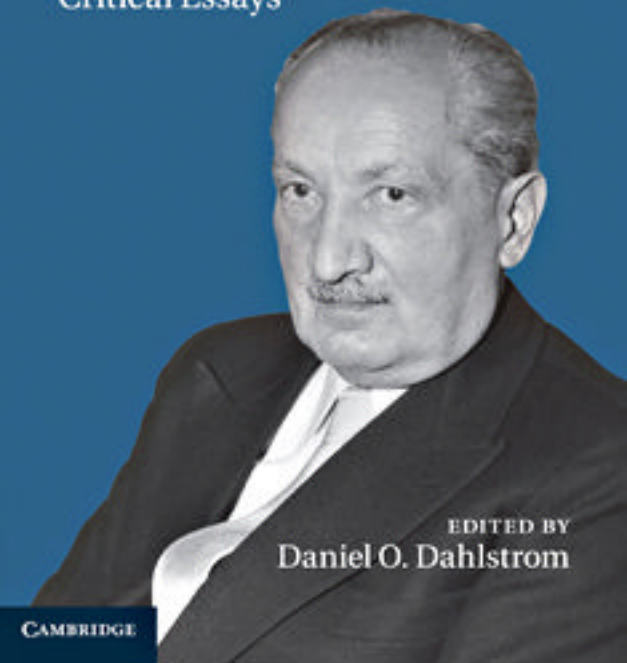


Interpreting Heidegger

Critical Essays



EDITED BY
Daniel O. Dahlstrom

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INTERPRETING HEIDEGGER: CRITICAL ESSAYS

This volume of essays by internationally prominent scholars examines the full range of Heidegger's thought and major critical interpretations of it. It explores such central themes as hermeneutics, facticity and *Ereignis*, conscience in *Being and Time*, freedom in the writings of his period of transition from fundamental ontology, and his mature criticisms of metaphysics and ontotheology. The volume also examines Heidegger's interpretations of other authors, the philosophers Aristotle, Kant, and Nietzsche, and the poets Rilke, Trakl, and George. A final group of essays interprets the critical reception of Heidegger's thought, both in the analytic tradition (Ryle, Carnap, Rorty, and Dreyfus) and in France (Derrida and Lévinas). This rich and wide-ranging collection will appeal to all who are interested in the themes, the development, and the context of Heidegger's philosophical thought.

DANIEL O. DAHLSTROM is Professor of Philosophy at Boston University.

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EDITED BY
DANIEL O. DAHLSTROM
Boston University



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My thanks, above all, to my esteemed collaborators for the wonderful essays they contributed to this volume. I am especially grateful to Ben Roth and Bryan Norwood for their excellent assistance with revising and editing the manuscript of the book for style, accuracy, and consistency of reference. I would also like to thank Hilary Gaskin for proposing and continuing her guidance and support for this project. I also owe a debt of gratitude to Joanna Garbutt, Joanna Breeze and Paul Smith for helping put the finishing touches to the volume.

Method of citation and bibliography of Heidegger's works

By means of abbreviations, short, or shortened titles, references are made to the original German text, followed by / or = and the corresponding English translation, if available. For example,

GA 63: 9/HF 6

refers to

Martin Heidegger, *Ontologie – Hermeneutik der Faktizität*, ed. Käte Bröcker-Oltmanns, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 63 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1988), p. 9 and *Ontology: Hermeneutics of Facticity*, trans. John van Buren (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 6.

Similarly,

GA 9: 377 = *Pathm* 286

refers to

Martin Heidegger, *Wegmarken*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 9 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1976), p. 377 and *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 286.

In most cases no corresponding English pagination is given for *Sein und Zeit* (see SZ, below) since the page numbers of this text are indicated in the margins of both standard English translations of this work (by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson and by Joan Stambaugh). The only exception to this method of citation is Thomas Sheehan's essay, since Sheehan helpfully cites pages and lines of the German and corresponding English texts, if available, and, in the case of references to *Being and Time*, cites the Macquarrie and Robinson translation. References to the *Gesamtausgabe* editions (GA 43–44) of the Nietzsche lecture courses are reserved for material that was omitted or altered in the 1961 Neske version. In the case of *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* (abbreviated as KPM), the English translation is cited following the reference to the original

German and a solidus, but without an abbreviation for the English text. For example,

KPM 202/141

refers to

Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik, 5th edn (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1991), p. 202 and *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 5 edn, trans. Richard Taft (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), p. 141.

The abbreviation ‘tm’ signifies that the *translation* of the foregoing cited text has been *modified* by the author of the article.

What follows are the abbreviations and shortened titles of works by Heidegger cited in this volume. The information given with the works also constitutes a bibliography of the primary sources and translations used by the volume’s authors.

PRIMARY SOURCES

- GA *Gesamtausgabe*. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1975–.
All references to the *Gesamtausgabe* are followed by the volume number and the section (§) or page number. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann is the editor of volumes 1–5, 7, 9, 11–14, 16–17, 24, 29/30, 45, 64–66. Other editors are listed in parentheses, followed by the date of publication.
- GA 1 *Frühe Schriften* (1978)
- GA 2 *Sein und Zeit* (1977)
- GA 3 *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* (1991)
- GA 4 *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* (1996)
- GA 5 *Holzwege* (2003)
- GA 6.1 *Nietzsche I* (1936–1939) (Brigitte Schillbach, 1996)
- GA 6.2 *Nietzsche II* (1939–1946) (Brigitte Schillbach, 1997)
- GA 8 *Was heißt Denken?* (Paola-Ludovika Coriando, 2002)
- GA 9 *Wegmarken* (2004)
- GA 11 *Identität und Differenz* (2006)
- GA 12 *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (1985)
- GA 14 *Zur Sache des Denkens* (2006)
- GA 15 *Seminare* (2005)
- GA 16 *Reden und andere Zeugnisse eines Lebensweges 1910–1976* (Hermann Heidegger, 2000)

- GA 17 *Einführung in die phänomenologische Forschung* (2nd edn, 2006).
- GA 18 *Grundbegriffe der aristotelischen Philosophie* (Mark Michalski, 2002).
- GA 19 *Platon: Sophistes* (Ingeborg Schüßler, 1992)
- GA 20 *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs* (Petra Jaeger, 3rd edn, 1994).
- GA 21 *Logik: Die Frage nach der Wahrheit* (Walter Biemel, 2nd edn, 1995).
- GA 22 *Die Grundbegriffe der antiken Philosophie* (Franz-Karl Blust, 2004)
- GA 24 *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* (2nd edn, 1989)
- GA 25 *Phänomenologische Interpretation von Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Ingtraud Görland, 1977).
- GA 26 *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik im Ausgang von Leibniz* (Klaus Held, 2nd edn, 1990)
- GA 27 *Einleitung in die Philosophie* (Otto Saame and Ina Saame-Speidel, 2001)
- GA 29/30 *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik. Welt – Endlichkeit – Einsamkeit* (2004)
- GA 31 *Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit* (Hartmut Tietjen, 2nd edn, 1994)
- GA 34 *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit. Zu Platons Höhlengleichnis und Theätet* (Hermann Mörchén, 1997)
- GA 38 *Logik als die Frage nach dem Wesen der Sprache* (Günther Seubold, 1998)
- GA 39 *Hölderlins Hymnen "Germanien" und "Der Rhein"* (Susanne Ziegler, 1999)
- GA 40 *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Petra Jaeger, 1984)
- GA 42 *Schelling. Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit* (1809) (Ingrid Schüßler, 1988)
- GA 41 *Die Frage nach dem Ding* (Petra Jaeger, 1984)
- GA 43 *Nietzsche: Der Wille zur Macht als Kunst* (Bernd Heimbüchel, 1985)
- GA 44 *Nietzsches metaphysische Grundstellung im abendländischen Denken: Die ewige Wiederkehr des Gleichen* (Marion Heinz, 1986)
- GA 46 *Zur Auslegung von Nietzsches II. Unzeitgemäßer Betrachtung* (Hans-Joachim Friedrich, 2003)

- GA 52 *Hölderlins Hymne "Andenken"* (Curd Ochwadt, 1992)
 GA 55 *Heraklit* (Manfred S. Frings, 1994)
 GA 56/57 *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie* (Bernd Heimbüchel, 1999)
 GA 60 *Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens* (Matthias Jung, Thomas Regehly, and Claudius Strube, 1995)
 GA 61 *Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles* (Walter Bröcker and Käte Bröcker-Oltmanns, 1994)
 GA 62 *Phänomenologische Interpretationen ausgewählter Abhandlungen des Aristoteles zu Ontologie und Logik* (Günther Neumann, 2005)
 GA 63 *Ontologie – Hermeneutik der Faktizität* (Käte Bröcker-Oltmanns, 1988)
 GA 65 *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)* (1989)
 GA 66 *Besinnung (1938/39)* (1997)
 GA 70 *Über den Anfang* (Paola-Ludovika Coriando, 2005)
 GA 87 *Nietzsche Seminare 1937 und 1944* (Peter von Ruckteschell, 2004)

SEPARATELY PUBLISHED EDITIONS CITED

- EiM *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1953)
 EzHD *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung*. 6th edn (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1996)
 FD *Frage nach dem Ding* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1962)
 Holzw *Holzwege* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2003)
 ID *Identität und Differenz* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1957)
 KPM *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*. 5th edn (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1991)
 N I *Nietzsche I* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1961)
 N II *Nietzsche II* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1961)
 SG *Der Satz vom Grund* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1957)
 SZ *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1972)
 UzS *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1959)
 VA *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1954)
 VS *Vier Seminare. Le Thor 1966, 1968, 1969 – Zübingen 1973*, ed. Curt Ochwadt (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1977)
 WhD *Was heisst Denken?* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1997)
 WiP *Was ist das – die Philosophie?* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1956)
 Wegm *Wegmarken*, 2nd edn (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1978)

- ZSD *Zur Sache des Denkens* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1969)
 ZS *Zollikoner Seminare*, ed. Medard Boss (Frankfurt am
 Main: Klostermann, 2006)

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS, WITH EDITORS, FOLLOWED IN
 PARENTHESES BY CORRESPONDING *GESAMTAUSGABE*
 VOLUME, WHERE APPLICABLE, TRANSLATOR,
 PUBLISHER, AND DATE

- BCAP *Basic Concepts of Ancient Philosophy* (GA 22, Richard
 Rojcewicz, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007)
 BCAR *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy* (GA 18, Robert
 D. Metcalf and Mark B. Tanzer, Bloomington: Indiana
 University Press, 2009)
 BH *Becoming Heidegger: On the Trail of His Earliest Occasional
 Writings, 1910–1927*, ed. Theodore Kisiel and Thomas
 Sheehan (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press,
 2007)
 BPP *Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (GA 24, Albert
 Hofstadter, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988)
 BW *Basic Writings*, ed. David Krell (multiple translators, New
 York: Harper & Row, 1993)
 CPh *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)* (GA 65,
 Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly, Bloomington: Indiana
 University Press, 1999)
 EGT *Early Greek Thinking* (David Krell and Frank Capuzzi,
 New York: Harper & Row, 1975)
 EHF *The Essence of Human Freedom* (GA 31, Ted Sadler, New
 York: Continuum, 2002)
 EHP *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry* (Keith Hoeller, Amherst,
 NY: Humanity, Books 2000)
 EP *The End of Philosophy* (Joan Stambaugh, University of
 Chicago Press, 2003)
 ET *The Essence of Truth: On Plato's Cave Allegory and
 Theaetetus* (GA 34, Ted Sadler, New York: Continuum,
 2002)
 FCM *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* (GA 29/30, William
 McNeill and Thomas Walker, Bloomington: Indiana
 University Press, 1995)
 FS *Four Seminars* (Andrew Mitchell and François Raffoul,
 Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003)

- HCT *Prolegomena to the History of the Concept of Time* (GA 20, Ted Kisiel, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985)
- HF *Ontology: Hermeneutics of Facticity* (GA 63, John van Buren, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999)
- HS *Heraclitus Seminar* (GA 15, Charles H. Seibert, Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1993)
- IaD *Identity and Difference* (Joan Stambaugh, University of Chicago Press, 2002)
- IM *Introduction to Metaphysics* (Gregory Fried and Richard Polt, New Haven, Conn. and London: Yale University Press, 2000)
- IPR *Introduction to Phenomenological Research* (GA 17, Dan Dahlstrom, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005)
- LEL *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language* (GA 38, Wanda Torres Gregory and Yvonne Unna, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993)
- LH "Letter on Humanism" (Frank A. Capuzzi with J. Glenn Gray), BW, 213–265
- LQT *Logic: The Question of Truth* (GA 21, Thomas Sheehan, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010)
- MFL *Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* (GA 26, Michael Heim, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984)
- Mindf* *Mindfulness* (GA66, Parvis Emad and Thomas Kalary, New York: Continuum, 2006)
- N₁ *Nietzsche*, vol. I, ed. David F. Krell (David F. Krell, New York: Harper & Row, 1979)
- N₂ *Nietzsche*, vol. II, ed. David F. Krell (David F. Krell, New York: Harper & Row, 1984)
- N₃ *Nietzsche*, vol. III, ed. David F. Krell (Joan Stambaugh, David F. Krell, and Frank A. Capuzzi, New York: Harper & Row, 1987)
- N₄ *Nietzsche*, vol. IV, ed. David Krell (Frank A. Capuzzi, New York: Harper & Row, 1982)
- OBT *Off the Beaten Track* (Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes, Cambridge University Press, 2002)
- OWL *On the Way to Language* (Peter D. Hertz and Joan Stambaugh, New York: Harper & Row, 1971, 1982)
- Pathm* *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (multiple translators, Cambridge University Press, 1998)

- PIK *Phenomenological Interpretations of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (GA 25, Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997)
- PLT *Poetry, Language, Thought* (Albert Hofstadter, New York: Harper & Row, 2001)
- PR *Principle of Reason* (GA 10, Reginald Lilly, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991)
- PRL *Phenomenology of Religious Life* (GA 60, Matthias Fritsch and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004)
- PS *Plato's Sophist* (GA 19, Richard Rojcewicz and Andre Schuwer, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997)
- PT *The Piety of Thinking* (James G. Hart and John C. Maraldo, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977)
- QCT *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (William Lovitt, New York: Harper & Row, 1977)
- STF *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom* (Joan Stambaugh, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985)
- TB *On Time and Being* (GA 14, Joan Stambaugh, University of Chicago Press, 1972, 2002)
- TDP *Towards the Definition of Philosophy* (GA 56/57, Ted Sadler, New York: Continuum, 2002, 2008)
- WCT *What is Called Thinking?* (GA 8, J. Glenn Gray, New York: Harper & Row, 1968)
- WisP *What is Philosophy?* (Jean T. Wilde and William Kluback, New Haven, Conn.: College and University Press, 1958, 2003)
- WT *What is a Thing?* (GA 41, W. B. Barton, Jr and Vera Deutsch, Chicago, Ill.: Regnery, 1967)
- ZSe *Zollikon Seminars* (Franz K. Mayr and Richard R. Askay, Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2001)

OTHER ABBREVIATED TEXTS

- KrV Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1998)

Introduction

Heidegger is known for the importance he places on interpretation. In his view we are creatures of interpretation. Every move we make is an interpretation: elaborating, exposing, and shaping our self-understanding and, in the process, our relationships to ourselves, our world, and other things within the world. At the same time, from the moment we find ourselves, as interpreting animals, thrown into this process, we find that our interpretations are not ours alone, but the often mindless yet time-tested iteration of a tradition of interpretations written into our most common practices and beliefs. If we create our lives through our interpretations, it is not without the inertia of traditional interpretations. We are both the parents and the progeny of interpretation and, in both these ways, interpretation constitutes our existence and any sense of being.

This centrality of interpretation is no less true for Heidegger when it comes to what, in his view, most urgently calls for thinking today. We need to think responsibly and creatively about what it means to us for things, including ourselves, to be and what grounds this meaning. The task of thinking is, in other words, thoughtful interpretation of the ground (not merely the cause) of our understanding of what it means to be. At the same time, given the historical character of our thinking, we can only think creatively and responsibly about these matters by considering how the history of such interpretations – philosophical as well as poetic – enables and disables that understanding.

The importance that Heidegger attaches to interpretation in this sense directly affects his interpretations of others' works and helps explain why those interpretations often appear strikingly unconventional if not skewed. For Heidegger, interpretation can never be a matter of simply setting the record straight, of providing the most accurate *ex post facto* reconstruction of the meaning of a thinker or a text. Instead, his interpretive horizon is the process by which beings are meaningful or, alternatively, how the understanding of what it means for them to be takes

hold. When Heidegger turns to poets and other thinkers who allegedly contribute to this process, he presumes that they share this horizon on some level. While this seems at times presumptuous, it is partly offset by Heidegger's humbling cognizance of being caught up in the very process that, like them, he is grappling to express, with a future beyond the reach of any mortal soul. At the same time, while not over, this interpretive process has a beginning and, indeed, a history that we fail to tap at our peril. In Heidegger's view, one of our main tasks is to interpret the history of Western thinking as the beginning of a thinking that remains unfinished and incomplete, even as it shapes us, in need of us (thoughtful interpretations, responsible and creative thinking on our part) just as much as we are in need of it.

For all these reasons, Heidegger by no means dismisses the importance of determining the most coherent reading of a text, on the basis of the meanings of the words in question and/or the intention of the author. In his own interpretations of thinkers from Aristotle to Kant, he is often sensitive to these issues and their deep connection with philosophical interpretation, even where he plainly acknowledges the violence or unorthodoxy of his reading. Indeed, while sharply distinguishing the truth of an interpretation from the correctness of an explanation, he recognizes that correctness – despite or perhaps because of prose's illusory veneer of timelessness – can be a “first indicator of the truth,” provided that it stems from a preview (*Vorblick*) of the truth.¹ There can, of course, be no guarantees of this preview and therein lies the unmistakable risk and pretentiousness but also the promise of venturing interpretations of Heidegger's thinking. In this spirit, the essays in the present volume, ranging over Heidegger's entire corpus, attempt to interpret correctly (Part I) basic themes of his thinking, (Part II) his interpretations of philosophers and poets, and (Part III) some prominent critics' interpretations of his thought. The aim of the following glosses is to introduce readers to these new essays as attempts to interpret responsibly and creatively Heidegger's thinking and critical interpretations of it.

INTERPRETING HEIDEGGER'S PHILOSOPHY

Hermeneutics is not, *expressis verbis*, a prominent theme in Heidegger's later thinking and, indeed, this silence has been interpreted as one of many indicators of a major break or discontinuity in his thinking.

¹ GA 70: 147, 153.

Countering this interpretation is one of the motivations for Holger Zaborowski's "Heidegger's hermeneutics: towards a new practice of understanding." After identifying basic themes and sources that led the young Heidegger to rethink philosophy as a hermeneutics, Zaborowski elaborates the hermeneutics of facticity in his early lectures as well as the hermeneutics of Dasein in *Being and Time*. He shows how Heidegger, rejecting doctrines of hermeneutics as a theory or method of interpretation, is bent on retrieving its significance for philosophy proper as a mode of self-interpretation of factual life. After tracing how this practice of thoughtful self-understanding informs the *Contributions to Philosophy* and the "Letter on Humanism," Zaborowski arrives at the measured conclusion that Heidegger's later thinking is best considered "a transformation, rather than a dismissal, of his early hermeneutics."

In his essay, "Facticity and *Ereignis*," Thomas Sheehan also identifies a basic continuity in Heidegger's thinking, traceable to his early hermeneutics of facticity. One of Sheehan's targets is a widespread tendency to interpret Heidegger as a thinker preoccupied with the question of being. According to Sheehan, this way of interpreting Heidegger obfuscates his basic theme: the necessary correlatedness of Dasein and meaning as such. Arguing that Heidegger embraces the phenomenological reduction of being to meaning, he shows that the overriding concern of *Being and Time* is Dasein's facticity in the form of its ineluctable relation to meaning. Nor does this basic concern attenuate in his more mature thinking as the focus shifts to the theme of *Ereignis*. Far from something outside this relation, "*Ereignis*" signifies its reciprocal character, whereby Dasein submits to being appropriated to the meaning-process, while also actively sustaining it. More simply, the notion of *Ereignis*, like the notion of *facticity*, signals that there is no human being without meaning and no meaning without human beings. In much this way, Sheehan makes a powerful case for reading Heidegger from beginning to end as a hermeneutical phenomenologist. "Both *Ereignis* and *Faktizität*," he concludes, "bespeak the same thing: the 'fate' of human being as necessary for maintaining (projectively holding open) the meaning-giving process."

With its focus on Heidegger's analysis of the call of conscience in *Being and Time*, the next essay in the volume, Simon Critchley's "The null basis-being of a nullity, or between two nothings: Heidegger's uncanniness" bridges Zaborowski's and Sheehan's foregoing treatments of facticity and Guignon's subsequent essay on freedom. In the process Critchley gives a penetrating interpretation of Heidegger's analysis that moves him closer to Beckett than Nietzsche (or, at least, Nietzsche as he is

often read). Critchley's point of departure is the paradoxical strangeness of conscience's silent call: it stems from me, yet in a sense against my will, indicating a division at the very heart of myself, my Dasein. The self, as evidenced by the call of conscience, is divided between the nothingness of the world into which it is thrown and the nothingness, revealed in its being-towards-death, of what it projects. Dasein, as Critchley puts it, is correspondingly constituted by two impotencies, a lack of power over both its thrownness and its projection. Turning to the pre-moral, existential sense of guilt straddling this divide, Critchley argues for understanding the call of conscience as a call, not to heroic self-sufficiency, but to the uncanny potency of this dual impotence that defines our humanity, the freedom of embracing the "unmasterable thrownness, the burden of a facticity that weighs me down without my ever being able fully to pick it up."

In Charles Guignon's essay on "Freedom," he tracks two key meanings of the term in Heidegger's writings during the late 1920s and early 1930s. As a means of introducing the first sense, Guignon shows how Heidegger's distinction between inauthentic and authentic existence neatly maps onto the difference between lives oriented primarily to what Aristotle dubs *poiesis*, the quotidian process of producing something distinct from themselves, and lives oriented to *praxis*, the process of making themselves. But Guignon also helpfully flags how this conception of praxis corresponds to the Hegelian notion that an action counts as genuinely free only if one can properly claim it as one's own. Thus, our authentic actions can be characterized as "free" because "in authenticity, we do indeed stand behind our actions: we own them and can own up to them." Not to be confused with individual willfulness, the resoluteness required for standing behind our actions (choosing to choose) is, as Guignon puts it, a means of vigilantly redirecting "our care from everyday dispersal in worldly doings, from *poiesis*, to the role of action in constituting the self, toward *praxis*."

While this robust form of freedom is determined by a "proper" relation to one's own self, the second prominent meaning of freedom for Heidegger at the time consists in "letting be." "Letting entities be" means "freeing up" a space for the truthful encounter with them and, indeed, not as something already finished but with multiple possibilities of their own. This same sense of "freedom" is also operative, Guignon shows, in our authentic relation to ourselves, not least to our finitude. In the conclusion, Guignon turns to *On the Essence of Human Freedom*, where Heidegger criticizes the ontological naivety of Kant's theoretical approach

to the notion of freedom while applauding Kant's practical approach. Guignon suggests that, by assuming a derivative conception of being as presence-at-hand (as Heidegger contends), Kant's theoretical analyses of freedom prefigure contemporary debates about compatibilism and libertarianism – and their futility. At the same time, Guignon shows that Heidegger's positive, albeit highly unorthodox, gloss on Kant's practical approach grounds ethicality in decisiveness and authenticity, thereby recapitulating the robust sense of freedom articulated in *Being and Time*.

In the first part of his Habilitation, Heidegger repeatedly cites Scotus' commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. The commentary begins with the question "whether the proper subject of metaphysics is being as being (as Avicenna contended) or God and the Intelligences (as the Commentator Averroes contended)." In this way Scotus introduces an old dispute regarding Aristotle's work, namely, whether it is ontology or theology – or somehow both? Heidegger's own notion of "the onto-theological constitution of metaphysics" can be traced to this dispute, at least in the sense that a conception of what it means to be at all and a conception of the primary or pre-eminent being go hand-in-hand in the history of philosophy. In his essay "Ontotheology," Iain Thomson aptly recasts these parallel conceptions as the innermost core and outermost form or expression of an age's sense of reality. Thomson elaborates how, in Heidegger's view, Nietzsche's doctrines of will-to-power and eternal recurrence not only recapitulate ontotheology but, in the process, supply the ontotheological structure for the unrelenting reach of technology today. With a deft interpretation of a scenario from *Gulliver's Travels*, Thomson also provides an imposing image of the sense of ontotheology that undergirds our technological age.

INTERPRETING HEIDEGGER'S INTERPRETATIONS

The thinking that marks the beginning of metaphysics presupposes, Heidegger contends, the Greek experience of being as *phusis*. What he understands by this presupposition can be gathered from his readings of Heraclitus' fragments. Moreover, according to Otto Pöggeler, these readings provide some of the clearest statements of Heidegger's own late thinking. The issue is complicated, however, not only because his views of Heraclitus develop, but also because he explicitly maintains that the earliest Greek thinkers stop short of the central theme of Heidegger's own work, namely, be-ing (*Sein*) as the grounding appropriation of being and beings to one another. Against this backdrop, I examine Heidegger's

interpretation of Heraclitus' fragments on *phusis* as a key source of the meaning of being at the beginning of Western thinking.

After touting Aristotle's treatment of *pathe* in the *Rhetoric* as "the first systematic treatment of affects," Heidegger makes the oft-cited remark that "since Aristotle the basic ontological interpretation of affective [life] in general has scarcely taken a step worth mentioning" (SZ 138 f.). Yet Aristotle's treatment of *pathos* is by no means confined to his *Rhetoric* and, in fact, during the period leading up to *Being and Time*, Heidegger examines Aristotle's treatment of *pathos* in *De anima* at length, not least in his 1924 lecture, *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*. Josh Michael Hayes' illuminating essay "Being-affected: Heidegger, Aristotle, and the pathology of truth," investigates Heidegger's interpretation of *pathos* in these and other lectures during his early Freiburg–Marburg period. Following a review of Heidegger's interpretation of *pathos* generally, Hayes critically discusses Heidegger's reading of Aristotle's accounts of moods of "being composed" (pleasure, tranquility, wonder) as well as "being decomposed" (pain, fear, unrest, anxiety). Hayes shows that Heidegger's reading of these accounts has a direct bearing on the analysis of disposedness and *aletheia* in *Being and Time*, precisely insofar as disposedness is an existential and thus a form of disclosedness. As Hayes puts it, given Heidegger's interpretation of the disclosedness of *pathos*, he is engaging in a pathology of truth, consisting in retrieving the truth disclosed in our moods and the disposedness upon which they rest.

During the period just before and after the publication of *Being and Time*, only one thinker rivals Aristotle in capturing Heidegger's attention. That thinker is Kant and, indeed, as Stephan Käufer puts it in his essay "Heidegger's interpretation of Kant," *Being and Time* is itself "a deeply Kantian work." Käufer points out that Heidegger is engaged with Kant for his entire career, though perhaps never more so than in the period from 1925 to 1936. Heidegger himself characterized his reading of Kant as "violent," but Käufer argues that his reading proposes no more substantial a departure from Kant's text than does the Marburg Neo-Kantian interpretation that Heidegger combats. Indeed, while Heidegger shares with these Neo-Kantians a sense that Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* lacks an underlying unity, Heidegger's attempt to find the common ground of its two basic elements is arguably more charitable than eliminating one of them (as the Neo-Kantians propose). Käufer also notes that, far from superimposing a wholly alien framework onto Kant's thought (as Cassirer charged), Heidegger develops his own approach from his reading of Kant and makes no secret of his disagreements with Kant, especially regarding

the analysis of the self. Still, despite these disagreements, Heidegger's debt to Kant remains fundamental. For, as Käufer demonstrates in adroit detail, Heidegger merges his phenomenology of existence with a transcendental argument about the temporal conditions of existence and this argument is modeled after Kant's analysis of the threefold synthesis in the transcendental deduction.

"All philosophical thinking," Heidegger writes, "is in itself poetic [*dichterisch*]," adding that "a poet's work – like Hölderlin's Hymns – can be thoughtful [*denkerisch*] in the highest degree."² In his essay "Heidegger's poetics of relationality," Andrew J. Mitchell shows just how serious Heidegger is about thinking with the poets. Mitchell demonstrates how Heidegger's mature emphasis on our exposure to the world and the world's exposure to us develop in tandem with his interpretations of Rainer Maria Rilke (1946), Georg Trakl (1950, 1952), and Stefan George (1957–1958). Mitchell shows how Heidegger finds in Rilke someone deeply appreciative of the threat of total objectification, attempting to counter it with poetry that reveals the field of relations that objectification presupposes but cannot touch. But, as Mitchell also shows, while Rilke understands this "relational field" as infinitely open, a place where through poetic speech things can "perfectly belong to the world," Heidegger understands our finitude (including our not belonging perfectly to the world) as the very condition for encountering things in it. In Trakl's figure of the wanderer, Heidegger finds this understanding of human finitude that is missing in Rilke. Mitchell relates how, on Heidegger's reading, the animal that meets the wanderer's gaze in Trakl's *Sommersneige* is able to do so, not because they fit some metaphysical categories of animality and humanity but only because they are in a relation that exposes them to their limits (their not belonging and, ultimately, their mortality) and, in the process, transforms them. In the final segment of this rich essay, Mitchell turns to the humbling power of the poetic words, recounted by Heidegger in his reading of George's poem *Das Wort*. While all three poets have the gift of bringing relationality to words, George makes clear that this is a gift of the words, of language itself, as he writes, in the closing line of the poem, "No thing may be where the word fails." Thinking this gift means thinking of language non-instrumentally and, indeed, as the medium of meaning to which things and humans in their relationality are alike beholden.

² N I 329/N2 73. Heidegger makes these comments in the course of criticizing the editors of Nietzsche's works for distinguishing his supposedly "theoretical" presentations of his thought from his "poetic" presentations. The very distinction "theoretical–poetic" in this context is, Heidegger adds, a confusion.

Grappling with Nietzsche's thought, Heidegger submits, is absolutely essential to the task that he sets for his own thinking. In his essay "The death of God and the life of being: Heidegger's confrontation with Nietzsche," Tracy Colony searches for the interpretive horizon against which Heidegger regards Nietzsche as at once so close to this task and yet so far from taking up it. Complicating this investigation is Heidegger's revision of his lectures for the 1961 edition of them. Comparison with the original lecture notes published in 1985–1986 (GA 43–44) reveals that the principal themes of the texts altered or deleted by Heidegger are Nietzsche's understanding of the death of God and the possibility of a recurrence of the divine. Colony argues that the horizon for Heidegger's original interpretation of Nietzsche is to be found precisely in these themes eliminated from the first edition of the lectures. To make this case, Colony first presents a detailed review of Heidegger's discussion of divinity in the 1934–1935 lectures on Hölderlin and in his *Contributions to Philosophy*, written in tandem with Heidegger's first two Nietzsche lectures. This review effectively establishes the proximity of Heidegger's thinking at this time to Nietzsche's thought. But Colony also demonstrates how Nietzsche's conception of being as life represents to Heidegger the culmination of metaphysics and thus is the furthest removed from the sort of thinking that he deems necessary for a re-encounter with the divine.

INTERPRETING HEIDEGGER'S CRITICS

For a substantial part of the twentieth century, the most influential Anglo-American philosophers have been more at home with Fregean and Wittgensteinian than with Heideggerian conceptions of the fundamental philosophical issues and ways of addressing them. Nevertheless, there is a history of responses by such "analytically minded" philosophers to Heidegger. In his essay "Analyzing Heidegger: a history of analytic reactions to Heidegger," Lee Braver charts the ups and downs of this history. Braver argues that, while Gilbert Ryle's sincere but limited engagement amounts to a missed opportunity for potentially fruitful dialogue, Rudolf Carnap's charges of linguistic confusion and obscurantism shut the door – for a while – on any rapprochement. Nor, Braver contends, do Richard Rorty's best efforts to rehabilitate Heidegger the historical ironist reopen the door, not least because, on Rorty's reading, Heidegger himself undermines the pragmatic potential of such irony with his deferential reverence for the History of Being. After challenging

Rorty's reading, Braver concludes with an account of a successful appropriation of Heidegger's thinking to central concerns of contemporary Anglo-American philosophy, namely, Hubert Dreyfus' adaptation of Heidegger's conception of being-in-the-world to the basic issues of cognitive science.

As attention rightly turns again to the relation of Heidegger's philosophy to his woeful politics, the position of his former student and later critic Emanuel Lévinas deserves close scrutiny. For Lévinas was himself a victim of National Socialist savagery and a critic, not only of Heidegger's engagement with the Nazi Party, but also of the violent impulses in his thinking. Nonetheless, as Wayne J. Froman points out in his even-handed essay "Lévinas and Heidegger: a strange conversation," these criticisms did not keep Lévinas from appreciating the importance of Heidegger's thinking and the irreducibility of that importance to its political dimensions or Heidegger's own political failings. In an effort to illustrate that importance for Lévinas, particularly in Lévinas' attempt to think what escapes Heidegger, Froman begins with a review of their distinct but complementary criticisms of Western metaphysics – its obliviousness to time, for Heidegger, and its obliviousness to alterity, for Lévinas. *Both* Heidegger's conception of the absence that is constitutive of the meaning of being *and* Lévinas' conception of a relatedness to an other that cannot be assimilated to sameness signal a break with a substantialist metaphysics of presence. As Froman shows, this common ground is also evident in their differences with Sartre's conception of subjectivity. These lines of agreement invite the question of whether Lévinas' ethics can be legitimately interpreted as the implicit ethics of *Being and Time*. Froman shows that the question cannot be answered directly since Lévinas' thinking includes critical assessments of Heidegger's philosophy. Froman carefully sorts through various misunderstandings involved in these assessments and potential responses to them, as he works his way to the sobering conclusion that, while there is basis for agreement in some crucial respects, the basis for equally fundamentally disagreement (on the relative priority of ethics or thinking what it means to be) remains.

In her essay "Derrida's reading of Heidegger," Françoise Dastur points out that Derrida's critical engagement with Heidegger's thought was lifelong. As Derrida puts it, Heideggerian questions provided him with the "opening" for his own thinking, even though those questions also contain the most powerful defence of the very thought of presence that he aims to undo. Dastur distinguishes two periods of Derrida's debate with

Heidegger: the period from 1964 to 1968 (culminating in the lecture “The Différance”) and the second from 1968 to 1997 (extending from the lecture “Les fins de l’homme” to the lecture “L’animal que donc je suis”). Dastur recounts how, in the first period, Derrida takes issue with Lévinas’ criticisms of Heidegger, draws on Heidegger’s notion of *Destruktion*, and credits Heidegger with recognizing how Western metaphysics privileges a particular linguistic form. At the same time, as Dastur also points out, Derridean deconstruction (debunking the alleged difference between sign and signified) is by no means reducible to Heideggerian *Destruktion* (dismantling the content of ancient ontology to retrieve the original experiences that ground the first determinations of being). Yet Dastur also explains how Derrida takes up Lévinas’ notion of trace and Nietzsche’s notion of play in ways that expand – even further than Heidegger does – the project of undermining the dominant Western conception of being as presence. Dastur questions Derrida’s criticism that Heidegger himself remains captive of metaphysics in his differentiation of authenticity and authentic time from inauthenticity and vulgar (linear) time. But she also acknowledges Derrida’s insistence that there are two gestures in Heidegger, one that remains inside metaphysics and another that gestures beyond it.

According to Derrida, this ambiguity in Heidegger’s thinking reveals itself in the ontological difference, since it can be construed as the difference between beings themselves and being as their presence. To counter this understanding, Derrida introduces the notion of “*différance*” as the difference among beings that is older than the ontological difference. But Dastur contends that Derrida misconstrues Heidegger fundamentally in this respect, by failing to acknowledge Heidegger’s conception of “the withdrawal of being, the concealing which occurs *with* the clearing of beings.” Indeed, as Dastur observes, Heidegger anticipates the Derridean *différance* by thinking being as “coming from” the difference and, indeed, a difference that is co-extensive, not with mere process of appropriation, but deappropriation (*Enteignis*).

When Dastur turns to the second period of Derrida’s engagement with Heidegger, she finds Derrida once again taking up a Heideggerian theme and trying to take it beyond the point where Heidegger himself considered it. In the second period the issue is the intimate relation of humanism and metaphysics to one another, discussed by Heidegger in his “Letter on Humanism.” Derrida charges that Heidegger himself fails to evade this very collusion, given his insistence on tying the question of

what is proper to man to the meaning of being. After noting the increasing influence of Lévinas' thinking on Derrida during this time, Dastur demonstrates how, in the series of texts entitled *Geschlecht* and the book *De l'esprit*, Derrida continues to find unmistakable traces of metaphysical humanism – and a certain telling obtuseness towards the Hebraic – in Heidegger's work.

PART I

Interpreting Heidegger's Philosophy

CHAPTER I

Heidegger's hermeneutics: towards a new practice of understanding

Holger Zaborowski

J (Japanese man): ... Kuki merely stressed constantly that the term “hermeneutic phenomenology” was to indicate a new direction of phenomenology.

I (Inquirer/Heidegger): It may indeed have looked that way. In fact, however, I was concerned neither with a direction in phenomenology nor, indeed, with anything new. Quite the reverse, I was trying to think the nature of phenomenology in a more originary manner, so as to fit it in this way back into the place that is properly its own within Western philosophy

Martin Heidegger (GA 12: 90 f./OWL 9; tm).

This essay examines Heidegger's hermeneutics. At first sight, an examination of this sort could appear to be a rather limited task. If we consider all of his writings, we have to acknowledge that Heidegger has in fact relatively little to say about hermeneutics. There is, to be sure, his early “hermeneutics of facticity,” outlined in rather broad strokes (and by no means fully thought through) in his early Freiburg lecture courses. But already a few years later, in *Being and Time* (1926), the concept of hermeneutics no longer seems to play a prominent role. Heidegger continues to lose interest in hermeneutics, one could further argue, in the years and decades after the publication of *Being and Time*. Given the significant shift during that time in his understanding of philosophy and the task of thinking, this development is hardly surprising. Such observations could well be taken to imply that consideration of Heidegger's hermeneutics must be confined to an examination of his early Freiburg lecture courses, his critique of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, and his early understanding of philosophy as a “hermeneutics” that focuses on factual life in its historicity and temporality.

However, if we examined Heidegger's hermeneutics along the lines just suggested, we would fail to recognize the hermeneutic character of Heidegger's whole way of thinking. For in the course of his intellectual

career, Heidegger does not simply dismiss hermeneutics or, to be more precise, the hermeneutic character of his philosophizing, properly understood. Instead he transforms it. It is a significant transformation, to be sure, but still a transformation that makes it necessary to discuss his way of thinking in its entirety when it comes to his hermeneutics. In other words, even where Heidegger does not explicitly speak of hermeneutics, an implicit understanding of hermeneutics is at work. The task of examining Heidegger's hermeneutics is accordingly a matter not only of analyzing Heidegger's explicit references to hermeneutics and the apparent implications of his early understanding of philosophy as a hermeneutics, but also of disclosing the hermeneutic dimensions of his other writings.

Such an examination stands at the center of the following essay. In Section 1, I begin by briefly analyzing the young Heidegger's move towards hermeneutic philosophy, a move that provides the background for a more detailed discussion of his early "hermeneutics of facticity" in Section 2. Against the backdrop of this discussion, I devote Section 3 to outlining an understanding of *Being and Time* as a hermeneutic phenomenology. In Sections 4 and 5 I turn respectively to Heidegger's *Contributions to Philosophy*, perhaps his most significant work of the 1930s, and to his important post-war (and more accessible) "Letter on Humanism," encompassing many of his philosophical concerns of the 1950s and 1960s.¹ In concluding remarks (Section 6), I critically discuss why Heidegger's later philosophy, too, may be called a "hermeneutics" and I also briefly draw attention to the significance of Heidegger's hermeneutics for contemporary philosophy.

I. THE YOUNG HEIDEGGER (1910–1919): TOWARDS PHILOSOPHY AS A HERMENEUTICS

Heidegger himself acknowledged retrospectively the importance of his early studies for his understanding of hermeneutics. In "A Dialogue on Language" he points out that the

term "hermeneutics" was familiar to me from my theological studies. At that time, I was particularly agitated over the question of the relation between the word of Holy Scripture and theological-speculative thinking. This relation between language and Being was the same one, if you will, only it was veiled

¹ It is for this reason that the present essay, while focusing on the "Letter on Humanism," forgoes examination of Heidegger's writings of the 1950s and 1960s in any detail.

and inaccessible to me, so that through many deviations and false starts I sought in vain for a guiding thread. (GA 12: 91/OWL 9 f.)

Given his particular perspective in 1953/54 when he wrote the "Dialogue," Heidegger interprets his early acquaintance with the term hermeneutics with respect to the question of the "relation between language and Being." But he could have mentioned another relation that is closely interwoven with this relation and was equally important not only for the young Heidegger: the relation between the human being, the historical, and time on the one hand and Being on the other.

What this means can better be understood if we briefly look at another of the later Heidegger's autobiographical statements. In the preface to the first edition of his *Frühe Schriften*, Heidegger speaks of the "exciting years" between 1910 and 1914 (GA 1: 56). In this context he mentions explicitly the new edition of Nietzsche's *Will to Power*, the translations of Kierkegaard's and Dostojewski's works, the "awakening interest" in Hegel and Schelling as well as Rilke's and Trakl's poetry and Dilthey's collected works. This short list tells us a great deal about Heidegger's intellectual beginnings and deserves close scholarly attention (even though, in our interpretations, we are once again dependent on Heidegger's own words and thus subject to his later interest in directing his readers' attention to specific features of his intellectual formation). Who then are the writers that Heidegger (not one normally to express such excitement) considers as particularly "exciting" during the time of his early studies at Freiburg University?

It seems difficult, at first, to group these writers together. Heidegger mentions philosophers, at least two of whom – namely, Nietzsche and Kierkegaard – were in the 1910s not yet considered worthy objects of philosophical study, narrowly or rather traditionally construed. Another two – Hegel and Schelling – belonged to or at least occupied a significant place behind the tradition of speculative thought that Heidegger refers to in the "Dialogue." And the writings of the last philosopher whom he mentions – Dilthey, who died in 1911 and played a crucial role in the history of modern hermeneutics – was also not yet an accepted subject of scholarly interest among philosophers. Heidegger also credits two avant-garde poets, as it were, and a writer with having had a significant impact on his early intellectual development. Of course, in his short autobiographical preface, Heidegger also mentions Aristotle, Hölderlin, Husserl, Rickert as well as Braig and Lask as important sources and influences on his early thinking. But the early Heidegger is clearly less excited about this latter

group of thinkers, which is not surprising, given the fact that, not long after 1914, he develops a very critical reading not only of Husserl's phenomenology but also of Rickert's neo-Kantian and Lask's neo-Fichtean position. In a similar way, he also distances himself from the "traditional" Aristotle that he had encountered in neo-scholastic textbooks. However important these thinkers were, Heidegger seems to suggest, the really exciting sources of, and influences on, his thought up to the time of his doctoral dissertation are to be found elsewhere. So we have to ask once again: What is it that explains the exciting impact of Nietzsche, Hegel, Schelling, Kierkegaard, Dilthey, Rilke, Trakl, and Dostojewski on the early Heidegger?

It is here that I would like to formulate a first hypothesis that, despite being a rather bold generalization, will prove useful as we move on to interpret the very complex character of the early Heidegger's hermeneutics. All these writers, I would like to argue, focus on three closely related topics that were very important for the young Heidegger and significantly determined his philosophical self-understanding and thus also his early approach to hermeneutics. In the early 1910s, he would not have found any treatment of these topics, at least not in a comparably "exciting" form, in the writings of Aristotle, Husserl, or Rickert. The three topics are: (1) the meaning and crisis of Cartesian and Kantian modernity, (2) the meaning of (human) life, and (3) the meaning of history or of the historical.² These topics are, to be sure, not the only themes or questions that were of interest to the young Heidegger, but they need to be taken into account, particularly for an adequate understanding of the "relation between language and Being" in Heidegger's early philosophy (and thus also his new approach to Husserl and Aristotle).³

The reason for the importance of these topics for understanding Heidegger's early philosophy is the fact that he explicitly deals with them

² Heidegger explicitly points out how important these topics were for him in "A Retrospective Look at the Pathway" (written in 1937/38): "From the outset I did not endorse the basic *philosophical* positions that in fact were adopted by this [scil. Husserl's] phenomenology, that is, Cartesianism and Neo-Kantianism. My own pathway led me to a mindfulness of history, to a dissociating exposition of Dilthey and the determination of 'life' as basic actuality" (GA 66: 412/*Mindf*366).

³ See Alfred Denker, Hans-Helmuth Gander, and Holger Zaborowski (eds), *Heidegger und die Anfänge seines Denkens* (= *Heidegger-Jahrbuch* 1) (Freiburg and Munich: Verlag Karl Alber, 2004) for a discussion of Heidegger's very early life and thought. Important for an understanding of the early Heidegger's intellectual development are also John van Buren, *The Young Heidegger: Rumor of the Hidden King* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994) and Theodore Kisiel and Thomas Sheehan (eds), *Becoming Heidegger: On the Trail of His Early Occasional Writings, 1910–1927* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2007).

in his early Freiburg lecture courses from 1919 until 1923 – lectures in which the famous question of Being, the question that Heidegger himself often used to interpret his whole way of thinking, is by and large rather hidden, if it is present at all. Heidegger considers these topics in a manner that is closely related to an experience of crisis. In the face of the concrete historical experience of the breakdown of established forms of life, thought, and morality in the years of World War I, Heidegger realized that traditional ways of philosophizing could no longer prove helpful. An utterly new way of thinking seemed necessary, not only to Heidegger, but to many of his intellectual peers – a way of thinking that stood in stark opposition to the lifeless abstractions of much early twentieth-century philosophy and the common attempts at systematizing all reality theoretically and, indeed, ahistorically or at least without an adequate understanding of the historical (see particularly GA 60: §§ 7–10/PRL 22–37). Heidegger’s reaction to the experience of this crisis explains, among other reasons, why his early philosophy is more discontinuous than continuous with its immediate past and why, in his early lecture courses, he did not simply transform modern hermeneutics as he had encountered it as a theology student. It is, furthermore, Heidegger’s specific approach to the history of philosophy – the “destruction” of common interpretations and misunderstandings (GA 62: 368) – that makes it necessary for him to rethink radically the character of philosophy and thus also to propose an utterly new understanding of philosophy as a hermeneutics.

If a novelist and two poets (and with Kierkegaard and Nietzsche two rather “literary” philosophers) did indeed play such an important role for the early Heidegger and his appropriation of hermeneutics, one may very well read this fact not only as pointing to Heidegger’s later philosophical encounters with the world of poetry (yet another hermeneutic dimension of his thought), but also to important parallels between literature and poetry on the one hand and, on the other, the kind of philosophy that Heidegger outlined in the early 1920s: a philosophy that is neither a theory nor “expressive” of one’s own factual life, but a pre-theoretical and thus decidedly unscientific mode of one’s own life itself. To be sure, Heidegger neither proposes “life as literature” (as Nietzsche does, on Alexander Nehamas’ reading) nor entertains the idea that life simply be philosophy. But there is without doubt a Nietzschean element in Heidegger’s at once Kierkegaardian and Aristotelian interpretation of philosophy as a hermeneutics of one’s own facticity, that is, as *the* distinct *practice* by which one awakens to oneself.

II. HEIDEGGER'S EARLY FREIBURG LECTURES: THE HERMENEUTICS OF FACTICITY AS A PRE-THEORETICAL MODE OF ONE'S OWN LIFE

The foregoing biographical background helps us comprehend why Heidegger does not understand hermeneutics in the modern sense of the word as a specific kind of philosophical method. Heidegger makes this clear in his 1923 summer semester lecture course which is the fruit of several years of hard interpretive and "systematic" work, particularly of Heidegger's re-appropriation of Aristotle's philosophy (vols 61 and 62 of the *Gesamtausgabe*) and his interpretation of early Christian facticity (vol. 60).⁴ Heidegger gives this lecture a title that at least at the time was unusual: "Ontology – The Hermeneutics of Facticity." Heidegger explains this title in the following way: "In the title given to the following investigation, 'hermeneutics' is *not* being used in its modern meaning, and in no sense does it have the meaning of such a broadly conceived doctrine about interpretation" (GA 63: 14/HF 11). The "definition" of hermeneutics that Heidegger provided earlier already made it clear that he did not intend to use "hermeneutics" in its common modern sense: "The expression 'hermeneutics' is used here to indicate the unified manner of engaging, approaching, interrogating, and explicating facticity" (GA 63: 9/HF 6). This "definition," of course, raises a number of questions.

In order to explain further what he means by hermeneutics, Heidegger now moves on to provide his students with a very short history of hermeneutics from Greek mythology, Plato, and Aristotle to Philo, Aristeas, and Augustine to the modern understanding of hermeneutics (GA 63: 9–14/

⁴ For a discussion of the influence of Aristotle's philosophy on Heidegger's early thought, see Brian Elliott, *Anfang und Ende in der Philosophie: Eine Untersuchung zu Heideggers Aneignung der aristotelischen Philosophie und der Dynamik des hermeneutischen Denkens* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2002); Alfred Denker, Günter Figal, Franco Volpi, and Holger Zaborowski (eds), *Heidegger und Aristoteles* (= *Heidegger-Jahrbuch* 3) (Freiburg and Munich: Verlag Karl Alber, 2006). For an interpretation of Heidegger's early lecture courses on the phenomenology of religious life, see particularly Gerhard Ruff, *Am Ursprung der Zeit. Studie zu Martin Heideggers phänomenologischem Zugang zur christlichen Religion in den ersten "Freiburger Vorlesungen"* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1997) and Pierfrancesco Stagi, *Der faktische Gott* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2007). Also particularly important for understanding Heidegger's way towards *Being and Time* is the summer semester 1923 lecture course and Heidegger's so-called "Natorpbericht," written in 1922 (GA 62: 341–399). This text, along with Heidegger's winter semester 1924/25 lecture course (GA 19: *Plato's Sophist*), shows to what extent Heidegger's philosophy of factual life/Dasein is indebted to book Z of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, particularly to a reinterpretation of the Aristotelian concept of *phronesis* (see GA 62: 376–386 and GA 19: 132–188/PS 91–130). On the relation between *Being and Time* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*, see Franco Volpi, "Being and Time: A 'Translation' of the *Nicomachean Ethics*?" in Theodore Kisiel and John van Buren (eds), *Reading Heidegger from the Start* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 195–211.

