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***Blut und Boden?* Husserl's Transcendental Earth as *Heimat* and its Relation to National Socialism**

In May of 1934, Husserl wrote a strange little text about the Earth, which has garnered a lot of scholarly interest. The manuscript was contained in an envelope, on which was written (in German, but I translate it here): ‘*Overthrow [Umsturz] of the Copernican doctrine* in the interpretation of the usual worldview. The primordial earth does not move. Fundamental investigations into the phenomenological origin of the physicality of the spatiality of nature in the first scientific sense. All necessary initial investigations.’¹ I shall henceforth refer to this text as the *Umsturz*.

The text centres around a phenomenological investigation regarding our relation to the Earth. It might be considered controversial in the sense that it claims that the earth does not move. It might also be said to be controversial because many scholars can't seem to figure out whether it is trying to break out of Husserl's egology or whether it subjects the earth in its constitutive function to the transcendental ego. However, I think the text *should* be controversial for another reason – a reason that, especially in the English translation, seems to have flown under the radar. The concepts Husserl uses to mediate our relationship to earth are, in my opinion, highly suspect, especially if we look at the time and place he wrote the text: Nazi Germany.

I want to draw our attention to three concepts Husserl uses to argue for our necessary relation to the earth: *Boden*, *Heimat* and *Volk*. *Boden* is translated as *ground* when Husserl talks about Earth, and is a part of the compounded (and ever so clunkily English translation) earth-ground (*Erdboden*). It is interesting to conceptualize the earth as *Boden* in a time when the Nazis had already become the ruling party in Germany with their explicit *Blut und Boden* ideology. *Boden* on its own is an innocent enough word of course, but Husserl doesn't use the word in isolation.

¹ Edmund Husserl, “Grundlegende Untersuchungen zum Phänomenologischen Ursprung der Räumlichkeit der Natur,” in *Philosophical Essays in Memory of Edmund Husserl*, ed. Marvin Farber (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940), 307.

Because in addition, Husserl conceptualizes the *Erdboden* as a home for the ego.² The original German word he uses, which is often blandly translated into English as ‘home’ or ‘homeland,’ is *Heimat*. *Heimat* in German is an incredibly evocative term, relating one to a home rooted in nature or the earth, together with one’s community or People.³ *Heimat* roots an individual, through its community, in a specific *Boden* as *territory*. As Joseph Goebbels said: ‘National Socialism recognizes only one Heimat: Germany, only one Volk from one blood, on native soil [heimischen Boden].’⁴

And it seems that indeed Husserl places an emphasis on the relation between one’s ‘people’ when it comes to the *Erdboden* and the *Heimat*. Every people are made at home on the earth (as *Boden*).⁵ The German word for people here is *Volk* – a word which also featured heavily in National Socialist propaganda, *especially* in relation to *Boden*; when, for example, Alfred Rosenberg speaks of a ‘people’s culture rooted in blood and soil’ (*in Blut und Boden verwurzelten Volkskultur*).⁶ *Volk*, for Nazis, was synonymous with blood or race, and every *Volk* has its own culture that is *rooted* in the soil.⁷ Husserl also speaks of the ‘earthly sense’ of people is *rooted*, which makes for a good earthly metaphor to convey this earthly sense.⁸ In the *Umsturz* he uses the term ‘rooted’ only once, but scholars have picked up the word as a good metaphor and use it abundantly, which means that this ‘rootedness’ in the *Boden* resonates with people.

Now, I am of course not claiming Husserl was a Nazi – to claim something like that about a German-Jewish professor who suffered first hand from the Nuremberg Laws would be a tough sell. What I am claiming, is that the fact that all of these words Husserl uses to both prove and mediate our necessary connection to the earth were used in National Socialist ideology and propaganda, and that this realisation requires us to reread the text and ask: What is the relation of the *Umsturz* to National Socialism?

In order to properly investigate this, I shall first give a detailed historical and ideological analysis of the terms *Heimat*, *Volk* and *Boden* both before and during Nazi Germany. After

² Husserl, “Ursprung der Räumlichkeit,” 319.

³ Claus-Christian W. Szejnmann, “‘A Sense of Heimat Opened Up during the War.’ German Soldiers and Heimat Abroad,” in *Heimat, Region, and Empire: Spatial Identities under National Socialism*, eds. Claus-Christian W. Szejnmann and Maiken Umbach (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 116-117.

⁴ Quoted in Willeke Sandler, “‘Here Too Lies Our Lebensraum’: Colonial Space as German Space,” in *Heimat, Region, and Empire: Spatial Identities under National Socialism*, eds. Claus-Christian W. Szejnmann and Maiken Umbach (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 151.

⁵ Husserl, “Ursprung der Räumlichkeit,” 319.

⁶ Alfred Rosenberg, *Blut und Ehre: Ein Kampf für Deutsche Wiedergeburt* (München: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1938), 245.

⁷ Rosenberg, *Blut und Ehre*, 242.

⁸ Husserl, “Ursprung der Räumlichkeit,” 318.

having traced these historical circumstances of Husserl's writing, I shall investigate the meaning of these terms in the *Umsturz* by way of two different interpretations of the text. Both of these interpretations will give us a different insight into the relation between the *Umsturz* and National Socialism. The first will be an egological and essentialist reading of Husserl, and it will allow us to say that Husserl gives us a *reappropriation* of these terms. However, I shall argue that this interpretation misses a fundamental dynamic in the *Umsturz* – namely, that it seems that Husserl is breaking out of his preferred egology and making the earth a co-constitutive transcendental earth, and that, moreover, this happens *via* his conception of *Volk*. On this interpretation, we read the *Umsturz* as a *transcendental justification* of the concepts used by the National Socialists. By 'justification' here I mean that while Husserl might not agree with actual conclusions or theses the Nazi's postulated, he still reinforces and reifies the concepts that made the postulation of these theses and their genocidal conclusions possible, and does so by lifting them to the level of transcendental necessity. What does this mean for the relation between transcendental phenomenology and the political status quo?

CHAPTER ONE: HISTORICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

This chapter will give us an historical and ideological analysis in three parts. First, we will look at how concretely *Heimat*, *Volk* and *Boden* were used before and around the time Husserl wrote the text – both in society at large and specifically in Hitler’s speeches. Then we will read National Socialist ‘theory’ in order to see how concretely they thought *Heimat* is the result of the co-constitution of *Volk* and *Boden*. Before then going to our analysis of the *Umsturz*, we look at how Husserl used the concept of *Heimat* in his own correspondences, to see how he related to *Heimat* in times of National Socialism.

Historical Analysis

The concept of *Heimat*, by the time Husserl wrote the *Umsturz* in May 1934, had been used by many political and semi-political groups and institutions. But even before it became a concept used for party agendas, it was a central concept in the German literary tradition. From 1870 onwards, *Heimatliteratur* became a staple of reactionary literature.⁹ It provided a solution to the ‘search for identification of the - in the conservative view - "uprooted" rural refugees.’¹⁰ *Heimatliteratur* focusses on ‘main characters [who] are taciturn, action-loving, instinct-driven and anti-intellectual loners, predominantly of the male sex.’¹¹ It focused on regional identities, as opposed to the perceived outward-oriented politics Imperial Germany.¹²

Heimatliteratur was a genre closely affiliated with *Völkische Literatur* – a genre that focussed less on the regional landscape and the main characters emotional relation to it, but more on aspects of Germanness, the *Volk*, and its mythologized history and possible utopias.¹³ The two, although different in focus, are not to be viewed separately. As Dohnke writes: ‘The terms "*Heimat(kunst)literatur*" and "*Völkische Literatur*" are [...] to be understood more as poles in a segment of ideological (literary) cultural production...’¹⁴ The National Socialists were heavily influenced by the more general *Völkisch* movement, obsessed with national rebirth and race, and it should come as no surprise to us that many authors of *Heimatliteratur* later

⁹ Kay Dohnke, “Völkische Literatur und Heimatliteratur 1870-1918,” in *Handbuch zur “Völkischen Bewegung” 1871-1918*, ed. Uwe Puschner (München: K.G. Saur Verlag – GmbH & Co KG, 1996), 656.

¹⁰ Dohnke, “Völkische Literatur und Heimatliteratur,” 655.

¹¹ Ibid., 652.

¹² Ibid., 656.

¹³ Ibid., 667.

¹⁴ Ibid., 676-7.

pledged their allegiance to Hitler,¹⁵ has led some researchers to call the literature-movement ‘cryptofascist’ and even ‘protofascist.’¹⁶

In 1897 the term *Heimatschutz* (*Heimat* defence) was coined by Ernst Rudorff, who also founded the ‘Federation for *Heimatschutz*’ in 1904.¹⁷ The popularization of the idea led to a ‘flurry of *Heimatvereine* [*Heimat* associations] [which] worked tirelessly for the protection, preservation or restoration of the physical attributes of the ‘homeland’, comprising characteristic landscapes as well as vernacular building ensembles.’¹⁸ The goal of the Federation was, according to its statutes: ‘to protect the German homeland in its natural and historical character and to unite the entire *Heimatschutz* movement,’¹⁹ focussing both on nature and cultural heritage preservation. *Heimat* was thus used to connect the culture of a specific people to the landscape in which those people lived (or, as we’ll see later, should live).

The *Heimatvereine* were therefore not only founded for the purpose of the defence of the natural landscape, but also for the culture and the ‘German’ people living in this landscape. After the First World War they were important organisations determining which borderland-cultures were to be considered ‘German’ and which ‘foreign,’ serving essentially as ‘border watches.’²⁰ Thomas Williams writes the following about the function of *Heimat* in the borderland of Alsace (also called Baden):

‘The annual report of the ‘Historical Association for Central Baden’ for 1933 cited the claim by local- born National Socialist government minister Otto Wacker that ‘ “Here in the border march of Baden we have the enormous task of being the protector and defender, shaper and awakener of the German being” ’, adding that ‘in this mission, the cultivation of *Heimat* history would be a valuable help’ insofar as it would create men who ‘led back to the soil and to the *Volk*, would love their *Heimat* and therefore defend it.’’²¹

¹⁵ Ibid., 678.

¹⁶ Ibid., 677.

¹⁷ Joachim Wolsckhe-Buhman, “Heimatschutz,” in *Handbuch zur “Völkischen Bewegung” 1871-1918*, ed. Uwe Puschner (München: K.G. Saur Verlag – GmbH & Co KG, 1996), 534-5.

¹⁸ Maiken Umbach and Claus-Christian W. Szejnmann, “Towards a Relational History of Spaces under National Socialism,” in *Heimat, Region, and Empire: Spatial Identities under National Socialism*, eds. Claus-Christian W. Szejnmann and Maiken Umbach (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 4.

¹⁹ Ibid., 536.

²⁰ John Alexander Williams, ““The Chords of the German Soul Are Tuned to Nature”: The Movement to Preserve the Natural Heimat from the Kaiserreich to the Third Reich,” *Central European History* 29, no. 3 (1996): 357.

²¹ Thomas Williams, “‘Grenzlandschicksal’: Historical Narratives of Regional Identity

The *Heimat* was to be defended from the outside, but was also something to be reconnected with from the inside – the German masses had become ‘rootless,’ according to conversationists in *Heimatvereine*. If one was of German birth, one could become rooted in the *Heimat* once more, but those not of German birth were incompatibly foreign (*fremd*) to the *Heimat*.²² The *Heimat* was directly identified with Germanness, German nature and the German people, and was to be protected – to be made ‘pure.’²³ It should come as no surprise then that most *Heimatvereine* welcomed and celebrated when in 1933 the National Socialist government founded the *Reichsbund Volkstum und Heimat*, which united the *Heimatvereine* with other associations that defended both nature and culture.²⁴ As Wolschke-Bulmahn writes: ‘The ultimately backward-looking idea of Heimatschutz and its ties to reactionary ideas about the connection between man, people, race, culture and nature largely corresponded to National Socialist ideas and could be appropriated for the goals of the Nazi state.’²⁵

The use of *Heimat* through time became more and more flexible, coming to relate both to both the specific region where one was born, and the nation and people as a whole. The *Heimat* grew to be ‘the locus of the *Volksgemeinschaft* [National/People’s community].’²⁶ It was therefore the carrier of prevailing ideas about the German *Volk* at the time. Eugenicist Eugen Fischer stated that ‘*Heimat* and the people are one.’²⁷

One shouldn’t confuse the reactionary nature of the *Heimatschutz* ideal with a pure romanticism however. Williams argues that ‘during the Weimar years, the modernizing component of conservationist discourse fully overcame the remnants of the relatively nonanthropocentric and reverent concept of nature that had been an important part of the movement’s origins.’²⁸ The *Heimat* was fully anthropomorphic and modern; nature was *German* nature due to its proximity to the Germans,²⁹ and even projects such as the *Autobahn*,

and National Duty in ‘Gau Oberrhein’, 1940–1944,” in *Heimat, Region, and Empire: Spatial Identities under National Socialism*, eds. Claus-Christian W. Szejnmann and Maiken Umbach (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 59.

²² Williams, “The Chords of the German Soul Are Tuned to Nature,” 364-5.

