Without wishing to retrace my steps (long pause), without wishing to retrace my steps (long pause) and recall all the readings via which we turned around, not only the couple, the “odd couple”¹ Heidegger/Robinson Crusoe (I am thinking of the texts—basically all political texts—by Gadamer, Joyce, Woolf, Rousseau, Marx, Deleuze, etc.) our first incursion in search of—let’s say to stick with the title—the beast and the sovereign in The Island of Despair, and some passages from Robinson Crusoe on these two themes and especially the theater of an autobiography or an Autopresentation of the sovereign by himself, I must repair an omission. I meant to quote a passage that, I no longer know why, I omitted.

My Island was now peopled, and I thought my self very rich in Subjects; and it was a merry Reflection which I frequently made, How like a King I look’d. First of all, the whole country was my own meer Property; so that I had an undoubted Right of Dominion. 2dly, My People were perfectly subjected: I was absolute Lord and Law-giver; they all owed their Lives to me, and were ready to lay down their Lives, if there had been Occasion of it, for me. It was remarkable too, we had but three Subjects, and they were of three different Religions. My Man Friday was a Protestant, his Father was a Pagan and a Cannibal, and the Spaniard was a Papist: However, I allow’d Liberty of Conscience throughout my Dominions: But this is by the Way. (RC, 222)

What path are we going to privilege today? A path that would avoid, if that were possible, our having to retrace our steps?

I had announced, in concluding the last session, that to open, at least in a provisional and preliminary way, Heidegger’s Seminar² on World, Finitude, and Solitude, and so as to situate in it one of the dimensions of the prob-

1. [Translator’s note:] In English in the text.
2. Derrida sometimes capitalizes the initial letter of “Seminar,” and sometimes not.
lem of sovereignty, before coming to the question of the animal “poor in world [weltarm],” we ought to do an initial reconnoiter, at the very beginning of this long seminar of Heidegger’s, around one word. This is a recurring word that in my opinion is given too little attention in Heidegger in general, and that the [French] translation most often banalizes, neutralizes and muffles. This word is the German verb *walten,* which means—and which is indeed most often translated as—“to reign, to govern,” but which in French is abandoned to its neutrality, even its non-violence, a certain abstract innocence, as when one speaks of the animal realm, the calm that reigns in a deserted place, the silence that reigns in a room, etc., dissociating what there might be of force and imposed violence (*Gewalt,* precisely), authority, power, reigning and sovereign potency in *Walten* or *Gewalt.* This is a reigning and sovereign potency that is often emphasized in the political order, even though the meaning of *Walten* or *Gewalt* is not limited to that, and finds in that order only one of its figures. But precisely, one of our questions might be how the passage is made from the general and quite indeterminate, in any case quite open sense of *Walten,* to the properly socio-political sense. The neutralization or banalization of the meaning that I’ve just mentioned for the words “reign, rule, dominate, prevail” in [English] can also happen in German, of course, but my question, precisely, as to the use Heidegger makes of it, everywhere, really everywhere, more insistently than has ever been noticed, to my knowledge—my question here bears on what exactly Heidegger imprints on it, insistently and strangely, but clearly explicitly and deliberately, at the beginning of the seminar.

First of all, let’s look at what is happening a little before and a little after the passage that we read last week on Novalis’s comment about philosophy as *Heimweh,* on philosophizing as an experience of nostalgia, of philosophy suffering from a constitutional sickness that would be homesickness (and, let it be said in passing, is there a more nostalgic book than *Robinson Crusoe,* whether it be Robinson’s nostalgia for the world he has lost (*die Welt ist fort,* as Celan would say), the nostalgia he will feel at the end for the island he has lost after returning to that other island, England, where he will continue to dream of returning to his solitary island—and to which he will indeed return, affected by a real tropism of return to the state of nature, of a nostalgia for a quasi state of natural childhood or native naivety, close to birth; or the affect or phantasm of nostalgia that every reader feels as much

3. Derrida sometimes capitalizes the initial letter of “Walten,” and sometimes not.
4. [Translator’s note:] The English translators of Heidegger’s seminar use the verb “prevail” to translate *walten.*
for the state of nature and euphoric childhood which in spite of everything reigns over this island of despair, which reigns over this island and bathes it, surrounding it with all sorts of seas, good and bad), [so, a little before and a little after this passage that we read last week about Novalis’s comment and philosophy as Heimweh], Heimweh, the sickness of returning home, as Grundstimmung des Philosophierens (nostalgia as fundamental attunement of philosophizing), at least two strange things happen that I’d like to emphasize, even if I do so too rapidly.

The first thing to notice is that, suddenly looking like a sort of Robinson, Heidegger isolates himself from the whole tradition, from all traditions, and asks himself, out of nowhere, the question of the path: the question of the <path> to take, the best path for philosophy and for the determination of what metaphysics is, and he poses all these questions according to the turns and tropes of the path, the direct path in the right direction and the byways to avoid, etc. (Not like Descartes, who also, as you know, obsessively asked himself the question of path as method and resembled, in his own way, a first Robinson of philosophy who intended to rely only on his own strength, reconstruct everything himself after having radically doubted every presupposition, as Woolf said of Robinson Crusoe: the cogito ergo sum is a hyperbolic Robinsonade, particularly at the moment of hyperbolic doubt that absolutely insularizes the self-relation of the cogito sum, and we could go a long way analyzing this affinity or this analogy between the Philosopher-voyager Descartes and Robinson Crusoe, even from the Marxist point of view we situated last time); not like Descartes, then, whom Heidegger sends away or recuses in passing. Descartes is for Heidegger someone who wanted to determine philosophy as absolute, indubitable science, which to Heidegger’s eyes is a wrong and indirect path to take in determining and thinking philosophy itself. What is more, elsewhere, Heidegger casts doubt on Descartes’s determination of the path (hodos) as methodos, as a calculable and regulated procedure or proceeding (I talked at length about this in a seminar years ago).
In any case, here, after having affirmed that philosophy itself is neither a Science (Wissenschaft) nor a vision of the world (Weltanschauung), Heidegger wonders how to determine philosophy without going via the byway, the detour (Umweg) of a comparison with art and religion. We must find the true and proper path, the authentic Weg of philosophy itself, without Umweg, without the non-path constituted by a detour or a deferred, diverted path. Philosophy must have its own path determined by itself, a direct and unmediated path, without help or detour via anything other than itself. Heidegger asks himself: will we be able, then, on the diverted path (auf dem Umweg), passing through art and religion, to grasp philosophy in ihrem Wesen, in its proper essence? Clearly not. Independently of the difficulties presented by “such a path,” ein solcher Weg, and even if art and religion had the same rank as philosophy, we could not even compare if we did not have already in view some essence of philosophizing to distinguish from it art and religion. So we are in a circle which always makes us retrace our steps: in order even to take the Umweg of a comparison with art and religion, we must presuppose and give ourselves in advance some comparable determination of philosophy and therefore, through this presupposition or this precomprehension, envelope the defined in the defining or the comparing, and turn in the circle of this presupposition, and thus in advance retrace our steps without advancing. So that, even if, along our way (auf unserem Wege), we encounter art and religion, the path of philosophy properly speaking, in its essence, is closed, barred, closed off by this very circle (So ist auch dieser Weg verschlossen [H, 3/3]). And thus to accede to the proper essence of philosophy, which is not science, or art, or religion, one goes round in circles, either circularly or speculatively, one is sent back to oneself, to one’s own point of departure, one steps in one’s own footsteps, one goes round in circles as though on an island. And this is indeed what Robinson Heidegger finds: one is always sent back to one’s starting point (zurückgeworfen) in this attempt to grasp philosophy by comparison. “Alle diese Wege sind in sich selbst unmögliche Umwege [all these paths are in themselves impossible detours, impossible diverted paths]” (H, 4/3).

Faced with the impossible, because of the impossibility of advancing or moving along while turning around, in a detour, an Umweg, the question then becomes: how must we experience (erfahren) what philosophy itself (die Philosophie selbst) is, if we must give up on every Umweg, every detour (Umweg)?

When I say Robinson Heidegger, do not think that I am playing or that I am unfairly using a facile or artificial analogy. I am not unaware of the abyss
of differences that separates the two. The two . . . what? Well, first, a char-
acter on the one hand and a real person on the other, <on the one hand> the
fictional character of an English eighteenth-century novel and on the
other hand the person of a German philosopher of the twentieth century
who claims, precisely, to be talking seriously, in a seminar, in a mode that
is anything but imagination and fiction, about the most serious question in
the world, namely: “What is philosophy?” and “What is the world?” etc.