HF 6–11). What Heidegger considers most important in the history of hermeneutics is a shift that occurred in Schleiermacher's philosophy.⁵ In Schleiermacher's hands, Heidegger argues,

the idea of hermeneutics which had formerly been viewed in a comprehensive and living manner (cf. Augustine!) was then reduced to an "art" {technique} of understanding another's discourse, and seen as a discipline connected with grammar and rhetoric, it was brought into relation with dialectic – this methodology is formal, as "general hermeneutics" (theory and technique of understanding any foreign discourse) it encompasses the special disciplines of theological and philological hermeneutics. (GA 63: 13/HF 10)

The act of interpretation was thus transformed into a "doctrine about the conditions, the objects, the means, and the communication and practical application" of it (GA 63: 13/HF 10). It is obvious that Heidegger here continues the critique of modern thought in general and of the modern understanding of, and preoccupation with, theory and objectification in particular. This critique is a typical feature of his early Freiburg lecture courses in which he transforms Husserl's transcendental phenomenology of consciousness into a hermeneutic phenomenology of facticity.⁶ Heidegger, however, does not intend simply to return to one of the pre-modern versions of hermeneutics that he briefly discusses in this lecture series. His relation to pre-modern hermeneutics and thus to the history of philosophy is, as we will see, more complex.

It is – once again – not only Husserl's phenomenological turn to the "things themselves" but also Aristotle's "protophenomenological"

⁵ See here also GA 12: 92, 115 f./OWL 10 f., 29 f.

⁶ See also GA 56/57 (particularly pp. 84–94/TDP 66–73) as well as vols 58–63 of the *Gesamtausgabe*. For a discussion of Heidegger's transformation of Husserl's transcendental into a hermeneutic phenomenology, see Georg Imdahl, *Das Leben verstehen: Heideggers formal anzeigende Hermeneutik in den frühen Freiburger Vorlesungen 1919 bis 1923* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1997); Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, *Hermeneutik und Reflexion: Der Begriff der Phänomenologie bei Heidegger und Husserl* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2000), 11–98; Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, "Heideggers Grundlegung der Hermeneutik," in Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert and Elisabeth Weisser-Lohmann (eds), *Kultur – Kunst – Öffentlichkeit: Philosophische Perspektiven auf praktische Probleme* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2001), 143–155 (see p. 143 for further secondary sources); Hans-Helmuth Gander, *Selbstverständnis und Lebenswelt: Grundzüge einer phänomenologischen Hermeneutik im Ausgang von Husserl und Heidegger* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2001), 169–242; Theodore Kiesel, "From Intuition to Understanding: On Heidegger's Transposition of Husserl's Phenomenology," in Theodore Kiesel, *Heidegger's Way of Thought: Critical and Interpretative Signposts*, ed. Alfred Denker and Marion Heinz (London and New York: Continuum, 2002), 174–186. For a comprehensive interpretation of Heidegger's path towards *Being and Time*, see Theodore Kiesel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

philosophy, as it were, that is particularly important for the early Heidegger. In the beginning of his lecture course, he briefly discusses Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias* which "deals with *logos* in terms of its basic accomplishments of uncovering beings and making us familiar with them" (GA 63: 10/HF 8). Even though Aristotle did not choose this title, Heidegger considers it very appropriate because, as he argues, *hermeneia* means for Aristotle "*dialektos* [conversation], i. e., discussing the world as we go about dealings with it" (GA 63: 11/HF 7). Further explaining what he means by *dialektos* or *logos*, he adds: "What discourse accomplishes is making something accessible as being there out in the open, as being available" (GA 63: 11/HF 8). Discourse or *logos* discloses what was previously undisclosed or concealed.⁷ So, according to Heidegger's reading of Aristotle (which will be crucially important for a proper understanding of the hermeneutic dimension of Heidegger's later writings), hermeneutics, i.e., *hermeneia*, is a "discursive" unconcealing related to truth as unconcealment; it is, as *logos*, an *aletheuein*, not merely a method of interpreting historical documents.⁸ It is this, in Heidegger's view, original meaning of hermeneutics that he claims to retrieve (GA 12: 116/OWL 30). He does so from within a new philosophical framework that finds its center at what Heidegger calls "facticity." Hermeneutics, he consequently argues, means "in connection with its original meaning ... a definite unity in the actualizing of *hermeneuein* (of communicating), i.e., of the interpreting of facticity in which facticity is being encountered, seen, grasped, and expressed in concepts" (GA 63: 14/HF 11; see also GA 62: 348 f.).

But what does Heidegger mean by "facticity," a word that some of his students may have already read in Fichte and Lask?⁹ At the very outset of his lecture course he explains what the word means for him. Facticity is "the character of the being of 'our' 'own' *Dasein*" (GA 63: 7/HF 5). Facticity is, therefore, not a sortal term, but formally indicates *Dasein* that is always my very own *Dasein* and is there for itself not "primarily as an *object* of intuition and definition on the basis of intuition, as an *object* of which we merely take cognizance and have knowledge" (GA 63: 7/HF 5). Not primarily being there for itself as objects are for theoretical

⁷ For this understanding of *logos*, see also Brian Elliott, *Anfang und Ende in der Philosophie*, 37 f.

⁸ For Heidegger's understanding of *aletheuein*, see also GA 62: 378 ff.

⁹ For the conceptual history of "facticity," see particularly Theodore Kiesel, "Why Students of Heidegger Will Have to Read Emil Lask," in Theodore Kiesel, *Heidegger's Way of Thought: Critical and Interpretive Signposts*, 101–136; Theodore Kiesel, "Heidegger's Formally Indicative Hermeneutics," in François Raffoul and Eric Nelson (eds), *Rethinking Facticity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 41–67.

sciences, for instances, it is “*there* for itself in the ‘how’ of its ownmost being” (GA 63: 7/HF 5). Hermeneutics of facticity, then, is a (phenomenological) disclosing, or unconcealing, discourse of how Dasein *is* and thus how it is there (*da*) for itself.¹⁰ Heidegger further characterizes what is achieved by this hermeneutics as the “*wakefulness* of Dasein for itself” (GA 63: 15/HF 12).

This wakefulness is, he emphasizes, not a matter of “having” Dasein. The hermeneutic understanding “which arises in interpretation cannot at all be compared to what is elsewhere called understanding in the sense of a knowing comportment toward the life of another. It is *how of Dasein* itself” (GA 63: 15/HF 12). It is “a possible and distinctive how of the character of being of facticity” (GA 63: 15/HF 12; see also GA 62: 351). Hence, if Heidegger speaks of a hermeneutic of facticity, the genitive needs to be read both as a subjective and as an objective genitive.¹¹ What Heidegger focuses on is thus not only the temporal character of one’s own Being, but also the possibility of a non-objectifying understanding of oneself as irreplaceably oneself that also needs to be understood as a (temporal) “how” of one’s own Being. This understanding of philosophy as a hermeneutics is so different from all previous philosophy that Heidegger even goes so far as to suspect that “hermeneutics itself” is not philosophy – at least as it is commonly understood (GA 63: 20/HF 16).

Heidegger thus provides the outline of his hermeneutics of facticity over against what he considers serious misunderstandings of philosophy. As the lecture course clearly shows, he is critical not only of Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology as a philosophy of consciousness or of neo-Kantian value philosophy (GA 56/57: 121–203/TDP 93–152), but also of the contemporary renaissance of metaphysics and of Oswald Spengler’s (at the time very popular) philosophy of history. For him, hermeneutics of facticity is not another kind of philosophy, but philosophy proper, which he equates with ontology, properly understood.¹² Philosophy, then, is not an abstract theoretical discipline that examines many different objects or areas of research, as most academic philosophers in Heidegger’s time

¹⁰ For the phenomenological dimension of Heidegger’s hermeneutics of facticity, see GA 63: §§ 14 f./HF 53–60.

¹¹ At the same time, of course, one needs to be careful in speaking of “subjects” and “objects” because Heidegger, as we have seen, puts emphasis on the “unified manner” of this hermeneutics that does not attempt a “self-objectification,” that is to say, a “having” of one’s own being, because such an attempt would entail missing the “thing itself,” the factual life, itself. For Heidegger’s early understanding of phenomenology as a primordial science of life as such, see GA 58.

¹² GA 63: 1/HF 1; see also GA 61: 60 f. and GA 62: 362 ff.

conceived it to be. It needs to be understood as a primordial “mode” of Dasein’s being that is concerned with interpreting its own being. He thus provides the following “definition” of philosophy which he arguably never dismisses but only transforms:

(1) Philosophy is a mode of knowing which is in factual life itself and in which factual Dasein is ruthlessly dragged back to itself and relentlessly thrown back upon itself. (2) As this mode of knowing, philosophy has no mission to take care of universal humanity and culture, to release coming generations once and for all from care about questioning, or to interfere with them simply through wrongheaded claims to validity.¹³

This is to say that the beginning and the end of philosophy *as a hermeneutics* lies in factual life. It is a *self*-interpretation and, therefore, does not serve any external function, be it a theoretical or a practical function, as commonly understood. Because Heidegger considers this understanding of philosophy crucially important for his time, there is no lack of existential pathos in his early lecture courses. He thinks that a return to a proper hermeneutics of facticity is necessary if the shortcomings and failures of our self-understanding, partly due to the dominant position of the sciences and their methodologies, are to be deconstructed and overcome.

In outlining his hermeneutic philosophy, Heidegger articulates a claim that could be called “foundational”: The philosophical “how” of *Dasein*, Heidegger points out, is “prior ontologically and factico-temporally to all accomplishments in the sciences” (GA 63: 15/HF 12). By virtue of being “pre-scientific,” it is also pre-theoretical (GA 56/57: 95–117/TDP 74–90). It is not and can never be subject to the principles of theoretical reasoning that Heidegger considers to be dependent on this more primordial “mode of knowing.” Moreover, insofar as this kind of hermeneutics is not concerned with “practical advice,” it is also prior to all practical philosophy (be it an ethics of virtue, an ethics of moral obligation, or any other kind of ethics) even though it is, in a much deeper and more “primordial” sense, a distinctive *practice* of one’s own life, that is, the practice of self-awakening which requires a certain independence from others in order freely to think – to interpret oneself – for oneself. This hermeneutics of facticity is in yet another sense “foundational”: For Heidegger, the basic meaning of the historical is dependent on the temporal meaning (*Sinn*) of factual life.¹⁴

¹³ GA 63: 18/HF 14; see also GA 56/57: 11 f./TDP 9 f.; GA 58: 18–24, GA 61: 60, and GA 62: 363 f.

¹⁴ GA 60: 9–14/PRL 7–10, GA 62: 359 f., and GA 63: 52–57/HF 40–45.

If Heidegger in 1923 (as in previous years) emphasizes the ontological, the phenomenological, and the aletheiological dimensions of his hermeneutics, we should not read this as pure lip service to these dimensions. We need instead to take this emphasis seriously as indicative of Heidegger's philosophical claim that he has no intention of giving up the – *sit venia verbo* – “rigorous” character of philosophy in order to join the “proto-existentialists” or “literary philosophers” of the early 1920s. For his claim is that philosophy is not only a distinctive mode of *Dasein*, but also concerned with the things themselves, Being, and truth, properly understood. However much he distances himself from the tradition of philosophy, he remains deeply indebted to it. This is why he explicitly mentions the significance of Husserl for his way of thinking in the beginning of the 1923 lecture course,¹⁵ although he must have realized that his move towards phenomenology as a hermeneutics of facticity – and thus toward the historical and factual life – would not at all have met with Husserl's approval.

We can now also see to what extent this hermeneutics deals with the three key problems of the very young Heidegger. In a manner that never ceases to be fascinating, Heidegger combines into his hermeneutics interpretations of Aristotle's understanding of *logos*, *aletheia* / *aletheuein*, and *praxis*, St. Paul's, St. Augustine's, and Luther's understandings of the temporality of human existence, Kierkegaard's and Nietzsche's focus on the self and the limits of scientific worldviews, and Husserl's phenomenological return to things as they appear to us. All the while he is outlining his hermeneutics in what he considers a time of crisis of modern reasoning. Modernity's focus on (specific kinds of) theory and practice and the concept of philosophy that is closely related to this focus are extremely problematic to him. These ways of understanding philosophy are problematic in his eyes because they fail to understand the problem of the meaning of genuine, i.e., historical and individual, existence – of one's own factual life – and thus betray what he thinks philosophy proper ought to be.

III. BEING AND TIME AS HERMENEUTICS OF DASEIN (1926)

Heidegger's early hermeneutics (and thus also his concern with the questions of individual, factual existence, the historical, modernity, and

¹⁵ GA 63: 5/HF 4; see also GA 62: 365.

Being) finds its continuation in *Being and Time*, which reflects a very important stage of his philosophy as a hermeneutics.¹⁶ To be sure, many different interests and philosophical concerns can be found in *Being and Time*. All these concerns are very closely interwoven in a text, the complexity of which continues to challenge its interpreters and has led to many misunderstandings. As far as hermeneutics is concerned, at first glance the notion does not appear to play a significant role in *Being and Time*, yet it has not become less important to Heidegger. What precisely is the hermeneutic dimension of this text? Why and to what extent can the philosophy of *Being and Time* be interpreted as a hermeneutics?

The key to answering this question can be found in § 7 of *Being and Time*, where Heidegger discusses the phenomenological method of his investigation (SZ 27–39).¹⁷ In this section, Heidegger not only discusses the concepts of *phenomenon* and *logos*, but also the “pre-concept” [*Vorbegriff*] of phenomenology. In the subsection devoted to this “pre-concept,” Heidegger introduces his readers to what he considers a proper understanding of hermeneutics. As is obvious from the titles of this section and its subsections, the concept “hermeneutics” no longer stands in the forefront of Heidegger’s methodological concerns. Heidegger puts particular emphasis on the phenomenological dimension of his method, thus indicating that his main point of reference is Husserl’s phenomenology.

However, Heidegger’s idea that phenomenology is ontology (SZ 37) reveals to what extent he parts ways with Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology and attempts to retrieve the Platonic and particularly Aristotelian concern with ontological questions that already determined, as we have seen, his earlier considerations of what phenomenology is or, more precisely, on *how* to philosophize phenomenologically. Given that Heidegger intends to deal with the question of the *meaning* of Being in *Being and Time* (and not with, say, regional ontologies), it does not come as a surprise that he characterizes his philosophy as fundamental ontology. It would be wrong, however, to conclude from this that his method in

¹⁶ For a helpful discussion of the hermeneutic character of *Being and Time*, see Rainer Thurnher, “Ebenen des Hermeneutischen in Heideggers *Sein und Zeit*,” in Helmuth Vetter and Matthias Flatscher (eds.), *Hermeneutische Phänomenologie – phänomenologische Hermeneutik* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2005), 40–53. See also Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, *Hermeneutische Phänomenologie des Daseins: Ein Kommentar zu “Sein und Zeit”* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1987 [vol. 1]; 2005 [vol. 2]; 2008 [vol. 3]); Günter Figal, “Selbstverstehen in instabiler Freiheit: Die hermeneutische Position Martin Heideggers,” in Hendrik Birus (ed.), *Hermeneutische Positionen: Schleiermacher – Dilthey – Heidegger – Gadamer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 89–119.

¹⁷ For the significance of this section, see also GA 12: 91/OWL 9.

Being and Time can be called “ontological” without further modification. For in his attempt to deal with a question that, according to his account of the history of Western philosophy, has not only not been answered and not sufficiently been raised (SZ 21), but has even been forgotten, he considers it necessary to reinterpret what is meant by “ontology” (SZ 27). This is why he uses the concept “ontology” in a “formally broad” sense (SZ 27).

It is here that the understanding of his method as phenomenological becomes important. It is a relatively uncontroversial thesis that, for Heidegger, phenomenology refers not to a specific content of research, but to a specific (pre-theoretical) “how” of doing philosophical research. It is a research that focuses on the “thing itself” that is at stake and, therefore, describes the “thing” as it itself appears to us. This is why for Heidegger the concept “descriptive phenomenology” is tautological (SZ 35). In a very interesting turn, Heidegger introduces a concrete “what” of phenomenological research, namely, what “proximally and for the most part does *not* show itself at all” and is thus hidden even though it “essentially” (*wesenhaft*) belongs to what “proximally and for the most part” shows itself and, indeed, belongs to it as its “meaning” (*Sinn*) and “ground” (*Grund*) (SZ 35). Such, Heidegger argues, is the Being of being(s) which is why he can characterize phenomenology with respect to its subject matter as the “science of the Being of being(s) – ontology.”¹⁸ Phenomenology and ontology, Heidegger accordingly argues, are neither two different disciplines nor simply identical; instead they “characterize philosophy itself with regard to its object [*Gegenstand*] and its way of treating that object [*Behandlungsart*]” (SZ 38).

In the context of this discussion, Heidegger introduces the concept of hermeneutics and distinguishes among three different senses of hermeneutics. He argues first that the “meaning [*Sinn*] of phenomenological description lies in interpretation [*Auslegung*]” (SZ 37), not in reflections on one’s consciousness, as Husserl would have argued. In the hermeneutic interpretation, understood in this sense, the “authentic meaning of Being and also those basic structures of Being which *Dasein* itself possesses” are disclosed and communicated to the understanding of Being that belongs to *Dasein* (SZ 37). Insofar as this interpretation also discloses the horizon for the examination of the entities that are not *Dasein*, Heidegger points to a second sense of hermeneutics: “this hermeneutics also becomes

¹⁸ SZ 37; in this connection, see Thomas Sheehan’s “Facticity and *Ereignis*,” the next essay in the current volume.

a 'hermeneutic' in the sense of working out the conditions on which the possibility of any ontological investigation depends" (SZ 37). The third sense of hermeneutics is the "philosophically primary" sense of hermeneutics as an "interpretation of Dasein's Being" (SZ 38). It is "the specific sense of an analytic of the existentiality of existence" (SZ 38), which is primary because of Dasein's "ontic-ontological priority" and as such the starting point for the examination of the question of the meaning of being (SZ 12, 15–19).

The primary character of this last sense of hermeneutics explains why (descriptive) phenomenology and fundamental ontology (as the science of the Being of beings) begin with the hermeneutics of Dasein (SZ 38). Hence, hermeneutics (as a self-interpretation of Dasein) has a central and foundational position in the thought of *Being and Time*. There is, however, an important shift in his understanding of philosophy in *Being and Time* in comparison to his earlier lecture courses. Unlike his earlier hermeneutics of facticity, the hermeneutics of Dasein of *Being and Time* is integrated not only into a more pronounced fundamental ontological and ontological framework, but also into a (quasi-)transcendental structure. The latter structure becomes also apparent from Heidegger's claim that the hermeneutics of the "existentiality of existence" makes hermeneutics possible as it is understood more traditionally and narrowly, i.e., as the method of the historical sciences (SZ 38). For only on the basis of the hermeneutics of Dasein as temporal and historical, Heidegger contends, is historiology possible (see SZ 387–397). Heidegger's earlier thought strongly emphasized the difference between the hermeneutics of facticity and hermeneutics as a historical method, and it showed no signs of a transcendental perspective. In contrast to that earlier approach, in *Being and Time* Heidegger favors a kind of transcendental interpretation of the relation between hermeneutics, primordially understood, on the one hand and (regional) ontologies and hermeneutics as specific philosophical and historical disciplines on the other.

The relatively short paragraphs of *Being and Time* devoted to methodological questions leave many questions open and much to be desired (even in comparison to Heidegger's own remarks about the "how" of philosophizing in his early lecture courses). Heidegger's account of what he means by hermeneutics is brief and fragmentary. The reason for this brevity is, however, patent. Standing at the center of Heidegger's interest in *Being and Time* are not questions of methodology but the application of his method, that is, the hermeneutic-phenomenological interpretation of Dasein. It is "practiced hermeneutics" (even if, as

Heidegger suggests, there is a sense in which hermeneutics is never “not practiced”!). This hermeneutics in practice in the Heideggerian sense is an interpretation of Dasein that continues the early hermeneutics of facticity with a fundamental ontological focus. This character of *Being and Time* has considerable implications for a proper understanding of the book. For instance, there is reason to think that if Heidegger had said more about what he means by hermeneutics it would have been easier fully to understand these implications and thus also why *Being and Time* is not a philosophical anthropology or an existential philosophy.

What are some of these implications? In *Being and Time*, Dasein is not simply the present object of interpretation or an exemplar of a kind (SZ 41 ff.). It is “my own” Being. The hermeneutics of Dasein, too, needs to be understood as a distinct how, or mode of one’s own Being in which Dasein explicitly interprets itself, now with the intention of, ultimately, answering the question of the meaning of Being (SZ 41 f.). So even though the book seems to have a very theoretical character it provides by no means a theory of Dasein. Precisely because the interpretation is concerned with Dasein – our own Dasein – no theoretical approach is possible, but only a formally indicative approach, that is to say, an approach that helps the reader to bring the “thing itself” – his own Dasein in this case – into his own view. The hermeneutics of *Being and Time*, however, is also not a practical philosophy that provides concrete advice on how to live one’s life. It is to be read, like Heidegger’s early hermeneutics, as a primordial *practice* of self-interpreting, or self-understanding (which shows elements that do have ethical implications).

As he had done in his early Freiburg lectures,¹⁹ Heidegger argues that *self*-understanding, an adequate hermeneutics of Dasein, is difficult not only because of Dasein’s tendency to miss itself,²⁰ but also – and closely related to this tendency to mis-take itself – because of certain developments in the history of ontology (SZ 19–27). These developments, he thinks, make a destruction of the history of philosophy – particularly of Descartes’ and Kant’s philosophies – necessary and require a

¹⁹ GA 60, GA 62, and GA 63.

²⁰ See SZ 15: “The kind of Being which belongs to Dasein is rather such that, in understanding its own Being, it has a tendency to do so in terms of that entity towards which it comports itself proximally and in a way which is essentially constant – in terms of the ‘world.’” Heidegger here argues that Dasein often fails to understand itself in terms of itself – a topic to which he gave substantial attention already in his earlier lecture courses. This tendency of Dasein explains for Heidegger, among many other things, why an objectifying theoretical attitude could become so powerful and dominant in the history of Western thought.

re-orientation. It is only on this basis, Heidegger thinks, that the question of the meaning of Being can be adequately raised again and an answer found to the problems that have interested him since his early beginnings.

Given his considerations about the “interpreting” character of factual Being as such in his 1923 lecture course (GA 63: 15/HF 12), it comes as no surprise that Heidegger also examines in *Being and Time* why the “distinctive mode” of interpreting one’s own Dasein philosophically is possible. In addition to indicating that “understanding” is one of the “existential structures” of Dasein (SZ 142–153), he also draws attention to what he considers the primordial meaning of language (SZ 160–167) and of truth (SZ 212–230, particularly 219–226). While an ample discussion of these important elements of *Being and Time* lies beyond the scope of the present study, we cannot fail to point out their intrinsic connection with the hermeneutics of Dasein. For it is necessary to understand the hermeneutics of Dasein, as explicit interpreting, precisely in light of Dasein’s mode of Being, that is to say, in light of a character that it is always already understanding, discoursing (having, i.e., wielding a language or *logos*), and truth-disclosing (since Dasein as disclosedness is primordially “true”). Because Dasein *is* always already hermeneutical, philosophy as a hermeneutics is possible.²¹

This shows that hermeneutics is – once again – a term for a very complex phenomenon. Far from simply indicating a method of research, it indicates a mode of Dasein in which Dasein interprets itself as the being that always already understands being so as to be able to answer the fundamental ontological question. Soon after the publication of *Being and Time* Heidegger will interpret this philosophical “station” very critically. He will not abandon but transform his insights into the hermeneutic relation of Being, truth, and language to one another and transform them in a way that will no longer be subject to interpretation but will happen, as it were, or show itself in the event of thinking-saying or in language as hermeneutical.

²¹ See here also GA 12: 93/OWL 11: “In *Being and Time*, hermeneutics means neither the theory of the art of interpretation nor interpretation itself, but rather the attempt first of all to define the nature of interpretation with regard to the hermeneutic” (tm). Because of the hermeneutical character of Dasein, the “hermeneutic circle” in all understanding cannot (and, of course, should not!) be avoided: “What is decisive is not to get out of the circle but to come into it in the right way. ... The ‘circle’ in understanding belongs to the structure of meaning, and the latter phenomenon is rooted in the existential constitution of Dasein – that is, in the understanding which interprets” (SZ 153).

IV. HEIDEGGER'S PHILOSOPHY AFTER *BEING AND TIME*:
TOWARDS A HERMENEUTICS OF, OR FROM,
THE EVENT OF BEING IN *CONTRIBUTIONS*
TO PHILOSOPHY (1936–1938)

In his later philosophy Heidegger rarely speaks of hermeneutics. This relative silence does not mean that his philosophy, or thinking, no longer exhibits a hermeneutical character, understood along the lines of his earlier hermeneutics. *Contributions to Philosophy* can be quite plausibly read as a hermeneutics of, or from, the event of Being. While the hermeneutics of *Being and Time* finds its center, as it were, in Heidegger's fundamental, ontologically oriented existential analysis of Dasein (Dasein, as we have seen, interpreting itself), his later hermeneutics centers around the event of Being or, as he thus also puts it in this period, around the history of being. Given the philosophical claim of his later thought, one can argue that he radicalizes or deepens his earlier hermeneutics. In this hermeneutics, Heidegger still deals with the questions of history and of modernity and also with the interpretation of what it means to be for the human being. He is, therefore, still concerned with the topics outlined in the very beginning of this essay. However, he now takes a different perspective that explains why the very concept of hermeneutics no longer plays a significant role.

Concerned now with the history and truth of Being and reading closely the work of Nietzsche and Hölderlin, Heidegger increasingly comes to realize the limitations of the viewpoint that has determined the perspective not only of Western metaphysics *tout court*, but also of his own earlier thought.²² This realization explains why Heidegger's philosophical self-understanding changes, too. In his later philosophy, he not only no longer grants the concept "hermeneutics" a prominent position but also increasingly even abandons "phenomenology" and speaks rather of "thinking" and the "end of philosophy" (GA 14; GA 9: 364/*Pathm* 276). What is needed, he now thinks, is a very different kind of thinking that is open to the event-character of Being. How, one might ask, can such a philosophy of the event of Being be considered a hermeneutics? How is it possible to argue – with respect to *Contributions to Philosophy* – that "hermeneutic phenomenology – initially formed in a fundamental, ontological manner – is transformed into a hermeneutic phenomenology

²² For Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin and Nietzsche, see particularly GA 4 and GA 6.1, 6.2.

which is determined being-historically”?²³ Within the scope of the present essay, I can only highlight briefly some important aspects of Heidegger’s rather difficult thinking concerning the history of Being and its hermeneutic dimension.

Being-historical thinking is an understanding “from the event” (or “from enowning” if we follow Parvid Emad’s and Kenneth Maly’s translation). What this means is explained in the very beginning of the book:

Thus the *proper* title says: From *Enowning*. And that is not saying that a report is being given on or about enowning. Rather, the proper title indicates a thinking-saying which is enowned by enowning and belongs to be-ing and to be-ing’s word. (GA 65: 3/CPh 3)

Insofar as Heidegger is on the way towards a “thinking-saying” of be-ing and the “word” that belongs to be-ing, it seems appropriate to speak of the hermeneutic character of *Contributions*. It is a book in which Heidegger still deals with the issues of being and language. But he does so without interpreting his own factual Dasein any more as the main “reference point” and without any longer understanding primordial truth as Dasein’s disclosedness simply but instead hearing, as it were, the call or word of be-ing (cf. e.g. GA 65: 422/CPh 298). As an event itself, *Contributions* tries to “bring” the truth of be-ing into language, without making it the object of philosophical inquiry. Rendering it such an object would be impossible (as it is impossible to objectify “factual life”) because this would inevitably lead to a reductive understanding of be-ing and thus to the forgetfulness of be-ing, properly “heard,” that Heidegger considers the fate of Western metaphysics.

It is important to point out that particularly for Heidegger’s thought after *Contributions*, “hearing” is a crucially important philosophical task and closely related to our belonging to be-ing (*zugehören* [“belonging”]) alludes in the citation above as in many other passages of the later Heidegger’s writings to *hören* [“hear”]). Hearing is, of course, closely related to the task of “interpreting,” that is, thinking-saying of that which is heard and to which thinking “belongs.” While not novel (see SZ 163),

²³ Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, “*Contributions to Philosophy* and Enowning-Historical Thinking,” in Charles E. Scott, Susan M. Schoenbohm, Daniela Vallega-Neu, and Alejandro Vallega (eds), *Companion to Heidegger’s Contributions to Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 105–126, 123. See here also Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, *Wege ins Ereignis. Zu Heideggers “Beiträgen zur Philosophie”* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1994), 25, 62 f., 382 f. Otto Pöggeler interprets Heidegger’s being-historical thinking as a “concretization” of Heidegger’s hermeneutic approach: Otto Pöggeler, *Heidegger und die hermeneutische Philosophie* (Freiburg and Munich: Verlag Karl Alber, 1983), 296 f. and *passim*.

the important role of hearing signifies, roughly speaking, a shift from the “activity” of “wakefulness to oneself” and “understanding,” that is, from his early philosophy of Dasein to the “passivity” of the non-metaphysical thinking that Heidegger understands as transitional towards what he calls the other beginning of thinking. But this development is clearly not a shift from hermeneutics to a “position” that can not at all be called hermeneutics.

In *Contributions* Heidegger also still practices – and thus exhibits in action, as it were – a (decidedly non-useful) philosophizing that, however much the focus has shifted from Dasein to be-ing, can still be, and, indeed, must be, understood as a mode or practice of one’s own factual existence, in sharp contrast to the shortcomings and problems of theoretical (metaphysical) and practical (technological) approaches to the world.²⁴ As a means of countering the forgetfulness of being in the history of Western metaphysics, Heidegger thus proposes a formally indicative hermeneutics – a “thinking-saying” – of, or from, the event of be-ing. There are, therefore, very good arguments that support reading the *Contributions* as a being-historical hermeneutics and thus as a transformation, rather than a dismissal, of his early hermeneutics.

It is important to note, furthermore, that in his later philosophy Heidegger himself sees a continuity rather than a radical break in his thinking. His remarks about *Being and Time* in the *Contributions* suggest that he does not radically distance himself from his earlier work, but instead has so changed the perspective of his questions that his early work appears as an important “station” on his way towards the thinking of *Contributions*. This continuity contradicts many a misunderstanding of *Being and Time* and, indeed, in the course of stressing the continuity, Heidegger identifies one possible, but by no means necessary, misunderstanding of *Being and Time*.

The danger of misinterpreting *Being and Time* in this direction, i.e., “existentiell-anthropologically,” and of seeing the interconnection of disclosedness, truth, and Dasein from the perspective of a moral resolve – instead of the other way, proceeding from the prevailing ground of Da-sein and grasping truth as openness and disclosedness, as temporalizing-spatializing of the free play of the time-space of be-ing – such danger looms and gets stronger by many things that are unaccomplished in *Being and Time*. But this misinterpretation is basically

²⁴ See GA 65; 10/CPh 8: “The question concerning the ‘meaning’ [of being], i.e., in accordance with the elucidation in *Being and Time*, the question concerning grounding the domain of projecting-open – and then, the question of the *truth* of be-ing – is and remains *my* question, and is *my one and only* question; for this question concerns what is *most sole and unique*.”

excluded ... if from the beginning we hold on to the grounding-question of the “meaning of be-ing” as the only question. (GA 65: 87 f./CPh 60 f.)

What is important for Heidegger here is the relation between his early hermeneutics of the “interconnection of disclosedness, truth, and Dasein” (that we examined in the third and fourth parts of this essay) and the question concerning the “meaning of be-ing” that he explores in more detail in his later work. Thus Heidegger thinks that in his earlier hermeneutics he already anticipated some important elements of his being-historical thought. In the third “joining,” Heidegger implicitly draws attention to the continuity of his way of thinking, as he remarks:

since Plato no inquiry has been made into the *truth* of the interpretation of “being.” The correctness of representation and its demonstration by intuition was merely transferred back, from representing of beings to representing the “essence” – most recently in pre-hermeneutic phenomenology. (GA 65: 188/CPh 132).

This sentence clearly suggests that even when he composed *Contributions*, Heidegger read his own hermeneutic phenomenology as a break with the tradition of Platonic, that is to say, metaphysical philosophy up to Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology and that he regarded this break as helping him find the way towards the thinking of the truth of Being as outlined in *Contributions to Philosophy*.²⁵ If Heidegger did, indeed, see matters this way, then the hermeneutics of Dasein, as outlined in *Being and Time*, can be read as a “step” pointing to (but not, in a somewhat Hegelian manner, necessarily leading to) the *Contributions* where the “question of being” is no longer asked as the question of Dasein, but in a more primordial way, so Heidegger claims, as the “question concerning the truth of be-ing” and, indeed, asked no less hermeneutically, that is to say, with the same basic concern for bringing truth to language (GA 65: 305/CPh 215).

It is unfortunate that Heidegger does not comment on the significance of his own “hermeneutic phenomenology” any further in *Contributions*. But for the sake of our argument this short discussion of *Contributions* should be sufficient at least to establish the hermeneutic character of Heidegger’s later philosophy. We find even more evidence for speaking of the hermeneutic character of Heidegger’s later thought when we direct our attention to his “Letter on Humanism.”

²⁵ See also GA 9: 357/*Pathm* 271.

V. HEIDEGGER'S POST-WAR PHILOSOPHY:
TOWARDS A HERMENEUTICS OF LANGUAGE
AS THE "HOUSE OF BEING" (1946)

One of the first writings that Heidegger published after World War II and that for a considerable time determined the understanding of his later philosophy was the "Letter on Humanism." Heidegger actually sent the letter to Jean Beaufret as an answer to a question posed to him by Beaufret, but he considered it worth publishing shortly after he wrote it. This text is important in our context but not because Heidegger explained in it, or explicitly transforms, what he means by hermeneutics. The very word "hermeneutics" is absent from the letter. This absence, however, does not signal a departure from what Heidegger meant by hermeneutics in previous years. Instead, this letter is important as a document of Heidegger's implicit later hermeneutics. What at first seems to be a dismissal of hermeneutics, is, more closely analyzed, a transformation of philosophical hermeneutics, as understood in Heidegger's lectures of the early 1920s and in *Being and Time*. This text is also important because it allows us to discuss further some important features of Heidegger's later philosophy that – for reasons of space and "conceptual" density – could not be scrutinized in our discussion of *Contributions to Philosophy*.²⁶ We will, however, see that the "Letter" is not merely a more accessible version of *Contributions*. For in this "Letter" Heidegger focuses on a topic that, indeed, was already important for him in the early 1920s, *Being and Time*, and in the 1930s (in his elucidations of Hölderlin's poetry, for instance), but that now moves into the center of his philosophical attention and shows very clearly the hermeneutic dimension of his later philosophy of be-ing: the topic of language which "defines *the hermeneutic relation*," as Heidegger argues in "A Dialogue on Language" (GA 12: 116/OWL 30).

In this letter Heidegger continues to follow the trajectory that characterizes most of his texts written in the 1930s and early 1940s. He takes seriously his insight that "[t]hinking ... lets itself be claimed by being so that it can say the truth of being" (GA 9: 313/LH 218). His early interest in a new understanding of what philosophy is (over against what he considers common misunderstandings of philosophy), is still present, albeit in a transformed way. Heidegger is aware that thinking is

²⁶ See Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, *Wege ins Ereignis: Zu Heideggers "Beiträgen zur Philosophie"*, 325–349, particularly 325–327 for a discussion of the relation between *Contributions to Philosophy* and "Letter on Humanism."

in danger of being interpreted technically (GA 9: 314/LH 218), that is to say, he considers “philosophy” threatened by the need to justify its existence with respect to the sciences. While this need implies, as he thinks, the abandonment both of philosophy and of “being, as the element of thinking” (GA 9: 314 f./LH 218 f.), Heidegger proposes, along the lines of *Contributions*, an alternative way of understanding philosophy, or thinking, that liberates it from the implications of the metaphysical post-Platonic and post-Aristotelian tradition. This “alternative” way of thinking is characterized by Heidegger as “*l’engagement* by and for the truth of Being” (GA 9: 314/LH 218).

Before we examine the hermeneutic character of his later philosophy any further it is important to point out once again that there is one important difference between his earlier and his later hermeneutics. For the focus on facticity or one’s own *Dasein*, as we have already seen in our discussion of *Contributions to Philosophy*, Heidegger has substituted a focus not merely on being (as a simplistic reading of his later philosophy may suggest) but on the interplay or relation between being and the human being which is “accomplished” by thinking. “Thinking accomplishes the relation of being to the essence of man. It does not make or cause the relation. Thinking brings this relation to being solely as something handed over to it from being” (GA 9: 313/LH 217).

It is in this context that Heidegger coins his famous expression that language is the “house of being” (GA 9: 313/LH 217). Language, then, is hermeneutics itself (see GA 12: 116, 118/OWL 30, 31). It is important not to forget that this often-cited sentence cannot be fully understood without the sentence that immediately follows it: “In its home man dwells” (GA 9: 313/LH 217). Here, we not only find a reference to Heidegger’s later philosophy, or hermeneutics, of dwelling, as most famously presented in “Building Dwelling Thinking” (GA 7: 145–164/BW 343–363) or in “Poetically Man Dwells” (GA 7: 189–208/PLT 209–227), but also a key to understanding his later thinking as a hermeneutics. This home of language, Heidegger points out, has thinkers and poets as its “guardians.” Heidegger speaks here of his own responsibility (that is, responsiveness to being) as a thinker. But he also speaks implicitly of the hermeneutical task of thinking insofar as the thinker as guardian thinks and says (and thus accomplishes) the “relation of being to the essence of man” (GA 9: 313/LH 217) in the house of being that language is – in contrast to the metaphysical forgetfulness of be-ing.²⁷

²⁷ See here also GA 12: 118 f./OWL: 32: “You said that language is the fundamental trait in human nature’s hermeneutic relation to the two-fold of presence and present beings.”

Heidegger, therefore, understands the human being now – in language reminiscent of *Contributions* – as belonging (*gehören*) to the “truth of being” (GA 9: 333/LH 237). The human being is, in another well-known expression, the “shepherd” or the “neighbor” of being (GA 9: 342/LH 245), that is, he dwells in the nearness of being. He is, therefore, not the “lord of beings” (*Herr des Seienden*) who could objectify what is, but he needs to hear being itself (GA 9: 342/LH 245). This explains the relation of thinking to being and language (and thus also to truth) that Heidegger now presupposes: “For thinking in its saying merely brings the unspoken word of Being to language” (GA 9: 361/LH 262). What Heidegger outlines is, therefore, a hermeneutical thinking of language that, like the thinking of *Contributions*, goes beyond the metaphysical forgetfulness of being (as the thinking of *Being and Time* raises the long-forgotten question of being, but failed to take a sufficiently primordial or radical perspective).

Heidegger still interprets this kind of thinking explicitly as a *practice* and thus continues his early concern with, and interpretation of, philosophy as a practice. Hence, Heidegger begins his letter by pointing out that “thinking acts insofar as it thinks” (GA 9: 313/LH 217). But we should not conclude that Heidegger has now become an advocate of the understanding of philosophy as existential or social action. Heidegger thinks that “we are still far from pondering the essence of action decisively enough” (GA 9: 313/LH 217). Given the problematic nature of all “philosophies of action” (problematic because they are not aware of their intrinsic shortcomings), Heidegger attempts more fully to examine the nature of action as accomplishing (*vollbringen*). It is here that thinking as accomplishing the “relation of being to the essence of man” comes into play (GA 9: 313/LH 217). This accomplishing, however, is by no means “practical” (GA 9: 314/LH 218). If it is understood in such a way, it is, as Heidegger holds, already understood from within a specific metaphysical context that interprets thinking technically. Heidegger wants to take thinking “for itself” (GA 9: 314/LH 218), that is, phenomenologically as it shows itself to us, not under certain premises that conceal what thinking essentially is.

If thinking, taken for itself, is not practical, is this not to say that it is theoretical? It is once again, in Heidegger’s account, a misunderstanding of philosophy that may lead us to such a conclusion. Philosophy proper is, as he argues (and has argued since 1919), not theoretical either. For to speak of theory would also presuppose the “technical interpretation of thinking,” something that Heidegger describes in no uncertain terms: “Such characterization is a reactive attempt to rescue thinking and

preserve its autonomy over against acting and doing" (GA 9: 314/LH 218). What is required is, Heidegger contends, to "return thinking to its element" (GA 9: 315/LH 219) which is the relation between the truth of being and the human being. The "position" of thinking (that is, where it dwells) is, therefore, to be found beyond, or prior to, the technical distinction of theory and practice.

Thus in the "Letter on Humanism" as well, Heidegger deals with the three "topics" that have determined his way of thinking as a hermeneutic way:

- (1) as in *Contributions*, his concern with the historical is transformed into the concern with the history and truth, or clearing, of being;
- (2) his interest in life and the human being is now understood in terms of the relation of the human being to being; and
- (3) his concern about modernity is now reformulated (or broadened) with respect to the history of Western metaphysics and its misapprehension of thinking proper.

In addition, where he spoke of understanding or interpreting, he now speaks of the practice or activity of thinking as accomplishing, in contrast to problematic conceptions of thinking as either theory or praxis. The horizon within which this "hermeneutics" of being is outlined is once again – as in *Being and Time* and in *Contributions* – the horizon of language and truth in which the human beings dwells, now, of course, being-historically understood.

CONCLUSION: HEIDEGGER, HERMENEUTIC PHILOSOPHY, AND THE REDISCOVERY OF PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY

It may be helpful to follow Heidegger in *not* speaking about hermeneutics with respect to the thinking that presents itself in *Contributions* or in "Letter on Humanism." One may even consider it necessary not to speak of hermeneutics in this context. After all, would Heidegger not have spoken of hermeneutics if this had been important to him and if it had been appropriate? In "A Dialogue on Language," Heidegger interprets his own way of thinking as follows: "I have left an earlier standpoint, not in order to exchange it for another one, but because even the former standpoint was merely a way-station along a way" (GA 12: 94/OWL 12). There are, therefore, very good arguments that would have suggested a limitation of this essay to the early Heidegger, at best to Heidegger's writings up

to the late 1920s.²⁸ Is the concept “hermeneutics” not too dependent on (metaphysical and subjectivist) premises that Heidegger tried to overcome in his later philosophy? And if not, is it not too easily misunderstood as necessarily being based on such premises?

There are, however, also good reasons still to use this concept and to speak at least of the implicitly hermeneutical dimension of the later Heidegger’s philosophy. As we have already seen, Heidegger himself suggests as much in “A Dialogue on Language.” In this “Dialogue” we can also read: “The lasting element in thinking is the way. And ways of thinking hold within them that mysterious quality that we can walk them forward and backward, and that indeed only the way back will lead us forward” (GA 12: 94/OWL 12). So going back to his early hermeneutics of facticity, properly understood, may eventually lead us forward in an understanding of his later philosophy – which has already happened insofar as the publication of Heidegger’s early lecture courses has without doubt enriched the debate about his later thinking.

We could perhaps leave the question whether or not it is fully appropriate to speak of hermeneutics with respect to Heidegger’s later philosophy, too, open. It is, after all, a rather academic question that Heidegger would have considered unnecessary. We should not forget that the later Heidegger wanted to leave his way of thinking in “namelessness,” that is,

²⁸ Claudius Strube speaks therefore of “hermeneutic phenomenology” with respect to Heidegger’s thought from 1919 to 1929/30; see Claudius Strube, *Zur Vorgeschichte der hermeneutischen Phänomenologie* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1993), 3 f. Hubert Dreyfus also supports the thesis that Heidegger’s later thinking can no longer be called a hermeneutics; see Hubert Dreyfus, “Beyond Hermeneutics: Interpretation in Late Heidegger and Recent Foucault,” in Gary Shapiro and Alan Sica (eds), *Hermeneutics: Questions and Prospects* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 66–83. Günter Figal calls Heidegger’s abandonment of the concept of hermeneutics “consequent”; see Günter Figal, “Selbstverstehen in instabiler Freiheit. Die hermeneutische Position Martin Heideggers,” 115 f. Not only von Herrmann and Pöggeler (see n. 23), but also – among many others – Jean Grondin argues that one can call Heidegger’s later philosophy hermeneutic; see Jean Grondin, “Stichwort: Hermeneutik. Selbstauslegung und Seinsverstehen,” in Dieter Thomae (ed.), *Heidegger-Handbuch: Leben – Werk – Wirkung* (Stuttgart: Verlag J. B. Metzler, 2003), 47–51. For an examination of the hermeneutic dimension of Heidegger’s later thinking, see also Richard E. Palmer, “Hints for/of Hermeneutics,” in Joseph J. Kuchelmanns (ed.), *Hermeneutic Phenomenology: Lectures and Essays* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1988), 157–210; see also his response to Dreyfus’ “Beyond Hermeneutics” in Richard E. Palmer, “On the Transcendability of Hermeneutics,” in Gary Shapiro and Alan Sica (eds), *Hermeneutics: Questions and Prospects*, 84–95 and his *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 140–161; Theodore Kiesel, “Gibt es eine formal anzeigende Hermeneutik nach der Kehre?” in Annemarie Gethmann-Siebert and Elisabeth Weisser-Lohmann (eds), *Kultur – Kunst – Öffentlichkeit: Philosophische Perspektiven auf praktische Probleme*, 173–179. For the “pre-formation” of Heidegger’s later thought in his early hermeneutics, see Rainer Thurnher, “Ebenen des Hermeneutischen in Heideggers *Sein und Zeit*,” 53.

he refused to provide a definition of how he now thought (GA 12: 114/OWL 29). What was more important for him was the task of thinking. But it is, ironically, precisely this task that makes us want to call his later philosophy, too, a hermeneutics, understood along the lines of Heidegger's understanding of the word.

In reminding his readers of the task of thinking, Heidegger's philosophy has significantly influenced the development and the course of twentieth- and twenty-first-century hermeneutics – in a still challenging way. One can even argue that in some cases the history of later hermeneutics falls short of some of the insights that Heidegger's hermeneutic philosophy offers and that still need to be taken seriously. This is not to say that one should read Heidegger's hermeneutics and his contributions to contemporary philosophical hermeneutics uncritically. His very early hermeneutics raises the question whether or not this philosophy does not change the character of philosophy so significantly that the problems associated with this change are more complex than the problems it tries to solve. Does not the hermeneutics of facticity already imply the end of philosophy as we know it? If so, what are the implications of this conclusion?

More questions need to be raised. In particular, Heidegger's later idea of a history of being is problematic. The hermeneutics of the event of being is dependent on a rather selective and narrow reading of the history of Western philosophy that is not only questionable in many of its details but perhaps also in its general claims. Nevertheless, it also needs to be said that even Heidegger's being-historically oriented hermeneutics provides important insights and has helped both to abandon a reductively subjectivistic and anthropocentric focus in hermeneutics and to develop a more comprehensive and deeper view of history than nineteenth-century hermeneutics with its historicist and objectivistic presuppositions.

There is, however, another important problem that should not go without mention. Particularly the later Heidegger's being-historical focus does not seem to allow for a sufficient understanding of the ontic. This criticism is by no means a superficial one. It helps explain, among other things, some of the more problematic features of Heidegger's relation to the world of politics and to ethical issues in general. From his being-historical perspective, to name but one example, there is no essential difference between totalitarian regimes and modern liberal democracies. Even if we leave aside the question of whether this view is convincing from that perspective, we may raise the question of whether Heidegger's later philosophy would not have benefited from a more elaborate hermeneutics of facticity and even whether the being-historical hermeneutics

must not partly be read as a betrayal of important elements of his own early hermeneutic beginnings.

One can plausibly argue that many of Heidegger's students – particularly the students who attended his early Freiburg lecture courses – have further developed some of the insights of the early Heidegger and may thus help to remedy some of the problems that have just been mentioned. In so doing, they have explored often hidden implications of Heidegger's hermeneutics in many different directions. With *Truth and Method*, Hans-Georg Gadamer has provided a hermeneutics that takes particularly Heidegger's early philosophy seriously and uses it to lay the foundations for a new "methodology" of the humanities.²⁹ Emmanuel Lévinas has explored the hermeneutics of the Other. Hannah Arendt and Leo Strauss have further examined the hermeneutics of the political and of modernity. Hans Jonas has contributed significantly to the hermeneutics of nature, and Karl Löwith has critically discussed the hermeneutics of history. In the cases of all of these thinkers (and of many other thinkers who encountered Heidegger later or only through his writings), one can speak of a rediscovery of practical philosophy in the sense of a philosophy that takes human practice and, indeed, itself as such a practice seriously. Heidegger's critique of what he considered a deeply problematic understanding of philosophy, his rediscovery of the *practice* of philosophy, or of philosophy as one distinct human *practice* (particularly with Aristotle on his side) and his hermeneutics of what it means to *be* with respect to the manifold world of human *praxis*, has without any doubt led to a new interest in practical philosophy and its hermeneutic dimensions (or in the practical dimensions of hermeneutics).³⁰ In Heidegger's hermeneutics we find the nucleus of this rediscovery – a nucleus that, all criticism notwithstanding, still deserves to be taken seriously, even though in many cases his students were inspired by what Heidegger failed to say or to explore as much as by what he did say and explore. This encourages a hermeneutics of silence (about which particularly the later Heidegger has a great deal to say) – a topic that will, however, be passed by in silence here.

