

## The World after the End of the World

To be able to bear to bring to bear [*supporter de porter*] on death this mourning gaze [*regard endeuillé*] that is enduring and durable, to bear the weight of this bearing [*portée*], of the gaze brought to bear and the mourning borne [*porté*], the courage to bear death [*porter la mort*], one needs, I would say, something like a fidelity to death, to what dies and to who dies, as such, as dead: fidelity to death, fiance, confidence, faith, fidelity-to-death to the death [*fidélité à mort à la mort*], to whom and to what happens to be dead [*se trouve mort*]. This fidelity and loyalty not only require time: there would be no time without them.

—Jacques Derrida, *Séminaire La bête et le souverain*,  
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La mort, c'est un monde qui disparaît. Et si chaque mort est la fin d'un monde, il y a une infinité de mondes.

—Jacques Derrida, *Idiomes, Nationalités, Déconstructions*

“The world” is gone.<sup>1</sup>

There is no world when *you're* gone. The moment that I'm obligated, as soon as I am obligated *to you*—and it is your death that obligates me, makes *me* obligated, responsible *for* you and *to* you—no world can be there. There is no ground—or a third—between us. No world can support us or serve as mediation for us. I am all alone.

“The world has gone, already, the world has left us, the world is no more, the world is far off, the world is lost, the world is lost from sight, the world is out of sight . . . the world has departed, the world has died” (“R” 46/149). On the occasion of the other’s death, each time, it is the end of the world. Farewell to the world, for upon the other’s death the world has departed.

In the last few years of his life, Derrida on a number of occasions wrote about and commented on Paul Celan’s poem “Grosse, Glühende Wölbung” from *Atemwende*, which ends with the line “*Die Welt ist fort, ich muss dich tragen.*”<sup>2</sup> “This poem,” Derrida writes in *Rams*, “says the world, the origin and the history of the world, the archeology and eschatology of the concept, the very *conception* of the world: how the world was *conceived*, how it is born and straightaway is no longer, how it goes away [*s’éloigne*] and leaves us, how its end is announced” (“R” 77/162). Derrida’s writings on Celan’s poem bear on a host of important motifs, motifs such as world (including the phenomenological concept of the world), death, the death of the other, survival, melancholy, mourning, solitude, and survivance. What can be learned from these writings can be summarized all too brutally and quickly as follows: There is no such thing as the One universal world that is shared by all; the world is not that within which all beings live or what they inhabit, the intersubjective accomplishment of a transcendental ego or *the* horizon against which everything is supposed to occur; death marks every time the absolute end of the world; the death of the other entails the disappearance of *the* world, marking, every time, each time singularly, the absolute end of the one and only world, *the end of the world*. To state this boldly: for Derrida, whatever we are to understand by “world” is determined out of, determined from, determined by “death”—the death of the other. Derrida’s writings force us to think the notion of “world” starting from, out of, or on behalf of, the other. In other words, we are forced to rethink the very thought of the world on the basis of, setting out from “*ich muss dich tragen.*”<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, in his various remarks on Celan’s poem, Derrida reformulates, what may advisedly be called, the “mortal” condition as “carrying the other in me.” In his meditations on the verb *tragen*, particularly in Celan and in Heidegger, and on *porter*, to carry, to bear, to wear, Derrida places a great emphasis on the experience of carrying the other in oneself. At both ends of life’s spectrum, at birth and at death, I carry or bear the other in myself. For the mother, in the experience of *carrying* a

child before birth, *Die Welt is fort*, the world disappears—it is far away. For the one who mourns and endures the melancholy of a loss, what is left is to carry or bear the other. That is the survivor's condition: to live with the melancholy of the end of the world.

In speaking about the end of the world, I am following a path, which may by now be considered well trodden, a trail already expertly blazed by the remarkable analyses of Michael Naas, Rodolphe Gasché, Ginette Michaud, Geoffrey Bennington, J. Hillis Miller, and Peggy Kamuf, who each in his or her own way has helped us better understand Derrida's very curious formulation "the end of the world."<sup>4</sup>

From the first encounter between us there is melancholy, the melancholy that one day death will separate us. We know, we are aware, that one of us will have to go before the other, leaving the other alone. But mourning does not wait for death, its implacable temporality of the future anterior dictates that one of us will have been "dedicated [*voué*]" ("R" 22) to carry the other, to carry "the world after the end of the world" ("R" 23/140).

