Marlene Prosdocimo
University of Pavia, Italy
https://orcid.org/0009-0009-8292-5974
marleneprosdocimo@gmail.com

THE EVENT OF THE HOLY: ON THE ESSENCE-TO-COME OF THE IMMEDIATE*

Abstract: This paper investigates the relationship between immediateness, its essence (as the "holy") and the event, drawing on Heidegger's *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*.

The article will begin by clarifying why the "immediate" can only be identified with "nature,"[1] which is the "all-mediating mediatedness".[2] Thus, the "immediate" coincides with the "mediatedness" (namely, *mediation*) of mediated beings.

The analysis will then shift to the "holy" understood as the "essence of nature",[3] so consequently, as the essence of the "immediate". This will lead to the mode of presence of the holy: According to Heidegger, the holy is indeed "present as what is coming".[4] The "immediate", in its essence, is not an "already-been dimension" of the mediated. The holy, therefore, is not an event that has always already occurred, opening space for the emergence of mediated beings: The holy is *given* insofar as it is *to come*.

This does *not* mean that the holy coincides with a future event, or with an impossibility that can never be. "Nature" arises from "chaos", which corresponds to the "holy" itself.[5] The holy at the heart of the immediate is hence *originary* and has *effectively* begotten nature, being that which is coming.

To grasp this dynamic, the issue of the "poetic word" as the *event* of the holy[6] will be addressed. The poetic word does not refer to something that *has been* or *will be*: A generative dynamic is always ongoing, in which the poetic word corresponds to the *event* of the *essencing* of immediate mediation. This paper will demonstrate how, in the poetic word, "what is coming" has begotten — and continues to beget — the omnipresent immediate (mediation) in its difference from beings.

Keywords: *Heidegger, event, immediate, holy, poetry*

---

* © 2026. This work is openly licensed via CC BY-NC 4.0., which enables reusers to distribute, remix, adapt, and build upon the material in any medium or format for noncommercial purposes only, and only so long as attribution is given to the creator. Canonical URL: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

Marlene Prosdocimo (2026). "The Event of the Holy: On the Essence-to-Come of the Immediate." In M. Nyírő, Zs. Lurcza, P. Makai (eds.): *EVENT and Its Mediation: Interdisciplinary Perspectives in Philosophy, Religious Studies, Literary Studies, and Cultural Theory* (117–125). Miskolc: Miskolc University Press, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. https://doi.org/10.70832/EVENTanditsmediation.04

1 See Martin Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2000), 84.
2 Ibid.
3 See ibid., 81.
4 Ibid., 89.
5 See ibid., 84–85.
6 See ibid., 81, 98.

The question of the holy in Heidegger is intimately bound up with that of mediation, to the point that in certain respects the two in effect coincide. The holy does not correspond to any specific *region* within Heidegger's ontology, not even to one situated at a fundamental level, nor with any supplementary register of meaning-fulness that might illuminate beings (or anything which gives itself) with a different light — a holy one, indeed. It is therefore neither a ground nor a further determination for what there is.[7]

A well-known passage of the "Letter on 'Humanism'" states: "Only from the truth of being can the essence of the holy be thought. Only from the essence of the holy is the essence of divinity to be thought. Only in the light of the essence of divinity can it be thought or said what the word 'God' is to signify."[8] This shows how originary the holy is for Heidegger — the "space" of the essence of the holy is drawn directly from the primary truth of being.[9] But this does not mean that there is in fact a hierarchy according to which the holy would constitute some sort of ground for the subsequent levels mentioned in the quotation, not even if conceived in terms of an *Ungrund* or an *Abgrund* (a "shattered" negative ground).

At the same time, "the holy" is one of the "names" for the Heideggerian other beginning of thinking.[10] This might lead one to think that it pertains to the future moment of an eschatological promise, for example, or that in any case it concerns the dimension of the "not-yet" that can at most be anticipated in the present. However, this is not the case. This paper aims to demonstrate why the holy, insofar as it concerns the issue of immediateness, cannot be reduced to a single level forming part of a hypothetical foundational chain or series of events. We will analyze the generative dynamic that it undergoes and initiates, which does not relegate it to either the past or the future. To accomplish this, we will draw on Heidegger's *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry* — more precisely, from his elucidation of *As when on a holiday…*[11] This will allow us to clarify the relationship between immediateness, its essence as the holy,[12]

---

7 Not even of what there is *not*, if we consider for instance being and nothingness.

8 Martin Heidegger, "Letter on 'Humanism'," in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 267.

9 For a further examination of the relation between the holy and being, also in light of this passage, see Holger Zaborowski, "Heidegger and the Question and the Need of the Holy," in *Heidegger and the Holy*, ed. Richard Capobianco (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2022), 108.

