



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Rondom de vloedlijn

Blok, V.

Citation

Blok, V. (2005, April 20). *Rondom de vloedlijn*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/2723>

Version: Corrected Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/2723>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

SUMMARY

Along the Tideline

Philosophy and art in the technical era. A confrontation between Heidegger and Jünger

This study is devoted to the poetry by Jünger and the thinking of Heidegger, because this enables the question concerning the 'being' of *imperialism*. Moreover the confrontation with this poetry and thought enables the preparation of an answer. The work of Heidegger and Jünger is indispensable in this matter, as they both know the answer to imperialism can not be found in an *anti-imperialistic* way of life. In one respect anti-imperialism is marked by resentment and is therefore *against* the world as it is. In another respect anti-imperialism is out for power itself and is thereby practising imperialism. Imperialism is omnipresent and pervades every resistance against it as well. If I presume the 'untruth' of this imperialism despite its omnipresence, then this presumption can only be tested by posing the question to the *being* of power. Through posing the philosophical question to the being of power in this dissertation, an answer to the *being* of imperialism can be prepared.

The critical reader may have become apprehensive by noticing the ease with which I on the one hand speak of a 'being' of things and on the other use the word 'test' regarding the philosophical question towards being. It is a question of old if philosophical statements are as verifiable as those made by the sciences. Philosophy does not ask about things but about the being of things, independent of experience. If the being of things is independent of this, philosophical statements are unverifiable and therefore useless. Even if we would put this aside the question arises what the sense of the word 'being' can be these days, since Nietzsche evoked the age of *nihilism*. Nihilism concerns the experience that the Platonic horizon of the transcendent being of things is washed away. People and things no longer derive their meaning from this being as the solid measure of things but from the measure of fruits of their labours. The question concerning the testability of the philosophical question towards being brings us to the subject of the first part of this dissertation, that thematizes the impossibility of the philosophical proposition in the technical era.

Chapter 1

The question towards the possibility of philosophy as a science and therefore the question towards the nature of scientific confrontation per se is put central in the first chapter. Because if the question is to be asked if philosophy is as testable as the sciences, the nature of scientific testability is to be put up for discussion. First and foremost the *demarcation criterion* of the scientific character of a proposition is sought after, that is the criterion with which scientific statements can be distinguished from pseudo-scientific or metaphysical statements.

In the first paragraph the nature of scientific testability is discussed by means of Karl Popper's philosophy. According to Popper the scientific nature of a statement is laid in its *falsifiability*. Due to the rule of theory in every observation, which Popper points out, the demarcation-criterion of the scientific character of a statement is not merely determined by the measure of testability, that is the measure in which a statement can be refuted by empirical facts. *What* is being tested is no longer the truth or untruth but the *explanation force*, i.e. the pragmatic success of a proposition in the explanation of reality. Every scientific proposition is a working hypothesis which has to prove its success i.e. its effectiveness in confrontation. By discussing Popper's philosophy of science it appears that scientific propositions are Darwinistically understood organisms. Science formulates working hypotheses that are exposed to *natural selection*, which thereby can turn out to be the *fittest to survive*.

If philosophy wants to be possible as a science, its propositions will have to comply to the criterion of scientific testability. In the second paragraph the scientific status of the propositions of Popper himself are questioned. According to Popper philosophy does not make *empirically* testable but *rationally* testable propositions, its duty is a rational reconstruction as a justification of the scientific method. Here it emerges that a rational reconstruction is not falsifiable itself and does not contribute in any way to scientific progress. In what exactly does the rationality of philosophy exist, when its propositions do not comply to the demarcation criterion of the scientific character of a proposition? In other words, the question is how philosophy can speak meaningfully, when its propositions do not contribute to the progression of science.

To sharpen up the question towards the meaningful philosophical proposition I turn to the ground of this problematic complex in paragraph 3, namely the thought of Kant that philosophy makes *synthetically a priori* propositions. By questioning the nature of the proposition and the synthetic a priori proposition of philosophy it is proven on the one hand

that the synthetic a priori has the character of a working hypothesis just like every other scientific proposition, of which the scientific value must appear from its pragmatic success. On the other hand it appears that the synthetic a priori propositions of philosophy do not contribute to the progression of science.

Philosophy is thereby put before a choice, that is to say either becoming scientific or letting the scientific pretence go. If philosophy thinks it is contributing to science, it shall have to become scientific. If philosophy thinks it has its own task besides science, it will have to abandon every pretence of scientific value. The question then arises if philosophy then not exclusively 'herumtappt im Dunkeln' and gives itself up to complete uselessness, that avoids every possible confrontation.