²⁹ For a discussion of the relation between Gadamer and Heidegger, see Günter Figal and Hans-Helmuth Gander (eds), *"Dimensionen des Hermeneutischen": Heidegger und Gadamer* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2005).

³⁰ In this connection, see Manfred Riedel, "Heidegger und der hermeneutische Weg zur praktischen Philosophie," in Manfred Riedel, *Für eine zweite Philosophie: Vorträge und Abhandlungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), 171–196.

*Facticity and Ereignis**Thomas Sheehan*

The major obstacle in interpreting Heidegger today is the continued use of the ontological language of “being” and “beings.” If Heidegger’s work is to have the philosophical impact it deserves, scholars must realize that throughout his texts the term “being” was only a provisional and ultimately misleading way of saying “meaning,” just as “time” was a first and inadequate attempt to name “the disclosure of meaning to understanding.”¹

This essay argues that throughout his writings Heidegger presupposed a phenomenological reduction of being to meaning. It then tests that thesis by re-interpreting two crucial terms in Heidegger’s philosophy: *Ereignis* in the later period and facticity in the earlier, both of which come down to the same thing: the a priori appropriation of man to the meaning-process.

Some conventions in this essay: I use “man” and “human being” as gender-neutral and as the most formal of indications of what Heidegger means by *Dasein*.² Both English terms translate the Greek ἀνθρώπος, understood by Heidegger as *Dasein*, the only place where meaning shows up. Secondly, after a few introductory paragraphs, I will translate *Sein* as meaning or meaning-giving;³ and in this essay I will not distinguish

¹ On “time” as a preliminary name (*Vorname*) for disclosure, see GA 9: 377.4 = *Pathm* 286.13; and GA 14: 36.11–12 = TB 28.20–21. I cite texts by page and line, separated by a period. The line-count does not include headers but does count titles within the text. Unless otherwise noted, all translations and paraphrases are my own, but I do refer to the corresponding pages and lines in existing translations.

² Heidegger often follows this usage (*Mensch* as *Dasein*), for example, at GA 14: 28.8, 15, and 19 = TB 23.6–7, 12, and 19. For Heidegger’s claim that “Dasein” should not be translated, see GA 65: 300.13 = CPh 211.41: “In der Bedeutung, die ‘Sein und Zeit’ erstmals und eigentlich ansetzt, ist dies Wort [Da-sein] nicht zu übersetzen ...” Cf. GA 65: 299.18 = CPh 211.19–20: “selbst nirgendwo unterbringbar.” On formal indication, see Daniel Dahlstrom, *Heidegger’s Concept of Truth* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 242–252.

³ Analogous to the medieval thesis that *having* being entails *giving* being: Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentes*, II, 6, no. 4.

between sense and meaning. Thirdly, I will translate *Erschließung*, *Erschlossenheit*, *Unverborgenheit*, and *Wahrheit* as “disclosure [of meaning] to understanding,” lest the correlation of disclosure and understanding be overlooked. Finally, to designate the earlier and the later Heidegger, I will occasionally use William J. Richardson’s helpful shorthand terms: Heidegger I (the early Heidegger, 1919 to 1930) and Heidegger II (the later Heidegger, 1930 to 1976).

I. BEING AND MEANING

Everyone is used to hearing that “being” (*Sein*) is Heidegger’s core topic, but that is wrong on two accounts.

First, being is always the being *of beings*, whereas Heidegger insisted that the being of beings was not the central issue of his thinking. (Metaphysics had already covered that ground.) Instead, prescinding from its function of grounding beings, Heidegger asks how being itself occurs at all. This question can be expressed in various ways, for example: What is the *Wesen* or *Wahrheit* or *Ursprung* of *Sein*? (i.e., the source of the disclosure of being to understanding), or simply “*Wie west das Sein?*” – “How does the being-process occur?” In some of Heidegger’s later works, the various titles for naming that source tend to cluster around the key term *Ereignis*.⁴

The second reason why “being” is not Heidegger’s core topic is that once one has taken the phenomenological turn, the only philosophical issues that remain are questions of meaning.⁵ To gloss Gadamer’s *bon mot*: Being that can be understood is meaning.⁶ Our ability to deal with anything we encounter, our capacity to make sense of it, entails that the thing must have already entered the realm of language – that is, the realm of meaning. And meaning, of course, occurs only in correlation with human understanding. This correlation is itself the disclosure of meaning

⁴ GA 9: 316, n. “a” = *Pathm* 241, n. “b”: “Denn ‘Ereignis’ seit 1936 das Leitwort meines Denkens.” Cf. also GA 12: 248, n. 2 = *On the Way to Language*, 129 n. On the sameness of *Wahrheit*, *Wesen*, ἀλήθεια, *Sein*, *Sein*, *Lichtung*, *Da*, *Unverborgenheit*, *Offenheit*, *Welt*, *Unterschied*, *Entwurfsbereich*, *Sinn*, *Ereignis*, and *Kehre*, see GA 14: 36.17–18 = TB 28.24–25. *Zollikoner Seminare* 242.12–13 = ZSe 194.33–35. Also GA 65: 318.21–23 = CPh 223.38–40; also *ibid.* 331.23 = 232.27–28; and § 130 in both texts. Also GA 9: 336.27 = *Pathm* 256.23–24; and *ibid.* 369, n. d = 280, n. d; and *ibid.* 201.22–24 and 30–32 = 154.5–7 and 12–14; and *ibid.* 325.20–21 = 248.11–12; and *ibid.* 336.27 = 256.23–24.

⁵ In phenomenology “there are no other philosophical problems except problems of sense, meaning, and signification,” Aron Gurwitsch, review of Gaston Berger, “Le cogito dans la philosophie de Husserl,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 7/4 (1947): 649–654, here 652.

⁶ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London and New York: Continuum, 1989), 470.3–4: “Being that can be understood is language.” Italicized in the original.

to understanding. Therefore, Gadamer's sentence correctly implies a phenomenological reduction of "being" to "meaning," and of "is" to "makes sense as."⁷ And for human beings the wonder of all wonders, the θαῦμα that causes us to θαυμάζειν is, as Heidegger says, that things make sense and do so without being constituted by a Husserlian transcendental ego.⁸

Husserl had already made it clear that within the phenomenological reduction things remain the same as they were before.

We should not overlook the *most essential thing of all*, namely that even after [the phenomenological reduction's] purifying epoché, perception still remains perception *of this house*, indeed, of this house with the accepted status of "actually existing."⁹

What the reduction does is to refrain (ἐπέχειν) from considering the house as just "existing out there." Instead, it leads the phenomenologist's gaze "back from" the existing thing (*re-ducere*; *zurück-führen*) and directs it to one's hermeneutical (sense-making) relation to that thing. This is especially true of Heidegger's phenomenology, with its focus on the hermeneutical structure of human being. So it is quite incorrect to say that, given its strong focus on everyday practical activity, Heidegger's early phenomenology operates within the "natural attitude" that Husserl's epoché brackets out. Rather, everything that Heidegger has to say about tool-use in *Being and Time* is said exclusively within a phenomenological reduction to the hidden hermeneutical structure of our sense-making relation to things.

And then, following the phenomenological reduction, the phenomenologist poses a further question, this time about the *constituting source* of meaning-giving as such. This source is not anything "behind" the

⁷ According to the context, I use "sense-making" either (a) as an a priori term, i.e., as the condition of the possibility of understanding this or that thing, or (b) as an a posteriori term, i.e., as an actual instance of understanding (making intentional sense of) some thing or state of affairs. Man's relation to sense-making in the second sense would correspond to (a non-Husserlian) *intentionality*, whereas man's relation to the first would be Heideggerian *transcendence*. Cf. GA 24: 91.20–22 = BPP 65.15–16: "Intentionality is the *ratio cognoscendi* of transcendence. Transcendence is the *ratio essendi* of intentionality in its various modes."

⁸ Cf. GA 9: 307.23–24 = *Pathm* 234.18: "daß Seiendes ist." Also see GA 52: 64.24–25: "[der] Wunder nämlich daß überhaupt eine Welt um uns waltet, daß Seiendes ist und nicht vielmehr nichts" – that is: the wonder that a world sheds meaning around us, that things are meaningful and not meaningless.

⁹ See "Phenomenology" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica* Article), Draft A, in Edmund Husserl, *Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology and the Confrontation with Heidegger (1927–1931)*, ed. and trans. Thomas Sheehan and Richard E. Palmer (Dordrecht, Boston, and London: Kluwer, 1997), 91.12–14 (the emphasis on "of this house" is my own). The phenomenologist, however, must refrain from working with the thing *apart from* the human sense-making relation to the thing; *ibid.* 91.27–29; see also, *ibid.* 83–84 and 90–92.

meaning of the thing but is simply the disclosive correlation of man and meaning as such. "Meaning and its disclosure to understanding are of co-equal and simultaneous origin."¹⁰ Therefore, in both reductions of focus – from being to meaning, and from meaning to its constituting source – the outcomes are always a matter of correlation. In the first reduction the phenomenologist's focus is on the *intentional* correlation between understanding and the thing. In the second reduction, the phenomenological gaze focuses on one's *transcendence to meaning* (= one's a priori engagement with it), a correlation that *is* the source of meaning-giving. In neither reduction does Heidegger trace matters back to a transcendental ego à la Husserl, but rather always and only to the sense-making structure of concrete human existence as ineluctably engaged with meaning (*In-der-Welt-sein*). In other words, (a) the meaningful within the context that *gives* it meaning, (b) in correlation with the human engagement with meaning-giving – this is Heidegger's rewrite of the so-called object and subject poles of the phenomenological correlation. And this is definitively Heidegger, not Husserl, because the so-called subject pole is not consciousness but *Dasein*, the hermeneutical essence of human being.¹¹ As we shall see below, this correlation is what Heidegger means by *Ereignis*.

One might object, however, that in his 1927 lecture course *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Heidegger designates *his own* version of the phenomenological reduction as the shift of the philosopher's gaze from "beings" (*Seiendes*) to their "being" (*Sein*) rather than to their meaning. He argues that the phenomenologist must begin with things, but always and only in an effort to thematize their *Sein*.

The apprehension of being (i.e., an ontological investigation) always focuses first of all, and necessarily so, on *something* that is in being. But then one's focus *decisively shifts away* from the thing *and is led back to the thing's being*. This basic element of phenomenological method – understood as leading the researcher's gaze from naïvely understood things to their being – is what we designate as the *phenomenological reduction*. (GA 24: 28.32–29.4 = *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, 21.13–18)

¹⁰ SZ 230.6–7 = *Being and Time*, 272.35–36: "Sein und Wahrheit 'sind' gleichursprünglich." Cf. below.

¹¹ On this, see Heidegger's letter to Husserl, October 22, 1927, GA 14: 131.3–17 = Husserl, *Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology*, 138.3–14: "What is the mode of being of the entity in which 'world' is constituted? That is the central problem of *Being and Time*. ... Human being harbors within itself the possibility of transcendental constitution. ... Transcendental constitution is a central possibility of the existence of the factual self."

Yes – but it is clear that for Heidegger this is a reduction from the naive, natural-attitude *understanding* of a being to a thematically focused *understanding* of its being. But being that is understood is meaning. In fact, in this text Heidegger glosses “being” with the modifier “in terms of the specific way it is disclosed to understanding” (*Entwerfen [des Seins] auf die Weise seiner Unverborgenheit*; *ibid.* 29.18 = 21.29–30). But disclosure = ἀλήθεια = the finite availability of meaning to human being. In the first reduction we know things not as merely “already-out-there-now-real” but in terms of how they matter to us and make sense.¹² Thus to understand (or “project”)¹³ things in terms of their finite disclosure means to understand them in terms of their specific form of meaningfulness. Hence Heidegger’s phenomenological reduction is an act of explicitly understanding a thing in terms of its meaning.

We can already see Heidegger’s phenomenological turn at work in his early review of Karl Jaspers’ *Psychology of Worldviews* (June 1921), where talk of *Sein* is always talk of *Seinssinn* in the sense of what is meaningful to oneself (*Erfahrung zugänglichen Bedeutsamen*) and where even the statement “I am” is under the sign of sense and significance (*aus der Grunderfahrung des bekümmerten Habens seiner selbst*).¹⁴ We see this as well in *Being and Time*, where the world – which contextualizes and hermeneutically “situates” the innerworldly – is defined as meaningfulness (*Bedeutsamkeit*) in the sense of that which *gives* meaning to the meaningful.

When I use “hermeneutics” in this essay, I am primarily referring neither to the second-order employment of the hermeneutical “as” in acts of practical understanding nor to third-order acts like the fusion of interpretive horizons. Rather, I am referring to ἐρμηνεία in its first-order and fundamental sense: the *need* and ability to make sense of whatever one encounters. We human beings are hermeneutical by nature: we cannot exist without understanding the meaning of ... (If we can encounter something, we can make sense of it. If we cannot make sense of something,

¹² I borrow the phrase “already-out-there-now-real” from Bernard Lonergan, *Insight* (London and New York: Longmans, Green, 1957), 251.21. See also Aristotle’s ἔξω [τῆς διανοίας] (“outside of thinking”) at *Metaphysics*, VI 4, 1028a 2, and ἔξω ὅν καὶ χωριστόν (“a thing that is outside and separate from [thinking]”); *ibid.* XI 8, 1065a 24.

¹³ For the equivalence of “understand” and “project” see SZ 306.7–8 = *Being and Time*, 353.41 f.: “entwirft ... das heißt versteht.” Also GA 15: 335.1–2 = FS 40.41–42: “‘Sinn’ ist vom ‘Entwurf’ hir zu verstehen, der sich durch ‘Verstehen’ erklärt.” Also GA 14: 39.32 = TB 31.31–32: “[Wenn] das Entwurf in und als Verstehen geschieht.” Also GA 3: 235.19–20 = *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 165.12: “Dieses Entwerfen (Verstehen).”

¹⁴ GA 9: 30.10, 17–19, 21–26 = *Pathm* 26.8, 14–17, 23–25. The word “bekümmerten” (concernful) is emphasized in the original.

we cannot encounter it.) We are the only entity for whom meaning makes a difference, and if sense-making were ever to be taken away from us, we would be no more.¹⁵ We have nowhere to go, no way to live, but meaning. As Heidegger put it in 1925:

Because human existence, in its very nature, is sense-making, *it lives in meanings* and can express itself in and as meanings.¹⁶

The phrase “lives in meanings” is not meant in the way a fish cannot live outside water, but rather in the way a fish cannot exist without its fishness.

The fact that sense-making *can* be taken away from each of us at any moment is what Heidegger means by mortality (*Sein zum Tode*: being ever at the point of death). Mortality and first-order ἐμπειρία are two sides of the same human coin. Mortality lets us make sense of ... and in fact *requires* us to do so if we don’t want to die. The facticity of thrownness into meaning becomes utterly serious when we realize that meaning-making – our very way of staying alive – is possible only because we are mortal; and our mortality is the groundless ground for why we have to make sense.

How is this so? Whether in the theoretical or the practical orders, in order to make discursive sense of anything, we must keep distinct the subject and the predicate, or the tool and the task. We must differentiate each from the other (= διαίρεσις), while at the same time uniting them in a practical or theoretical affirmation (= σύνθεσις). We are able to perform such acts because we ourselves *are*, in our very nature, σύνθεσις/ διαίρεσις: constantly pulling ourselves together across the ultimate διαίρεσις – our mortality, which when fulfilled will be our death. Thus the alternative to being dead is to be making sense while living ever at the point of death.

In Heidegger’s ontological lexicon, all this can be expressed in the chiasmic phrase: *Ohne Da-sein, kein Sein; ohne Sein, kein Da-sein* (without human being, no being; without being, no human being). But given that the phenomenological reduction is essential to Heidegger’s approach to these issues, we should translate that chiasmic phrase into hermeneutical-phenomenological language: *Ohne Da-sinn, kein Sinn. Ohne Sinn, kein*

¹⁵ On “making a difference,” see Richard Polt, “Ereignis,” in *A Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 375–391, here 383.21–22.

¹⁶ GA 21: 151.4–5 = *Logic: The Question of Truth*, 127.30–32: “Weil Dasein in seinem Sein selbst bedeutend ist, lebt es in Bedeutungen und kann sich als diese aussprechen.” My emphasis within the translation.

Da-sinn. Without man, no meaning at all (the motto of Heidegger I); and without meaning, no man at all (the motto of Heidegger II).

At this point we must pose another objection. Recall that in *Being and Time* Heidegger declares that “there is being only as long as human being *is*.”¹⁷ – But is that sentence really true? Is there no being without human being? Surely that cannot be the case! Imagine that all human life on earth were destroyed by a meteorite. Before the impact, it would be a safe (if uncollectible) bet that, after our deaths, there will still be things out there that have being: the sun, the moon, the sky. Therefore, contrary to Heidegger’s phrase just cited, when *Dasein* is gone, there still will be *Sein*. QED.

However, a comparison of that objection with the text from *Being and Time* forces the conclusion that when Heidegger employs the words “being,” he clearly does not mean “existing ‘out there’” in the objective, spatio-temporal order of things. What then does he mean by *Sein*?

When the meteorite hits and we are all dead, something will indeed be lost forever. Not just our bodies and brains, but all the worlds of meaning that we sustained as long as we lived. Without human being, no meaning-giving world, hence no meaning, and therefore no meaningful things. Meaning requires a mind to mind it, and *Da-sinn* is that mind. As Heidegger puts it in *Being and Time*, “Meaning ‘is’ only in [man’s] understanding.”¹⁸ Human being is the thrown projection of – or in Heidegger’s later language, the appropriated sustaining of – meaning. The conjunction of (a) thrownness/appropriation and of (b) the projecting/sustaining of meaning constitutes the disclosure of meaning to understanding. Again Heidegger:

There is meaning only insofar as there is the disclosure of meaning to human understanding. And the disclosure of meaning *is* only insofar as and as long as human being is. Meaning and its disclosure to understanding are of co-equal and simultaneous origin.¹⁹

This human correlativity with meaning, in which man is necessarily involved in the disclosure of meaning, is analogous in a very different register to the world of Augustine, where things exist only because God is aware of them. Compare Augustine’s *De trinitate* 15, 22: *non quia sunt*,

¹⁷ SZ 212.4–5 = *Being and Time*, 255.10–11: “Allerdings nur solange Dasein *ist*, das heißt die ontische Möglichkeit von Seinsverständnis, ‘gibt es’ Sein.”

¹⁸ GA 2: 244.5 = SZ 183.29–30 = *Being and Time*, 228.12–13. “Sein aber ‘ist’ nur im Verstehen des Seienden, zu dessen Sein so etwas wie Seinsverständnis gehört.”

¹⁹ SZ 230.5–6 = *Being and Time*, 272.34–35: “Sein – nicht Seiendes – ‘gibt es’ nur, sofern Wahrheit ist. Und sie *ist* nur, sofern und solange Dasein ist. Sein und Wahrheit ‘sind’ gleichursprünglich.”

ideo novit, sed ideo sunt, quia novit ("God knows things not because they are; rather, they are because he knows them"). Or *Confessiones* 13, 38, 53: *nos itaque ista quae fecisti videmus, quia sunt; tu autem quia vides ea, sunt* ("We see the things you made because they exist, but they exist only because you see them"). Or *De civitate Dei* 11. 10: *iste mundus nobis notus esse non potest, nisi esset; Deo autem nisi notus esset, esse non potest* ("This world could not be known by us unless it had being, whereas it cannot have being without being known by God"). In Augustine's case the correlation is between God's knowing of things and their having *being*. In Heidegger's case, the correlation is between us knowing things and their having *meaning*.

But here looms the major obstacle. Even though Heidegger declared that his philosophy was phenomenological right to the end,²⁰ he nevertheless continued to use the *pre*-phenomenological language of *Sein* and *Seiendes*, even when he declared that the proper object of his thought was no longer being.²¹ Heidegger's key terms "being" and "beings" derive from the pre-phenomenological, ontological lexicon of naive realism, where "being" means "being out there" in what we may call the "actual" order of things. The term "being" virtually begs to be understood as existence (*existentia*), and to the extent that "being" *can* be misunderstood this way, it is an obstacle – I argue the main obstacle – to grasping Heidegger's philosophical intentions. This problem of terminology is a major issue, not a minor detail. If one chooses (unwisely, in my view) to continue using the pre-phenomenological discourse of "being" and "beings," one should make it clear that Heidegger himself understood *Sein* phenomenologically, i.e., as *Sinn* (meaning) in correlation with the *Da* of *Sinn*, man as "where-meaning-appears."

Originally Heidegger employed the language of being in order to keep continuity with classical and pre-classical Greek philosophy – all of this within the framework of, and for the sake of, possible retrieval of its unsaid. This explains Heidegger's frequent glossing of ὄν and οὐσία with παρόν and παρούσία, so as to say: not beings and their beingness but meaningful things and their meaningfulness. And yet he continued

²⁰ See Heidegger, "The Understanding of Time in Phenomenology and in the Thinking of the Being-Question," trans. Thomas Sheehan and Frederick Elliston, *Southwestern Journal of Philosophy*, 10/2 (1979): 200–201, here 201.1. Also William J. Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* (1963), pp. xvi, 1–7; also 44.1–2 with n. 47; also 537.26–28: "It is singularly important to realize that Heidegger never abandons the phenomenological attitude that seeks only to let the phenomenon manifest itself."

²¹ GA 14: 50.3 = TB 41.5: "das Sein ... nicht mehr das eigens zu Denkende ist." See also below.

to use the language of “being” even while adopting a hermeneutical-phenomenological approach to philosophy.

That notwithstanding, the evidence shows that Heidegger always understood “being” under the sign of the phenomenological reduction. On March 18, 1919, during his first course after the war, Heidegger insisted that in the lived experience of our first-hand world (*Umwelt*), what we first encounter are not things, objects, or blanched out “beings” that only subsequently acquire the hue of meaning. Rather, what we immediately encounter is

das Bedeutsame – *the meaningful* – that is what is primary, that is what is immediately given to you without any mental detour through a conceptual grasp of the thing. When you live in that first-hand world, everything comes at you loaded with meaning, all over the place and all the time. Everything appears within a meaningful world, and that world *gives the thing its meaning*.²²

Clearly, by *das Seiende*, Heidegger is referring to things not as already-out-there-now-real but only insofar as they are ἀληθές. And the primary meaning of ἀληθές is not “true” but “meaningful.” Consider the following analogical senses of the word “meaning”:

1. ἀλήθεια-1: the basic occurrence of meaning in disclosive correlation with thrown transcendence: the emergence of the meaning-giving world (*Welt*, *Lichtung*) sustained by man’s “World-openness.”
2. ἀλήθεια-2: the pre-theoretical meaningfulness of this or that thing in correlation with everyday intentionality.
3. ἀλήθεια-3: the theoretical-apophantic correctness of a proposition as a form of fulfilled intentionality

“Truth” in the sense of the adequate correspondence between proposition and thing is only the third form of meaningfulness. Prior to that there is, first, the emergence of meaning as such, i.e., the disclosure (opening up) of the meaning-giving world in correlation with one’s a priori engagement with it; and second, there is the intelligibility – the normal everyday significance – of this or that thing within the meaning-giving world. The third instance, the correctness of propositions, is a valid and necessary form of meaningfulness, but of the three

²² GA 56/57: 73.1–5 = TDP 61.24–28: “*das Bedeutsame* ist das Primäre, gibt sich mir unmittelbar, ohne jeden gedanklichen Umweg über ein Sacherfassen. In einer Umwelt lebend, bedeutet es mir überall und immer, es ist alles welthaft, ‘*es welter*’.” The phrase “Die Welt welter” (= “The world enworlds things”) means that the world allows for the meaning of whatever is found within the world.

it is the most derived sense of ἀλήθεια. It is here alone that the word “truth” really applies.²³

The several arguments I have provided in this first section justify the thesis that in Heidegger’s work “being” should be understood as “meaning.” But doing only this much is merely to have taken the first step in the two-step process of arriving at the answer to Heidegger’s fundamental question. This first step – reading being as meaning – moves us from the traditional framework of metaphysics to a specifically hermeneutical-phenomenological perspective. It marks the transformation of the question of the being of beings into the question of the meaning of the meaningful. It is a crucial step to be sure, one that, unfortunately, is almost never thematized in Heidegger scholarship. Without it, one risks slipping back into the incoherent tendency to think of “being” as objectively out there, either within things, or behind them, or above them – and ultimately as some kind of Super-Subject endowed with agency, as in onto-theology.

To take only the first step is to still have one foot in the same issue that guides metaphysics – the being of beings – only now stated in a phenomenological mode.

The truly important step is the next one: getting to the *constituting source* of meaning as such. This is “the leap” into a truly new and fundamental question, heretofore unasked in philosophy or phenomenology: If meaning-giving (*Welt, Lichtung*) is responsible for things being meaningful, what is responsible for *Welt* and *Lichtung* as such? Without appealing to a creative deity, a transcendental ego, or to some crude notion of causality, what lets meaning come about at all? If we accept that the realm of clarity (*Lichtung*) is the open region of understanding (*das Offene des Begreifens*)²⁴ – i.e., that it is the disclosure of meaning to human being (*die Wahrheit des Seins*) – then the question becomes: “Granted that the region of enworlding clarity is always already given, whence and how is it given?”²⁵

Heidegger’s sights were ultimately set not on that which is meaningful (in traditional language, *das Seiende*) nor even on what gives it meaning (traditionally, *das Sein*) but rather on the *source* of meaning (*das Wesen/ die Wahrheit des Seins*). That is, Heidegger’s work is not ontic or even

²³ See Heidegger’s important *retractio* on “truth” at GA 14: 86.16–21 and n. = TB 70.2–5 and n. 5.

²⁴ Here I follow John Sallis’s translation: GA 9: 199.21 = *Pathm* 152.24.

²⁵ GA 14: 90.3–4 = TB 73.3. “Woher aber und wie gibt es die Lichtung?” and *ibid.* 46.5 = 37.14–15: “von woher und wie es ‘das Offene’ gibt?” Also “Wie west das Seyn?”: GA 65: 72.22 = CPh 54.35. On the equivalence of “world” and “the realm of clarity,” cf. GA 9: 326.15–16 = *Pathm* 248.36–37: “die Lichtung des Seins, und nur sie, ist ‘Welt’.”

ontological, but praeter-ontological: *Was läßt das Sein anwesen?* What is responsible for, what makes possible, meaning-giving at all?²⁶

The Pre-Socratics came close: they named φύσις and ἀλήθεια— both of which come down to the emergence of meaning-giving — but they failed to ask what is responsible for that emergent disclosure, i.e., the question of how it is constituted by man's appropriation to the meaning-giving process.²⁷ When Heideggerians return to that Pre-Socratic position and ask the heretofore unasked question — How come meaning-giving at all? — they already have a notional knowledge of the answer, or at least a German word to stand in heuristically for the answer. That word is *Ereignis*. But what does *Ereignis* mean?

By way of summary: this first section of the essay has offered several arguments for why *Sein* is better understood as *Sinn* or *Bedeutung*, intelligibility or meaning. I will now test this hypothesis against two major topics in Heidegger's thought: *Ereignis* and facticity. Does using the hermeneutical discourse of meaning work with those two terms? Does it lend greater clarity to each of them than does the discourse of being?

II. *EREIGNIS*

Ereignis is the later Heidegger's name for the central issue of his philosophy. So central is it that in 1962 Heidegger declared that *Ereignis* is not an element *within* being but the reverse: being is embedded within *Ereignis* ("*das Sein in das Ereignis gehört*"). Moreover, once "being" in all its formations and dispensations is "taken back into *Ereignis*" — that is, once philosophical thinking begins to focus on *Ereignis* rather than on being ("*in das Ereignis einkehrt*") — from then on, being is no longer the proper object of thought, precisely because *Ereignis* is the ultimate source of all the various dispensations of being.²⁸

To put this another way: Being is always dispensed by *Ereignis*, but this dispensing source is, of its very nature, intrinsically hidden. Precisely because it is intrinsically hidden, *Ereignis* mostly goes unnoticed and is forgotten, in which case one is aware of only the dispensed and not its dispensing source. One sees only the constituted (meaning in its epochal forms) without acknowledging its ever-latent constituting source

²⁶ Heidegger associates the ontological difference with ontology and metaphysics; GA 65: 424.15–16 = CPh 299.13–14: the ontological difference is "[die] Ontologie tragenden Unterscheidung." His interest is to trace that difference back to its self-unifying "identity" in *Ereignis*.

²⁷ Cf. GA 15: 366.31–32 = FS 61.4: "Mit dem Ereignis wird überhaupt nicht mehr griechisch gedacht."

²⁸ GA 14: 49.28–50.7 = TB 40.34–41.8. Further on the embeddedness of being in *Ereignis*, see *ibid.* 25.20–21 = 20.17.

(*Ereignis*).²⁹ In Heidegger's metaphor, one fails to distinguish the source from the river (GA 14: 29.15 = *On Time and Being*, 24.2). However, upon personally recognizing and accepting, in an act of resolve, the intrinsic hiddenness of appropriation as the finite source of all meaning, one has overcome the whole system of the dispensations of being (*Seinsgeschichte*). In fact, "being disappears in *Ereignis*."³⁰

But what is this *Ereignis*, and how should we translate it into English? Can we make more sense of it within the phenomenological discourse of meaning than in the ontological lexicon of being?

Heidegger refuses the usual, non-technical translation of *Ereignis* as "event" and interprets it instead as *the appropriation of man to the meaning-giving process*. But this appropriation of human being to meaning-giving is an a priori and therefore inescapable state of affairs for human being. Man is, of and by its nature, *thrown* into meaning. In the language of Heidegger I, man is *In-der-Welt-sein*, a thrown-projective engagement-with-meaning. In that sense, the appropriation of man for meaning in Heidegger II is the same as the thrownness of man into meaning in Heidegger I. This equivalence of thrownness and appropriation is stated frequently and clearly in Heidegger's *Contributions to Philosophy* – e.g., "*das Dasein ist geworfen, ereignet*" and similar texts.³¹ Likewise the projective sustaining of meaning (*Entwurf*) in Heidegger I is the same as the belonging-to or holding-open of meaning in Heidegger II (*Zugehörigkeit, Offenhalten*). The outcome of thrownness/appropriation is the togetherness or bond (*Zusammengehörigkeit*) of man and meaning, the state of affairs that is itself meaning-giving. In 1969 Heidegger designated this meaning-giving bond as the core of his philosophy.

The basic idea of my thinking is precisely this: meaning – by which I mean the disclosure of meaning to understanding – *requires* human being. And conversely, human being is human only insofar as it stands within the disclosure of meaning to understanding.³²

²⁹ I use "to constitute" in the sense of "ausmachen" in GA 9: 244.25–28 = *Pathm* 187.22–24 and of "mitausmacht," *ibid.* 407.25 = 308.6. See also Heidegger's use of *Konstitution* and *konstituieren*, "Phenomenology," in Husserl, *Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology*, 138.1–17.

³⁰ GA 14: 27.8 = TB 22.3–4: "Sein verschwindet im Ereignis." Cf. GA 9: 366, n. "a" = *Pathm* 278, n. "a": "Sein verschwindet in die Wahrheit."

³¹ GA 65: 304.8 = CPh 214.22. Further examples include *ibid.* 34.9 = 24.32: "die Er-eignung, das Geworfenwerden"; and *ibid.* 239.5 = 169.12: "geworfener ... d.h. er-eignet." Cf. also, SZ 325.37 = *Being and Time*, 373.14–15 ("Übernahme der Geworfenheit") with GA 65: 322.7–8 = CPh 226.13–14 ("Über-nahme der Er-eignung"); and *ibid.* 320.16–17 = 225.5–6: "Übernahme der Zugehörigkeit in die Wahrheit des Seins."

³² GA 16: 704.1–5: "Und der Grundgedanke meines Denkens ist gerade der, daß das Sein beziehungsweise die Offenbarkeit des Seins den Menschen *braucht* und daß der Mensch nur Mensch ist, sofern er in der Offenbarkeit des Seins steht."

Appropriation, the thrown-together-ness of man and meaning, is the origin of intelligibility as such. It is the ultimate *factum* (where can we live but in meaning?), and man's ineluctable relation to meaning is what Heidegger calls *facticity*. We saw that Heidegger uses other metaphors: Man's bondedness to the meaning-process institutes the open region of understanding or the realm of clarity/clarification. It is also called the disclosive emergence (*Wesen, Wahrheit, Es gibt, Geben, Schicken*) of meaning in understanding.

Heidegger's thinking progresses, as we saw, through two questions, which we now may call the *preparatory* question and the *basic* question. Both of them concern the meaning-process, the spectrum running from meaningful *things*, to meaning-giving, to the *source* of meaning as such. However, the two questions approach that process from very different perspectives. The preparatory question seeks out what is responsible for the meaningfulness *of things*. The basic question, on the other hand, considers meaning in itself (a) without regard to its relation with the meaningful³³ and (b) in order to search for the source of meaning at all. The table below, using the lexicon of meaning as well as Heidegger's ontological vocabulary, offers a sketch of the two questions. (It is important to note that the meaning-process is a unified whole whose elements can be distinguished and individually discussed but cannot be separated from the whole.)

The meaning-giving process <i>das Seinsgeschehniss</i>				
PREPARATORY QUESTION			BASIC QUESTION	
the meaningfulness of the meaningful (<i>Innerweltliches</i>)	→	meaning-giving as such (<i>Welt</i>)	→	the source of meaning-giving (<i>Ereignis</i>)
<i>die Seiendheit des Seienden</i>		<i>Sein als solches</i>		<i>die Herkunft des Seins</i>
<i>die Bedeutung des Bedeutsamen</i>		<i>Bedeutsamkeit als solche</i>		<i>das Ausmachen der Bedeutsamkeit</i>

Reading the table from left to right: The *preparatory* question is "How and why are things meaningful?" and the answer is *world* in Heidegger's

³³ GA 14: 29.29–30 = TB 24.17–18: "Ohne Rücksicht auf die Beziehung des Seins zum Seienden."

sense of that term: the meaning-giving context that exists only in correlation with human being. On the other hand, the *basic* question is: “How is there meaning at all?” and the answer is: man’s thrown appropriation to the meaning-giving process. Heidegger spells out the preparatory issue as *Anwesenlassen*, letting *things* be meaningfully present, whereas he interprets the basic question as *Anwesenlassen*, appropriation’s allowing of *Sein*, *Welt*, and meaningfulness at all.³⁴

Each human world or meaningful context discloses to understanding the meanings that can accrue to whatever is found within that world. The world is a set of possible relations that link tools to tasks, and subjects to predicates, thereby providing things with their significance. In the context of a downpour, for example, a piece of rough canvas has a different significance from what it might have if it showed up in an elegant living room. Human beings live in many distinct meaning-giving worlds at the same time. A mother, for instance, makes business calls from home in the evening while rocking her child to sleep and enjoying a Scotch. Each of those worlds – her job, her parenting, her desire to relax – has the function of providing a range of possible sense-making relations within its semantic field.³⁵

The meaning-process begins with the obvious fact that, from one’s first encounter with things, they make sense. They are immediately imbued with meaningfulness – which is to say they are always already caught up in the ontological difference between meaning-giving and the meaningful. For example, that roundish rock over there, as soon as I encounter it within the context of a need of mine, appears to me as a mallet, or as a paper weight, or as a weapon – depending on the need and its context. Now we can thematically raise the preparatory question: How did this rock become (let us say) a mallet? And we will find the answer in the context or world that unfolds around my need to pound in some tent pegs in the absence of a hammer. That context renders meaningful this particular rock, while it excludes from the task that more frangible piece of slate. The early Heidegger discusses all this in *Being and Time*, Division I, Chapter 3, “The Worldhood of the World,” where he argues that the meaningfulness of a tool (its utility or serviceability) derives from the practical world of means-and-ends, and in this specific case, from the world of tool-use. That world establishes the relations (this-as-for-that: these tools for those tasks) that make this rock useful – i.e., practically

³⁴ GA 14: 45.28–30 = TB 37.4–6. The text is misprinted in the English translation.

³⁵ Cf. Thomas Sheehan, “Dasein” in *A Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 199.19–27.

meaningful – for pounding in tent pegs, and that other rock not. It is in this way that the world of practical activities is meaning-giving.

But the next question, the basic question, is: What is responsible for the world itself as meaning-giving, i.e., as an open region of understanding that allows for the meaning of this or that thing? This question asks not about the relation of the meaning-giving world to the meaningful but about the ever self-unifying togetherness of man and meaning whence unfolds the ontological difference between meaning-giving and the meaningful. In a word, it asks about appropriation.

We might pose the basic question in another frame of reference. Insofar as “world” in Heidegger’s sense is the sphere of “minding the meant” (i.e., making intentional sense of whatever we meet), “world” can be understood as “mind” in the very specific Heideggerian sense of *the structural condition for making intentional sense of anything*. Mind in this sense is a priori “open” and meaning-giving. When things come to mind, they are disclosed. In this form, “mind” is not unlike Aristotle’s ὁ νοῦς τῶ πάντων ποιεῖν [νοητῶ] (*De anima*, III 5, 430a 15), i.e., the aspect of mind that renders everything we encounter intelligible – or, in medieval parlance, the actuating intellect (*intellectus agens* [*aliquid intelligibile*]). Such νοῦς or mind is what Heidegger understands as human existence itself, as when he compares the *lumen naturale* or “natural light” of medieval epistemology to the *Da*, the “where-meaning-appears,” as the essence of human being (SZ 133.1 = *Being and Time*, 171.17). This *lumen* corresponds to the φῶς that Aristotle metaphorically describes as rendering things “luminous,” i.e., actually intelligible (*De anima* III, 5, 430a 16).

In this context, the *preparatory* question concerns how mind makes intentional sense of whatever it meets. On the other hand, the *basic* question asks: What is the source of mind? The early Heidegger would answer that question with *In-der-Welt-sein*, i.e., human thrownness into projectively sustaining (*entwerfen*) the openness that is mind as meaning-giving. Thanks to this thrown projectivity, we are always already familiar with meaning within a given world and thus can make sense of this or that innerworldly thing. Alternately, the later Heidegger answers that basic question with: the appropriation of man to “belonging” to mind and “holding it open” (*zugehören*, *offenhalten*). And since appropriation is man’s ineluctable/thrown relation to meaning, we may say that the source of mind is the fact that, in order to exist at all, man *must belong* to mind (*zugehören*), just as mind, if it is to exist at all, *requires* man (*braucht*). *Ereignis* is this hermeneutical circle of reciprocal need: human being’s need of *Welt*/mind as meaning-giving, and *Welt*/mind’s inability

to subsist without human being. *Ohne Da-sinn, kein Sinn. Ohne Sinn, kein Da-sinn.*

But another objection: Doesn't this interpretation ascribe too much power to human being? In brief, the answer is no. In 1951 and again in 1955 Heidegger insisted that within the hermeneutical bond of meaning and man, *Sein* and *Dasein* co-constitute each other.

As soon as I thoughtfully say "human nature," I have already said relatedness to meaning. Likewise, as soon as I thoughtfully say: the meaning of the meaningful, I have already named its relatedness to human nature. Each of the two members of the relation between human nature and meaning already implies the relation itself ... [T]he situation we have named between human nature and the meaning of the meaningful allows of no dialectical maneuvers in which one member of the relation is played off against the other.

And

We always say too *little* when, in speaking of meaning, we leave out its presence *to human being* and thereby fail to recognize that human being itself co-constitutes meaning. We also say too little of human being when in saying meaning (not human being) we posit human being for itself and only later bring it, as already posited, into a relation with meaning.³⁶

Such being the case, the man-meaning relation – *Ereignis* – is one of co-equal reciprocity. Yes, the later Heidegger emphasized the role of meaning (*Sein*) rather than that of man, but only so as to bend the twig back to the center and to emphasize what in fact had already been spelled out in *Being and Time*: that all projective holding open of the world is a *thrown* projection.³⁷ Once one understands that, there is no problem with referring to the equal and reciprocal need of man for meaning and of meaning for man.

In *Being and Time* Heidegger treats man's relation to meaning in Division I, [Chapter 5](#), "Being-In." He had already argued that the essential structure of any world (*Bedeutsamkeit*) is meaning-giving in correlation with man's being "in" such a world. Being-in, far from having anything to do with ordinary space (within-ness), refers to our ever-operative but unthematic *engagement* with meaning-giving, without which we could not know anything as *meaningful*. Moreover, being-already-engaged-with-meaning (*In-der-Welt-sein*) is made up of man's bivalent relation to meaning: on the

³⁶ GA 8: 85.13–19 = *What Calls for Thinking*, 79.19–22 and GA 9: 407.22–8 (cf. 412.1–3) = *Pathm* 308.3–9 (cf. 311.21–3); Thus, whenever I use the terms "man" or "human being," I always intend them as completed by the word meaning – as in "man-meaning."

³⁷ Cf. GA 65: 239.4–5 = CPH 169.11–12: "daß der Werfer des Entwurfs als geworfener sich erfährt."

one hand, passively having to be related to the meaning-giving process (otherwise there is no man) and on the other hand, actively holding open or sustaining the meaning-giving process (otherwise there is no meaning). In short, as already engaged, both passively and actively, with meaning-giving, man necessarily sustains mind as the locus of the meaning-process. Which is another way of articulating the function of *Ereignis*.

Nonetheless, and regardless of all the mental activities that go on within it, mind itself, along with its need to be sustained by man, remains ever in the background, undisclosed. How is that so? To understand mind we would have to presume and use mind to explain mind, which would be a *petitio principii*, begging the question. Unlike Aristotle's god, human being is denied a complete transparency that would allow for such a direct intuition of itself. At best we can be reflexively aware of our awareness of things and can mind our minding of them. But mind itself in its basic whence, why, and whereunto can never be brought to full intelligibility. Everything is understandable except the reason why everything is understandable. If knowledge of something is had by knowing its "causes," i.e., by giving an account of the reasons that explain it,³⁸ we can never know the reason for our thrownness into and our sustaining of mind. We obviously can use mind – in fact are always using it – and we can even sense our own thrownness into mind. That is, we do have a relation to the intrinsic non-disclosure of mind, but that relation is between our ever-possible impossibility of minding things (*Sein zum Tode*) and mind's impossibility of being disclosed, i.e., its intrinsic *Verbergung*.³⁹ As the constituting source of meaning as such and of the meanings of things, the *Ereignis* relation remains ineluctably latent. It is impossible for us to master it. And the name of that impossibility is facticity.


A final thing that needs to be said about *Ereignis* concerns the much-discussed *Kehre* or "turn." As commonly but incorrectly used by Heideggerians, "the turn" refers to the 1930s shift in the way Heidegger philosophized about his central topic. That shift was from the transcendental approach of Heidegger I to the so-called *seinsgeschichtlich* approach

³⁸ *Metaphysics*, I 3, 983a 25–26: τὴν πρώτην αἰτίαν γνωρίζειν. Also Virgil, *Georgics*, II, 490: "felix, qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas."

³⁹ See GA 65: 324.16–21, 28–32 = CPh 227.39–228.1–2 and 9–13: At the very edge of our openness, we are bound up with hiddenness – our utmost not-there-ness – which we know in the form of death as our utmost possibility. Death is the complete other of our openness. It is hidden from us, but, as hidden, it belongs essentially to our thrown-open-ness and needs to be sustained as the basis of our standing within meaning.

of Heidegger II. However, that shift (*Wandel*, *Wende*, *Wendung*) or reversal (*Umkehr*) is not the *Kehre* in its basic and proper sense. There is no doubt that Heidegger's way of thinking about the disclosive source of meaning underwent a *Wandel* in the period 1930–1938, and that this change was first articulated publicly in his “Letter on Humanism” of 1947. But Heidegger took care to point out in *Contributions to Philosophy* (1936–1938) that the proper meaning of the “turn” is found not within this change of his thinking but only within *Ereignis* itself: *die im Ereignis wesende Kehre*.⁴⁰

The clue to understanding the proper and basic sense of the *Kehre* lies in the German term with which Heidegger glosses *Ereignis*, namely, *Gegenschwung*: back-and-forth reciprocity. (The word “reciprocity” comes from the Latin *reci-proci-tas*, back-and-forth-ness.) The “turn” in its proper sense refers to the back-and-forth relation of need between man and meaning-giving: man needs meaning as much as meaning needs man. More specifically, the back-and-forth-ness refers to the two forms of the reciprocal need of man and meaning-giving: man's *passive submission* to being appropriated to the meaning-process (*Brauch*) and man's *active sustaining* of that process (*Zugehören*). The following table illustrates the reciprocal need of man for meaning and of meaning for man. It also illustrates (by way of the dots) the tension or *Streit* between passive thrownness/appropriation and active projection/sustaining of the meaning process.

Man			
is			
passively		actively	
<i>geworfener</i>	thrown into	projecting open	<i>Entwurf</i>
<i>ereignetes</i>	needed for	sustaining	<i>Offenhalten</i>
<i>gebraucht</i>	required to	belong to	<i>Zugehören</i>
			
the meaning-giving process			

⁴⁰ GA 9: 193, n. “a” = *Pathm* 148, n. “a.” Cf. “the Kehre in Ereignis,” GA 65: 34.10–11 = CPh 24.33 (and *passim*: cf. GA 65: 57.10; 262.3–4; 267.12; 320.19; 325.9–10; 407.6). See also Thomas Sheehan, “The Turn” in *Martin Heidegger: Key Concepts*, ed. Bret W. Davis (Durham: Acumen, 2010), 82–101.

Thus the answer to Heidegger's basic question "How does meaning occur at all?" is: It happens because man is "passively" thrown into (appropriated to, or needed for) "actively" sustaining the meaning-process. In a word: *Ereignis* as reciprocity.

Heidegger has a host of rich and potentially misleading metaphors to express this state of affairs, and he uses them liberally: Man is hailed, claimed, called out to, "thrown to," evoked, or even pulled into *Sein*.⁴¹ Such language, of course, risks attributing quasi-personal agency to *Sein*. That, however, is a monstrosity that must be avoided at all costs. Therefore, Heideggerians should take the pledge and swear off the sauce of hypostasizing *Sein*. No more reifying of it into something that does the calling, claiming, throwing, or pulling. Rather, what these metaphors are trying to express is that, when it comes to man and meaning, you cannot have one without the other.

III. FACTICITY

Facticity (*Faktizität*) is the early Heidegger's term for man's a priori thrownness into the ability to give meaning and thus for man's ability to understand this or that thing. Facticity is an essential component of being-in-meaning (*In-der-Welt-sein*). It is a preliminary name for man's appropriation to the *factum* of meaning-giving.

From the first pages of *Being and Time* Heidegger insisted that what makes human being unique is that it *has* to be (*zu sein*).⁴² "Human being exists as the thing that has to be how it is and how it can be."⁴³ Heidegger refers to this "having-to-be" as one's being "delivered over to" and "burdened with" (*überantwortet, belastet*) the condition of being-in-meaning, which is the condition of "being-able-to-make-sense-of" (*Seinkönnen*). Human being lives into and out of its possibilities, which goes back to its *one* possibility: to make sense. We can *feel* this condition of facticity/ thrownness, but we can never understand its origins.

We are most immediately aware of our factual thrownness into sense-making through moods or feelings. These Heidegger anchors in the structural moment of human being that he calls *Befindlichkeit*, the condition of finding ourselves already affectively attuned to the meaning-giving

⁴¹ The verbs are, respectively, *grüßen, ansprechen, heißen, zurufen, zuwerfen*, and *ziehen*.

⁴² In GA 2 (*Sein und Zeit*): 56, n. "d." Heidegger glosses the phrase *Zu-sein* with "daß es zu sein hat," i.e., "that it has to be."

⁴³ SZ 276.17–18 = *Being and Time*, 321.11–12: "Es existiert als Seiendes, das, wie es ist und sein kann, zu sein hat."

process. Moods are the primary and basic way in which a world is disclosed to us, and Heidegger often describes this factual thrownness, this attunedness, as the naked *Daß*⁴⁴ – the fact that we are always already engaged with the *factum* of meaning-giving, from which there is no escape.

But there is an extraordinary kind of mood, quite different from everyday moods and feelings, one in which we not only experience the world and its contents but above all confront the fact that there is *no reason, no ground* for why we are thrown together with meaning. This encounter with groundlessness is a matter of awestruck wonder, whether it take the form of sobering dread (*Angst*) or unshakeable joy (*Freude*).⁴⁵ Heidegger calls these special moods *Grundstimmungen*, “foundational” moods that get to the foundationlessness of the meaning-process. The early Heidegger is better known for his analyses of the experience of dread than of joy, and we may gain some insight into how facticity and appropriation fit together – and in fact are the same phenomenon – by revisiting his treatment of dread in the 1929 lecture *What is Metaphysics?*⁴⁶

In the second and third parts of the lecture, Heidegger portrays what such an experience of dread might feel like. Jean-Paul Sartre took up and transformed these pages in his early novel *Nausea* (1938), particularly in describing the protagonist Roquentin’s harrowing yet liberating experience of the absurd.⁴⁷ And in fact whereas Heidegger employs the term “the nothing” (*das Nichts*) to name what we encounter in dread, we would do well to utilize the Sartrean term “absurd” (“lacking in any meaning at all”) as we employ the discourse of meaning to understand the core of Heidegger’s thinking. I will be using “absurd” not in a strict Sartrean sense of the term but in a Heideggerian-phenomenological sense based on the word’s etymology: that which is “deaf” (Latin, *surdus*) to any efforts to make sense of it: the abyss of meaninglessness (SZ 152.15).

