleep he drives the tale toward its un-biding as a set-form of the calculation and computation <in its ground-trait of preying or setting after> the tale-less (scarce) beënt [*als Stellform der nachstellenden Verrechnung des zahllosen (knappen) Seienden*]. The more neglected the tale, the more irrepressibly the taleless [*das Zahllose*] is willing to increase itself into the un-tale²⁴ [*die Unzahl*]. In the oblivion of the clearing-safekeeping bidding of the tale, the wealth of what has been told (the ytold) [*der Reichtum des Gezählten*] gives way to the needfulness of the eternally uncounted and overcounted²⁵ [*des ewig Un- und Überzähligen*], with no way out.

Only if once the tale en-tells a world, there clears itself house and field, man and animal, work and fruit, word and silence, grief and joy, death and life, light and secret into the frugal-still mind-show of the enownment.

Endnotes:

¹ This attempt of translation has been conducted by Daniel Zaruba, Thomas O'Halloran Jr. and Jack Krasuski. The footnotes in this text are from the original text of the author; the endnotes have been written by us. We may sometimes employ alternative translations, which we will either announce through endnotes or add in brackets. We thank Ivo De Gennaro for his comments and his aid in the process of finalizing this translation.

² An alternative translation of this quote from Martin Opitz, which will flash in its full fremdness after all of the hints within the text have been gathered, may be the following: “so also those who wanted to be counted (told) among the tale of the poets (dighters) / gave their dightings other poets (dighters) to look over them”.

³ Both *Zahl* and *zählen* are ordinary words in German, the former meaning “number“, the latter meaning “to count“. Since this text is inquiring into the *sense* of *Zahl* and *zählen*, we will omit translations of these two words for the first few paragraphs of the text, and will translate them later according to the hints we will have gained by then from the text.

⁴ The word-complex surrounding the adjective *verwandt* [related; con-versant] (including *urverwandt* [primordial; ur-conversant] and *unverwandt* [unrelated; un-conversant]) will be further elucidated on p. 4 in footnote d. *Verwandt* indicates the trait of all that is con-versant insofar as it is simultaneously unified and scinded in the versatility of the cut. *Unverwandt* describes, in its first sense, the in-itself unique uniqueness of the schism in its sheer nullibicity; in another sense it is indicating the ceaseless “eyeing” of the schism, its unimpaired minding (us) in its very versatility and all its “versions”, “turnings” or “angles”. Colloquial German knows phrases such as “Sie blickte mich unverwandt an.” [“She looked at me intently.”; i.e., with a look that wouldn’t turn away.] The latter trait, in particular, is very subtle, as it is both the firmest and most fragile trait. This is why we necessarily find it also in metaphysical constellations, albeit deformed into figures of the ultimate foundation of the beënt such as the unmoved mover and the eternally truth-emanating look of the good. Finally, *unverwandt* also means “unused”, i.e., in the present context, “unusable” and “every day (a)new”.

⁵ For *kerben* as a verb (and related instances), we will use *to carve* as a translation, for *die Kerbe* as a noun we will use *notch* as a translation. *Die Kerbung* will be translated as *carving*.

⁶ From this instance onwards, we will translate *Zahl* with the English *tale* and *zählen* with *to tell*. Other cognate words of *Zahl* will be indicated in brackets after our respective attempts of translation. Both *tale* and *telling* speak within the dimension of *Lichtung*, the clearance of being-itself: They indicate the fitting appearance of things in the light of their sooth. The *tale* allots every beënt its respective time-play-space for its own selving; in doing so, it simultaneously gathers the beënt into its world-bearing wholeness.

⁷ *Einzeichnung* means the act of *sich-einzeichnen*, of tokening-itself-into here, i.e. the way the schism tokens itself into the wholeness of things and “leaves its mark (show)” there.

⁸ We suggest translating the German *Zeichen* with the noun *show*. In our employment of this word, we hear in it the archaic meaning “sign, token, indication”; the *show* shows the broken flagrancy of the nullibiquitous principle in its sooth, or truth.

⁹ *Zählen* as *to tell* must be heard with the meanings of “to reckon in, to include in consideration; to account, to regard as; to reveal [e.g. ‘Time will tell what became of him.’]”.

¹⁰ The German verb *ausgrenzen* means, with its primary ontical meaning, “to exclude”. Here, *ausgrenzen* means the display of something in its limits or bounds: Whatever truly appears – whatever appears in its truth or sooth – shows itself in its limits; limit, or bound, means here the schismatic wherefrom and wherein of appearing. In order to indicate this phenomenon for the path of thinking in English, we wish to coin the verb *to or-bound*; the prefix *or-*, which hints at the accomplishment from an origin or source, points to the aforementioned “schismatic wherefrom and wherein” of appearing.

¹¹ *Sooth-scission* indicates the bidesome “decision” of disensconcing a thing into its sooth, of bringing it to light. Cf. Gino Zaccaria, *The Enigma of Art. On the Provenance of Artistic Creation*. Leiden: Brill, 2021, 131–132 (n.176).

¹² The obsolete English *dighter* translates the German *Dichter* and is etymologically closer to the now more regularly used word “poet”.

¹³ The coinage *each-whiling* translates the German *jeweilig*, which indicates the dis-contingent “eachness of each”, the allotted while for the self-same abiding (the *Einzigkeit* or onlyness) of a thing or person.

¹⁴ In ordinary German, *abgrenzen* means “to demarcate, to define, to mark off”; within the scope of this text, it means the “clear-cut” scission of a things into its truth-bearing element, which clearly sets a thing off against other things in its uniqueness (while still keeping the uniqueness of other things and the gathering of a harmonic world). In order to indicate this phenomenon within the English language, we wish to recover the obsolete English verb *to disbound*, which used to mean “to separate by boundaries”, and which we will write with a hyphen here (*to dis-bound*) to establish it clearly as a word for the path of thinking. Compare also endnote 10 above for further clarifying remarks on the meaning of *Grenze* (limit; bound) in this text.