But what I am seeking and will be seeking again today to situate, in the
analogy between their respective ways of proceeding [démarches] (and that’s
the word: démarche, progress [cheminement], scene of orientation, question in
view of the best path for the best question, the most appropriate and direct
path for the best question, the path that advances, that proceeds in order to
accede and does not return to its starting point by going round in circles in
its own footsteps), what we’ll be seeking to bring out, then, is precisely this
common concern with orientation, with “where to go?” “where to head
for?” “how to get ahead?” “how to proceed?” “how to progress?” “at what
pace?” a concern that, in one place, and from a given place to a non-given
place, engages bodily movement in a metaphorical or literal way, and with
a metaphor that has one wondering to what proper sense of the body proper
it refers, to what time and what space: a concern that thus engages the body
proper of a questioner who is walking, of a question on the march that goes,
that comes and goes, always risks coming back, going around in circles, be-
ing sent back over its own steps.

I’ll go further in that direction a little later, precisely in the direction of
the question of direction, of sense as direction. We shall come back to the
sense of orientation and the orientation of a sense that is determined only
by orienting itself. Precisely, immediately after the passage that I have just
mentioned, and so from the beginning of the seminar (§1, H, 4/3), the word
“orientation” [Orientierung] provides the title for the first question that fol-
lows. Heidegger, as I was just recalling, has just spoken of the closed, barred
(verschlossen) route, he has just pointed out the illegitimate circularity of all
the Umwege, and has thus just properly described the aporia, i.e. the absence
of an open route toward the determination of philosophy itself, and he then
asks himself which is the way out, the Ausweg, the exit route from this apo-
ría. The point is always to avoid the aporia, i.e. either/or: either not get lost,
or not allow oneself to be closed in. These are always the two risks of a pro-
ceeding [démarche]: wander and get lost, or get closed in by retracing one’s

8. [Translator’s note:] The word sens in French can mean both “sense” or “meaning”
and “direction.”
steps. And that is the Robinsonian trouble with the island. Not get lost and
not get closed into the aporia, not get paralyzed. Heidegger may well often
make fun of those who seek the security of the safe passage or of the ground,
of the grounding ground and the sure route, but he doesn’t want to get lost
either, he is a thinker of wandering who does not want to wander when he
is philosophizing, when he is thinking, writing or above all teaching (for
this is a seminar), and he wants not only order and a map, but also the exit
route, the way out (Ausweg). He wants the right orientation and the right
direction to escape from enclosure or circular insularity. The subtitle of this
paragraph I was just mentioning aims for the right way out (Ausweg), the
exit, the right path out of the impasse, avoiding both the detour (Umweg) of
comparison, and circular closure. Turning to the hypothesis of a historical
or historiographical orientation, Heidegger will again show that it leads to
an impasse, to a final path that is an impasse (“So führt auch dieser zuletzt
noch gebliebene Weg in eine Sackgasse [Thus, this last remaining way also
leads to a dead end]” [§ 1, H, 5/3]).

The subtitle of the paragraph that concludes in this fashion was, then:
“Der Ausweg zur Wesensbestimmung der Philosophie über die historische
Orientierung als Täuschung [The escape route of determining the essence
of philosophy via a historical (historiographical) orientation as an illusion
(or mystification)].”

And Heidegger immediately goes on: a final way out, a last escape route
(Ausweg) remains in order to accede to the essence of philosophy: ask his-
tory. And on the path of historical orientation (Auf dem Wege der historischen
Orientierung), we shall thus try to obtain clarification about metaphysics,
which Heidegger notes in passing is, as it were, the other name of philos-
ophy. And he will pass without even giving an explanation from the ques-
tion: “What is the essence of philosophy?” to the question he holds to be
synonymous: “What is the essence of metaphysics? What is metaphysics?”
And then, following a tripartite gesture—I dare not say trinitary or tri-
adic, trilobed or triangular—a gesture that we shall see later is recurrent in
Heidegger’s rhetoric or pedagogy (let us not forget that this is a seminar),
Heidegger announces three questions or three paths in this perspective and
this historical orientation.

First path: ask about the noteworthy, curious, strange (merkwürdige) his-
tory of this noteworthy, curious, strange word “metaphysics.”

Second path: through the history of this word or this simple signifier,
move on to the signified, the meaning (Bedeutung) of the word “meta-
physics” as a philosophical discipline.
Third path: through this definition, this signifier/signified, word/meaning couple and disciplinary institution, if you will, go this time right to the thing itself, the thing thus called, metaphysics itself.

But there too, we are retracing our steps. We could not undertake this journey, Heidegger makes clear, and this experience, if we did not already know, if we were not presupposing in advance what metaphysics itself is. Without this circular foreknowledge, all the historical stories in the world would tell us nothing, they would remain mute (stumm), we would merely be learning of opinions about metaphysics but would never accede to metaphysics itself. This is when Heidegger concludes that there is an impasse: “So führt auch dieser zuletzt noch gebliebene Weg in eine Sackgasse” (H, 4/3).

At this point, I’ll leave you to read the following paragraph, paragraph §2 that comprises five or six pages, and which turns, precisely, around Novalis’s sentence (“Philosophy is really homesickness, an urge to be at home everywhere”). You will again see, at work more than once, that obsession with orientation and direction (Orientierung and Richtung are recurrent words). Heidegger repeats ten times over that one must avoid Umwege, which are so many steps aside to avoid doing what needs to be done, namely look metaphysics in the face without any detour, see it for itself, facing us face on. What the indirect detours have taught us is that we were avoiding looking straight on, taking sight of what is proper to metaphysics itself. And so we have acquired, thanks to a detour, a certain important view of what is proper to metaphysics (“eine wichtige und vielleicht wesentliche Einsicht in das Eigentümliche der Metaphysik” [translate]), namely that we turn around, step aside and make detours to dodge it and avoid doing what we ought to do. Then there is no longer a choice, we must get going and look metaphysics in the face (“aber keine Wahl bleibt, als uns selbst aufzumachen und der Metaphysik ins Gesicht zu sehen, um sie nicht wieder aus den Augen zu verlieren [no other choice remains than to ready ourselves and to look metaphysics in the face (Heidegger’s emphasis), so as not to lose sight of it again]”).


10. [Translator’s note:] Derrida’s improvised translation during the session might be in turn translated: “A serious and important and perhaps essential view of what is proper to metaphysics.” McNeill and Walker give “an important and perhaps essential insight into what is peculiar about metaphysics” (H, 4).
And everything Heidegger goes on to say is there to affirm that we try to avoid this face to face and this direct path, that we seek the detour and the dodge, that we flee and try to withdraw from this path that leads directly (direkt in German) to metaphysics. Metaphysics requires of us that we avoid avoidance, that we avoid always avoiding it by means of detours, Umwege, and that we not look away from it (wegsehen means “to avert one’s gaze”). The word that dominates what follows, I leave you to read it, is Richtung, direction. What we are showing, what I am showing, says Heidegger, what I am pointing out, is the direction (Richtung) in which we have to seek, but also the direction (Richtung) in which metaphysics withdraws from us. And in this same movement, Heidegger-Robinson wonders: “Why else would we have come along here [i.e. to the land of philosophy]? (Denn wozu wären wir sonst hierher gekommen?). Or have we landed here (Oder sind wir nur so hierher geraten) only because others also come along [. . .]? Why are we here? (Warum sind wir da?) Do we know what we are letting ourselves in for? (Wissen wir, womit wir uns einlassen?)” (H, 6/4–5).

The already or still Robinsonian landscape of these astonished questions (why have we landed here, why have we wound up in this place, at this place, what are we doing here?)—this already or still Robinsonian landscape becomes even more Robinsonian when, having asked “what is world?” and having insisted on isolation, insularity, loneliness, and solitude, and asked “What is this solitude in which each human being will be as though unique—or singularly, uniquely alone (Was ist diese Einsamkeit, wo der Mensch je wie ein Einziger sein wird?),” after having noted that, along the way, our question, “What is metaphysics?” has become the question, “What is man?” Robinson Heidegger ends up with images of a storm blowing between heaven and earth:

We ask anew: What is man? A transition (ein Übergang, a step beyond, an excess), a direction (eine Richtung), a storm (ein Sturm) sweeping over our planet (der über unseren Planeten fegt), a recurrence (eine Wiederkehr oder ein Überdruss den Göttern?), or else a vexation for the gods, an annoyance for the gods? We do not know. But we have seen that in this enigmatic essence, philosophy happens (geschieht). (H, 10/7; translation modified)