Heidegger begins his analysis of the absurd with everyday, ordinary moods that disclose to our affective understanding not only the meaning of individual things in our lived experience but also the encompassing

⁴⁴ See SZ 134.37 = *Being and Time*, 173.28: “das Sein des Daseins als nacktes ‘Daß es ist und zu sein hat.’”

⁴⁵ SZ 310.14–15 = *Being and Time*, 358.6–7: “die nüchterne Angst, die gerüstete Freude” – the latter due to the sense of freedom that follows upon the act of resolve.

⁴⁶ GA 9: 103–122 = *Pathm* 82–96. See also “Reading ‘What is Metaphysics?’,” trans. Thomas Sheehan, *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, I (2001), 181–199.

⁴⁷ Jean-Paul Sartre, *La nausée* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938) = *Nausea*, trans. Lloyd Alexander (New York: New Directions, 1964).

context that gives them meaning. He speaks, for example, of how the mood of boredom colors our feelings not just about a specific thing (say, this or that television show) but more broadly about the whole world of watching television. Similarly, although in a different emotional register, we can experience the mood of romantic love, which opens up an entirely new way of living *à deux* and transforms the significance of all that we encounter within that world. Heidegger's analysis of these moods focuses on our attunement to the meaning-giving role of a world.

However, in contrast to such ordinary, everyday moods Heidegger invokes the fundamental mood of dread, which goes to the very *basis* of the world. Dread is not fear in the face of any specific thing that threatens us – say, that pit bull on the other side of the fence. Rather, it is overwhelming wonder in the face of the so-called “nothing,” the ultimate and inescapable absurdity that lurks beneath our everyday acts of making sense.

Imagine, he suggests, that, regardless of the reason, the meaning-giving world that you inhabit with such familiarity and comfort is, in an instant, thrown out of joint and completely collapses. In that terrifying moment everything is suddenly thrown into chaos and loses all meaning (no world = no meaning). Perhaps, like Sartre's Roquentin, you cannot say what exactly happened between one step and another on some grey February day, but in that dramatic instant everything you once knew, everything you were once so sure of, gets detached from its predicates – practical, theoretical, or whatever – and begins to float free of its anchorage in the lived context that has abruptly disappeared. As they float away from their meanings, those things turn on you and press in upon you with a terrifying closeness. No longer mediated by the now-lost world, they become frighteningly *immediate*, with no semantic framework to situate them in a safe, meaningful relation to you. In fact, in this instant of terror you yourself float away from the calm and self-assured person that you were a second ago. In a flash of insight you realize that the world of meaning is based on nothing solid and has no ultimate *raison d'être*. The thin veil that previously separated you from your groundless facticity is torn asunder, and you have to face, for the first time, the absurdity of the burden you bear: having to make sense of things, with no founding or final reason. In confronting the ultimate meaninglessness of meaning-making, you realize that you once could make sense of everything, but now cannot make sense of sense-making itself. You encounter the absurd – not just this or that puzzle or problem to be solved, but the very real fact that making sense is ultimately an ungrounded and futile task into which you are thrown by the sheer fact of being human. As

Heidegger puts it, for that brief instant you “hang suspended” over the abyss of the absurd.

But, as ultimately senseless as making-sense is, you also see, in a flash of insight, that sense-making is *the only thing that separates you from your death*, which, of course, will be the end of all meaning for you. Sense-making may be finite, limited, groundless, and with no final outcome, but at least it’s not death and nothingness. This encounter with absolute absurdity – the nothing – is an encounter with the possibility of your own *impossibility* and thus with the awareness that mortal sense-making is all that stands between you and your death. But surprisingly such an encounter with the absurd does not suck you into your death – it neither kills you nor encourages suicide – but rather throws you back upon your mortal self as groundless engagement-with-meaning. You cannot make sense of the absurd – trying to do so would itself be absurd – but you can make sense of *everything else* as you stand there with your back pressed up against your death. You see that, despite its groundlessness, your mortal understanding of meaning is the thin line holding back your nothingness, and that, even in your daily life of sense-making, you are at each moment already at the point of death – and at the point of life.

If fundamental moods like dread confront you with the groundlessness of being-in-meaning, they also offer you the possibility of fleeing from this experience of nothing-to-hold-on-to. You can retreat from this awareness of facticity and try to continue your life in the everyday ways that paper over your mortality and the final absurdity of living – like the protagonist of T. S. Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” who, once having seen “the thing itself,” flees it.

Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald)
 brought in upon a platter,
 I am no prophet – and here’s no great matter;
 I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,
 And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker,
 And in short, I was afraid.

And would it have been worth it, after all

...

To have squeezed the universe into a ball
 To roll it towards some overwhelming question,
 To say: “I am Lazarus, come back from the dead,
 Come back to tell you all, ... ?”

...

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be; ...

Prufrock has a riveting vision of his factual, absurd mortality – the eternal Footman – but then takes flight into a world of erotic fantasy, even though that life will prove to be only a suffocating death-in-life:

We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.⁴⁸

(Notice how subtly the poem begins with Prufrock, in the form of Guido da Montefeltro, speaking to you, the reader, from a safe distance – “*senza tema d’infamia ti rispondo*.” The poem then progresses to your own side-by-side journey with him – “Let us go then, *you and I*” – and concludes with your virtual identification with Prufrock: “*We* have lingered ... Till human voice wake *us*, and *we* drown.”)

The alternative to Prufrock’s flight would be to let yourself be held-out-into nothingness for a cold, focused moment – to hang suspended, with nothing to hold on to, over the abyss of the utter absurdity that gapes at the heart of your factual life. It would be to feel what is at stake in the seemingly innocent act of making sense of things. You could finally, despite the ultimate futility of it all, wake up to that absurdity, live through it and in an act of resolve accept it as the human condition, and then take responsibility, without appeal, for the sense you make.

A person may be “sure,” because of his faith, of where he is going; or may think that, thanks to rational enlightenment, he knows where he came from. But all that counts for nothing against the experience of dread, which confronts you with the sheer fact that you are thrown into making sense, a fact that now stares you in the face as an unfathomable enigma. (Cf. SZ 136.1–5 = *Being and Time*, 175.4–9)

In either case, whether you flee this awareness like Prufrock or live into the experience with trembling courage and faint hope, the outcome is the same. Experiencing the possibility of no-meaning-at-all – the possibility of your own impossibility – throws you back upon yourself as mortal engagement-with-meaning, but now with a choice: either to forget your experience of your own groundlessness, or to hold on to that awareness and make it your own (*eigentlich*) as you return to the everyday business of living. This push-back from death – which is what mortality is and what the absurd does – will be the same for both the feckless Prufrock and the person of resolve as they face their facticity. What distinguishes

⁴⁸ *The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Valerie Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), 16–17.

them is their decision about living with that awareness. As Heidegger puts it: "The question of existence is clarified only by how you exist" (SZ 12.30–31 = *Being and Time*, 33.8–9).

In *What is Metaphysics?* Heidegger employs a puzzling phrase that describes this throw-back from the absurd. He writes: *das Nichts nichtet* ("The nothing nothings"). The phrase seems to defy translation. However, in the sentences that precede the phrase (as well as in his marginal notes to the lecture), Heidegger tells us precisely what he means.

In dread you "draw back" from the absurd. This is not flight. It is the calmness of wonder. This movement "back from" is initiated by the absurd that you are experiencing. The absurd does not draw you into itself; rather, of its own nature it pushes you back. In pushing you back from itself, it directs you to the very things that you experience as slipping out of meaning. This business of pushing you back from itself and directing you toward the things that are slipping out of meaning is how the absurd presses in upon you during dread. This is *die Nichtung*, that is, the *essence* of the absurd and the way it acts. The absurd does not annihilate things, nor does it result from acts of negation. Annihilation and negation cannot account for the essence of the absurd. *Das Nichts nichtet*. The absurd pushes you back from itself.⁴⁹

In ontological language: this "nothing" directs you back to beings in their being. In phenomenological discourse, experiencing the groundlessness of sense-making returns you to the meaningful in its meaningfulness, with an awareness that mortality – being ever at the point of death – underlies the entire meaning-process. Whatever you decide to do with this experience – to remain oblivious of it (like Prufrock's beloved), or to flee it (like Prufrock himself), or to embrace it in an act of resolve – in each case, the absurd will always be, as Heidegger says, "slumbering" within your experience, with the possibility of awaking at any moment.⁵⁰

Facticity as human thrownness-into/appropriation-into the *factum* of the groundless meaning-giving process functions centrally within Heidegger's earlier and later work. In *Being and Time*, for example, it is one of the three moments that make up the structure of care and hermeneutical openness ("temporality").

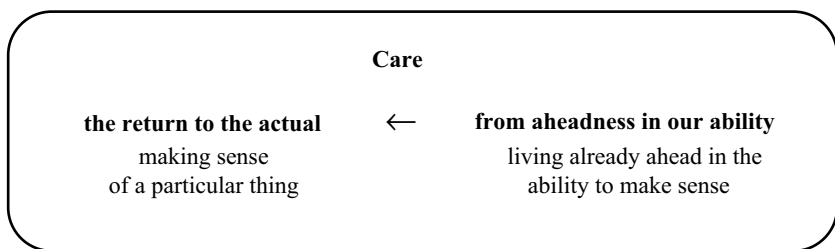
Care, which is the always self-unifying engagement with meaning, is composed of three moments, *Faktizität*, *Existentialität*, and *Sein-bei*, that

⁴⁹ Cf. GA 9: 114.1–16 = *Pathm* 90.15–24. The last sentence of the lecture should read: "Why are there meaningful things at all instead of the absurd?"

⁵⁰ GA 9: 117.32, 118.12–13 = *Pathm* 93.11, 21.

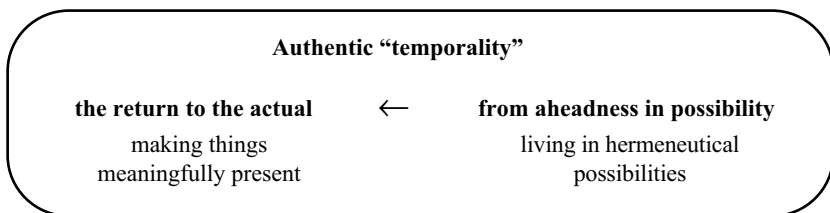
finally reduce to two: (a) factual existentiality as living into possibilities of meaning and (b) rendering things meaningfully present. As a whole, these three-moments-reduced-to-two constitute the meaning of man, which *Being and Time* calls, as a whole, *Rede* or λόγος: sense-making. (The widespread but false notion that *Rede*/λόγος is the *third* component of care – rather than naming the whole of being-in-the-world – can be traced back to Alphonse de Waehlens’ misreading in *La Philosophie de Martin Heidegger*, 1942.)⁵¹

Heidegger uses “existentiality” as a name for the human condition of being “ahead of oneself,” living in the necessity and ability to “become” oneself (*Zukünftigkeit*). “Existentiality” refers to the essential condition of living *into* the potentially endless but *de facto* finite – hence, the finitely infinite – ability in principle to make endless sense of everything, including oneself. “Facticity,” on the other hand, bespeaks our structural condition of thrownness into that ability. If we think of “factual” as an adjective modifying “existentiality,” and then bring these two together, we may say that man is a priori thrown ahead of its everyday self into its necessary ability to sustain the meaning-process. In short, these two moments of facticity and existentiality come down to one: thrown-ahead-ness into meaning-giving. If, as Heidegger declares, “*Possibility* is higher than actuality” (SZ 38.29–30 = *Being and Time*, 63.2), so too the thrown ability to be engaged with sense as such is what allows for the actuality of making sense of particular things, in a kind of “return” *from* our ahead-ness in our a priori ability-to-make-sense *to* actual sense-making (see the following table).



⁵¹ See the author’s “Heidegger’s New Aspect: On *In-Sein*, *Zeitlichkeit*, and *The Genesis of ‘Being and Time’*,” *Research in Phenomenology*, 25 (1995): 207–225, esp. 211–212. Note that *Rede* has no specific corresponding ecstasis (SZ 349.7–8 = *Being and Time*, 400.18–19). If anything, *Rede* corresponds to the “fourth dimension of time”: *Nähern der Nähe/Nahheit* (GA 14: 20.12 = TB 15.30).

In this configuration we can already see what Heidegger will argue is the basis of care and therefore of being-in-the-world – namely, authentic “temporality”:



The same three moments, collapsed into two, hold as well in the case of existential “temporality”: already-aheadness (facticity and existentiality) and making-things-meaningfully-present (*gegenwärtigen*). “Temporality” is about human becoming *in the realm of sense*, not in the field of ordinary time as past–present–future. Heidegger defines “temporality” as our condition of being the *movement* of having to become what we already are – where “what we are” is the finite ability to make endless sense of whatever we meet. Temporality is about human beings becoming themselves as sense-makers as they make sense of this or that. But “becoming” is what we already are; and so the specific form of that becoming is: ever-coming-to-ourselves as the necessity and ability to make sense. Thus the so-called “futurity” of existential human being is in fact the content of its structural condition of facticity, i.e., being “thrown ahead” into the ability to make sense of everything; and from that aheadness we have always already “returned” to the actual, concrete realm of making sense of specific things. Care and temporality fold into each other as different forms of the movement of ἐρμενεῖα.⁵²

CONCLUSION

This essay has argued that stepping out of the misleading discourse of “being” and taking one’s stand in the phenomenological reduction of

⁵² (1) In one sense, rendering-something-meaningfully-present is “released” from the “futurity” of ever becoming: SZ 326.20–21 = *Being and Time*, 374.11–12. (2) However, Heidegger correctly notes that one’s a priori engagement-with-sense (one’s “alreadiness” or *Gewesenheit*) gives rise to both aheadness-in-sense-making and making-things-meaningfully-present: SZ 344.14–16 = *Being and Time*, 394.27–29. (3) He also asserts that making-meaningfully-present has a privileged function in temporality: SZ 349.10–11 = *Being and Time*, 400.22–23.

“being” to “meaning” not only is possible and necessary in itself but also clarifies the structure and function of appropriation and facticity. Both *Ereignis* and *Faktizität* bespeak the same thing: the “fate” of human being as necessary for maintaining (holding open) the meaning-giving process. Given that the term “being” has a long-standing and solid claim to meaning “existing out there,” phenomenology needs to subject it to the phenomenological reduction that alone, Heidegger claimed, gives entry to his thought and, for him, sustained that thinking throughout his career.

If it is the case – as Heidegger stated in *Being and Time* and maintained to the end – that being occurs *only* in the understanding of human being; if being and its disclosure to understanding are simultaneous and in fact the same; and if “being that can be understood is meaning,” then it holds that being is always “*ad hominem*,” it enters phenomenological-hermeneutical discourse only κατὰ τὸν λόγον (*Physics* II 1, 193b2–3), in relation to man’s sense-making abilities. Anything outside of this λόγος/ἀλήθεια is unknown until it enters the realm of sense. For we have knowledge of things only through their meaning, and meaning at all levels is a matter of disclosure-to-understanding: ἀλήθεια.

CHAPTER 3

The null basis-being of a nullity, or between two nothings: Heidegger's uncanniness

Simon Critchley

For Bill Richardson

At times, reading a classical philosophical text is like watching an ice-flow break up during global warming. The compacted cold assurance of a coherent system begins to become liquid and great conceptual pieces break off before your eyes and begin to float free on the sea. To be a reader is to try and either keep one's footing as the ice breaks up, or to fall in the icy water and drown.

This is true of every page of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* (hereafter *Being and Time*). But it is nowhere truer than in the discussion of conscience in Division II, which, to my mind, is the most interesting moment in *Being and Time*. I want to try and show where the ice-flow of fundamental ontology begins to crack, for it is there that the question of the uncanny and the stranger will begin to make themselves heard. At stake will be bringing the human being face to face with its uncanniness, with the utter strangeness of being human: we *are* the null basis-being of a nullity, a double zero suspended between two nothings.

As everyone who has read *Being and Time* is aware, what Heidegger is seeking in Division II of *Being and Time* is an authentic potentiality for being a whole, which turns on the question of the self. If Dasein's inauthentic selfhood is defined in terms of *das Man*, the they, and this is something over which I exert no choice, then what Heidegger is after in Division II, [Chapter 2](#) is a notion of authentic selfhood defined in terms of choice. So, I either choose to choose myself as authentic or I am lost in the choiceless publicness of *das Man*. Heidegger's claim is that this potentiality for being a whole – for being authentic – is attested in the voice of conscience.

Ontologically, conscience discloses something: it discloses Dasein to itself.

If we analyse conscience more penetratingly, it is revealed as a call [*Ruf*]. Calling is a mode of *discourse*. The call of conscience has the character of an *appeal* to

Dasein by calling it to its ownmost potentiality-for-Being-its-Self; and this is done by way of summoning it to its ownmost Being-guilty. (SZ 269)

Conscience is a *Ruf*, a call. The call is a mode of *Rede*, a silent call as we will see. The call has the character of an *Anruf*, an appeal that is a summons or a convocation (*Aufruf*) of Dasein to its ownmost Being-guilty. We will see below what Heidegger means by guilt, which is something closer to *lack* in the Lacanian sense or indebtedness than moral guilt or culpability. Heidegger insists that our understanding of this call, hearing this call, unveils itself as wanting-to-have-a-conscience, *Gewissenhabenwollen*. Adopting this stance, making this choice, choosing to choose, is the meaning of *Entschlossenheit*, resoluteness or decidedness or being determined or possessing fixity of purpose. Such is the basic shape of the argument in Division II, [Chapter 2](#) and the terminology employed.

Heidegger argues that the call of conscience calls one away from one's listening to the they-self, which is always described as listening away, *hin-hoeren auf*, to the hubbub of ambiguity. Instead, one listens to the call that pulls one away from this hubbub to the silent and strange certainty of conscience. "The call is from afar unto afar. It reaches him who wants to be brought back."¹

To what is one called in being appealed to in conscience? To one's *eigene Selbst*, to one's own self. Conscience calls Dasein to itself in the call. What gets said in the call of conscience? Heidegger is crystal clear: like Cordelia in *King Lear*, nothing is said.

But how are we to determine *what is said in the talk* that belongs to this kind of discourse? *What* does the conscience call to him to whom it appeals? Taken strictly, nothing. The call asserts nothing, gives no information about world-events, has nothing to tell. Least of all does it try to set going a "soliloquy" in the Self to which it has appealed. "Nothing" gets called to [*zu-gerufen*] this Self, but it has been *summoned* [*aufgerufen*] to itself – that is, to its ownmost potentiality-for-Being. (SZ 273)

The call contains no information, nor is it a soliloquy, like the ever-indecisive Danish prince. It is the summoning of Dasein to itself that occurs silently. This picks up on a remark where Heidegger writes: "Vocal utterance ... is not essential for discourse, and therefore not for the call either; this must not be overlooked" (SZ 271). So, conscience discourses in

¹ SZ 271: "Gerufen wird aus der Ferne in die Ferne. Vom Ruf getroffen wird, wer zurückgeholt sein will." It's a little like Socrates' *daimon* that calls him back at times in the Platonic dialogues.

the mode of silence, in and as *Verschwiegenheit*, reticence, which is given an extraordinary privilege in the discussion of discourse in *Being and Time*. Reticence is the highest form of discourse. One says most in saying nothing.

The logic of the call is paradoxical. On the one hand, the call of conscience that pulls Dasein out of its immersion and groundless floating in *das Man*, is nothing else than Dasein calling to itself, calling to itself by saying nothing. It is not God or my genes calling to me, it is me myself and I. As we will see, this logic will become more complex.

But is it at all necessary to keep raising explicitly the question of *who* does the calling? Is this not answered for Dasein just as unequivocally as the question of to whom the call makes its appeal? *In conscience Dasein calls itself*. This understanding of the caller may be more or less awake in the factual hearing of the call. Ontologically, however, it is not enough to answer that Dasein is *at the same time* both the caller and the one to whom the appeal is made. When Dasein is appealed to, *is* it not “there” in a different way from that in which it does the calling? Shall we say that its ownmost potentiality-for-Being-its-Self functions as the caller?

Indeed the call is precisely something which *we ourselves* have neither planned nor prepared for nor voluntarily performed, nor have we ever done so. “It” calls, against our expectations and even against our will. On the other hand, the call undoubtedly does not come from someone else who is with me in the world. The call comes *from* me and yet *beyond* me. (SZ 275)

This is a very interesting passage. The call comes from me, yet it calls from beyond me: “*Der Ruf kommt aus mir und doch über mich*.” It is this *über mich* (in which we find an echo of Freud’s *Über-Ich*) which is so uncanny, which happens against my will and is something that I do not voluntarily perform. Dasein is both the caller and the called and there is no immediate identity between these two sides or faces of the call. How do we explain this? How do we explain this division at the heart of the call of conscience that we all hear, “which everyone agrees that he hears,” as Heidegger insists?²

In order to explain the division within the call, Heidegger folds the analysis of the call structure back into the care structure. The situation of Dasein being both the caller and called corresponds to the structure of Dasein as both authentic and inauthentic, as anxious potentiality-for-Being or freedom and thrown lostness in *das Man*; that is, Dasein is both in the truth and in untruth. So, insofar as I am a thrown project, I am

² SZ 281. Does everyone hear the call? Perhaps that’s another paper.

both called and the caller. This takes Heidegger back in a fascinating way to the discussion of *uncanniness* that first appeared in the discussion of anxiety in Paragraph 40. Heidegger asks: what if this Dasein that finds itself, *sich befindet*, in the very depths of its uncanniness should be the caller of the call of conscience? This leads us to the idea of the alien or stranger voice, *die fremde Stimme*, in a way that recalls Nietzsche's 1886 Preface to *The Birth of Tragedy*:

In its "who", the caller is definable in a "worldly" way by *nothing* at all. The caller is Dasein in its uncanniness: primordial, thrown Being-in-the-world as the "not-at-home" – the bare "that-it-is" in the nothing of the world. The caller is unfamiliar to the everyday they-self; it is something like an *alien* voice. What could be more alien to the "they", lost in the manifold world" of its concern, than the Self which has been individualized down to itself in uncanniness and been thrown into the "nothing". (SZ 276 f.)

What might be noted here is the repeated emphasis on the word "nothing" and the general strangeness of the claim that Heidegger makes. The call of conscience is the anxious *Unheimlichkeit* of not being at home in the *Heimlichkeit* of being at home, but then this "not at home" is claimed to be the *nothing* of the world (the word "nothing" appears in quotation marks in the Macquarrie and Robinson translation). The self is thrown into the nothing of the world and into that nothing I hear the silent call that strikes me as alien.

Strictly speaking – and this is the thought that I want to get at in this essay – the *self is divided between two nothings*: on the one hand, the nothing of the world and, on the other, the nothingness of pure possibility revealed in being-towards-death. It is akin to Lacan's idea of being "between two deaths" in *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, but perhaps even more radical. The self is nothing but the movement between two nothings, the nothing of thrownness and the nothing of projection. Which is to say that the uncanniness of being human, being a stranger to oneself, consists of a double *impotentialization*, but I'll come back to that.

Heidegger insists that the uncanny call calls silently:

The call does not report events; it calls without uttering anything. The call discourses in the uncanny mode of *keeping silent*. And it does this only because, in calling the one to whom the appeal is made, it does not call him into the public idle talk of the "they", but *calls him back* from this *into the reticence of his existent* potentiality-for-Being. When the caller reaches him to whom the appeal is made, it does so with a cold assurance which is uncanny but by no means obvious. (SZ 277)

Note the cold assurance of the appeal here, the uncanniness of *kalte Sicherheit*. Uncanniness pursues Dasein down into the lostness of its life in the they, in which it has forgotten itself, and tries to arrest this lostness in a movement that Heidegger will call in the next chapter of *Being and Time* “repetition.” It is only the self’s repetition to itself of itself that it can momentarily pull clear of the downward plunge of *das Man*. When the self ceases to repeat itself, it forgets and ceases to be itself.

Heidegger completes this run of argument in the following way:

The proposition that Dasein is at the same time both the caller and the one to whom the appeal is made, has now lost its empty formal character and its obviousness. *Conscience manifests itself as the call of care*: the caller is Dasein, which, in its thrownness (in its Being-already-in), is anxious about its potentiality-for-Being. The one to whom the appeal is made is this very same Dasein, summoned to its ownmost potentiality-for-Being (ahead of itself ...). Dasein is falling into the “they” (in Being-already-alongside the world of its concern), and it is summoned out of this falling by the appeal. The call of conscience – that is, conscience itself – has its ontological possibility in the fact that Dasein, in the very basis of its Being, is care. (SZ 277 f.)

So, the call of conscience is entirely intelligible in terms of the care structure, that is, thrown projection, of falling factual existence, and we do not need to resort to other powers to explain conscience, i.e. God, as in Paul or Luther, or public conscience or “world conscience” that Heidegger deals with in the final pages of Paragraph 57.

What does the uncanny call give one to understand? Conscience’s call can be reduced to one word: “Guilty!” (SZ 280). But what does Dasein’s guilt really mean? It means that because Dasein’s being is thrown projection, it always has its being to be. That is, Dasein’s being is a lack, it is something *due* to Dasein, a debt that it strives to make up or repay. This is the ontological meaning of guilt as *Schuld*, which means guilt, wrong, or even sin, but can also mean debt. To be *schuldig* is to be guilty or blameworthy, but it also means to give someone their due, to be owing, to be in someone’s debt. *Schulden* are debts, which have a material origin as Nietzsche argues in the *Genealogy of Morals* and which I have tried to analyze at length elsewhere in relation to Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*.³ Life is a series of repayments on a loan that you didn’t agree to, with ever-increasing interest, and which will cost you your life – it’s a death-pledge, a mort-gage. As Heidegger perhaps surprisingly writes

³ “Universal Shylockery – Money and Morality in *The Merchant of Venice*,” *Diacritics*, 34/1 (2004): 3–17.

(although it should be recalled that he was writing in troubled economic times): “Life is a business whether or not it covers its costs” (SZ 289). Debt is a way of being. It is, arguably, *the* way of being. This is why credit, and the credence in credit, its belief structure, is so important.

Heidegger runs through the various meanings of guilt understood as having debts, being responsible for, or owing something to another. Although this would require separate and extended analysis, it is fascinating to watch Heidegger try to separate his conception of guilt from the usual concept of guilt as responsibility to others or from any idea of guilt understood in relation to law or the *Sollen*, the Kantian ought that Hegel criticizes and whose critique Heidegger implicitly follows. Heidegger, of course, is trying to get at an ontological meaning of guilt and avoid the usual legal or moralistic connotations of the word. What he is aiming for is a pre-ethical or pre-moral understanding of guilt, or perhaps an originary ethical understanding of guilt. Can he do this? I don’t know, but let’s follow him a little further into some of the most difficult and radical passages in *Being and Time*.

As Heidegger tirelessly insists in these pages, Dasein is a thrown basis (*ein geworfene Grund*). It projects forth on the basis of possibilities into which it has been thrown. This is also to say, as we will now see, that Dasein is a null basis. He writes, and the German is dense and difficult to render here:

In being a basis – that is, in existing as thrown – Dasein constantly lags behind its possibilities. It is never existent *before* its basis, but only *from* it and *as this basis*. Thus “Being-a-basis” means *never* to have power over one’s ownmost Being from the ground up. This “not” belongs to the existential meaning of “thrownness.” It itself, being a basis, is a nullity of itself. “Nullity” does not signify anything like not-Being-present-at-hand or not-subsisting; what one has in view here is rather a “not” which is constitutive for this *Being* of Dasein – its thrownness. The character of this “not” as a “not” may be defined existentially: in being its *Self*, Dasein is, *as a Self*, the entity that has been thrown. It has been *released* from its basis, *not through* itself but *to* itself, so as to be *as this basis*. Dasein is not itself the basis of its Being, inasmuch as this basis first arises from its own projection; rather, as Being-its-Self, it is the *Being* of its basis. (SZ 284)

This is fascinating. The claim is that Dasein is a nullity of itself. Dasein understood as being a basis means that it does not have power over itself. Dasein is the experience of nullity with regard to itself. The potentiality for being-a-whole which defines Dasein’s power of projection is revealed to be an *impotentialization*, a limit against which it runs and over which

it has no power. It is the impotence of Dasein that most interests me. As we will see, it is a double impotence.

As a thrown basis, Dasein constantly lags behind its possibilities. As he writes above: "In being a basis [*Grund-seiend*], that is to say existing as thrown [*als geworfenes existierend* – another of Heidegger's enigmatic formulae], Dasein constantly lags behind its possibilities." The experience of guilt reveals the being of being human as a lack, as something wanting. The self is not just the ecstasy of a heroic leap towards authenticity energized by the experience of anxiety and being-towards-death. Such would be the heroic reading of the existential analytic – and I do not doubt that this may well have been Heidegger's intention – that sees its goal in a form of *autarky*: self-sufficiency, self-mastery or what Heidegger calls in Paragraph 64, "self-constancy" (SZ 322: *die Ständigkeit des Selbst*). Rather, on my view, the self's fundamental self-relation is to an unmasterable thrownness, the burden of a facticity that weighs me down without my ever being able fully to pick it up. This is why I seek to evade myself. I project or throw off a thrownness that catches me in its throw and inverts the movement of possibility by shattering it against impotence. I am always too late to meet my fate. For those with ears to hear, this is a reading of Heidegger perhaps closer to Beckett than to a certain Nietzsche (but there are many Nietzsches).

Dasein is a being suspended between two nothings, two nullities: the nullity of thrownness and the nullity of projection. This is where the text gets really radical:

Not only is the projection, as one that has been thrown, determined by the nullity of Being-a-basis; as *projection* it is itself essentially *null*. This does not mean that it has the ontical property of "inconsequentiality" or "worthlessness"; what we have here is rather something existentially constitutive for the structure of the Being of projection. The nullity we have in mind belongs to Dasein's Being-free for its existentiell possibilities. Freedom, however, *is* only in the choice of one possibility – that is, in tolerating one's not having chosen the others and one's not being able to choose them.

In the structure of thrownness, as in that of projection, there lies essentially a nullity. This nullity is the basis for the possibility of *inauthentic* Dasein in its falling; and as falling, every inauthentic Dasein factically is. *Care itself, in its very essence, is permeated with nullity through and through*. Thus "care" – Dasein's Being – means, as thrown projection, Being-the-basis of a nullity (and this Being-the-basis is itself null). This means that *Dasein as such is guilty*, if our formally existential definition of "guilt" as "Being-the-basis of a nullity" is indeed correct. (SZ 285)

Dasein is a double nullity. It is simultaneously constituted and divided around this double nullity. This is the structure of thrown projection and the ontological meaning of guilt. That is, Dasein is guilty; it is indebted doubly; it is null at the heart of its being; it is essentially doubly lacking. Thrown projection means: *das nichtige Grund-Sein einer Nichtigkeit*, the null basis-being of a nullity. And this is nothing less than the *experience* of freedom. As Heidegger writes above, freedom is the choice of the one possibility of being: in choosing oneself and not the others. But what one is choosing in such a choice is the nullity of a projection that projects on the nullity of a thrown basis, over which one has no power. Freedom is the assumption of one's ontological guilt, of the double nullity that one is.

Heidegger goes on to show that this existential-ontological meaning of guilt is the basis for any traditional moral understanding of guilt (see SZ 286). Heidegger's phenomenology of guilt, like Nietzsche's in the *Genealogy of Morals*, claims to uncover the deep structure of ethical subjectivity which cannot be defined by morality, since morality already presupposes it. Rejecting any notion of evil as *privatio boni*, Heidegger's claim is that *Guilt is the pre-moral source for any morality*. It is beyond good and evil. Is guilt bad? No. But neither is it good. It is simply what we are. *We are guilty*. Such is Kafka's share of eternal truth.

Heidegger brings a large number of themes discussed in this essay together in an enormously powerful way, and here we come back to uncanniness:

The call is the call of care. Being-guilty constitutes the Being to which we give the name of "care". In uncanniness Dasein stands together with itself primordially. Uncanniness brings this entity face to face with its undisguised nullity, which belongs to the possibility of its ownmost potentiality-for-Being. To the extent that for Dasein, as care, its Being is an issue, it summons itself as a "they" which is factically falling, and summons itself from its uncanniness towards its potentiality-for-Being. The appeal calls back by calling forth: it calls Dasein *forth* to the possibility of taking over, in existing, even that thrown entity which it is. It calls Dasein *back* to its thrownness so as to understand this thrownness as the null basis which it has to take up into existence. This calling-back in which conscience calls forth, gives Dasein to understand that Dasein itself – the null basis for its null projection, standing in the possibility of its Being – is to bring itself back to itself from its lostness in the "they"; and this means that it is *guilty*. (SZ 286 f.)

There is an awful lot going on here. Guilt has been shown to be the innermost meaning of care, its very movement, its *kinesis*. Here and indeed

elsewhere in his work, Heidegger is simply trying to think *kinesis* as the rhythm of existence and ultimately the rhythm of being itself. This movement, which is the movement of thrown projection, or what I prefer to call “thrown throwing off,” is the structure of the call, which “calls back by calling forth.” It calls Dasein forth to take over its potentiality for being by taking it back to its thrownness and taking it over.

Look closely at Heidegger’s words: Dasein is the *nichtiger Grund seines nichtigen Entwurfs*, the null basis for its null projection. Dasein is a double nothing, a double zero. This is the meaning of thrown projection. Guilt is the movement, the *kinesis* of this nullity, a movement *vor und zurück*, back and forth, or to and fro as Beckett would say. Such is the strangeness of what it means to be human, the uncanniness of being brought face to face with ourselves. As Heidegger writes in *Introduction to Metaphysics*, “Dasein is the happening of strangeness” (*die geschehende Unheimlichkeit selbst*) (EiM 121/IM 158). The human being is the utter strangeness of action between two nothings. The self is a potentiality for being whose sole basis, limit, and condition of possibility is a double impotentialization, which of course is to say that it is also a condition of impossibility, an existential quasi-transcendental. Impotence – finally – is what makes us human. We should wear it as a badge of honor. It is the signal of our weakness, and nothing is more important or impotent than that.

Heidegger insists that Dasein does not load guilt onto itself. It *is* in its being already guilty. Dasein *is* guilty, always already, but what changes in being-authentic is that Dasein *understands* the call or appeal of conscience and takes it into itself. Dasein as authentic comes to understand itself as guilty. Which means that Dasein as potent comes to understand itself as impotent. In doing this, Dasein has somehow chosen itself, *er hat sich selbst gewählt*, as Heidegger writes (SZ 287). This is very interesting: what is chosen is not having a conscience, which Dasein already has qua Dasein, but what Heidegger calls *Gewissen-haben-wollen*, wanting to have a conscience. This is a second-order wanting, a wanting to want the want that one is, an ontic-existential decision.

Wanting to have a conscience is rather the most primordial existentiell presupposition for the possibility of factually coming to owe something. In understanding the call, Dasein lets its ownmost Self *take action in itself* [*in sich handeln*] in terms of that potentiality-for-Being which it has chosen. Only so can it be answerable [*verantwortlich*]. (SZ 289)

Thus, answerability or responsibility – which would be the key to any originary ethics or pre-moral morality – consists in understanding the

call, in wanting to have a conscience. This choice, Dasein's choice of itself, is – in Heidegger's strange phrasing – taking action in itself. As Heidegger will remind us at a significantly later date: "We are still far from pondering the essence of action decisively" (*Wegm* 311/*Pathm* 239). The word "action" is one that Heidegger both uses in *Being and Time* and continually reminds us that he wants to avoid. Such – as Derrida told us a long time ago – is the logic of Heidegger's avoidances. But what might action mean conceived in relation to the double nullity we have described? What might potentiality for being mean when its condition of possibility and impossibility is a double impotentialization? To perhaps anticipate another paper, such a conception of action might be called tragic, or better, tragi-comic. As one of Beckett's gallery of moribunds, Molloy, asks himself, tongue deep in his cheek: "Where did I get this access of vigour? From my weakness perhaps."⁴

⁴ Samuel Beckett, *Molloy*, trans. Patrick Bowles in collaboration with author (New York: Grove Press, 1955), 114.

CHAPTER 4

Heidegger's concept of freedom, 1927–1930

Charles Guignon

The concept of freedom plays an important role in *Being and Time* and takes on an increasingly important place in Heidegger's essays and lectures of the post-*Being and Time* 1920s and early 1930s. In his lecture course of 1928/29, *Introduction to Philosophy*, he speaks of freedom as the "innermost essence of [human] existence" (GA 27: 103). An entire lecture course devoted to the concept of freedom in 1930 (*The Essence of Human Freedom: An Introduction to Philosophy*) begins with the claim that the question of the essence of human freedom "lays the whole of philosophy before us."¹ The essays written during this period make even stronger claims for freedom. According to "On the Essence of Ground," written in 1928 immediately after the publication of *Being and Time*, "*Freedom alone can let a world prevail and let it world for Dasein*" (Wegm 162/Pathm 126). And in "On the Essence of Truth," written in 1930 and revised over the years, the discussion of "the essence of truth" is introduced by way of a section entitled "The Essence of Freedom" (Wegm 185–189/Pathm 143–147). It is here that we find the nearly inscrutable statement that the essence of truth is freedom.²

The concept of freedom is also central to *Being and Time*. In some cases, when Heidegger talks about freedom, we seem to be on familiar ground. He speaks, for example, of a kind of authentic solicitude for others that *frees* them for their own being, and he envisions an authentic community "which frees the Other in his freedom for himself" (SZ 122). The idea of freedom also seems to be presupposed in the references to choice and decision, as when Heidegger says that "[o]nly the particular Dasein decides its existence" and that "Dasein has always made some decision as to the way in which it is in each case mine" (SZ 12, 68). Dasein's being

¹ GA 31: 14/EHF 10; see also, GA 31: 7 f./EHF 5.

² Wegmarken 183: "*Das Wesen der Wahrheit ist die Freiheit.*" In the *Gesamtausgabe* Heidegger revises the sentence as follows: "*Das Wesen der Wahrheit als Richtigkeit der Aussage verstanden ist die Freiheit* [The essence of truth, as the correctness of a statement, is freedom]" (GA 9: 186/Pathm 142).

as a distinctive sort of entity partly consists in its projection into “possibilities” for being, though we are told that “possibility” should never be thought of in the sense of a “free-floating potentiality-for-being,” as *libertas indifferentiae* (SZ 144). Based on such statements alone, it might seem that the later existentialist reading of *Being and Time* was not too far off base in regarding Heidegger’s account of being human as presupposing a fairly familiar “voluntarist” or “libertarian” notion of freedom.³ But any account of freedom in *Being and Time* must also make sense of some less transparent references to freedom – for example, claims that anxiety brings Dasein toward its “*being-free for the freedom of choosing itself*” or that the authentic stance toward death brings Dasein to the “*possibility of being itself ... in an impassioned freedom toward death*” (SZ 188, 266; Heidegger’s emphases). Moreover, any account of the idea of freedom in *Being and Time* must be able to make sense of the crucial references to “giving freedom” and “having freed” entities (*freigegeben*, *Freigabe*), a freeing that is accomplished, we are told, “by the world” (SZ 83).

Understanding Heidegger’s uses of the words “free” and “freedom” is made more difficult by the fact that, so far as I have been able to tell, he never provides definitions of these terms. He takes some care to reject our ordinary and philosophical assumptions about what freedom is, but he never makes his own use of the term perspicuous. As a result, we are forced to interpret the uses of these words solely on the basis of contextual features of their use. This lack of clarity about the meaning of “freedom” in Heidegger’s works leads to the question of whether there is some unifying meaning to his uses of the term, or whether the term has manifold meanings in different contexts. In what follows, I want to develop the claim that the word “freedom” has two key meanings in the writings of the late 1920s and early 1930s. The first is a distinctive conception of human freedom, a conception that undercuts our ordinary understanding of this word in mainstream debates about the “the problem of free will.” The second is a very idiosyncratic use of the word that makes it intelligible to say that freedom is the essence of ground and the essence of truth. These two uses of the word “freedom” are not always sharply distinguished and may be interwoven in some cases. As I hope to show, this second notion of freedom explains why he increasingly comes to think of human freedom as an event that happens in and through being itself, a

³ Mere capriciousness, acting entirely on whim in an arbitrary way (what the German language identifies as *Willkür*), is not an issue here. Such a phenomenon cannot be free in any sense. See Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel’s Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 39 (hereafter cited as ‘HPP’).

conception that culminates in the late 1930s and 1940s suggestion that the source of agency is being and that humans are more like conduits carried along by the event of being.

I. HUMAN FREEDOM IN *BEING AND TIME*

The best way to grasp Heidegger's distinctive and unusual conception of human freedom is to contrast it with the now dominant conception of "free will" or "free choice" in mainstream philosophy. As anyone who has looked at the discussions of this issue knows, there is a wide array of definitions of freedom in the literature.⁴ Most philosophers seem to follow a roughly Kantian line, holding that there is a causal order in nature, but that some events occur because of the spontaneity of agents, so that the agents are "responsible" for the event in the sense that they can be judged on moral grounds. According to this conception of "agent causality," the agent is, in Kane's vocabulary, "ultimately responsible" for what happens: he or she provides the final cause or impetus that initiates the event, and that impetus does not itself result from any antecedent causal factors that absolve him or her from moral responsibility for the action. Most accounts include some further conditions on an event being considered the free action of an agent. It is often said that, in order for an event to be an agent's action that is truly his or her own, it must be in accord with the agent's considered reasons or settled will concerning what sort of person he or she wants to be. Or it is assumed that, in taking the course of action he or she has taken, the agent could have done otherwise, that is, that there were options other than the one chosen, so that he or she can be said to have *chosen* this possibility *rather than* some other.

In discussing traditional conceptions of freedom, Heidegger starts out from Kant's claim in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* that

[w]ill is a kind of causality of living beings insofar as they are rational, and *freedom* [is] that property of such causality that it can be efficient independently of alien causes *determining* it, just as *natural necessity* is the property of the causality of nonrational beings to be determined to activity by the influence of alien causes.⁵

On this way of characterizing freedom, the so-called problem of freedom arises quite naturally. If we grant the fundamental principle of physics

⁴ For an overview, see Robert Kane, *The Significance of Free Will* (Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁵ I am quoting from Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 52. Heidegger discusses the opening paragraphs of Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* in GA 31, § 3/EHF, § 3.

that all events have a cause (the “principle of universal determination”) and we grant that human actions are events, then we are committed to believing that every human action has a cause, that the causal antecedents of the action are themselves caused by prior events, and that that series of events forms a chain that goes back to a time long before the agent was born. And if that is the case, then the agent cannot be held morally responsible for what he or she does. What we do, our deeds, are the products of a natural causal order we cannot control. The belief in freedom would then be an illusion.

In the third section of this essay, we will see how Heidegger diagnoses and undercuts the assumptions propping up the traditional, mainstream conception of freedom. For now, we need to try to make sense of how Heidegger understands freedom in *Being and Time*. To understand this, we should get clear on how Heidegger understands the human agent, and hence a human being generally, in that work. The initial, “formal” characterization of Dasein is found in the first Introduction of *Being and Time*, where Heidegger says that Dasein is an entity for which its being is *at issue*. In its being (that is, in living out its life, doing what it does on a day-to-day basis), Dasein’s being (that is, its identity, what its life is adding up to, who it is) is always at stake or in question. And that means that in all its ways of existing, Dasein’s life as a whole (its “existence”) is something toward which it “comports itself in one way or another.” In existing, Dasein “decides its existence, whether it does so by taking hold or by neglecting.” This characterization of human being is summed up by saying that Dasein just is a relation to itself: what constitutes Dasein’s being is that, “in its being, [it] has a being-relationship toward that being” (SZ 12).

To clarify this obscure “formal indication,” which is supposed to guide the inquiry into the being of humans, we might look at Heidegger’s account of Aristotle’s conception of human being, written at the same time he was finishing the draft of *Being and Time* and contained in his lectures on *Basic Concepts of Ancient Philosophy* of 1926. According to Heidegger’s reading of *De Anima*, Aristotle defines a human being as a moving being (*kinein*) who can make connections through *logos*. In contrast to most lower animals, humans are motivated by, and make decisions on the basis of, an anticipation of what is to come. “Thereby,” Heidegger says, “humans face the possibility of an opposition between *epithemia*, sheer ‘appetite,’ impulsive life, which is blind, and understanding, action grounded in reasons” (GA 22: 156/BCAP 229). In other words, humans are unique to the extent that what motivates them to act originates from

two different levels of desire or motivation. Like other animals, humans act on the basis of first-order desires, mere impulses to satisfy desires and provide for their needs. Yet, at the same time, they are capable of acting on the basis of second-order motivations, discerned by reflection or reasons (*logos*), concerning the worthiness of their first-order desires. This two-tier structure of motivation, with its opposition between impulse and rationally chosen action,

is a possibility open only to those living beings which can understand time. Insofar as a living being is delivered over to impulse, it is related merely to what is immediately there ... Impulse strives unreservedly toward ... what is present and available. But humans, because they possess an *aisthesis chronon* ["sense of time"], can presentify *to mellon* ["the future"] (433b7 f.) as the possible and as that for the sake of which they act. This capacity of a double comportment – toward the future and toward the present – allows conflict to arise. (GA 22: 156/BCAP 229)

To be human, then, is to live in a tension between immediate desires and the kinds of second-order desires we want to have govern the first-order motivations that should move us to action. What is definitive of the being of a human being is the relation between these two aspects or capacities.

For humans, then, there are two basic forms of motion or activity. There is "*poiesis*, 'manipulating' [or hands-on producing], and *praxis*, 'acting'" (NE 1140a2), "[that is], something done for reasons ..." Action in the proper sense (*praxis*) "is distinguished from mere producing by the fact that the *ergon* [work to be accomplished] does not lie outside the doing, like the nest of a bird, but resides in the doing itself. The goal of acting [*praxis*] is the action itself, i.e., the acting being as such" (GA 22: 157/BCAP 230). Aristotle grants that many human activities are both *poiesis* (acting to achieve some end external to the action) and *praxis* (actions whose goal is internal to the agent's activity itself). A doctor, for example, acts to bring health to a patient, yet at the same time she acts for the sake of being a good doctor, that is, for forming herself as the doctor she cares about being. Heidegger, in his appropriation of Aristotle, holds that, with rare exceptions, all human deeds have this dual nature: they aim at some end external to the agent – for example, hammering boards together to make a bookcase – and at the same time are for-the-sake-of being a person of a particular sort – for example, being a home craftsman.

This dual nature of agency makes possible two "modes" or core possibilities-of-being for humans: an orientation directed primarily toward productive activity, in which the "for-the-sake of-itself" is "forgotten" or "covered up" as one is absorbed in the work at hand, and an orientation

in which the primary focus is the activity of self-making in one's productive activity. Heidegger agrees with Aristotle that the second mode is the highest attainable for humans. "The highest *bios*, the highest possibility of existence, [is] the mode of Being in which a person [*Mensch*] satisfies to the highest degree the proper human potentiality for Being, in which a person authentically [*eigentlich*] is." (For Aristotle, this is "*bios politikos* (NE 1095b18), 'life in community'.") From this standpoint, our ordinary involvements with familiar matters of concern are a lower form of life: "Orientation toward something temporally determinate and historically pregiven [i.e., specific concerns of the present moment] ... [is] a mode of being that in the Greek sense is not authentic."⁶

Given this conception of human existence, what would free agency be? Obviously, the answer cannot be obtained from Aristotle (who did not have access to such an idea). To understand the conception of freedom in *Being and Time*, I propose we look at that notion as it appears in the thought of a thinker Heidegger does not explicitly cite in this regard in *Being and Time*, yet whose thought seems to pervade that work, namely, Hegel. In his recent book on *Hegel's Practical Philosophy*, Robert Pippin works out an account of Hegel's conception of freedom and of agency in general that seems to provide a key to understanding the way these notions are employed in *Being and Time*. According to Pippin's account, Hegel understands agency *not* in terms of a special sort of causation, but in terms of a specific sort of relation an agent has toward being an agent. On this view, an action can count as one's own free action in the fullest sense of this term when one can properly claim it as *one's own*, that is, when I act in such a way "that I can fully or truly stand behind it, own up to it, claim ownership of it" (HPP 5). Such a view sees human existence as a matter of taking a *stand*, assuming a position or stance, *toward* the unfolding life-story it is (HPP 53). It is therefore self-relational: in Pippin's words, "The subject 'taking itself' to be a certain way is the 'object' taken in such a way" (HPP 51).⁷ Pippin notes that this way of defining agency

⁶ GA 22: 157 f./BCAP 230; tm. Heidegger adds to this account of Aristotle on human agency that "[t]he same conception appears again in Kant" and he adds: "Kant became a Greek of the first rank, if only for a short time" (ibid.). In the third section of this essay, we shall see that Heidegger interprets Kant's account of human agency in terms very similar to this Aristotelian two-tiered view of human existence.

⁷ This is why Heidegger uses the initially mentalistic-sounding word "understanding" (*Verstehen*) to refer to this relation of Dasein's being to its own being. *Verstehen*, like our English word "understanding," is built on a stem meaning "stand." It was originally used in German to mean "standing up for" in the sense of asserting one's own legal standpoint in a court of law. For Heidegger, "understanding" should always be read as *stehen für*, where this taking a stand is

will presuppose the “possibility of degrees of agency and thus degrees of freedom,” an assumption in line with Hegel’s Aristotelian “account of realizations understood as partial because of some whole or full realization” that can serve as at least an ideal (HPP 5 n.). Agency and freedom, then, are not “all or nothing” concepts. The same actions may be seen as free or unfree in different situations, depending on the person’s relation to his or her action, so that what we do might be free in some respects but not in others.