Chapter 2

As the position of philosophy is unclear, the second chapter is focussed on the question of *significant* philosophy. For this I turn to the philosophical thinking of Heidegger, because he claims to prepare a new way of speaking that will release philosophy from its status as a superscience that is no science. He characterizes his 'method' of philosophical speaking as 'Eigens Sich-einlassens in unser Verhältnis zu dem Begegnenden, in dem wir schon immer uns aufhalten' (*ZoS*: 143). In the second chapter this 'relationship' wherein man and reality can meet is being questioned, as a *philosophical* speaking is useful here according to Heidegger.

The question of the meaningful philosophical confrontation is introduced in paragraph 4 by sharpening up the position of Heidegger towards the metaphysical tradition. By the thinking of Descartes it is made clear that the input for metaphysical thinking is laid in an apory towards the *identity* of things. Metaphysics tries to repair the broken passageability of the 'being' of things for 'thinking' by the *ontological* investigation into their identity. The metaphysical quest for an *escape* from the apory presumes the principal *accessibility* of 'being' and 'thinking'. The discrimination between the metaphysical tradition and Heidegger will appear to lay in his not presuming the self-evident passageability but questions about the *empirical* character of this presumption.

By discussing an early lecture from the years 1921/22 in paragraph 5 it becomes clear that each scientific and metaphysical investigation prejudicizes the 'theoretical attitude' as self-evident access to reality. The theoretical attitude is a very specific way of *access* to the

area of investigation, as it is because of this attitude, that the 'Seinsinn' is on the forehand and uncritically understood as the highest genus or as the principle that forms the fundament of the objects (§5α). The attitude on the forehand determines how the subject of speaking is understood, which implies the *technical* character of the theoretical attitude. In §5β en §5γ it appears that metaphysics does not 'make' (*herstellen*) the things in reality but the 'being' of things, that is to make it present and therefore available as the ground for the passageability of 'being' and 'thinking'. In the end it becomes clear that the technical character of the theoretical attitude is not exclusively reserved to metaphysics, but is hidden in every propositional statement. By the technical character of the theoretical attitude metaphysics as well as the sciences remain blind for the 'subject-objectrelation' as the '*semantic ground* thereof, that is what Heidegger's thinking has in mind.

Heidegger conversely does not want to ambush the relation *between* me and the things with our question- and problem statements, but wants to let his way of speaking be determined by the *being*. In paragraph 6 the example of the subject-objectrelation in Descartes leads to considering the formal indication and the specific way of philosophical speaking of Heidegger. The subject-objectrelation is not age old but arises with the revolution from the being of truth to certainty. Descartes comes to the specific attitude of the subject by the 'Anzeige' that truth means certainty. The example of Descartes leads to the *formal indication* and the specifically *philosophical* confrontation, that is the *formale Anzeige* of the 'Seinsinn' or the relation between man and things, described in §6β.

By discussing the formal indication it appears that Heidegger prepares the possibility of a new way of speaking, that indeed asks about the *being* as the semantic ground of things, but yet is no longer bound by the imperialistic character of the proposition. The philosophical way of speaking by Heidegger no longer exists in the *representation* but *answers* the formal indication of the semantic ground of representing, that is *handed* to human thinking. With the notion of the formal indication a first answer is given to our question towards a meaningful philosophical speech, that will be further elaborated on in the second part of this dissertation.

Part II

The second critical question was if the dominion of nihilism isn't passed by when in this dissertation the question towards the *being* of imperialism is asked. In philosophy the political-economical notion 'imperialism' is not commonly used, instead one speaks of the

‘will to power’. The will to power points to the appearance of reality *as* conducive or not conducive for one’s own life, that is to say *as* potential energy for the selfpreservation (‘Machterhaltung’) and selfexceeding (‘Machtsteigerung’) of life. I dedicate this study purposefully to the poetry of Jünger and the thinking of Heidegger because they both have sought the confrontation with the dominion of imperialism as will to power without seeking an exception in an alternative way of existence or making an attempt to restore traditional metaphysics.

In the second part of this dissertation it is proven that both the poetry by Jünger and the thinking by Heidegger –although in completely different ways- are typified by the *transition* of the human existence. This transition is assigned to thinking and poetry, if it wants to answer the omnipresence of imperialism. The goal of the second part of this dissertation is not only the explanation of the work of Jünger and Heidegger, but primarily to invoke understanding for the necessity of this transition.