For, as Derrida writes in *Rams*, death is not, as we customarily think, the end of *a* world, "the end of someone or something *in the world*," the end of one world among others, but the absolute end of the one and only world. Each time, each time singularly, death is nothing other than the end *of the* world (23/140). Death marks, each and every time, the end of the one and only world, the very world that "each one [*chacun*] opens as the origin of the world" (23/140).

The world is gone. It is no more. The world died; it ended. But what *was* the world? Has there ever been such a thing as *the* world? Which world?



Rather than give a historical genealogy of a concept, it may be more helpful to provide some markers in what we might call the history of the world.<sup>5</sup> The notion of "world" was developed gradually in ancient Greece.<sup>6</sup> Homer (10th c. BCE) juxtaposed sky, earth, sea, and so on, when he wished to speak of all things. He also used the phrase "the heaven and the earth," while Hesiod used the plural neutral adjective *panta*, "all [things]," in the *Theogony* (730–700 BCE).<sup>7</sup> The adjective *ta panta*, all things, also makes an appearance in Heraclitus (ca. 500 BCE),<sup>8</sup> whereas Empedocles (ca. 485–425 BCE) makes use of the singular adject-

tive to *pan*, “the All.”<sup>9</sup> Elsewhere, around 600 BCE, the prophet Jeremiah states that the God of Israel has made “*the whole*”: “He is the one who formed all things.”<sup>10</sup> The innovation introduced by the Greeks was to give the world a name of its own, *kosmos*. Its meaning, beginning with its use in the *Iliad*, is “order” in the expression *kata kosmon*, “in good order” or “ornament.” The term designates order and beauty, particularly the beauty resulting from order, the beauty that is implied today by an activity that obtains its name from the word—“cosmetics.” Similarly, the Latin *mundus*, world, is the same word as *mundus*, the French *toilette* or “woman’s ornamentation.” At least, this is according to Pliny the Elder, who asserts: “What the Greeks call *kosmos*, we call *mundus* due to its perfect and faultless elegance.”<sup>11</sup> The word *elegantia* used by Pliny is a direct reference to the cosmetic usage of the term *mundus*. The two meanings of the word coexisted together and persisted.

The first application of *kosmos* to the “world” is attributed to Pythagoras by later authors: “Pythagoras was the first to call ‘kosmos’ the encompassing of all things (*hē tōn holōn periokhē*), because of the order (*taxis*) that reigns in it” (Aetius, *Placita*, 2.1.1, p. 327, DK 14 A21). We may be dealing with Platonic conceptions retroactively projected onto Pythagoras, but the term is also encountered in various pre-Socratic authors (among them, Anaxagoras DK 59 B8, Diogenes of Apollonia DK 64 B2 or 4 Laks). *Kosmos* is found several times in Heraclitus’s fragments. In Fragment 30 the idea of “an ordered totality sufficient in itself” that does not require the involvement of an exterior stimulus is affirmed (Brague 20). This fragment is credited with having created the meaning of the word *kosmos*. By the time of Plato’s writings, the word *kosmos* was understood in “the exclusive sense of a cosmic order” (Brague 21). Xenophon writes that “the action of the gods is carried out to ensure the ‘order of all things’ (*hē tōn holōn taxis*), a synonym for ‘the totality of the world’ (*ho holos kosmos*)” (*Mem* 4.3.13 and *Cyr* 8.7.22) (22).

Brague considers Plato’s work as “representing a decisive point of departure” (22). It was with Plato that the word *kosmos* was installed definitively and without ambiguity in its meaning as “world.”<sup>12</sup> By providing the first description of reality as forming an ordered whole, both good and beautiful, Brague maintains, Plato’s *Timaeus* “causes the concept of *kosmos* to function” (22).<sup>13</sup> The dialogue’s final words fortify the description of the world: “this Heaven (*heis ouranos hode*) single in its kind and one” (92c7–d3). That which is initially designated “the heavens *and* the earth” is merged, so to speak, with the sky and the world

becomes identified with the heavens or the sky. Aristotle distinguishes three meanings of the word “sky” (*ouranos*) (a) the substance of the last sphere of the universe or the natural body that is found in that sphere; (b) the body that is continuous with the last sphere of the universe, (c) the body enveloped by the last sphere” (*Cael* 1.9.278b11–21). The sky, no longer imagined as a flat plane above the earth, but now considered to be rounded and enveloping the earth on all sides, would also be all that the sky contains (the container and the contents, as it were, become one). An interpretation of the world taking its pattern from the sky begins to emerge (23).