10 See Martin Heidegger, *On Inception* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2023), 129–130.

11 The approach taken in addressing the elucidation will not be historical or philological in nature. See for instance Alexis C. Briley, "The Subject of Inversion: Hölderlin's 'Wie wenn am Feiertage...'," *MLN* 128, no. 3 (2013): 485–493, regarding the philological issues in Heidegger's reading of the poem by Hölderlin.

12 See Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, 81.

and the event: These three coordinates will further enter into dialogue with poetry since, according to Heidegger, the "poetic word" is the "event of the holy".[13]

Let the inquiry now begin by identifying what the "immediate" may correspond to. The immediate cannot rest on distinction or on beings which have certain determinations and properties: The determinateness of a being is grounded in the fact that it possesses certain properties and not others; it is "thus and so", and not otherwise. This, indeed, entails *distinction* — through which immediateness is sublated or vanishes. This renders such beings mediated, and the immediate, in turn, cannot itself be mediated.[14] According to Heidegger, no *determinate* (therefore mediated) being is actually the immediate.

The immediate cannot be sought among beings. What does not fall under determinations and is not a mediated being turns out to be the *mediatedness* of mediated beings — namely, *mediation*. This "all-mediating mediatedness" is called nature, which is "all-present".[15] The all-presence (omnipresence) of nature does not correspond to a quantitative presence which results from the sum of present beings, or to an abstraction from those beings (whereby one present being is taken, then successively other ones, and their presence gets abstracted and universalized to everything which is present), and cannot even be evoked or *indicated* by something real.[16]

"As the clearing [*Lichtung*], in her everything can first be present":[17] nature "renders the mediated possible in its essence".[18] Nature should therefore be intended in this sense, as the immediate mediation which makes mediated beings possible, and this makes nature the "all-present".

It may be thought that the immediate is an originary, primary ground that serves as a mere *condition of possibility* for mediated beings. However, this is not entirely true. The immediate nature should not be understood transcendentally,[19] or as an unconditional condition. Nature itself has an essence, which emerges as the "holy".[20] Of course, the "holy" here does not coincide with a property derived from a god, nor with the ground of nature — which would otherwise be mediated. If the

13 See ibid., 81, 98.
14 See ibid., 84.
15 See ibid., 75, 84.
16 See ibid., 75.
17 Ibid., 82.
18 Ibid., 84.
19 It is not intended, however, to completely dissociate Heidegger from transcendental philosophy. The issue is complex and will not be explored further in this context. See Eric S. Nelson, "Heidegger's Failure to Overcome Transcendental Philosophy," in *Transcendental Inquiry: Its History, Methods and Critiques*, eds. Halla Kim and Steven Hoeltzel (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-40715-9_8
20 See Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, 82.

holy is the essence of nature, it is consequently the essence of the immediate, since the two are identical.

At this point, one may conceive the holy as a posited origin of the immediate, of nature. In this scenario there would be a *first* origin, the essence of the immediate — namely, the holy — and then nature as the ground for mediated beings. But the relation between these elements does not follow a foundational order or necessity. There is no chain from which beings descend, beginning with the holy, followed by nature, and then that which is mediated. In this chain of grounds or conditions, the links would be present in the same way as mediated beings, thus forming a present, actual chain.

The mode of presence (subsistence) of the holy is indeed specific: As claimed by Heidegger, the holy is "present as what is coming *[Kommendes]*."[21] "Present", in this context, is not to be understood along the lines of the metaphysics of presence. The point is precisely that the way in which the holy "essences" itself makes it the (non-) being that is *to come*: That is why it is excluded that it constitutes a given or posited origin. If that were the case, it would *already* be *there*, available, as a ground that supports everything that derives from it.

