A single thesis seems to cover the whole of the vast critical literature that surrounds Friedrich Hölderlin's dramatic fragments, Der Tod des Empedokles: the tragic hero, it is claimed again and again, sacrifices himself in order to synthesize the previously incompatible spheres of art and nature, or heaven and earth. Commentators of the fragments tirelessly display a kind of hermeneutic desire for closure and reconciliation in their remarks. However, in this fragmentary work—one of the titles of which announces the death of its tragic hero—death takes place nowhere in the space of its presentation. The absence of anything resembling a scene of self-immolation causes a certain interpretive distress. Empedokles' "suicide" is inevitably described as if it were a fait accompli, despite its complete absence from the texts under consideration. Commentators continually refer to Holderlin's initial self-interpretive remarks in order to corroborate their well-worn thesis that Empedokles' death issues in reconciliation, that the poet-philosopher passes beyond death and enters into another world that would surpass the world of the dead. Although the opening salvo of the Empedokles project does indeed end in a scene of self-sacrifice, there is absolutely no reason to believe that the succeeding texts slavishly imitate this basis. Interpretation—as Heidegger pointed out powerfully in the opening pages of Sein und Zeit—finds in a text what it places into it.

Let us consider this opening moment, the effects of which still determine the scholarship of the fragments. In a letter to his brother written in the summer of 1797, Friedrich Hölderlin alluded to a project that sent him into transports: "Ich habe den ganz detaillierten Plan zu einem Trauerspiel gemacht, dessen Stoff mich hinreissit" (SW 6 247). This sketch would become known as the "Frankfurter Plan"—the original schema of Hölderlin's only existing tragedy, Der Tod des Empedokles. This original design of the "drama" will be discarded. Whereas the "Frankfurter Plan" elaborates what one might call an "identificatory" tragic scheme, the successive modifications of the
dramatic fragments undermine its grounding framework.

The reflective idealist pathos for reconciliation between the self and the world is particularly evident in Hölderlin's description of the fourth act:

Seine Neider erfahren von einigen seiner Schüler
die harten Reden, die er auf dem Aetna vor diesen
gegen ihn aufzuheben, das auch wirklich seine Statue
umwirft und ihn aus der Stadt jagt. Nun reift sein
Entschluss, der längst schon in ihm dämmerte, durch
freiwilligen Tod sich mit der unendlichen Natur zu
vereinen. Er nimt in diesem Vorsatz den zweiten
tieferen schmerzlicheren Abschied von Weib und
Kindern und geht wieder auf den Aetna. Seinem
jungen Freunde weicht er aus, weil er diesem zutraut,
dass er sich nicht werde täuschen lassen, mit den
Tröstungen, mit denen er sein Weib besänftigt, und
dass dieser sein eigentliche Vorhaben ahnden möchte.
(SW4 148)

The resolution to die would be the necessary consequence of
Empedokles' theory that all things flow together in relations of affinity
and divisiveness.2 Empedokles would accordingly decide to sacrifice
himself for the sake of the idea, his suicide would be a philosophical
suicide. Empedokles' innermost drive, according to the "Frankfurter
Plan," is to "unify with infinite nature," to become indissociably
bound together with all-englobing *hen kaí pan*, to coalesce with the
infinite through his self-sacrifice. But the promise of coalescence,
as announced in the originating plan of the drama, does not exactly
result in coalescence, but rather in the self-erasing representation
of coalescence. Unification will be replaced with the *simulacrum
*of union.3

In the "first version" (c. 1798) of *Der Tod des Empedokles*, however,
Empedokles is continually identified with "the infinite." The infinite
may be understood by what Hölderlin terms in his theoretical and
poetical fragments "intellectual intuition" (*intellektuelle Anschauung*):
an immediate relation between subject and object that *efface the
limit*, suspending the distinction between them. Panthea's euphoric
description of Empedokles—that to be him is life itself ("Er selbst
tu sein, das ist das Leben und wir andern sind der Traum davon")—
suggests that the tragic hero is already indissociable from, and has
achieved total union with being itself.4 Her very name, *Pan-thea*, is
evocative of such an immediate union. The desire for the realization
of the totality of being has already been accomplished. The limit that
would circumscribe the self from the "life" that would be posted
outside the self is transcended. Empedokles is further qualified as
illimitable in Delia's more sober remark of admonition to her friend
that she loves the unrestricted unrestrictedly ("Den unbegrenzten liebst
du unbegrenzt") (SW4 7).5 Hermocrates, the priest who functions in
the "first version" as his nemesis,6 similarly identifies Empedokles with
the limitless. Empedokles was expelled by the gods, Hermocrates
claims, "weil er des Unterschieds zu sehr vergiss/Im übergrogen
Glück, und sich allein/Nur fühle" (SW4 11). Empedokles, then,
who does not attend to the difference, is much like the sages of
which Hölderlin wrote in "Die Weisen aber..." who only differentiate
spiritually/intellectually and, for the fault of making a purely ideal
distinction, are victimized by nature?7