Chapter 3

In chapter 3 the key subject is the poetry of Jünger in his main work *Der Arbeiter*. Jünger has shown the working character of our reality and the human response to this, which he calls ‘total mobilisation’ (§7 α). Following Nietzsche, Jünger has a sense of nihilism, that is to say the experience that the Platonic horizon of the transcendental *being* of things is being erased. This experience of the *ontological indifference* does not remain confined to the now brittle discrimination between the traditional ontic and ontological research and therefore the uselessness of metaphysical questioning, as is presented in part 1. In the trenches in World War I Jünger experiences that things and people no longer derive their meaning from the transcendental being as a measure of things –the Platonic *idea* or the categories of thinking for example- but from the way in which they function, work. Total mobilisation points to nihilism –the ontological *indifference* and the dominion of the working character- that has become the ‘Normalzustand’ in our world.

Although Jünger affirms total mobilisation, he experiences our working-world as *meaningless*. ‘The working-world waits and hopes for its giving of sense’ (*MM*: 325) which is the *matter* of *Der Arbeiter*. This *sense* lies in a new ‘Zuwendung des Seins’ that Jünger suspects in World War I which he calls the ‘gestalt of the worker’ (cf. *Arb*: 158; 308) (§7 β). This gestalt is understood as ‘unity’, that guarantees a new certainty and ranking of life’ (*Arb*:

99). Security and order need a unity or measure, in which reality appears orderly and can be secured. Therefore Jünger suspects within total mobilisation an *ontological difference* between the gestalt as a new unity and things in reality. The nucleus of *Der Arbeiter* is therefore consisting of the conception of the *gestalt* of the worker.

The question is what the nature of this conception is. In *Der Arbeiter* it appears that this is being impeded because according to Jünger the gestalt *is* not there but can only be *suspected* within nihilism. When this is the case, then *der Arbeiter* is not an episode or story that describes the gestalt of the worker. In the course of chapter 3 it appears that Jünger understands his conception of the gestalt in terms of the 'will to power as art', therefore as *poetry*. In the light of Nietzsches doctrine of the will to power (§8) the nature of the poetry by Jünger is questioned in paragraph 9. The representation (will to power as art) of the type of the worker as representation of the gestalt of the worker that restrains the elementary and hereby exceeds towards a new necessary order. The poetry by Jünger is thus itself *transitional* of total mobilisation into a world in which this type represents the 'gestalt' and in that sense answers to the new 'Zuwendung des Seins'. This clarifies that Jünger is not only confronted with omnipresence of imperialism or with the will to power but also answers in the same terms; his poetry is itself pervaded with imperialism, namely the will to power as art.

Chapter 4

In chapter 4 it emerges that this is exactly where the controversy between Jünger and Heidegger lies. Because Jüngers poetry merges into the representation (will to power), his description of total mobilisation (will to power) and his answer in terms of the gestalt of the worker remains blind for its semantic ground. Heidegger calls this 'oblivion' of the semantic ground of representing (will to power) 'Seinsvergessenheit' as the *being* of nihilism. 'Being' here no longer denotes the metaphysically understood 'being' of things but its semantic ground.

Heideggers confrontation with Jünger and his thinking on the being of nihilism is discussed in paragraph 10. In paragraph 10α the question is to what extent the metaphysics of the will to power of Jünger belongs to the theoretical attitude of metaphysics. Here it appears that man is the *subjectum* of the theoretical attitude by Jünger, because the *meaning* of working is found in the gestalt of the *worker*, so in a *human type*. Binding this gestalt to man as subject has two consequences. As I show in section 6α the theoretical attitude of the

subject has no eye for the subject-object relation as the semantic ground of it. Because man is the subject of the theoretical attitude by Jünger, he remains blind for the semantic ground of total mobilisation (will to power), that Heidegger discusses in terms of *Machenschaft und Erlebnis* as the *being* of power. (§10β). The second consequence is that in spite of the attempt by Jünger to defeat nihilism it is nihilism that defeats him, because the representation of the gestalt of the worker implies the ‘nihil’ of this semantic ground (§10γ).

Because Jünger merges in representation (will to power), his ‘poetic’ descriptions of total mobilisation or the ‘Macht der Technik über das Seiende’ remain excluded from the semantic ground of total mobilisation and the gestalt of the worker. Being excluded from this, he can ‘die Technik nie als Grund’ of representation (will to power) ‘ansetzen’, namely as ‘Machenschaft und Erlebnis’ (GA 66: 17). This remains concealed for Jünger, as his poetic way of speaking is itself pervaded by imperialism, namely the will to power as art.