²³ Alexa Stiller, “On the Margins of *Volksgemeinschaft*: Criteria for Belonging to the Volk within the Nazi Germanization Policy in the Annexed Territories, 1939–1945,” in *Heimat, Region, and Empire: Spatial Identities under National Socialism*, eds. Claus-Christian W. Szejnmann and Maiken Umbach (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 236.

²⁴ Wolschke-Bulmahn, “Heimatschutz,” 542.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Martina Steber, “Regions and National Socialist Ideology: Reflections on Contained Plurality,” in *Heimat, Region, and Empire: Spatial Identities under National Socialism*, eds. Claus-Christian W. Szejnmann and Maiken Umbach (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 32.

²⁷ Quoted in Williams, “The Chords of the German Soul Are Tuned to Nature,” 367.

²⁸ Williams, “The Chords of the German Soul Are Tuned to Nature,” 384.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 370.

which cut straight through the landscape, were argued to work towards the ‘ideal landscape’ for the *Volksgemeinschaft*.³⁰

Up to now we have given a broad investigation of the way in which the concept of *Heimat* was in widespread use during and before the years Husserl wrote the *Umsturz*. I also want to give a more concrete study of the use of *Heimat* by a very specific someone during that time: Adolf Hitler. Specifically, I will be looking at how Hitler used the notion of *Heimat* in relation to *Volk* and *Boden*.

In his very first public speech as Chancellor of Germany, broadcast by radio on February 1st, 1933, Hitler talked about the *Heimat*. He spoke of how just like *Heimat* needed to be fought for in the trenches of World War I, they needed to now fight for it at home. He then spoke of how the President had entrusted this task to him and his party: ‘In these hours of overwhelming worries about the existence and future of the German nation, the aged leader of the World War called on us men of national parties and organisations to fight once again, as we once did on the front, now at home [*in der Heimat*] in unity and loyalty for the salvation of the *Reich* under him.’³¹ The *Heimat* was something to be defended in this important moment in Hitler’s political ‘career,’ and it was to be defended from something very specific: the economic disparity caused by ‘the communist method of madness [which] is trying to poison and disintegrate the people,’ who, through this method, have become, ‘shaken and uprooted to the core.’³²

3 months later Hitler spoke of the importance of the unity of the German *Volk* and the protection of the *Heimat*: ‘The world is persecuting us, it is turning against us, it does not want to recognise our right to live, it does not want to acknowledge our right to protect our homeland [*Schutze der Heimat*]. My fellow Germans [*deutscher Volksgenossen*]! If the world is so against us, we must become all the more united, we must constantly reassure it: you can do what you want to do!’³³ There are two sources of the division within the German *Volk* from which the *Heimat* needs to be defended: the tainting of the German *Volk* through a tainting of the blood, and a division of the Nation into classes by Marxists (who were also often identified with Jews).³⁴

But who belonged to the German *Heimat*, and who belonged to a foreign *Volk*? According to the Nazi’s, East-Prussia certainly belonged to the Germans – however, it was cut

³⁰ Ibid., 379.

³¹ Adolf Hitler, *Hitler: Reden und Proklamationen 1932-1945. Kommentiert von einem deutschen Zeitgenossen*, ed. Max Domarus (Leonberg: Pamminger & Partner Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 1973), 192.

³² Hitler, *Hitler: Reden und Proklamationen*, 192.

³³ Ibid., 263.

³⁴ Robin te Slaa, *Fascisme: Oorsprong en Ideologie* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2022), 238.

off from German territories by Poland at that time. Hitler, in a speech held in East-Prussia congratulating a Field Marshall on past war efforts in the region, talked about how the ‘long line of generations should also bear witness to their great ancestor in connection with this *Heimatboden*.’³⁵ When talking in Saarland later that same day (27th of August 1933), he spoke of how ‘[separated] from their *Heimat*, two million Germans are standing there [in East-Prussia] in loyal vigil in order to maintain the bridge that has been broken geographically through their will and their attitude.’³⁶ East-Prussia was the reason Germany invaded Poland 6 years later; to reunite them with German *Heimat*. Note here how Hitler compounds *Heimat* and *Boden* – a logical combination, since *Heimat* is the spiritual union of a Volk being rooted in its soil (something we’ll explore in more detail later).

Here I’d also like to take some time to show the ways Hitler used the concept of *Boden* in his speeches at the same time. As we’ll show later, *Heimat* is the result of the mutual constitution of *Volk* and *Boden*. Therefore, it is worth investigating now how Hitler characterized the relation between Volk and Boden without the use of *Heimat*.

On January 3rd 1933, Hitler said at a NSDAP agropolitical convention that the realisation of the *Blut und Boden* principle ‘will create the conditions for putting our own ground and soil [*Grund und Boden*] in complete order and securing the life of the nation from our own resources for a long time to come. [...] If we realise the fundamental principle of blood and soil in domestic and foreign policy, then for the first time we as a people will no longer be thrown by events, but we ourselves will then master the circumstances.’³⁷ The strength of the People was determined by the putting in order of the *Boden*. The ‘German earth, the German soil, unchanged before us’ were also ‘the eternal foundations of our national existence [*völkisches Daseins*],’ as he said a month later, on February 2nd.³⁸

A week after Hitler becoming Chancellor, he said of the relation between *Volk* and *Boden* the following: ‘[The] foundations of our life are based on values that no one can rob us of except ourselves, they are based in our flesh and blood and will and in our soil [*Boden*]. People and soil [*Volk und Erde*], these are the two roots from which we want to draw our strength and from which we intend to build our resolutions. And thus the sixth point clearly emerges as the goal of our struggle: the preservation of this people and this soil [*Bodens*], the preservation of this people for the future in the realisation that only this alone can represent a

³⁵ Hitler, *Hitler: Reden und Proklamationen*, 294.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 295.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 173-4.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 196.

purpose in life for us.’³⁹ Again, the relation between *Volk* and *Boden/Erde* both secure the *unity* of the People’s strength, and are its *roots*.

Hitler’s project was thus for a large part centred around a return to Earth, since the right ordering of the Earth as *Boden* would mean the right rootedness for a *Volk* to live a strong life. But the German has become uprooted: ‘He dreams of right in the stars and loses his grounding on earth.’⁴⁰ An interesting phrase, in the context of Husserl’s project: to return from the stars to find a *Boden* on the *Earth* once more. Now however, we shall delve deeper into the way *Heimat* was constituted in National Socialist ideology.

Ideological Analysis

This investigation into the constitution of *Heimat* in Nazi ‘ideology’ will proceed analysing the slogan *Blut und Boden*, which means ‘Blood and Soil.’ I’ll analyse what the Nazi’s meant by this slogan, and the complex dynamics between the *Volk* and its soil – a relation, I’ll argue, that is best characterized as *Heimat*. I’ll show that it is only in this context of Blood and Soil that it is possible for National Socialists to think about individuality and the body.

In order to properly understand *soil*, we’ll have to start with *blood*. What is meant with blood? The most obvious thing meant by blood is *race* – a ‘community of descent and at the same time a group with the same hereditary characteristics,’⁴¹ with the *blood* being deemed the carrier of the hereditary material of the race. The Nazi’s divided Europeans up into five races, with the Germans being a part of the Nordic race.⁴² Although the Germans were a part of the Nordic race, they were again a subdivision of it – the German Blood was distinct from other Nordic ‘bloods.’ This is because blood is identified with *Volk*, meaning a ‘community of people not only in racial terms, in this case in terms of ancestry and biological similarity, but also in linguistic, cultural and national terms.’⁴³ The term *Volk* is often translated as *People*, but, as Biehl argues, is ‘much more comprehensive’ than that: ‘for to German thinkers [...] “Volk” signified the union of a group of people with a transcendental “essence.” This “essence” [...] in each instance [...] was fused to man’s innermost nature, and represented the source of his creativity, his depth of feeling, his individuality, and his unity with other members of the

³⁹ Ibid., 205.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 226.

⁴¹ Ludwig Trepl, *Die Idee der Landschaft: Eine Kulturgeschichte von der Aufklärung bis zur Ökologiebewegung* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2012), 197.

⁴² Rosenberg, *Blut und Ehre*, 242.

⁴³ Trepl, *Die Idee der Landschaft*, 197.

Volk.”⁴⁴ We’ll get into the relation pointed at here between the individual and the *Volk* later – for now it is important to stress the ‘essential’ unity of a *Volk*.

It is important to understand the biological racism the National Socialists used to conceptualize *Volk* and *Blut*, but it should neither be overstated nor singled out. As prominent Nazi theorist Alfred Rosenberg writes: ‘The five races of Europe, due to the current deepened research, aren’t merely understood in a materialist sense, but it is currently understood that the exterior of people goes together with a very distinct character, a very distinct spiritual attitude. The separation of different races is therefore also a separation of different souls and spirits [...]’⁴⁵ Biology for the National Socialists was synonymous with *Volkskultur*, as can be seen from Rosenberg’s interchangeable usage of it with the terms Soul of the Race (*Rassenseele*),⁴⁶ Character of the People (*Volkskarakter*),⁴⁷ Soul of the Nation (*Nationalseele*),⁴⁸ Essence of the People (*Volkswesen*),⁴⁹ and Soul of the Culture (*Kulturseele*).⁵⁰

The indistinguishability of race and culture can also be seen by how the National Socialists talk about the deterioration of the two. Rosenberg writes about the cultural heights reached by the Greeks, which then waned because of racial mixing.⁵¹ This deterioration can however also happen the other way around. Walther Darré (the man who popularized the slogan *Blut und Boden*)⁵² thought the deterioration was caused by the fall of the Germanic nobility due to, as historian te Slaa writes, the ‘conversion to Christianity and the associated infiltration of harmful Latin influences [which] changed the Germanic worldview[...].’⁵³ Race was therefore not only seen as biological, but as a spiritual attitude.

I’d argue further that it was culture which was actually the important factor with regards race and racial purity. Hitler talks about a ‘primal power of culture creation,’⁵⁴ [*kulturschaffende Urkraft*] which sets the Nordics apart from other races. It is precisely this power which connects a *Volk* to soil. Rosenberg agrees with this and shows how the inverse is true as well, meaning that if one has no culture, one has no right to soil: “The fact remains that

⁴⁴ Janet Biehl, “‘Ecology’ and the Modernization of Fascism in the German Ultra-right,” in *Ecofascism: Lessons from the German Experience*, eds. Janet Biehl and Peter Staudenmaier (Chico: AK Press, 1995), 21.

⁴⁵ Rosenberg, *Blut und Ehre*, 242-243.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 243.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 246.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 197.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 347.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 349.

⁵² Peter Staudenmaier, “Fascist Ecology: The “Green Wing” of the Nazi Party and its Historical Antecedents,” in *Ecofascism: Lessons from the German Experience*, eds. Janet Biehl and Peter Staudenmaier (Chico: AK Press, 1995), 14.

⁵³ te Slaa, *Fascisme*, 165.

⁵⁴ Quoted in Trepl, *Die Idee der Landschaft*, 201.

a real black culture doesn't exist [...] The lack of an authentic statehood in Africa means, geopolitically speaking, the Right of the White to colonies."⁵⁵ When speaking of race therefore, we should keep in mind that it is *culture* that made race a salient category in the first place.

The unity of the biological *Volkskörper* and the Spirit from which it is indistinguishable can also perish in another way – instead of the deterioration of the *blood* or the *culture*, the *Volk* can also lose its connection to the *soil*. In order to properly understand this, let us investigate how the National Socialists conceived their relationship to the soil.

Weissenböck quotes Hans Bach, Nazi and Rector of the University of Linz, when writing about the concept of *Boden* in NS-thought: 'It was the "root [*Wurzelgrund*] of racially valuable generations", it was the "basis of the economy and the nutrition of the people" and "vital for the people as a whole."⁵⁶ This *Boden* as a ground to be rooted in becomes a condition for the *Volk*.

On the one hand, the *Boden*, as a necessary condition for the *Volk*, is often characterized as *Lebensraum*, meaning living-space – the physical space a *Volk* needs to thrive and stay healthy, because they need enough arable land.⁵⁷ This can be seen as more of a practical consideration for the health of the people, but there was also a more 'spiritual' or 'natural' connection between *Blut* and *Boden*. As More and Roberts write: 'from the landscape came the possibility of spiritual community.'⁵⁸

The *Volk* was 'naturally' connected to the *Boden*– the borders of the state being the 'natural demarcation of cultural souls [...].'⁵⁹ As such, each *Volk* is the 'expression of an "eco-niche,"'⁶⁰ having developed in tandem with the landscape itself. This proximity to the landscape made the Germans rooted in the soil, and the soil be characteristically German in turn, as our earlier citing of Hitler's speeches shows. But this 'natural' connection came about through the aforementioned *kulturschaffende Urkraft*: it was the ability of a *Volk* to create a culture that allowed it to work the landscape, to struggle against it, and thus to root in it. In this struggle

⁵⁵ Rosenberg, *Blut und Ehre*, 304.