Empedokles is similarly punished with boundless destruction ("mit
gräzenloser Ode nun gestraft" (SW4 11)) for refusing to recognize
the original difference.

One means of interpreting this passage from *Empedokles* would
be to consider it through the speculum of "Urtteil/Seyn." According
to the logic of that text, the "I" posits itself as identical with itself
only by not regarding the separation that divides it from itself. (The self posits itself as the same with itself, "ungeachtet dieser Trennung," Hölderlin writes.) For Hölderlin, self-consciousness proceeds from out of the opposition of the "I" to itself. By forgetting the difference, the opposition from which self-consciousness issues, the self is able to recognize itself as the same as itself ("ich erkenne mich als dasselbe"). The paradox is that the self is opposed to, and yet at the same time the same as, since the self posits itself as itself in the opposed ("um entgegengesetzt"). The self recognizes itself as its own other and yet exteriorizes itself as its own double at the same time—a paradox that is markedly Fichtean.6

Let us return to the passage from Empedokles that led us down this path of reflection. Empedokles, according to Hermokrates interpretation, "forgot too much the difference," "felt himself alone," and was therefore expelled by the gods. To which difference is Hermokrates referring? The context suggests that it is the difference between gods and mortals, which is certainly one of the primary concerns of all of Hölderlin's writing. Empedokles' transgression was to have presented himself as a divine figure before the Agrigentine people and to have relativized the difference by his self-deification. And yet the succeeding phrase ("er fühlt sich nur selbst") seems to suggest something more. "Felt himself alone": Empedokles, according to Hermokrates' interpretation, "forgot too much the difference." Empedokles felt himself, and this sentiment de soi was the consciousness of being determined by nothing other than himself, as he himself claims he is by identifying himself as "the one who is born free": "die Freigeborne, die aus sich allein/Und keines andern ist" (SW4 15). Empedokles presents himself as the absolute self—not merely as one who was purely conscious of himself, but as one who was intimately connected with the sources of the natural world: "[In mir/In mir, ihr Quellen des Lebens, strömtest ihr einst/Aus Tiefen der Welt zusammen" (SW4 14). Empedokles' auto-affection was an inner experience that led to the disclosure of the sources of the natural world: "Es sammeln in der Tiefe sich, Natur,/Die Quellen deiner Höhn und deine Freuden,/Sie kamen all' in meiner Brust zu ruhn" (SW4 70). Empedokles, then, felt himself unconditionally and felt himself to be the source of nature at the same time; i.e. he is an idealist in the rigorous sense.12

The absolute synthesis of subject and object had been obtained, and yet this synthesis belongs to an inaccessible past. Empedokles' "fault," according to Hermokrates' interpretation, would be the forgetting of the separation that lies at the origin of selfhood, or to put it more generally, the inability to sufficiently engage with difference—the leitmotif of much of Hölderlin's writing.13 The neglect of (the) difference (between the self as subject and as object) is what produces (social) difference—the banishment of Empedokles from the polis.14

The first version of the Empedokles follows the "Frankfurter Plan" in its presentation of a complete union between selfhood and the world. One could say with justification, however, that the last versions of the dramatic fragments undermine their opening tendency. The grounding framework of the project—which announces a philosophical program in which sacrifice would lead to reconciliation—will become complicated.