In this lies the occasion for Heidegger’s question if *thinking* is possible at all when considering power – namely ‘Machenschaft und Erlebnis’ as the *being* of power – without slipping into representation himself. In §6 this thinking was thematised for the first time, occasioned by the early Freiburgian lectures, in which Heidegger takes leave of the propositional speech (representation) in favour of the experience that the Anzeige of the semantic ground is given to human thinking. ‘Machenschaft und Erlebnis’ is the ‘Anzeige’ that signifies the appearance of things and the human answer to this. Philosophical thinking *follows* this Anzeige to our ‘Verhältnis zu dem Begegnenden’ in a way that this indication itself appears in our philosophical speaking and writing (cf. §6). In the final paragraph of this chapter the ‘Verwandlung des Sagens’ and the ‘gewandeltes Verhältnis zum Wesen der Sprache’ is dealt with more closely. These are according to Heidegger necessary to exceed nihilism – ‘Seinsvergessenheit’ (ZSF: 405)(§12).

Preceding this however, a problem is established. A critical reader of Heidegger’s texts will notice that the difference between the *descriptions* by Jünger and the *thinking* by Heidegger as depicted in the previous chapter is not that simple. During the period that Heidegger was engaged in National-Socialism, he used a terminology that shows kinship with that of Nietzsche and Jünger. He speaks for instance as Jünger does about a spiritual ‘Auftrag’ and the ‘Deutsche Schicksal’ that comes into the ‘Wesenswille zur Macht’ (SdU: 108). In the published letters, notes, and lectures from the same period there is no trace to be detected of the *following* of an indication that is *given* to human thinking, but is he speaking purposefully

of an 'Arbeitswille' that the destiny of the 'Deutsche Volk verwirklicht' (GA 16: 221) by the 'Fügung des Volkes in das Wirkungsfeld aller wesentlichen Mächte des Seins' (GA 16: 205).

Therefore the question is posed in §11 how much the 'victory' of nihilism (Seinsvergessenheit) that Heidegger aims at in the period 1933-1938 is tributary to the terminology of the will to power and working. By discussing the *rectoral address* held in 1933 it appears on the one hand that Heideggers engagement with National-Socialism is *philosophically* motivated and on the other that he *destruates* the terminology of the will to power and only maintains it in destruated form. Collaborating with this subject the question is being asked if Heideggers engagement and breach with National-Socialism belongs to philosophical *empiricism*. It is namely also a part of empiricism that I am wrong, that is to say that there is no 'Anzeige' or 'Auftrag' that has a claim on me.

After the rectoral address he saw that the destrued terminology of will is not empirical. The turning point for abandoning the terminology of power lies around 1938. In that period a change emerges from 'Seyn' as power to 'Seyn' as powerless and from thinking as power to 'Besinnung' of the being of power (§12). Later he states that a 'Verwandlung des Sagens' and a 'gewandeltes Verhältnis zum Wesen der Sprache' are necessary, which are no longer bound to power and working. Heidegger discusses this in *Zur Seinsfrage*. Heidegger finds the answer to the being of the will to power/imperialism –'Machenschaft und Erlebnis'- in the exposure to the 'Sinn von Sein' in the human 'answering' to the 'Anspruch' of being. This 'answering' does not suggest an alternativeway of existence, because the dominion of imperialism is omnipresent. Heidegger is concerned with the experience of the semantic ground as *origin of imperialism*, that cannot be understood itelf in terms of 'will' and 'power' but concerns the 'Anspruch' that every representation is answering to without knowing it.

Chapter 5

In chapter 5 the final word is given to Jünger. *Zur Seinsfrage* is a onesided approach of the poetry by Jünger. Heidegger understands the 'writing' by Jünger from Nietzsches metaphysics of the will to power and does not notice the true *Anliegen* of Jünger; the *poetry* of the gestalt. The 'writing' in *Der Arbeiter* is ambiguous. Although Jünger on the one hand merges into representation (will to power as art) as Heidegger notices, on the other he is very keen on a 'gewandeltes Verhältnis zum Wesen der Sprache'. In section 13 the poetic value of the gestalt is examined.

The confrontation between the poetry by Jünger and the thinking by Heidegger in this dissertation aims to invoke understanding for the necessity of the transition of the human way of existence that is assigned to poetry and thinking, and hopes to contribute to the preparation of this. The execution of this transition is not primarily in the hands of human thinking and poetry, but can, according to Heidegger, only be *prepared* by them.