According to Brague, “The ‘world’ has never designated a simple description of reality: it has always translated a value judgment, the fruit of a sort of act of faith” (23). Indeed, “Greek scientists were aware that they not only had a knowledge of the *kosmos*, but that their use of the term had essentially constructed the *kosmos* as such, as a *kosmos*” (23). For the Greeks “the world and its human subjects were primarily connected through the existence of laws that governed them all, and [. . .] those laws were of a moral nature. This idea was not specifically Greek. It can be found, for example, in Persia,” as evinced in the Zoroastrian conception of the universe as a struggle between good and evil (29).

In his many writings on the notion of the world, Heidegger claimed that the concept of world was masked by that of nature and it was necessary to distinguish the phenomenological concept of the world from that of nature (*phye*, *physis*), which was often conflated with it.<sup>14</sup> The phenomenon of the world, Heidegger argued, had heretofore never been acknowledged in philosophy (GA 20 231, 250). Greek ontology is, before all, oriented by the cosmos—the paradigm to grasp all that is. The world does not designate anything worldly or cosmic; rather, it designates that “in” which the Dasein that we are lives (27). Thus, the world is a characteristic and feature of Dasein and not of things, still less that of their organized gathering.

Brague argues that the concept that Heidegger relies on is not at all Greek. Rather, it is Germanic, as indicated by the etymology of the terms translated by “world” in these languages: *Welt*, *world*, and the Dutch *wereld*, which bring together the first element that means “man” (the Latin *vir*) and a second meaning “age” (the English *old*). Does the syntagma “I am, we are in the world,” he asks, exist in Hellenism? Brague believes that the notion of “being-in-the-world” coined by Heidegger does not have a Greek equivalent. That we are *in* something called a world

did not make sense for the Greeks. The notion that birth is “coming to the world” and dying is “to leave the world” was hardly meditated by them. It was not until Christianity that being in the world received a meaning, in particular with St. Paul and St. John, signifying the state of man separated from God (Weg 40/112).

Brague’s decisive question is: “Has Greek thought ever thought the relation of man to the world otherwise than that of the part to the whole (e.g., *Laws* X, 903b–d)?” (37). “The Greeks think the totality of *what is present* but leave aside the totality of *presence* itself” (44). “Being in the world does not mean that we are in the midst of the things, which form the totality of what there is” (44). We are in the world “totally and permanently [*façon totale*]” (44). In his book Brague argues that Greek thought says everything about the world apart from the fact that *we are here*, we have always already been in the world (47). “It thinks the site that we occupy,” remarks Brague, “but not our situation (being-situated),” which is ours (48). It thinks the being *of the* world and not being *in* the world. It thinks the belonging of man to the world, but not *my* presence in the world. It is fascinated by the contents of the world and forgets that the being-in-the-world that is mine goes hand in hand with it. Thus, for Greek cosmology there is no difference between “I am” in the world and that there are stars, gods, animals in the world.

In “On the Essence of Ground” (written in 1928), Heidegger investigates transcendence as the fundamental constitution of Dasein (Weg 108). He provides an interpretation of the phenomenon of world that will serve to illuminate transcendence. Heidegger names “*world that toward which* Dasein as such transcends, thus determining transcendence as *being-in-the-world*” (109). In *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* (1928) Heidegger also describes his aim as looking at “what is signified by ‘world’ as a feature of transcendence as such” (GA 26, 218/170). He goes on to define transcendence as “being-in-the-world” (218/170). In “On the Essence of Ground” he writes that the concept of world is taken not in a pre-philosophical sense but in a transcendental one. World, for Heidegger, does not signify “the totality of those beings that are present at hand” (Weg 110). He states that “*kósmos* does not refer to all beings taken together” but rather to “a state of affairs [*Zustand*], i.e., *how* beings, indeed beings *as a whole* are” (111). The world thus belongs precisely to Dasein, even though it embraces in its whole all beings (112). *Kósmos* comes to be used as a term for a particular kind of human existence, the kind of stance he takes *toward* the cosmos.

