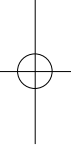# The Duplicity of Beginning
 Schürmann, Aristotle, and the Origins of Metaphysics

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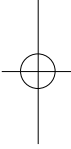
> The poet bursts the bonds of what he touches.
> He does not teach the end of bonds.
> —René Char, "The Consequences"[1]

1.

Beginnings are poetic. They are haunted by an ineluctable duplicity that is heard already in the Greek word ποίησις. On the one hand, ποίησις names the sort of making associated with fabrication; on the other, it names the creative capacity to imitate action in a way that brings delight and discloses truth.[2] This duplicity of ποίησις haunts the story Reiner Schürmann tells of the beginning of metaphysics in his book *Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy*.[3] Metaphysics is said to begin with a decisive determination of the very meaning of beginning. Indeed, it is said to begin with a certain ποίησις, a fabrication that systematically undermines the other sense of ποίησις that speaks of possible things and opens a space for the happening of truth.[4] For Schürmann, Aristotle was the poet of the beginning of metaphysics, because he was the first to bring together the two senses of the Greek word ἀρχή, "inception" and "domination," consolidating them into a single concept of the principle in which incipience gives way to domination as the univocal law that governs thinking and acting (HBA 97).

Ironically, a certain repetition of this consolidation of the origin, of the reduction of the poetic duplicity of beginning to the univocal law of domination, is heard in Schürmann's own account of the origin of metaphysics. For Schürmann, metaphysics "designates that disposition where action requires a principle to which words, things, and deeds can be related" (HBA 5–6). To identify an expression that captures this

schema of reference to a single principle of domination, Schürmann appeals to the Aristotelian locution of pros hen equivocation in which a diversity of phenomena enter into community with one another by pointing "toward one" (πρὸς ἕν) principle, or ἀρχή (Aristotle, *Met*. IV.2, 1003b5). Although, as will be heard, Aristotle's own account of pros hen equivocation cannot be reduced to the hegemonic operation of the one upon the many, the logic that drives the story Schürmann tells about the origin of metaphysics forces him, not quite to deny, but certainly to underemphasize the degree to which in Aristotle the pros hen relation affirms difference. Schürmann's story of the origin of metaphysics as an epoch of hegemonic principles is itself a fabrication operating according to a logic of domination that elides those dimensions of the beginning dissonant with the narrative.

Thus, to begin with Schürmann is to be exposed to the poetic duplicity of beginning in a poignant way; for his is a singular thinking intent upon exposing the violence each new beginning perpetrates upon the singular itself. To begin with Schürmann, then, is to be caught already in a double bind in which the very attempt to do justice to the singularity of his thinking requires the deployment of words that obliterate the singular by forcing it into an economy of concepts that renders it particular. Yet justice requires that we resist the temptation to do with Schürmann what he does with Aristotle; for the singularity of Aristotle's thinking is rendered particular the moment Schürmann identifies him as the father of metaphysics. Every attempt to do justice to singularity is caught up in the poetic duplicity of beginning—the need to speak and act together and the violence endemic to such speaking and acting. This is the duplicity that Schürmann himself identifies as the condition under which life stretches itself out between natality and mortality.

Drawing explicitly on one aspect of Hannah Arendt's discussion of natality in *The Human Condition*, Schürmann insists that the trait of natality not only "carries us toward new beginnings,"[5] but, more decisively, natality gives birth to principles that crush the singular.[6] Natality names the thetic thrust at work in every act of institutional founding. But what gives this life-affirming condition tragic poignancy for Schürmann is the manner in which its activity denies mortality. If "mortality familiarizes us with our *singularization to come*," natality wins a life for itself by forcing the singular into concepts that render it particular (BH 19). For Schürmann, then, natality is associated with life, the common, and the violence of language, whereas mortality is bound up with death, the singular, and a certain silence.