Perhaps you still remember: this whole detour (Umweg) on Heidegger’s discourse on the detour to be avoided, on the need to avoid the detour that avoids the direct path and the direction of the face to face—this whole detour was designed to lead us to this vocabulary of Walten that I announced at the outset occupies a terrain worthy of our attention, especially at the beginning of the seminar. I’m coming to that now, very fast, too fast, leav-
ing you to read on your own the first two chapters of the seminar. In the third chapter devoted in part to the origin of the word “metaphysics,” given that “metaphysics” designates the inclusive or comprehensive interrogation that extends to world, finitude and solitude, Heidegger devotes a first subsection to the clarification of the word “physics,” physis, and to physis “als [das] ‘sich bildenden Walten des Seienden im Ganzen,,’” as (I quote first the Gallimard translation, which remains feeble, enfeebling), self-forming11 realm12 of beings as a whole.”13 I concede that this is difficult to translate, but the word walten deserves a stronger accent, the strongest possible, in fact. Walten is dominant, governing power, as self-formed sovereignty, as autonomous, autarcic force, commanding and forming itself,14 of the totality of beings, beings in their entirety, everything that is. Physis is the Walten of everything, which depends, as Walten, only on itself, which forms itself sovereignly, as power, receiving its form and its image, its figure of domination, from itself. Walten as physis, physis as Walten is everything; physis and Walten are synonyms of everything, of everything that is, and that is, then, as originarily sovereign power. Physis, the phuein that thus dominates as totality of beings, is what increases, grows, increases by growing, the growing of blossoming growth. Physis means das Wachsende, what increases or grows, growing, growth, the very thing that has grown in such a growth, “das Wachsende, das Wachstum, das in solchem Wachstum Gewachsene selbst” (H, 38/25). And there too, the pedagogy whereby Heidegger illustrates what he means by “growing,” by growing as nature, as realm or domination of physis, takes the form of a Robinsonian landscape: the plants, the animals, the seasons, the day and the night, the stars, the tempest and the storm, the raging elements. Heidegger makes clear that he is taking growing and growth in the broad and elementary sense that they inaugurate in the originary experience (the French translation even says “expérience primitive”15 for Urerfahrung) of man: not merely, Heidegger adds, plants and animals, their arising and passing away as an isolated process (als bloßer isolierter Vorgang) but growth as what takes place or comes about (als dieses Geschehen), physis as history, in short nature as natural history, beyond or

11. During the session, Derrida added: “he’ll always say that: sich bildenden Walten.”
12. During the session, Derrida added: “Walten: reign, potency, force, power, authority, potentiality, etc., power, violence.”
14. During the session, Derrida added: “and of course the word bilden is very important too.”
15. [Translator’s note:] “Primal experience” (H, 38/25).
short of the nature/history opposition, for *physis* covers history, natural history in this new extended sense, then, the natural coming about of what is dominated (again, but this time it is *durchherrscht*), of what is under the dominating sovereignty of the changing seasons, the passage from night to day and reciprocally, the movement of the stars, the storms, and weather (*vom Sturm und Wetter*) and the raging of the elements (*und dem Toben der Elemente*).

What justifies my insistence on *Walten*, here, as a figure of absolute power, of sovereignty before even its political determination, is that it seems to me that it answers to Heidegger’s most explicit concern. Heidegger who explains to us ([H, 38/25]) that, if we translate more intelligibly and clearly (*deutlicher*), if we (that is, he) translate *physis* not so much by growth (*Wachstum*) as by *Walten* (by “sich selbst bildenden Walten des Seienden im Ganzen [the self-constituting, self-formed, sovereign predominance of beings in their totality]”) ([H, 38–39/25]), if, then, we translate *physis* by *Walten* rather than *Wachstum* (as sovereign power rather than growth), this is, as Heidegger expressly says, because it is clearer (*deutlicher*) and closer (note this word, “close,” which we shall be seeing again in a decisive strategic place), closer to the originary sense, the intentional sense, the meaning of the originary sense or the originary meaning of the word *physis* (“deutlicher und dem ursprünglich gemeinten Sinn näherkommend φύσις” [H, 38–39/25]).

In other words *physis* is better translated, translated more clearly and closer to its originary sense, as *Walten* than as *Wachstum*, as prevailing violence rather than as increase, growing, growth. And this better translation, this supposedly better translation, closer to the original or the originary, if you will, in both cases concerns *physis* as totality of what is, and not, no longer, nature in the belated and restricted sense of the word, as object of the natural sciences (as opposed to history, society, spirit, liberty, culture, etc.) any more than in the prescientific, romantic, or Goethean sense of nature. No more is it a matter here of the *state of nature* as opposed to the *state of society*, an opposition that has organized so many discourses for so long, in particular discourses of political philosophy on the state of nature or on natural right.

To justify fully this translation of *physis* as *Walten* (*sich bildenden Walten*) and this extension of the sense of the word *physis* toward its originary and pre-oppositional sense, Heidegger insists on this absolute extension, which goes well beyond biological life, biological growth, but includes within itself birth, childhood, maturity, old age, death, human destiny and its his-
tory. This is how, he says, one must understand the meaning in which those who are wrongly called, in a false sense of the word, the pre-Socratic Greek "philosophers of nature" were thinking and meaning. And when he says the meaning, emphasizing the article (the only meaning [um dieses Wort in der Bedeutung zu verstehen] [H, 39/26]), Heidegger is sure that there is no meaning other than the one that is translated into German as Walten. The sense of sovereign and superhuman violence of Walten, of the all-powerful reign of physis appears the most clearly in Heidegger’s elucidation when he makes clear that humans themselves are dominated, crushed, under the law of this sovereign violence. Man is not its master, he is traversed by it, “gripped [transi],” says the French translation for durchwaltet, man is dominated, seized, penetrated through and through by the sovereign violence of the Walten that he does not master, over which he has neither power nor hold: “φύσις meint dieses ganze Walten, von dem der Mensch selbst durchwaltet und dessen er nicht mächtig ist, das aber gerade ihn durch- und umwaltet, ihn, den Menschen, der sich darüber immer schon ausgesprochen hat [Physis means this whole Walten that prevails through man himself (durchwalten) and over which he has no power, of which he is not the master, but which precisely reigns (dominates) through him and around him (or even by undoing him: ihn durch- und umwaltet are Heidegger’s neologisms), him, man who has always already spoken about this]” (H, 39/26; translation modified).

Of course, as Walten covers the totality of what is, its meaning also covers animals, man and the gods (das göttliche Seiende, the divine being). In other words, this all-powerful sovereignty of Walten is neither solely political nor solely theological. It therefore exceeds and precedes the theologico-political.16

We would now have to pursue a detailed reading of what immediately follows. I won’t do that, because it would disorganize the economy of what I want to do today and because you can do it yourselves along the same lines. But, in three words, before provisionally leaving Heidegger here, I would suggest that:

16. During the session, Derrida added: “Before the theologico-political, unless one says that, precisely, there is something theologico-political here because there is some Walten which is both theological and political, opening everything. But it is not a category: if I translate Walten as sovereignty, obviously this does not have a narrowly political or narrowly theological sense because it covers both the political and the theological. Now, one can also say the opposite—one can say that it is the foundation of the theologico-political.”
1. Heidegger’s definition of *logos* will always depend tightly on this thinking of *Walten*. The *logos* is what, bringing *Walten* to speech (*zum Aus-spruch* — and Heidegger always says in this context *Ausspruch*, which is not language, *die Sprache*, or speech in general, but the saying of the sentence, the poetic verdict, the powerful saying, one might say the self-authorized performative that here withdraws the *Walten* from what hides it, from its retreat, its *Verborgenheit*), liberates this *Walten* — and this *physis*, this *physis*-as-*Walten*, from its *Verborgenheit*, its hidden, dissimulated, silenced being. And what is thus said, liberated from its retreat in the shadow of what is hidden (*Verborgenheit*), would be *Walten* itself, i.e. the law, its order and its status, its law\(^\text{17}\) (*seine Ordnung und Satzung, das Gesetz des Seienden selbst*), the law that rules over beings themselves: “Im λόγος wird das Walten des Seienden entborgen, offenbar [in logos, the reign, the power, the law of the entity is unconcealed, manifest . . .]” (H, 41/27). In *logos, physis*, and therefore *Walten*, appears as such, manifests itself. Keep hold of this point, because it will be decisive when we come to the question of the animal: if the animal is poor in world, in contrast to man who is *Weltbildend*,\(^\text{18}\) this is because it does not have access to the “as such” of beings, it does not have the structure of the “as such.” And this is why it does not have the *logos*, or because it does not have the *logos*, or that the *logos* does not prevail in it, that it does not have experience of beings or the world “as such,” in its appearing, in its *Offenbarkeit*.

2. When, a little later, in the fourth subsection (subsection d\(^\text{19}\)) of the same paragraph, Heidegger analyzes the two meanings of the word *physis*, or *physika* in *meta ta physika*, he notes in particular (I’ll limit myself to this and let you read the rest) that the originary meaning of truth (*Urbedeutung von Wahrheit*), i.e. the unconcealing, discovering of *physis* as *Walten*, as “Entborgenheit des waltenden Seienden” (translate),\(^\text{20}\) remains ambiguous in its *Doppeldeutigkeit*, for *physis* does not only designate what reigns or dominates (*das Waltende*) but what reigns as such, inasmuch as it reigns:

17. During the session, Derrida added: “and I would say here its force of law.” On the next line, on the “the law that rules over beings themselves,” he specifies, “that’s the force of law, not in the juridical sense of the term, but law as force, or the force that makes the law.”