¹⁵ The German verb *auszeichnen* usually means “to distinguish”, but speaks here as a synonym of the pathword *clearing*: *To out-show* means to bide or selve within the scope of the inscape. For a further elucidation, see Ivo De Gennaro, *The Weirdness of Being. Heidegger's Unheard Answer to the Seinsfrage*. London: Routledge, 2014, 190 (n. 55).

¹⁶ Within this sentence, “thus” indicates how the “cleared whole of ytold things” may only come about as a free seconding, or ensuing, of the mindfulness of the schism.

¹⁷ The gathered wealth or richness of told things, *das Gezählte*, could also be translated with the Old English *the ytold* or the coinage *the i-told*. The prefixes “y-” and “i-” indicate the gatheredness of something, and can provide a hint of the sense of being-itself within the modality of granting sense and gifting us a unified, harmonic world.

¹⁸ The Old English verb *to adree* is our suggested translation of the German verb *austragen* in this text. It is etymologically closely related to the German *tragen* and means “to spend, pass (time, etc.); to carry on; to lead (one’s life)” as well as “to bear, endure, suffer, undergo”. Older English also knows the phrase “to dree one’s weird” (to suffer one’s fate); we therefore believe that this word is uniquely suited to be employed in the English thinking-path to indicate the *adreeing* of the stress of being-itself and its weirdness.

¹⁹ In ordinary German, *Gegend* denotes a geographical area or region; in this text, it indicates the spaciousity of the achieved acknowledgement of the schism and the freely ensuing mirror-play of sky and earth, divinities and mortals within the harmony of the world-quadrifugue. In *Gegend* we ought to mind the important traits of *geggen* and *Gegenwart*, of countering (towardsing) and towardness, which constitute the ceaseless sway of the principle (in its wantingness) towards the human being. In order to indicate this (weirded) spaciousity within the English thinking-path, we suggest translating *Gegend* with the English noun *angle*. As a springboard for our considerations, we wish to point to the following lines from William Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*: “I left him cooling of the air with sighs / In an odd angle of the isle and sitting, / His arms in this sad knot.” The Proto-Indo-European root of *angle* and all its cognate words, **h₂enk-*, means “to curve, to bend”. The noun *angle* has a plethora of rich meanings within the English language; we wish to point out a variety of these which we see as crucial for establishing *angle* as a word of the thinking-path: They include “a corner of a room or other enclosed space; a retreating space; a recess; a nook”, “a point of land; a cape; a promontory”, “the indefinite space between two lines or surfaces that meet, at or close to their meeting point”, “the shape formed by lines that meet”, “the point at which two or more lines meet; a vertex”, “the degree of divergence of two lines from one another, or of lines from a horizontal or vertical reference-line or axis; an analogous property plane or planes”, “the angle of approach; the angle of deflection; the angle of deviation; the angle of dip; the angle of elevation; the angle of inclination; the angle

of rotation”, “the angle of sight and of vision”, “the angle of contact”, “the angle of rest”, “the angle of repose” or “any of the turning points on a zig-zag path or stream”. The verb *to angle* includes meanings such as “to indicate direction”, “to turn or move at an angle”, “to lie or be aligned in an oblique direction”, “to follow a sharply winding course”, “to wind; to twist”, “to bend; to incline”, “to curve”, “to hold, to set, to keep at an angle”, “to obtain an angle” or “to meet [at an angle]; to converge”. For this reason, we believe it is uniquely suited to indicate both the (fourfold) angles which constitute the worlding world, as well as the (time-space of the) towardness of all the “vectors”, “constellations” or “versions” that may unfold within the structure of enowning. One last interesting fact about the word *angle* is that it corresponds to the word *English* (cf. the prefix *Anglo-*); the name is possibly derived from *angol* (Proto-Germanic **angulaz*, “fishhook”), referring either to the Angles’ habitat on the Jutland coast, which is shaped like a fishhook, or the Angles’ probable occupation as fishermen. It is still enigmatic if and how the word *angle* may speak as an ownmost word of the thought-path within the English language; we still maintain that *angle* may be capable of indicating the fair roominess of the likely advent of being.

²⁰ The obsolete English prefixes ‘ur-’ and ‘or-’ indicate the accomplishment from an origin or earliness.

²¹ The coined noun *fay* gathers the meanings “to join, to fit, to joint; to adorn; to clear, to cleanse” and is our suggested translation of the German *Fuge*.

²² In ordinary German, *Einzahl* and *Mehrzahl* indicate the grammatical singular and plural; within the scope of this text, they indicate the phenomenon of the one-tale, broken into the schismatic four-tale of world and the more-tales of things.

²³ The German *Seiendes/das Seiende* is translated by us with the now obsolete English *beënt*. For a further elucidation of this pathword, see pathword elucidation 8 in Gino Zaccaria, *The Enigma of Art. On the Provenance of Artistic Creation*. Leiden: Brill, 2021, 33–35.

²⁴ *Zahllos* (taleless, deprived of the tale) indicates the beënts as they are reduced to mere computability; *Unzahl* (the un-tale) is the meaningless tale as mere computational value.

²⁵ *Das Un- und Überzählige* is another way of saying *die Unzahl des Zahllosen* (cf. endnote 24 above, cf. the previous sentence in the main body of this text). *Unzählig* (uncounted) and *überzählig* (overcounted) here mean the same; they both indicate the degeneration of what is told in a tale. *Unzählig* is the meaningless quantum; *überzählig* is the planetary senselessness of what is reduced to mere computability.