⁵⁶ Georg Weissenböck, "'Blut und Boden'-Kultur? Agrarwissenschaftliche Dissertationen an der Wiener Hochschule für Bodenkultur," *zeitgeschichte* 45, no. 3 (2018): 385.

⁵⁷ Carolin Mehnert, *Kompromisslose Räume: Zu Rassismus, Identität und Nation* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2021), 77.

⁵⁸ Sam Moore and Alex Roberts, *The Rise of Ecofascism: Climate Change and the Far Right* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2022), 27.

⁵⁹ Rosenberg, *Blut und Ehre*, 347.

⁶⁰ Madeleine Hurd and Steffen Werther, "Nature, the Volk, and the Heimat: The narratives and practices of the Far-Right Ecologist," *Baltic Worlds* IV, no. 2 (2013): 16.

with its landscape, both the soil and the *Volk* are developed into higher and stronger versions of themselves.⁶¹

Both ideas about *Boden*, as belonging ‘naturally’ to a *Volk* and needed as *Lebensraum* were used in the annexation of Poland. The Germans claimed they needed the soil to survive physically, and that it would become theirs spiritually through its use by the Germans.

It has become clear then, that we cannot separate *Volk* from *Boden*. As Mehnert writes: ‘To understand ‘race’ without a spatial reference [...] is not possible, because the present construction of ‘race’ is characterized in its supposed value precisely by its reference to geographical space and soil.’⁶² This also works the other way around: soil and geographical space are, in National Socialist thought, precisely *Lebensraum* or the *Wurzelboden* for a *Volk*. So while it is true that the *Boden* indeed is a constitutive condition for the *Volk*, the opposite is also true: the *Volk* constitutes *Boden* as well. For the National Socialists, humans and earth are co-constituted as *Blut und Boden* – the earth seen as territory for a *Volk*, and the humans seen as rooted in a *Boden*. Both earth and humans are demarcated, bordered, in this constitution, and their borders overlap ‘naturally.’ I will argue that this co-constitutive relation in which *Blut und Boden* are inseparable yet irreducible, is best characterized as *Heimat*.

So, how does the individual factor into all of this? This is something very important to understand, because, after all, the purpose of these theories was to mobilize individuals to political action against other individuals. The *Volk* wasn’t some abstract ideal, and it wasn’t abstractly rooted in an abstractly conceived soil; instead, it was of the utmost importance to every single person. As Rosenberg writes: ‘Personality is not opposed to the Masses, instead, it is precisely the highest expression of a Will of the People.’⁶³ The individual is an expression of the *Volk*, and the strength of each individual is a gauge of the purity of the race. It was this idea that allowed the National Socialists to see eugenics as an option to ensure the strength of the *Volk*, since the presence of ‘weaker’ people was a signifier of the degeneration of the racial purity.⁶⁴ The individual was an expression of the *Volk*, and therefore the essence of the *Volk* was an integral part of each individual’s ‘innermost nature, and represented the source of his creativity, his depth of feeling, his individuality, and his unity with other members of the *Volk*.’⁶⁵

⁶¹ Trepl, *Die Idee der Landschaft*, 200.

⁶² Mehnert, *Kompromisslose Räume*, 81.

⁶³ Rosenberg, *Blut und Ehre*, 246.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 261.

⁶⁵ George L. Mosse quoted in Biehl, “Ecology,” 21.

The individual being an expression of the *Volk* has far-reaching implications for how the ego was conceptualized in National Socialist thought. As Mehnert writes: ‘According to Rosenberg, for the ego ‘race’ and people are the necessary preconditions for its own existence and the only possibility of optimizing its improvement. [...] The subject, the ego, can therefore only be understood in a direct relation to the ‘race’, understand itself and realize itself.’⁶⁶ And since we’ve shown that *Volk* can only be properly understood when we take into consideration its *spatial* dimension, Mehnert claims that one of the ways the *Volk* is a precondition for the individual, is *spatial*. She shows how the Nation was thought of as a *body*, and, *Volk* and Nation being used interchangeably, we have already shown that this was also the case for *Volk*: the *Volkskörper*. The *Volk* then is a precondition for constituting the *Körperraum* for the individual.⁶⁷

If the *Volk* is a precondition for the individual, how does it relate to the *Boden*? The *Boden*, the German soil with its landscapes, is an essential part of every German: ‘In every German breast the German forest quivers with its caverns and ravines, crags and boulders, waters and winds, legends and fairy tales, with its songs and its melodies, and awakens a powerful yearning and a longing for home; in all German souls the German forest lives and weaves with its depth and breadth, its stillness and strength, its might and dignity, its riches and its beauty — it is the source of German inwardness, of the German soul, of German freedom.’⁶⁸

We might say that there is a transitive relation from individual to soil *through Volk*, since the individual is an expression of the *Volk*, and the *Boden* is a necessary condition for the *Volk*. As Biehl writes: ‘Volk mediates between individual and cosmos.’⁶⁹ But this mediation must be thought complexly: since I’ve shown Volk and Boden are in a relationship of mutual co-constitution. We’ve already been doing this, however: since we’ve thought of *Volk* as the spatial precondition of the individual – now, within NS thought, the Boden would therefore also be the racial precondition of the individual: it is the *German* forests which find their expression in the individual.

It is the *Volk* which roots the individual into the *Boden necessarily*. What do I mean by that? Well, obviously, not everyone who was on ‘German Soil’ was rooted in it, according to the National Socialists – that was kind of their whole shtick. One aspect of this was a racial/cultural component: Jews, seen as parasites, were seen as a ‘nomadic’ race, being unable

⁶⁶ Mehnert, *Kompromisslose Räume*, 77.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 79.

⁶⁸ Quoted in Staudenmeier, “Fascist Ecology,” 11.

⁶⁹ Biehl, “Ecology,” 39.

to root in any soil.⁷⁰ Their nomadic nature was opposed to the Germanic ‘settler’ nature, and this opposition was framed in *spatial* terms: ‘The contrary and also spatially frontal positioning is established by the recurring reprehensible designation of the Jewish ‘race’ as, according to Rosenberg, the ‘opposite race’, and in a horizontal, direct juxtaposition geographically as well as socio-spatially with an implied ‘counter-race’.⁷¹ This spacialization of the ‘Jewish race,’ and opposing it to the ‘German race’ was essential in order to consolidate the idea that some *Volk* was necessarily rooted in some *Boden*.

So, it is not the case that anyone on the German soil was rooted there. One might say that some people were on the German soil *accidentally*, while others were there *necessarily*. Belonging to the German *Volk* was the deciding factor here of course. According to Schinkel, the *Volk* is a type of ‘domesticated History,’⁷² and it is this form of time that makes the Earth into *Boden* for a *Volk*. And this is actually something we’ve already seen: it is the history of the *Volk*, through its *primordial powers of cultural creation*, that over time transforms the simple landscape into a space in which the *Volk* is rooted. The individual is rooted *necessarily* into the soil by virtue of the *Volk* as a temporal force.

I believe we now have the full picture to go into the core argument I want to make here: that the unity of (or co-constitutive relationship between) Blood and Soil is best characterized as *Heimat*. Now, in the previous part I’ve given an extensive analysis of the historical use and meaning of *Heimat*; I’ve shown through a study of historical and academic literature that it was the union of the *Volk* and the Soil, something experienced directly by every individual as a location they are tied to by the history of their community. What I’ve done in this chapter so far is investigate *exactly* how these notions connect.

In *Heimat*, culture and landscape become indistinguishable. This is also exemplified by the quote above about the German landscape in every ‘German breast’: it is not only the landscape, but also its ‘legends and fairy tales, with its songs and its melodies,’ which find their expression in every German, instilling a ‘longing for home.’ It also becomes clear that *Heimat* is not any other simple and bare *Lebensraum* when Himmler speaks about the newly annexed Polish territories: “The peasant of our racial stock has always carefully endeavored to increase the natural powers of the soil, plants, and animals, and to preserve the balance of the whole of nature. For him, respect for divine creation is the measure of all culture. If, therefore,

⁷⁰ Trepl, *Die Idee der Landschaft*, 204.

⁷¹ Mehnert, *Kompromisslose Räume*, 78.

⁷² Willem Schinkel and Rogier van Reekum *Theorie van de Kraal: Kapitaal, Ras, Fascisme* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2019), 12.

the new Lebensräume (living spaces) are to become a homeland [*Heimat*] for our settlers, the planned arrangement of the landscape to keep it close to nature is a decisive prerequisite. It is one of the bases for fortifying the German Volk.”⁷³ It is the precisely mutual *aufhebung* of Volk and Soil that is called *Heimat*, and it ties together all the separate aspects of racial hygiene, the natural preservation, culture, etc, we’ve analysed so far. As Biehl writes, *Heimat* is that in which the *Volk* becomes ‘biologically embedded’⁷⁴ – and we might add that *Heimat* is also that through which the Soil becomes ‘racially expressed.’

Since the individual body is the expression of *Blut und Boden*, this means that it is also the expression of the *Heimat*. If we take seriously the idea of a spacialized *Volk* (due to its specific relation to *Boden*) becomes the precondition for the individual body as a *Körperraum*, and if the *Heimat* is this spatializing-racializing relation that constitutes both blood and soil, this means that the individual body is the expression of *Heimat*. *Heimat* is then the very precondition for the National Socialist conception of an individual as being tied to an ordered history and land. *Heimat* is the space and time in which the individual must necessarily be thought. This is confirmed by Mehnert, when she writes how the *Heimat* is visible in every body: ‘[Racism] is still fundamentally polarized towards visible, physical markers and thinks in terms of a system of ‘purity’, uniformity and seclusion of the subject or various homogenized groups. Here, the body represents a variation of its containing-space, which has clear boundaries. [...] Spatial-theoretical concepts such as ‘*Heimat*’ are also represented and depicted physically and enter and influence the social dialogue through the visibility of the body.’⁷⁵ We see here how the body is both an expression of *Heimat*, and how *Heimat* can only be understood through the body. It is only in this context, of blood and soil, *Heimat* and individual, that we can understand that according to the Nazis, *Heimatschutz* was *Naturschutz*, and how the only logical consequence of this was, according to Bäumer, ‘nature protection and eugenics.’⁷⁶

Husserl and Heimat

Husserl wrote the *Umsturz* in May 1934 – little more than a year after Hitler became *Reichskanzler* and a month before the Night of Long Knives. Tumultuous times indeed, and knowing what we do about *Heimat*, it seems strange that Husserl uses the same terms as the National Socialists did, and that in the *Umsturz* (as I will show later), *Heimat*, *Volk* and *Boden*

⁷³ Quoted in Staudenmaier, “Fascist Ecology,” 13.

⁷⁴ Biehl, “Ecology,” 23.

⁷⁵ Mehnert, *Kompromisslose Räume*, 97.

⁷⁶ Quoted in Staudenmaier, “Fascist Ecology,” 12.

even relate to each other in the same way as in Nazi ‘ideology.’ Husserl must also surely have been familiar with Nazi ideology regarding *Heimat* and how it was popularized through *Heimatliteratur* and *Heimatvereine*, since *Heimatkunde* (*Heimat* studies) was taught in a lot of schools and universities already since the Weimar years and this ‘became a preferred practice of the Nazi state as well.’⁷⁷ So while Husserl of course was *not* a National Socialist, he must have been intimately familiar with their use of *Heimat*.

Already in 1921 Husserl wrote of the effects of rising antisemitism in Germany and the consolidation of who counted as German and who did not:

‘I by no means feel *uprooted, lost, homeless* [*Heimatlos*]. In *earthly* terms, I am indeed without a fatherland and without a people. But I feel myself and my work, which I continue to work on with all my life forces, all the more firmly centred on God, who has destined me to be lonesome. The "German-national" turn is now taking hold of almost the entire German people. [...] And perhaps there will come a time when people will seek for me, perhaps a god will not ask what the unadulterated Germanic peoples define as "German"; perhaps there is a *true-to-the-roots* Germanness, that of the spiritual being.’⁷⁸ [my emphasis]

In this letter we can already feel Husserl’s struggle with rootedness and *Heimat*. Herskowitz describes the sentiment expressed in this and other letters as Husserl’s ‘understanding that he has been expelled not only from his university, but from the German nation of which he considered himself a proud son. He was no longer a German – he was a Jew.’⁷⁹ However, he does not need a *Heimat* in the German earthly fatherland, he tells himself – his *Heimat* he finds in something more spiritual, and he hopes that there can be a redefinition of a more *spiritual* Germanness. The reason he does not feel *Heimatlos* is because he seems to still feel rooted in this kind of Germanness.

However, as we have seen, this is not all that different from the way the National Socialists theorised their relationship to their Germanness and *Heimat*. Already with Rosenberg I have shown that National Socialists *did* think of the Germans being defined by a certain spirit. It might be that Husserl is *not* rejecting the ‘national turn,’ out of some sort of anti-nationalistic

⁷⁷ Williams, “The Chords of the German Soul Are Tuned to Nature,” 376.

⁷⁸ Edmund Husserl, *Briefwechsel: Band III Die Göttinger Schule*, eds. Elisabeth Schuhmann and Karl Schuhmann (Dordrecht: Springer Science+Business Media, 1994), 43.