However, to posit natality as the exclusive trait under which the singular dissolves into particularity, and to set it over against the trait of

mortality as that which singularizes, is to remain caught in a metaphysical logic of dichotomy that Schürmann himself does so much to call into question. Unless these traits themselves are integrated, woven into "the entire tragedy and comedy of life," the distinction is destined to remain one more in a long line of metaphysical fantasms. The singularizing dimension of natality must be heard to stretch out into the universalizing function of mortality. Natality opens us to the singular as the source of new possibilities even as mortality presses in upon life indiscriminately. If the tragic names the mode in which the bonds of mortality singularize, perhaps the comic names the mode in which natality playfully bursts the totalizing bonds of mortality, not by "teaching the end of bonds," but by opening a space for the emergence of new possibilities for thinking and acting. This space of appearance, conditioned as much by natality as by mortality, is the topos in which the individual—situated precariously between the singular and the particular—comes to presence. The site of the individual's appearance is the one toward which (πρὸς ἕν) thinking and acting must always return if they are to temper their own hegemonic tendencies and cultivate an ability to respond in ways that do justice to the appearing of things. Schürmann's intense focus on combating the tragic denial that annihilates the singular itself eclipses the perplexing appearance of the individual at play in the space between singularity and particularity. Here a comic denial can be heard in the way the preoccupation with the tragic reinforces a long history of philosophy's obsession with death to the detriment of life.

Let us begin again, then, with Schürmann in order first to attend to the manner in which the logic of domination at work in his narrative of the origin of metaphysics suppresses the singular poetics of Aristotelian thinking. To hear the duplicity of that beginning is already to begin to feel the play of natality and mortality that operate together in each new beginning. This will allow us to hear more clearly how Schürmann's analysis of natality in its relation to mortality in *Broken Hegemonies* opens the possibility of reading Aristotle's thinking as something other than the origin of an errancy. In *Broken Hegemonies*, this other Aristotle is permitted to speak and it is Aristotle's peculiar way of speaking that allows the individual to appear between the silence of singularity and the violence of particularity. Aristotle's own phenomenological orientation to the ways things are said allows the things said to open a site in which the possibility of a certain justice emerges.

2. Metaphysics as Poetic Fantasm

Aristotle's *Physics* is said to be the foundational book of western metaphysics because it transforms the inquiry into the first beginnings

(ἀρχαί) of nature into a search for causes. This shift covers over the original sense of nature as φύσις, a noun that retains its intimate link to the verb φύειν, "to come forth into appearance." The attempt to articulate the beginnings of the dynamic event that is nature's appearing is eclipsed by an obsession with locating those causes that stand at the beginning of a chain of responsibility capable of answering the metaphysical question par excellence, "Why?" or διὰ τί, "Through what?" For Schürmann, the human fetish for fabrication perverts the inquiry into origins by turning it into a search for causes. He puts it this way: "[I]t is only because man first grasps himself as archi-tect, as initiator of fabrication, that nature can in turn appear to him as moved by the mechanisms of cause and effect" (HBA 100).[7] Aristotle's *Physics* introduces the four causes in order to account not merely for the sort of change at work in human making, but, as Aristotle insists, for "every natural change."[8] For Schürmann, the attempt to extend the model of production to all natural change can be heard in the very examples to which Aristotle appeals in establishing the material, formal, efficient, and final causes, most of which are taken from the sphere of human fabrication or action.[9]

The shift toward thinking nature in terms of human fabrication is decisive for Schürmann's account of the origin of metaphysics because it illustrates how the model of production gives rise to an obsession with causes that comes to color our understanding of action in general and political action in particular. The drive to lead all principles of being back to ultimate causes gives rise to the tendency to conceive action in terms of ultimate rules and laws and to reduce politics to obedience. Yet, to trace this trajectory in Aristotle from the *Physics* to the *Politics*, Schürmann leads us along a rather convoluted path too quickly. He appeals first to that provocative and enigmatic passage at the end of the *Posterior Analytics* in which Aristotle suggests that a principle arises from perception in a manner similar to the way "a reversal in battle is generated [γενομένης] when one man makes a stand, then another, then a another, until they attain a principle" (*Post. An.* II.19, 100a12–3). Taking this passage out of the context in which it is found—namely, as part of an attempt to account for how the principles of demonstrations are acquired—Schürmann thematizes it as an illustration of "the constitution of a principle for action" (HBA 39). He goes on to insist:

> The entire army does not stop because two or three master their fear but suddenly it obeys orders again and the activity of each becomes again the action of all. Aristotle views command (ἀρχή) imposing its order on the runaways just as he views substance, as ἀρχή, imposing its unity upon the accidents. Such is the filiation

between ousiology and practical philosophy. Both observations are construed in relation "to the one."