On first appearance, the text entitled Grund zum Empedokles (1799)—which originated, according to Beißner, roughly at the same time as the third version of Der Tod des Empedokles15—seems like a theory or program that would elaborate the fundamental principles of the "drama" (but of which version or versions?).16 It is, however, by no means certain that one is justified in separating this text from what have become known as the three extant versions of Empedokles. What appears as the author's own interpretive statements on what he thought he accomplished in the first two versions may be also read as another instantiation of Empedokles, rather than as an explanatory ground that should be set alongside—and hence outside—the "drama." After having established the fundamental principles of tragedy, Hölderlin presents—in the section of the text entitled Grund zum Empedokles—the immediate ground of Empedokles' sacrificial decision. In "pure life," Hölderlin writes (without giving one a means of understanding this term), nature and art, physik und technik, are "opposed only harmoniously" (nur harmonisch eingenommen) (SW4 152) insofar as they are bound together by a relation of unification and separation.17

The division between art and nature affords a reciprocal relation (in a manner that radically transforms the Widerselfbindung between the I and the Non-I in Fichte):18 art fashions nature and thereby makes of itself its "blossom" (Blühe) and "perfection" (Vollendung), whereas
nature only becomes "divine in conjunction with the diverse yet harmonious art" (erst göttlich durch die Verbindung mit der verschiedenen aber harmonischen Kunst). Whereas art (as the "organic") gives form to \textit{physis} and is imposing of measure, nature belongs to the sphere of the "aorgic"—that is to say, the formless, the immeasurable. Both pre-representational nature and human founded-institutions of art exist in a relation of interdependency in "pure life": each complements the other, "compensating for the shortcomings of the other, which that one must necessarily have in order to be entirely that which it can be as a particular" (erzählt den Mangel des andern, den es notwendig haben muß, um ganz das zu sein, was es als besonderes sein kann) (SW4 152). Art has a compensatory function, imposing measure upon the immeasurable, stabilizing and introducing constancy, while the aorgic offers a countermovement that undoes constancy and measure. Thus it would seem that art has a redressive character that seeks to offset the deficiencies of nature, while art requires nature's supplementary complementation.

But "pure life," Hölderlin reminds us, only exists as a feeling. In order for intimacy to attain the level of intelligibility, the "organic" and the "aorgic" retreat from the other into their respective spheres. If it is to be known, nature (which exists, Hölderlin suggests, prior to all comprehension) must separate itself into the extremity of its unruly freedom and assume its amorphous ("incomprehensible" [des Unbegreiflichen], "insensible" [des Unfähigbaren] [non-sensuous]) character, while art must withdraw into the interior space of the "organic" (the constructed), until both reciprocally exchange their fundamental properties. In terms of this differential configuration, art and nature separate themselves into the extremity of their mutual isolation, but this antithesis leads to a reciprocal determination (\textit{Wechselwirkung}) in a manner that is Fichtean.19 The "organic" adopts the features of its counterpart, becoming limitless and chaotic, while the "aorgic" becomes measured, constant, and constructed.

There is, then, a moment in which the violent opposition between art and nature is reconciled, and yet this reconciliation is excessive (it presents one with an Übermacht! der Kantigfeit), insofar as the counterparts unify with each other so intimately that they discard their originally differentiated form and invert their relationship to the other: each of the antipodes now converts into the other, adapting its properties, and exchanges its position with the other. In the space between the terms lies "the struggle and the death of the individual" (\textit{der Kampf, und der Tod des Einzelnen}) (SW4 153), by which Hölderlin means the negation of the distinctive identity of the tragic hero. The death of the individual—situated at the juncture between art and nature—is the tragic medium that allows art and nature to substitute their properties with each other.20

The "aorgic" and the "organic" enigmatically maintain their mutual exclusivity, however: each finds itself in its counterpart, and restores itself in the other. There is, then, not an absolute fusion or a simple restoration of the original intimacy. Both members are destroyed in their individual, self-subsistent particularity and unite not by way of a speculative, "idealistic" fusion, but in a "real supreme struggle" (\textit{realer [...] höchster Kampf}) (SW4 153). Both return to their fixed determinations by passing into the other. The intensification of the conflict is the moment of the "highest reconciliation" (\textit{die höchste Versöhnung}) in which both members of the conflictual pair attain their individuality by way of the division that separates them. Neither lose their individual self-sufficiency altogether, both are in relation to the difference from which they issue. The reconciliation between them is merely apparent, inasmuch as both interpenetrate only at the highest degree of their polarization. The union of the pair thus proceeds out of "the most intense enmity" (\textit{die höchste Feindseligkeit}). It would seem that Hölderlin's own description (or narration) of the division between art and nature transforms the fundamental tenor of Empedoklean philosophy that the emanations of nature are bound together by forces of affinity and dissociation.