The key to an appropriate interpretation of the holy does not even lie in conceiving it in terms of a groundless ground, or an *Ab-grund* (abyssal foundation). Thus, from this open abyss, the totality could freely emerge without deterministic conditions. The problem, however, is that the abyss would risk being relegated to the bottom of the system, even though it has no ground of its own and does not mechanistically cause the emergence of nature and mediated beings. If one thinks of the abyss or the open as an immediateness that has *already* occurred, then the sense of the holy as "present as what is coming" does not get fully conveyed because it would fail to account for the fact that this essence — the essence of the immediate — bears *futurality*. The "immediate", in its essence, is not a sort of "already-been dimension" of the mediated — and this leads to the point that the holy cannot be considered an event[22] that has always already occurred, allowing for (or opening the space for) the emergence of mediated beings.

The essence of the immediate is not the "τί" of a "τί ἐστί", a "what" or an "idea" that falls within the metaphysical framework (as understood by Heidegger, in whose view metaphysics is derivative and does not penetrate the originary).[23] To avoid being

---

21 Ibid., 89.

22 The issue of the "holy" as an "event" will be addressed later.

23 The intention here is not to propose a dichotomy between metaphysics and the originary (of the other beginning of thinking or of the event, for instance). This paper will not, however, address the relation between the two beginnings, nor that between metaphysics and the event. For a discussion of the status of the other beginning of thought, see, e.g., Françoise Dastur, "The Later Heidegger: The Question of the Other Beginning of Thinking," in *The Bloomsbury Companion to Heidegger*, eds. François Raffoul and Eric S. Nelson (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

subsumed under that metaphysical configuration, among all the reasons, the *essence* represented by the holy can be conceived as an *event* — that is clearly neither determinable nor mediated. Such event, however, did not open the space in the beginning (*in principio*) for immediateness — of which it is the essence — and, subsequently, for beings. The holy is *given* insofar as it is *to come*.

This does not mean that the holy coincides with a future event, or with an impossibility that simply can never be. *Prima facie*, these two hypotheses might preserve the futurality of the event of the holy, without making it available in the present — or in the actuality of a foundation — while nonetheless allowing it to subsist. Let us now see why, though, these conceptions fail to account for the essence of the immediate.

The holy is not "something" that must come from the future, of which we have only a presentiment *(Ahnung)* in the present. In the first hypothesis, according to which the holy coincides with a future event, we would only be dealing with the absence of the holy. This, however, is not the path to follow, because the aforementioned abyss, instead of being confined to the bottom of totality, would constitute the last link in the chain — a *future* link (which still does not correspond to the structure of the holy-nature relation, as it does not resemble a chain).

In the second hypothesis, on the other hand, according to which the holy is an impossibility that can never be, the holy would never subsist as an actuality. It would be forever "to-come" and never "coming", because it could actually *never come* — and this would be its mode of essencing *(Wesung)*: Not a logical mistake, but rather a way of guaranteeing the constant futurality of the essence of the immediate — a sort of impossible parousia, possible only insofar as it is impossible. However, once again, that would not be correct. We shall now examine why.

Heidegger asserts that "nature" arises from "chaos", which corresponds to the "holy" itself.[24] More precisely, "nature is [nevertheless] 'begotten out of holy chaos'".[25] It is not a primordial confusion: According to Heidegger, "chaos" gets associated to that which is undifferentiated and confused only if it is considered with reference to mediated beings, and therefore grasped in its in-essential aspect *(Unwesen)*. More appropriately, thought instead "in terms of nature φύσις[,] chaos remains that gaping out of which the open opens itself, so that it may grant its bounded presence to all differentiations".[26] This originary openness is, coherently, the holy: Even before the openness, the holy is the *opening* (the gaping) out of which, it has been said, the open (which precedes every different being) opens itself. "Coherently" because the holy is the *opening*, the essence of nature, of the immediate;

[24] See Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, 84–85.
[25] Ibid., 84.
[26] Ibid., 85.

while the immediateness represented by nature, on the other hand, is the *openness* that precedes every being, "the oldest of every former thing, and always the youngest of subsequent things".[27] We will return to this last point shortly, which leads to the dismantling of the idea of the aforementioned "chain" (foundational or otherwise); now, however, it must be understood why the fact that nature is begotten by chaos refutes the two hypotheses put forward above regarding the futurality of the event of the holy.