Yet the text of the *Posterior Analytics* speaks of a reversal in battle "being generated" (γενομένης), a term that evokes not the imposition of order by a principle external to the order, but the coming-into-being of order from within. Morphologically, the Greek verb γίγνεσθαι is a middle deponent, having an active voice only in the perfect tense.[10] In it, therefore, the force of the middle voice must be heard. Schürmann himself recognizes the middle voice as undermining the hegemony of a dichotomous thinking that posits a simple disjunction between agent and patient.[11] Yet Schürmann's own reading of the turning in battle stifles the dimension of the middle voice that resonates in the deponent verb. The example of the reversal, whatever its other limitations, does not suggest that the army turns because it begins again to obey orders from outside and above. Rather, an order comes into being from within the army itself, as one of its organic parts turns, lending courage to others. To read this text as an example of the imposition of a hegemonic principle, and to put it in the service of an account of how the principle of action is constituted, performs a double—we might even say, duplicitous—violence: It at once abstracts the example from the context to which it belongs and imposes upon it a reading dominated by the trope of imposition. The reading is, quite literally, a fabrication. It enframes the text, taking it as standing-reserve for a poetic fable about the beginning of metaphysics as dominated by an obsession with production.[12]

The fable becomes fantasmic as the trope of imposition is imposed first upon the fundamental, ontological relation between substance (οὐσία) and its accidents, and then extended yet further to practical philosophy in general by means of an interpretation of the pros hen relation that is itself governed by an obsession with domination. If Schürmann deploys the term "hegemony" to name the attempt to posit a norm according to which a diversity of phenomena is set in order and, further, if this thetic maneuver becomes a "fantasm" the moment it is itself effaced, so that the hegemonic ordering may be legitimized as the natural order of things, then perhaps Schürmann's own reading of Aristotle, which posits production as the law according to which the Aristotelian corpus is set in order, can itself be said to be a hegemonic fantasm.[13]

And yet, there is in this story of beginning, as with every poetic beginning, a certain instability that announces itself in the very moment of its institution. To discern this instability, it will be necessary to begin again with Aristotle, in order to attempt yet another

beginning with Schürmann. Aristotle's thinking does not consolidate itself into a systematic totality of thought centered upon the single experience of fabrication. Although there remains in Aristotle a tendency to appeal to examples taken from "the region of manipulable things" for heuristic purposes,[14] Aristotle's thinking is peripatetic and phenomenological. He remains committed throughout to living in intimate association with the phenomena of nature and his thinking is, for this reason, itinerant. It will be necessary then, to follow a path of Aristotelian thinking concerning the meaning of οὐσία in order to discern an itinerary guided more by a loyalty to the perplexing phenomenon that is οὐσία than by an attempt to impose upon it the structure of fabrication. Tracing this path of thinking will allow us to return to Schürmann's story of the beginning of metaphysics in order to discern the extent to which another beginning is recognized but suppressed.

3. The Poetics of Aristotelian Thinking

Aristotle's thinking is borne by a tension that gives it life; for it is a thinking conditioned by a profound sense of what Socrates in the *Philebus* calls "the entire tragedy and comedy of life" (*Phil.* 50B). In that text, the comic is associated with the exposure of pretense and, in particular, with the pretense of those who, unable to adhere to the Delphic admonition, "know thyself," become ridiculous by professing a knowledge accessible only to the divine (*Phil.* 48C–51A).[15] The comic, then, like the tragic, is a way of responding to the finitude that conditions life; but unlike the tragic, which involves always a denial of ultimate conditions, the comic is intent on exposing these conditions, celebrating them, despite themselves, as the very conditions under which the possibility of community unfolds.