⁷⁹ Daniel M. Herskowitz, “The Husserl-Heidegger Relationship in the Jewish Imagination,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 110, no. 3 (2020): 497.

or anti-German sentiment on his part. He seems to be rejecting it because *he* is excluded from it, and that there is a true-to-the-roots, spiritual Germanness in which he *would* be included. Husserl's comments about the Roma, which Moran paraphrases as them not belonging 'to the spiritual essence of Europe,'⁸⁰ corroborate my suspicion. A spiritual Germanness would of course belong to the spiritual essence of Europe – which also means that the Roma would be excluded from Germanness in the same way Husserl was by the Nazi's. So not only does Husserl root his *Heimat* in a spiritual Germanness like the National Socialists, he excludes others from this Germanness in the same ways.

Husserl reaffirms this spiritual *Heimat* in a letter in 1933, in a time where the political reality posed a challenge for peaceful thinking:

‘Do not let the all-too-human get to you. We may and must be grateful that we have a higher *Heimat* in the world of ideas and can be so sure of working for a better future for mankind.’⁸¹

While this *Heimat* in the ‘world of ideas,’ in philosophy, seems to be different than the *Heimat* Husserl derives from a ‘spiritual Germanness,’ I would argue that this isn't necessarily the case. Philosophy, as science, is for Husserl a specifically *European* enterprise, because it is ‘the goal or telos of European humanity (founded on the ancient Greek “breakthrough” to philosophy and science),’ as Moran summarizes.⁸² This spiritual Germanness (as part of the spirit of Europe) and the world of ideas (as philosophy) are indistinguishable for Husserl. Now, Moran argues that this idea of Husserl precisely goes *against* National Socialism, since it is a universalist doctrine instead of a racial/cultural relativist one.⁸³ However, in the same paper, Moran shows how students of Husserl take his ideas and how these are indeed not incompatible with National Socialism at all. Instead, they merely neglect the biological aspect of Nazi ideology rather than contradicting it – undercutting most of the strength of his argument.⁸⁴ Not strange at all, when even Moran notes that according to Husserl ‘others cultures will embrace Europeanization, and never vice-versa: the European will never feel an urge to “Indianize.”’⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Dermot Moran, ““Even the Papuan is a Man and not a Beast”: Husserl on Universalism and the Relativity of Cultures,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 49, no. 4 (2011): 465.

⁸¹ Edmund Husserl, *Briefwechsel: Band IV Die Freiburger Schöle*, eds. Elisabeth Schuhmann and Karl Schuhmann (Dordrecht: Springer Science+Business Media, 1994), 198.

⁸² Moran, “Even the Papuan is a Man and not a Beast,” 464.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 475.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 471.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 466.

Husserl also talks about his old *Heimat* in for example Prague, and he is delighted when in 1935 he is invited to talk there. He appears to snidefully remark that ‘after the prompt authorisation of the Ministry of the Interior (!) it seems that I am not counted among the dung heap of non-Aryans after all.’⁸⁶ Husserl also wasn’t allowed to publish in any journals in Germany.⁸⁷

Under the National Socialist state, however much Husserl might have professed his *Heimat* be in the spiritual realm of ‘philosophy,’ he did feel ‘bereft of any *Heimat*.’⁸⁸ He felt the understandable longing to return to Prague, his old *Heimat*, since he ‘couldn’t last much longer in Germany,’⁸⁹ especially after the ‘bomb’ of the Nuremberg Laws on the 15th of September, 1935.⁹⁰ Husserl felt that as a Jew ‘[it] is truly impossible for us to remain in G[ermany] without suffocating spiritually.’⁹¹ Husserl felt spiritually suffocated because of his exclusion from the German people, and yearned for his old *Heimat* in which he still was considered a true German.

We see then that Husserl wrote the *Umsturz* in a politically tumultuous time. We might theorize that because he felt a disconnect from a Germanness which he did explicitly value,⁹² it might thus come as no surprise that he looked for a steady grounding and theorized about a rooted home. But the curious thing is that in this search for a ground, he seems to use vocabulary which, as I’ve shown, carries a *lot* of reactionary baggage and was directly utilized by the National Socialists. While he obviously was not a National Socialist himself, I’ll be showing in the following chapter that in his arguments about the Earth as *Boden* he reproduces the same structures as their use by National Socialists. We should want a phenomenology of earth which is anti-fascist, or at least one which is not committed to fascism – whether these are synonymous or not is outside the scope of this paper.

A look at Husserl’s argument in the *Umsturz* about the Earth is therefore important. In the next chapter, I shall provide an egological and essentialist reading of the *Umsturz*, and shall present its relation to National Socialism as a *reappropriation*. In the final chapter, I shall argue that this reading neglects important moments in the *Umsturz*, and that this new co-constitutive reading makes us have to view the text as a *transcendental justification* of National Socialism.

⁸⁶ Husserl, “*Die Freiburger Schüle*,” 328.

⁸⁷ Edmund Husserl, *Briefwechsel: Band IX Familienbriefe*, eds. Elisabeth Schuhmann and Karl Schuhmann (Dordrecht: Springer Science+Business Media, 1994), 129.

⁸⁸ Husserl, “*Familienbriefe*,” 232.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 247.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 246.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 462.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 158.

CHAPTER 2: THE *UMSTURZ* AS A GENEALOGY OF ESSENCE

In chapter 1, we have shown two general things. We started our investigation by noticing a curious thing in Husserl's *Umsturz*; namely, that a couple of key concepts he uses were also used heavily in National Socialist rhetoric and propaganda around the time Husserl wrote the text. Specifically, these were *Heimat*, *Boden* and *Volk*. Not only did we show their usage in Hitler's speeches and other Nazi rhetoric, we also showed, by way of historical investigation, that from their inception these words were steeped in conservatism, which has led some authors to claim that their general and popular usage in the Weimar period and before had always been proto-fascistic. Second, we've analysed not only their presence in National Socialist ideology, but also their meaning. We've shown the complex co-constitutive relationship of *Volk* and *Boden* as *Heimat*, and shown how this is related to the individual, among other things, as *Körperraum*. This historical and ideological analysis of the way these terms were used by those it would be fair to call Husserl's enemies makes us have to read Husserl's *Umsturz* to see if indeed he uses these key concepts in the same way, and if so, what is to be concluded from it.

In this chapter, I will analyse the *Umsturz* through the lens of our first interpretation. I will provide an egological reading of the text, which definitely has some *prima facie* merit. With this egological reading I will show that the *Erdboden* has a 'privileged role in the constitutive genesis,' as Sallis writes, but that it is nevertheless 'submitted [...] back to transcendental life.'⁹³ This reading will give us the role of the *Erdboden* as *beheimaten*, making-at-home, which will then be made a function of the transcendental ego. We will then read Husserl's text as a genealogy of the constitution of *Heimat* and *Volk* as essences. On this view, the *Umsturz* becomes a text that analyses how the 'German national turn' was possible, and its *meaning* – the way the people experienced as such their *Heimat*.

Note that I will argue against this interpretation in the next chapter. There, with the help of Steinbock's notion of generative phenomenology, I will argue that the proper way to read the *Umsturz* is that the transcendental earth and the transcendental ego co-constitute each other *via Volk*. The implications for the text's relation to National Socialism will, be that Husserl does *not* give us an essential re-appropriation of these terms, but a transcendental *justification*.

The Egological Interpretation

There is a point in the *Umsturz* at which the apodictic ego makes its appearance on the page, to the surprise (and seemingly to the annoyance) of many commentators. This happens later in the

⁹³ John Sallis, *Double Truth* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), 51.

text, but it is important to note that in this interpretation, which gives constitutive priority to the transcendental ego, the ego doesn't appear in the text *ex nihilo*. As Chouraqui paraphrases Merleau-Ponty, 'any philosophy that begins with the cogito shall finish with the cogito.'⁹⁴ This means that while the presence of the ego is only made explicit later, it is already present in the beginning – and I think that this is true. Husserl starts out by analysing the Earth as a precondition for bodies in their capacity for movement, and whether the motion and corporeality of the Earth in the Copernican scientific view carries any apperceptive validity for us. About this he states that the demonstration of this validity 'has its subjective starting point and ultimate anchorage in the Ego who does the demonstrating.'⁹⁵ It is ego with its *Leib* which opens us up to bodies in general,⁹⁶ and it is therefore not that strange that when we take this as the start of the analysis of the movement of bodies, this circle seems to be closed at the end of the text with the appearance of the ego (whether it is in fact closed, we will discuss later).

Let us concretely look at Husserl's analysis of bodies and movement, and in what way the Earth is related to this. Is the earth merely an accidental body among bodies, as it is in the 'Copernican' scientific view, or does it have a more fundamental role as transcendental or originary? As Sallis writes, the question of earth (if there is such a thing) in Husserl is 'the question of origin.'⁹⁷ Is the earth originally apperceived as a body in the way Copernican science claims?

We of course know from the Copernican theories and other scientific observations that the earth *does* move, right? Is the earth not a body moving through space, around the sun and its own axis? Husserl wishes to challenge this claim at a transcendental level: 'And if this claim can be disputed, this dispute can only happen because the modern apperception of the world as world of infinite Copernican horizons has not become for us an apperception of the world that has been confirmed through an intuition of the world that has been actually accomplished.'⁹⁸ This means that if we wish to dispute the Copernican claim, this can only happen on the basis that it is not how we apperceive the world – meaning that claiming the earth moves carries no validity for us in our intuition of the earth. And Husserl's project in general is not to demonstrate

⁹⁴ Frank Chouraqui, "Merleau-Ponty and the Order of the Earth," *Research in Phenomenology* 46 (2016): 59.

⁹⁵ From here on, most quotes are from the English translation of the *Umsturz*. Edmund Husserl, "Foundational Investigations of the Phenomenological Origin of the Spatiality of Nature: The Originary Ark, the Earth, Does Not Move," trans. Fred Kersten and Leonard Lawlor, 120. Published in: Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Husserl at the Limits of Phenomenology*, eds. Leonard Lawlor and Bettina Bergo, trans. John O'Neill and Leonard Lawlor (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2002)

⁹⁶ Husserl, "Foundational Investigations," 121.

⁹⁷ Sallis, *Double Truth*, 39.

⁹⁸ Husserl, "Foundational Investigations," 120.

validity or objectivity, but to show how objectivity is possible. In even claiming that phenomenologically the earth might not be a moving body in the Copernican sense, Husserl sees its confirmation – this claim could not be made if indeed we apperceived the earth as a moving body.

So let us investigate in what way we apperceive the earth, or what the relation of the earth is to moving bodies. Phrased differently, the question becomes: From where or what do moving bodies gain their constitutive validity? Husserl writes that '[bodies] are in actual and possible movement' and that all modes of movement are 'modes which belong to the being of bodies.'⁹⁹ This means that if something is a body, it moves, or at least, *could* move: 'there is the possibility of possibility always open within actuality, within continuation, within change of direction, etc.'¹⁰⁰

Since the possibility of modes of movement belongs to the being of bodies, the next question becomes what the preconditions for such movements are. Husserl, as noted before, starts this part of the investigation at the ego, in which we have our 'subjective starting point and ultimate anchorage.'¹⁰¹ The ego is always in the world, and has its 'flesh [*Leib*]' as the central body [*Zentralkörper*] among the others, all of which are given intuitively with their own essential contents at rest or in motion, in change or nonchanged.'¹⁰² If I kick a ball to someone, it goes away *from me*, and if they kick the ball back, that ball returns *towards me*.

But when I'm on the train, I do not experience other chairs as moving in the same way as the kicked ball – they don't move away from me. In a scenario like this, Husserl calls the train a 'ground-body,' a *Bodenkörper*: 'Necessarily a motion is relative when experienced with respect to a "ground-body," which is itself experienced as at rest and in unity with my corporeal flesh.'¹⁰³ However, the train *is* of course moving, since it is a body: all *Bodenkörper* are 'naturally, relatively at rest and relatively in motion with reference to the earth-ground [*Erdboden*] which is not experienced as a body—not actually and primordially experienced.'¹⁰⁴ The movement of bodies, whether they are regular *Körper* or *Bodenkörper*, always occurs in 'terrestrial space, [in which] bodies are mobile and they have a horizon of possible movement.'¹⁰⁵ It is the earth to which movement is relative, which is the precondition for movement as its space. Therefore, the earth as a precondition for movement is neither at rest

⁹⁹ Ibid., 119.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 120.

¹⁰² Ibid., 121.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 119.

nor in motion: ‘in the primordial shape of its representation, the earth itself does not move and does not rest; only in relation to it are movement and rest given as having their sense of movement and rest.’¹⁰⁶

The relation between *Boden*, movement, and *Körper* here is crucial. The possibility of movement belongs essentially to bodies, and as such, needs a *ground* from which this movement gets its sense. An ‘ultimate’ ground for movement can therefore not be a body, as Himanka shows in his explication of one of the arguments in the *Umsturz*.¹⁰⁷ And so, Husserl nominates the earth for this role, not as *Bodenkörper* but as *Erdboden*, the earth-ground. And as *Boden*, the earth neither moves nor rests, and is therefore not a body either. Note that the English ‘ground’ as a translation of *Boden* does not imply a logical grounding.