The holy, as shown, lies at the heart of the immediate as its essence. Furthermore, as the holy chaos, it has (already) begotten nature: It is hence originary, and has *effectively* begotten nature, being that "which is coming". Its way of essencing, which apparently refers only to the future (and therefore to the possibility not actualized in the present, to the non-effectiveness or actuality), instead means that in this opening up the holy has in fact generated something — not in the sense of a "thing", of an objectified content, of course, but rather as the open. This is why it was argued earlier that the holy is given insofar as it is *Kommendes*: The emphasis is not only on the "insofar as…" as a limitation regarding the essencing, but also on the *given*. It is therefore not a matter of opting for one of the two dimensions often associated with eschatology — the "already" and the "not yet" — and refusing the other, but of keeping them both simultaneously "present". After all, the temporality referred to here is not that of historical-objective time, or chronologically linear time.

Now that the non-excluding coexistence of the futurality of the holy — as the essence of nature — and its effectiveness (the actual generation of the immediate, of nature) has been understood, let us investigate the ongoing dynamics by connecting what has been established to the issue of poetry.

Heidegger claims that the poetic word is the event *(Ereignis)* of the holy, that it *must* be the holy.[28] The word "event" does not convey that *something* happens in the realm of poetry such as, for example, the manifestation of a supposedly holy dimension through the medium of words. Indeed, the holy is not objectifiable.[29] It is not a content that can be referred to as something that stands against (as a *Gegenstand*), in front of, something else (for example, a poet-subject who would express that content after having grasped or conceptualized it). The holy is not even a super-subject that purely manifests itself. No-thing really occurs within this event: The poetic word does not, therefore, refer to something that has been or will be.[30]

---

27 Ibid.

28 See ibid., 81, 98.

29 See ibid., 89.

30 It neither narrates a past in which the gods and the holy were present — contrasting with the absence of the holy in the present — nor does it announce a future of eschatological presence that is now absent. And, as mentioned above, it does not even speak of an initial or ultimate ground.

This paper aims to suggest that the poetic word, as the event of the holy, corresponds to the event of the essencing *(Wesung)* of immediate mediation (nature) — within a generative, self-sustaining dynamic that is always ongoing. Let's unravel this.

Since there is no initial state of isolated immediateness, from which the state of mediated beings would follow, the holy is an event. It is neither a mere presence, nor an *Abgrund* that initiates mediation: In fact, as has been shown, we are not dealing with a chain of grounds that lead to mediated reality, nor with a linear process (for example, of begetting, generation). There is no such chain or process with a punctual beginning. Heidegger, incidentally, does not believe that the "beginning" (in the sense of "ἀρχή") disappears once a certain process has been initiated. Such beginning does not simply occur at the instant t_0 (as in the example of the surgeon washing his hands before performing an operation in *What Is Philosophy?*):[31] The beginning always "reigns" and "begins", to evoke the semantic field of "ἀρχή", "ἄρχειν", which includes both reigning and beginning.

Therefore, the holy, that from which nature (the immediate) is begotten, can never be found merely at the beginning. Furthermore, since it can only "give" itself as "that which comes", it *actually* gives itself — without ever giving itself *definitively*. At the same time, the holy has *already* given itself (it has already begotten nature), but it is always yet to come — being "what is coming". This mode of subsistence of the holy as the essence of nature, of the immediate, can only have an "evenemential" nature. Indeed, the Heideggerian originary *Ereignis* is not an already constituted principle, a form of monism, but rather requires a relation: "Be-ing needs man in order to hold sway; and man belongs to be-ing so that he can accomplish his utmost destiny as Da-sein. […] This *counter-resonance* of *needing* and *belonging* makes up be-ing as enowning *[Ereignis]*."[32] The "structure" of the *Ereignis* presupposes that there does not subsist a hypothetical side that exclusively consists of being — absolute and complete in- and for-itself — from which man (or man as *Dasein*) would issue forth. Neither here does a foundational chain occur: Both being and man correspond to the other within the movement of *needing* and of *belonging*. It is possible to propose an analogy between this structure and the originary opening of chaos (namely, the holy) that begets nature (the openness). Chaos constitutes the opening from whose movement nature (which belongs to it) is generated; yet it is also futural — just as being needs man in the *Ereignis* and is therefore not definitively given "before" man occurs. Consequently, the holy as the essence of nature is an *event*.

---

31 See Martin Heidegger, *What Is Philosophy?* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 81.

32 Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), 177.