It would appear from this view of agency that much of what we do cannot even be thought of as viable contenders for being called “free” or “unfree” – as Heidegger says in 1928, “we are only seldom free existentially, factually” (GA 26: 253/MFL 196). If someone asks me whether I am wearing the shoes I have on of my own free will, the proper response is not “Yes,” but rather “What makes you ask? Is there something strange about wearing these shoes that I didn’t see? Are they inappropriate in this situation?” The issue of free will does not arise in such a case, because, quite simply, these are my shoes, the shoes I wear, and it makes no more sense to ask whether I put them on this morning of my own free will than it makes to ask whether I was determined to put them on by forces beyond my control (perhaps some sort of shoe police). Much of what we do in everyday life – our “actions” as opposed to our “deeds,” as Hegel sometimes distinguishes them⁸ – is simply beyond categorization as “free” or “unfree,” just as colors cannot be sorted into “large” and “small.” What we do is simply what we *do*. Needless to say, we may be held responsible for what we do. But there is a big difference between being able to be *held* responsible and *being* responsible. If my shoes cause damage to the wood floors because, unbeknownst to me, there is a nail sticking out of one of them, then I might be held responsible for negligence of some sort. But this is more a forensic question than it is a matter of whether, as an ontological fact about being a human agent, I am free or determined to do what I do.

One of the advantages of the Hegelian conceptions of agency and freedom is that it enables us to see how the vast majority of what we do in our “average everyday” lives is not really free. As representatives of the “They” or “Anyone” (*das Man*), we “proximally and for the most part” take up

initially understood as being “answerable” or “accountable” for responding to another, that is, “being responsible” (*Verantwortlichkeit*). See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd edn, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1989), 261–262 n.

⁸ Pippin notes that Hegel in his later writings sometimes makes a distinction between *Handlung* and *Tat*, though he does not do so consistently; see HPP, 148 n. 5.

and enact “possibilities” of being – social roles, styles of acting, traits of character – that are made accessible in the public lifeworlds into which we are thrown. In enacting these possibilities, we are, of course, making choices in a straightforward sense. In driving to work, I am choosing to be a driver rather than a walker or biker, and in nodding hello to a colleague, I am choosing (in at least some thin sense of that word) not to ignore her. Moreover, in making the choices I make, I am necessarily waiving my chance of pursuing other possibilities: I cannot both drive and walk at the same time, just as I cannot be both amiable and rude simultaneously. So my average everyday actions are *mine* in the minimal sense that they have a locus: they come in some sense from me, and so they are not just events that occur in the world, like changes of weather. But Heidegger would say, I think, that these deeds are not really *actions* in the full sense of that word, and so not really part of what I freely *do* as an agent. This is so because merely enacting roles in the public world is, for the most part, simply a matter of doing what everyone else does, a matter of doing things unreflectively in accordance with the norms and conventions regulating such doings. We are going through the motions, running on automatic, conforming to the expectations of the social context in which we happen to live. To say this, however, is to say that, for most of our doings, we cannot find ourselves in them: we cannot stand behind them or stand up for them; we cannot own them or own up to them. As unavoidably members of the They, we have a propensity to slide into the distinctive “existentiell” mode of being a “they-self.” In what we do, we are not ourselves but are, rather, the Other, the “nobody in particular,” the “anyone.”

Heidegger calls this everyday way of being “falling.” In his view, falling into step with the crowd is unavoidable in life because we are essentially social beings, that is, beings whose Being is characterized by *Being-with* (SZ §§ 25–27). Falling is an essential aspect of life – it is an “existentiale.” But falling can be aggravated by a style of living that involves a motivated cover-up, a mode of existing in which we try to avoid facing up to our responsibility for making our lives our own. The account of “falling” in section 38 of *Being and Time* brings out the turbulence and frenzy, as well as the attempted tranquilization and numbing down that characterize a life that consists of throwing oneself into the patterns of life of the They. One feels that anything is possible, that “all doors are open” and that “everything is in reach” (SZ 177 f.). It is a way of living that concerns itself entirely with actualizing projects and achieving specific goals, the way of life of *poiesis*, and in the process of being a productive member of society, one loses any sense of what this means for oneself, the dimension

of agency called *praxis*. One is adrift, distracted, and forgetful of the issue of being a self.

Heidegger calls this way of life *alienated*. In alienation (*Entfremdung*), one can no longer find oneself in what one is doing. Alienation hides one's "ownmost potentiality-of-being" from oneself: Heidegger says that alienation "*closes off* from Dasein its authenticity and possibility, even if only the possibility of genuinely foundering" (SZ 178). The deleterious effects of falling are evident in our everyday busyness and preoccupations as we run chores and do what is necessary to "get by." What is insidious about such falling is that there is no longer any "there" there – our "being-there" is being lost. We cannot identify ourselves with our deeds, we cannot recognize *ourselves* in all this because we cannot stand behind what we do. Though Heidegger does not describe it this way, I think it is in line with the overall thrust of his text to say that, in the inauthenticity of aggravated falling, we are not really agents, and *a fortiori* we not really *free*.

If being caught up in average everydayness makes our doings unfree (or, more precisely, puts them outside the free/unfree distinction altogether), then being authentic should be a condition for our actions being characterizable as "free." In authenticity, we do indeed stand behind our actions: we own them and can own up to them. The actions are *ours*, where that means we can more or less wholeheartedly identify with them. Heidegger says that, in authenticity, we are fully "responsible" (*verantwortlich*; SZ 288), and not merely susceptible to being *held* responsible. To use a phrase Heidegger borrows from Nietzsche, in becoming authentic, you "become what you are" (SZ 145). Authentic Dasein becomes "clear-sighted" (*durchsichtig*) about what it is and what it is doing. This lucidity "is not a matter of tracking down and inspecting a point called the Self, but rather one of seizing upon the full disclosedness of Being-in-the-world *throughout all* the constituents that are essential to it" (SZ 146; tm). Heidegger describes this distinction between inauthentic and authentic understanding as resulting from different orientations or directions of focus:

Understanding *can* devote itself primarily to the disclosedness of the world; that is, Dasein can, proximally and for the most part, understand itself in terms of its world. Or else understanding throws itself primarily into the "for-the-sake-of-which;" that is, Dasein exists as itself. Understanding is either authentic, arising out of one's own Self as such, or inauthentic. (SZ 146)

This distinction explains why Heidegger refers to the existentiell mode he calls "authenticity" with the strange German neologism, *Eigentlichkeit*.

Certainly no native German speaker would think of translating this word as “authenticity” – they have their own word for this: *Authentizität*. Heidegger’s reasons for choosing this word become more apparent, however, when we hear the stem of the word *Eigentlichkeit*, which means “own” and “proper.” The point is that, in becoming authentic, we undergo a qualitative change in understanding and in life, so that our direction of focus in life is not entities in the world (*poiesis*) but the “Self” (*praxis*).

Nearly one-third of *Being and Time*, particularly in Division II, is devoted to trying to clarify what it is to be authentic and how one can become authentic. The text is often dense and turgid, loaded with strange uses of familiar terms as Heidegger tries to force us to see things in unaccustomed ways. There is a constantly growing debate about what Heidegger means in these sections. For our purposes, however, the following crude approximation of the development of ideas should do. First, the description of anxiety shows how Dasein can escape from its ordinary fleeing into falling and come to find itself as “individualized,” a “*solus ipse*” that, though thrown into a world, is also a free agent who can express and realize its own identity as an individual. Anxiety, as we have seen, brings Dasein face to face with its “ownmost potentiality-for-Being – that is, its *Being-free* for the freedom of choosing itself” (SZ 188). Second, the recognition of the ever-present possibility of death reveals that Dasein’s life is finite, that not all things are possible for it, so that choosing which possibilities to seize upon and which to forgo is unavoidable and pressing for it. Third, hearing the call of conscience reveals to Dasein that it has no pre-given ground to stand on, that it is always coming up short in the task of living its life to the full. This shortcoming (“guilt”) is motivating to the extent that it calls on one to strive to become one’s own ground.

The outcome of these transformations can be what Heidegger calls *resoluteness*. The term Heidegger uses here, *Entschlossenheit*, is correctly translated as “resoluteness,” but it is noteworthy that the word is built on stems that make it readable as “un-closedness.” It has therefore been translated as “resolute openness.” The first introduction of this word might suggest something like a Kierkegaardian “leap of faith” – an “infinite passion” that realizes the religious ideal, “Purity of heart is to will one thing.”⁹ Indeed, Heidegger suggests that Dasein’s “Being-free for its existentiell possibilities” implies that freedom “*is* only in the choice of

⁹ The fact that Heidegger seems to take Vincent Van Gogh and Martin Luther as models of what he means by authenticity reinforces the idea that being authentic is a matter of having a single-minded commitment to one goal; see Benjamin D. Crowe, *Heidegger’s Religious Origins: Destruction and Authenticity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), *passim*.

one possibility – that is, in tolerating one's not having chosen the others and one's not being able to choose them" (SZ 285; Heidegger's emphases). Passages such as these might tempt one to think that Heidegger not only buys into the view of the subject as the sovereign individual of modernity, but that he also advocates a sort of proto-Kierkegaardian decisionism that affirms the value of anything on the basis of the depth of passion one invests in it. But I think it would be a mistake to suppose that resoluteness is a matter of making an unconditional commitment to anything distinct from oneself. Resoluteness is first and foremost an openness to oneself in the sense that it enables us to shift our direction of concern from the business of making that is characteristic of the They to grasping one's own actions as one's own precisely because they are directed towards *being* a person of a particular sort. Resolute actions redirect our care from everyday dispersal in worldly doings, from *poiesis*, to the role of action in constituting the self, toward *praxis*.

If the most robust form of human freedom is determined by a "proper" relation to one's own self, a pressing question seems to arise: the problem of identifying what conception of the "self" is presupposed in the ideal of being "true to" or "focusing on" one's own self.¹⁰ As we have seen, Heidegger's official position is that "proximally and for the most part," in average, everyday being-in-the-world, Dasein as "Being-with" just *is* the They. So fundamental is Dasein's being as the They that Heidegger says "*the They is an **existentiale** ... and [so] belongs to Dasein's positive constitution*" (SZ 129; Heidegger's emphasis). And we have also seen that simply drifting into the They is what characterizes inauthenticity, a way of being in which the issue of freedom can scarcely get a foothold. For this reason, "[*a*]uthentic Being-one's-Self... [*is*] an *existentiell* modification of the They – of the They as an essential *existentiale*" (SZ 130). Yet Heidegger also insists that "the they-self ... is an *existentiell* modification of the authentic Self" (SZ 318). So there is some lack of clarity concerning what this "Self" is that authentic agency is supposed to focus on.

Heidegger's answer to this question might be clearer if we understand that, in his view, the self is not a thing or object of any sort. Instead, the self is understood in *Being and Time* as a movement (*Bewegtheit*), a happening (*Geschehen*), a being-underway that unfolds "'between' birth and death" (SZ 233). This is the point of saying that Dasein is defined as a "comportment toward itself," as a "being-relation toward its being" (SZ 12): we are always already "ahead-of-ourselves" in being-toward the

¹⁰ This is the main point of my book *On Being Authentic* (London: Routledge, 2004).

realization and definition of our own life-projects, our “potentiality-for-being.” Understood as an ongoing undertaking, a “projection” toward the being it “has as its own to be” (SZ 12), Dasein stands outward (“ex-sists”) into an open range of possibilities, some of which it has already chosen and others which it has passed up. As an “*ability-to-be*” that always freely chooses concrete existentiell possibilities in living out its life, Dasein’s being “is characterized by freedom,” i.e., “it *can* comport itself toward its possibilities” (SZ 193). Yet because all possibilities are made accessible by the They, and because being the They tends to drag us down into falling, Dasein is for the most part inauthentic, not truly itself. Dasein “*can* be inauthentically; and factually it *is* inauthentically, proximally and for the most part” (SZ 193; Heidegger’s emphasis).

To be focused on the “for-the-sake-of” of one’s projection, then, is not merely a matter of making choices – we are all doing that in some sense all the time, whether we realize it or not. Instead, becoming authentic involves a second-order stance with respect to one’s own choices. Authenticity involves a “choosing to choose” in which one stands behind one’s own choices, owning them and owning up to them. It is this higher-order stance that is called “resoluteness” (SZ 270). Instead of drifting into the familiar activities approved by the conventions of the public world, the resolute individual fulfills her ability-to-be free by identifying herself with a specific range of choices while recognizing that, in doing so, she is renouncing others. It is in this sense that “freedom *is* only in the choice of **one** possibility – that is, in tolerating one’s not having chosen the others and one’s not being able to choose them” (SZ 285; Heidegger’s emphasis). The clear-sightedness built into this sort of resolute stance is revealed by the fact that the second-order stance toward one’s first-order choices is not a matter of obstinately clinging to any particular possibilities. Being open and clear-sighted with respect to the “situation” in which it finds itself means that Dasein “cannot *become rigid* as regards the situation, but must understand that the resolution ... must be *held open* and free for the current factual possibility.” In the commitment involved in resoluteness, “*one holds oneself free* for the possibility of *taking it back*” while at the same time “*repeating*” or constantly renewing its assessment of the situation and the meaningfulness of its commitment therein (SZ 307f).

One caveat in this description of resoluteness – Sartre’s famous example of the gambler who resolutely swears off gambling and an hour later is back at the gaming tables – reminds us of the extent to which even the most earnest and passionate commitments, understood as resolutions made in a “moment of decision” and backed by the agent’s wholehearted will, can

quickly wane in force as circumstances evolve.¹¹ This is why Heidegger does not think of the self as a point of consciousness occasionally sputtering out decisions and commitments. On the contrary, Heidegger characterizes the self as having a fundamental “historicity,” where this refers to the entire unfolding of a life-story from its original experiences to its projected, life-defining ends. Moreover, Dasein’s historicity includes the world-historical context in which it is enmeshed and which defines its possible understanding of what is worthwhile. Authentic decisions and commitments arise out of this unfolding historicity and gain their normative force from the guidelines laid out in advance by the forms of life of a historical community. In Hegelian terms, it is the *place* of decision in the *Sittlichkeit* of a living community that makes it possible to achieve human freedom.¹²

II. FREEDOM AS “LETTING BE”

There is a second use of the word “freedom” in *Being and Time* that appears infrequently, though it seems to be presupposed in some of Heidegger’s more obscure statements about freedom at the end of the work. As we have seen, these uses appear primarily in passages where Heidegger speaks of what can come to show up *in* the world as being *set free* (literally, “given freedom”: *freigegeben*; SZ 83) by the world. According to Heidegger, ready-to-hand entities are “freed by the world with regard to their Being,” where that means that they are allowed to show up in their characteristic relationships of being “assigned” to one another in a referential totality (SZ 83). In such formulations, the idea of “freedom” refers to a “freeing up” or “loosening up” that lets things turn out to be in certain ways (*bewenden lassen*). This freeing-up (*Freigabe*) is accomplished by a world, according to Heidegger; that is to say, the world is inherently such that it frees things up, creating a room for free play (*Spielraum*) in which things can come into their own *as* what they always already are.

¹¹ See my *On Being Authentic*, 144 f., and Richard Moran, *Authority and Estrangement: An Essay on Self-Knowledge* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 79. The original source is Jean-Paul Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), 33.

¹² Pippin captures this distinction in a nice metaphor: “The relation between an agent and a deed is not like that between a foot and a soccer ball when the ball is kicked; the intending agent does not cause bodily motion (à la Davidson) in the way the foot causes the ball to move, but is rather to be understood on the model of an artist’s somewhat provisional and somewhat indeterminate ‘plan’ unfolding over time as the object takes shape” (HPP 153 n.).

Though Heidegger insists that it is *world* that does the freeing up here, this freeing does not occur independently of Dasein. The fact that there can be an opening or clearing in which things can emerge into presence – a “space of meaning,” in Steven Crowell’s apt phrase¹³ – is made possible by the fact that Dasein always stands out into an open space of possibilities of self-interpretation, and thereby creates an arena or leeway in which things can come to presence and stand out *as* mattering or counting in some determinate way. Through this freeing up or making room for things, there is a clearing or “dis-closedness” in which concerned dealings can “let [something] be so-and-so *as* it is already and *so that* it be such” (SZ 84). Or, as Heidegger put it a year later, “we must help things to become manifest” so that “the entity [may] show itself in itself” (GA 27: 183).

This freeing up or letting be requires that we resist our common tendency to impose onto things a prior grid of interpretation designed to make them fit our antecedent expectations. In freeing, we give things the breathing room they need to unfold in their own proper way, to “essence” (in Heidegger’s verbal use of the word *wesen*), without foisting on them an interpretive schema determined by our interests and projects. This freeing is mostly passive: it involves a receptivity that requires on our part a “self-surrender [*Sich-freigeben*] to the things so that they can show themselves as they are” (GA 27: 75). The idea of freedom as surrender – as Dasein’s “giving itself up” (*Selbstaufgabe*) or “self-subjection” (*sich Unterstellen unter*) (SZ 264; GA 29/30: 497/FCM 342 f.) – paves the way for Heidegger’s introduction of the word *Gelassenheit* in 1929/30 to refer to the ideal stance of humans toward things (GA 27: 214 and GA 29/30: 91/FCM 60f).¹⁴ It is an idea of releasement from one’s own presuppositions, coupled with the idea of being *bound* to what shows up in our encounters with things. Heidegger says that our free “being open for” what presents itself is “from the very outset a *free holding oneself toward* whatever beings are given there in *letting oneself be bound*” (GA 29/30: 496/FCM 342).

The implication here is that Dasein *can* let entities show up as what they are only because it is itself a space of possibilities or openness through and in which entities can emerge into presence as what they are. In opposition to certain types of idealism, Dasein does not “constitute” beings. As Heidegger says,

¹³ Steven Galt Crowell, *Husserl, Heidegger, and the Space of Meaning: Paths toward Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2001).

¹⁴ The word *Gelassenheit* is used in a restricted way in these early writings and does not yet have the broad and profound significance it develops in the late writings.

With Dasein's factual existence, entities within the world are encountered too. The fact that such entities are discovered along with Dasein's own "there" of existence, is not left to Dasein's discretion. Only *what* it discovers and discloses on occasion, in *what* direction it does so, *how* and *how far* it does so – only these are matters for Dasein's freedom, even if always within the limitations of its thrownness. (SZ 366)

Or, as Heidegger put it in his lectures of the same period, "That entities are what and how they are is not due to any favor of ours. [Their being what they are] is there already beforehand, it is a *positum* [a fact already laid out], and we can only come upon them" (GA 27: 184). We supply the orientation, the context, and the frame of reference in which anything can show some "aspect" (*Ansicht*) of itself, and in this sense our being-free for possibilities of "taking" what surrounds us makes it possible for anything to come to presence in any form whatsoever. But the fact that we encounter aspects of things does not mean that there is some unknown and unknowable "thing-in-itself" distinct from these aspects that is forever concealed from us. On the contrary, it means that we encounter the entities themselves, entities that are "multi-faceted" and can be taken in a "plenitude" of possible ways. What we discover is the entities themselves, though we are open to encountering them from different points of view and contexts of relevance in which they appear. Insofar as any revealing of aspects is at the same time a concealing of other ways of taking things, we also constantly go astray (*Irre*). But this fact – that we can encounter things in errant ways – shows that we can also encounter them as they truly are.

The conception of freedom as "freeing up" a space for an encounter with what-is helps to clarify some of the thorniest references to freedom in *Being and Time*. One of the most egregious of these is the crucial talk of "freedom toward death" in Division II, [Chapter 2](#). In his discussion of an authentic stance toward death (§53), Heidegger suggests that, in contrast to our everyday experience of possibilities as projects that can be actualized, it is only in clear-sightedly facing up to death that we can encounter a possibility that cannot be actualized. "Manifestly being-toward-death ... cannot have the character of concernfully being out to get itself actualized" (SZ 261). This is so for the obvious reason that, when we are dead, we are no longer, so nothing can be either actualized *or* unactualized for us. Rather, in authentic being-toward-death, what we encounter is the only pure and unactualizable possibility we have, and in doing so we also discover something that for the most part is hidden, namely, our most fundamental being as being-possible. To say that our

very being is being-possible is to say that we “ex-sist” as a pure *being-toward* in which *what* we are “toward” is not as salient as our being-ahead-of-ourselves as entities whose being is fundamentally *futural* (*zu-künftig*, literally “coming-toward”).

The disclosedness of pure possibility and futurity in the confrontation with death can transform our way of living. Under ordinary, everyday circumstances, we are proximally and for the most part absorbed in our concerns, striving to attain goals, and “*waiting for that actualization*” that is promised or hoped for (SZ 262). What the confrontation with death reveals is our underlying being as pure possibility, that is, as a possibility of “*running forward toward*” that is directed not toward expected outcomes, but toward *being* that entity that we ourselves are – the forward-directedness and movement (*Bewegtheit*) of a finite life. Discovering our own “*reaching-forward-toward*” as the ownmost possibility for an entity whose being is future-directedness opens us onto what we “*really*” (*eigentlich*) are: entities for whom what is *at issue*, what we really do and should *care* about, is the unfolding of our own lives as a whole, and not just the transient accomplishments that result from our making and producing. In authentic being-toward-death, as a kind of “*primordial action*” (*Urhandlung*), Dasein is focused on itself.¹⁵ Running forward toward death, understood as caring about one’s life course as a whole, “turns out to be the possibility of understanding one’s *ownmost* and uttermost potentiality-for-being – that is to say, the possibility of *authentic existence*” (SZ 263). In the proper relation to death, we “become what we are.”

The authentic stance toward death dispels the illusions and concealments built into Dasein’s everyday understanding of itself, and opens it onto a clear-sighted understanding of what it is to be human. This lucid disclosedness emerges, as we have seen, in what Heidegger calls a “*freedom toward death*,” where “freedom” means being released from the strictures of the everyday “they” interpretations of possibilities and being opened onto what is “*really*” there all along – the most fundamental project of living out one’s own life as a whole. This letting be or opening up, in which death is allowed to come forward and manifest itself as what it is, is “freedom toward death.” Heidegger’s final characterization of the authentic stance toward death asserts that “*running-forward-toward ... reveals to Dasein its lostness in the they-self* [i.e., living with no sense of goals

¹⁵ Throughout the lecture course of 1928/29, *Einleitung in die Philosophie* (GA 27), Heidegger refers to a “*primordial praxis*” (*Urhandlung*) that underlies and makes possible all other ways of comporting to things. I am indebted to Fred Dallmyer for this observation.

other than actualizing the current possibilities derived from the projects made accessible by the They], and brings it face to face with the possibility of being itself... in an impassioned **freedom toward death** – a freedom which has been released from the illusions of the They, and which is factual, certain of itself, and anxious” (SZ 266; Heidegger’s emphases). Freeing up the true meaning of death allows Dasein to gain an insight normally concealed from it and, on the basis of this insight, to transform itself. This freedom of surpassing or “passing beyond” the manifold of particular possibilities opened by the public world is called “transcendence.”

This conception of freedom as letting be also enables us to make sense of one of the most obscure assertions in all Heidegger’s writings, the claim that *the essence of truth is freedom* (Wegm 189/Pathm 147). In his 1930 essay on truth, an essay he later regards as the beginning of the “turn” in his thought, Heidegger writes:

Freedom for what is opened up in an open region lets beings be the beings they are. Freedom now reveals itself as letting beings be¹⁶ ... To let be, that is, to let beings be as the beings they are – means to engage oneself with [*sich einlassen auf*] the open region and its openness into which every being comes to stand, bringing that openness, as it were along with itself. (Wegm 186/Pathm 144)

Letting beings be, freeing them up, is an attuning [*stimmende*], a “bringing **into** accord, [that] prevails throughout and anticipates all the open comportment that flourishes in it. Human comportment is brought into definite accord throughout by the openedness of beings as a whole.”¹⁷ Only on the basis of such an attuned accord can truth as correspondence become possible.

Freeing things up involves stepping back, gaining some distance from the demands of the concrete and particular case, so that things can “reveal themselves with respect to what and how they are.” Only when there is an open space of comportment toward things in which we can discover what-is and compare statements with what-is can the correct (if limited) conception of truth as correspondence arise and make sense. According to the truth essay, “letting things turn out to be what they are” makes

¹⁶ At this juncture in the first edition of this essay in 1943, Heidegger writes: “Letting be ... not in the negative sense [presumably of indifference or a hands-off policy], but granting – preserving” (Pathm 144, n. a).

¹⁷ Wegm 190/Pathm 147. John Sallis works out these connections in “Free Thinking,” in *Heidegger and Practical Philosophy*, ed. François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 3–12. John Haugeland provides a valuable account of letting-be in his “Letting Be,” in *Transcendental Heidegger*, ed. Steve Crowell and Jeff Malpas (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007), 93–103.

it possible for truth as correspondence (the “usual concept of truth”) to “take its standard” from the things themselves (*Wegm* 186/*Pathm* 144).

III. FINITE FREEDOM, SELF-BINDING, AND GROUNDING

Towards the end of *Being and Time*, Heidegger begins to use the word “finite” in a way that presages the emphasis on finitude in his 1929 Kant book, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. To speak of “human finitude,” according to the Kant book, is to bring to prominence the fact that the human being (*der Mensch*, now distinguished from *Dasein*) is thrown into the midst of entities and is always dependent on entities for his or her being. As Heidegger puts it,

In man’s comportment toward entities which he himself is not, he already finds the entities on the basis of which he is supported, as that on which he has depended, as that over which, for all his culture and technology, he can never become master. Depending on the entity which he is not, man is at the same time not master of the entity which he himself is. (KPM 228/160; tm)

Freedom from this standpoint appears as something to which we are “delivered over,” part of the thrownness we must take up in our “to be.” Freedom is a burden we have to assume in the midst of things, not a vertiginous ability to do whatever we want (GA 29/30: 29/FCM 19 f.).

The conception of our freedom as limited by the boundaries of thrownness explains Heidegger’s reference to *finite freedom* in his account of *Dasein*’s “historicity” in *Being and Time*. The idea of finite freedom appears in the context of a discussion of the way the “happenings” of our own lives are always enmeshed in the wider flow of events of a shared historical culture. The fact that we are inextricably embedded in a world-historical context of meanings can lead us to encounter the “They” possibilities making up our lives in a new way. Heidegger suggests that authentic running-forward toward death can disclose to us what is handed down by history as a *legacy* or a *heritage* (*Erbe*). When history is encountered in this way, *Dasein*’s existence can take the form of a “primordial happening” in which we come to see what *really* calls for action in our world-historical situation. This clear-sightedness reveals what goals are genuinely worth pursuing: “Only being-free *for* death” – that is, only through openness to our being as finite entities moving toward possibilities – only this “gives *Dasein* its goal (*Ziel*) outright and pushes existence into its finitude.” In other words, it is only when being-toward-death

lets us see what goals truly are worth pursuing that our life-course can become a happening “in which Dasein *hands itself down* to itself, free for death, in a possibility which it has inherited and yet has chosen” (SZ 384). Finite freedom, true human freedom, is achieved when (1) we see our possibilities as given to us as an inheritance that opens us up onto genuinely worthy courses of action, and (2) we make our choices among these possibilities with a clear-sighted “choosing to choose.” In confronting death and being free for death, Heidegger says, “Dasein understands itself in its own *superior power* [*Übermacht*], the power of finite freedom, so that in this freedom ... it can take over the *powerlessness* [*Ohnmacht*] of being abandoned to itself, and become clear-sighted concerning the circumstances that may arise in the disclosed situation” (SZ 384; tm). Seen in this light, freedom involves both *empowerment* – the ability to make meaningful choices – and *powerlessness* – a dependence on the limits built into the background of shared intelligibility into which it is thrown.

Authentic historicity lets Dasein discover its own life as *fate* and the unfolding history of its community as a *destiny*. The German words for “fate” and “destiny,” *Schicksal* and *Geschick*, come from the stem *schicken*, “to send,” and suggest that Dasein might be regarded as a being with a “sending” whose possible paths of development are laid out in advance by its historical context. Yet this picture of the self as a conduit for forces beyond its control might seem to undermine the aim of construing Dasein as a free agent. What seems to be missing from this 1927 picture of human finite freedom is a compelling account of what might *motivate* a person to act in one way rather than another. We have already seen that a Kierkegaardian leap of “unconditional commitment” cannot be sufficient to motivate us to make a particular choice nor to stick to a particular path. This is because such resolutions are ultimately transient psychological episodes that tend to lose their force as time goes on. Being motivated to live in a particular way takes more than a leap of will; it requires some awareness of the *reasons why* one should choose and follow a particular course of action. Reasons, however, are by their nature intersubjectively valid: they are binding precisely because they express something like a general truth or a law that applies to anyone in the same situation. In the case of authentic historicity, for example, the normative force of experiencing history as embodying a “heritage” and a “destiny” depends on there being some genuine validity to one’s interpretation of the unfolding course of world-historical events. Yet, at the same time, if I am genuinely free, then the laws and interpretations of the worthiness of historical trends that I acknowledge must be determined by *my*

choices. This is why Heidegger says that Dasein must “choose its hero” and decide for itself which “footsteps” it shall “loyally follow” (SZ 385; my emphasis). It is because the past as such has no necessarily binding force that Dasein’s “retrieving” of historical possibilities takes the form of a *challenging reply* [*Widerruf*] that puts in question the past’s apparent significance (SZ 386).

But if the normativity of reasons and finding a “calling” in the past are determined by one’s own personal choice, and nothing determines that choice other than one’s current commitments and interpretations, then the supposed “bases” for one’s decisions cannot really be “reasons” or a true “calling” at all. The result, as Terry Pinkard suggests, is a paradox typical of modernity: one must recognize “that what counts as leading one’s own life and therefore choosing and acknowledging the value of *that which* one chooses cannot always be the result of one’s *choosing* it, while at the same time holding fast to the idea that it *can bind* you *only* if you choose it.” Or, put more simply, the paradox of human existence is that “we must lead our own lives, yet the very basis of what might count as our own life does not seem as if it could be our own.”¹⁸

It might be a recognition of this sort of paradox that lies behind Heidegger’s account of free action in his 1930 lecture course, *The Essence of Human Freedom*. This lecture course is complex and follows a winding and not always transparent path. For our current purposes, we might see the work as containing three parts. The first part, making up most the first half of the volume, consists in an attempt to show that, from the time of the origins of Greek thought on, there has been a strong tendency to think of being as the enduring presence of what is present-at-hand (Heidegger’s reading of the Greek words *ousia* and *parousia*). The second part tries to show that this conception of being as present-at-hand objects is uncritically presupposed throughout Kant’s first *Critique*. According to Heidegger, the *Critique of Pure Reason* develops Kant’s “first way to freedom,” the attempt to make sense of human freedom by a close reading of the Second Analogy and the Third Antinomy. This interpretation of Kant is an example of what Heidegger calls the “de-structuring of the history of philosophy” (SZ § 6): it provides a scholarly reading of the relevant passages of the first *Critique* while making a convincing case that Kant, throughout his discussion of freedom and causation, presupposes an understanding of being as

¹⁸ Terry Pinkard, *German Philosophy, 1760–1860: The Legacy of Idealism* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 349; some emphases added.

the causal nexus of present-at-hand objects, an understanding of being that *Being and Time* had shown to be derivative from and parasitic on a “more primordial” tacit understanding of being in terms of practical contexts of meaning and possibilities. The power of this part of *The Essence of Human Freedom* consists, then, in showing that Kant’s problem of free will (and, hence, the entire modern tradition of thought about this problem that follows from Kant) is determined by uncritical ontological assumptions concerning the ultimate *being* of entities in the world: the assumption that reality consists of present-at-hand objects in causal interactions.¹⁹ Given this understanding of reality, the conclusion that the all-pervasive natural order of cause and effect makes belief in free will untenable seems unavoidable. Kant’s attempt to deal with this problem by positing the existence of a free will at the noumenal level, outside of the phenomenal world of objects in causal relations, is generally seen as unsatisfactory.

Heidegger’s extended study of the first *Critique*, taking up eighty pages of the English edition of the work, is scholarly and basically on interpretively solid ground. In contrast, the twenty-page account of Kant’s “second way to freedom” at the very end of the book, the examination of Kant’s practical philosophy, seems to be “violent” and out of touch with what Kant is actually saying. The entire discussion engages Kant’s views about the need for self-legislation in order for the will to be autonomous. But the concern with understanding what constitutes a *good will* seems to have lost the dimension of moral goodness Kant was concerned to show: a “good will,” for Heidegger, is a pure will that “only wills willing” (GA 31: 277/EHF 191). Moreover, Kant’s categorical imperative, arguably the very core of his account of what constitutes the lawfulness of a good will, is treated as a mere by-product of Kant’s social conditioning. The categorical imperative is one formula “among many possible philosophical interpretations,” an idea that might be explained by the “history of ideas” or with a “sociological” explanation, but one that lacks any integral role in Kant’s overall moral philosophy (GA 31: 287, 291/EHF 197, 200). As a result, this part of Heidegger’s reading of Kant seems simply to bypass what we would consider the *moral* significance of Kant’s inquiry into the will, limiting itself instead to the phenomenon of will willing itself.

¹⁹ See my development of this phenomenological critique of the free will debate in “Ontological Presuppositions of the Free Will/Determinism Debate,” in *Between Chance and Choice: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Determinism*, ed. H. Atmanspacher and R. Bishop (Charlottesville, Va.: Imprint Academic, 2002), 321–328.

The best way to understand why Heidegger offers this strange reading of Kant's moral philosophy is to see this part of the 1930 lectures as an extension and development of his earlier project of making a clear distinction between those everyday doings that focus entirely on production, mere *poiesis*, and actions done "for-the-sake-of" one's own being, actions aimed at defining and expressing the being of the individual who acts, namely, *praxis*. As we have seen, only the latter may be thought of as truly one's own actions, actions one can stand behind and take responsibility for. The importance of this notion of actions that are "authentic" and one's "ownmost" lies in the fact that, unlike the conformist busyness of the They, such actions are genuinely motivated because they arise out of the self of the agent, and not from external influences that might be experienced as having nothing to do with oneself. As we have seen, only actions understood as *praxis* can be properly thought of as "free" in any meaningful sense of this word.

According to Heidegger's commentary on the idea of freedom in Kant's moral philosophy, the Kantian "second way to freedom" does not try to prove the existence of "free will." Such a proof is neither possible nor necessary. It is not possible, because the familiar "problem" of free will operates within the horizon of an understanding of being as present-at-hand objects in causal interactions, and such a horizon of understanding cannot begin to make sense of human agency. And it is not necessary, because freedom of the will is simply "given" in every act of will: "The proof of the practical reality of freedom consists in [seeing that] the actualization and actuality of practical freedom consists in nothing else than actual willing" (GA 31: 296/EHF 202).

Instead of a "proof" of free will, the second way focuses on a description of what freedom must be within Kant's practical philosophy. For Kant, "Will is the power of acting in the sense of *praxis*," not in "action" understood in the sense of "natural actions," that is, brute causal relations among objects (GA 31: 274/EHF 190). What is distinctive about humans is the ability to act on the basis of practical laws dictated by pure reason (Aristotle's *logos*). Lawfulness itself is made manifest in the *will*, where "will" refers to the ability to act according to concepts and principles that reason represents to itself. In contrast to everyday concerns with fulfilling concrete desires, pure reason determines the will not by representing something to be effected by the will – some actualizable goal anticipated on the basis of sensibility – but by a representation of oneself in one's ability to effect anything. The issue for pure will is the will itself, the being of the "person" who wills, not the intended product to be produced by the action. Heidegger

interprets this to mean that, in pure will, the will represents “the possible determining ground for its willing.” In the case of praxis, “will-governed determining is intrinsically addressed to itself.” Or, to put it somewhat differently, in will-governed representing, will is always “co-represented” with whatever is willed (GA 31: 276 f./EHF 191). The direction of focus is the will and the agent’s willing, not something in the sensory world.

What Heidegger sees in Kant’s conception of pure law-giving is self-legislation, *auto-nomos*. Such a conception of agency is *formal* in the sense that the law governing the will “is nothing else than the form of law-giving for pure will” (GA 31: 278 f./EHF 192). But far from following the Hegelian tradition in seeing this sort of “formalism” as a limitation in Kantian practical philosophy, Heidegger sees it as having the advantage of remaining “pure,” unsullied by material considerations. He seems to be contemptuous of the various sorts of “material ethics of values” worked out, for example, by Max Scheler and Nicolai Hartmann. The superiority of Kantian formalism consists in its recognition that “the form of the law is precisely the decisive, proper, and determining instance in relation to the law” (GA 31: 279/EHF 192 f.). Only pure willing is “authentically [*eigentlich*] law-giving” for willing. The form of willing is essential for the possibility of any ethics whatsoever. “Unless pure willing, as the authentic actuality of all ethical action, actually wills itself, a material table of values – however finely structured and comprehensive – remains a phantom with no binding force” (GA 31: 279 /EHF 193; tm). In other words, ethical imperatives and values have no binding force unless the will of the moral agent is capable of binding itself.

Heidegger’s frequent use of the word “authentic” (*eigentlich*) in these passages seems to harken back to the idea of authenticity that his students would recognize from his recently published *Being and Time*. To be “authentic,” on this 1930 view, is to be motivated by a binding will that arises solely out of the self. Without this motivating will, no ethics, no normativity of norms, will be possible. This seems to be what Heidegger means when he says, “The ethicality [*Sittlichkeit*] of action does not consist in realizing so-called values, but in the actual will to decisiveness [*Entschiedenheit*], the will to take responsibility for myself and to go on existing in this taking responsibility” (GA 31: 280/EHF 193; tm). Only in willing to take responsibility for one’s own willing can one become a genuine moral agent who is capable of making meaningful decisions and applying values in situations that demand moral action. The only categorical imperative, then, is the “ought” demanded by pure willing: “*the ought of one’s existence*” (GA 31: 289/EHF 198).

On Heidegger's interpretation of Kant, the conclusion to draw is that the essence of a person is the "self-responsibility to bind oneself to oneself. ... To be in the mode of self-responsibility, to answer only to the essence of one's self" (GA 31: 293/EHF 201). The notions of binding and being bound provide a counterthrust to the pure "being-possible" revealed in Dasein's confrontation with death. The connection between freedom and being bound is made central to the writings and lectures of this period. In lectures from 1928, for instance, Heidegger says, "Only what exists as a free being could be at all bound by an obligatory lawfulness. Freedom alone can be the source of obligation" (GA 26: 25/MFL 19 f.). In freedom, understood as "transcendence," "Dasein holds before itself bindingness qua world, and in this counter-hold first can and even must hold itself to beings" (GA 26: 254/MFL 196 f.). As finite freedom, human freedom calls for "being open *for* beings as they are," for letting beings show up *as* they are. In letting oneself be bound, "we are given the leeway to decide concerning the conformity or nonconformity of our comportment toward whatever is binding" and so to let ourselves be bound by "whatever is to provide the measure and be binding in one way or another" (GA 29/30: 497/FCM 342). This openness to being, which is bound by what provides the measure for what is and what is not, is in turn the condition for the possibility of *truth* understood as the correspondence of a statement to the "facts." It is in this sense that "the essence of truth is freedom."

The Essence of Human Freedom addresses what is generally regarded as the problem of free will, starting out from Kant's formulation of the problem in his first *Critique*. This is the first of the two conceptions of freedom we found in *Being and Time*. We saw that Heidegger feels entitled to brush off Kant's formulation in his first way to freedom on the grounds that it presupposes an understanding of being that has no binding force for us in considering the question of human action. Kant uncritically takes over the conception of being as presence-at-hand that has come down to us from the Greeks, and he unquestioningly assumes that all events in the natural order result from efficient causality. Certainly, given these assumptions, the idea of human freedom becomes incoherent (despite valiant efforts by compatibilists to save it). But Heidegger feels he has shown that this understanding of being is optional in the sense that historically it has turned out to be useful for the purposes of science, but that it conceals or is misleading when treated as the only "correct" understanding of being in town.

If causality and presence-at-hand, as offspring of the “metaphysics of presence,” are optional ways of understanding being, the question arises: What is the source of any understanding of being whatsoever? This question is addressed in the essay “On the Essence of Ground” of 1929, a work that takes up and develops the second understanding of freedom we considered earlier, freedom as “freeing things up” or “letting be.” Because freedom in this sense clears an opening or world in which things can come to count for us *as* such-and-such, it is also shown to be the source of the “regional” understanding of being as presence-at-hand and causality currently dominating the sciences. Seen from this standpoint, the universe of objects in causal relations turns out to be derivative from, and dependent for its intelligibility on, a prior *grounding* (*Gründen*) that itself depends on freedom. Although freedom in this expanded and more fundamental sense is always dependent on Dasein, it can no longer be thought of as a capacity or action of individual “persons.” Instead, freedom as grounding “lets world world” for Dasein. “Freedom alone can let a world prevail and let it world for Dasein. World never is, but worlds” (Wegm 162/Pathm 126). Freedom as grounding is what first lets entities appear on the scene *as* what they are, including the entities that we ourselves are, human beings. For this reason, grounding and freedom cannot be thought of as an accomplishment of humans, though humans co-constitute the “there” or “site” in which being emerges. They can contribute to the being of the There (*Da-sein*) if they come to fulfill their proper path of unfolding (“essence”). In this sense of being “more than human,” grounding is a version of the primordial Temporality envisioned in *Being and Time*.

In “On the Essence of Ground,” Heidegger lays out the three fundamental components that make up the unified structure of grounding. These three aspects correspond to the three temporal ex-stases in *Being and Time*, which themselves are derived from the tripartite structure of *care* (SZ 192). The first dimension of grounding, corresponding to *Being and Time*’s “ahead-of-itself” as projection into future possibilities, is called *establishing*. This projection of the “for-the-sake-of,” also called “transcendence,” is a matter of “freely letting the world prevail” – in other words, of freedom as *letting be* (Wegm 163/Pathm 127).

Projecting lets entities show up in some way determined by the perspective of the projection, but by itself it is not sufficient to ground or open up a meaningful world. The second aspect of grounding therefore requires that “Dasein in its projecting is, *as projecting*, also already *in the midst of beings*” (Wegm 163/Pathm 127). This dimension of *thrownness*, called

“being-already-in” in the characterization of the care structure, brings out the fact that Dasein always “*finds itself [sich befinden] as such among beings.*” In projection or transcendence, “*those beings that are surpassed also already pervade and attune that which projects*” (Wegm 163 f./Pathm 128). The entities disclosed in the projection, as multifaceted and over-determined in their possibilities of showing up, contain a *surplus*, which means that in any showing-forth of some aspects others must *withdraw*. “Such withdrawal lends precisely the binding character of what remains projected before us: the power to prevail within the realm of Dasein’s existence” (Wegm 165/Pathm 128 f.; tm). Because Dasein is *absorbed* by beings, Heidegger tells us, its superior “power” of defining how things can count from some perspective or other is always inseparable from a “powerlessness (throwness),” rooted in the withdrawal of entities in their self-revealing, a powerlessness that constrains freedom and binds us to entities, obliging us to let them show up as what they always already are (Wegm 172 f./Pathm 135). Freedom is always “finite freedom.”

The third component of grounding, corresponding to the idea of “being engaged with [*bei*] entities” in the care structure, is contained in grounding as being *of* or *about* something, thereby making “intentionality possible” (Wegm 165/Pathm 129). Only given this third aspect of grounding’s “co-temporalizing” does it become possible to articulate the world into beings in such a way that we can say of anything, “this, *not* that.” In short, we encounter the world as having an “*as*-structure.” And only when things are taken in determinate ways can the “*why-question*” arise: we can ask “Why this rather than that?” and “How does it come to be the case that things are as they are?” and “Why is there something rather than nothing?” In other words, it is only because there is a prior event of grounding that questions about “enduring objects” and “causal relations” can have a frame of reference in terms of which they make sense. Questions about causation and freedom can then make sense *relative to the horizon of understanding in which they arise*. But, as should be evident, questions about free will and determinism are made possible only by a prior grounding that is itself characterized as “freedom” in a deeper sense.

The connection of grounding to the structure of temporality in *Being and Time* is made clear at the end of “On the Essence of Ground,” where Heidegger says that the three components of grounding – establishing, taking up a basis, and legitimation – each in its own way spring forth from “a care for steadfastness and subsistence, a care that is in turn possible only as temporality” (Wegm 169/Pathm 132). The talk of “steadfastness” recalls

the account of steadiness and self-constancy, “grounded in a specific temporalizing of temporality,” that *Being and Time* describes as definitive for being a “Self” in the fullest sense of that word (SZ 373 ff.). It is only when Dasein is characterized by continuity and connectedness, no longer distracted and dispersed by being the they-self, that it can be a “Self.” But note that a “Self” in this sense is neither the self of an individual nor of a collective, though human being must be complicit in its coming to pass. Freedom is now no longer conceived in terms of an action of humans nor as one of their capacities. Thus, Heidegger can say, “Freedom [is] ... *the origin of ground*,” and “*Freedom is the ground of ground*” (Wegm 171/Pathm 134), where such claims no longer directly imply anything about the free will/determinism debate. Heidegger has changed the meanings of the terms involved in the traditional free will debate, bringing in undefined terms such as “Self,” terms that will pervade his writings of the 1930s. But even though he makes no “headway” in the free will debate, he has shown how arbitrary and historically relative the terms of the debate have always been.

Ontotheology

Iain Thomson

What does Heidegger mean by *ontotheology*, and why should we care? We will see that Heidegger understands ontotheology as the two-chambered heart of Western metaphysics, “the history that we are” (GA 47: 28/N3 20). Heidegger’s deconstruction of the metaphysical tradition leads him to the view that metaphysics does not just concern philosophers isolated in their ivory towers; on the contrary, “metaphysics grounds an age.” As he explains, “Metaphysics grounds an age in that, through a specific interpretation of what is ... it gives the age the ground of its essential form.”¹ Here Heidegger advances the thesis I call *ontological holism*. Put simply: Everything *is*, so by changing our understanding of what “is-ness” itself is, metaphysics can change our understanding of everything. In other words, metaphysics molds our very sense of what it means for something – anything – to *be*. Because everything intelligible “is” in some sense, Heidegger holds that: “Western humanity, in all its comportment toward entities, and that means also toward itself, is in every respect sustained and guided by metaphysics” (GA 6.2: 309/N4 205). By shaping and reshaping our understanding of what “is-ness” is, metaphysics plays a foundational role in establishing and maintaining our very sense of the intelligibility of all things, ourselves included.²

Heidegger’s view that “metaphysics grounds an age” (“*ein Zeitalter*,” literally “an age of time,” in the singular) presupposes two further theses, which I call *ontological historicity* and *epochality*. Ontological historicity, in a nutshell, is the thesis that our basic sense of reality *changes* with time. As Heidegger puts it, “what one takes to be ‘the real’ is something that comes to be only on the basis of the essential history of being itself” (N II 376/N4 232). *Ontological epochality* is just the further specification

¹ GA 5: 75/QCT 115. For a demonstration of this claim, see my *Heidegger on Ontotheology: Technology and the Politics of Education* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), Ch. 1, esp. 17–20.

² See *Heidegger on Ontotheology*, 20, n. 16.

that Western humanity's changing sense of reality congeals into a series of relatively distinct and unified historical "epochs." Ontological holism teaches that metaphysics can change our sense of everything simply by changing our understanding of what "is-ness" is, but "light dawns gradually over the whole" (as Wittgenstein observed), and Western humanity's sense of what-is changes slowly enough that individual human beings tend not to notice the change.³ Many of us even experience a troubling sense of vertigo when first faced with the contention that humanity's basic experience of reality is historically variable, the kind of vertigo we might feel upon first noticing that the ground we live and build our dwellings upon is slowly shifting. Nonetheless, Heidegger's deconstruction of metaphysics makes a convincing case for ontological holism, historicity, and epochality by uncovering a succession of different ways in which Western humanity has understood what entities are. In this "history of being," these different "understandings of being" each "ground" and "guide" their respective ages.

Heidegger's deconstruction of the metaphysical tradition suggests that ontological historicity – our changing sense of what-is – congeals into five distinct but overlapping ontohistorical "epochs" in the "history of being," which we could call the *pre-Socratic*, *Platonic*, *medieval*, *modern*, and *late-modern epochs*. Foucault adopts Heidegger's epochs in his investigation of the different occidental *epistemes* or "regimes of truth," as does Lévinas when he writes more poetically of different "mutations in the light of the world."⁴ I find it illuminating to think of these epochs as historical *constellations of intelligibility*. Heidegger himself calls them "epochs" because, as readers of Husserl know, *epoché* is the Greek word for "holding back," "bracketing off," or, as Derrida liked to say, "putting in parentheses," and Heidegger saw that each of the epochal understandings of the being

³ See Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H von Wright, trans Denis Paul and G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), #141, p. 21. It is not surprising that we tend not to notice this fundamental change, not only because of our "blindness to the immediate" (this paradoxical "distance of the near" is the first law of phenomenology), but also because, in Heidegger's influential view (a kind of "punctuated equilibrium" theory), history – in the deepest "ontohistorical" (*seinsgeschichtlich*) sense – does not really "happen" within epochs, but only between them, when a new ontotheological "truth event" or understanding of what and how entities *are* takes hold and spreads, consolidating past insights and catalyzing an historical transformation of our very sense of intelligibility. These new understandings of being do not fall from the heavens (à la Badiou) but instead result when a new way of understanding being that has been taking shape at the margins of a historical age suddenly becomes all encompassing, pulling everything into its gravitational field.

⁴ See Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), *passim*; Lévinas, *Humanism of the Other*, trans. N. Poller (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 59.

of entities “holds back” the floodwaters of ontological historicity for a time – the “time” of an epoch.⁵ Each of the five different historical epochs is thus unified by its shared sense of what is and what matters, but each of these epochs is grounded in a *different* way of understanding what and how entities *are*.