The tension endemic to "the whole tragedy and comedy of life" at work in Aristotle's thinking can be heard already in the way he articulates the situation that conditions philosophy as a search for truth:

> The investigation concerning truth is in one sense difficult, in another sense easy. . . . So if it seems that we happen to be in the condition of the common saying, "Who could miss the doorway?" in this way it would be easy, but to have the whole in a certain way [τὸ δ᾽ ὅλον τι ἔχειν], and yet not to be capable of part of it, shows the difficulty of it. (*Met.* II.1, 993a30–993b7)

The path of truth is an open door. To miss the doorway is to close oneself to the play of possibility that reveals the truth of things. And yet, this openness, this playful accessibility, suggests another dimension of the truth; for the door opens upon a certain limit. It offers access to the whole, but only in a certain way (τι), for we remain always incapable of

part of it, never able to grasp the totality. Aristotle gestures to this incapacity with the little indefinite enclitic τ ι, perhaps the most important and, indeed, playful word of the Aristotelian corpus. It injects definitive statements with a dimension of uncertainty, a play of ambiguity, comic in its capacity to expose the pretense of authority. The indefinite enclitic serves in Aristotle throughout as a reminder of the tragicomic incapacity to grasp the whole, even as it affirms the attempt to enter the threshold that opens onto the appearance of things.

Aristotle's thinking lives largely along the limit of this threshold, advancing always into the possibility of that knowledge all humans desire (*Met.* I.1, 980a21), yet returning ever again to the doorway, the liminal site of the perplexing ambiguity of appearing. This dynamic of advance and return can be heard in Aristotle's own articulation of the pros hen relation that orients his investigation into the meaning of being qua being. He begins at the threshold, advancing cautiously toward a principle capable of establishing a certain order without annihilating difference. He writes: "Being is said in many ways, but pointing toward one [πρὸς ἕν] and some one nature [μίαν τινὰ φύσιν] but not homonymously" (*Met.* IV.1, 1003a33–4). The approach is phenomenological: the attempt to attend to the many ways being is said in order to discern a certain one, a common nature to which they themselves point. Here the many ways being is said are heard to articulate something of the truth of being as plurivocal. For Aristotle, language is not a violence that closes access to the singular, but a natural phenomenon that opens us to the truth of things.

The truth of pros hen reference is heard in the way things are said. For example, a diversity of things are called healthy in reference to some one thing, namely, the healthy condition of an organic being. Thus, medicine is related to a healthy condition by restoring it, exercise by producing and maintaining it, the body by being receptive to it, and a ruddy complexion by being a sign of it. The many ways being is said point similarly to one source (ἀρχή), namely "substance," or οὐσία:

> For some things are called beings because they are οὐσίαι, others because they are affections of οὐσία, some because they are ways into οὐσία, or destructions or deprivations or qualities or the production or generation of οὐσία, or they are things said in relation to οὐσία or negations of any of these, on account of which it is even possible to say that nonbeing is not being. (*Met.* IV.2, 1003b6–10)

The assertive advance of οὐσία seems here unimpeded even by the strange appearance of non-being. This initial thrust appears to take on a comic hubris when it is heard along with that famous sentence at the beginning of the path of thinking that is the middle books of the *Metaphysics*: "And indeed, in earlier times and now and always the

inquiry, indeed always the perplexity concerning what being is [τί τὸ ὄν] is just this: what is οὐσία?" (*Met.* VII.1, 1028b1–3). This shift from the perplexity concerning being (τὸ ὄν) to the concrete question, "What is οὐσία?" when combined with the identification of οὐσία as the one nature toward which the investigation into being must be oriented, seems initially to reinforce Schürmann's insistence that οὐσία names the one hegemonic principle that sets all things in order.[16] However, to take this beginning of the inquiry into being as indicative of the overarching structure that reveals itself in the end is to fail to traverse the difficult path of thinking that leads to a dynamic apprehension of οὐσία, not as the product of manufacture, but as a living expression of living being. If Aristotle orients the investigation into being toward the one that is οὐσία, it will be necessary to hear the way in which this one is permitted to retain a certain singularity and is prevented from entering completely into the universal that would render it particular. Indeed, the introduction of pros hen reference was animated by Aristotle's recognition that being is not a universal genus, and so, if there were to be a single science of being, another way of thinking about the unifying nature of things would have to be delineated. Pros hen equivocation was initially designed to suggest a way to think being without subsuming the many ways of being under a single hegemonic universal principle.[17] It offers Aristotle a way of articulating the manner in which a diversity of phenomena enter into community with one another without sacrificing their unicity.