18. During the session, Derrida added, “here too it is *bildend* that is important.”

19. In the typescript Derrida writes “third” subsection and “subsection c.”

20. During the session, Derrida translated, “comme décèlement de l’étant puissant, en force, dominant — il n’y a pas de mot français pour traduire [as unconcealing of the being that is potent, forceful, dominant — there is no French word to translate this].”

[Translator’s note: “the revealedness of prevailing beings” (H, 45/30).]
“sondernd das Waltende in seinem Walten oder das Walten des Waltenden” (translate).21 Whence a certain subtle indecision, a certain undecidability (Unentschiedenheit). Which resembles that of beings and the Being of beings. It is because of this undecidability that physis appears both as an excess of power that threatens (bedroht) man, which is threatening (bedrohend), and on the other hand as a support and a protection.

Let me simply read the translation of these few Robinson-inflected lines and I leave you to study what follows, on the physei onta and the tekhne onta (we could easily spend all year on it): “Precisely what prevails as all-powerful (das übermächtig Waltende) for immediate experience claims the name φύσις for itself. Yet such is the vault of the heavens, the stars, the ocean, the earth, that which constantly threatens man, yet at the same time protects him too, that which supports, sustains (trägt) and nourishes him; that which, in thus threatening and sustaining him, prevails (waltet) of its own accord without the assistance of man” (H, 46/30).

3. Finally, this interpretation of both physis and logos on the basis, let’s say, of the hidden or revealed sovereignty of Walten is not, to my knowledge (but I have not reread all Sein und Zeit recently from this point of view—if someone would like to do so, with a scanner, that would be very useful)—to my knowledge, then, the concept and vocabulary of Walten is not at work—at least not centrally—in Sein und Zeit, which dates from two years before the Seminar we are reading. Moreover, the lexicon of Sein und Zeit, the published glossary of Sein und Zeit does not mention Walten as an operational or thematic concept. Does not mention it at all. On the other hand, after this Seminar (1929–30), which follows Sein und Zeit about two years later, and especially in the Introduction to Metaphysics, in 1935 (politically a very marked time, of course), the vocabulary of Walten is not only confirmed, but extends, differentiates, grows richer, and becomes invasive, especially around physis and logos (walten, das Walten, durchwalten, das Durchwalten, Mitwalten, verwalten, Vorwal tung, überwältigend, Übergewalt, verwaltend, bewaltigen, unbewältigt, Gewalt, Allgewalt, Gewalt-tat, gewalt-tätig, Gewalt-tätigkeit, etc.) So, reread from this point of view the Introduction to Metaphysics, take the book with you, along with RC,22 to an island over the holidays, you won’t be wasting

21. During the session, Derrida added: “but the predominant [or perdominant, in Gilbert Kahn’s translation] in its act of dominating or the act of dominating of the dominant.”

22. Thus in the typescript. In this case the abbreviation can designate both the character and the title of Defoe’s book.
your time. In the French translation by Gilbert Kahn who took a lot of trouble to translate this whole lexicon of Walten into a French that is often laborious and neologizing, there is moreover a glossary and a very useful index.

So much for Walten, and for those who are called—we know at least one of them—Walter.23

And now, what path are we, ourselves, going to privilege today? What path that will not oblige us to run the risk of going round in circles and retracing our steps?

On n’en sait trop rien.24 How do you write: on en sait trop rien? Is it “on n’en sait trop rien?” or “on en sait trop rien?” I really don’t know too much about it. “Je n’en sais trop rien” or “j’en sais trop rien?”

Too much nothing: it’s a whole world.

So what path are we going to privilege today? A decision, any decision, seems—I say seems—always to come down to a path to be taken, or a track [une trace] to be followed along a path to be determined. To decide is to decide on a direction, on a sense in the topographical sense of orientation. Such at least is the dominant trope or figure. Where to go? Where to take oneself? How to orient one’s step? That is the form of every question concerning a decision, a decision to be taken. Where to go? Where to take oneself? Am I going to go there or not, here or there? What is the best path?

But there is decision only where, at first, one does not know where to go. When one knows the path in advance, the best path, when one knows the map, when one knows in advance where to take one’s steps and toward which destination, there is no reflection, no deliberation, no justification to be given, neither question nor decision, because there is no indecision. It is decided in advance, so there is no decision to be taken. The path is already

23. [Translator’s note:] An allusion to Derrida’s earlier discussion of Walten and Walter Benjamin’s essay Zur Kritik der Gewalt in the second part of Force de loi (Paris: Galilée, 1994), entitled “Prénom de Benjamin.”

24. [Translator’s note:] The French idiom “correctly” written “Je n’en sais trop rien,” literally “I don’t know too much nothing about it,” means “I don’t know too much about it,” “I really don’t know anything about it.” Derrida is playing on the tendency in spoken French to drop the initial “ne” in negative formulations (so that the “correct” “Je ne sais pas,” for example, is often spoken as “Je sais pas”). Here the paradoxical possibilities are further increased by the fact that “too much nothing” is hard to construe literally, and that, in the French expression “(ne) . . . rien,” the rien derives from the Latin res, thing.
taken, and this is, as they say *tout bête.* What I am saying here is, moreover, *tout bête* but undeniable, which also means that it is so simply and so constraintingly obvious that, if one wants to oppose it, one can *only* deny it.

To decide on the path to take or to privilege today, we must recall the context of the contract or the contract of the context: the beast and the sovereign. The beast and the sovereign are like the coats of arms of the seminar, like the dolphin was on the coat of arms of a certain sovereign realm that became the province of the Dauphiné, as we were saying last year.

The beast and the sovereign resemble each other, as we have been saying insistently since last year. They resemble each other in that they both seem to be outside the law, above or alongside the law. And yet, even if they resemble each other, they are not fellows [*semblables*]. Nor are they, or so we think, our fellows.

Who is that, the beast and the sovereign? Who are the beast and the sovereign? What are they, *elle* and *lui?*

Our suggestion is the following: we are committed to discourse here about the beast and the sovereign, and the contract that is proposed or, if you prefer, the rule of the game that I did more than propose to you, that I imposed on you without discussion (not without some *Gewalt*), that I decided on all alone, the rule of this game that is so improbable or a bit crazy, is to read on this subject Heidegger with Defoe: to read the Seminar given in Freiburg im Breisgau in 1929–30, entitled *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik: Welt-Endlichkeit-Einsamkeit,* The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude (in which Heidegger addresses as never before, and better than anywhere else or since, the question of the beast or the animal) and on the other hand *Robinson Crusoe.* Heidegger in one hand, then, and Defoe in the other, crossing our eyes or squinting a bit to see what is left standing out in this binocular vision. Heidegger-Defoe.

(On my computer, the title of the document for this seminar is *heilfoe* (board), and you know that *foe* in English means enemy. In fact, Defoe’s real name, his family’s real name, was Foe: his name was Daniel Foe, Daniel Enemy, Daniel the Enemy. I believe that Schmitt somewhere—I do not remember where—tries laboriously to distinguish the two uses: *foe* for...
inimicus (biblical and not political sense) and enemy in the sense of hostis, political enemy. Defoe’s name is as though it meant enemy; and here I recommend that you read at least two or three magnificent novels by J. M Coetzee, the great South African writer who wrote a novel called Foe,28 which presents itself as an oblique reading-re-writing of Robinson Crusoe, with embedded quotations, but also because Coetzee bears in his thought and his œuvre the grave concern of the animal, I advise you to read also The Lives of Animals and Disgrace.29

In order to bring Robinson Crusoe closer to Heidegger, I will not misuse the fact that if Foe is a real English name, Crusoe, as Robinson explains to us from the very opening lines of his autobiographical self-presentation, from the opening lines of the book that are like the genealogical presentation of an identity card or a family record book, Crusoe is the Anglicization of the German name Kreutznaer. Kreutznaer is the name of the father, a foreign trader originally from Bremen, with Robinson being the name of the maternal line.