How, then, is it possible for each epoch to *share* a sense of what is and what matters, and yet for this shared sense of the intelligibility of things to be *different* for each epoch? By what “mechanism,” as it were, is Western humanity’s shared sense of the being of entities transformed and maintained? This question brings us directly to the two-chambered heart of Heidegger’s view of metaphysics. For an *ontotheology* is what puts the parentheses around an epoch, temporarily shielding a particular sense of what is and what matters from the corrosive sands of time. In Heidegger’s terms, ontotheologies *ground* and *guide* their epochs by establishing a historical understanding of the being of entities; ontotheologies supply the aforementioned “ground” from which an age takes its “essential form” (GA 5: 75/QCT 115). An ontotheology provides a temporarily unshakable understanding of *what* and *how* entities *are*, and thereby doubly anchors an epochal constellation of intelligibility. To say that “metaphysics grounds an age” is thus to say that the shared sense of intelligibility unifying an epoch derives, in the last analysis, from an *ontotheology*.⁶

I realize that, at first, “ontotheology” can sound like a dauntingly unfamiliar word. (As an index of this unfamiliarity, “ontotheology” and its cognates have yet to make it into the printed edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*.)⁷ Shortly after *Heidegger on Ontotheology* was published, my intrepid teenage cousins pressed me on what “that big word”

⁵ In the metaphysical tradition, Heidegger maintains, the question of the being of *entities* stands in for (and so occludes) the deeper question of “being as such.” Being as such “conceals itself in any given phase of metaphysics, [and] such keeping to itself determines each epoch of the history of being as the *epochê* of being itself” (N II 383/N4 239). See the explanation of ZSD 9/*Time and Being* 9 in *Heidegger on Ontotheology*, 19 f.

⁶ Interestingly, this suggests that the philosopher who understands how metaphysics “grounds” and “guides” the age should also be able to discern the general direction in which it is moving. At first blush, the claim of any connection between philosophy and prophecy sounds dangerously hubristic (especially in light of Heidegger’s own history). Nonetheless, once we grasp the relation between our own late modern ontotheology and the current global movement toward increasing technologization, we can see how metaphysics facilitates a kind of general historical prognostication. Understanding this connection can also help us to appreciate why Heidegger continues to inspire philosophical resistance to the *Zeitgeist* of global technologization.

⁷ “Ontotheology” is listed in the “draft revision” of the online version of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (dated June 2004), but it is defined there only in (1) Kant’s sense (see below) and (2) as: “A branch or system of theology in which God is regarded as a being, esp. the supreme being.” We will see that this latter understanding of ontotheology, although common, mistakenly reduces the genus to one of its species.

in my title meant. We happened to be at a public pool, so, inspired by the moment, I suggested that if they thought of all reality as a beach ball, then they could think of ontotheology as the attempt to grasp the beach ball from the inside and the outside at the same time. (As a first approximation of Heidegger's views, I am still not too unhappy with this analogy, but I shall present more precise images later.) What is crucial is that ontotheologies allow the metaphysical tradition temporarily to establish what it means for an entity to *be*, and that they do so by answering the question of what it means for something to be in two different ways at the same time.⁸ We could say that metaphysics' ways of understanding what it means to be are like what advertisers call "two-for-ones": The "great metaphysicians" implicitly answer the question of reality's ultimate foundation twice-over by understanding the being of entities ontologically and theologically at the same time.

Indeed, for an ontotheology to work, it must "doubly ground" its age's sense of reality by comprehending the intelligible order in terms of *both* its innermost core *and* its outermost form or ultimate expression. Because these dual ontotheological foundations are what allow metaphysics to provide a basis for the intelligible order, Heidegger's notorious antipathy to metaphysics and to ontotheology obscure the fact that, in his view, it is the two-chambered ontotheological heart of metaphysics that unifies and secures our successive historical epochs. A series of metaphysical ontotheologies doubly anchor our successive constellations of historical intelligibility, temporarily securing the intelligible order by grasping reality from both ends of the conceptual scale simultaneously, both *ontologically* (from the inside-out) and *theologically* (from the outside-in); in this way, metaphysics secures our understanding of reality floor-to-ceiling, microscopic-ally and telescopically, or, in a word (albeit a big one), *ontotheologically*.⁹

⁸ In order to secure its understanding of the being of entities, metaphysics seeks to establish "the truth concerning the totality of entities as such." This phrase is meant by Heidegger to be "positively ambiguous" between the ontological and theological ways of understanding the being of entities, connoting not ontological *or* theological but *both*. See *Heidegger on Ontotheology*, 11–23.

⁹ That this word has eight syllables has not gone unnoticed or unpunished; amusingly, technology seems to be taking its revenge on my critique of it *via* Amazon.com's "statistical analyses" of a book's "readability." Relying only on the crude measures of syllables per word and words per sentence, Amazon's computers have calculated that my first book is virtually *impossible* to read, since reading it requires no less than "27.5 years of formal education." (I did not even take quite that long in school – which means I cannot read my own book!) Of course, these same blunt "readability" calculations conclude that James Joyce's *Ulysses* can be read by sixth graders. Although students will continue to prove such facile calculations false, it remains ironic that a book criticizing technology's pre-emptive delegitimation of genuine alternatives should itself be pre-emptively delegitimated by that technology, processed by a literally illiterate machine and presented as unreadable to human beings.

I. BACK TO BASICS

Briefly recounting a few decisive moments from the history of Western metaphysics should help clarify and motivate what can sound initially like an implausibly idiosyncratic view. What I shall suggest is that, ever since Western philosophy began with Thales and Anaximander, our metaphysical tradition has indeed sought to establish both the *fundamental* and the *ultimate* conceptual parameters of intelligibility by ontologically grounding and theologically founding – and thereby legitimating – our changing historical sense of what-is.¹⁰

When, at the birth of Western metaphysics, Thales and Anaximander search for the foundation of reality, they understand this *archê* or “ground” in two very different ways. For Thales, the “ground” of reality is “water”; water is the “one element” out of which everything else is composed. As the most basic constitutive component of what-is, water is the fundamental ground that provides the terms in which to understand what everything is. Thales, in Heidegger’s terminology, understands the being of entities *ontologically*. Now, sitting atop our historical perch, some find it easy to laugh at Thales’ seemingly simplistic claim that “water” is the *archê* or ground of reality. Philosophers sometimes try to motivate Thales’ view by pointing out that the seeds from which things grow are moist, or that many different kinds of things tend to dissolve in water, but such retrospective rationalizations make the great sage look like a rudimentary empirical scientist at best. It is much more important to appreciate just what an amazing leap of thought it was for humanity simply to postulate that the seemingly endless diversity of material entities are all fundamentally composed of the same kind of stuff. Thales’ great idea was that there is a final ground somewhere beneath our feet, so to speak, and thus a kind of being that *everything* shares in common. This was the *ontological* intuition, and it is a postulate that our metaphysicians have never abandoned – even as these metaphysicians dropped the “meta” from their title (disowning, with false modesty, its extra-empirical implications). Contemporary metaphysicians still seek to uncover reality’s final building blocks, the elementary constituents of matter; they just prefer to call the ontological endeavor inherited from Thales “physics.”

¹⁰ Because Western philosophy is coeval with the metaphysical tradition whose ontotheological structure Heidegger deconstructs, he will forsake the name “philosophy” as a description of his own later “thinking.”

For Thales' student Anaximander, by contrast, the *archê* or "ground" of reality is *apeiron*, the "indefinite, unlimited, or infinite." That is, Anaximander understands the ultimate ground of what-is in terms of that source from which all entities derive and by appeal to which they can be justified – or, as in Anaximander's case, *condemned*, judged undeserving of finite existence. According to Anaximander's beautiful but tragic vision of reality, the existence of discrete entities is inherently unjust. For, the very existence of individual entities as finite and limited represents a primal violation of the infinite and unlimited source from which they derive, a kind of original sin for which all entities must eventually pay penance by being destroyed. Thus justice decrees it, for only through their destruction may finite entities be reunited with their infinite source. Anaximander thinks himself to the very limits of the intelligible order so as to grasp the source from which all things derive, and he understands the being of what-is in terms of this outermost condition on the possibility of the meaning of the cosmos. Because he takes up this "view from nowhere" or God's-eye perspective on all that is, a perspective that enables him to vindicate the meaningfulness of the cosmic order as a whole, Anaximander, in Heidegger's terms, understands the being of entities *theologically*. Many today like to think they have nothing in common with "theology," but, in Heidegger's terms, the theological intuition is simply the idea that somewhere above us, somewhere *out there*, as it were, there is an ultimate source from which all things finally derive, and by which the meaning of the cosmos as a whole can be finally explained. Our metaphysicians continue to follow this theological intuition whether they think of this ultimate source of all being as a creator God or as an infinitely hot and dense "singularity" existing at the beginning of cosmic time (some 13.7 billion years ago). Theologians and astrophysicists alike remain heirs to the Anaximandrian approach.¹¹

The birth of Western philosophy is thus the birth of two radically different ways of understanding the "ground" of what-is: Thales' ontological understanding of water as the fundamental element of being and Anaximander's theological understanding of *apeiron* as the ultimate source of being. It took a thinker as great as Plato implicitly to appropriate these two different ways of understanding the being of what-is – the ontological

¹¹ The persistence of this ontotheological inheritance can be seen in Richard Dawkins' hubristic prediction that physics combined with Darwinism will "furnish a totally satisfying naturalistic explanation for the existence of the universe and everything that's in it, including ourselves." See Dawkins, "The Final Scientific Enlightenment," in *What are You Optimistic About?*, ed. John Brockman (New York: Harper Perennial, 2007), 27.

and the theological – and combine them into a single ontotheological view, almost as if he were performing a kind of retroactive Siamese twinning on what began as separate but related conceptual children.¹² Plato gives the philosophical tradition its first ontotheology when he presents the forms both as the common element unifying all the different instantiations of a thing and also as the highest, most perfect, or exemplary embodiment of that kind of thing. (In the terms the scholastics would use, Plato's forms function both as "universals" and as "paradigms.") For example, Plato's *Symposium* presents the form of beauty as the unifying element shared in common by the many different kinds of beautiful things; the form of beauty is what explains why beautiful bodies, beautiful artworks, beautiful state constitutions, and so on, are all *beautiful* – namely, they are all imperfect instantiations of the perfect form of beauty. At the same time, as this suggests, the *Symposium* also presents the form of beauty as the most beautiful of all that is beautiful, as the most perfect expression and ultimate standard of beauty. Indeed, Plato suggests that the form of beauty is a beauty so perfect that nothing in this imperfect world can ever measure up to it. Thus, following in Anaximander's footsteps, Plato's theological conception of the forms makes sense of the intelligible order as a whole only by postulating a supersensory realm, the comparison with which degrades the finite world of mortal experience.

Let us cut to the chase. Plato's student Aristotle makes the ontotheological duality implicit in Plato's doctrine of the forms explicit when he distinguishes between "primary and secondary substance," differentiating the "thatness" of entities from their "whatness." This, moreover, is the very distinction the medieval scholastics would treat as the difference between *existentia* and *essentia*. This ontotheological distinction between "existence" and "essence" subsequently became so deeply ingrained in our Western philosophical tradition that Heidegger can convincingly claim that even the proudly "godless" Nietzsche conceives of "the *existentia* of the totality of entities as such *theologically* as the eternal return of the same," just as Nietzsche's "ontology of entities as such thinks *essentia* as will to power" (N II 348[GA 6.2: 314]/N4 210). As we can see most clearly in that undeniably beautiful passage which has become famous as the last entry of that infamous "book," *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche too seeks to grasp all of reality both *ontologically*, from the inside-out,

¹² This ontotheological twinning increases rather than decreases the viability of the conceptual offspring so joined, so perhaps Plato spliced his ontotheological hybrid together as a kind of defensive formation against the haunting threat of his teacher Socrates, that famous son of a midwife who euthanized every conceptual child he delivered.

as will-to-power, and *theologically*, from the outside-in, as eternal recurrence.¹³ Nietzsche thus gives us, in Heidegger's terms, an ontotheology of will-to-power eternally recurring.¹⁴

In Heidegger's "history of being," Plato is the first ontotheologist, and Nietzsche is the last, because Nietzsche teaches the futility of metaphysics' foundationalist project and yet nevertheless succeeds in supplying humanity with an ontotheology – albeit one that "grounds" reality as a whole only by dissolving it into the endless involutions of eternally recurring will-to-power in its "sovereign becoming."¹⁵ The metaphysical tradition thus culminates and exhausts itself in Nietzsche, whose ontotheology lays the ground for "the metaphysics of the atomic age." In fact, Heidegger's entire understanding of metaphysics as ontotheology *turns* on his understanding of Nietzsche's ontotheology, in two senses: Heidegger holds Nietzsche's ontotheology responsible for that increasingly global technologization of our very sense of reality in which we currently remain caught, and yet Heidegger also thinks that the only way to transcend the nihilistic technological ontotheology we have inherited from Nietzsche is

¹³ See aphorism #1067 in Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, ed. Walter Kaufmann, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1967), 549 f.; a virtually identical version of the passage can be found in Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, ed. Rüdiger Bittner, trans. K. Sturge (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 38 f. Heidegger was well aware of the problematic status of the former text (see *Heidegger on Ontotheology*, 148, n. 4). In fact, he was already criticizing the book's pro-eugenicist vision in 1909, and by the time he began his famous *Nietzsche* lectures in 1936, the book's serious editorial problems had become obvious to him, since in 1935 he joined the commission charged with putting together a scholarly edition of Nietzsche's works and so had Nietzsche's original notebooks before him and could see with his own eyes all the heavy-handed black-pencil work of the previous editors. Nietzsche's sister's resistance to any corrected edition reportedly helped prompt Heidegger to resign from the commission.

¹⁴ Nietzsche himself was clearly troubled by the tension between his naturalistic understanding of will-to-power and his cosmological understanding of eternal recurrence; his notebooks and letters suggest that he was tremendously frustrated by his inability to provide a consistent naturalistic explanation capable of validating his seemingly *supernatural* Sils-Maria experience (which Klossowski suggests was actually an early psychotic break), an experience that left him utterly convinced about the truth of eternal recurrence. Nietzsche repeatedly returns in his notebooks to the thought that, given finite matter and space and infinite time, all possible combinations must already have occurred – and recurred. Indeed, I would contend that Nietzsche himself (unlike most of his subsequent interpreters) remained convinced to the end that there must be a plausible way to bring will-to-power and eternal recurrence together, even if he could not fully see it. If this contention is right, however, then despite the violence of Heidegger's reading in various respects, he remains faithful to Nietzsche's deepest inner conviction by joining will-power and eternal recurrence as the two extreme poles of the "unthought" ontotheology toward which Nietzsche's thinking points – thereby fulfilling Nietzsche's struggle to put into words the "secret" even *Zarathustra* can only whisper, silently, into the ear of life at the culmination of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (GA 8: 109/WCT 106). See my forthcoming *Heidegger: A Philosophical Biography* and Hans Sluga, "Heidegger's Nietzsche," in *A Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 102.

¹⁵ See *Heidegger on Ontotheology*, 20–23.

to think its “unthought,” that is, to develop or think through Nietzsche’s ontotheology to the point that it “transcends” itself, *turning* into another way of understanding the being of what-is.

II. THINKING THROUGH NIETZSCHE’S UNTHOUGHT ONTOTHEOLOGY

In order to understand Heidegger’s crucial interpretation of Nietzsche’s ontotheology, let us ask a more basic question: How are ontology and theology *joined* in an ontotheology? What kind of conceptual bonds hold the ontological and theological ways of understanding the being of entities together? For Heidegger, ontology and theology are held together in a kind of chiasmus: ontology leads to theology and theology feeds back into ontology. Put more precisely, an ontology, as an understanding of *what* entities are, generates a theology, an understanding of that “highest” entity which embodies this kind of being most fully. Conversely, a theology, as a conception of this highest entity, feeds back into ontology by impacting our understanding of the being of what-is as a whole – typically, by shaping our understanding of whether or not the being of this whole is justified or meaningful. This ontology-theology feedback loop is clearly visible in Nietzsche’s ontotheological conception of being as will-to-power, eternally recurring. For, Nietzsche’s ontological conception of what entities are essentially – namely, will-to-power – leads to his conception of eternal recurrence as the ultimate expression of will-to-power; and, conversely, Nietzsche’s theological conception of the eternal recurrence of the cosmic order leads him to understand the being of what-is as justified (or at least justifiable), as meaningful rather than nihilistic.

To see this, remember that, for Nietzsche, what-is is *essentially* will-to-power. In Nietzsche’s neo-Darwinian view, will-to-power is the “essence” of life, the inner force generating that continual self-overcoming of existing life forms that works to keep life itself alive. Eternal recurrence, moreover, is the way that the totality of all that is exists when viewed from a God’s-eye perspective; “the eternal return of the same” is Nietzsche’s name for his speculative understanding of the endless repetition of the cosmic cycle: Big bang, universe, big crunch; big bang, universe, big crunch; and so on *ad infinitum*.¹⁶ Ontology leads to theology, then,

¹⁶ In his early lectures on *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers*, Nietzsche discerns versions of eternal recurrence in Anaximander, Heraclitus, Xenophanes, and the Pythagoreans, but it is the Pythagorean version that most closely resembles Nietzsche’s cosmological doctrine of the eternal return of the same. See my “Interpretation as Self-Creation: Nietzsche on the Pre-Platonics,” *Ancient Philosophy*, 23 (2003): 195–213.

because will-to-power is the force driving the cycle of cosmic recurrence, leading the universe to unfold as a kind of magnificent perpetual motion machine of endless growth and decay. Viewed from the greatest possible distance (that “view from nowhere” Nietzsche calls the “super-historical perspective”), will-to-power is *as* the eternal return of the same. Nietzsche’s ontology generates his theology because will-to-power ultimately unfolds as eternal recurrence. According to Nietzsche, moreover, the eternal return of the same is also the *highest* conceivable mode of existence.¹⁷ For, the universe conceived in its eternal recurrence is both the closest that the endless stream of becoming ever comes to *being* and also the means we need in order to affirm all of existence by affirming just one moment of our lives. If all events are interconnected in an unbroken circle of cause and effect, then “future” events circle around to help cause “past” ones, and to affirm *any* moment of your life is thus to affirm not only your whole life but also the entire cosmic cycle, without which that moment could not exist. In this way, the theological understanding of being feeds back into the ontological; with eternal recurrence Nietzsche reaffirms, as it were, the connection we observed in Anaximander and Plato between the theological understanding of the whole of what-is and the question of whether the being of this whole is meaningful. Nietzsche too provides a “cosmodicy,” a godless cosmic theodicy that seeks to vindicate the meaningfulness of what-is as a whole.

Of course, it was Nietzsche himself who saw that Plato’s theological conception of the forms as perfect exemplars led to the “nihilism” or meaninglessness of “devaluing” the finite achievements attainable by mortals by comparing them to unattainable “otherworldly” ideals. (Nietzsche extends the same charge to the Christian understanding of heaven as an afterworld for the eternal soul, an afterlife compared to which this life is merely a “vale of tears,” hence his famous description of Christianity as “Platonism for the masses.”) Nietzsche challenges us with his powerful call for *amor fati* to embrace eternal recurrence in order to justify our finite lives non-nihilistically – that is, solely on their own terms, without redeeming them in some afterlife or otherwise judging them by unfulfillable, “otherworldly” standards. Nonetheless, Heidegger suggests,

¹⁷ Most crucial, from Heidegger’s perspective, are the words expressed in Notebook 7 (from the end of 1886 to the Spring of 1887), where Nietzsche writes: “To imprint upon becoming the character of being – that is the highest *will to power*”; and, one sentence later, “That *everything recurs* is the most extreme *approximation of a world of becoming to one of being*: [this is the] *pinnacle of contemplation*” (Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, 138). Heidegger’s reading of Nietzsche turns on this “pinnacle,” where Nietzsche *himself* joins eternal recurrence to will-to-power as its highest expression, i.e., as the closest becoming comes to being and as the key to affirming existence.

Nietzsche fell into the same theological trap he discerned in Plato, because Nietzsche held that human existence can be justified only by affirming the doctrine of eternal recurrence, the truth of which Nietzsche himself admitted was ultimately “unknowable.”¹⁸

Heidegger agrees that eternal recurrence is unknowable. For Heidegger, “the essential knowing of the thinker [always] begins by knowing something unknowable” (N I 477/N3 5 f.). Despite its “factual” unknowability, Heidegger insists that “Nietzsche’s thought of the eternal recurrence of the same” is anything but “a mystical fantasy.” Quite the contrary; owing to the theses of ontological holism, historicity, and epochality we discussed earlier, Heidegger believes that “Nietzsche is the name for an age of the world” (GA 50: 84). What this means, we can now see, is that Nietzsche supplies the ontotheological substructure of our own epoch; Nietzsche’s understanding of being as eternally recurring will-to-power undergirds and suspends our own historical constellation of intelligibility. This is why Heidegger rather mysteriously prophesies that, in “the coming age ... the essence of modern technology – the constantly [*ständig*] rotating recurrence of the same – will come to light” (GA 8: 112/WCT 109). Such gnomic remarks, properly understood, show us that Heidegger’s famous critique of technology in fact follows from his understanding of ontotheology.¹⁹ Indeed, although no one seems to have recognized this connection before, it is clear that Heidegger holds the Nietzschean ontotheology of eternally recurring will-to-power ultimately responsible for the increasingly global *technologization* of our world.

III. TRANSCENDING OUR TECHNOLOGICAL ONTOTHEOLOGY

To see this, one has to know that the constellation of intelligibility characteristic of our own late modern epoch is what Heidegger famously calls “enframing” (*Gestell*). In Heidegger’s view, many of the deepest problems plaguing our “technological” age of enframing emerge from or are

¹⁸ Near the climax of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, when Zarathustra whispers the “secret” of eternal recurrence into the ear of life, she tellingly replies: “You *know* that, O Zarathustra? Nobody knows that.” See *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and tran. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 339.

¹⁹ Heidegger uses “*ständig*” to suggest that the metaphysics of eternally recurring will-to-power is ultimately responsible for “enframing,” the technological mode of revealing which reduces everything to mere “*Bestand*,” i.e., intrinsically meaningless resources standing by for optimization. Eternal recurrence is ironically fulfilled in technological homogenization, “the endless etcetera of what is most desolately transitory” (GA 65: 409/CPh 287).

exacerbated by the particular Nietzschean ontotheology in which this technological enframing is rooted.²⁰ In effect, Nietzsche's ontotheology implicitly provides the lenses through which we see the world and ourselves, leading us to pre-understand the being of all things as eternally recurring will-to-power, that is, as mere forces coming together and breaking apart with no end beyond this continual self-overcoming. Insofar as our sense of reality is shaped by this "technological" understanding of the being of entities, we increasingly come to treat all entities, ourselves included, as intrinsically meaningless resources (*Bestand*) standing by merely to be optimized, enhanced, and ordered for maximally flexible use.²¹ As I have argued elsewhere, environmental devastation, our growing obsession with biogenetic optimization, the increasing reduction of higher education to empty optimization imperatives, and the nihilistic erosion of all intrinsic meaning are just some of the most obvious symptoms of the underlying ontotheology "enframing" our sense of reality.²²

²⁰ When Heidegger refers to "the source of these destructive phenomena in their essence" (N II 363/N4 221), he is thinking of Nietzsche's ontotheology of eternally recurring will-to-power as a historical understanding of the being of entities which dissolves being itself into *nothing* but becoming and thereby occludes the condition of its own possibility. Yet, this "essence of nihilism contains nothing negative" (ibid.), because this strange "noth-ing" or "nihilating" needs to be understood as the way being itself shows up when viewed through the lenses of Nietzsche's ontotheology; in the active "nihilating" by which its "presencing" can be felt, being paradoxically "comes across" in its very "staying away." The "fulfilled peak" of Western nihilism is Nietzsche's reduction of being to nothing (by dissolving being into becoming), but this peak "looks down both slopes" (as Derrida recognized); for, to understand this "noth-ing" as the way we experience being from within our Nietzschean ontotheology is to be already turning or pivoting phenomenologically beyond nihilism. For Heidegger's difficult but crucial idea of a salvific turn from understanding being as nothing to experiencing this dynamic noth-ing as the presencing of being, see my "Understanding Technology Ontotheologically, or: The Danger and the Promise of Heidegger, an American Perspective," in *New Waves in the Philosophy of Technology*, ed. Jan-Kyrre Berg Olsen, Evan Selinger, and Søren Riis (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

²¹ What Heidegger teaches us (and this is one of the important things that Feenberg helped me see) is that the view (shared by both Marxism and liberalism) of technology as a neutral tool that can be used for either good or evil purposes is far too simplistic. In fact, technology reinforces a particular historical drift, owing to the ontotheology it expresses, and Heidegger's great merit is to have helped us discern the underlying historical direction in which we are moving as our sense of reality becomes increasingly *technologized*. One need think not only of Latour's automatic door-closer, of speed-bumps, or of the spreading panopticon of traffic and other security cameras – devices the evolution of which threatens to render autonomy obsolete by making punishment automatic and instantaneous. We can think instead of how seemingly more neutral phenomena like email and the internet encourage an accelerated rate of exchange, make the distant near and the near distant, and foment irresponsibility and brusque hostility through their facelessness. These and other technologies can be used, to be sure, to combat *technologization*; but to use them so (i.e., to use our technology without being used by it), we must first recognize and learn to resist their tendency to serve empty optimization; see *Heidegger on Ontotheology*, Ch. 2.

²² See my "Ontology and Ethics at the Intersection of Phenomenology and Environmental Philosophy," *Inquiry*, 47/4 (2004): 380–412.

These problems are as serious as they are deeply entrenched in the metaphysical substructure of our historical self-understanding.

Fortunately, Heidegger's work also helps suggest a treatment, and so an educational mission for future thinking: First, to make us aware of the subtle and often unnoticed impact of this technological ontotheology so that we can learn to recognize and resist it; and, second, to help us learn to practice the phenomenological comportment Heidegger calls "dwelling." To learn to *dwell* is to become attuned to the phenomenological "presencing" (*Anwesen*) whereby "being as such" manifests itself. "Being as such" is one of Heidegger's names for that conceptually inexhaustible dimension of our experience which all metaphysics' different ontotheological ways of understanding the being of entities partly capture but never exhaust. Heidegger's hope is that if we become comportmentally attuned to the dynamic phenomenological presencing that both precedes and exceeds all conceptualization, then we can come to understand and experience entities as being richer in meaning than we are capable of doing justice to conceptually, rather than taking them as intrinsically meaningless resources awaiting optimization. In this way, we can learn to approach all things with care, humility, patience, gratitude, awe, and even reverence and love. Such experiences can become microcosms of, as well as inspiration for, the revolution beyond our underlying ontotheology that Heidegger teaches us that we need in order to transcend enframing and set our world aright. The task for future thinking is thus to help us transcend this technological ontotheology and its devastating nihilistic effects, in our lives, our academic institutions, and our world at large.²³

Perhaps the simplest way to understand the drastically different ways of comporting ourselves toward reality that Heidegger is contrasting – namely, the active receptivity of poetic dwelling as opposed to the obtuse domination of technological enframing – is to think about the difference between these poetic and technological modes of revealing in terms Heidegger traces back to the ancient Greek distinction between *poiêsis* and *technê*. Just think, on the one hand, of a poetic shepherding into being which respects the natural potentialities of the matters with which it works, as Michelangelo (who worked in a marble quarry) legendarily claimed he had just set his "David" free from the marble or, less hyperbolically, as a skillful woodworker notices the inherent qualities of particular pieces of wood – attending to subtleties of shape and grain, shades of color, weight, and hardness – while deciding what might be built from

²³ See Heidegger on *Ontotheology*, Ch. 4.

that wood. Contrast, on the other hand, a technological making which imposes form on matter without paying any heed to its intrinsic potentialities, the way an industrial factory indiscriminately grinds wood into woodchips in order to paste them back together into straight particle board which can then be used flexibly to efficiently construct a maximal variety of useful objects.²⁴ While Nietzscheans continue to believe that all meaning comes from us, as the result of our various “value positings,” Heidegger is committed to the more phenomenologically accurate view that, at least with respect to that which most matters to us – the paradigm case being *love* – what we most care about is in fact not entirely up to us, not simply within our power to control, and this is a crucial part of what makes it so important.

What I think the later Heidegger thus suggests is a fundamental *ontological pluralism* (or *plural realism*). We need to be sensitive enough to intrinsic meanings to be able to “cut reality at the joints,” or attend to the fact that, in each case, there will be more than one way of cutting reality at its joints.²⁵ This means, for example, that, just as a talented artisan can make more than one thing from a single piece of wood, so there was also more than one form slumbering in the veins of the marble from which Michelangelo “released” his David. Like the neo-Aristotelian view of “open resoluteness” (*Entschlossenheit*) that Heidegger developed in *Being and Time*, his later view of the active receptivity of “releasement” (*Gelassenheit*) suggests a kind of ethical and aesthetic *phronêsis* or practical wisdom. The guiding idea here is that, rather than getting hung up looking for the one right answer – and, when we finally despair of finding that right answer, rebounding back to the relativistic view that no answer is

²⁴ Admittedly, this crucial difference is difficult to define philosophically without falling back into ontotheology (for example, by grounding it in intrinsic properties), but one need not rely on historically outdated examples in order to bring this still widely shared intuition into focus. Instead, one could think of the difference between web page design just a few years ago and the standardized web palette instantly available to users of facebook and myspace, which allows users to imagine how best to express themselves by selecting from an array of predefined options, rather than by struggling to understand what they really want to say and, in the process, creating a style of their own. Or one could think about the difference between an educational approach that helps students identify and cultivate their own unique talents and capacities, as opposed to one that treats students merely as raw materials, “human resources,” and seeks to remake them so that they can pursue whatever society currently deems to be the most successful career path. I develop these suggestions in detail in *Heidegger on Ontotheology*, Chs 2 and 4.

²⁵ In “The Origin of the Work of Art” Heidegger suggests that intelligibility contains a complex texture of edges, lines, and breaks, and that this “rift-structure” forms an open-ended “basic design” or “outline sketch” (GA 5: 51/PLT 63) to which we need to learn to be creatively receptive in order to bring at least one of the potentially inexhaustible forms slumbering in the earth into the light of the world. (I develop this view in my entry on “Heidegger’s Aesthetics” in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.)

better than any other (or concluding nihilistically that intrinsic meanings are an obsolete myth) – we should instead cultivate the recognition that in most situations there will be more than one right answer to questions of what to do or how to go on. The hermeneutic principle to follow in ethics as well as aesthetics is that there is more than one intrinsic meaning to be found. For, if being is conceptually inexhaustible, capable of yielding meaning again and again, then the intrinsic meanings of things must be plural (however paradoxical that now seems, given our obsession with formal systems capable of securing monosemic exactitude).²⁶

IV. IMAGES OF ONTOTHEOLOGY

Let me now bring in the more precise images for ontotheology promised earlier, images which can help us head off some common misunderstandings of Heidegger's view. Jonathan Swift's wonderful satire, *Gulliver's Travels*, famously begins with Lemuel Gulliver recounting his famous experiences among the minuscule Lilliputians, where Gulliver lives like a mountain among men. Then, in his second adventure, Gulliver describes the inverted experience of life among the gargantuan Brobdingnagians (even their name is big), who tower above Gulliver just as he once towered above the tiny Lilliputians. It is easy to imagine Gulliver's sense of perspective being thoroughly relativized by these successive experiences of immensity and minuteness, and Gulliver's third adventure begins (not coincidentally) with him set adrift at sea, a state from which he is rescued and hoisted aboard a great floating island called Laputa. Gulliver's fundamental bearings thus get reestablished, paradoxically, by a land that hovers in mid-air – a seeming impossibility nicely captured in René Magritte's ominous painting, "Le Château des Pyrénées" (1959).²⁷

The male inhabitants who rule the floating island of Laputa are deeply autistic. Swift writes that "the minds of these people are so taken up with intense speculations that they neither can speak nor attend to the

²⁶ See my essays "Heidegger's Perfectionist Philosophy of Education in *Being and Time*," *Continental Philosophy Review*, 37/4 (2004): 439–467 and "Even Better than the Real Thing? Postmodernity, the Triumph of the Simulacra, and U2," in *U2 and Philosophy: How to Decipher an Atomic Band*, ed. Mark A. Wrathall (Chicago, Ill.: Open Court, 2006), 73–95.

²⁷ The idea that Magritte's "Le Château des Pyrénées" seems to have been inspired by Swift's portrait of Laputa is reinforced by one of two early sketches of the painting (held, along with the painting itself, in the Israel Museum, Jerusalem), which shows the giant rock floating ominously above a large dwelling, as if threatening to crush it. See www.english.imjnet.org.il/htmls/Popup.aspx?co=13316 and www.imj.org.il/imagine/item.asp?table=comb&itemNum=243183 (accessed January 12, 2008).

discourses of others”; they require servants to tap them on the mouth or the ear when it is their turn to talk or to listen. These Laputans remain so lost in thought that, like their philosophical forebear, Thales (whom Swift knowingly caricatures), when they leave their homes they are in constant “danger of falling down every precipice.”²⁸ Although the Laputans’ theoretical obsessions leave them nearly incapacitated in practical matters, they nevertheless govern the country below them by applying to all practical problems a speculative philosophy the twin foci of which are pure mathematics and astronomy. The distance between these everyday problems and the Laputans’ soaring speculations generates lots of absurd and destructive “solutions,” but the Laputans back up their speculative philosophy with brute force, literally crushing rebellions by landing their giant island on any city that refuses their rule. Even the Laputans’ physiognomy reflects their twin philosophical fixations on mathematics and astronomy: “one of their eyes [is] turned inward, and the other [looks] directly up to the zenith.”²⁹

Swift’s striking image of the Laputans’ dual gaze, a gaze directed simultaneously inward and outward, with one eye looking for truth within while the other searches for it beyond the heavens: is this not a nearly perfect analogy for metaphysics’ ontotheological obsessions? Swift’s image is pushed even closer toward perfection, for our purposes, by the fact that these Laputans, whose ontotheological gaze blinds them to the immediate and leads them to destroy the world they rule, live on a solid

²⁸ Although the poets sometimes like to make fun of them, I think the Greek philosophers understood better than we do that the ultimate practical virtues are extremely difficult to attain without a theoretical wisdom to help guide the way. J. Glenn Gray suggests as much with his droll observation that “It is one of life’s ironies in our times that so many of us require more knowledge, even to find our way home, than we really care to have.” Gray’s insight can be taken ironically, as pointing out that our lives are maintained by technological devices the mechanics of which most of us no longer even want to understand. But it can also be taken unironically, as suggesting that if we human beings are ever going to become at-home in our contemporary world, then we need to understand not just the mechanics of technological devices but also the underlying “principles” driving global technologization. The theoretical wisdom we need to guide us derives from the thoughtful insight into the limits and dangers of the ontotheological foundations of our own age. As Martin Woessner recognizes, “Heidegger is referred to only twice in *The Promise of Wisdom*, but his influence suffuses the whole project.” See J. Glenn Gray, *The Promise of Wisdom: An Introduction to Philosophy of Education* (New York: Lippincott, 1968), 24, 203, 271, 275; Martin Woessner, “J. Glenn Gray: Philosopher, Translator (of Heidegger), and Warrior,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 40/3 (2004): 498.

²⁹ Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels* (New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2003), Pt III, Ch. 2, 170 f. Kierkegaard similarly imagines “a novel in which the main character would be a man who had obtained a pair of glasses, one lens of which reduced images as powerfully as an oxyhydrogen microscope, and the other magnifies on the same scale”; see Rick Anthony Furtak, *Wisdom in Love: Kierkegaard and the Ancient Quest for Emotional Integrity* (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 203, n. 14.

island paradoxically floating in mid-air. From a Heideggerian perspective, *they are us*, living on an ungrounded ground that is supported by dual insights into the innermost core of reality and its ultimate expression. The Laputans *look like* ontotheologists, in short, and the floating island of Laputa is a nearly perfect image for Heidegger's understanding of the way in which metaphysics' dual ontotheological understandings of the being of entities leave our unified constellations of intelligibility, our shared sense of what-is and what matters, suspended epistemically, floating somewhere between the unshakeable foundation we continue to yearn for and the yawning abyss we still fear.

The strange suspension of this solid ground allows me to speak to a worry that might have occurred to you earlier: Why think that the history of being takes the shape of a series of overlapping but relatively distinct "epochs"? The answer is that ontotheologies join the dual points at which humanity's microscopic and telescopic conceptual spadework turns; these ontotheologies establish for their time both the most fundamental element out of which (the being of) everything else is composed and the ultimate limit from the perspective of which (the being of) reality as a whole can be grasped. The fact that these ontotheological foundations are neither absolute nor arbitrary but instead represent the historically variable limits of human knowledge explains why the history of being takes the form of a series of unified epochs rather than either a single monolithic epoch or an unbroken flux. Swift thus gives us a suggestive image of ontological epochality and historicity: Our ontotheologies supply our epochal constellations of intelligibility with the firmest ground possible historically, and yet our firm ground nevertheless seems to hover in thin air, like Laputa, when viewed from a sufficient distance.

Other worries arise for the post-Heideggerian reader of *Gulliver's Travels* when Swift has Gulliver speculate about the etymology of "Laputa." Gulliver rejects the stock derivation according to which the floating island's name means *governing from on high* (from *Lap*, "high," plus *untah*, "governor"), a straightforward etymology Gulliver ironically dismisses as "too strained." Instead, Gulliver offers "to the learned" his own etymological conjecture that Laputa derives from *Lap*, "the dancing of sunbeams in the sea," plus *outed*, "a wing."³⁰ Gulliver's outlandish poetic

³⁰ Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, 173 f. I have treated Heidegger's own occasional etymological acrobatics more sympathetically in *Heidegger on Ontotheology* and more critically in "Reading Heidegger Backwards: White's *Time and Death*," *Inquiry*, 50/1 (2007): 103–120. In my view his use of etymology is more defensible than commonly thought but less reliable than the Heideggerian faithful like to believe, and must thus be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

speculations obscure the fact that, for Swift himself, Laputa is obviously a simple contraction of the Spanish words meaning “the prostitute,” *la puta*. What this suggests, perhaps, is that Swift’s own sympathies do not lie with Heidegger’s idealistic view that metaphysics, despite its ivory-tower autism, does indeed rule the world. Swift’s own view seems closer to a historical materialist critique of such a high-flown conception of philosophy, a critique which suggests that even the most seemingly disconnected speculations of metaphysics can ultimately be reduced to a covert apology for the economic order. At any rate, Swift helps raise the question: Is philosophy ultimately just a high-minded prostitute for the economy? Or, at the very least, doesn’t Heidegger credit the great metaphysicians with an unjustifiably exalted role in establishing and maintaining intelligibility, thereby ignoring the broader and deeper historical and material forces that shape the world out of which even the great metaphysicians think their lofty thoughts?³¹

Heidegger is careful to stress that the epochal transformations catalyzed by ontotheologists like Nietzsche are not the creations of some Promethean philosopher’s private imagination. As he puts it: “Nietzsche neither made nor chose his way himself, no more than any other thinker ever did. He is *sent* on his way” (GA 8: 50/WCT 46). Heidegger’s idea that historical transformations are “sent” by being is usually given a mystical or quietistic interpretation, but I think it is better heard as a *realistic* acknowledgment of our situatedness within (and, hence, the necessity of our *receptivity* to) ontohistorical currents that shape us much more than we shape them. In fact, the later Heidegger came to believe that spitting

³¹ For a more detailed response to this question, see *Heidegger on Ontotheology*, Ch. 2. Crowe advances a similar criticism of this “implausibly inflated view of the real influence of philosophers,” but Crowe motivates the criticism with a different and interesting worry: How could metaphysicians reshape a culture in which “literacy was the achievement of a small minority”? When one thinks about *ontological holism* – which, as the name suggests, holds that all meaning is interconnected and turns on an understanding of what being is – this objection becomes less pressing. For there is no reason why the interconnected networks of intelligibility that give Dasein a world should be transmitted solely within *written* language (or even writing and speech). As Heidegger already recognized in *Being and Time*, discourse goes deeper than our explicit use of language. My account of ontotheology seeks to explain Heidegger’s (admittedly under-elaborated) view of the mechanism by which the “deep framework” of a culture gets refocused, transformed, and disseminated by metaphysicians, who are thus not simply “invisibly shaped” by some mysterious process that they passively serve (even though they often take important cues from poets and other artists, as Crowe, following Dreyfus, rightly points out). Of course, even if Heidegger were wrong about the historical influence of ancient ontotheologies, his critique of technologization turns on his reading of Nietzsche’s ontotheology, which is why I have mostly been concerned to explain and defend the core of this crucial reading. See Benjamin D. Crowe, *Heidegger’s Phenomenology of Religion: Realism and Cultural Criticism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 27, n. 11.

into the wind of the history of being is pointless, and that we can change this history only by pushing it forward, developing it to the point where it turns into something else.³² Heidegger should have been more clear, nonetheless, that the ontotheologies that catalyze epochal shifts in our history often do so by generalizing discoveries from subdomains (“positive sciences” or “regional ontologies”) of our knowledge. Ontotheologies can rapidly accelerate pre-existing historical trends by moving them from the periphery to the center of our culture’s historical self-understanding. In Nietzsche’s case, for example, Adam Smith had already described the way an “invisible hand” optimized growth when the forces of supply and demand are unfettered and allowed to fight it out in the economic domain, just as Darwin had suggested that competition over scarce resources generates an escalating evolutionary arms-race between living things, an endless struggle that serves the continued growth of life itself. Nietzsche, long sympathetic to the Greeks’ Olympian enthronement of the agonistic principle that *competition is good*, can be understood as having ontologized and so universalized these insights, celebrating will-to-power as the fundamental law of being in general and so extrapolating it to its ultimate expression in the endless boom-and-bust cycle of eternal recurrence.

Nonetheless, it is difficult to emphasize sufficiently just how profoundly ambiguous a figure Heidegger’s Nietzsche is. Heidegger thinks of Nietzsche as “a transition, pointing before and behind ... and therefore everywhere ambiguous,” a great thinker who recognized “that it was his own thought that would first have to bring about a devastation in whose midst, in another day and from other sources, oases would rise here and there and springs well up” (GA 8: 54/WCT 51). Heidegger attempts to think Nietzsche’s “unthought” ontotheology because it is this ontotheology that supplies our current constellation of intelligibility with its fundamental and ultimate conceptual parameters. A great thinker’s “unthought” is that point toward which their thinking is moving, not so much their unconscious – although “the thinker can never say that which is most his own” (N II 484/EP 77 f.) – as their internal avant-garde. Questioning means thinking after or toward (*nachdenken*) this unthought point which reaches the furthest ahead in another thinker’s thought. In plain English, questioning is an endeavor to pick up and push forward that which thinks the furthest ahead in a predecessor’s thinking – and so help move history.

³² Concerning Heidegger’s views on “errancy,” see my essay “On the Advantages and Disadvantages of Reading Heidegger Backward,” 113 and 119 f., n. 25.

Heidegger's attempt to think Nietzsche's unthought is thus an effort not to refute his thinking but instead to develop it beyond where Nietzsche left it by making explicit the point toward which it was heading. Heidegger sought this Nietzsche beyond Nietzsche in two senses: first, the Nietzsche whose unthought ontotheology helped catalyze the ongoing technologization of reality in which we remain caught; but also, second (and even further ahead), the Nietzsche who struggled valiantly to help inspire a way beyond the nihilistic age he both predicted and inadvertently ushered in. Thus, in the same crucial notebook entry in which Nietzsche joins will-to-power and eternal recurrence as "the pinnacle of contemplation," Nietzsche also observes that we have reached the historical "tipping point" into nihilism, imagining his philosophers of the future as "amphibians" capable of crawling out of the old sea of meaning and surviving on the desert-dry landscape of nihilism. Urging "bravery" and "patience," Nietzsche calls for us to balance between worlds – "no 'going back,' no ardent rush forward," he advises – and his final word is "plenitude."³³ This, I think, is the Nietzsche who anticipates Heidegger, the Nietzsche of youth and creativity, of abundance and excess, and I think we should acknowledge this Nietzsche even as we share Heidegger's suspicions, learned the hard way, of the Nietzsche whose own *magnum opus* came to teach the world "the *superman*," the notorious doctrine that "humanity is something that should be *superseded*." Rather than defend the Nietzsche of optimization, the Nietzsche of "breeding and selection," the Nietzsche who eagerly anticipated "the task of rearing a master race," calling for the emergence of a "higher type" of human being who would embrace the deadly truth that life is will-to-power and so set out to reshape human beings the way artists sculpt clay, let us instead celebrate the other Nietzsche who leads beyond the pro-eugenicist Nietzsche whom Heidegger was right, I think, to subject to such relentless and acerbic criticism.³⁴

CONCLUSIONS: ON THE USE AND ABUSE OF ONTOTHEOLOGY FOR RELIGION

Let me address one final misunderstanding. Most readers seem to think that by *ontotheology* Heidegger simply means any view which treats God

³³ Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, 138 f.

³⁴ See *ibid.* 71. I examine *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*'s notorious doctrine of "The Superhuman: Humanity is something that should be superseded" in my essay "Deconstructing the Hero," in *Comics as Philosophy*, ed. Jeff McLaughlin (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005), 100–129.

as the self-caused cause of creation, the ultimate anchor meant to halt the regress in an otherwise unending chain of cause and effect. As should now be clear, however, this is only one part of Heidegger's larger view of metaphysics as ontotheology – an undeniably interesting part, and one which has helped inspire that return to religion now under way in contemporary continental circles, but a single part nevertheless. We should be careful not to reduce Heidegger's complex view of ontotheology to one of its component parts and, by treating this part as if it were the whole, eclipse that larger and more important whole from view – obscuring the way Heidegger's understanding of ontotheology explains his famous critique of technologization, for example, or the way it reveals his later thought to be much more coherent and persuasive than is usually appreciated. It remains worthwhile, nonetheless, to see how an appreciation of this whole allows us better to understand that part to which it is too often reduced.

Remember that Kant coined the term *ontotheology* in order to designate that “transcendental” approach to theology exemplified by St. Anselm's famous “ontological proof” for the existence of God. Such a theological approach believes, as Kant put it, that the existence of God can be derived from “mere concepts, without the help of any experience whatsoever” (KrV A632/B660). What Kant calls *ontotheology*, in other words, is the idea that the existence of God can be proved simply by analyzing the concept “God.” This “ontological proof,” put simply, holds, first, that the concept “God” should be analyzed as “the being than whom none greater can be conceived” and, second, that this “greatest possible being” must exist *for strictly logical reasons*, because a perfect god who exists would be “greater” than one who does not.³⁵ The problem with the ontological proof, in Kant's view, is that adding to a conceptual description of some being that this being exists actually adds no further *content* to that conceptual description. Thus Kant argues that if I completely list all the predicates describing the coin in my pocket – it is circular, silver-colored, metallic, imprinted with images, hatched all the way around the edge,

³⁵ Perhaps the easiest way to see the point is the Cartesian one: compare the two leading candidates for this greatest possible being, both of which are conceived as identically possessing all the conceptually maximized, divine attributes (omniscience, omnipotence, and so on), but only the second of these beings is conceived as also actually *existing*. Which of these two candidates would be the *greatest* entity? Presumably the perfect being who actually exists possesses something the other perfect being lacks, namely, existence. If so, then that being of whom none greater can be conceived – i.e., God – must exist. (Given the well-documented problems with this proof, it is noteworthy that as strict a logical mind as the young Bertrand Russell found it compelling for a time.)

and so on – and then I add as the last item on my list that the coin in my pocket *exists*, I have in fact added no further content to my concept of the coin in my pocket.

What is most interesting about this old debate, from our perspective, is that Heidegger never simply accepted the claim on which Kant's rejection of the ontological proof rests, namely, that (in Kant's terms) "existence is not a real predicate" (KrV A598/B626). Heidegger points out that a *real* predicate means a predicate belonging to "a *res*, a substance, to the substantive content of a thing" (GA 9: 451/*Pathm* 341). Heidegger thus reinterprets Kant's thesis to mean "that being itself can never be explained by *what* any given being is" (GA 9: 452/*Pathm* 342). In Heidegger's view, what metaphysics has taught us to call "existence" does not itself simply possess some determinate content; rather, "it" remains the source of all the possible contentful descriptions we have yet to discover and enumerate. We could thus say that what for Kant is not a real predicate is for Heidegger the source of all the predicates yet to be disclosed. The very idea of a complete description or an exhaustive conceptual analysis of any entity, even one as commonplace as the coin in my pocket, is not something Heidegger would accept, precisely because the being of an entity remains conceptually inexhaustible; that is what the great poets teach us, *pace* the great metaphysicians. Even if we spent months seeking completely to describe a quotidian entity like the coin in my pocket, enumerating a list of predicates several pages long, a sufficiently insightful poet would still be able to notice something about the coin that we had missed and, what is more, this poet could put a name on that contentful quality that renders it visible to us, allowing us to see it and to see that we had overlooked it.

Still, poets are more painfully aware than anyone of the fact that the names they use to disclose and communicate these heretofore unglimped aspects of reality fail fully to express and communicate their poetic insights. A thoughtful insight into poetry itself can thus help teach us to experience "being as such" as what both elicits and resists poetic naming. We can learn to see – over the shoulder of the poet, as it were – the way poets themselves experience this conceptually inexhaustible dimension of our reality as a kind of preconceptual givenness and extra-conceptual excess which precedes and exceeds the poetic act of concept formation. Thinking carefully through poetry can thus help attune us to that dimension of our experience of reality in which Heidegger places his hope for the future. For the future itself comes from the poetic naming-into-being of still unglimped aspects of this

reality, as well as from the thoughtful rediscovery of aspects of being we were once aware of but whose full meaning has been lost through disuse or worn away through overuse.³⁶

What conclusion, then, is suggested by Heidegger's critique of Kant on ontotheology? For Heidegger, the real problem with the ontological proof is not that it might be invalid but instead that it reflects and reinforces a phenomenologically misguided and historically disastrous approach to thinking about humanity's relation to the divine.³⁷ The problem with conceiving of God ontotheologically – whether ontotheology is taken in the sense Kant criticizes, as an attempt to provide a purely conceptual proof of God's existence, or in the sense Heidegger criticizes, which includes any understanding of God as a self-caused cause or as the outermost entity in the causal chain of creation – is that such approaches work to disconnect Western humanity from the real and immediate relation to the divine we once experienced and which, Heidegger believes, we can experience still.