From now on, whenever I talk about the earth (or other things) in their function of ‘ultimate’ *Boden*, I shall refer to this type of *Boden* (as Husserl does in the text infrequently) as a *Stammboden*, keeping to Steinbock’s convention.¹⁰⁸ It will make clearer that there is a distinction between the originary *Boden* as *Stammboden* and the intermediary *Boden* as *Bodenkörper*.

However, maybe there is a way in which the earth *can* be experienced as a *Bodenkörper* instead of *Erdboden*, as the Copernicans claim. Husserl asks: ‘Does motion, hence corporeality, make sense for the earth?’¹⁰⁹ Is its location maybe in the totality of space as a system of coordinates, which Himanka calls ‘absolute space’?¹¹⁰ Can the totality of (outer) space not provide the ‘ground’ for the earth to move, as a ‘system of locations of all bodies’?¹¹¹

Once again, Husserl brings us back to the Ego to answer this question. Absolute space as the ground for movement carries no apperceptive validity for the ego, since ‘the ground on which my flesh walks or does not walk is not experienced as a body to move away from or not completely.’¹¹² It is the earth that has this apperceptive validity as the ground of movement, since I do not experience the actual ground as something I can move away from – even when I jump, I don’t experience the Earth as something I can *leave*. Moreover, since I can ‘transpose myself’ into every other person, I know that this is the same for them.¹¹³ Therefore, ‘space’ as

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 118.

¹⁰⁷ Juha Himanka, “Husserl’s Argumentation,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 58, no. 3 (March 2005): 635.

¹⁰⁸ Anthony J. Steinbock, *Home and Beyond: Generative Phenomenology after Husserl* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1995), 119.

¹⁰⁹ Husserl, “Foundational Investigations,” 123.

¹¹⁰ Himanka, “Husserl’s Argumentation,” 629.

¹¹¹ Husserl, “Foundational Investigations,” 123.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

the ground for the movement of the earth carries not only no apperceptive validity for *me*, but for *every* subject: ‘For all the earth is for everyone the same earth’.¹¹⁴

This forms the theoretical basis for Husserl to explore the ramifications and limits of this phenomenological insight into the earth. From here on out the text takes on a more experimental character, raising problems and objections not head-on but in the form of thought experiments, the point of which is often not spelled out in the text. They are not all equally relevant for the purposes of this paper however. What interests us here is the venture of these thought experiments into more abstract territory, concerning ‘flying machines’ and ‘spaceships.’ It is this part of the text that allows us to understand 1) how Husserl moves from the *Erdboden* as being constitutive of bodies as moving to bodies as such, and 2) how the originary role of the *Erdboden* relates to *necessity*, which will allow us to analyse Husserl’s use of *Heimat* and *Volk*. I will analyse the relation between these terms in the *Umsturz*, in this egological interpretation, as an account of the constitution of *essences*. I will show that on this interpretation indeed the terms *Heimat*, *Boden* and *Volk* relate to each other in the same ways as they do in National Socialist ‘ideology,’ but that on this account, this does not make Husserl complicit in the consolidation of it – rather, in his analysis, one might say that he is trying to come to terms with the ‘national turn’ and trying to re-appropriate these terms, these essences. Let us turn to some of the relevant thought experiments in the *Umsturz* and see what we can learn from them.

1. *Earth as Sphere*

In this thought experiment, which was more of a thought experiment for Husserl than it is for some humans alive today, Husserl describes a ‘flying machine’ with which we would fly so high that we would see the earth as a sphere, a small ball suspended in space. Would we, if we see the ‘whole’ earth, the earth in astronomical context, automatically ‘arrive at corporeality in the sense that the earth is ‘astronomically’ just one body among others, among the celestial bodies’?¹¹⁵ With this thought experiment, Husserl implicitly asks the question: *Is there a mode of experiencing the earth such that it loses its function as Stammboden?* Husserl argues that it there isn’t: ‘For us humans on the earth, the bird or the flying-machine moves, and that is valid for the bird itself and the people on the flying-machine insofar as they experience the earth as the source [*Stamm*] “body,” as the ground “body.”’¹¹⁶ The earth does not lose its apperceptive validity as *Stammboden* when we experience it from as a *sphere in space*, since we still travelled

¹¹⁴ Ibid..

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 125.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

away from it as our *Stammboden*. If there is *not* a mode of experiencing the Earth such that the Earth loses its function as *Stammboden*, precisely because the Earth as *Stammboden* is the source of the validity of each mode of experience, then this is the point in the text where Husserl shifts from the Earth as the prerequisite for bodies as moving to bodies as such. This is what Himanka aims at when he writes that ‘bodies are founded as bodies in relation to the earth.’¹¹⁷ Our *experience* of the earth does not influence the transcendental function of the earth as *Stammboden*. The reverse still holds – precisely because in its function as *Stammboden*, the transcendental earth influences every experience we have of the Earth.

2. *Flying Machine*

We’d still always need an ‘ultimate’ ground for movement and experience, and this is still the earth’s function in the above case of the flying machine. But, Husserl asks, is it not a possibility that the Earth might lose that function of *Stammboden* if something else were to gain it? This time he doesn’t concern himself with absolute space, but he asks whether it would be possible for the *Stammboden*-function to be switched from the Earth to the flying machine itself? Would the Earth then become a *Bodenkörper*, if not a regular body among bodies?¹¹⁸ Is it necessarily the earth that carries the function of *Stammboden*? This is the place in the text where Husserl introduces the notion of necessity,¹¹⁹ which Sallis calls the ‘second discourse’ on the earth in Husserl’s text (within the domain of the first discourse, regarding the role of the earth as origin).¹²⁰ It is through these thought experiments that Husserl develops the meaning of *Stammboden* as *beheimaten*, or making-at-home. Through this meaning, he then comes to his analysis of *Heimat* and *Volk* in relation to this (*Stamm*)*Boden*.

2.1 *The Two Earths*

Husserl starts by investigating what would happen if there are two fragments of earths, and people would be able to fly between them. The implicit question asked here is whether the Earth as *Stammboden* is necessarily *unique*. His answer is that yes, the *Erdboden* is necessarily unique. These two Earths together ‘become one ground and, at the same time, each would be a

¹¹⁷ Himanka, “Husserl’s Argumentation for the Pre-Copernican View of the Earth,” 637.

¹¹⁸ Husserl, “Foundational Investigations,” 125.

¹¹⁹ One might also claim that the discourse on necessity is already introduced when Husserl makes the argument concerning kinaesthetic rest (not covered in this analysis), but ultimately where the exact point of the start of discourse on necessity is located in the text is of minor consequence to my argument – especially since the kinaesthetic rest argument is disregarded by Husserl, and he makes a case for the validity of necessity at this point in the text.

¹²⁰ Sallis, *Double Truth*, 48.

body for the other,' they would be '[t]wo fragments of one earth with one humanity.'¹²¹ This means that the *Erdboden* in its originary role of *Stammboden* can be comprised of multiple 'bodies' from the perspective of one of its fragments (insofar as we can talk about something unique being comprised of multiple parts).

2.2 *Born on a Ship: Stammboden as making-at-home*

After showing that the *Erdboden* can be comprised of 'separate' parts, Husserl asks whether the Earth whether the earth can *become* fragmented in this way later on. Concretely, he talks about whether we can start on earth and then extend the *Stammboden* to (space)ships. Without going into detail too much, he thinks it is possible for the spaceship to become *part* of the *Stammboden* and function in a similar way as the 'two earths' example. But Husserl raises a more interesting (and radical) point: what if you were born on such a ship, and didn't know about the Earth at all?¹²² Can one be born on a one of the 'two' parts of earth, without realizing it is part of a larger earth? From the 'Earth as a sphere' we know that we always experience the earth as *Stammboden*. Here, Husserl begins the analysis of the *Stammboden* as a *Heimat*.

Husserl's answer to this question is conditional 'yes' – he claims that the ship was 'was my ontic ground [*Seinsboden*] until I learned that we were only sailors on the larger earth, etc. Thus a multiplicity of ground-lands, of homelands [*Heimstätte*; homesteads], is unified into one ground-land [*Bodenstätte*].'¹²³ As Sallis writes, 'the spaceship could function as one's initial earthbasis until such time as one came to realize the link to the earth itself.'¹²⁴ There is therefore a certain experience that is effectively based on a *mistake* of sorts, which is then rectified when we realize this perceived *Stammboden* was part of the *Erdboden* as *Stammboden* all along. I read this in a similar sense to a child being on a train and making the mistake that the train is not moving, until it looks out the window and sees trees and cows speeding by. Sallis reads the introduction of 'historicity' at this point in the text, as the gap between the ship as *Stammboden* and its experiential unification with the Earth as *Stammboden*.¹²⁵ We see that the ship, as *Seinsboden* (a *Stammboden* which is no longer merely the ground of movement and rest but the ground of *being*), is identified with a homestead. The Earth as *Stammboden* is taking on the role of *beheimaten*, making-at-home.

¹²¹ Husserl, "Foundational Investigations," 125.

¹²² Ibid., 126.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Sallis, *Double Truth*, 49.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

Husserl continues, and tries to push this thought to its limits. What if I was born on such a spaceship and it was *never* unified with the earth in my experience? Can there be a *Boden* that functions as *Stammboden* but is not the Earth, if I have never been on the earth? Is the Earth not a necessary *Stammboden*? Is a *Stammboden* necessarily the Earth?

Husserl claims that the earth is indeed a necessary *Stammboden*, even if one was never brought ‘in contact’ with the earth. He writes: ‘In that connection it is indeed possible that this primordial history would be a collection of people living and developing entirely by themselves, except that they all are held mutually within the open and indeterminate horizon of earthly space.’¹²⁶ Note that this is not yet his argument, but his conclusion. If one lived forever separated from the Earth, the earth would still be one’s *Stammboden* necessarily – one would still live in earthly space.

How does Husserl argue for our necessary connection to the *Erdboden* as *Stammboden*? First, Husserl accepts that indeed a ship would be one’s ‘earth,’ one’s *Stammboden* in some sense: ‘If I am born a sailor’s child, then a part of my development has taken place on the ship. But the ship would not be characterized as a ship for me in relation to the earth—as long as no unity would be produced between the ship and the earth—the ship would itself be my “earth,” my homeland [*Urheimat*].’¹²⁷ It is at this point that Husserl uses the term ‘*Urheimat*’ and the concept of ‘*Heimat*’ in general for the first time in the *Umsturz*. Husserl relates *Heimat* to the function of a *Stammboden* as *Urheimat*. This means that the function of the *Stammboden* in a concrete sense is that someone whose *Stammboden* it is, is made at home on that *Stammboden*. So, the sailor’s child is at home on the ship since that ship, without its unification with the earth, functions as their *Stammboden*.

Furthermore, the *Stammboden*’s function of making-at-home (*beheimaten*) is something that happens for the ego. It is a necessity that the ego experiences itself as always already being-made-at-home, and this is then made into a function of the transcendental ego itself by Husserl on this interpretation, when we read that ‘everything comes to this: we must not forget the pre-givenness and constitution belonging to the apodictic Ego or to me [...]’.¹²⁸ If we read the transcendental function of the *Stammboden* in this way, meaning that it is relegated to a function of the transcendental ego, then we can read the rest of Husserl’s investigation as a *genealogy of essence*. These transcendental functions are discovered – we are always made at home, and this ‘home’ can even be a ship if the subject has never come into contact with the earth. The essence

¹²⁶ Husserl, “Foundational Investigations,” 127.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 126.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 129.

of the ship is constituted as a *Heimat*, but Husserl investigates further: he analyses the constitution of the essential relation between *Boden*, *Heimat* and *Volk*.

To get to the essential relation between *Erdboden*, *Heimat* and *Volk*, Husserl first needs to investigate the ship situation further, because it seems possible that this ‘unification of groundlands’ might not happen – ‘as long as no unity would be produced between the ship and the earth’ the ship would be the sole *Stammboden*. However, Husserl will reject the idea that ultimately the ship can be a *Stammboden* without the earth being a *Stammboden*, and he will do this through relating the essence of *Heimat* to *Volk*.