According to the logic of the \textit{Grund zur Empedokles}, there is only an instantaneous and deceptive presentation of the unification of opposites, however. The apparently all-unifying moment between the organic and the aorgic is nothing more than a \textit{Tragbild}—a term that, in the eighteenth century, according to the Grimm \textit{Wörterbuch}, carried the connotation of a deceptive sense perception without a corresponding empirical object ("täuschende irdische Wahrnehmung"), and most likely served as the Herderian translation of \textit{phantom}.21 The passage in question is worth citing directly:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Aber die Individualität dieses Moments ist nur ein Erzengnis}
\end{quote}
The struggle between the warring partners results neither in an indistinguishable coalescence, nor in a simple opposition. The struggle ends in a simulacrum. The reciprocal determination of each by the other is "like" the Tragbild of unification, and yet this simulation itself dissolves and gives way to a "more pure generality." How is one to understand this "dissolution"? The intimacy between the organic and the aorganic is, once more, excessive; the moment of unification cannot sustain this excess and does not persist: the opposites are suspended and the synthesis is dissolved. The synthesis must become disengaged for two reasons. First, the intimate reconciliation of the split must undo itself, as we have seen, in order to be known. The synthesis must generalize itself, if it is to attain to the level of intelligibility. Secondly, the moment of unification is instantaneous because it may not be restricted to any finite instantiation. The "union" of art and nature, Hölderlin remarks, is not reducible to a "single individual" and is "therefore not too intimate, in that the divine no longer appears physically..." Were the synthesis to be perpetuated in the tragic hero, the general would lose its universal character in the particular (the "unique," the "individual"). Because the resolution is of the strictest generality, it cannot be restricted to the particular; it must unravel itself, causing the tragic hero to perish.22

Absolute unification, then, occurs "like" a Tragbild played out on the stage of the tragic drama through the death of the tragic hero. But what is the role of the tragic figure Empedokles in relation to the conflict between of the organic and the aorganic? Empedokles— as the "son" who "arose out of the deepest oppositions" between art and nature—interiorizes the Wechselbestimmung between the aorganic and the organic. Empedokles' time, Hölderlin remarks, demanded an "Opfer" [a victim, an offering, a sacrifice]. For Hölderlin, the death of the tragic hero is not a personal sacrifice, but is effected by an epochal transformation: "So individualisiert sich seine Zeit in Empedokles, und je mehr die sich in ihn individualisiert, je glänzender und wahrlicher und sichtbarer in ihm das Räthsel aufgelöst erscheint, um so notwendiger wird sein Untergang" (SW4 158). The tragic hero individuates the simulated synthesis of art and nature, which inescapably results in the destruction of the synthesis. By becoming the external representation, indeed, the embodiment of this synthesis, he must go under.

In Grund zum Empedokles, the spaces of nature and art, divorced into the incommensurableness of their respective spheres and unified by the difference that separates them, are phantasmally represented by the tragic hero through his self-annihilation. Inasmuch as unity is replaced with its Tragbild, the Grund zum Empedokles counters the initial strategy of the "Frankfurter Plan," which presented a tragic schema in which there would be an identification between subject and object through the vehicle of sacrifice. The "third version" of the dramatic fragments follows the inexorable logic of this counter-movement.

It is significant that the third version of the Empedokles was written roughly contemporaneously with Der Grund zum Empedokles,
since it similarly undermines the Frankfurter Plan's expression of a desire for an unmediated unity between subject and object. One could say with justification that the latest versions of the dramatic fragments undermine its opening tendency. The fundamental perspective of the drama is modified in its final version with the appearance of Manes, an Egyptian who is described as a "seer" (Sieher) and "the one who is all-experienced" (der Allespfahre) in the "Entwurf zur Fortsetzung der dritten Fassung" (SW4 168). As one whose consciousness embraces all modes of temporality, Manes effectively undermines the foundation of Empedokles' sacrificial project.