Now, to begin to cross the paths of Robinson and Heidegger in the most improbable places, you will have noticed (if, as I hope, you have reread Robinson Crusoe) that he is always looking for, or breaking, paths on his island. He tries to get his bearings [s’orienter]. He tries to decide, to come to a decision as to the best path. His island is an isolated world within the world, and we see him, and he constantly shows himself, solitary in this insularity, constantly in the process of deciding as to the best path, given that he has no map, neither a map of the world nor above all a map of the island. Refer for example to the moment when, having not yet found any trace of human life on the island, having not yet heard any voice other than that of his parrot Poll who echoes his own voice, Robinson discovers “the Print of a Man’s naked Foot on the Shore” (RC, 142). It is as though he had been struck by lightning or thunder (“I stood like one Thunder-struck”) and as though he had seen a ghost, the vision of a specter (an Apparition): the footprint on the sand of the shore becomes not only a spectral apparition, a “fantôme” says Borel’s French translation, but a paralyzing hallucination, a sign come from heaven, a sign that is as menacing as it is promising, uncanny,30 as diabolical as it is divine: the other man. What terrifies Robin-

30. [Translator’s note:] “Uncanny” is in English in the text.
son is the possible trace of the spectral presence of another, another man on the island.

In a certain way, this is everything he was looking for or dreaming of, but the signal of the arrival of what he was hoping for, a bit like the messiah, suddenly terrifies him. Who is the other? And what if the other were worse than anything, what if he were a bad messiah, an envoy of the devil (and Robinson mentions more than once Satan or the Devil, a Satan or Devil (RC, 143) who has taken on human form or who has sent him another man to be his enemy, another foe, if you like)? As always, he is keen to hope that all this is a good sign of divine providence, but he is afraid that, instead of God, behind the God, the devil or an evil Genius (Robinson Descartes again) might have come to do his work, like a malign substitute for God who, instead of saving him, might have come to destroy him by sending him another man to be his enemy, another foe. He is not confident enough that God will save him. (Tell the joke about “Is anybody else there????”)31

Now what happens during the feverish reflection that, for many pages, follows this discovery of a footprint? A footprint that basically frightens him rather than giving him hope, which makes him think of the devil as much as of God, which even makes him invoke several times the sovereignty of an omnipotent God:

I consider’d that this was the Station of Life the infinitely wise and good Providence of God had determin’d for me, that as I could not foresee what the Ends of Divine Wisdom might be in all this, so I was not to dispute his Sovereignty, who, as I was his Creature, had an undoubted Right by Creation to govern and dispose of me absolutely as he thought fit; and who, as I was a Creature who had offended him, had likewise a judicial Right to condemn me to what Punishment he thought fit; and that it was my Part to submit to bear his Indignation, because I had sinn’d against him. / I then reflected that God, who was not only Righteous but Omnipotent, as he had thought fit thus to punish and afflict me, so he was able to deliver me; [. . .] (Read what follows [RC, 145]).

31. Thus in the typescript. During the session, Derrida told this joke: “I saw on television the other day a story that’s a bit vulgar but quite funny: someone is all alone on an island, with cliffs, and he stumbles . . . and falls . . . And he grabs onto some branches, you see . . . he grabs onto some vines, some trees . . . hanging, and he calls for help. He calls for help knowing that he is alone, like Robinson . . . He calls for help, and suddenly he hears the voice of God saying to him: ‘My child, fear not . . . Fear not . . . Let yourself drop and when you’re sixty feet from the ground, I’ll catch you in my hands . . .’ And you hear the man say, ‘Help! Help! Isn’t anybody else there?’ [Laughter] That’s a bit like Robinson: he has hope in God, but he’s afraid that . . .”
Which, be it said in passing, means at least two or three things:

1. **On the one hand**, the world is already determined as the totality of divine creation: I am a creature of God, God is the name of the originary creation of the world (and we shall see later that Heidegger inscribes and interprets this determination of the world, as created world, and as Christian world, in the history of the concept of the world);

2. **On the other hand**, this creation is indeed conceived on the Christian model by Robinson, and when he prays, when he learns how to pray (and the whole of *Robinson Crusoe* can be read as a rhythmic series of attempts to learn how to pray properly, authentically, in the Bible, on the Bible; and one also needs to know, and it is known, concerning the Bible, that Foe, Daniel Foe [Defoe] and some of his friends, around 1678, when people expected a *coup* by Charles II with the help of an Irish papist army—that Foe, then, and his friends, were fearful that their Bibles might be confiscated and learned it by heart; you need to know this context, this and so many other features of the politico-religious context of England at the time, to read *Robinson Crusoe*)—well, having just seen this bare footprint of another man, Robinson Crusoe prays on the Bible that he has taken with him and of which he will have, at a given moment, more than one copy (“which book would you take to a desert island, the Bible or a Heidegger seminar about the concept of world?”);

3. **Finally**, having put his Bible down and comforted himself through prayer, he asks where he is, in what place, what his path will have been. He then wonders even more anxiously if this bare footprint is not that of his own foot. His own foot on a path he had already taken. Just as Poll the parrot returns to him only the echo of his voice, so the bare footprint is the more *unheimlich*, uncanny, for being quite possibly his own, on a path already trodden, that he has always described without knowing it, described in the sense that to describe a movement is also to execute it. Fundamentally, he cannot decide if this track is his own or not, a track left on a path that he does not know if he has already trodden, broken or walked—or not. He really does not know [*Il n’en sait trop rien*]. Is it me? Is it my track? Is it my path? Is it the specter of my print, the print of my specter? Am I coming back? Am I or am I not returning? Am I a revenant of myself that I cross on my path like the trace of the other, on a path that is already a return path or a path of revenance, etc? I really don’t know [*J’en sais trop rien*], or I really don’t know about the possibility of this uncanny, *unheimlich* double. When I discover this path and this track, have I not already been this way,

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32. [Translator’s note:] The word “uncanny,” here and a few lines later, is in English in the text.
already, without knowing or wanting to, decided to go this way? I really don’t know. \[Je n'en sais trop rien. J'en sais trop rien.\] Who will have decided what? And to go where? That’s the question that this bare footprint is asking me, as the trace of a man. The other man, the step of the other man—is it not me again, me alone who, returning like a revenant on the circular path of the island, become an apparition for myself, a specular phantom, a specular specter (the other man as myself, myself as another, I who am an other), but a specular phantom who cannot, who does not know if he is himself, ipse, who really doesn’t know \[qui n’en sait trop rien\]—nor whether he can still look at himself in the mirror?

He scares himself \[il se fait peur: literally “he makes himself fear”\]. He becomes the fear that he is and that he makes himself. And all these pages, among the most extraordinary in the book, on which he is shown, in which he shows himself, meditating, in terror, on this bare footprint—these pages should be read step by step, and for example in parallel with Freud’s Gradiva, with all the phantasmata, i.e. the phantasms and phantoms that return on the print of a step, or “the Print of a naked Foot.”

In the middle of these Cogitations, Apprehensions and Reflections, it came into my Thought one Day, that all this might be a meer Chimera of my own; and that this Foot might be the Print of my own Foot, when I came on Shore from my Boat: This cheer’d me up a little too, and I began to persuade my self it was all a Delusion; that it was nothing else but my own Foot, and why might not I come that way from the Boat, as well as I was going that way to the Boat; again, I consider’d also that I could by no Means tell for certain where I had trod, and where I had not; and that if at last this was only the Print of my own Foot, I had play’d the Part of those Fools, who strive to make stories of Spectres, and Apparitions; and then are frighted at them more than any body. (RC, 145–46)

Note that the Devil and the Good Lord, those two figures of all-powerful sovereignty, specters and ghosts, are not the only figures invoked in the wandering of these paths without path. There is also, in this book which is, as you know, an immense zoology, both a taxonomy of the animals—a Noah’s ark, a zoological park, a farm, a slaughterhouse, a hunting ground, a jungle of savage beasts—and, as he says, so often, of beasts that are “ravenous,” “furious,” “venomous,” “poisonous;” it is also a protection society for domestic animals, a stockbreeding center, etc.

33. RC, 122–23: “[. . .] so I found no ravenous Beast, no furious Wolves or Tygers to threaten my Life, no venomous Creatures or poisonous, which I might feed on to my Hurt, no Savages to murther and devour me.”
In short, in this bestiary book that forms an island between heaven and hell, there is a moment—which immediately follows the moment of discovery of the bare footprint which could be his or that of the other, on this path that he might have taken or that remains the path of the other—there is a moment when Robinson retreats. He withdraws into what he calls his Castle, he takes off, feeling himself followed by a trace, basically, hunted or tracked by a trace. Or even by his own trace. Perhaps persecuted by himself and by his own revenance. As though he were living everything in the past of his own past as a terrifying future. He believes he is shortly going to die, that he is running after his death or that death is running after him, that life will have been so short, and thus, as though he were already dead, because of this race with his revenance, everything that happens to him happens not as new, fresh, or to come, but as (perhaps, he really does not know [il n’en sait trop rien]) already past, already seen, to come as yesterday and not as tomorrow. You know these sublime and infinite lines from John Donne, which come back to my memory from I know not where: (Board)

I run to Death and Death meets me as fast
And all my Pleasures are like Yesterday.34

I run toward death, I hurry toward death and death comes to meet me just as fast. (I run at death, I run to death and death comes upon me, chance death encounter seizes me, catches me or catches up with me just as fast, as soon.)