How does Husserl argue that the *Erdboden* will be constituted as the sailor’s child’s *Heimat*, even though they might be unaware of this? He writes the following:

‘But my parents are not then primordially at home [*urbeheimatet*] on the ship; they still have the old home, another primordial homeland [*Urheimat*]. In the change of homelands (if homeland has the ordinary sense of territory peculiar to individual or family in each case) there remains universally stated that each ego has a primordial home [*Urheimat*]*—*and every primordial people [*Urvolk*] with their primordial territory has a primordial home [*Urvolk*]. But every people [*Volk*] and their historicity and every super-people (a super-nation) are themselves ultimately made at home [*beheimatet*], naturally, on the “earth.”’¹²⁹

Note that this is the Kersten and Lawlor translation – I will be using my own translation in the next section. How is the *Erdboden* essentially constituted as *Heimat* for the ego? As Husserl says, every *Volk* is made at home naturally on the earth. The *Erdboden* is the *Heimat* for the *Volk*. It is through the parents, who have their *Heimat* on the Earth, that the earth is also constituted essentially as *Heimat* for their child, even though they might never experience it as such. The child born on a ship is part of a *Volk*, and for the *Volk*, the *Erdboden* is constituted as *Heimat* – they are *beheimatet* on it ‘naturally,’ necessarily. It is the ‘historicity’ of the people which has been made-at-home on the earth – the apperception of the earth has been sedimented, constituted, as *Heimat*, through its essential relation to *Volk*. What this means in Husserlian terms is that *Volk* and *Heimat* cannot be meaningfully apprehended in their separation, like colour and extension. *Volk* is that which relates us to the earth as a historical force. On this

¹²⁹ Ibid., 126.

reading, Sallis's identification of the 'second discourse' within the *Umsturz*, that of necessity, is characterized as an *essential necessity*.

We won't concern ourselves any further with thought experiments that Husserl engages with, since, on this reading, they all share the same purpose of showing that the Earth is always essentially constituted as a *Heimat* for us. Scholars like Johnson treat all thought experiments in the *Umsturz* as serving the same purpose – and indeed, Johnson rejects fundamental parts of the *Umsturz* precisely because he reads the text as egological.¹³⁰ This, I think, is a weakness of this reading – and these thought experiments will be elaborated on somewhat (with some restraints regarding space, of course) in the next interpretation.

Husserl writes that all sense is *earthly* – and the earth, as shown, is always constituted essentially as *Heimat*. How, then, is all sense essentially constituted as *Heimatlich*? Husserl claims that it is because of a certain way intersubjectivity is constituted (a transcendental intersubjectivity ultimately subjected to the transcendental ego, of course): 'this constitution [of *Erboden*] already presupposes that my flesh and the known others and the open horizons of others are constituted, distributed in space within the space which, insofar as an open field of bodies that are near and far, surrounds the earth and endows the bodies with the sense of being earthly bodies and space with the sense of being earthly space.'¹³¹ All this earthly 'sense is rooted [*verwurzelt*] and has its orientation center in me and in a narrower We who live with one another.'¹³² The constitution of the *Erboden* as *Heimat* is linked to transcendental subjectivity, and to *intersubjectivity in a concrete historical form*: 'a narrower We who live with one another' – which, if we are to read this comment in context of what Husserl has said about this sort of 'We' in this text, we are to read it as *Volk*, since this has been how he has referred to this 'narrower We' consistently. The transcendental ego, to which *Stammboden* and *intersubjectivity* are relegated, constitutes these in their essential relation concretely as *Boden*, *Heimat*, and *Volk*.

Genealogical Analysis as Reappropriation

What do we make of the relation of the *Umsturz* to National Socialism on this interpretation? I believe the interpretation presented here is a generally uncontroversial reading of the *Umsturz*,

¹³⁰ Andrew Tyler Johnson, "A Critique of the Husserlian and Heideggerian Concepts of Earth: Toward a Transcendental Earth That Accords with the Experience of Life," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 45, no. 3 (2014): 224.

¹³¹ Husserl, "Foundational Investigations," 126.

¹³² *Ibid.*

except that it simply takes the actual original German more seriously than other commentators do, and therefore needs to grapple with these three terms that are essentially related in the text.

This interpretation allows us to state that Husserl might be trying to offer a ‘genealogy of essence’ – a phenomenological account of how the ‘German national turn’ was possible, or, put differently, how the phenomena that the Nazi party was so obsessed with in their rhetoric and worldview were (are) constituted. This doesn’t make Husserl complicit in either justifying or consolidating these ways of experiencing the world – it is merely him analysing how it was possible for the German people to apperceive the earth as a *Heimatboden* and themselves as a *Volk* because of the sedimentation of these essences. He has given us transcendental categories (subjected to the transcendental ego) such as intersubjectivity and *Stammboden* to explain how the sedimentation or constitution of these essences are possible.

Analysis of these essences is not a consolidation of them on this view: on the contrary, it might be seen as a grappling with the situation and Husserl trying to reappropriate these concepts. By grappling with the situation, I mean that Husserl (on this view), in trying to analyse why the German national turn happened, locates its possibility in the transcendental ego itself – meaning that the danger of the constitution of these essences lies in the very possibilities for meaning in general. The analysis of the constitution of these phenomena and their essential relations might be read as a warning – or an attempt to reappropriate these terms. How? Because we might say that there is a critical distance between the *Umsturz* and what it analyses, that we could read the terms *Volk*, *Heimat* and *Boden* here as “*Volk*,” “*Heimat*,” and “*Boden*,” – meaning that we get more distance from these phenomena in a sense, so that they might lose their grip on us. On the other hand, the analysis of these evocative words might open a space for a change in their signification, since Husserl has shown how they are constituted, sedimented – and therefore might be constituted differently.

However, I think that this relatively uncontroversial analysis of the *Umsturz* misses some important moments in the text, and because of the severity of these moments, is not merely incomplete, but wrong. In the next section, I shall give a different interpretation, which we open up on by a reading of Steinbock’s generative phenomenology. The main difference between the two interpretations is the relation between the earth and the ego. While on the view we have discussed, the transcendental earth is relegated to being a part of the transcendental ego, on the next interpretation I shall argue that the proper way to read the *Umsturz* is that it argues for a *co-constitution* of the transcendental earth and the transcendental ego, *through Volk*.

CHAPTER 3: THE *UMSTURZ* AS A TRANSCENDENTAL JUSTIFICATION

Not everyone agrees with the egological account of the *Umsturz*. One of the most influential scholars to do so is Anthony Steinbock. We shall now engage with his reading of the transcendental lifeworld which is structured as homeworld/alienworld. Unfortunately, Steinbock does not engage with the political meaning of the terms Husserl uses in the *Umsturz*, although his theory might be especially equipped to do so. Steinbock sees the Earth as a modality of the transcendental lifeworld, which as the ‘familiar’ or ‘home’ is co-constituted by the ‘alien,’ and we are always rooted in it through tradition. Due to the erasure of the borders between the transcendental and the empirical on this type of transcendental account, we shall argue that Husserl’s use of *Heimat*, *Volk* and *Boden* is all but innocent.

The Co-constitutive Interpretation

What distinguishes Steinbock’s view from the one we’ve just discussed, is what he calls his ‘non-foundational’ approach, which is nevertheless still transcendental. As he writes, ‘certainly, foundational and transcendental enterprises together can yield [...] ‘the transcendental ego’ as ground. My contention, nevertheless, is that ‘foundation’ and ‘transcendental’ are essentially distinct.’¹³³ Foundationalism is the idea that everything can ultimately be grounded in *one* principle – which in phenomenology usually becomes the transcendental ego. However, for scholars such as Džanić, the earth itself becomes such a foundational principle, solely grounding all sense.¹³⁴ Steinbock contends that a transcendental phenomenology needn’t be foundational, and in his transcendental analysis of the lifeworld as homeworld/alienworld he introduces a reading of *Erboden* that is non-foundational in this sense. With its emphasis on the ‘homeworld/alienworld’ structure and therefore the intersubjective lifeworld, Steinbock claims that his account takes Husserlian phenomenology out of its ‘egological subjectivity.’¹³⁵

Steinbock’s non-foundational transcendental account is one of the lifeworld. His analysis of the lifeworld goes beyond the project of the ontology of the lifeworld to the analysis of a transcendental conception of the lifeworld.¹³⁶ No longer do we investigate the lifeworld in

¹³³ Steinbock, *Home and Beyond*, 15.

¹³⁴ Denis Džanić, “The Earth and Pregivenness in Transcendental Phenomenology,” *Research in Phenomenology* 50 (2020): 50.

¹³⁵ Steinbock, *Home and Beyond*, 17.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 102.

how we experience it, but it becomes a precondition for experience in general. More than that; the lifeworld becomes the precondition for the *ego*. We will see later if this ego is still transcendental for Steinbock if it is founded in the lifeworld, and if this also aligns with the *Umsturz*.

Now, in his explication of the lifeworld, Steinbock argues that the lifeworld as ‘intersubjective structure’ should be conceptualized and written as ‘homeworld/alienworld.’¹³⁷ Salient here is that Steinbock makes a distinction between the *other* and the *alien*. The Other is a numerical derivative of the I and founded in the I – we are already aware of ourselves, and then we transpose ourselves into the Other. On the other hand, the alien is contrasted to the familiar, and neither is primary, nor are they reducible to one another.¹³⁸ We do not start with the familiar and then transpose ourselves into the alien; instead, the familiar is always already delimited by an encounter with the alien (and vice versa). The lifeworld is structured as both a homeworld, which is familiar, and an alienworld, which is not an ‘other’ world based on a primary homeworld, but something which is ‘co-relative or co-constitutive.’¹³⁹ Neither is completely reducible to the other, or, as Steinbock writes: ‘Here neither homeworld nor alienworld can be regarded as the ‘original sphere’ since they are in a continual historical becoming as delimited from one another. This is the sense in which home and alien are co-generative.’¹⁴⁰

This short introduction to Steinbock’s analysis of the transcendental lifeworld as non-foundational will eventually help us show 1) how we can open up onto the *Umsturz* in a reading against its supposed egology and 2) how Steinbock will read the transcendental earth as a modality of the lifeworld. Now, let us return to the *Umsturz* itself. I will show that not only does the text allow for a co-constitutive interpretation (which may or may not align exactly with Steinbock’s reading), but that this interpretation is the better interpretation upon a closer reading of the *Umsturz*. An important result of the co-constitutive nature of the transcendental earth is that the necessity Husserl has been talking about will no longer be interpreted as an *essential* necessity, but as a transcendental one. We are leaving ontological investigations behind and reading the text more transcendently – or, in its most radical form, the blurring of the lines between the two.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 183.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 59.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 179.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 179

Let us pick back up where the previous interpretation started and ended: the appearance of the apodictic ego. Husserl writes: ‘Everything comes to this: we must not forget the pregivenness and constitution belonging to the apodictic Ego, to me, to us, as the source of all actual and possible ontic sense [*Seinsinn*], of all possible broadening which can be further constructed in the developing acquired history [*Historizität*] of an already constituted world.’¹⁴¹

This is a point in the text which, as mentioned previously, many commentators take issue with: why, when Husserl is operating at the limits of phenomenology, as Merleau-Ponty accurately calls this project,¹⁴² does the apodictic Ego suddenly ‘leap onto the page quite unannounced,’¹⁴³ seemingly indicating ‘a gap between the spirit and the letter’¹⁴⁴ of the *Umsturz*? While this might be an ever-present ‘remainder’ of Husserl’s Cartesianism, I read even in this ‘relapse’ an opening for further investigation: even while relating everything back to the apodictic Ego, Husserl needs to invoke its relation to not just the world, but specifically *historicity* in the ‘already constituted world.’ Yes, the apodictic Ego might seemingly onto the page as the source of all actual and possible sense, but this sense can only be *further constructed* in the historicity of a world in which that Ego always already finds itself together with others. Husserl is even a bit unclear in his formulation in this sentence whether this pregivenness and constitution belongs to the *ego* or even to ‘us.’ So is the apodictic Ego *the* source of sense, or *a* source of sense? Steinbock reads this as a clue for a new, *generative* phenomenology, which tries to grapple with historicity and its relation to phenomenology – as developed from the genetic procedure, which already added time and horizonality to the static procedure.¹⁴⁵

Remember that Husserl is proving the idea that the Earth is a necessary *Stammboden*. The Copernicans view the earth as a body among others. So why should we not forget the apodictic Ego, historicity, others, and the world when talking about the Copernican scientific worldview? Husserl tells us the following:

‘One should not perpetrate the absurdity, indeed the absurdity, of presupposing tacitly beforehand the naturalistic or prevailing conception of the world—in order to consider then, in an anthropological and psychological way, the formation of science and of the interpretation of the world in human history, in the history of the species, within the

¹⁴¹ Husserl, “Foundational Investigations,” 129.

¹⁴² Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Husserl at the Limits of Phenomenology*, eds. Leonard Lawlor and Bettina Bergo, trans. John O’Neill and Leonard Lawlor (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2002)

¹⁴³ Steinbock, *Home and Beyond*, 120.

¹⁴⁴ Džanić, “The Earth and Pgivenness in Transcendental Phenomenology,” 50.