In the strange colloquy that ensues between Manes and Empedokles, questions that pertain to identity are answered only equivocally. When Empedokles asks after the identity of the Egyptian stranger ("Was? woher? Wer bist du, Mann!" (SW4 133)), Manes identifies himself with Empedokles' race (the mortals) and thus designates Empedokles as mortal—that is, as one who is capable of dying: "Der Armen Einer auch/Von diesem Stamm, ein Sterblicher, wie du" (Ibid.). Empedokles responds by declaring that he is dead to the living, and that the dead rise to meet him. He thus refers to Manes as a phantasm, the apparition of one who has died: "Kein Wunder ist es! Seit ich den Lebenden/Gestorben bin, erstehen mir die Toden" (SW4 134). Manes' response suggests that Empedokles is absent from the place of the dead ("Die Toden reden nicht, wo du sie fragst") (Ibid.). By declaring that the world of the dead is not the space of his questioning, Empedokles' role as a sacrificial figure is annulled in Manes' speech. And by referring to his voluntary assumption of death as a "black sin" (schwarze Sünde), Manes calls into question the basis of Empedokles' sacrificial decision. Empedokles appears in the dialogue as a "false priest" (falscher Priester) (SW2 120)—to refer to the language of "Wie wenn am Feierabend..."—but sin is perhaps not reducible to moral negativity, and falsehood is perhaps not reducible to error.

Throughout the dialogue, Empedokles' decision to immolate himself is rendered problematic. It remains profoundly ambiguous, for instance, whether Empedokles' decision to sacrifice himself is an exercise of freedom. To what extent is Empedokles' decision to sacrifice himself a "right" that is expressive of the freedom of the will? Manes asks if Empedokles is the only one who has the "right" (Recht) - and in this term resonates Empedokles' earlier declaration of the right to death ("Denn sterben will ja ich. Mein Recht ist dill" (SW4 122)). There is a certain discontinuity in the dialogue between the representation of sacrifice as the result of voluntarism and as act that will have been motivated by a thoroughgoing causal determinism.

Manes' description elides the voluntary character of his self-sacrifice and suggests an almost mechanistic determination: "Der Tod, der jahre, er ist ja von Anbeginn/Das weist du wohl, den Unverständigen/Die deinesgleichen sind, zuvorbeschrieben" (SW4 135). According to Manes, at least, Empedokles is following a supervenient appeal that is pre-determined and that does not permit the intervention of subjectivity. Hence Empedokles follows ananke in a manner similar to Ajax in the first and second versions of "Mnemosyne": "Mit eigener Hand/Viel traurige, wilden Mutts, doch göttlich/Gezwungen..." (SW2 194 and 196). Suicide is an act that is submissive to the laws of divine necessity, and yet the remark that succeeds this description suggests that Empedokles' death has been voluntarily appropriated: "Du willst es und so sei!" (SW4 135). According to Manes' interpretation, then, Empedokles willfully assumes a death that is prescribed to him and that is his right in a manner that invites comparison with the tenth of Schelling's Philosophische Briefe. It becomes difficult at this point to assert with any degree of certainty that Empedokles is one whose death is either willed or "pre-programmed."26

The temporality of Empedokles' sacrifice is also significantly problematized. Manes' designation of Empedokles as "the sacrificial beast that does not fall in vain" (Das Opferthier, das nicht vorgebend fällt) (Ibid.) gives a teleological determination to his sacrifice in a manner that recalls "Der Tod fürs Vaterland": "Umsonst zu sterben, lieb' ich nicht doch/Lieb' ich zu fallen am Opferhügel" (SW2 299). And yet, paradoxically, the act of sacrifice that will take place has already taken place ("Es ist geschehn" (SW4 138)). Everything that has taken place will take place, Empedokles announces to Pausanis, before his departure (his Abgang), and what will happen has already happened: "Geh! fürchte nichts! es kehret alles wieder/Und was geschehen soll, ist schon vollendet" (SW4 133). With these strange words of leave-taking, Empedokles sends his disciple off and implies that he is subject to a state of extreme passivity vis-à-vis
an event that infinitely exceeds his subjectivity. Because suicide is an event that has already occurred, it cannot be set "in front of" one's self as an act to be executed. Illustrative to this context are the final verses of the second version: "Denn Einmal bedurfen/Wir Blinden des Wunders" (SW4 118). The miracle is Empedokles' sacrifice. The Letarten show that Hölderlin originally employed the present tense: "Und wohl uns. Denn Einmal/Bedürfen des Wunders/Wir Blinden ja doch" (SW 637). That the "final" version historicizes the event of sacrifice is not fortuitous. The präterite form suggests that both death and the reconciliation that death would bring about belong to an inaccessible past—but a past that will be recuperated in the future. The call of the past to the future effectively renounces the present as the time in which sacrifice would occur. Inasmuch as the future of sacrifice recovers its history, there is no "now" in which it could take place. The present appears only as a yawning abyss in which both the future and the past precipitate. The category of presence is annulled. The time in which Empedokles would immolate himself is a time without presence.