And all my pleasures are like yesterday,35 like the yesterday, as though come from yesterday, my pleasures are already of yesterday, my pleasures are the yesterday itself, in advance they are dated—from yesterday. In advance they have passed, they are past, already past and passed by, overtaken, already memories of bygone enjoyment or returns of pleasure. My present pleasures are in the present yesterday’s presents, they are yesterday. Not: they have been or were yesterday, but they are presently yesterday. Their being-present is yesterday, the yesterday. It is as if presently I were already dead, death coming so quickly to meet me and me to meet it, and there is no knowing whether I’m going quicker than it toward it or it quicker than I toward me, we are running at each other, as if in order to find out who

34. The lines are from the first of John Donne’s Holy Sonnets. The following pages were published and commented on by Ginette Michaud in “Courir à toute vitesse: Note télégraphique sur un poème de pensée de J.D.,” Mosaic 40, no. 2 (June 2007): 56–62.

35. [Translator’s note:] Derrida inserts the English words “like yesterday.”
will arrive first, and at the moment of a meeting that never keeps one wait-
ing, there is no knowing who will, who will have, yesterday, arrived first, quicker than life in any case, a life that this accelerated movement takes by speed, thus taking time by speed, even taking speed by speed, a speed beyond speed, a speed winning out over speed, going quicker than time and even than speed, taking time by speed, so fast that what I live in the present, or even what I expect from the future, is already past, already memory and melancholy, or nostalgia (Heimweh). That’s what it means whenever I say: “Life will have been so short.” Incalculable, incommensurable precipitation or acceleration, ahead of itself—and taking time by speed.

So clearly “I run to Death” can mean both “I run toward death, I hurry toward death, I rush in the direction of death which comes at me just as fast,” but also “I run to death,” I run like a madman, out of breath, to flee death, I run to death to avoid death, I run on ahead of death so as not to have it surprise me, to take the initiative: but it catches up with me immediately; but “catch up with” won’t do here for “meet,” one must therefore suppose that even if I run to death, before death, ahead of death in order to flee it, death is there before me, it already awaits me, in Samarkand, both because it goes faster and because, going ahead of me, taking the lead, it outstrips me, awaits me and comes to meet me at the very moment I am running to death—both to flee it and to catch up with it. Both to flee it and to catch up with it. The more I flee it, the faster I flee it, I chase it, the faster I approach it, I take it upon me, I take it in the sense that, in chasing it, I run after it. I learn it, I take it in [je l’apprends, je la prends], and it takes me by surprise. All the Umwege, all the detours of the race are outplayed by a death that precedes me, that is ahead of me, before me—since yesterday. Always anterior, in its very futurity, like what remains to come, affecting itself in advance from the nostalgia of its own archive—its very light affecting itself without delay with photography, autobiophotography. Or affecting itself in advance, via what in photography is called a delay mechanism, with its own photograph, a photograph that is itself not reappropriable. Everything begins with the archive or with archive fever.

But that is not even everything and it is not even so simple <in> the thinking, giving [donnante] writing and the unheard-of signature of this metaphysical poem. By making “yesterday” a noun, and not an adverb:

36. [Translator’s note:] An allusion to the ancient Middle Eastern story often referred to as “Death in Samarkand,” whereby a man who attempts to escape death by fleeing to Samarkand finds that that is precisely where his appointed encounter with death is to take place.
And all my Pleasures are like Yesterday,” Donne gives us the chance of thinking even more than what I have just been saying. What, then? Well, perhaps that this race to death, this race to death of death, this running out of breath, this being-in-the-race at high speed, a speed that is all-powerful and indifferent, without speed-differentiation, this absolute speed, this speed beyond speed, this speed that is the whole, as infinite speed that takes itself by speed and overtakes itself, passes itself, as they say in [American] English for overtake, when one vehicle overtakes another, this speed that passes itself, this race at full speed, this race of death to death, this race unto death not only means that my present pleasures are presently and in advance gone, past, already gone by in their very present, already dated yesterday in their present and their here and now. No: one would have to say and think, to the contrary, taking seriously and taking into account the grammar of a proposition that dares to take “yesterday” as a noun, the yesterday, and not an adverb (my pleasures are yesterday, as though yesterday), one would have to emphasize and unsettle the meaning of the like, by beginning to understand not only that my pleasures are always affected with expiration and in advance dated, dated from yesterday, past and imprinted with nostalgia, as though one first thought the essence of present pleasure and then noticed, in a second moment, the predicative tense, that what we know and feel under this name pleasure or enjoyment and as present pleasure is then, into the bargain and as soon as possible, determined as past, affected with past, with yesterdayness. No, it is the contrary, the other way round, if I can say so, it is yesterday that gives the pleasure, pleasure is yesterday, like yesterday, it begins now by being yesterday, not only in the manner of yesterday but as yesterday. I have pleasure only because there is the past of yesterday, only because pleasure is originarily yesterday, it is in its essence, in its now, in the presence of its essence and in the essence of its presence, a having-been-yesterday, it is (present) in its Gewesenheit, it is in its essence (Wesen), a Gewesenheit, a being-having-been, and that’s the nostalgia of yesterday, of a death already come, an originary mourning, this is the nostalgia that does not come after pleasure but which, alone, gives me pleasure and gives it to me as yesterday. I do not enjoy a pleasure first present that is immediately past, nostalgic, in mourning: no, the pleasure is born only of the mourning, of enjoyment as mourning. And not any mourning and any memory of death, but the mourning of myself. I am from yesterday, I am no longer, I am no longer present, I am already yesterday, I enjoy from yesterday, not because I have enjoyed or have been, or because I was born.
yesterday, but because only yesterday will have given me, only my death or the feeling of my death, a death that will have taken me by speed, only my death lets me enjoy and take pleasure—in this very moment. Only the absolute yesterday gives me pleasure. The yesterday itself gives enjoyment, makes a present in the present of enjoyment as yesterdaily enjoyment, if I can put it like that. Without mourning, and the mourning of myself, the mourning of my “I am present,” there would be no pleasure. There would not even be an “I am,” consciousness, cogito, I think, or present enjoyment of my Cartesian-Robinsonian existence. Pleasure, my pleasures are yesterday, they are the yesterday, they are like the yesterday. They are neither present nor future, I enjoy them only as a memory; and even then, “memory” and “past” are concepts that are too broad and vague. The yesterday is not only the past the memory of which I keep or lose: yesterday is the day ahead, the day that has just passed, whose phenomenal light has just faded. Yesterday is the past imminence of today itself, the imminence of day’s dawning, the dawning that gives light to the day [donne le jour au jour]. And that is the first metonymy, the major metonymy of the past in general, as past of the experience of what appears in the light of day, comes to see the light of day. Of what is born but, since we are here dealing with a past like a death already happened, having won the race, faster than speed itself, what is born as though stillborn. My pleasures are stillborn. Another way of saying and thinking the pas de plaisir, the step or the not of an enjoyment that is in advance the past of itself, a step [pas] as past, as what comes to pass as, and passes on [se passe de] present pleasure in pleasure and that I enjoy only in the trace of the pas de plaisir. Coming back to haunt all the steps [pas]. Pleasure is the revenance of the pas—all the pas, all the past passages of the pas. Terrifying or terrified pleasure, this could be the fright of a Robinson, the pleasure-terror (the one in the other, terror in pleasure and pleasure in terror)—the pleasure-terror that consists in not being able to do anything, not take a step [pas un pas], in not being anything other than the return of revenance over the track of its own steps, a revenance thenceforth the more fearful—a little as Robinson is scared by the footprint he is not sure is his own, about which he is not sure if he can recognize himself in it, find himself in it, reappropriate his track—a revenance that is thenceforth the more fearsome or fearful for the fact that one is not sure, in the blazed trace of a pleasure, an enjoyment, a joy, in the trace of this pas de jouissance, one is never sure of being able to recognize one’s own or that of another. Not only is it that what I enjoy is yesterday but perhaps, it is perhaps my yesterday or perhaps the yesterday, already, today, of an other, and in any case of another, even it is already, even if it were already another myself. My pleasure is,
from yesterday on, by yesterday altered, come from the other, the coming of the other.

And the other would say to me, or else I would say myself to the other: as I run to death always after yesterday, yesterday will always be to come: not tomorrow, in the future, but to come, ahead, there in front, the day before yesterday.