¹⁴⁵ Steinbock, *Home and Beyond*, 39.

evolution of the individual and people, as an obviously accidental event on the earth which might just as well have occurred on Venus or Mars. This holds too for the earth and we humans, me with my flesh and me in my generation, my people, etc.’¹⁴⁶

The absurdity of looking at the Earth as being open to the possibility of becoming an accidental *Stammboden* is question begging for Husserl. The sciences try to prove our history, me and my flesh, and my *Volk* as an ‘accidental event on the earth’, and they can only prove this by interpreting these things *as* accidental beforehand. We already presuppose the scientific world view in order to prove its truth, by which we make things accidental that are, according to Husserl, necessary. It is question begging to claim in the way the sciences do that it is not a *necessity* that human history has occurred on Earth, instead of Venus or Mars. The same holds for the other things like my *Volk* and ‘our history’ – which Husserl interestingly enough puts on the same level as *Leib*. What does this entail? Husserl elaborates:

‘Following implicitly from this, one might therefore think that the earth can no more lose its sense as “primordial homeland,” [*Urheimstatt*] as the ark of the world, than my flesh can lose its wholly unique ontic sense as primordial flesh [*Urleib*] from which every flesh derives a part of its ontic sense and as we human beings in our ontic sense precede the brutes.’¹⁴⁷

Just as my body necessarily is the *Urleib* from which other bodies get their sense, so the Earth is *necessarily* our *Urheimstatt*, or, as Husserl calls it in other places, our *Urheimat*. A *Leib* would always already be *beheimatet* for Husserl, *Heimat* always being a *Heimat* for a *Leib*. It seems that in this sense, we cannot give priority to one over the other – they both constitute one another. We are here dealing with the *Heimat* at the transcendental level, since it is the prerequisite for a *Leib* – just as the *Leib* is the prerequisite for the *Heimat*. A lived body is always already at home, while a ‘home’ is always already a home for a lived body.

Another way in which the *Umsturz* puts the *Erdboden* at the same level as the *Leib* is all the arguments for the *uniqueness* of the *Erdboden* – how it is not made up of multiple parts,

¹⁴⁶ Husserl, “Foundational Investigations,” 130.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

but even in its ‘separate’ parts forms a whole, much in the same way the *Leib* forms an organic unity in its different parts.¹⁴⁸ It is fundamental in the same way as the *Leib* in its uniqueness.

Just as in National Socialism, we see that the *Heimat* is the precondition for a body as its *Körperraum*. Husserl writes that ‘Primordially, only “the” earth-ground can be constituted with the surrounding space of bodies,’¹⁴⁹ [my emphasis] meaning that, at the level of transcendental constitution, the *Erdboden* is necessarily constituted together with the surrounding space of bodies. (*Stamm*)*Boden* and *Körperraum* are inseparable at the level of constitution. The fact that *Boden* and *Körperraum* are inseparable because is ‘this constitution [of *Erdboden*] already presupposes that my flesh and the known others and the open horizons of others are constituted,’¹⁵⁰ meaning that the *Leib* is the thing that is responsible for the constitution space through its kinaestheses.¹⁵¹ However, Husserl continues the sentence, and writes that not only does the *Leib* constitute the meaning of its space, but so too does the earth, since this space which is constituted ‘surrounds the earth and endows the bodies with the sense of being earthly bodies and space with the sense of being earthly space.’¹⁵² This space that seems to be constituted by the body also gives the body its sense as *earthly* – pointing to the co-constitution of *Leib* and Earth.

This constitution of bodies and earth, or, as Husserl emphasises in the same quote, the fact that ‘the earth is constituted with carnality and corporeality’¹⁵³ [my emphasis] is the reason that the ‘totality of the We, of human beings, of “animals,” is in this sense earthly—and at first is not opposed to the nonearthly.’¹⁵⁴ There is a co-constitution of bodies and earth, since *all sense is earthly from the start*, while at the same Husserl doesn’t neglect the constitutive nature of the body, for which the earth can only be of such a constitutive nature because the *Leib* walks on its surface.¹⁵⁵ The *Erdboden belongs to transcendental constitution*, and, what ‘belongs to constitution is, and is alone, the absolute and ultimate necessity.’¹⁵⁶ We shall return to this necessity, and exactly how Husserl proves it, later. First, let us get back to Steinbock.

¹⁴⁸ Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. Second Book: Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), 168.

¹⁴⁹ Husserl, “Foundational Investigations,” 126.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Husserl, *Ideas II*, 169.

¹⁵² Husserl, “Foundational Investigations,” 126.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 123.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 131.

Because we can see that indeed, like Steinbock, Husserl is presenting us with a non-foundational transcendental account. Husserl seems to be trying to break out of the limits of egology through the introduction of the earth. However, we might critique Steinbock's transcendental account of the lifeworld structured as homeworld/alienworld, from the perspective of the *Umsturz*, in that it locates this co-constitution purely and solely in the lifeworld. His account does not factor in the *Leib* as transcendental principle, while in the *Umsturz*, Husserl still seems to place an importance on the *Leib* as transcendental principle. Let us investigate further, if Husserl indeed opens the possibility in this text for a constitution that is transcendental for the ego, in the sense that it really transcends the transcendental ego.

The way Steinbock conceptualizes the *Erdboden* as *Stammboden* as a modality of the transcendental lifeworld is illustrative in showing how Husserl tries to prove the necessity of the Earth as *Stammboden*, as *Heimat*, through *Volk*. For Steinbock, the *Erdboden* is a modality of the transcendental lifeworld as constitutive of experience.¹⁵⁷ What does this mean? He writes: 'As *Stamm* the earth-ground is an enduring "process of generation"'¹⁵⁸ The *Erdboden* as *Heimat*, which Steinbock translates as 'homeworld,' is precisely a *Stamm* in the sense that 'Stamm entails a normal familiarity that is built up by actively repeating and appropriating and coming back to. [...] Generatively speaking, a stamm is where we generationally repeat ourselves, where we come into being and pass away, where we pick up and take up where other generations left off, and where future generations take up our contributions.'¹⁵⁹ The *Erdboden*, in its function as *Stammboden*, is the modality of the lifeworld which has the function of *beheimaten*, and is not reducible to something else in this way.

Steinbock notes that *Stamm* as can be seen as the stem of a tree, or a root, but can in a similar way 'be understood genealogically as "stock" or "lineage" in a bloodline.'¹⁶⁰ We'll explore some of the significance of this later. Steinbock distinguishes *Stamm* from *Ursprung* because, in his reading, *Stamm* is not 'unidirectional' like his reading of origin.¹⁶¹ It requires what he calls 'tradition' to be taken up. What does he mean? Well, remember that the lifeworld for Steinbock is structured as homeworld/alienworld, both constituting and delimiting each other. Now, the homeworld has a certain privileged position with regards to the people who are made at home in it – it is this world which they experience as homeworld, not as alienworld. It

¹⁵⁷ Steinbock, *Home and Beyond*, 121.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 120.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 195.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 194.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

is the homeworld to which the ego belongs.¹⁶² One belongs to it *through* tradition: ‘For as long as I have accepted a world, asserts Husserl, this world has always already been a world whose sense and validities stem from a tradition.’¹⁶³ A tradition, a ‘generational intersubjective historicity, constitutive of and constituted in a homeworld’¹⁶⁴ both forms and is taken up by the individual. This has implications for the transcendental status of the ego since, as Steinbock writes, the homeworld ‘is that through which our experiences coalesce as our own and in such a way that our world structures our experience itself.’¹⁶⁵ This means that *if* one would want to keep talking about the transcendental ego within ‘generative’ phenomenology, it would be released of its ‘egological’ role. Instead, it is firmly placed *within* the co-generation of homeworld/alienworld, released of its function as the unity of apperception by Steinbock.

So, for Steinbock, the ego is formed and related to the *Stamm* via a *tradition*. Let us look at the *Umsturz* once more to see in which sense this is also present there – and exactly which German sense Steinbock is missing in the text. How is the ego necessarily related to the Earth as *Stammboden* in the *Umsturz*? We have already looked at this to some extent in the previous interpretation, and know that it has something to do with *Volk*. As alluded to then, however, not only was I not satisfied with the interpretation, I am also unsatisfied with the English translation by Kersten and Lawlor. Let us take a closer look at the same and more passages from the *Umsturz*, this time with a more accurate translation where needed.

We return to the sailor’s child, whose *Stammboden*, whose *Heimat*, was the ship, until its unification with the Earth. But what if the child is never aware of the Earth as their *Stammboden*? Is the Earth a necessary *Stammboden*, or, in this sense, is it the *Erdboden* the transcendental category or can other things take on the role of transcendentially *beheimaten*? Remember that in the egological interpretation, Husserl showed the essential connection between *Volk*, *Erdboden* and *Heimat* – so *Volk* will once again make its entrance here. Husserl denies that it is possible for anything else besides the *Erdboden* to be the *Stammboden*, and writes that this is because all humans ‘according to their ultimate generative origin which is for themselves historical, have been made at home on the earth-ground as their ark.’¹⁶⁶ Everyone is ultimately made at home on the earth because of their own *historical, generative origin*. What does this mean? Steinbock shows us that by generative, Husserl means ‘both the process of becoming – hence the process of ‘generation’ – and a process that occurs over the ‘generations’

¹⁶² Ibid., 193.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 196.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 195.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 232.

¹⁶⁶ Husserl, “Ursprung der Räumlichkeit,” 319. My translation.

– hence specifically the process of ‘historical’ and social becoming.’¹⁶⁷ The reason we are necessarily related to the earth seems to be a historical and social one – what sort of historical reason is it exactly? Let us look at sailor’s child passage again, this time with a more faithful translation (my own):

‘But my parents are not then primordially made at home [*urbeheimatet*] on the ship; they still have an old home, another primordial homeland [*Urheimat*]. In the change of homesteads [*Heimstätten*] (if homestead has the ordinary sense of territory peculiar to individual or family in each case) there remains universally stated that each ego has a primordial homeland [*Urheimat*]*—*and this belongs to every primordial people [*Urvolk*] with their primordial territory. But every people [*Volk*] and their historicity and every super-people [*Uebervolk*] (or super-nation) are themselves ultimately made at home [*beheimatet*], naturally, on the “earth.”’¹⁶⁸

So, once more, why is the sailor’s child also *necessarily* related to the earth as *Erdboden*? First, each ego has an *Urheimat*. As mentioned before, this is a necessity, as it is ‘universally stated.’ The *Urheimat* of the sailor’s child is the ship. However, every *Urheimat* belongs to an *Urvolk*, which have as their own *Urheimat* the Earth. The child’s *Urheimat* belongs to a *Volk*, and they are themselves connected to that *Volk* through their parents, who are made at home on the earth. The sailor’s child then, is necessarily related to the *Erdboden* because it is the *Heimat* of the *Volk* they belong to. They are made at home on the earth, the earth is a *Stammboden* necessarily for the ego, because the *Volk* they belong which was always already made at home on the earth. *Volk* is that which relates us to the earth as a historical force. We are necessarily connected to the Earth as *Stammboden*, even if we would never experience the earth as such, because of the historical origin of our people on the earth.

This is not the only thing Husserl notes about the importance of *Volk* in necessitating our connection to the transcendental Earth, to the *Urheimat*. We’ve already shown how Husserl puts the *Erdboden* on the same level as the *Leib* – he does the same with *Volk* in the same quote, when he lists things as *necessary* instead of accidental: ‘This holds too for the earth and we humans, me with my flesh [*Leib*] and me in my generation, my people [*Volk*], etc.’¹⁶⁹ But how

¹⁶⁷ Steinbock, *Home and Beyond*, 3.

¹⁶⁸ Husserl, “Ursprung der Räumlichkeit,” 319. My translation.

¹⁶⁹ Husserl, “Foundational Investigations,” 130.

is something like *Volk*, as a type of community which was thought about in very specific and historically and politically contingent ways, necessary? Husserl writes:

‘This whole historicity belongs inseparably to the Ego, and is in essence not repeatable, but everything relates back to this acquired history [*Historizität*] of the transcendental constitution as pertinent core and as an ever-widening core—everything that is newly discovered as a possibility of the world is connected with the ontic sense [*Seinsinn*] of being ready made.’¹⁷⁰

Historicity *belongs inseparably to the Ego*, and it is part of transcendental constitution itself. It is because of this historicity, this ‘generative origin’ that humans are necessarily bound to the earth – precisely contradicting intuitions that historicity would be the very reason the Earth is be an *accidental Stammboden*. This is the reason Husserl can argue that it is due to our *Volk* that we are connected necessarily to the earth as *Stammboden* – historicity is a necessary part of transcendental constitution, and whatever notion of *Volk* we have, it is a notion entwined with historicity. It is because of this entanglement of *Volk* with historicity, in the sense that a *Volk* is always already made at home on the earth, that the earth is a necessary *Stammboden*. In Husserl, the Earth as *Boden* is necessarily constituted as *Heimat* for an individual because of their belonging to a *Volk* as a *temporal force* – something that mirrors our findings regarding these terms in the historical and ideological use in National Socialism at the time Husserl was writing this text.

So, it is not only the *Leib* and the *Erdboden* that co-constitute each other, but there is also a role for the *Volk*. As we’ve seen previously, all sense is earthly, because the *Erdboden belongs to transcendental constitution*. Husserl writes that everything which ‘belongs to constitution is, and is alone, the absolute and ultimate necessity.’¹⁷¹ Is the *Volk* part of this necessity? It would seem from the above that it is, since it is the reason we are necessarily connected to the *Erdboden* as *Heimat*. Husserl confirms this when he writes that all earthly ‘sense is rooted [*verwurzelt*] and has its orientation centre in me and in a narrower We who live with one another.’¹⁷² We’ve already shown that the constitution of the *Erdboden* is linked to the constitution of the subject, and to *intersubjectivity in a concrete historical form*: ‘a narrower We who live with one another’ – which, as argued in the egological interpretation, should be

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 131.