It is no accident, from this perspective, that Empedokles' departure (Abschied) is an endless farewell. Empedokles can neither conclusively take his departure from his disciple nor from the one who arrogates to himself the absolute right to interrogation. To Manes' question whether he is departing, Empedokles responds, "I am not going yet, O old man!" (SW 140). The moment of suicide is delayed in an interminable suspension. When the day goes under, Empedokles remarks, he will be seen again: "Lass mich ize, wenn dort der Tag/Hinunter ist, so stehst du mich wieder" (Ibid). Empedokles' death appears as ahead-of-himself, "occurring" in terms of a postponement. Empedokles does not sacrifice himself in the space of the drama—he will have sacrificed himself, sometime or other.

Everything that must occur has already occurred, thus complicating the sacrificial project as a possibility. Without the intervention of the act of sacrifice, the tragic schema has already completed itself. The depths of the past return into the proleptic temporality of futurity ("so musst es werden"). The time that absolutely lacks the present moment dispenses with the instant when absence would become an act. Suicide perpetuates itself in an immobile movement as an infinite absence.

In assuring the futurity of Empedokles' self-offering, Manes assumes the role of historical consciousness. His function is to "preserve" and "recollect" Empedokles' dissolution. According to the logic of the "third version," his role is to attest to Empedokles' sacrifice: to preserve what will happen because it has already happened. Manes' request for a legacy ("Doch wolltest du mir nicht, wie dies ergieng bei deinem Volke, sagen?") (SW 134) will be translated into a testimony in the "Entwurf zur Fortsetzung der dritten Fassung":

+ Manes, der Allerfahrene, der Seher erstaunt über den Reden des Empedokles, und seinem Geiste, sagt, er sei der Berufene, der töte und belebe, in dem und durch den eine Welt sich zugleich auffüllte und erneue. Auch der Mensch, der seines Landes Untergang so tödlich fühlte, könnte so sein neues Leben ahnen. Des Tages darauf, am Saturnusfeste, will er ihnen verkünden, was der letzte Wille des Empedokles war. (SW 168)

What remains in the final version of the Hölderlinian "drama" is not the immediate presentation of death, but the promise of the announcement of a volition (Wille). In the last extant version, Hölderlin transformed the entire orientation of the work by renouncing the will to self-sacrifice. The Tod des Empedokles is perhaps something other than an unfinished text. One must pose the question: Could there ever be a successful completion of the work? The necessarily elliptical character of the Empedokles announces the absence of death from the time of presentation, the impossibility of sacrifice, the failure of sacrifice to become an act that would secure human mastery over the impossible. The fragmentary nature of Empedokles, seen in this light, seems to be tied to its success.

There are moments in Hölderlinian verse that are indeed reminiscent of idealist pathos and the doctrine for which spirit is identifiable with the world. The speculative idealist solution, however, is neither definitively accepted nor rejected in Hölderlin. Sacrifice is the metaphor for intellectual intuition according to "Über den Unterschied der Dichtarten" and "Die Bedeutung der Tragödien": it would be the "transference" (the transport)—to refer to the language of the Anmerkungen zum Oedipus—or disclosure of being itself. And
yet the moment of disclosure never arrives in any of the multiple versions of Der Tod des Empedokles. Hölderlin's theoretical claims about the essence of the tragic project do not quite correspond to what is enacted in the text of his only surviving dramatic fragments. If the "Frankfurter Plan" sketches out a tragic schema that results in a fusion, the later modifications of the text evoke the impossibility of such a synthesis. Even the very unfinished character of the fragments belies the possibility of unification, and evokes, as well, the impossibility of presenting such a relation.

If there is a desire in Empedokles for a dialectical-sacrificial synthesis, this synthesis only "occurs" in terms of its simulation. Both identification between subject and object and the sacrifice that would bring the moment of identification about are prohibited. In the absence of a scene of sacrifice, Der Tod des Empedokles becomes a tragedy of tragedy—or, if you would, a tragedy that concerns the failure of tragedy. Empedokles never appears to die, but suffers the endless torments of death or the indefinite postponement and impossibility of dying. The fragments concern the failure of sacrifice, the failure to make of sacrifice a project, to make of death a possibility over which the will could dispose. Empedokles' suicide—which never arrives, is never presented—never quite serves the function of communicating the union of subject and object, which in "Urtheil/Seyn" is named "being as such," "absolute being," and "intellectual intuition." In lieu of a suicide, a void.