And here is Robinson comparing himself to a hunted animal, more than one hunted animal, a hare or a fox, so that—and this makes us think of Kafka from another century—his castle looks like a burrow in which he takes refuge:

When I came to my Castle, for so I think I call’d it ever after this, I fled into it like one pursued; whether I went over by the Ladder as first contriv’d, or went in at the Hole in the Rock, which I call’d a Door, I cannot remember; no, nor could I remember the next Morning, for never frighted Hare fled to Cover, or Fox to Earth, with more Terror of Mind than I to this Retreat.

(RC, 142)

You have already noticed the fact, especially if you have just reread Robinson Crusoe, that in Robinson Crusoe’s solitude, loneliness, insular isolation, even after the footprint, and even, later, after the meeting with Friday, there are on this island only men and beasts: those are the only living beings. And when I say men, I mean men, not only humans but men without women and without sex. Until the last pages of the book it is a world without women and without sex, or, if you prefer, men without sexual difference and without desire, without obvious sexual concern as such. This is no doubt what explains in part the profound affect that attracts and attaches readers the world over, readers become children again, dreaming of such a paradisiacal place in spite of all the dangers that Robinson Crusoe seems to confront and fear. As if, like in Paradise, sexual difference had not yet taken place or no longer had any reason for being. Later we’ll cite the moments of euphoria, Robinson’s moments of extreme and declared enjoyment, Robinson who declares himself, in spite of all the difficulties, menaces, and privations, the happiest of men. This happy man never thinks, for almost thirty years, for at least twenty-eight years, of the fact that there are women in the world. As he seems never to have thought about it before being cast ashore on the island. In any case he never talks about it, this is the absolute unspoken aspect of these memoires. A little as though there were some secret contract between sovereign euphoria, paradisiacal euphoria, and the absence of women, of the other as woman, even the desire of or for the other woman, the other as woman. There is nobody else,
there is a sort of slave, there are some animals and nobody else. And nobody else, “alone at last,” that means: no woman, no more women. No trace of woman. [Pas trace de femme.] Because above all he never imagines for a moment that the footprint might be a feminine footprint. Il, the Il, an il, him, an island [île] and not them [elles], no woman. No trace of woman’s step. [Pas de trace de pas de femme.] That’s sovereignty, that’s solitary and exceptional sovereignty: slave, animal, and no woman. No desire to come along and limit sovereignty. In any case no heterosexual desire, and if there were homosexual desire, it would go, symbolically and symptomatically, via the symbols of young slaves and beasts. Beasts you eat or that constantly threaten to eat you (the great gesture, the great phantasmatic gesta of the book, which rules its whole vocabulary, its speech, its mouth, its tongue and its teeth, is that of eating and devouring, eating the other, that’s all we ever hear about, the fear of being devoured by wild beasts or by savage cannibals, and the need to eat beasts, beasts that you hunt, that you raise or that you domesticate. Whose skin you always keep. You will have noticed on a hundred occasions: those beasts, he’ll have their hide. He keeps it and uses it to clothe himself, protect himself, to build, but also as an emblem of sovereignty, etc. The skin of beasts is like the origin of his technology and supremacy as a man. So there are all the animals in the world, the most “ravenous, furious, venomous, poisonous” beasts, but no women. No trace of woman’s step.)

Only in the last six pages of the book, and as though in passing, through preterition, does Robinson mention two women.

And in both cases, death is there waiting.

The other woman is always death.

In the first case, it is an old woman to whom he had sent money and who is so grateful that she is ready to do anything for him. Now this woman is a widow, he says, “my good antient Widow” (RC, 279). He sees her again on his return, and she gives him the good advice not to go back to his island as he had wished (“My true Friend, the Widow, earnestly diswaded me from it . . .” [RC, 280]).

Death and the other woman. As for the other woman, his wife, she is not a widow, but he is himself a widower, since he tells us, as though in a postscript and by preterition, in one sentence, in the final pages that describe his return, that, upon his return, precisely, and before setting off again for what he calls his “new Collony in the Island” (“In this Voyage I visited my new Collony in the Island, saw my Successors the Spaniards . . .” [RC, 281]), on his return, then, and before setting off again to his “new Collony in the Island,” he tells us in passing, in three lines, less than a sentence, he says in
passing that in passing, between his two voyages to the island, he got married, had two sons and a daughter, but that his wife died. He says nothing about her but “she died”: “My Wife dying . . .”; she doesn’t die, she is “dying,” or rather, she dies, she is dying:

In the mean Time, I in Part settled myself here, for first of all I marry’d, and that not either to my Disadvantage or Dissatisfaction, and had three children, two Sons and one Daughter. But my Wife dying, and my Nephew coming Home . . . my Inclination to go Abroad, and his Importunity prevailed . . . (RC, 281)

This does not stop him going on to speak of the five women taken back to the island by his Spanish successors and of the seven women he sent them himself, as though by mail or by cargo boat. A cargo of women like “surface mail.”38 This is the last page: “. . . besides other Supplies, I sent seven Women, being such as I found proper for Service, or for Wives to such as would take them: As to the English Men, I promis’d them to send them some Women from England, with a good Cargoe of Necessaries, if they would apply themselves to Planting” (RC, 282).

Now: Now, holding [Maintenant, maintenant] in one hand [main] Robinson Crusoe, and keeping it in memory and in sight, we now take in the other hand Heidegger’s seminar on World, Finitude and Solitude (Welt, Endlichkeit, Einsamkeit), and to make a path for ourselves toward the animal, we open the book right and exactly in its middle (p. 265 out of 532 pages [179 of 366]). Let us not forget the radical differences of status: we have in one hand an English book, a book of fiction that pretends to present itself as realistic and non-fictional memoirs, and in the other a book in German, a written seminar that, in another language and another country, more than two centuries later, in <a> mode as heterogeneous as possible, speaks to us of world, finitude, solitude, and animals.

What do we find, in this seminar? Someone, a German, this time, who unlike the Kreutznaers did not emigrate to England, who is seeking his path, the best path (his word, a hundred times, Weg) among many others, at least three, in order to ask the question of the world (Was ist Welt?), to question after the world, and a world in which there are stones, animals, and men, the stone, the animal, and the man. We are in the second chapter of the second part of the book or the seminar. It is called “The Beginning of Metaphysical Questioning with the Question of World. The Path of the Investigation and Its Difficulties” [“Der Beginn des metaphysischen Fra-
The gesture whereby I decide to open the book at its center is neither neutral, nor innocent, nor totally justifiable. I hope to correct that fact with you, either by returning, as I intend to, over what comes earlier, or by inviting you to do it yourselves (we can’t do everything in one course).

My strategic justification is a double one: on the one hand, it is from this halfway point that Heidegger explicitly and systematically broaches the question of the animal, which is our theme here; on the other hand, the figure of the path, the decision to take one path rather than others in order to present theses (and the gesture of presenting theses as such is in itself very odd in Heidegger, merits special reflection) interests us, among other things, because of what we have just identified as Robinson’s anguish about the path and the cartography to be opened, including that of the risk of a vicious circle as a hermeneutic circle that consists in retracing one’s steps, in always presupposing oneself, allowing oneself to be hallucinated by the specter of one’s own tracks as tracks of the other man.

If, then, we open this chapter, we find that everything in it goes by three. From the title onward, Heidegger announces to us that in this path (Weg) we have taken, there are three guiding theses: 1. The stone is worldless; 2. The animal is poor in world; 3. Man is world-forming: “Der Weg der vergleichenden Betrachtung von drei leitenden Thesen: der Stein ist weltlos, das Tier ist weltarm, der Mensch ist weltbildend” (H, 261/176).

That’s the title, a path, and three theses. But when we begin to read the chapter, we are told that to arrive at these three theses, we already had to hesitate and already choose among three paths.

Which paths?

You have noticed that the three theses all concern the world, the question of world (Welt), the different modalities of the relation to what one calls the world: weltlos for the stone, weltarm for the animal, weltbildend for man, each time it is an attribute or participle that qualifies the world, the presence or absence of world, the having or not-having a world, the world, etc. One might say that Heidegger’s point is less to say something essential about the stone, the animal or man than to say something essential about differences as to the world.