With the advent of Christianity, the world came to be viewed as the terrestrial “globe,” designating the world of human beings or living beings. In the Gospel of St. John *kósmos* refers to the fundamental form of human Dasein removed from God. According to Heidegger, this coining of the meaning of *kósmos* that begins in the New Testament also appears in Augustine and Aquinas. For Augustine *mundus* refers to the whole of created beings, but also “those who delight in the world, the impious, the carnal” (Weg 113). World, Heidegger summarizes, means “beings as a whole” and the way Dasein maintains itself in relation to beings. Aquinas, too, on occasion uses *mundus* as synonymous with *universum*, the whole world of creatures, but also *saeculum*, the worldly way of thinking.

From the intricate thinking of world and the infinity of possible ways of creating the world in Leibniz, to Kant’s examination of the concept of the world in the *First Critique*, from Schopenhauer’s *The World as Will and Representation* to the phenomenology of Husserl, Fink, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre, from the thought of “existence without a world [*existence sans monde*]” in Levinas to Blanchot’s “solitude in the world,” the notion of world has played a significant role and has exercised tremendous influence in Western philosophical thought.



What, then, is the world? The “world is what is always already there.”<sup>15</sup> It is understood as the “ground,” the background, or “the total horizon of our experience” (121). We call the world “the spatiotemporal totality of being” (121). It forms “the frame of reference of any possible truth, certainty, validity, judgment, opinion, knowledge, value, and so forth” (121). It is the common horizon of experience; the “soil” that we are rooted in.

The world, Derrida writes, “has at least as a minimal sense the designation of *that within which* [ce dans quoi]” all living beings are born, live, inhabit, and die (BSII 365/264). It is said that all living beings inhabit a common world—the *same* world—the world that they cohabit as inhabitants, for whom it serves as the common horizon. The world is also considered to be “an arrangement, an order, an order of ends, a juridical, moral, political order, an international order” (359/260). Yet, for Derrida, this is a *presumed, anticipated* unity, a supposed unity or identity that “one can always question” (366/265). As he writes in the

second volume of *The Beast and the Sovereign*: “No one will ever be able to demonstrate, what is called *demonstrate* in all rigor, that two human beings, you and I for example, inhabit the same world, that the world is one and the same thing for both of us” (366/265). He goes on to state that “*there is not the world* [il n’y a pas le monde], that nothing is less certain than the world itself, that there is perhaps no longer a world and no doubt there never was one as totality of anything at all [*totalité de quoi que ce soit*]” (366/266). He reiterates this a little further by saying that “perhaps there is no world. Not yet and perhaps not since ever [*depuis toujours*] and perhaps not ever” (367/266). For, what has been called the world is nothing but an “arbitrary, conventional and artificial, historical, non-natural contract,” an “agreement inherited over millennia between living beings” (368/267). According to Derrida, there is such an “uncrossable difference” between us that it has been necessary for the sake of survival to make *as if*, to go along with a ruse (368/267) to give the same meaning to similar vocables or signs, to pretend “*as if* we were inhabiting the same world” (369/268).<sup>16</sup>

Having briefly established Derrida’s views on “world,” one path to take would be to pursue the philosophical notion of “the world” in order to show how Derrida’s differs from its phenomenological predecessors (for whom the world forms *the* horizon). But perhaps a more interesting approach would be to explore the deconstruction of the world through a discussion of *the end* of the world. In retrospect, we can say that this is exactly what was taking place in Derrida’s last seminar *The Beast and the Sovereign*, 2 (2002–2003), devoted in part to Heidegger’s 1929/1930 lecture course *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, that is, the meticulous but utter reformulation, reevaluation, in other words, deconstruction of each of the terms of its subtitle: world, finitude, solitude. There, through a silent reading of the last line of Celan’s poem, each of the three terms of Heidegger’s lecture course is thoroughly worked over and reinterpreted by Derrida.