By orienting his investigation into being qua being toward the one nature that is οὐσία, Aristotle embarks upon a circuitous path of thinking that, however complex, can be traced by attending briefly to two moments of turning in which the question, "What is οὐσία?" is itself transformed. The first moment of turning comes in chapter 17 of *Metaphysics* VII, which Aristotle explicitly marks as an attempt to speak anew about οὐσία "as though making another beginning" (*Met.* VII.17, 1041a6–7). Here the original ontological question—"What is οὐσία?—seems to have led to a series of impasses because it sought an answer in some concrete entity, rather than looking for that according to which each thing is one. Aristotle insists that οὐσία escapes notice "when the thing being sought is what is a human being, because one states it simply and does not distinguish that these things are this thing [ὅτι τάδε τόδε]" (*Met.* VII.17, 1041a32–b2). The new beginning Aristotle suggests involves, then, a shift in perspective that requires a transformation of the sort of question being asked. The what-question is no longer sufficient; instead, what must now be sought is "why the material is something." Aristotle continues, appealing first to an example from the region of fabrication, moving then to a living example: "So,

why are these things [τα δί] a house? Because the what it is for the house to be inheres. And this here [τοδί], or this body [τὸ σῶμα τοῦτο] holding itself this way, is a human being. Thus, the cause of the matter is sought by which it is something, and this is the form [εἶδος]. But this is οὐσία"(*Met.* VII.17, 1041b4–9). This new beginning reveals the εἶδος as that which accounts for the matter's being held in a certain way such that it becomes whatever it is. This leads Aristotle to distinguish the material dimension of the individual from its form, calling the former an element and the latter an ἀρχή, or "principle" (*Met.* VII.17, 1041b16–33).

This shift from the what-question to the why-question, with its appeal to the example of the house, seems to reinforce Schürmann's insistence that Aristotle's conception of οὐσία fetishizes fabrication, reducing the inquiry into being to a search for causes that ends ultimately in the positing of the form as the ultimate principle of order. However, even as Aristotle attempts here to speak οὐσία anew, a proliferation of demonstratives—τά δε, τόδε, τοῦτο—anticipates yet another beginning, one oriented by yet a third kind of question. The demonstratives themselves demonstrate the extent to which Aristotle's thinking remains oriented to the being of concrete beings. The demonstratives literally point, again and again, to the site of ontological encounter that conditions the very appearing of οὐσία. Thus, the proliferation of demonstratives anticipates already the extent to which the causal account will need to give way to a more phenomenological orientation. Ousiology is not aetiology, but phenomenology.

The end of *Metaphysics* VIII prepares the way for yet another beginning. There Aristotle translates the distinction between matter and form into the more dynamic vocabulary of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια, "potency" and "being-at-work." He suggests that those who seek a cause of being in some thing beyond the being in question are misguided:

> But as was said, the ultimate matter and the shape [μορφή] are the same and one, the former as in potency, the later as being-at-work, so that seeking the cause of their being is like seeking what the cause of one thing is; for each is a certain one [ἕν γάρ τι ἕκασ-τον], and that which is in potency and that which is in activity are somehow one [ἕν πώς ἐστιν]. (*Met.* VIII.6, 1045b17–21)

The enclitic pronoun τι, a "certain," and the enclitic adverb πως, "somehow," announce an indefiniteness at play in the being of the one. As potency and being-at-work, matter and form are each a *certain* one; nevertheless, they are together *somehow* one. An ambiguity of unicity emerges here that destabilizes οὐσία, forcing Aristotle to consider the perplexing question: *how* are these two one? The what-question gives

way to the why-question, which now turns out to be the phenomenological question as to howοὐσία shows itself as one.