The question is indeed that of the world, and the three theses are theses about the world, as to the world, more still than about those entities: stone, animal and man. And it is precisely on the subject of the world, the question “Was ist Welt?” that, even before the three theses, Heidegger envisages three paths. Indeed he writes:
We begin with the first of our three questions [it being understood: \textit{world, finitude, and solitude} that form the triple coordinated theme of the seminar]: \textit{What is world?} Even now we tend to take this explicit question as a free-floating question asked along the way just like any other (Wir nehmen diese ausgesprochene Frage auch jetzt noch leicht als eine freischwebende, so in den Tag hinein gesprochene Frage). Initially we do not know where we should look for an answer to it. Indeed, if we consider the matter more closely, we do not even know what we are asking about, or in what direction our questioning is moving (\textit{in welcher Richtung des Fragens wir uns bewegen}). (H, 261/176)

In other words, and it’s a bit like it is for the question of \textit{Being}, we do not know what it is, \textit{world}, what \textit{being} it is and therefore in view of what we are questioning. We think we know what the \textit{world} is, what we mean when we say “\textit{world},” and that everything is the \textit{world}, everything is in the \textit{world} or of the \textit{world}, that there is nothing outside the \textit{world}, and therefore we are unable to specify, to determine a question bearing on the \textit{world}, as it would bear on this or that, on a determinable \textit{being}. A question about the \textit{world} is a question about everything and nothing. About everything, therefore about nothing, it’s an empty question that bites the tail of its own presupposition. One knows too much and one knows nothing, of the \textit{world}. \textit{On en sait trop rien}. One could stop there and thus refuse even the possibility of determining such a question, determining and specifying its meaning. Kant said of the \textit{world} that it was merely a regulative Idea of \textit{Reason}.

But what interests me, what seems interesting to me here, and what remains at bottom unreflected by Heidegger, is that instead of getting paralyzed or giving up, faced with the all and nothing, the all or nothing of this empty question, faced with \textit{je n’en sais trop rien}, or \textit{j’en sais trop rien}, Heidegger makes a gesture: he decides, without thematizing the sense and necessity of this decision—he takes, will have taken the decision to make the gesture that consists in determining the difficulty or the aporia as the figure of \textit{direction}, the path to be taken. To pose and determine a question, one apparently needs to know where to go, on what path, in what direction, with what step to move along (\textit{sich bewegen}) a path (\textit{Weg}). That such a question paralyzes us seems to mean in his eyes that, as one must move forward (that is the presupposition), as the discourse must discourse going forward, proceeding, progressing; as one must walk [\textit{marcher}], as it must work [\textit{il faut que ça marche}], as one must go to it, one must go, precisely—the question insists as a question of orientation, of \textit{direction} (\textit{Richtung}) on the path (\textit{Weg}) of moving along (\textit{sich bewegen}). Where to go? In what direction should one take oneself? We are alone, immobilized on an island and we wonder...
how to start walking, toward the world, that is, without going around in
circles or retracing our steps. In which direction? How to orient oneself
in thinking the world? one might say to parody and displace Kant’s ques-
tion in that extraordinary little great text entitled Was heißt: Sich im Denken
orientieren? (1786). If I had not chosen to read a seminar of Heidegger’s at
the same time as Robinson Crusoe, I would have chosen and perhaps should
have chosen to read with you, to reread this text of Kant’s, closer in the
Age of Enlightenment to Defoe, and the exercise would have been fruitful.
From the very start of this text that you no doubt know or else should read
and reread, Kant articulates his question as would a Robinson who was at
once a seafarer, an astronomer, and a geographer and who, left to himself,
wonders how to orient himself, and what “to orient oneself” means. He
then sets off from the etymon, i.e. the orient, and he specifies that to orient
oneself in the proper sense of the word (in der eigentlichen Bedeutung des
Worts)39 means—since one always orients oneself in the world, on the basis
of a given region of the world (aus einer gegebenen Weltgegend), and since
there are four of them on the horizon—that the point is to find the orient,
the Levant, the sunrise (Aufgang). If I see (and I need to see) the sun in the
sky and if I know it is noon, I will find the south, east, west and north. But
for that to be possible, I must feel, I must have a feeling of difference in
my own subject (an meinen eigenen Subjekt). And you see that the value of
property or propriety is indispensable, along with the value of the proper: to
determine the proper sense of the word “orient” (die eigentliche Bedeutung
des Worts), I have to refer myself to what affects the feeling (Gefühl) of my
own proper subject (an meinen eigenen Subjekt). If Kant speaks of feeling
and not of concept or idea, it is because this is about the sensory experience
of my own body, namely the difference between right and left. Because this
difference—as you know, he shows this elsewhere—is not conceptual but
sensible and because between my right hand and my left hand there is no
predicable conceptual difference, but only a sensory difference of orienta-
tion and place, and thereby of sensory irreplaceability (one cannot put one’s
right hand in a left-hand glove even though there is no intelligible concep-
tual difference, nor even an objectively describable difference between the
two gloves and the two hands, merely a difference of sensory orientation).40

39. Immanuel Kant, Was heißt: Sich im Denken orientieren? (1786), in Kants Werke:
Nisbet as “What Is Orientation in Thinking?,” in Kant’s Political Writings, ed. H. S.
40. [Translator’s note:] This sentence is incomplete in the French text.
And this allows Kant to posit that geographical orientation (in the world and on the earth) depends in the last analysis on no objective or objectifiable datum but merely on a principle of subjective differentiation. The major interest of this text (a text that is Robinsonian in its way, since it poses the question and answers the question of orientation in the world on the basis of the situation of a solitary body proper, which at least alleges, claims to be without any objective or intersubjective reference point, deprived of any socialized techno-science, etc., which therefore alleges and claims to come forward as the pure, solitary subjectivity of the naked body proper), the major interest of the text also hangs on the moment when Kant wants to “extend” (erweitern), without betraying it, what he calls the sensory and subjective principle of differentiation in orientation, when he extends it, then, to everything, to mathematics, logic, to thinking in general, in particular to thinking in the shape of the rationality of reason. It is thus that he accounts for what he calls the “need of reason,” as elsewhere he talks of the interest of reason, the “feeling of the proper need of reason [Das Gefühl des der Vernunft eigenen Bedürfnisses],” and Kant underlines the word “need,” Bedürfniss, then the “right of the need of reason [das Recht des Bedürfnisses der Vernunft]” (Kant’s emphasis again . . .).41

What right, what right of need? The right, I quote, “to suppose and admit (vorauszusetzen und anzunehmen) something that it [reason] cannot claim to know by objective principles; and consequently to orient oneself in thought (sich im Denken . . . zu orientieren) through its own proper need (the need of reason alone: durch ihr eigenes Bedürfniss) in the incommensurable space (that is for us full of dense shadows) of the supra-sensible (für uns mit dicker Nacht erfüllten Räume des Übersinnlichen).”42

The point, then, is to extend the always subjective, but sensory, principle of orientation to the right of reason, the right of the need proper to reason to orient itself in thought on the basis of a principle that is always subjective, of course, but this time carried beyond the sensory field and into the black night of the supersensible, and thus the invisible, the metempirical. This leap into the night, the leap of right on the basis of need is an infinite leap, an infinite extension. And if you follow the huge consequences of this, the oceanic consequences in what follows in the text that I am leaving you to read, you will see why the need of practical reason is absolutely, unconditionally privileged with respect to the need of theoretical reason, for the need of reason in its practical use is, precisely, unconditional (unbedingt).

41. Ibid., pp. 136–37 [p. 240].
42. Ibid.
You will also see Kant define and determine what he calls a belief of reason, and even a “purely rational belief” (Ein reiner Vernunftglaube) and to describe this belief of reason, here too he takes what I shall call a Robinsonian tone, or at least he navigates like a sailor in the Robinsonian ocean. The point is always to orient oneself and trace one’s path:

A purely rational belief is the signpost [Wegweiser, what shows the way] or compass (oder Kompass) by means of which the speculative thinker can orient himself on his rational wanderings in the field of supra-sensory objects, while the man of ordinary but (morally) healthy (moralisch gesunder) reason can use it to plan his course (seinen Weg vorzeichnen), for both theoretical and practical purposes, in complete conformity (Angemessen) with the whole end of his destiny; and this same rational belief must also be made the basis of every other belief, and indeed of every revelation (Offenbarung).43 (Reread without the German.)

Then he moves on, in the same movement, to the concept of God. You’ll read it.

One last return to Heidegger, and I’m done for today.

In what direction? he was asking himself. Toward which path should we orient this question that is so open and indeterminate, namely: “what is world?” In what sense, in the sense of direction, should we orient this question that does not, itself, even indicate the direction in which we can pose it, in which we can organize ourselves and relate to it? The world is an island whose map we do not have. We are in it and we want to go toward it, and we do not know which way to turn to take our first step.

Now here he goes (it looks like a coup de théâtre or a coup de force, although that is not Heidegger’s tone, but I maintain that more than once he is taking decisions that are so many arbitrary coups de force or coups de théâtre, so many unjustifiable decisions: that would be Heidegger’s Walten), here he goes starting to name the first path, as the closest path (“Der nächste Weg zu einer ersten Klärung . . .” [H, 261/176]).

What does “the closest” mean here? And why begin this way, with the one closest to us, as Heidegger already had done in Sein und Zeit, right at the beginning, to take Dasein as point of departure and exemplary being as to which to ask the question of the meaning of Being?

Those are questions that will wait for us until 2003: I remind you it’ll be the twenty-second of January.

43. Ibid., p. 142 [p. 245].