The world is gone. The world is no more and the survivor remains alone. The survivor remains “before [*en deçà*] and beyond the world” of the other—before the world itself (“R” 23/140). On this side, below, and “before” the world, because with the other’s death there is no world, the world is gone and “beyond” because (the survivor is) far removed from the world that is gone. The survivor is, as it were, “in the world outside the world [*dans le monde hors du monde*]” (23/140). Alone, deprived of the world, “he feels solely responsible, assigned to carry the other and



*his world*" (23/140). He is responsible "without world (*weltlos*), without the ground of any world [*sans le sol d'aucun monde*], thus in a world without world" (23/140).

In *Rams*, a talk delivered on February 5, 2003, and published in the same year, while honoring Hans-Georg Gadamer and declaring his admiration for him, Derrida turns to a discussion of Celan's poem, in particular its last line: *Die Welt ist fort, ich muss dich tragen*. Not because, like Gadamer, who believes that the last line "bears the stress of the poem," Derrida is following a "hermeneutic principle," but because this line, separated, solitary, all alone, allows him to speculate on the import of Celan's words ("R" 30/142).

On a first reading, there seems to be a radical heterogeneity between the two clauses of the last line of the poem. What demonstrable link can there be between them? Michael Naas (233) and Ginette Michaud have both emphasized the chiasmatic structure of the last line, Celan's double proposition that contains a constative (it's the end of the world) and a performative (a commitment, a promise, an oath, a duty, an "inflexible injunction": I must carry you). But if it is the end of the world, why must I still carry you? "When the world is no more (*n'est plus*), when it has gone far away [*au loin parti*] (*fort*), then I must carry *you*, you all alone [*toi tout seul*], you alone in me or on me alone [*tout seul en moi ou sur moi seul*]" (68/158). If one were to invert the order, the sequence of the two parts of the last line of Celan's poem, in other words, "if one were to invert the consequence of *if, then* [*si, alors*]: if (where) [*si (là où)*] there is a necessity or duty toward you, if (where) *I* must [*doit*], myself, carry you, bear you [*te porter*], yourself [*toi*], well, then," Derrida notes, "the world tends to disappear [*tend à disparaître*]" (68/158). What is called the world tends to disappear when I become responsible, when I am responsible. It is the other's death that immediately obligates me. "As soon as I am obliged, from the instant when I am obliged *to you*, when I *owe*, when I owe it *to you*, owe it *to myself* to carry *you*, as soon as I speak to you and am responsible to you, or before [*devant*] you, there can no longer, essentially, be any world [*aucun monde, pour l'essentiel, ne peut plus être là*]. No world can support us, serve as mediation, as ground, as earth, as foundation or as alibi." For, there is "no longer anything but the abyssal altitude of a sky" (68/158).

Where there's no longer any world, I am alone. "I am alone with you [. . .] we are alone"—and this is a declaration as well as an engagement (69/158). Where there's no world and I'm alone, "I am alone in the

world as soon as I owe myself to you [*je me dois à toi*], as soon as you depend on me, as soon as I bear, and must assume” without the mediation of a go-between, without ground, “the responsibility for which I must answer in front of you for you” (68–69/158). According to Derrida, all the protagonists and the reader of Celan’s poem “hear themselves called [*s’entendent appeler*] [. . .] as soon as the poem is entrusted to our care and as soon as we must carry it.” To bear this poem is “to give it to the other to bear [*donner à porter*]” (69/158–159).

In the tenth session of *The Beast and the Sovereign* Derrida asks, “What does *porter*, [to carry, to bear, *tragen*] mean”? (BSII 357/258). (Later in the seminar, he also pays attention to the lexicon of *tragen* in Heidegger [*Übertragung*, *Auftrag*, and *Austrag*] in *Identity and Difference* and the relationship between *tragen* and *Walten*.) Derrida devotes an analysis to the term *tragen* in Celan’s poem in the fifth section of *Rams*, where he develops a remarkable description of an experience—the experience of carrying the other in the self—in which *I must* prevails over *I am*. Before *I am*, I carry. Before being, I carry.<sup>17</sup>

In spoken German, *tragen* refers to the experience of *carrying* a child prior to its birth (“R” 72/159). Derrida glosses this further as he puts a twist on Levinas’s notion of “the other in me”: “Between the mother and the child, the one in the other and the one for the other, in this singular couple of solitary beings, in the shared solitude between one and two bodies, the world disappears” (72/159). The world is far away for the mother who carries the child (72/159). As well as speaking the language of birth, *tragen* can also be addressed to the dead, to the survivor or to his or her specter in the same experience of carrying the other in the self. I keep the other in me in mourning, something that I was already doing while the other was still living. According to Derrida, “I welcome in me, I take into myself this end of the world, I must carry the other and the other’s world, the world in me: introjection, interiorization of memory (*Erinnerung*), idealization” (74/160). “But if *I must* (and this is ethics itself) carry the other in myself in order to be faithful to that other, to respect its singular alterity, a certain melancholia must still protest against normal mourning” (74/160, trans. mod.). Melancholia is *necessary* so that I do not keep the other within myself, *as myself*.