Aristotle pursues a response to this question in terms of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια, suggesting ultimately that these terms cannot be understood on the model of a conception of motion (κίνησις) bound up with the paradigm of production. In *Metaphysics* IX, Aristotle delineates the difference between motions, like house building, that have their ends outside of themselves, and actions (πράξεις), like living, that have their ends in themselves in order to suggest that the being of οὐσία is itself a πρᾶξις with its end in itself (*Met.* IX.6, 1048b18–35). As such a π ρ ᾶ ξ ι ς, οὐσία names a dynamic activity in which the being-at-work of a being does not relinquish its own potency-for-being. Such beings embody the living activity of possibility that Aristotle names τόδε τι, "this something," or "a certain this." Here the demonstrative τόδε articulates the irreducible singularity of that which presents itself, while the indefinite τι shatters the hermetic isolation of the singular, calling it into community with others. The τόδε τι expresses the individual as such. No longer singular, but not yet particular, the individual gives itself to articulation even as it retains something of an irreducible unicity.

Schürmann's account of hegemonic principles and the beginnings of metaphysics covers over the precariously situated individual that is the τόδε τι. The individual is eclipsed by the division of phenomena into irreducible singulars destined to be violated by the "brutal syntax" of a language that forces concepts upon them, and mere particulars, thoroughly dominated by the universals that rule over them (BH 19–20). Yet, the dynamic poetics of Aristotle's thinking lingers on the site of the playful appearance of the individual, the beginner who lives as conditioned by its end. His thinking is able "to linger on the site in which we live" precisely because it refuses to deny the tragic limits that press in upon it, even as it attempts to articulate the truth that emerges there (BH 3). It is no surprise, then, to find Schürmann encountering the poetics of Aristotelian thinking as he develops the distinction between natality and mortality in the initial stages of *Broken Hegemonies*.

4. The Play of Natality and Mortality: The Appearing of the Individual

Let us begin again, and now for a final time, by returning to the moment at which Schürmann articulates the ontological traits of natality and mortality. This distinction was said to remain caught in a metaphysical logic of dichotomy that prevents Schürmann from discerning the precariously situated individual who appears somehow between the anarchic singular and the subsumed particular. The metaphysical

undertones of this dichotomy can be felt in the way it repeats the long tradition of privileging mortality, death, and the tragic over natality, life, and the comic. Yet in the same breath as Schürmann posits this dichotomy he is careful to describe his project as testing the suspicion "that death joins life without, however, forming a tandem with it, that it does not reflect life symmetrically nor oppose it with a determinate negation" (BH 23). Natality and mortality must be permitted to enter into an inherently unstable community, without the one being permitted to dominate the other, and yet without the two consolidating themselves into a stabilized whole. The moment Schürmann's thinking feels the pull of metaphysical theticism, the powerful subsumptive force of the one, it responds with a "dispersive counter-strategy" that intentionally posits difference in an attempt to undermine the hegemonic authority of the principle of unity itself (ibid.).

Schürmann's is a thinking soberly bound to a ravaged site. "What if," writes Schürmann, "the common and the singular both bind us—then is it not rather that we inhabit a ravaged site?" (BH 16). Yet, to inhabit a ravaged site is to feel the tragic weight of singularity *along with* the comic desire for community. To be assiduously bound to such a site is to be ravaged *and* enrapt. It is to refuse to sacrifice the play of the comic upon the alter of the tragic; it is to hear in the call to community not only the annihilation of singularity, but also the allure of possibility, not merely the hegemonic operation of dominating principles, but also the injunction to respond to the appearing of the individual in ways that open a "network of potentials" within which justice first becomes possible.[18]