Furthermore, the poetic word is the event of the holy because the word here is not the *power* of a subject. The poet does not "possess" or "use" language: "It is not we who have language; rather, language has us, in a certain way."[33] It is language which "has" the poet, and this relation of correspondence is precisely the *Ereignis*.

In its essencing, the holy does not symmetrically oppose presence, for example being absent in the present — and perhaps being present in an unspecified future. In coming, it always generates nature: Therefore, the dynamic which is being described here is "generative". It sustains itself because it is continuous, never fully actualized, never motionless, hence the holy is to-come. Furthermore, since nature is the immediate, it is not a mediated being that gets begotten by something else: This means that it cannot be considered as an object that comes into being once and for all, or that has to be maintained at most in its properties. Mediation subsists continuously in its immediateness; it admits of neither "before" nor "after".[34]

Besides, nature (the immediate) is "the oldest of every former thing, and always the youngest of subsequent things".[35] Addressing explicitly Hölderlin's poem, Heidegger then states: "By awakening, nature's coming, as what is most futural, comes out of the oldest of what has been, which never ages because it is each time the youngest."[36] When the immediate essences itself, it comes out of the holy (chaos), which, being nature's essence, is the most originary level (as analyzed above, not as an isolated, first level or ground). Once nature (the immediate) awakes, it remains futural even if it is the youngest of subsequent things: So, the process of generating nature always goes on — because in so far as nature makes the *mediated* possible in its essence (as mentioned above), this dynamic is the one that also makes mediated beings possible. Therefore, the begetting does not involve nature (the immediate) alone. The immediate is the mediation of the mediated, and thus, when it is generated, the mediated gets also generated (otherwise, immediateness or the holy would appear as an isolated, objectified state, and not all-present)[37] — of course, preserving the

---

33 Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymns "Germania" and "The Rhine"* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 24.

34 On the relationship between nature and temporality, see André Schuwer, "Nature and the Holy: On Heidegger's Interpretation of Hölderlin's Hymn 'Wie wenn am Feiertage'," *Research in Phenomenology* 7 (1977), 229.

35 Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, 85.

36 Ibid.

37 This *could* allow a possibility for man, as a mediated being, to *access* the essence of the immediate — that is, the holy. In so far as the notion of a foundational chain has been excluded, man would no longer be forced to engage solely with mediated beings, being separated by an insurmountable distance from immediateness. Certainly, it remains to be considered *whether* an immediate relation between the immediate and man as mediated is possible, and *how*.

difference between the immediate and the mediated, and without ignoring the other causes or similar factors necessary for the generation of the mediated.

In the poetic word (namely, in the event of the holy), "what is coming" has begotten — and continues to beget — the omnipresent immediate (mediation) in its difference from mediated beings. This dynamic does not take the form of a chain, but rather, of a sort of circular, simultaneous process that keeps together the dimensions of the "already-" and the "not-yet-".

BIBLIOGRAPHY

[1] Briley, Alexis C. "The Subject of Inversion: Hölderlin's 'Wie wenn am Feiertage...'," *MLN* 128, no. 3 (2013): 477–501.

[2] Dastur, Françoise. "The Later Heidegger: The Question of the Other Beginning of Thinking." In *The Bloomsbury Companion to Heidegger*, edited by François Raffoul and Eric S. Nelson, 55–66. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.

[3] Heidegger, Martin. "Letter on 'Humanism'." In *Pathmarks*, edited by William McNeill, 239–276. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

[4] Heidegger, Martin. *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999.

[5] Heidegger, Martin. *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2000.

[6] Heidegger, Martin. *What Is Philosophy?* Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003.

[7] Heidegger, Martin. *Hölderlin's Hymns "Germania" and "The Rhine."* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014.

[8] Heidegger, Martin. *On Inception*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2023.

[9] Nelson, Eric S. "Heidegger's Failure to Overcome Transcendental Philosophy." In *Transcendental Inquiry: Its History, Methods and Critiques*, edited by Halla Kim and Steven Hoeltzel, 159–179. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-40715-9_8

[10] Schuwer, André. "Nature and the Holy: On Heidegger's Interpretation of Hölderlin's Hymn 'Wie wenn am Feiertage'." *Research in Phenomenology* 7 (1977): 225–237.

[11] Zaborowski, Holger. "Heidegger and the Question and the Need of the Holy." In *Heidegger and the Holy*, edited by Richard Capobianco, 105–116. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2022.