The world is gone; it is in retreat. In *Rams* Derrida addresses the Husserlian-inspired thought of the annihilation of the world (*Weltvernichtung*), referring to this “retreat [*retrait*]” of the world to “the point

of the possibility of its annihilation” as “the most insane experience of a transcendental phenomenology” (74/160). In §49 of *Ideas I* Husserl explains that “access to the absolute egological consciousness” necessitates the suspension of the existence of the transcendent world in a radical *epokhē*” (75/161). The hypothesis of the annihilation of the world does not only threaten the sphere of pure egological experience but also opens access to this sphere. According to Derrida, Celan’s poem “pushes to its limit the experience of the possible annihilation of the world,” that is, “its sense for ‘me,’ for a pure *ego*” (75/161). But in this solitude of the pure *ego*, the alter ego that is “constituted in the ego is no longer accessible in an originary intuition.” The *alter ego* can be constituted “only by *analogy*, by *appresentation*, indirectly, inside of me, who then carries it there where there is no longer a transcendent world” (76/161). “I must then carry it, carry *you*, there where the world gives way [*se dérober*]” (76/161). This is my responsibility; but I can only carry you without appropriating you to myself. This carrying can no longer mean to include or comprehend the other in oneself; but rather, “to bear oneself toward [*se porter vers*] the infinite inappropriability of the other, [. . .] in me outside of me” (76/161). I can only be “starting from this strange, dislocated bearing [*portée disloquée*] of the infinitely other in me” (76/161). Highlighting the plurivocity of the *dich* in the last line of Celan’s poem, Derrida writes, “I must carry the other, and carry you, the other must carry me [. . .] even there where the world is no longer between us or beneath” us (76/161). My solitude is such that “I am alone with the other [. . .] without world,” “wherever the ‘I must’ [. . .] forever prevails over the ‘I am’” (76/161).

A few months after giving the talk on Gadamer, in the preface to *Chaque fois unique, la fin du monde* (published in October 2003) Derrida claims: “the death of the other, not only *but especially if one loves the other* [*surtout si on l’aime*]” does not simply declare the “absence,” the “disappearance [*disparition*], the end of *this or that* life,” in other words “the possibility for a world (always unique) to appear to a *given* living being” (CFU 9, first emphasis mine).<sup>18</sup> Rather, “death declares *each time the end of the world entirely* [en totalité], the end of every possible world, and *each time the end of the world as a unique, and thus singular, and thus infinite, totality*” (9).

The death of the other is “as if the *repetition* of the end of an infinite whole [*d’un tout infini*] were still possible: the end of the world *itself*, the

only world there is, every time. Singularly, irreversibly” (9). It is as if this end of the world were possible “for the other and in a strange way also for the provisional survivor who endures its impossible experience” (9). It is as if every time the repetition of the death of another—the end of the world *itself*, the only world there is—were possible. What is referred to as an “impossible experience” is this aporetic experience of the repetition of the end of the world (each time the end and then its repetition).

As Rodolphe Gasché observes, “To repeat the unique disappearance of the one and only world after the death of an other also means that in every singular case in which a death occurs, and one world (which is also the world itself) disappears, there is no more return of the world itself.”<sup>19</sup> And this is how Derrida defines “the world,” showing that its meaning is entirely derived from death: “That is what ‘the world’ would mean. This meaning is conferred on it only by what is called ‘death’” (CFU 9). The other does not come back. There is no more return of the world. The death of a singular other confronts the survivor with “the always open possibility, indeed the necessity of a possible non-return,” the necessity that non-return be possible. This necessity of the possibility of *non-return*, this end of the world, signals the end of all resurrection (CFU 11).<sup>20</sup>