The very attempt to articulate the meaning of natality in its relation to mortality implicitly drives Schürmann back to the beginning of metaphysics to expose its duplicity. Turning again, then, to Aristotle, Schürmann hears more acutely the power of those little, playful words Aristotle deploys as signifiers of his own profound appreciation of the ravaged site of enrapture that conditions his thinking. In referring again to the pros hen relation, Schürmann points to a passage in which the indefinite pronoun τι appears modifying the pros hen formulation itself, rendering it ambiguous, as if to undermine its capacity to consolidate at the very moment of its articulation.[19] Emphasizing the significance of the indefinite, Schürmann says, "the τι serves to muddle the concept, making it into an indirect description" (BH 20).[20] It seems, then, that language is capable not only of a violence that annihilates the singular, but also of a poetic response that does some justice to that remainder that does not enter completely into the concept. The singular remains somehow accessible to a poetic saying riveted to the ravaged site of rapture.

Thus, as always, there is more to that little word τι than at first appears. For it marks the trace of an individuality Schürmann does not think even if his thinking opens the enigmatic space of its appearing. The τόδε τι is a poetic articulation of the individual as ravaged and enrapt. It is ravaged because bound on one side by the singularity it must relinquish to enter into community and on the other by the particularity that seeks to consume it. Yet, it is enrapt because exposed to a double bind that frees it for the possibility of connection. If, however, community is not to devolve ever and again into the politics of domination, the capacity to think, act, and live as conditioned by natality and mortality at once will need to be cultivated by habits of thinking and acting—indeed, by habits of speaking attuned to the poetic duplicity of beginnings. With the τόδε τι the political significance of the pros hen relation is transformed, for a thinking and acting directed toward such an insistently ambiguous one would need to operate with a heightened awareness of its own hegemonic tendencies; it would need to learn a certain poetics: the ability to respond to the duplicitous appearing of things in ways that do justice to duplicity and open new possibilities for community.

NOTES

1. René Char, "The Consequences," in *René Char: Selected Poems*, trans. and ed. Mary Ann Caws and Tina Jolas (New York: New Directions, 1992), p. 125.

2. For the second sense of ποίησις, see Aristotle, *Poetics* 4, 1448b4–9. There Aristotle locates the two natural causes of the poetic capacity (ποιητική) in the co-natural tendency to imitate in human beings and in the delight humans take in imitations. In the *Sophist*, the activity of μίμησις is associated with the capacity to disclose the true proportions of things. See Plato, *Sophist*, 235C–E. All translations of Greek texts are my own.

3. Reiner Schürmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); henceforth HBA, followed by page number.

4. Heidegger emphasizes this second sense of ποίησις when he speaks of ποίησις as the "setting-itself-into-work of truth." See Martin Heidegger, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, in *Holzwege*, vol. 5 of *Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1994), p. 59; *Origin of the Work of Art*, in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 72. The second sense of ποίησις is heard already in Aristotle as well when

he insists at *Poetics* 8, 1451a30–b10, that poetry speaks of possible things and of the whole.

5. Reiner Schürmann, *Broken Hegemonies*, trans. Reginald Lilly, ed. John Sallis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), p. 18; henceforth BH, followed by page number.

6. For an insightful discussion of natality in *Broken Hegemonies*, see Reginald Lilly, "The Topology of *Des Hégémonies Brisées*," *Research in Phenomenology* 28 (1998), p. 234. The passage from *The Human Condition* that seems decisive for Schürmann's understanding of natality runs as follows: "The frailty of human institutions and laws and, generally, of all matter pertaining to men's living together, arises from the human condition of natality and is quite independent of the frailty of human nature" (Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958], p. 191; cf. BH 635n. 33). What Schürmann sometimes seems to underplay is the extent to which natality itself carries with it singularity in Arendt: "The fact that man is capable of action means that the unexpected can be expected from him, that he is able to perform what is infinitely improbable. And this again is possible only because each man is unique, so that with each birth something uniquely new comes into the world" (Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 178).

7. Schürmann explicitly references Nietzsche's *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1968), §551, pp. 295–7, for the notion that the concept of causality is anthropocentric, derived from our own ability to manipulate things.