Northwestern University

Notes

1 All references in parentheses are to Hölderlin, Sämtliche Werke (SW). The volume number is given first, then the page number.
2 On Hölderlin's appropriation of the historical Empedokles' theory of elements, see Hölscher.
3 For interpretations that concern themselves with the alleged speculative and dialectical dimensions of Empedokles' desire to commit suicide, see Lacoue-Labarthe and Sörging.
4 For a discussion of the question of Hölderlin's alleged pantheism, see Hölscher, passim.
5 For a revision of this verse in a dialogue between Empedokles and

"Unbegrenzt hebt ich dich/Unbegrenzt."  
6 The name "Hermokrates" is derived from a rather minor character in the Platonic Timaeus and Critias. For the thesis that Hermokrates is identifiable with Hegel, see Pöggeler, 108.
7 For a discussion of "Die Weisen aber..." in relation to the Empedokles fragments, see Laplanche, 109.
8 For a lucid exposition of this paradox, see Neuhouser, 114-15.
9 For a discussion of this matter, see Corssen.
10 This is no doubt a reference to the Fifth Promenade of Rousseau (a reference that would require a separate study to elaborate upon), which, as Paul de Man has argued, is of some moment for the Holderlin of "Der Rhein." Cf. De Man, 38. For a discussion of the ostensible Rousseauan characteristics of the Empedokles fragments, see Link.
12 On the question of auto-affection in Hölderlin, see Vökel.
13 According to Laplanche, there are two equally legitimate and nonetheless contradictory interpretations of Empedokles' fault; one can either maintain, with philological justification, that Empedokles' sin was to have "forgotten the difference" (as Hermokrates claims) by having desired to integrate himself with the totality of being, and, with equal justification, that he "severed the sacred alliance" by "thinking of himself alone" (as Empedokles says in his soliloquy). Cf. Laplanche, 107-8.
14 It should be emphasized that Empedokles' expropriation and expulsion from the city by Hermokrates and the Agrigentian people is related secondarily to his self-presentation as one who "forgot the difference." Cf. Constantine, 141.
15 Beißner claims that the "Grund zum Empedokles" originated at the earliest in August or September 1799 (SW4 371), and that the third version was composed at the earliest in September of the same year (SW4 362).
16 Indispensable to my interpretation of the "Grund zum Empedokles" is Lawrence Ryan's magisterial study Hölderlin's Lebze vom Wechsel der Töne.
17 According to Corssen, the relation of separation and unification between art and nature conforms to Hölderlin's description of the tragic project in the "remarks" that were appended to his controversial Oedipus translation. Cf. Corssen, 142.
18 For a useful discussion of Wechselbestimmung ("reciprocal determination") in Fichte, see Waibel.
19 "Wechselwirkung" is, of course, a Fichtean term. For an account of this procedure in Fichte, see Koch.
20 Gerhard Kurz identifies the description of Empedokles' suicide in this passage with the tragic figure that "= 0" in "Die Bedeutung der Tragödien."
26

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23 For the etymology of the term “Trugbild,” see Grimm, 1257.
22 For a discussion of the sacrifice of the tragic hero in relation to the disjunctive synthesis between art and nature, see Szondi, 18.
24 Cf. Ibid., 108.
25 This point made very forcefully by Katherina Grütz in her Der Weg zum Lesezelt: Editionskritik und Neudition von Friedrich Hölderlin’s ‘Der Tod des Empedokus.’ Cf. p. 21.
26 Cf. Cornelissen, 104-5.
27 Compare the original draft of the text: “Geh! fürchte nichts! es kehrt alles wieder/Und was geschehen soll, ist schon geschehen” (SW4 671).
28 Wilhelm Dilthey was probably the first to identify the “miracle” in this passage with Empedolkes’ sacrifice. Cf. Dilthey, 414.
29 Klaus Rudiger Wohrmann addresses the temporal discrepancy between both drafts. Cf. Wohrmann, 54.
30 Cf. Cornelissen, 104-5.
31 I derive the phrase “absolute right to interrogation” from Foucault, 83.
32 See the text entitled by Reißner “Über Werden im Vergehen” (SW4 282-87).

Works Cited


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