It is here that Heidegger's critique of metaphysics as ontotheology importantly includes his critique of this metaphysical understanding of God as a self-caused cause. His famous criticism is that this "God of the metaphysicians" is not the God of religious faith, that is, not the God before whom humanity has historically knelt in prayer or danced in ecstatic celebration. As Heidegger puts it near the end of "The Ontotheological Constitution of Metaphysics" (1957):

This is the right name for the god of philosophy. Man can neither pray nor sacrifice to this god. Before the *causa sui*, man can neither fall to his knees in awe nor can he play music and dance before this god. / The god-less thinking which must abandon the god of philosophy, god as *causa sui*, is thus perhaps closer to the divine God. (GA 11: 77/1aD 72)

For the early Heidegger, the "God of faith" meant "the crucified God," Christ, a Pauline faith in whom opens up a radically transformed experience of temporality as eschatological and hence linear rather than as cyclical and continuously self-resurrecting. (Easter, written atop the

³⁶ See Heidegger, "Homecoming/To Kindred Ones" (1943) (GA 4: 9–31/EHP 23–49). Here I take myself to be supplementing the insightful view articulated by Hubert L. Dreyfus in "Heidegger on the Connection between Nihilism, Art, Technology, and Politics," in *Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Charles Guignon, 2nd edn (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 345–372.

³⁷ One objection to the ontological proof, especially relevant from our perspective, is that "the greatest possible being" is intrinsic, not to the concept of God as such, but only to the Judeo-Christian tradition's ontotheological conception of a creator God, as this took shape during the Middle Ages.

pagan rites of Spring, allows Christianity to absorb rebirth in a way that takes it out of nature and transposes it into the human soul.³⁸) The later Heidegger's mysterious hints about gods and God refer to the departed gods of Greece and the as-yet-unnamed (and so unarrived) God whom Hölderlin evokes in his poetry and prose, situating our technological age of divine "destitution" in the time "between" the gods who have fled and the God who is yet to come.³⁹

I find myself increasingly inclined to conclude that "being as such" – that is, "be-ing" in its *difference* from the metaphysically conceived understanding of the being of entities – *is* the later Heidegger's unnamed name for this God to come, "the last or ultimate God" whom he evokes at the climax of his *Contributions to Philosophy (On Enowning)*. Heidegger's post-Christian "last God" is a kind of Eckhartian Godhead (that is, a finally unnamable source of all our different conceptions of god), whose name the later Heidegger writes only under erasure and thereby pluralizes in his "fourfold." (It is crucial to remember that this fourfold of earth and heavens, mortals and divinities emerged from the later Heidegger's "cross-wise striking-through" of being.)⁴⁰ Through this fourfold, the later Heidegger's hidden and unnamed Godhead, being as such, reveals itself as an in-principle multiplicity, an ontological pluralism beyond ontotheology and irreducible even to polytheism. For, after rejecting the metaphysically overloaded labels "monotheism," "pantheism," and "atheism," Heidegger dismisses "all types of 'theism'" as the confused legacy of "Judeo-Christian 'apologetics.'" Nonetheless, his own view of "the gods" can be tentatively characterized as *polytheistic*, given his contention that "the multitude of gods cannot be quantified ... The last God is not the end but rather the other beginning of immeasurable possibilities for our history" (GA 65: 411/CPh 289).⁴¹

³⁸ See *Wegm* 52 f./*Pathm* 44. Nietzsche's thinking of eternal recurrence seeks to restore rebirth to nature, which is one reason why he famously ends *Ecce Homo* by setting "Dionysus against the Crucified."

³⁹ On the riches inherent in the poverty of this destitution, see n. 20 above. On the "Last God" in Heidegger's *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, see my essay "The Philosophical Fugue: Understanding the Structure and Goal of Heidegger's *Beiträge*," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 34/1 (2003): 57–73.

⁴⁰ See Heidegger, "On the Question of Being" (1955) in GA 9: 385–426/*Pathm* 291–322.

⁴¹ "The Last God" begins with this epigraph: "The entirely other against that which has been, especially against the Christian" (GA 65: 403/CPh 283). In the "incalculable moment" of the "turning" into the other beginning (when we suddenly recognize that what we experienced as nothing but constant becoming was instead the way that the presencing of being as such makes itself felt within our Nietzschean ontotheology – again, see n. 20 above), being "is like the nothing" (GA 65: 415/CPh 292). Indeed, Heidegger writes that: "All these decisions, which seem to

Ontotheological approaches to religion were historically disastrous, in sum, precisely because they eclipse what Western humanity originally experienced as a direct attunement to aspects of reality larger and more powerful than ourselves – as, for example, the polytheistic Greeks were struck by Apollo in the sudden epiphany, experienced Athena when just the right judgment came to them, felt Ares when overtaken by war-like aggression, and knew Aphrodite in moments of sexual ecstasy. Ontotheological approaches transform such immediately felt experiences into a cognitive demand for a kind of detached intellectual certainty concerning some entity standing beyond this world.⁴² Such approaches thus work to enforce our alienation from genuinely “holy” experiences capable of helping to heal humanity by reminding us of our place in the larger world – as humble, earth-bound “shepherds of being” in all its conceptually inexhaustible, holistic interconnectedness, rather than ontotheologically domineering “lords over entities,” insatiably seeking mastery over an “objective” world of entities from which we have become alienated by our very way of conceptualizing and so experiencing ourselves. Finding our way home, Heidegger thus suggests, will require us to cultivate a more thoughtful awareness of the relation between our fundamental ways of

be so many and varied, are gathered into one thing only: whether being definitively withdraws or whether this withdrawal as refusal becomes the first truth and the other beginning of history” (GA 65: 91/CPh 63). In this experience (of, in Heideggerian terms, the nihilating of the nothing as the concealed presencing of being), Heidegger writes, “god ... appears ... solely in the space of ‘being’ itself” (GA 65: 416/CPh 293, my emphasis). Heidegger always explicitly disavows any equation of being with God (leading Derrida to write, misleadingly, of Heidegger’s “negative theology”). These very denials suggest to me that for Heidegger God is not the source of being (as in ontotheology) but rather the reverse, that being as such remains the source of any experience or thinking of God. Heidegger disassociates being from God, e.g., by writing that “being is never a determination of God itself; rather, being is that which God needs in order to [be] God and yet remain completely different [*das Seyn ist Jenes, was die Götterung des Gottes braucht, um doch und vollends davon unterschieden zu bleiben*]” (GA 65: 240/CPh 169). Heidegger employs the neologism *Götterung*, “Godding,” in order to evoke the being of God – the way God “is” – without using the word being or its inflections. The point is not that being is God but that being is (what Meister Eckhart called) the *Godhead* of God; i.e., “God” is only one of the names by which being shows itself, a showing which, even in the richest polytheism, does not exhaust being. For, being always withholds itself for future manifestations – profane as well as sacred – in its very *difference* from that which presently shows itself (even as a god). Hence, what Heidegger once called by a succession of names such as “being as such,” and which he will in the end no longer name but only evoke through the fourfold, seems to become for him the “last” or “ultimate” (*Letzte*) God, an unnamed – and never completely nameable – source of all intelligibility. In the end, then, perhaps Heidegger rejects “pantheism” because he himself is a pan-beingist, disavows “monotheism” because he is a polytheist, and repudiates “atheism” because that is what his own religious position will look like to a traditional, monotheistic, Christian ontotheologist.

⁴² See Hubert L. Dreyfus and Sean Kelly, *All Things Shining: Reading the Western Classics to Find Meaning in a Secular Age* (New York: Free Press, 2011).

conceiving our reality, on the one hand, and our basic experience of ourselves and our worlds, on the other.⁴³

⁴³ Earlier versions of this essay were delivered to Colorado College (in the J. Glenn Gray colloquium series, February 7, 2008) and the International Society for Phenomenological Studies (July 19, 2008). For helpful comments and criticisms, I am especially grateful to Kelly Becker, William Blattner, David Cerbone, Steven Crowell, Hubert Dreyfus, Manfred Frings, Rick Furtak, Jonathan Lee, Joachim Oberst, John Riker, Thomas Sheehan, Carolyn Thomas, and Mark Wrathall. My thanks, finally, to Daniel Dahlstrom, for inviting me to contribute to this volume. I develop the ideas presented in this chapter in *Heidegger, Art, and Postmodernity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

PART II

Interpreting Heidegger's Interpretations

CHAPTER 6

Being at the beginning: Heidegger's interpretation of Heraclitus

Daniel O. Dahlstrom

*Herr Schulz, wenn ich nachdenke
dann ist es manchmal so
als ob Heraklit daneben steht.*

Heidegger to Walter Schulz¹

In Heidegger's lexicon, "being" usually designates what, in this or that historical epoch, it means for any entity to be. Hence, it is not to be confused with a term designating any entity or set of entities, though it necessarily stands in an essential relation to human beings, as creatures uniquely capable of differentiating beings from what gives them meaning. But the meaning of being, so construed, must also be distinguished from what grounds or constitutes its essential correlation with human beings. Heidegger labels this ground the *Ereignis*.² He also refers to it as *Seynsgeschichte* to signal the fact that, as part of this *Ereignis*, the history of interpretations of being constitutes and, in that sense, underlies our way of being and understanding being. In the process, this still-unfolding history takes hold of us in the ways we make this destiny our own, mindlessly or not. Indeed, in our preoccupation with particular beings (including the metaphysical preoccupation with them insofar as they exist, i.e., with the being of beings), this history easily escapes our notice. In the period from 1935 to 1945 Heidegger attempts to develop a kind of thinking that could become mindful of this history and thereby free from it

¹ Walter Schulz, "Als ob Heraklit daneben steht," in *Erinnerung an Martin Heidegger*, ed. Günther Neske (Pfullingen: Neske, 1977), 228; Martin Buber, *Briefwechsel*, vol. 3 (Heidelberg: Lambert Schneider, 1975), 291: "obwohl ich mich ... dem Heraklit nahe fühle, den Heidegger wie sein Vater behandelt (ich halte Heideggers Heraklit-Interpretation für absolut falsch)." On Heidegger's decision to maintain the engagement with Greek thinkers, called for by – or even regardless of – the project of SZ, see Rudolf Bultmann and Martin Heidegger, *Briefwechsel 1925–1975*, ed. Andreas Großmann and Christof Landmesser (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2009), 190 and Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Heideggers Wege*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, 3 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1987), 287. See also, Otto Pöggeler, *Neue Wege mit Heidegger* (Munich: Alber, 1992), 178.

² See Thomas Sheehan's essay "Facticity and *Ereignis*" in this volume.

(a freedom, it bears adding, that calls by no means for forgetting or dismissing it but for paying final respects to it).³

Essential to this history and no less part to it are salient ways of thinking that privilege some entity or another (God, nature, matter, humans, scientifically determined reality) as the key to the meaning of “being.” By thus obscuring the difference between being and beings, these ways of thinking unknowingly contribute to concealing – and waylaying any concern for – the grounds of that difference. Heidegger subsumes these traditional, obfuscating ways of thinking under a single term: “metaphysics.” Against this metaphysical tradition, but also thanks to it, Heidegger struggles to think in terms of this history – *seynsgeschichtliches Denken* – where the thinking understands itself as firmly part of that history and where the history is not a record or explanation of the past, based upon some reckoning in the present, but instead a process that essentially involves and appropriates us and is constitutive of our unfinished being. Or, as Heidegger also puts it, we have been thrown or appropriated into this history and it is in terms of this history that we have – and have yet – to come into our own.⁴

Not surprisingly, in Heidegger’s scenario, Plato’s thought plays a central role as the beginning of metaphysics.⁵ To be sure, he sharply distinguishes Plato from Platonists. While Platonism can be identified with idealism, “Plato was never an ‘idealist’ but instead a ‘realist’” (GA 65: 215/CPh 150). However, he also takes pains to identify the long metaphysical shadow cast by Plato. The *Contributions to Philosophy*, for example, are replete with the locution “since Plato”: “since Plato,” we are told, there has been a “continual decline” (*während der Verfall*) (GA 65: 134/CPh 94); “since Plato, the truth of the interpretation of ‘being’ has never been questioned” (GA 65: 188/CPh 132; GA 55: 98); “since Plato, thinking is determined from the

³ GA 70: 21: “Erst in der Überwindung des Seyns selbst sogar ist die Überwindung der Metaphysik ereignet.” In this same context, it should be noted that Heidegger, by way of qualification, adds that what needs to be ventured is the *Verwindung des Seyns* and that *Verwindung* is more originary (*anfänglich*) than all *Überwindung*; *ibid.*: “Die Verwindung des Seyns enthält die Gewähr der eigentlichen, d.h. anfänglichen Frag-würdigkeit des Seyns. Die Verwindung ist nicht Entwürdigung des Seyns, sondern die letzte Würdigung.”

⁴ Thinking this history of be-ing is difficult since it runs counter to customary patterns of explanation, causal and/or chronological, and it runs counter because, unlike anything else, it can be grounded neither in any entity nor in any account of what it means for any entity to be. The singular difficulty is thinking this history of be-ing (*Seynsgeschichte*) that grounds the meaning of any entity’s coming to be, i.e., grounds the being of beings. GA 65: 297, 303 f./CPh 209, 214 ff. For a review of the senses of *Ereignis*, the event of appropriation discussed in this paragraph, and its relation to *Seyn*, see Richard Polt, *The Emergence of Being: On Heidegger’s Contributions to Philosophy* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2006), 81 ff.

⁵ GA 55: 113: “Seit Platon, d. h. seitdem die Metaphysik beginnt ...”; *ibid.* 56 f.

standpoint of a suitably purified way of representing beings" (GA 65: 458/CPh 322).⁶

But the expression "since Plato" points in two directions: towards his predecessors as well as those who followed in his footsteps (that "series of footnotes" in Whitehead's memorable phrase⁷), and both directions are necessary to evaluate not only Heidegger's claim that Plato inaugurated metaphysics but also Heidegger's efforts to prepare the way for thinking the history of be-ing, i.e., for non-metaphysical thinking. In other words, in order to understand and assess Heidegger's view that Plato's thinking marks the beginnings of Western metaphysics, we have to come to terms with his interpretation of its departure from the foregoing ways of understanding what-it-means-to-be.⁸

More specifically, Heidegger asserts at several junctures in his *Contributions to Philosophy* (1936–1938) that Plato was able to interpret the beingness of beings as ἰδέα in no small measure because of the foregoing Greek experience of ὄν as φύσις.⁹ In other words, Plato's thinking supposes the experience of being at the beginning, described by his predecessors as the experience of φύσις. This claim cries out for elucidation and one of the main tasks of the following essay is to try to shed some light on it. In order to do so, the first order of the day is to come to terms with what Heidegger understands by the Greek experience of φύσις. Although Heidegger points to the Pre-Socratics in general, with their writings "περὶ φύσεως," for evidence of the nature of the supposedly foundational experience of φύσις (GA 55: 109), he does not identify sources for this experience by name in the *Contributions*. However, in his early 1940s lectures on Heraclitus, lectures that he gives one year after the initial publication of "Plato's Doctrine of Truth," he hammers out an interpretation of

⁶ Similarly, "since Plato" *aletheia* stands as the bright light in which entities stand, their visibility as their presence, but in the process also yoking them to perceivers and thereby yoking itself to correctness (GA 65: 333/CPh 233 f.); for other such remarks on developments "since Plato," see GA 65: 453, 457, 480/CPh 319, 322, 338.

⁷ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1969), 53: "The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato."

⁸ Heidegger states explicitly that the thought of *Ereignis* does not belong to Greek thinking and, perhaps not surprisingly, he characterizes φύσις as ὄν (even if it is thought with the emphasis on εἶναι), and translates it as *Sein*, not *Seyn*; see VS 104/FS 61: "Mit dem Ereignis wird nicht mehr griechisch gedacht"; GA 55: 73–84. See also, Thomas Sheehan, "Kehre and Ereignis: A Prolegomenon to *Introduction to Metaphysics*," in *A Companion to Heidegger's Introduction to Metaphysics*, ed. Richard Polt and Gregory Fried (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001), 14 f.; and Richard Polt, *The Emergence of Being*, 85, n. 117.

⁹ GA 65: 126 f., 184, 189–200, 222, 351, 381, 386, 425 f., 457, 483/CPh 88, 129, 133–139, 155, 245, 266, 270, 300, 322, 340.

Heraclitean fragments that focus on φύσις and, albeit briefly, its connection to ἀλήθεια.¹⁰ The main enterprise of the following essay is to examine Heidegger's interpretation of Heraclitus' description of the primordial experience of φύσις as a key to understanding being at the beginning of Greek thought.

As one might expect, given Heidegger's understanding of the history of be-ing in the sense glossed above, his interpretation of Heraclitus is not motivated principally by antiquarian concerns of setting the record straight. His interpretation of Heraclitus' fragments aims at understanding them not simply as the dawn of metaphysical thinking but more importantly as a way of thinking that, by stopping short of the thought of what grounds its own thinking, cannot take leave of that history. It is hardly coincidental that, for the better part of three decades beginning in the mid-1930s, Heidegger repeatedly finds inspiration and corroboration for his own thinking through reflections on Heraclitus' fragments.¹¹ Although he ultimately gives a certain nod to the importance of Parmenides over that of Heraclitus,¹² Heidegger's interpretation of Heraclitus' fragments provides important clues (*Winke*) to what he means by the need for a new beginning of our thinking.¹³ Not surprisingly, given these objectives,

¹⁰ "Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit" first appears in *Geistige Überlieferung, das zweite Jahrbuch* (Berlin: Helmut Küpper, 1942), 96–124. However, already in his 1931/32 lectures on Plato's Cave Allegory, Heidegger registers the importance of Heraclitus' observations regarding φύσις in this connection; see GA 34: 93/ET 67.

¹¹ As do Hölderlin, Eckhart, and Hegel, Heidegger observes in the winter semester, 1934/35 (GA 39: 134). In both semesters prior to these lectures on Hölderlin's *Germanien*, Heidegger comments on Heraclitean fragments; see GA 36/37 (winter semester 1933/34): 89–100; GA 38 (summer semester 1934): 112/LEL 93. This same engagement continues for the next decade, both in the Nietzsche lectures in the second half of the 1930s as well as in his 1943 and 1944 lectures (GA 55), the basis for the two Heraclitus essays "Logos" and "Aletheia," published in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* in 1954 (VA 199–221, 249–274/EGT 59–78, 102–123). See also, the Heraclitus Seminar conducted by Eugen Fink and Heidegger in the winter semester, 1966–1967, in GA 15. For Heidegger's assessment of the enormous influence of Heraclitus on Hölderlin and Nietzsche, see GA 39: 128, 133 f.

¹² On the change in the primacy Heidegger assigns to Heraclitus and Parmenides between the mid-1930s and his 1973 Zähringen seminar, see his response to Jean Beaufret in FS 81/VS 137 f.; see also, Pöggeler, *Neue Wege mit Heidegger*, 180 f., 247, 416 and GA 70: 21.

¹³ GA 65: 236/CPh 167; Pöggeler, *Neue Wege mit Heidegger*, 182 f.: "Es ist ohne Zweifel so, daß Heideggers Heraklitaufsätze und auch die Parmenidesdeutung am klarsten Heideggers eigene späte Gedanken offenlegen." In his Heraclitus lectures Heidegger does not speak of the need for "another beginning," as he had in the *Beiträge*; see Heinrich Hüni, "Heraklit oder 'anderer Anfang,'" in *Heidegger und die Griechen*, ed. Michael Steinmann, vol. 8: Schriften der Heidegger Gesellschaft (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2007), 43; on the first and the other "beginning," see Gregory Fried, *Heidegger's Polemos: From Being to Politics* (New Haven, Conn. and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 116–135 and Daniela Vallega-Neu, *Heidegger's Contributions to Philosophy: An Introduction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 61–71, esp. 66 f.

Heidegger reads Heraclitus' understanding of φύσις in terms of the ontological difference, such that the term "φύσις" stands not for a particular being (*Seiendes*) or even for the set of all beings (*Seiendheit*), but for being itself (*Sein*).¹⁴

Heidegger's interpretation of Heraclitus, it hardly needs emphasizing, is audacious, if not tendentious to a fault. After all, what Heraclitus (ὁ Σκοτεινός) has to say about φύσις is not only obscure but also exasperatingly terse and, even if we indulge Heidegger's presumptions about reading notions from other fragments as synonyms or metonyms for the term, the net result is far from conclusive evidence of anything like a unified conception of φύσις. Further complicating matters is Heidegger's tendency to interpret Heraclitus in light of subsequent treatments of being.¹⁵

Of course, there is also plainly a value to the audaciousness of Heidegger's interpretive style, not only for the incentive it provides to re-examine Heraclitus' fragments in light of that interpretation, but also for the window it provides to Heidegger's own effort to prepare for thinking that frees itself from metaphysics. The following study is undertaken with an eye to probing this potential of Heidegger's interpretation without overlooking its tendentiousness.¹⁶ The bulk of the following essay is an attempt to reconstruct how Heidegger, on the basis of Heraclitus' fragments, interprets the experience of φύσις as a key to the meaning of being at the beginning of Western thought. In a brief conclusion I address how

¹⁴ GA 55: 58, 100. On Heidegger's reading, the Heraclitean φύσις is also clearly distinct from the being of beings (*Sein des Seienden*) that supposedly forms the subject matter of classical metaphysics (inspired by Plato, drafted by Aristotle), i.e., an inquiry into what-it-means-to-be, guided by a particular conception of beings. But, as already noted (see n. 8 above), Heidegger nonetheless reads φύσις as an understanding of *Sein*, not *Seyn*. Still, though Heidegger finds more than an inkling of the difference between being and beings in Plato and Aristotle, he contends that Heraclitus' appreciation of its significance puts him at odds with his illustrious successors and the metaphysical tradition inaugurated by them.

¹⁵ Buber, for example, considered Heidegger's reading of Heraclitus "absolutely false"; see n. 1 above. Pöggeler, too, questions whether Heidegger's interpretation of Heraclitus and Lao Tse are "not simply, constructs through which he articulates his own thinking." Although Pöggeler initially criticizes the supposed implication of Heidegger's interpretation that there are no new and other beginnings than the Pre-Socratics, he later backtracks, acknowledging that Heidegger, after beginning his discussion with the East Asian tradition, speaks of many paths. Nonetheless, Pöggeler continues to challenge the degree to which the interpretation corresponds to "what was actually thought on the coast of Asia minor"; Pöggeler, *Neue Wege mit Heidegger*, 179, 184, 293 f., 412, 439. See below, however, Heidegger's response to the charge of anachronism.

¹⁶ For instructive treatments of Heidegger's treatments of Heraclitus, see Manfred S. Frings, "Heraclitus: Heidegger's Lecture Held at Freiburg University," in *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 21 (1990): 250–264; Ivo De Gennaro, *Logos – Heidegger liest Heraklit* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2001); and Parvis Emad, "Heidegger's Originary Reading of Heraclitus – Fragment 16" in *Heidegger on Heraclitus: A New Reading*, ed. Kenneth Maly and Parvis Emad (Lewiston and Queenston: Mellen, 1986), 103–120.

this experience of φύσις supposedly underlies Plato's inauguration of metaphysics and how Heidegger's interpretation of this experience relates to his own post-metaphysical project of thinking the history of being – and taking leave of it (GA 70: 21).

1. ΦΥΣΙΣ AS THE EVER-EMERGING SELF-CONCEALMENT

When Heidegger observes that Plato's interpretation of the beingness of beings rests on the experience of ὄν as φύσις, Heidegger has in mind the constancy and presence of beings, emerging on their own (*vom ihm selbst her*), where "emerging" precisely means coming out from being closed off, concealed, and folded in upon itself (GA 55: 87). As Heidegger puts it in another context, "φύσις names that within which, from the outset, earth and sky, sea and mountains, tree and animal, human being and God emerge and, as emerging, show themselves in such a way that, in view of this, they can be named 'beings'" (GA 55: 88). Yet this formulation, he immediately warns, can be misleading if it suggests that the Greek essence of φύσις amounts to some all-encompassing container, the result of a generalization of experiences of things emerging (e.g., seeds and blossoms). As Heidegger puts it, "the pure emerging pervades the mountains and the sea, the trees and the birds; their being itself is determined and only experienced through φύσις and as φύσις. Neither mountains nor sea nor any entity needs the 'encompassing' since, insofar as it is, it 'is' in the manner of emerging" (GA 55: 102; see also, 89 f.). Only on the basis of the primordial experience of the emergence from the hidden into the light is it possible to establish what emerges and thus is something at all rather than nothing.¹⁷

With these observations, Heidegger takes himself to be glossing the paradigmatic account of φύσις to be found in Heraclitus' fragments. Notably, he privileges a fragment in which the term φύσις does not occur at all: Fragment 16. He translates Fragment 16: τὸ μὴ δύνον ποτε πῶς ἂν τις λάθοι; as "the [process of], indeed, not going-under ever [*das ja nicht Untergehen je*], how might someone be concealed from it?" As Heidegger

¹⁷ Given this interpretation of the original sense of φύσις, Heidegger cautions against anachronistically equating it with modern uses of "nature" (GA 55: 101 f.). As Susan Schoenbohm puts it in a valuable gloss on Heidegger's interpretation of φύσις in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*: "Phusis is a name for the emerging of the originary difference of determination and no determination, the very occurrence of an articulation of a primordial difference between something and nothing"; Susan Schoenbohm, "Heidegger's Interpretation of *Phusis*," in *A Companion to Heidegger's Introduction to Metaphysics*, ed. Richard Polt and Gregory Fried (New Haven, Conn. and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 149.

reads the fragment, it is important that each of the two words framing it – δύνων and λάθοι – supposes senses of hiddenness, “going-under” (as in the setting sun) and “being concealed” (as in the sun disappearing from our view) (GA 55: 47 f., 68 f.; VA 259/EGT 110). Indeed, Heraclitus’ very question – how could what never goes-under (never hides) escape our notice? – gets any traction and force it has from the Greek experience of the all-pervasive interplay of hiddenness and unhiddenness. To be is to be present, but being present is itself always a “luminous self-concealing” (*gelichtetes Sichverbergen*), i.e., concealing itself behind the being (*Seiendes*) that it illuminates (VA 255/EGT 108). Like the word “ἀλήθεια” (for reasons discussed more at length below), the opening phrase of the fragment supposes this fundamental hiddenness. For the early Greeks, Heidegger contends, this underlying hiddenness is constitutive of the way beings are, not only in relation to themselves but also to other entities generally. In other words, they do not construe hiddenness merely or primarily in terms of entities’ relation to human beings.

As a means of capturing this dynamic interplay of presencing and absencing, Heidegger takes pains to argue for translating the participle τὸ δύνων in the fragment verbally rather than substantively, i.e., as “the process of going under” (*das Untergehen*) rather than as “what or something that goes under” (*das Untergehende*).¹⁸ The verbal translation amounts to construing the term as signifying, not a particular being or type of being, but that in which “the hidden essence of what is called ‘to be’ [*Sein*] resides” (GA 55: 81; see, 100, 155). What Heidegger wants to flag with the word “hidden” here is, among other things, the fact that this essence is something supposed but not duly understood by the founders of metaphysics (Plato and Aristotle). Precisely in this sense, i.e., not as any particular being or kind of being, the process of never going-under, of never passing-away, or even – with suitable qualifications¹⁹ – of constantly emerging (τὸ ἀεὶ φύον, ἀεὶζών) constitutes, Heidegger submits, the underlying significance of φύσις for Heraclitus.²⁰ Yet, even in this fragment, Heidegger emphasizes,

¹⁸ GA 55: 52 f., 58, 85. Heidegger belabors the parallel ambiguity with τὸ ὄν that has victimized metaphysical thinking; see GA 55: 71–80 (esp. 76 f.), 99 f.

¹⁹ The positive formulation runs the risk of forfeiting the primordially of the hiddenness, such that we take the ever-emerging sense of φύσις as privileging presence over absence; GA 55: 86 f. A few years before the lectures on Heraclitus, Heidegger in fact ascribes to the τὸ μὴ δύνόν ποτε the springboard for the notion of constant presence (*ἀεί der Beständigkeit*); see GA 70: 86. This difference in emphasis, if not in the substance of the interpretation itself, suggests that Heidegger’s interpretation of Heraclitus was anything but settled during this period; see n. 47, below.

²⁰ GA 55: 87, 90, 101, 124; VA 261/EGT 112; see Schoenbohm, “Heidegger’s Interpretation of *Phusis*,” 153 ff.

φύσις is not to be understood as simply the ever-emerging. As the negative modifiers of δύνων indicate, the fragment presupposes the significance of “going-under” and thereby the hiddenness that is its constant companion (that is to say, not some happenstance down the road but rather a dimension integral to its emergence).²¹

Having thus signaled the central role played by hiddenness in Fragment 16 and identified the theme of the fragment with φύσις, Heidegger turns to the fragment where Heraclitus explicitly characterizes it: φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ (Fragment 123). This fragment is typically translated “nature loves to hide,” but Heidegger’s version reads: “the emerging bestows favor on self-concealing” (GA 55: 110, 121). Prima facie this fragment appears self-contradictory (and inconsistent with Fragment 16) if, following Heidegger, we take φύσις in the sense of the subject of Fragment 16 as what precisely never sinks into hiddenness. Or, if there is no contradiction or inconsistency here, then at least it needs to be explained how an emerging, a coming to be present that is never absent, that never “goes under” or “passes away” into concealment can be compatible with or, as Heidegger also puts it, “stands in an essential relation to” (namely, loves or favors) concealing itself.²² Heidegger begins to answer this question by construing φιλεῖ – translated “favoring” (*Gunst*) – as a reciprocal “affording and granting” (*Gönnen und Vergönnen*).²³ This reciprocal affording “secures” (*verwahrt*) the unity of their essence that is designated by the name φύσις.²⁴

²¹ GA 55: 86; VA 262/EGT 112 f.; Heidegger cites, as an illuminating contrast, Clement of Alexandria’s theological interpretation of τὸ μὴ δύνων ποτε; see VA 251 f./EGT 104 f.

²² At times Heidegger gives a more qualified interpretation of Fragment 123, such that *Aufgehen* “stands in an essential relation” to *Untergehen* (GA 55: 125, 35). Mostly, however, Heidegger stresses the patent inconsistency of Fragment 123; in other words, he contends there is not merely a discrepancy between the subject and the predicate or an obscurity about the signified relationship, but an outright contradiction (GA 55: 110–116, 125 f., 134 ff.). This construal is apt if the fragment is taken to mean that φύσις is not merely inclined to conceal itself, but does so as part of its very essence. (Analogously, we might say, for example, that an introvert likes to hide from others or a camouflaged soldier likes to conceal himself, where the phrase “likes to” supposes that both the introvert and the camouflaged soldier do what is essential for them.) It bears noting that in these passages, Heidegger is working to ward off three misinterpretations, two based in “normal thinking” and a third inspired by Hegel. Normal thinking may (1) simply dismiss the fragment as “illogical,” given its formal contradictoriness, or (2) construe the relation between “going-up” and “going-under” as two temporally distinct and thus non-contradictory processes. Finally, “speculative” thinking, having determined “the self-contradictory precisely to be ‘the true,’” (3) resolves the contradiction dialectically into a unity. In Heidegger’s view, this dialectical approach avoids the effort to think what the fragment says and, instead, has recourse anachronistically to the “method of a late metaphysics” (GA 55: 112, 126 f.).

²³ GA 55: 132 f., 136; VA 263/EGT 114. The φιλεῖ meant in Fragment 123 is, Heidegger observes, not just any *Gunst* and *Vergünstigung* but a specific *Gunst* that he characterizes as *Gönnen* and *Vergönnen*.

²⁴ GA 55: 136; VS 16, 81 f./FS 6, 46.

Employing counterfactuals to drive home the necessity of this unity, Heidegger asks: What would bare emerging, shorn of any connection with self-concealing, be? “Then the emerging would have nothing out of which it emerges and nothing that it opens up in emerging.”²⁵

The term that Heidegger uses for self-concealing is *Sichverbergen*. The root of *verbergen* (“concealing”) is *bergen* and Heidegger in fact proposes that the former, as the translation of κρύπτεσθαι, be understood in the sense of *bergen*.²⁶ Further qualifying *bergen*, Heidegger adds that it is to be understood, not simply as hiding something but also sheltering and securing it, getting it to a safe place. These word-plays are meant to reinforce the sense of coherence between φύσις, understood as the constantly emerging presence of things, and their absences or, as he also puts it, the “sheltering concealing” (*bergendes Verbergen*) (GA 55: 160). Heidegger would have us think of them as one movement, viewed from two sides, each of which depends upon the other.

Recapitulating this point the next semester (summer semester, 1944), Heidegger characterizes φύσις as the “emerging” (*Aufgehen*) that is at once a “return-into-itself” (*In-sich-zurück-gehen*). Thus, while retaining the determination “going up, i.e., emerging” (*Aufgehen*), Heidegger substitutes “going-back-into-itself” for “going under” (*Untergehen*, his translation for τὸ δύνων in Fragment 16). These two counterpoints to “going up, i.e., emerging” are not the same, to be sure. But it is easy to see them as complementary, especially given his reading of φύσις as “the never going under” for which hiding is essential (as he interprets φιλεῖ). In constantly emerging, φύσις conceals itself. “If we heed the fact that going-up is of itself [*von sich aus*] a going-back-into-itself, then both determinations are not to be thought somehow only as on hand simultaneously and alongside one another, but instead they mean one and the same basic move [*Grundzug*] of φύσις” (GA 55: 299). Herein lies no doubt the most elusive sense of φύσις, bordering on contradiction.²⁷ They are not simply two

²⁵ GA 55: 137, 153 f. In his essay on Fragment 16, Heidegger reverses the counterfactual; see VA 263/EGT 114: “Was wäre ein Sichverbergen, wenn es nicht an sich hielte in seiner Zuwendung zum Aufgehen?”

²⁶ Heidegger in fact employs two word-plays in this connection. In addition to emphasizing that we heed the sense of *bergen* supposedly retained in *verbergen* (i.e., the rescuing and sheltering provided by concealing), he links *verbürgen* with *verbergen*, i.e., “the self-concealing secures [guarantees], in that it conceals” (Das Sichverbergen verbürgt, indem es verbirgt); GA 55: 138 f.; VA 263/EGT 114.

²⁷ Still, insofar as contradiction is a law governing assertions or judgments, it would not apply to φύσις but neither would contradiction’s ontological counterpart if that counterpart requires constancy of something or some A (where A is some intrinsically defining property) obtaining without relation to its opposite.

aspects of some third thing, e.g., like the contraries, Ax and $\neg Ax$, that x may be at different times or at the same time in different respects. Nor are they dialectically resolved into some higher self-negating unity, yielded by the negation of a negation. Instead, this emerging and returning-into-itself are two mutual and mutually constitutive determinations of φύσις.²⁸ Indeed, talk of them as two sides or two aspects is fatally misleading, insofar as it suggests either that they are (and are understandable) apart from one another or that they inhere in something or some way of being that does not entail them.

The opposing forces responsible for the concavity and convexity of an arc or curve made by a moving object may perhaps convey a sense of the contrasting mutuality signified by φύσις. Though really distinct from one another (no mere *distinctio rationis ratiocinati* here), you cannot have one without the other. Each is a condition of the other and the moving arc consists of the mutual opposition (represented by its concavity and convexity) differentiating itself from a foregoing opposition. Perhaps an even more helpful image in this regard, suggested by Susan Schoenbohm, is the way that background and foreground are differentiated and thus determined in the process of perception.²⁹ The differentiation is both diachronic and synchronic. This differentiation is a process that differentiates itself from the foregoing undifferentiation. At the same time, foreground and background differentiate themselves in one fell swoop, allowing things in the foreground to become determinate. Because this differentiation thus takes place both diachronically and synchronically and, indeed, seemingly as a condition for the encounter of anything at all, it has the character of a fundamental, i.e., originary process. Analogously, φύσις is at once (diachronically) the emergence from hiddenness and (synchronically) the differentiation and interplay of unhiddenness and hiddenness.

But we need not invoke our own metaphors and tropes for φύσις here. Heraclitus does this for us and, indeed, Heidegger turns to several images in other fragments to elucidate his interpretation of φύσις and demonstrate how it coincides with Heraclitus' own sense of the matter. Thus, in Fragment 54 Heraclitus speaks of the noble, unapparent (because ever-on-display) fit (ἄρμονιή ἀφανής), taken by Heidegger, as yet another reference to φύσις. That constant emergence into presence (the "going-up") counteracts and thus depends upon the concealment (the "going-down")

²⁸ Alternatively, with a view to Aristotle's understanding, one might characterize φύσις as the enduring qua being constantly actualized out of the δύνανμις of the future and disappearing into the στέρησις of the past. I am grateful to Al and Maria Miller for this alternative characterization.

²⁹ See Schoenbohm, "Heidegger's Interpretation of *Physis*," 149 f.

and in this way they fit themselves to each other. In this respect, φύσις is their fit (*Fügung*) or, better, their very countervaleance (τὸ ἀντίξουν συμφέρειν in Fragment 8) and more. The requisite tension in the span of the bow and of the lyre aptly illustrates this character of their fit; the ever-emerging presence stretches out from the self-concealing but this stretch requires the countervailing pull of the self-concealing and vice versa (GA 55: 141–153).

To round out this interpretation of the primordial, Heraclitean sense of φύσις, Heidegger weaves together glosses on Heraclitus' images of fire (πῦρ) and adornment (κόσμος). As a fire blazes, it at once initiates and separates light from dark, pitting them against each other; so, too, the fire's flames form an expanse (the primordial "measure"³⁰) even as they consume what lies in their path. That split instant we catch sight of a fire's flames (*das Augenblickhafte des Entflammens*) opens up a space for appearing and disappearing, the realm in which it is possible to point and show, but also the realm of "the rudderless and utterly opaque."³¹ Fire is thus an instructive name for φύσις. In the process of yielding, shaping, and consuming the burning coals (*Seiendes*), the image of φύσις as πῦρ is meant to capture the event of providing and constituting the light (*Sein*) and the darkness (*Nichts*), i.e., the interplay of concealment and unconcealment that allows things to be seen and conceals itself in the process.³²

Heidegger contends that similar considerations underlie Heraclitus' characterization of φύσις as κόσμος in the sense of the primordial adorning (*ursprüngliches Schmücken und Zieren*) that is not to be confused with any decoration or ornamentation of some thing already on hand or even entities as a whole. Nor, he insists, does the κόσμος in Heraclitus' sense have anything to do with the modern sense of cosmology. Instead, the

³⁰ GA 55: 161. Heidegger sharply criticizes readings of Fragment 30 that construe its reference to μέτρον as an anticipation of the modern conception of nature following the laws of physics rather than as the original expanse (*Weite*, τὸ μέτρον) of expanse-forming φύσις, i.e., an expanse that qua original first yields and hence cannot be conceived as following measures or laws; see GA 55: 168–171.

³¹ Heidegger further supports this interpretation of φύσις as fire with a reading of Fragment 64 where Heraclitus observes that lightning (κεραυνός) – the concentrated essence of fire – steers beings as a whole; see GA 55: 162 f.

³² This gloss aptly suggests how closely Heidegger's gloss of the Heraclitean φύσις comes to his own senses of *Ereignis* and *Seyn* in contrast to *Sein* and *Seiendes*; see nn. 8 and 14 above. There are at least two (complementary) ways we might interpret this interpretation of φύσις as fire: (1) insofar as a fire, e.g., a campfire, provides light to see one another in the midst of the darkness, we may ignore the fire in order to attend to the presences and absences it makes possible; (2) insofar as, gazing at a fire, we see the coals and embers glowing and darkening in a regular rhythm, taking on different shapes before disappearing into the flames, we see not the fire itself but something on fire; in this sense, the fire may be said to conceal itself in the process.

image of φύσις as κόσμος is meant to convey what “provides the splendor of the fit” of one being for one another, a fit that also enables them to be. So construed, φύσις as κόσμος can only refer to being not beings, again underscoring Heraclitus’ appreciation of the ontological difference. “Κόσμος and πῦρ say the same,” Heidegger contends, because, like fire, the κόσμος as the primordial adornment illuminates in one and the same event that produces the dark as light’s counterpart, yet all the while is itself concealed or overlooked in favor of what has been illumined.³³

II. THE SEEMING ANACHRONISM OF THINKING BEING AT THE BEGINNING

In these glosses of φύσις, particularly as κόσμος, Heidegger repeatedly contrasts this interpretation with metaphysical interpretations of φύσις (i.e., as an all-encompassing entity, entities as a whole, or even the meaning of being for entities as a whole). Heidegger himself warns against the anachronism of reading metaphysics back into Heraclitus’ thought and insists on preserving its crucial difference from that of Plato and Aristotle (GA 55: 78 f.). Thus, Heidegger contends that “κόσμος does not primarily mean entities in their entirety [or beings as a whole: *das Seiende im Ganzen*], but instead the fitting of the fit of entities, the adorning in which and out of which the entities beam [*erglänzt*]” (GA 55: 164).³⁴ From this perspective, metaphysical interpretations of Heraclitus’ fragments are *volens volens* anachronistic interpretations.

Yet, as noted above, Heidegger does not shy away from equating φύσις with a sense of “to be” (*Sein*) – i.e., the verbal sense of the participle ὄν – in contrast to entities and any metaphysical understanding of “to be” in terms of entities. Since these terms are not to be found in the fragments of Heraclitus glossed by Heidegger, invoking them also appears *prima facie* anachronistic, albeit in a way different from the above-mentioned anachronism of metaphysical interpretations of Heraclitus. For example, after stressing how φύσις cannot be produced and is thus beyond gods

³³ In making the latter point about the obliviousness to the adornment, Heidegger distinguishes the foreground adorned things (*das Gezierde*) from the original adorning (*das Zieren*) of the pure, but unapparent fit underlying them; see GA 55: 163–166; VS 20 f./FS 7 f.

³⁴ It is noteworthy that the ontological difference that Heidegger recognizes in some fragments is a matter of beauty. Thus, however riveting and beguiling any foreground appearance of entities, indeed, even if it is the most beautiful adornment (*Gezierde*), it is no comparison with the “sole, original adorning” or, as Heraclitus puts it, ὁ κάλλιστος κόσμος (Fragment 124; GA 55: 165; VS 20 f./FS 8). See also, Heidegger’s characterization of φύσις in the sense of ἀρμονία (*Fügung*) as the most beautiful (*das Schönste*) (GA 55: 144).

and humans, Heidegger glosses φύσις here as follows: “Being itself prevails in advance of all beings and in advance of any origination of beings from beings. It is nothing made [*Gemächte* (!)] and hence has no beginning determined by means of a point in time and no corresponding end of its standing” (GA 55: 166).

As noted earlier, Heidegger also invokes the ontological difference in his glosses on the fragments.³⁵ He exploits the fact that the fragments themselves are emphatic about the difference between φύσις or any of its cognates (τὸ μὴ δυνόν ποτε, ἁρμονία, κόσμος) and what they are said to make possible. To be sure, it is hardly patent that the difference signaled is something else – for example, a difference between a cause and its effects, i.e., between beings rather than between being and beings, Heidegger’s preferred way of understanding the difference. Nevertheless, the conclusion seems inescapable that his interpretation of the Heraclitean fragments provides a much greater window into his own later thinking than it does into the thought of Heraclitus.³⁶

Of course, one might respond that there are levels of anachronism and, while some are plainly egregious, others are unavoidable consequences of the human condition. As Marx puts it, “The anatomy of a human being is the key to the anatomy of an ape.”³⁷ From this perspective, Heidegger’s reading is hardly an egregiously anachronistic interpretation. He gives a plausible reconstruction of the meaning that Heraclitus attaches to “φύσις” and other terms to designate a basic Greek experience well in play prior to the time of Plato and thus likely shared by him, an experience of what Plato comes to designate and re-interpret as being. There is, after all, nothing implausible about the contention that Heraclitus’ fragments on their own terms point to an understanding of what is later ambiguously dubbed “being,” one that, while forming the backdrop of Plato’s

³⁵ See GA 70: 68–83, esp. *ibid.* 68: “Wenn wir von ‘der Unterscheidung’ sprechen, halten wir sogleich in zwei Hinsichten. Die eine geht auf ein Denken, das unterscheidet und die Unterschiedene (Sein und Seiendes) gleichsam vorfindet ... Die andere Hinsicht ... geht auf das Seyn selbst und denkt aus ihm und als es selbst die Unterscheidung”; *ibid.* 76: “Sein als Seyn ‘ist’ selbst Unterschied und niemals ein Glied und eine Seite der Entscheidung und Eines der beiden Unterschiedenen”; *ibid.* 80: “Der Unterschied wird nicht ausgelöscht. Aber er wandelt sich wesentlich.”

³⁶ The fact that Heidegger largely ignores – at least in his 1943 Heraclitus lectures – other readings reinforces the impression that his interpretation is idiosyncratic. In his later seminars, Heidegger engages different interpretations, e.g., interpretations by his respective interlocutors, Fink and Beaufret.

³⁷ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse de Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* (Berlin: Dietz, 1974), 26: “In der Anatomie des Menschen ist ein Schlüssel zur Anatomie des Affen ... Man kann Tribut, Zehnten, etc. verstehen, wenn man die Grundrente kennt. Man muß sie aber nicht identifizieren.”

understanding, is at odds with traditional metaphysical approaches to being. Moreover, there are good reasons not to limit interpretative possibilities to the presumed self-understanding of an author or even the members of his language community. So even if there is and, indeed, could be no explicit indication that Heraclitus understands $\phi\upsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$ as being in the pre-metaphysical sense Heidegger suggests, this does not rule out the plausibility, on other grounds, of interpreting it as such.

Yet this way of defending Heidegger from the charge of anachronism has the effect of undermining his very project. For, by accepting the ordinary meaning of "anachronism" as "an error in computing time," for example, antedating some event or phenomenon,³⁸ this sort of defense presupposes a linear conception of time, where the past is something denumerable that has passed away and is long gone (*Vergangenes*). In *Sein und Zeit* Heidegger argues that such a conception is derivative and, indeed, derivative of the temporality that provides the very meaning for human existence. Far from something that is over, the primordial sense of the past is what is always *already* before us, the *thrownness* of our finite, mortal existence that we project, one way or another. Each of us lives out this thrownness that informs all our projections and, in that sense, both overtakes us and comes to us in the form of our ending.³⁹ Similarly, the beginning (*Anfang*) of the history of Western thought is for Heidegger the inception of the event that continues to be ours (Western humanity). In language echoing the analysis of primordial temporality in *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger contends that, far from something over and done so that our thinking of it is anachronistic, this beginning overtakes us and, prevailing in advance of us, first comes to us (GA 55: 175). Hence, the need to understand Heraclitus' epoch-making sense of $\phi\upsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$ as being at the beginning of Western thought.

That need, moreover, coincides with the dire straits in which we find ourselves at the end or, alternatively, at the culmination of metaphysics. Accordingly, we can come to think being at the beginning only on the basis of our own experience of this fate. Not surprisingly, towards the end of the first Heraclitus lectures, Heidegger acknowledges the necessity of

³⁸ *Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, 2 vols (Oxford University Press, 1986), i. 75.

³⁹ This sort of beginning dictates both what it means to be caught up (*auf-gefangen*) in what is begun (*an-gefangen*) and the future of those caught up in it. For mundane examples of this convergence of the meanings of thrownness and beginning, consider fatefully beginning life as a slave or serf, the perilous inception of a revolution, or simply the ever-operative origins of any personal life-history. Given this convergence, the analysis of temporality in SZ, far from being abandoned, survives the *seynsgeschichtliche Kehre*; see GA 70: 176, 180.

having already “come into the vicinity of being, on the basis of originary [*anfängliche*] experiences” in order to be able to hear “the originary terms of the originary thinking” (GA 55: 176). Following this acknowledgement, he does not directly answer the charge that he’s reading his own philosophy into Heraclitus’ fragments; instead he simply shrugs it off with the observation that “if unhiddenness is grounded in a self-concealing, if this [self-concealing] is part of the essence of being itself, then φύσις also can never be thought in a sufficiently originary way at all” (GA 55: 176).

But to think this beginning in a way that captures its originary, inceptive dimension is to come to understand being in a way different from yet underlying the Greek beginning and its understanding of being (*Sein*) as φύσις. It is, in other words, to understand be-ing (*Seyn*) as the historical grounding of the meaning of being and its difference from beings, i.e., as the ground that constitutes and thus appropriates to itself the essential correlation of that meaning and human understanding of it. Precisely in this connection, Heidegger proposes, recalling this first beginning amounts to thinking our way into another beginning.⁴⁰

III. ΦΥΣΙΣ AS THE UNPRODUCED TRUTH

Two further aspects of Heidegger’s interpretation of Heraclitus’ experience of φύσις warrant consideration, not least because they have a particular bearing on what he takes to be Plato’s departure from this experience. The first concerns Heraclitus’ remark that the κόσμος is not produced, either by gods or humans (Fragment 30). As noted above, Heidegger glosses this remark in terms of the ontological difference such that gods and humans are beings (*Seiendes*) in contrast to the κόσμος. For Heidegger, this remark also underscores what he interprets as Heraclitus’ insight that being itself lies beyond all human caprice or arbitrariness; in contrast to beings, φύσις is not itself something that can be produced or, in a certain sense, even manipulated. Heidegger’s concurrence with this insight explains why according the highest level of being to humanity is, in his view, tantamount to nihilism (VS 131 f./FS 77).