¹⁷² Ibid., 126.

read as *Volk*. The *Erdboden* is necessarily constituted as a *Heimat* for the ego because of the *Volk* it belongs to, while both the *Erdboden* and the *Volk* are the preconditions for the constitution of the ego. The necessity here is a *transcendental* necessity.

So, not only is there an overlap in vocabulary between this Husserlian text and the ideology and propaganda of the ruling political party at the time and place of its writing, these terms also seem to be related to each other in the same ways: The Earth as *Boden* and *Volk* as temporal force (or historical force, to be more precise) together necessarily constitute each other as *Heimat*, and they are inseparable from the Ego as the precondition for its *Körperraum*. We see here the direct similarities if not exactly the same way of thinking as the Nazi's did about *Heimat* in relation to *Blut und Boden*, as explored in our first chapter. Husserl seems to place this relation and constitution at a *transcendental level*. Before we get to relation of the *Umsturz* to National Socialism on this interpretation, a small note on Steinbock's comment about *Stamm*.

Steinbock's remark on how *Stamm* can 'be understood genealogically as "stock" or "lineage" in a bloodline'¹⁷³ seems particularly remarkable in the light of our findings – while neglecting the political meanings of the German homeworld or *Boden* as *Heimat*, and the fact that the *Erdboden* is constituted as *Heimat* through not only tradition but a *Volk*, he still talks of *blood* in the constitution of a homeworld. What exactly this means for Steinbock's theory we do not have the space to get into – it is merely something worth pointing out that even if one neglects the political meaning of the original German, it seems to still rear its head, as if the structure of these ideas carry it over from language to language.

Kind of Brown – Transcendental Justification

It thus seems to not be wholly unjustified, according to the *Umsturz*, that Steinbock places the transcendental unity of apperception in the lifeworld – or, at the very least, engages in a non-foundational transcendental account of the Earth. There is certainly a 'historical force,' the *Volk*, that constitutes the *Erdboden* (which is not relegated to being merely a function of the transcendental ego) as a *Heimat* for the ego as its condition. We are here dealing with a certain 'transcendental unity of a history through the transmission and transference of sense as a modality of generative sense constitution [...] but these generative 'sources' of sense are not premised on the self, conceived statically or genetically. Sense constitution does not simply begin with an individual subject, but extends beyond me and 'stems' from a tradition.'¹⁷⁴ We see that there is a transcendental co-constitution of the *Boden*, *Heimat* and *Leib* in

¹⁷³ Steinbock, *Home and Beyond*, 194.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 191.

the *Umsturz* through *Volk* – in much the same way as the National Socialists envisioned the content and constitution of these terms.

Before we draw our conclusions about the relation of this interpretation of the *Umsturz* to National Socialism, we need to see what it *means* that the Earth has become a constitutive transcendental category. More specifically, what does it mean for the earth to be a transcendental category that *co-constitutes* sense together with the transcendental ego with its *Leib*? We should note with Mohanty that the transcendental ego in Husserl is not merely a ‘bare logical form of thinking,’ but instead, ‘if it is to serve as the domain within which all meanings have to have their genesis [the transcendental subject] needs to be in the first place, a concrete field of experience (and not an essence of it).’¹⁷⁵ Mohanty continues that the transcendental ego needs to be ‘historical, for meanings are constituted on the foundation of other historically sedimented structures,’ and of course, ‘there is a ‘dimension of corporeality as well.’¹⁷⁶ Moran describes the transcendental ego as the ‘anonymous source of all meaningfulness and as a growing, developing self, with a history and a future, in relation to other selves, possessing *life* in the fullest sense of the word. The transcendental ego covers “the universe of the possible forms of lived experience.”’¹⁷⁷

It is clear that the Husserlian transcendental ego is not just a formal principle, but a concrete *field* – the transcendental ego for Husserl overlaps with the concrete empirical ego as its field and not merely principle of possibility. The same holds for the *Leib*, which is a transcendental field that ‘overlaps’ with the empirical body – it is for this reason Chouraqui calls the erasure of the borders between the transcendental and the empirical in the *Leib* a ‘direct threat to transcendental idealism.’¹⁷⁸ Moreover, and for these same reasons, Serban claims that the transcendental and empirical (what she calls the ‘anthropological’) are ‘entangled.’¹⁷⁹

In our analysis of the *Umsturz*, we have shown that Husserl is struggling with this historical aspect of the transcendental ego and is transferring this aspect to something *outside* of it – whether that is in a co-constitutive manner as our analysis of the *Umsturz*, or in Steinbock’s more ‘radical’ reading of ascribing the unity of apperception to the lifeworld. We could see the *Erdboden* in its transcendentality as the location for this history. If in Husserl the

¹⁷⁵ J.N. Mohanty, “Husserl’s Transcendental Phenomenology and Essentialism,” *Review of Metaphysics* 32, no. 2 (1978): 320.

¹⁷⁶ Mohanty, “Husserl’s Transcendental Phenomenology and Essentialism,” 320.

¹⁷⁷ Dermot Moran, “Immanence, Self-Experience, and Transcendence in Edmund Husserl, Edith Stein, and Karl Jaspers,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 82, no. 2 (2008): 276.

¹⁷⁸ Frank Chouraqui, *The Body and Embodiment: A Philosophical Guide* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021), 87.

¹⁷⁹ Claudia Serban, “Kant, Husserl, and the Aim of a “Transcendental Anthropology”,” in *Husserl, Kant, and Transcendental Phenomenology*, eds. Iulian Apostolescu and Claudia Serban (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 119.

transcendental/empirical lines start to blur, this is absolutely the case when he argues for the *Erdboden* as a necessary condition for the constitution of meaning. We are here not reading a formal principle ‘earth,’ but the concrete empirical earth made to carry out a transcendental constitution, and the Earth is this necessary condition for sense partly because of the concrete history of a *Volk* which is always already made to be at home on it. The transcendental earth becomes this concrete field of space and time, the concrete earthly space which is the condition and space for history. The historical sense that the transcendental ego carried is placed (at least partly) outside of it, into a space and time where it is always already thrown into – or, at the very least, is co-constituted with. Moreover, the ego is *necessarily related to this concrete earthly field of constitution* because of the *concrete history of the people it belongs to*.

I believe a quick look at Steinbock’s way of framing this situation can be helpful in elucidating the consequences of this entanglement of the transcendental with the empirical for the relation of the *Umsturz* to National Socialism. We won’t get into his entire conceptualization of the change in phenomenology because of space and relevance constraints, but just highlighting an important aspect may help us.

Steinbock develops what he calls, after Husserl, a *generative phenomenology*. It is this type of phenomenology that can account for the fading borders between the transcendental and the empirical: ‘it is through generative phenomenology that it will be possible to present a non-foundational phenomenology of the social world as transcendental historicity, materiality, and sociality.’¹⁸⁰ This is because of its *generative* character: ‘by generativity or ‘generative’ Husserl means both the process of becoming – hence the process of ‘generation’ – and a process that occurs over the ‘generations’ – hence specifically the process of ‘historical’ and social becoming that is circumscribed geologically (whereby ‘geological I mean the constitutive role of ‘Earth’ and cultural ‘landscapes’).’¹⁸¹ It takes into account the fact that transcendental constitution (or should we say *institution* at this point?)¹⁸² is now entangled with a concrete empirical field encompassing history, or how transcendentality itself is shaped by an empirical or anthropological world. Instead of rejecting phenomenology for this reason, or maybe rejecting these tendencies within phenomenology and keeping it locked in its genetic form, Steinbock accepts and fully embraces this anthropological challenge. However, the overlapping

¹⁸⁰ Steinbock, *Home and Beyond*, 15.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁸² Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Institution and Passivity: Course Notes from the Collège de France (1954-1955)*, trans. Leonard Lawlor and Heath Massey (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2010).

of the empirical and the transcendental has serious consequences for the relation of the *Umsturz* to National Socialism.

Because normally in phenomenology we might be able to ignore the normativity that comes from imbuing the empirical with a transcendental necessity. For example, with the *Leib* becoming this blending of empirical/transcendental, there might not be any problems with normativity or the political (although it is possible that there would be). However, I contend that this *does* become a problem when we imbue contingencies born out of a specific culture, such as *Boden*, *Volk* and *Heimat* with a *transcendental necessity*. Note that it is not Husserl that has argued for the necessity of the specificity of culture; this is more Steinbock's account of the lifeworld as homeworld/alienworld. Husserl seems to argue for a co-constitution of *Leib*, *Boden*, *Volk* and *Heimat*, in a conception of them as transcendental categories in general – contra Steinbock, who might be able to deal with Husserl's use of these terms as transcendental. More on that later – the point is that Husserl elevates the concepts of one particular culture (how particular the content of these concepts is we've analysed in chapter one) to transcendental in general.

When the *Umsturz* does this, it is no longer a reinterpretation or reappropriation of these terms. It is a *solidification*, a *justification* of these terms. Once phenomenology starts looking at the political and social world in a transcendental way, we are engaging with socially, politically, and normatively contingent phenomena and making them into their *own transcendental justification*. It exists; therefore, it must be justified – the ego *really does necessarily depend on its Volk which constitutes the Boden as a Heimat*. Not only does it exist and must therefore be justified, these 'empirical,' or 'anthropological,' or 'political' concepts transcendently justify *themselves*, because it is precisely the empirical content that is made transcendental.

However, one might claim that Husserl is offering us an explanation, not yet necessarily a justification. To this I would say that in order for the *Umsturz* to be an *explanation* on the transcendental interpretation (it already is such on the essential interpretation), we'd have to go all the way to Steinbock's notion of homeworld/alienworld – which the *Umsturz* itself doesn't do. Steinbock can only do this in a very specific way, however. The non-foundational transcendental lifeworld as homeworld/alienworld can account for the *Erdboden* as a transcendental 'home' or *Stamm*, and for the way tradition roots one in this. It might then interpret *Heimat*, *Volk* and *Boden* as essences once more – in this way, it would be a midway between our two readings of the *Umsturz*. However, the *Umsturz* itself does *not* argue for a homeworld/lifeworld in this sense – it argues for the *Heimat*, *Volk*, and *Boden* as transcendental

categories. It therefore does not look for an explanation of how these political phenomena can form, but simply places them at the transcendental level. This is not merely an explanation of how *Heimat*, *Volk*, and *Boden* come to be – it is taking their empirical and contingent political content at face value and ascribing an inherent necessity to them. Political concepts aren't necessary in the way that transcendental concepts are necessary, and making them thus in the way Husserl does, solidifies the use of these concepts.

In this reading of the *Umsturz*, which as I have shown to be a closer and more faithful reading of the text, Husserl is engaging uncritically with the notions *Heimat*, *Boden* and *Volk*, whose ideological use and history we have explored chapter one. Moreover, in his uncritical admittance of them into his transcendental phenomenology he *justifies* the existence of these political and social notions used by the National Socialists to commit genocide by as *necessary*. The relation between the *Umsturz* and National Socialism is therefore one of *justification and consolidation*.

Conclusion

Does this mean we shouldn't do phenomenology, or at least its transcendental variant, with regards to the social and political spheres because of the risk of justifying that which should be actively dismantled? Steinbock gives us an initial answer to this question. If the ego *is* formed by a transcendental social history, this means that now, quoting Husserl, 'the phenomenologist and phenomenology themselves stand in this historicity.'¹⁸³ The way we engage with the transcendental lifeworld shapes it, since the transcendental and the empirical overlap, and in this way 'historical critique and responsibility from the perspective of the homeworld become the responsible phenomenological posture for participating in the generative structure of homeworld/alienworld.'¹⁸⁴ We could then argue, combining this idea of responsibility from Steinbock with our reading of the *Umsturz*, that Husserl has not taken on a 'responsible phenomenological posture,' because he hasn't critiqued the terms he was making transcendental. Steinbock tries to go beyond Husserl's transcendentalism in the *Umsturz*, and locates the transcendental in the lifeworld as homeworld/alienworld. He tries to avoid the connotations of *Volk* and using tradition instead. However, even Steinbock might ultimately fall into the same trap when he characterizes the homeworld as a *Stamm*, and notes its genealogical connotations 'as "stock" or "lineage" in a bloodline.'¹⁸⁵ Even the 'alienworld' as

¹⁸³ Quoted in Steinbock, *Home and Beyond*, 268.

¹⁸⁴ Steinbock, *Home and Beyond*, 261.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 194.

a *fremdwelt* has specific political implications that are buried in English. Has this non-foundational transcendental phenomenology of the lifeworld not been pushed far enough yet, or is the project itself necessarily fraught with what it fights against – the justification of a fascist lifeworld? Is Steinbock's account not as free from being implicated in Husserl's mistake as we've previously sketched? And is this the result of an irresponsible posture, or will a transcendental phenomenology of the lifeworld inevitably end up justifying the political status quo? Only further research could begin to understand this. However, the dangers are apparent: the status quo in Husserl's time ended up with Hitler becoming Führer – the one in our time is, softly put, not heading in the opposite direction.

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