8. Aristotle links the discussion of the causes (αἰτίαι) to the why-question and the why-question to a certain εἰδέναι, or "knowledge," at *Physics* II.3, 194b17–23. There he insists that the search for causes must be about "both coming into being and passing away and about every natural change [μεταβολή]."

9. Schürmann recognizes that the examples that illustrate the formal cause—the two-to-one ratio of the octave and number in general—are exceptions. See HBA 329n. 32.

10. With γίγνεσθαι, the first, second, third and fifth principle parts are taken from the middle voice, the perfect stem is an active form. The problem of how to think generation is built into the morphology of this Greek verb. The active and passive dimensions of the verb resonate in this middle deponent. In English, as Smyth insists, the middle deponent is simply registered in the active voice. See Herbert Weir Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), §356(c). Schürmann's recognition that modern languages, even when they render the middle in terms of reflexivity, stifle the middle voice is even more pronounced with the middle deponent, for the active meaning mutes the middle voice yet further.

11. Schürmann writes: "Beneath the self-affirmation of the grammatical sub-ject and the institution of a normative-nominative system, it is necessary to see—or rather to hear—the very stifling of the middle voice" (BH 38–9).

12. The vocabulary here, of course, is meant to call to mind Heidegger's essay, "Die Frage nach der Technik," and particularly the meaning of das Gestell, "enframing," and Bestand, "standing-reserve." For the German, see Martin Heidegger, *Die Technik und die Kehre* (Pfullingen: Verlag Günther Neske, 1991), pp. 16–23; *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Garland Publishing, 1977), pp. 17–23.

13. Schürmann introduces the notion of a fantasm early in *Broken Hegemonies*: "Fantasms rule by authorizing not the deduction of a finite corpus of con-clusions, but the indefinite association of representations that require that one follow them. . . . Hence, if laws are measured against the fantasmic authority, then this fantasmic authority will be normative in the sense that one refers to it as the law of laws" (BH 6). Schürmann goes on to develop the meaning of hegemony in relation to fantasm: "A fantasm is hegemonic when an entire culture relies on it as if it provided that in the name of which one speaks and acts" (BH 7). See also Lilly, "The Topology of *Des Hégémonies Brisées*," p. 236.

14. For a discussion of the heuristic importance of the appeal to artifacts as examples see my *The Ethics of Ontology: Rethinking an Aristotelian Legacy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004), pp. 32–3 and 174n. 3. Michael Ferejohn, too, emphasizes the manner in which Aristotle appeals to arti-facts for heuristic purposes; see Michael Ferejohn, "The Definition of Generated Composites," in *Unity, Identity, and Explanation in Aristotle's* Metaphysics, ed. Theodore Scaltsas, David Charles, and Mary Louise Gill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 296n.

15. See also William Chase Greene, "The Spirit of Comedy in Plato," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 31 (1920), p. 67. Drew Hyland also recog-nizes the exposure of pretense as one dimension of the comic; see Drew A. Hyland, *Finitude and Transcendence in the Platonic Dialogues* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), pp. 128–37.

16. Schürmann puts it this way: "Substance is a principle of order: as the cause of accidents, it fulfills one and the same role in regard to them, that is, to maintain them in being; substance is furthermore part of their order since it functions as the first of the categories, and it transcends their order since they do not in turn cause it to be; it also orients and gives coherence to all predicaments; finally it founds an order that is not only logical but real, based on observation" (HBA 109).

17. Joseph Owens has articulated the impetus behind Aristotle's introduction of the pros hen vocabulary along these lines. See Joseph Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1978), pp. 269–75.

18. Schürmann himself develops an understanding of responsibility along these lines at the end of the Heidegger book, using in that context the for-mulation "network of potentials" (HBA 263).

19. This passage reads, "For each being there is a leading-back toward a certain one [πρὸς ἕν τι] and common thing," and is found at *Met*. XI.3, 1061a10–11.

20. Schürmann goes on to suggest the Aristotle speaks often of φύσις τις, which he translates as "something like a rising," in order to emphasize the extent to which Aristotle himself remains distant from that understanding of nature that serves as a supreme referent.