Commenting on Nancy’s notion of resurrection, what Derrida finds troubling is that *anastasis* “postulates both the existence of some God and that the end of *a* world will not be . . . the end of *the* world” (CFU 11). As Derrida explains, “‘God’ means: death can put an end to *a* world, it would not be *the* end of the world. A world, one world can always survive another. There is more than one world. More than one possible world [or: more than one world possible—*un monde possible*]. That is what we would wish to believe, as little as we believe or believe to believe in ‘God.’” However, “death, death itself, if there is such a thing,” acts as a countermeasure against this thought of God, because it leaves no room [*aucune place*], not the least chance [*pas la moindre chance*], for the replacement or for the survival of the sole and unique world, of the “sole and unique” that makes of each living being (animal, human, or divine), a sole and unique living being (CFU 11).

That the other does not come back spells the end of all resurrection.

After Derrida’s writings on the end of the world we can no longer accept the definition of the world as the totality of what there is. The world cannot be thought of as an all-encompassing, universal totality to

be grasped synoptically or viewed from a satellite as a globe.<sup>21</sup> Rather, the world is that which is uniquely opened up by the other, the totality of what is for a unique “being” that being’s world, and what comes to an end upon the other’s death.

The discussion of “the end of the world” can be linked to one of the terms or tropes appearing regularly in Derrida’s later seminars—the abyss.<sup>22</sup> The effect of the reading of the end of the world presented earlier, beyond its significance on death, the other, mourning, melancholy, world, solitude, resurrection, and so on, could be explored on Derrida’s almost contemporaneous reading of the notion of *Grund* (ground, principle, axiom, etc.) in Heidegger, a reading that Derrida takes up over a number of his seminars, for example, the *Death Penalty* seminar and *The Beast and the Sovereign, 1*.<sup>23</sup> Why would such a reading be important?<sup>24</sup> Being for Heidegger is ground, a point that he underscores on a number of occasions. As he writes in “The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking”: “Since the beginning of philosophy and with that beginning, the Being of beings [*das Sein des Seiendes*] has showed itself as the ground (*arché, aition*, principle), has been considered as ground. The ground is that from which beings as such are what they are in their becoming, perishing, and persisting” (ZSD 62/374). Being is the ultimate ground. *Grund* may be *arché*, beginning or first principle but it is certainly not the cause. Thus, for Heidegger, Being as *Grund* is not being as *ratio* but a ground without ground. The ground is an *Ab-grund*, an abyss; however, with this *Ab-grund*, Derrida suggests, Heidegger is still positing some form of ground—an originary ground (*Urgrund*) that is also a non-ground (*Ungrund*) underlying everything. The abyss, then, still seems to belong to some primordial *Urgrund*.<sup>25</sup>

In contrast, for Derrida, a consideration of ground is not an ontological matter. Each and every other constitutes a ground, rests on a ground. Consequently, with the death of every other, a world goes away; the ground (*le fond*) gives way and is lost. The death of every other signals an absence of bottom, ground, or foundation. With the other’s death, there is no ground—an abyss gapes open. The other’s death leaves the survivor with the abyss of without world. Since there is no such thing as *the* abyss, as Derrida tells us in session 12 of *The Beast and the Sovereign, 1*, there is *more than one* [*plus d’un*] ground.<sup>26</sup> With the passing away of every other, a ground founders. There is no *Ur*-abyss, no abyssal substratum, but abysses everywhere.

*Your loss has swept away the ground beneath your feet. Your ground. With no ground below you, I stare into the void.*

*Alone. I am alone—with you. I am alone, only for you. I am alone “only for you, that is, yours [seul pour toi et à toi]: without world [sans monde]” (“R” 76/161).*

*With you gone, the ground has given way. In the wake of your death I remain turned toward you. It is you “in me,” speaking to me, leaving “in me” your spectral traces. I appear before your gaze; I am an “image” for you. I bear in me the gaze that you bear on me. I will bear, “in this strange dislocated bearing” of you (“R” 76/161), what you have “left living in me” (CFU 123/94), thus keeping you—without keeping—in my heart, alive, in me outside of me. “At that end of the world that every death is” (BSII 244/170), where there is no longer any world between us, where there is an abyss between the two islands, there where “I am alone with you” (“R” 69/158) without the ground of any world, in a world without world, I must carry you, bear you.*