But, taken together with Fragment 16 (“how might someone be concealed from it?”), the observation that being cannot be produced does not mean that being is opaque to gods and humans or far from them. To

⁴⁰ GA 55: 175; see also, GA 70: 93–96, 105, 140 f., esp. *ibid.* 141: “Das seynsgeschichtliche Denken ist Erinnerung in den ersten Anfang als Vordenken in den anderen”; for a particularly thoughtful treatment of *Anfang* (aptly translated “inception”) and inceptual thinking, see Polt, *The Emergency of Being*, 115–128.

the contrary, hearkening back again – albeit with a marked difference – to the language of his earlier existential analysis, Heidegger glosses the “someone” (in Fragment 16) as *ek-sistent*, as herself emerging and standing out into the clearing, comporting herself to the emerging φύσις from which she cannot be concealed. The shift from the center of gravity in the existential analysis to that of this Heraclitus interpretation is noteworthy. In *Sein und Zeit* Heidegger declares that *Dasein* is illumined (*gelichtet*), but such that it is itself the clearing. In the Heraclitus lectures Heidegger observes that the emerging someone who comports herself towards the emerging φύσις “stands out into the clearing.”⁴¹

This reference to the clearing and our place within it introduces the final aspect of Heidegger’s reading of the Heraclitean φύσις, namely, its relation to ἀλήθεια. Heidegger insists that Heraclitus experiences φύσις in a way that is intimately related to the meaning of ἀλήθεια, namely, with reference to those to whom φύσις manifests and conceals itself. Thus, as the “primordially unifying ground,” ἀλήθεια holds sway, Heidegger contends, in the essence of φύσις as it does in the essence of those – Gods and humans – who correspond to φύσις by way of unconcealing (*entbergend*) and by opening themselves up (*Sicheröffnen*)(GA 55: 173 f.). Heidegger makes no pretense here that Heraclitus explicitly says as much; it also remains unsaid, Heidegger adds, by Anaximander and Parmenides. But he regards the fact that it is not said as anything but a strike against his interpretation. The fact that ἀλήθεια, as he interprets it, remains unsaid signals that it is the phenomenon “from which or on the basis of which the thinking at the beginning speaks” (*aus dem her das anfängliche Denken spricht*) (GA 55: 174).

Heidegger finds particular confirmation of this signal in his readings of Fragments 16 and 123. While Fragment 16, it may be recalled, is ostensibly about φύσις on Heidegger’s reading, the depiction of it as the ever-emerging or, more precisely, “never going-under” and the plain-tive question: “Who can hide from this?” clearly trade on the sense of ἀλήθεια as unhiddenness. However, just as it would be a mistake – an ontotheological mistake – to understand φύσις here as some entity

⁴¹ GA 55: 168 f., 172 f.; SZ 133. Heidegger acknowledges the shift himself; see VS 121 f./FS 71. In the Heraclitus lectures, Heidegger adds that someone who emerges and comports herself towards φύσις – in effect, mimicking it – “can, because she is emergent [*aufgegangenes*] in this sense, look back at herself and thus herself be herself, that is to say, be a Self as such an entity that we address through the τὴς– someone” (GA 55: 173; gender specification added). Notable here is a basic continuity with the specification of the “da” of *Dasein* as the *Lichtung* in SZ, particularly if due consideration is given to *Dasein*’s thrownness and the irreducibility of its horizons to its projections, its ecstases.

(*Seiendes*) or even beings as a whole (*das Seiende im ganzen*) constantly on hand, apart from *Dasein*, so, too, it would be a mistake – an aletheiological mistake – to understand ἀλήθεια here (a) as sheer and exhaustive presencing, devoid of any absence, or (b) apart from those to/from it is present/absent. Contrary to (a), the unhiddenness of φύσις is in constant interplay with hiddenness as its very condition. The fact that φύσις needs and thus affords absence is precisely confirmed by Heidegger's interpretation of Fragment 123 (φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ:), as noted above. So, too, contrary to (b), Heraclitus himself emphasizes that no one can hide from it. Accordingly, since “ἀλήθεια is, as the name says, not pure openness but the unconcealment of the self-concealing,” it is the name for “the essential beginning of φύσις itself and the gods and humans belonging to it” (GA 55: 175). Thus, if the experience of being at the beginning is the experience of φύσις (*genitivus objectivus*), it is no less the experience of ἀλήθεια (*genitivus appositivus*).

CONCLUSION: FROM ΦΥΣΙΣ TO ΙΔΕΑ

How, on Heidegger's view, does Plato take up but fundamentally transform Heraclitus' understanding of φύσις or (as Heidegger puts it) his understanding of being as φύσις (VA 255/EGT 107)? Plato presupposes that to be is naturally (i.e., in accordance with the very meaning of being, i.e., κατὰ φύσιν) to be unhidden and, indeed, that the ἰδέα is the really real (τὸ ὄντως ὄν) precisely as what is more unhidden than what it illuminates, indeed, the most unhidden (ἀληθινόν) and ever so. This presupposition echoes precisely the thought – or at least part of the thought – expressed by Heraclitus in Fragment 16 that Heidegger takes as a gloss on φύσις. Herein lies a central reason for Heidegger's contention that Plato's interpretation of being presupposes the Greek experience of ὄν as φύσις.

Yet even as Plato at one level supposes this understanding of being as φύσις, at another level he re-interprets being in terms of the ἰδέα that illuminates things, enabling them to be seeable and thus to be.⁴² The primordial significance of ἀλήθεια gives way to the ἰδέα as something always unhidden relative to ἰδεῖν, a perceiving, albeit in the sense of νοεῖν, θεωρεῖν. Through this subordination of ἀλήθεια to the ἰδέα, it

⁴² The conception of being in terms of εἶδος is tied, Heidegger contends, to two further reinterpretations, consideration of which is omitted here: a reinterpretation of φύσις to make it conform to τέχνη, given the productiveness of the look, i.e., its role in production, and a reinterpretation of being as something common, given the commonness of the look; see, respectively, GA 65: 126, 184/CPh 88, 129 and GA 65: 63, 75 f., 206, 209/CPh 44, 52, 144, 146.

devolves into the alignment (ὁμοίωσις) of something perceived with a perceiver and, ultimately, the correctness of an assertion about them. By way of conclusion, I shall try to put some flesh on these bare-boned claims.

In Heidegger's 1931/32 lectures on Plato, he emphasizes that the Platonic ἰδέα is reducible neither to the particular being it illuminates (the object perceived) nor to the subject who perceives thanks to its illumination.⁴³ Exploiting the analogy that Plato himself draws between φῶς and ἰδέα, Heidegger construes the idea as what, like light, lets us see what an entity is, "allowing it, as it were, to come to us."⁴⁴ But the ideas can "let things through" only thanks to being seen in some way themselves.⁴⁵ "But both, the seen as such and the way of looking, *together* belong to the fact that an unhiddenness of entities emerges, that is to say, that truth *happens*."⁴⁶

This reference to the happening of truth and the emergence of unhiddenness hearkens back to the sense of ἀλήθεια that Heidegger identifies as a metonym for φύσις in Heraclitus. On Heidegger's reading, as we saw above, Heraclitus understands φύσις as the hidden unhiddenness of things

⁴³ Heidegger's interpretation of Plato's ἰδέα reflects his phenomenological pedigree, indeed, his long-time fondness for Husserl's doctrine of categorial intuition. Thus, Heidegger emphasizes that Plato's "discovery of the 'so-called' ideas" was not some flight of speculation; instead Plato found "what everyone sees and grasps when he comports himself to entities," namely, the looks (*Anblicke*) of things, the way they present themselves as being what they are (freely translating: *als was seiend sich etwas darbietet*). In these looks "the individual thing *presents* itself; present and *presenting* [*präsent und anwesend*]" (GA 34: 51/ET 38; see also, GA 65: 208/CPh 145). Heidegger rightly insists that the ἰδέα, so understood, is not to be confused with the notion of something re-presented in the mind [*das Vor-gestellte des Vorstellens*], the modern gloss that anchors everything in the perceiver and leads to idealism. As noted at the outset, Heidegger refuses to saddle Plato with responsibility for this sort of idealism since the term ἰδέα signifies precisely the appearing or "shining forth" of the look itself, what offers a view or outlook *for* looking upon it.

⁴⁴ GA 34: 57/ET 42: "'Ἰδέα' meint das im voraus Gesichtete, das im voraus Vernommene und Seiendes Durchlassende, als *Auslegung* des 'Seins'. Die Idee läßt uns das, was das Seiende *ist*, sehen, läßt gleichsam durch es hindurch das Seiende auf uns *zukommen*"; *ibid.* 106/77: "Dem Bilde des Lichtes, der Helle, entsprechen die Ideen."

⁴⁵ GA 34: 70, 73/ET 51, 53. Cognizant that his interpretation goes beyond Plato on this point, Heidegger nevertheless insists on the need to take the meaning of "ideas" literally as something seen. If Heidegger's phenomenological interpretation is right on this score, the fact that the look of the book is a condition for seeing the book does not entail that the look exists or takes shape apart from looking that way to someone, i.e., apart from a seeing.

⁴⁶ GA 34: 72/ET 53. To the extent that the good is the highest idea, what applies in general to the ideas applies in the greatest degree to the good, namely, having an essential relation to a seeing that "forms the idea, pre-forms it for itself ... neither objectively on hand nor subjectively fabricated [*Erdichtetes*], it [the good as the highest idea] is precisely what empowers every objectivity and every subjectivity to what they are because it spans the yoke between subject and object" (GA 34: 111/ET 81).

that supposes hiddenness and can be equated with being as opposed to beings. The basic experience of truth is the experience of φύσις as “the never going under” such that no one can hide from it but, nonetheless, “ever-emerging” in a way that favors hiddenness.

While Plato’s treatment of being and truth in terms of ἰδέα draws, in the senses suggested, upon the basic experience of φύσις and ἀλήθεια announced by Heraclitus, Heidegger finds clear signals that this basic experience begins to fade (*schwinden*) in Plato’s thinking. Heidegger sums up the two most important signals in his observation “that Plato already construes ἀλήθεια as something that pertains to *beings*, – in such a way that beings *themselves* are addressed as unhidden, that beings and unhidden are *lumped together* [*in eins gesetzt*], and that the question of the unhiddenness *as such* is not alive at all” (GA 34: 123 f./ET 89 f.). The two signals mentioned here are complementary, i.e., the construal of ἀλήθεια solely in terms of beings and the obliviousness to the question of the meaning of ἀλήθεια as such. As for the latter signal, the evidence that unhiddenness is not questioned can be found in the fact that hiddenness is not questioned. Again, Plato presupposes this very understanding, since he addresses what is unhidden or beings insofar as they are unhidden. Yet as he focuses on what is unhidden, i.e., beings insofar as they are unhidden, he does not call into question, let alone, address unhiddenness itself, which would entail examination of hiddenness as well. “Precisely the absence of the question of hiddenness as such is the *decisive* evidence for the already starting ineffectiveness of the *unhiddenness* in the strict sense” (GA 34: 125/ET 91).

In his early lectures on the Cave Allegory, Heidegger makes specific note of Plato’s departure from Heraclitus in this regard.

But if hiddenness is not seized upon primordially and entirely, then *un*-hiddenness cannot be correctly conceived. And yet Plato treats of ἀλήθεια in his critical confrontation with illusion! But that can only mean then that the cave allegory treats, to be sure, of ἀλήθεια, but not such that it would, in its essence, come to light *primordially* – in the *position-of-the-struggle* against the κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ that is said of φύσις (of being), hence, against hiddenness *in general* and not only against the false, the illusion. But if this stands as such, then in Plato the basic experience out of which the word ἀλήθεια sprung is already fading. (GA 34: 93/ET 67)

In these lectures on the Cave Allegory as in the *Beiträge*, Heidegger adds that Plato’s tendency to construe ἀλήθεια in terms of light is part and parcel of his obliviousness to hiddenness supposed by it: “And because the ἀλήθεια thus becomes φῶς, the character of the α-privative also gets lost” (GA 65: 332/CPh 233).

Heidegger also locates the onset of the transformation of truth into correctness in Plato's account of ἀλήθεια in terms of the illuminating ἰδέα. Insofar as beings can be seen – and thus can be said to be – thanks to the ἰδέα, “the brightness of the ἰδέα is the *yoke*, ζυγόν although characteristically this is never articulated” (GA 65: 335/CPh 234 f.). Plato construes truth, at least sometimes, with the way the brightness of the ἰδέα yokes subject and object. In this way he subordinates ἀλήθεια to the ἰδέα – the fatal move that forfeits the primordial sense of ἀλήθεια, epitomized by the Heraclitean φύσις, and opens the way to conceiving truth as the correspondence between subject and object, perception and perceiver, sentence and its reference. “For Plato ἰδέα moves above ἀλήθεια because the seeability [*Sichtsamkeit*] becomes essential for ἰδεῖν (ψύχη) and not the unconcealing as pre-veiling of be-ing [*Wesung des Seyns*]” (GA 34: 99, n. 2/ET 84, n. 2).⁴⁷

As noted above, the other signal of Plato's departure from Heraclitus in Heidegger's eyes is Plato's confinement of the discussion of ἀλήθεια to the realm of beings, indeed, to such an extent that the ἰδέα is itself a particular being.⁴⁸ Because Plato restricts truth to the truth of beings, he omits consideration of the truth of being itself. From this vantage point, Plato's proclivity to focus on what is unhidden, even what is most unhidden, i.e., what unhiddenness (pre-eminently) pertains to, at the expense of unhiddenness itself, signals a failure to attend to the ontological difference between beings and being. Were Plato to have remained closer to Heraclitus' lead and tried to say what unhiddenness (ἀλήθεια, being) itself is, he would have had to come to terms with the significance of “hiddenness.” For Heidegger, then, Plato's crucial misstep, his departure from Heraclitus, consists in taking unhiddenness (ἀλήθεια) for granted as the illuminating look (the ἰδέα, εἶδος) of beings and, indeed, a look that is itself another being, rather than as the unhiddenness of the self-concealing of φύσις.

⁴⁷ For Heidegger's discussion of *σισι* (ὁρθότερον βλέπει), heralding the shift to correctness, see GA 34: 34 f./ET 26. Between the time of the *Beiträge* and his Heraclitus lectures, Heidegger may have changed his interpretation of the Heraclitean φύσις. In the earlier text he places φύσις in apposition to *Seiendheit* or *das Seiende als Seiendes* by way of explaining how it serves as a condition for Plato's thinking; see GA 65: 332, 351/CPh 233, 245 and GA 70: 86; but for a positive albeit qualified assessment of Heraclitus opposite Plato in another connection, see GA 65: 360/CPh 252.

⁴⁸ “The word ἀλήθεια stands for the most part simply for the being [*Seiende*] itself, for what the being is *that most pre-eminently* is [*das seiendste Seiende*] ... The unhidden, that is to say, that *to which* unhiddenness *pertains* [*zu-kommt*] is the being that genuinely is [*das eigentlich Seiende*]; but it itself [the unhiddenness] is not meant as such ... ἀλήθεια stands here already for that to which it pertains [*zu-kommt*], but not for what it itself *is*” (GA 34: 124/ET 90).

Φύσις is not the same as *Ereignis*, to be sure. But to think being at the beginning – and, not least, the movement and underlying hiddenness it signals – is a first step towards thinking the history of be-ing and, thereby, recognizing and being open to its end (*Untergang*).⁴⁹

⁴⁹ GA 70: 45: “Daß das Sein als Entborgenheit Aufgang ist, ohne in die Verbergung zu wesen, kündigt, wie noch der Anfang kaum angefangen. Noch steht der Anfang bevor und deshalb ist der Untergang einziger denn vormals”; *ibid.* 19: “Der anfangende Anfang ist Er-eignis, ist Untergang in den Abschied. In der Vorsicht des vorbereitenden anfänglichen Denkens kann aber der anfangende Anfang erst nur der ‘andere’ Anfang zum ersten genannt werden.” I am grateful to Matthew Meyer and Al and Maria Miller for their critical readings of this essay.

CHAPTER 7

Being-affected: Heidegger, Aristotle, and the pathology of truth

Josh Michael Hayes

To suffer is not a simple term.

Aristotle, *De anima*, 417b2

Now there is something which is opposed to having as the imperfect is opposed to the perfect, and this is affection.

Aquinas, Commentary on *De anima*¹

Beginning with a precursory reading of Franz Brentano's *On the Manifold Meaning of Being according to Aristotle* in 1907, Heidegger's interpretation of Aristotle always remained attuned to the question concerning the meaning of being (*Sinn von Sein*). Throughout the early Freiburg and Marburg period, Heidegger consistently returned to Aristotle's definition of the soul to investigate the meaning of being as the "being" of life.² The human soul as a cause and principle of life that is open to the being of entities other than itself by its potential to perceive (*to aisthanesthai*) and to think (*to noein*) exhibits a fundamental receptivity to being-affected (*paschein ti*) by the world. However, this receptivity is not merely passive, but actively discloses the being of everything that appears; "the human

¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's De anima*, trans. Kenelm Foster and Silvester Humphries (South Bend, Ind.: Dumb Ox Books, 1994), 375. This essay is dedicated to the memory of Franco Volpi of the University of Padua, Italy, whose *joie de vivre* and generosity of spirit first inspired me to investigate Heidegger's phenomenological interpretation of Aristotle's *De anima*.

² Heidegger designates factual life as the proper object of philosophy. If life is the basic content of facticity, philosophy must begin by investigating the "being" of life. Since life can be said in many ways, the plurivocity of life is what initially motivates our tendency to make it accessible as an objective phenomenon: "The character of being in the living is the soul which is characterized by the fact that it is a *dunamis*: being-possible [*Möglichsein*]. Its manner of being is such that for it something completely determinate is possible. The manifold: nourishing, perceiving, thinking, willing soul, these diverse manners of potential-being of what is alive are not functions that function peacefully with one another such that what would matter would be merely to determine these connections precisely – instead one must recognize the grounding of these diverse possibilities in a definite, layered primordiality of potential being" (GA 17: 295/IPR 224 f.).

soul is in a certain way all entities" (*he psyche ta onta pos esti panta*).³ In the following essay, after reviewing how Heidegger's interpretation of "being true" is grounded in the soul's manner of "being disposed," I address his appropriation of Aristotle's account of the two basic forms of *pathos*, namely, the tranquil mood of "being composed" and the fearful mood of "being decomposed," and, finally, how this pathology of truth "de-poses" us. The investigation aims, more precisely, at answering the following questions: how does Heidegger's interpretation of *pathos* as disposedness come to influence his understanding of truth as *aletheia*?⁴ Can we speak of a pathology of truth that would diagnose truth as a *pathos* by retrieving his exposition of these moods?

³ This openness to being-affected clearly corresponds to Heidegger's understanding of the human Dasein; SZ 25: "The problematic of Greek ontology (like any other ontology) must take its clues from Dasein. Both in ordinary and in philosophical usage, Dasein, the being of the human, is defined as *zoon logon echon*, the living entity whose essence is essentially defined by the ability to speak." In a letter to Jean Beaufret on November 23, 1945, Heidegger writes: "*Dasein bedeutet für mich nicht so sehr 'me voilà!' sondern, wenn ich es einem vielleicht unmöglichen Französisch sagen darf: être-le-là. Und le-là ist gleich aletheia: Unverborgenheit-Offenheit.*" ["Da-sein for me means not so much 'Here I am!' but – if I can put it in a perhaps impossible French – 'being-the-there.' And 'the there' is equal to aletheia: unconcealment-openness."] Martin Heidegger, *Lettre sur l'humanisme*, rev. edn, trans. Roger Munier (Paris: Éditions Montaigne, 1964), 180–185, here 182 f. See ZS 156 f./ZSe 120: "The there in *Being and Time* is not meant as a specification of place, but is intended to name the openness [*Offenheit*], in which beings can be present for human beings, as well as their being present for themselves. Being the there is the distinguishing mark of being human." See VS 83/FS 47: "From what does 'meaning' signify? Meaning in *Being and Time* is defined in terms of a project region, and projection is the accomplishment of Dasein, which means the ek-static instance [*Inständigkeit*] in the openness of being. By ek-sisting, Dasein includes *meaning*. The thinking that proceeds from *Being and Time*, in that it gives up the word 'meaning of being' in favor of 'truth of being,' henceforth emphasizes the openness of being itself, rather than the openness of Dasein in regard to this openness of being."

⁴ One might thereby assume the role of the doctor to diagnose *pathos* according to its twofold nature. See Eva Brann's magisterial study, *Feeling our Feelings: What Philosophers Think and People Know* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Paul Dry Books, 2008), 132: "The passions are pathological, that is to say they are accounted for as a sickness, the sickness of letting a *pathos* overcome *logos*. But since it is an illness of thought, the therapy is in thinking well. So philosophy goes curative." Disease as a kind of destruction of the body accounts for the German prefix *ver* to indicate a miscarriage and mis-direction (as in [*sich*] *verfahren*, to go astray). In contrast to this state of corruption, health functions as a kind of preservation of its own possibility by actively exercising and enacting it. Health as the attainment of a thing in terms of its essence (*Wesen*) can in turn be juxtaposed with disease as the decomposition (*Verwesen*) and non-essence of health. For Heidegger's discussion of the relation of truth as essence to its non-essence, see GA 65: 327–368/CPh 229–257; and "On the Essence of Truth," trans. John Sallis in *Pathmarks* (*Wegm 175–199/Pathm 136–154*). See also John Sallis, "Deformatives: Essentially Other than Truth," in *Double Truth* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 85–106; and Andrew Mitchell, "Contamination, Essence, and Decomposition," in *French Interpretations of Heidegger: An Exceptional Reception*, ed. David Pettigrew and François Raffoul (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 131–150.

I. BEING-DISPOSED

The soul's openness to becoming all things is decisively informed by how the soul is disposed to uncovering life and world. In a recently published lecture first delivered in 1924 entitled "Being-There and Being-True according to Aristotle" (*Dasein und Wahrsein nach Aristoteles*), Heidegger turns to Aristotle's account of truth (*aletheia*) to describe how things come to disclose themselves to the soul. Being-true as an activity only originates from a certain disposition or habit of the soul. "Aristotle says that being true, *aletheuein* is a *hexis tes psuches* [habit of the soul], *hexis* comes from *echein*, something that the soul has in itself, something it disposes over. Thus the soul disposes over specific possibilities of uncovering world and uncovering human life itself."⁵

By the time of the composition of *Being and Time*, this disposedness to the world and life corresponds to the existential of *Befindlichkeit*. Disposedness as a fundamental existential possesses an ecstatic character by opening *Dasein* up to how it finds itself in a world. Heidegger privileges the existential status of disposedness as responsible for disclosing the facticity of *Dasein*. Disposedness along with understanding is equiprimordial to the being of *Dasein* as care. However, Heidegger also indicates that disposedness might even assume a more primordial ontological status such that understanding and the existentiality of being-in-a-world are indeed only derived from a more originary facticity.

It is rather the phenomenal expression of the fact that the constitution of *Dasein*, whose totality is now brought out explicitly as ahead of itself-in-Being-already in [*Sich-vorweg-im-schon-sein-in*] ... is primordially a whole. To put it otherwise, existing is always factual. Existentiality is essentially determined by facticity [*Existenzialität ist wesentlich durch Faktizität bestimmt*]. (SZ 192)

Disposedness discloses the facticity of *Dasein* insofar as being thrown into a world (and being burdened and threatened by it) entails that we are disposed and attuned to the world in a certain way. The fact that we always find ourselves in a certain mood testifies to the facticity of thrownness.

⁵ "Being-There and Being-True According to Aristotle," trans. Brian Hansford Bowles, in *Becoming Heidegger* (BH 226). The talk first given by Heidegger to the Kant Society at the University of Cologne in December 1924 bears the full title, "Dasein und Wahrsein nach Aristoteles (Interpretationen von Buch VI [der] Nikomachischen Ethik)." Brian Hansford Bowles' excellent introduction makes a compelling case for translating being-there as being-open: "Heidegger thus attempts to articulate the possibility of the conjunction of the self-showing of the phenomena and the being of the human as receptive of such self-showing. In other words, he asks how the openness (i.e., *Dasein*) of human being originally discloses entities in terms of their being" (BH 216).

By being condemned and delivered over to our being-in-a-world, Dasein finds itself always confronting itself as that inexorable *enigma* (*Rätsel*) that must take over its responsibility for existing. The decision to bear the burden of such responsibility is always determined by some kind of particular mood that we unfailingly find ourselves in, even when we experience the persistence of indifference by the supposed “lack” of a mood (*Ungestimmtheit*). “In being disposed, Dasein is always brought before itself, and has always found itself, not in the sense of coming across itself by perceiving itself, but in the sense of finding itself in the mood that it has [*gestimmtes Sichbefinden*]” (SZ 135).

Our moods as ontic phenomena indicate the pre-ontological status of disposedness which discloses being-in-a-world as a whole. Such a pre-ontological status should not be confused with some kind of psychic phenomenon of apprehension that enables reflection upon a particular experience or some kind of inner condition that makes itself manifest by our composure to a given situation. Rather, moods arise out of being-in-a-world to disclose the world, our being-there with others, and existence. Heidegger claims that moods also possess a pre-thematic intentional character which makes it possible to direct oneself toward something, thereby permitting that which is within the world to be encountered through circumspection (*Umsicht*). However, circumspection is not just a bare sensing or staring at something, rather circumspection implies a kind of becoming-affected (*Betroffenwerdens*) so the world becomes essentially meaningful to us. Disposedness as a way of being-in-a-world can thus be understood as a transcendence which precedes sensory perception, cognition, volition, or even what we might characterize as “feelings.” What we commonly indicate as “feelings” or “affections” in which we can be “touched” (*können sie gerührt werden*) by anything or have a sense for (*Sinn haben für*) something are only ontologically derived from this prior character of disposedness which has already submitted itself to having entities in the world “matter” to us by how we find ourselves in a certain mood.

While Heidegger does not present a sustained exposition of various moods in section 29 of *Being and Time*, we are left with a preliminary indication of two moods that disclose Dasein in its thrown openness to being-in-a-world. Heidegger importantly claims that the way in which moods disclose “is not one in which we look at thrownness, but one in which we turn towards or turn away [*An- und Abkehr*].”⁶

⁶ SZ 135. See Daniel Dahlstrom’s argument for translating *Befindlichkeit* as disposedness in *Heidegger’s Concept of Truth* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 296: “According to the Oxford English dictionary, the primary ontological significance of ‘dis’ and its antecedent cognates is

Moreover, we are delivered over to our being in such a way that we find ourselves for the most part fleeing from the burdensome character of facticity rather than directly seeking it. Heidegger focuses on the mood of fear (*Furcht*) to describe this flight from oneself and the propensity for self-evasion. Fear becomes exhibited by how Dasein encounters a threat that may cause harm and flees from that threat: "As an entity which has been delivered over to its Being [*das seinem Sein überantwortet ist*], it remains also delivered over to the fact that it must always have found itself – but found itself in a way of finding which arises not so much from a direct seeking as rather from a fleeing [*sondern einem Fliehen entspringt*]" (SZ 135). While fear prominently functions as a mood that will clarify the phenomenon of falling (*Verfallen*), Heidegger also briefly alludes to another mood, the mood of tranquility or leisurely calm which characterizes purely beholding what is present-at-hand. Tranquility (*Ruhe*) arises out of the pleasure (*hedone*) of contemplation as a complete activity, "Yet even the purest *theoria* [theory] has not left all moods behind it; even when we look theoretically at what is present-at-hand, it does not show itself purely as it looks unless this *theoria* lets it come toward us in a tranquil tarrying alongside [*ruhigen Verweilen bei*] ... in *rhastone* [the greatest ease] and *diagoge* [recreation]" (SZ 138). *Theoria* exists for the sake of itself in such a way that its genuine possibility is perpetually preserved in the activity of thinking. *Theoria* ultimately maintains itself in its "whiling" and "abiding" as a movement of *repose*.

If we are to take seriously Heidegger's contention that an ontological interpretation of the affective life has been able to make scarcely one step forward worthy of mention since Aristotle, we might return to his definition of *pathos* as a kind of preservation in coming to be and a kind of destruction in passing away.⁷ Heidegger relates Aristotle's definition of

'two ways, in twain.' It is also often used as a prefix, rooted in a contrast with 'com-' (e.g., discord, concord: disparity, comparison). Each of these meanings contributes to the aptness of 'disposedness' as a translation for *Befindlichkeit*. For the *be* in *Befindlichkeit* also alerts the reader or listener to a duality, both in the sense of finding oneself relative to something else and in the sense of having been thrown, not merely into the world, but from somewhere else, as though one is constantly dis-posed-in the sense of being deposed, displaced, out of place-in the world. At the same time, the division ('dis' in contrast to 'com') is reflected in finding oneself with ('*bei*') things and others, and indeed, finding oneself always moved in relation to them (repulsed or attracted)." Heidegger's exposition of the ambivalence of disposedness is perhaps most crucially indebted to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*: "Our contention will become evident from the following consideration. Three things fall under our choice: the good, the useful, the pleasurable; and three contrary things we avoid: the evil, the harmful, the sorrowful ... This is especially true in the matter of pleasure that is common to animals and is found in all things obtained by choice" (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1104b30).

⁷ "Even the term 'being-affected' (*to paschein*) is not used in a single sense, but sometimes it means a form of destruction (*phthora*) of something by its contrary (*enantion*), and sometimes rather a

pathos to the being of life (*Sein des Lebenden*) which always finds itself (*Je-und-je-sich-so-Befinden*) stretched between the pleasure of coming to be and the pain of passing away. While the mood of tranquility characterizes the pleasure of preserving life as a possibility of complete composure, the mood of fear characterizes the decomposition of this possibility through corruption and harm. As noted above, in the second and third parts of the essay, I turn to Heidegger's interpretation of this twofold nature of *pathos* in the early Freiburg–Marburg period with a view to its relevance to his exposition of disposedness in *Being and Time*. But first, Aristotle's analysis of *pathos* in general and Heidegger's interpretation of it deserve our explicit attention.

Heidegger's most extensive treatment of *pathos* occurs during the 1924 lecture course, *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, which crucially anticipates many of the themes treated in *Being and Time*. Throughout the course, Heidegger seeks to define *pathos* beginning with how Dasein finds itself disposed to uncovering life and world. This disposedness as a *pathos* essentially determines *logos*, the manner in which beings become accessible in their being. His exposition of *pathos* thus must concretely consider various *pathe* that ground *logos* and affectively attune Dasein to the possibility of finding itself in a world.⁸ Before presenting the various *pathe* as modes of being-taken and becoming-affected by the world, Heidegger turns to how *pathos* is initially designated in its *average and immediate* meaning as a kind of alteration (*Veränderung*) belonging to the constitution of the entity. *Pathos* in the most inclusive sense refers to the possibility of something becoming otherwise (*alloiosis*) than it is; in other words, *pathos* is a "way of being-constituted, *poiotes*, in regard to which something is subject to alteration [therefore not just

preservation (*soteria*) of that which is potential (*tou dunamei*) by something actual (*tou entelecheia*) which is like it, in accordance with the relation of potentiality to actuality" (*De anima*, 417b2–5). See Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's De anima*, 117: "and as actuality is the perfection of what is potential; so being acted upon in this sense implies rather that a certain preservation and perfection of a thing in potency is received from a thing in act."

⁸ Heidegger's exposition of *pathe* in *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy* corresponds to the threefold structure of being-in-a-world as the envining world (*Umwelt*), the shared world (*Mitwelt*), and the self-world (*Selbstwelt*) presented in *Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle: Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation* (1922), "The Concept of Time" (1924), and *Sein und Zeit* (1927). "Since the *pathe* are characterized in this way, as a mode of being of living things whose basic structure is being-in-a-world, dealing with a world, dealing with others, there results the preliminary indication for the analysis of the individual *pathe* themselves, insofar as these are to be considered: (1) with respect to the world in which the one in question finds himself, the *envining world* of living things; (2) with respect to the mode of disposedness, comporting oneself toward the *shared world*; (3) how oneself must be, in what state of mind one *oneself* must be, in order to be affected [*betroffen*] by these *pathe*" (GA 18: 242/BCAR 162 f.; tm).

any endowment as such, but one that is characterized such that in itself it offers the possibility of being reversed] white-black, sweet-bitter ...”⁹ Fundamental to this definition is that something can “happen” (*pas-sieren*) to an entity in such a way that it has the potentiality of becoming changed. This potentiality for change is how Aristotle defines *dunamis* as “the origin of change (*arche metaboles*) in another thing or in the thing itself as other” (*Metaphysics*, 1046a10–11). While one might be tempted to understand *dunamis* as the *origin of change* in the sense that something incidentally happens to a thing, that which undergoes change is itself the origin of change so that *dunamis* passively undergoes and actively enables change.¹⁰

In what will prove to be decisive for the exposition of disposedness in *Being and Time*, Heidegger’s interpretation of *pathos* as having this potential to become changed is accorded a *specific ontological meaning* in terms of movement (*kinesis*). Aristotle is the first philosopher to account for movement as a way of being completed that is necessarily incomplete by striving beyond itself towards an end that is not yet present. “And although a movement is thought to be an enactment (*energeia*) of a sort, yet it is incomplete (*ateles*), and the cause of this is the fact that the potential of which this is the enactment is incomplete (*to dunaton ou estin energeia*).”¹¹ Heidegger retrieves Aristotle’s definition of movement to express how something that is potential essentially *becomes affected* by being preserved by that which is actual and thereby interprets this becoming-affected in an active sense as an *energeia*, something that

⁹ GA 18: 194/BCAR 129; tm. See Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, trans. John P. Rowan (South Bend, Ind.: Dumb Ox Books, 1995), 375: “In one sense (modification) it means the quality according to which alteration takes place, such as white and black and the like. And it is the third species of quality; for it has been proved in Book VII of the *Physics* [245b1].”

¹⁰ Aristotle explores change according to both the active potentiality of doing and production (*poiein*) and the passive potentiality of that which is produced to be affected (*pathein*). Both categories are always in a state of reciprocal exchange and are thereby related to the same end. Just as the builder as an active potentiality cannot realize the potentiality to build a house without stones as a passive potentiality.

¹¹ *Physics*, 201b32–34. Heidegger retrieves Aristotle’s exposition of movement (*kinesis*) beginning with the methodological problems confronted by his predecessors who failed to specify being as a condition for an entity to move and be moved. If movement occupies neither being nor non-being, then movement remains essentially indeterminate (*aporiston*). While pre-Aristotelian accounts of movement reflect its categorical indeterminacy as being-other (*heterotes*), being-unequal (*anisotes*), and non-being (*me on*), Aristotle begins with a basic presupposition that movement as an entity *is* and therefore must be intelligible as a mode of being that already has its end (*entelecheia*) in the sense of being-completed and being-limited. *Entelecheia* as an enactment (*energeia*) of the end is derived from the activity (*ergon*) of maintaining this completeness, “for activity is an end, and enact-ing (*energeia*) is the activity; and so even the name enactment is derived from activity (*ergon*) and indicates enactment” (*Metaphysics*, 1050a22–23).

suddenly “occurs” (*geschehen*) to a being.¹² Dasein is affected in such a way that it is delivered over to its own being by *suddenly* finding itself in a mood that opens itself up to a world. This way of being disposed through a mood “assails” us (*die Stimmung überfällt*), “Prior to all cognition and volition, a mood assails Dasein in its unreflecting devotion to the world with which it is concerned and on which it expends itself ... It comes neither from ‘without’ nor from ‘within’, but arises from Being-in-a-world itself” (SZ 136). Being assailed by a mood implies a momentary suddenness that corresponds to how we find ourselves in that mood.

This moment of suddenness also accords with how Aristotle understands change (*metabole*) as entailing a rupture insofar as that which changes withdraws from and leaves behind that from which it changes to become the thing that it is. Change as a coming into presence can be concretely characterized by how supposedly absent moods suddenly emerge to disclose themselves in their presence. This kind of being-affected is nothing other than a *genesis* or coming to be so that Dasein is “there” in such a way that it finds itself *in* its world.¹³

Genesis as belonging to the being of natural beings characterizes the movement of becoming by which a being comes to be out of not-being. Aristotle names this not-being, *steresis*, to describe the productive lack or deprivation which originates *genesis* and constitutes the twofoldness of all natural beings.¹⁴ *Steresis* brings about and determines the presence

¹² See GA 18: 171/BCAR 114; tm: “Most generally, *pathos* is characterized as ‘*ginomenon tes psuches*,’ ‘soul’ taken as *ousia*. *Metabole* and *genesis* are used with the same meaning: *pathos* is a changing and accordingly a determinate coming to be out of an earlier situation, but not a changing that would have its course set for itself. Rather, it is a mode of finding oneself in the world.”

¹³ Just as *pathein* is always implicated by *poiein*, *genesis* and *sozein* are always implicated by *pthora*. *Genesis* operates as a peculiar kind of movement that characterizes the essence of *phusis* or what it means for a natural being to be. Heidegger presents this unity between *genesis-pthora* in “On the Essence and Concept of *Physis* in Aristotle’s *Physics* B, I,” trans. by Thomas Sheehan, in *Pathmarks* (Wegm 295/Pathm 227): “While the blossom ‘buds forth’ (*phuei*), the leaves that prepared for and sheltered the blossom fall off. The fruit comes into appearance when the blossom dies away. The placing into the aspect, *morphe*, is *diches*, it is in itself twofold, presencing and absencing.” See also “The Anaximander Fragment,” in *Holzw* 341 f./EGT 30: “Rather *genesis* and *pthora* are to be thought from *phusis*, and within it, as ways of luminous rising and decline. Certainly we can translate *genesis* as origination; but we must think this originating as a movement which lets every emerging being abandon concealment and go forward into unconcealment. Certainly we can translate *pthora* as passing away; but we must think this passing away as a going which in its turn abandons unconcealment, departing and withdrawing into concealment.”

¹⁴ See *Physics*, 202a8. Aristotle remarks that what moves “will always bear a form (*eidos*) which will be the source and cause of its movement (*arche kai aition tes kineseos*)” (202a10 ff.). *Steresis* is the *eidos* (*steresis eidōs pos estin*) (193b20) from which something becomes (*ek gar tes stereōs ... gignetai ti*) (191b15). However, *steresis* as the source and cause of the movement never discloses itself as present.

of a natural being but without itself ever coming into being or showing itself. An absence which draws an entity into presence by its own withdrawal, *steresis* makes possible the transition from not-being into being and thereby opens up the way to understanding how we find ourselves suddenly disposed with an attendant mood through this movement from concealment to unconcealment.¹⁵ With the case of moods, Heidegger claims that every mood “follows” a certain disposedness that arises out of how we find ourselves at any given moment.

II. BEING-COMPOSED

In *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, Heidegger privileges the disposedness of pleasure as a movement of the soul (*kinesin tina tes psuches*) that suddenly and perceptibly settles it down (*katastasin athroan*) into its normal state (*Rhetoric*, 1369b34 f.). Tranquility or leisurely calm arises as a mood from the disposedness of *hedone*; *the fundamental determination of being in itself as living*.¹⁶ *Hedone* not only accompanies the highest state of human activity (*theoria*), but also accompanies every being that has living as its final end (*telos*). “All things pursue a *hedone*, a disposedness, and for the most part, not those things that they believe they are striving for, not what they say matters to them, but rather they are all after the same thing. What matters to them is to live” (GA 18: 243/BCAR 163; tm). *Hedone* is a having (*echein*) insofar as I “have” my being-in-a-world by living in that world. Following Aristotle, Heidegger compares the possession of *hedone* to the possession of sense-perception as a complete activity (*praxis*) that contains its end (*telos*) within itself, “there is nothing that could still be added in order to make seeing more complete in what it is.” Both sight and pleasure are intelligible as modes of being that are perfect

¹⁵ Likewise, the nothing of *Angst* brings about or draws out the full presence of Dasein as a finite entity by withdrawing itself and remaining essentially absent. See SZ 265 f.: “In anticipating the indefinite certainty of death, Dasein opens itself to a constant *threat* [*Bedrohung*] arising out of its own ‘there’. In this very threat Being-towards-the-end must maintain itself. So little can it tone this down that it must rather cultivate the indefiniteness of the uncertainty. How is it existentially possible for this constant threat to be genuinely disclosed? All understanding is accompanied by disposedness. Dasein’s mood brings it face to face with thrownness of its ‘that it is there’. But the disposedness [*Befindlichkeit*] which can hold open the utter and constant threat to itself arising from Dasein’s ownmost individualized Being [*eigensten vereinzelt Sein des Daseins*], is anxiety [*Angst*].”

¹⁶ Heidegger also translates Aristotle’s description of *hedone* in *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1173a4; see GA 18: 243/BCAR 163: “In weak beings, those of little value, there is probably *ti phusikon* – an essential possibility that belongs to their being and which is better than they are in themselves (namely, the *phauloi*), which they are after as *oikeion agathon*, the being with which they genuinely find their end.”

or complete insofar as they contain their *telos* within themselves. "Now seeing is thought to be complete at any interval of time, for it needs no thing which, when it comes into being later, will complete the form (*eidos*) of seeing. Pleasure (*hedone*) too, resembles a thing such as seeing, for it is a whole (*holon*)" (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1174a15–19). *Hedone* cannot be understood outside of this relation to the completeness of having which initially characterizes how we have *pathe*. *Pathe* are always fundamentally oriented by "having" as a genuine determination of being and thereby stand opposed to any traditional conception of the affects as "states of the soul" or "bodily symptoms."

Here Heidegger presents *echein* as ultimately reducible to habit (*hexis*) in order to emphasize how one finds oneself composed by *hedone* in such a way that is uniquely particular to oneself (*Jemeinigkeit*) and one's particular temporal situation (*Jeweiligkeit*). *Hedone* informs our understanding of truth (*aletheia*) as a *hexis* of the soul which discloses the unique temporal situation of Dasein. *Hedone* must thereby possess its own comportment as a *hexis* always present in how Dasein finds itself in a world. Heidegger's description of *hedone* as occurring "in the moment" and "not in time" decisively informs the temporal structure of the moment of vision (*Augenblick*) in *Being and Time* whereby Dasein comes authentically to seize and grasp its own being by resolutely choosing its facticity. Nowhere is this more evident than in Aristotle's discussion of practical wisdom (*phronesis*) as a kind of knowledge responsible for reflectively grasping each unique situation with regard to the proper end and good of human life. However, Heidegger's account of *hedone* as inducing the mood of tranquility or leisurely calm more clearly corresponds to theoretical wisdom (*sophia*) as the highest kind of knowledge available to human existence (*bios theoretikos*). "For it would be quite out of place if someone should judge practical wisdom (*phronesis*) to be the most profound kind of knowledge, unless humans were to be superior to all the other beings in the celestial order (*kosmos*)" (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1141a16–17).

Aristotle valorizes the divine enactment of *sophia* as the most powerful (*kratiste*), the most contiguous (*synechestate*), the most pleasant (*hediste*), and the most self-sufficient (*autarkestatos*). *Theoria* as the pure beholding of reality is the most complete kind of activity and thereby the perfection of *praxis*. *Theoria* constantly maintains this pleasure by preserving the possibility of existence in the most radical sense. The *pathos* of *hedone* takes on this character of preserving (*sozein*) this possibility through its being-completed. "By way of something encountering me, occurring (*geschieht*) to me, I am not annihilated, but instead I find myself first

come into the genuine state (*eigentlichen Zustand*), namely, the possibility that what was in me now becomes genuinely real (*wirklich*)” (GA 18: 196/BCAR 132). *Hedone* maintains the possibility through the enactment of the possibility and thereby opens a space for presencing and unconcealment.¹⁷ Perhaps the maintenance and preservation of this possibility is captured best by the attendant *pathos* of wonder constituting the activity of thinking. Heidegger remarks that this tranquility of pure beholding securely positions us (*epistasthai*) before beings. The mood of wonder happens in such a way that we are released (*gelassen*) to the presencing of beings so that we become simultaneously restored and settled down into what we genuinely are.¹⁸

While the *hedone* of wonder and the mood of leisurely calm correspond with tarrying alongside the world (*diagoge*) in contemplation as the mode of being fully present, Aristotle’s account of *theoria* removes the human being from its encounter with entities in the world and contradicts the concerned being alongside the world of human life. Heidegger’s interpretation of *phronesis* is an attempt to redress this imbalance by focusing upon the finite contingency of Dasein choosing its facticity. “Such a *pathos*, which Aristotle says is *egkechrosmenon*, ‘colored through and through,’ the sort of *pathos* that completely colors or permeates, *bios*,

¹⁷ Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, 375: “Affection is used in another sense (undergoing) according as the actualizations of this kind of quality and alteration, which comes about through them, are called affections. And in this sense affection is one of the categories for example, being heated and cooled and other motions of this kind.” See also Heidegger’s description of this second sense of *paschein*; GA 18: 196/BCAR 132: “Rather, Aristotle recognizes a *metabole*, *kinesis*, *alloiosis*, in which *paschein* has the character of *soteria*. Something occurs to me such that this experiencing or undergoing has the character of *sozein*.” Heidegger’s essay “The Turning” also develops this notion of *sozein* in reference to the line from Holderlin’s poem, *Patmos*, “But where the danger is, grows the saving also.” [“Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst das Rettende auch”]; *Die Technik und die Kehre*, 41/QCT 42: “What does to save mean? It means to loosen, to emancipate, to free, to spare and husband, to harbor protectingly, to take under one’s care, to keep safe. Lessing still uses the word ‘saving’ emphatically, in the sense of vindication, i.e. to put something back into what is proper and right into the essential, and to keep it safe therein. That which genuinely saves is that which keeps safe, safekeeping.”

¹⁸ Theodore Kisiel’s addendum to “Being-There and Being-True According to Aristotle” presents *Gestellsein* as a predecessor to *Gelassenheit*: “*Gestellsein* is Heidegger’s word in 1924 for denoting affective habit, *hexis*. Heidegger has already noted above that the Greek *epi-stasthai* ‘to know,’ etymologically means ‘to be securely pos[ition]ed’ before beings that already are. In *Being and Time* (SZ 138), he will observe that even the purest theorizing still has its mood or disposition, namely the total composure of leisurely calm. *Gestellsein* has accordingly been translated here, according to its context, variously as being pos[ition]ed, being-disposed, or being-composed. In the background lies Heidegger’s subtle attempt to displace theoretical composure with existential composure, *Gelassenheit*” (BH 486 f.). This secure positioning before beings is also disclosed in the mood of wonder (*thaumazein*); see WiP 26/WisP 85: “And wonder is not used up in this retreating from the Being of being, but, as this retreating and self-restraining, it is at the same time forcibly drawn to and, as it were, held fast (*gefesselt*) by that from which it retreats.”

'*Da-sein*.' *Bios*, not *zoe*; *bios* as 'existence,' living in the emphatic sense of human beings taking hold of themselves in *proairesis*" (GA 18: 247 f./BCAR 166; tm). However, this shift towards the authenticity of human existence betrays Aristotle's own definition of *hedone* as inhering within all beings. *Hedone* informs how all beings comport themselves in such a way that the possibility of something occurring to them belongs to their constitution. As Aristotle remarks in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, "Again, pleasure (*hedone*) has been from infancy with us all; so it is difficult to rub off this feeling, ingrained (*egkechrosmenon*) as it is in our own life" (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1105a1–2).

III. BEING-DECOMPOSED

Just as *pathos* is defined according to this movement of coming to be and the pleasure of preserving this possibility, Aristotle also presents an account of *pathos* in an even more narrow sense, "*pathos* as the occurring or happening to one has the character of the unpleasant (*blaberon*). That which happens to me is harmful to me in its happening ... Harmfulness is related to *lupe* (pain)" (GA 18: 195/BCAR 131; tm). Like the *pathos* of *hedone* and its attendant mood of leisurely calm, *pathos* also indicates how one is attuned to being-affected by the unpleasant (*meine Stimmung von diesem Geschehen mit mir betroffen*) and the accompanying possibility of pain.¹⁹ Harm becomes relevant (*Angegangenwerden von etwas*) to me as a kind of depression (*Herabgedrücktwerdens*) so that *Dasein* finds itself decomposed, "losing-composure" (*Aus-der-Fassung-Geraten*). This happening becomes harmful (*Abträglich*) by depriving me of a state of being (*hexis*), "Something happens to me as a reversal of fortune in which I lose the character of *hexis* (having), in which I become deprived (*verlustig gehe*), i.e. becoming old" (GA 18: 196/BCAR 132; tm). In contrast to the completion and preservation of a *hexis* as in the case of someone possessing knowledge and using it "or someone becoming a builder through building a house," what occurs with the movement of *pathos* is a deprivation. While this deprivation may happen on a small scale, *pathos*

¹⁹ Aquinas asserts that affection in this third sense designates anything harmful that befalls anything at all. This third definition is decisive for understanding how being affected is to be understood as a kind of corruption or harm that is brought about by a contrary. Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, 375: "For a patient by the action of some agent which is contrary to it is drawn from its own natural disposition to one similar to that of the agent. Hence, a patient is said more properly to suffer when some part of something is removed and so long as its disposition is being changed into a contrary one."

also indicates the misfortunes and painful experiences which occur on a larger scale so that when they completely overcome us and thereby cause imminent harm and suffering, "*pathos* designates the size, the measure of that which happens to me, that which occurs to me in a harmful way. We have a corresponding expression for that: 'that is a blow to me' [*Das und das ist ein Schlag für mich*]."²⁰

This deprivation whereby *hexis* is withdrawn from me in a harmful way marks the concealment of *hexis* and literally its passing away into non-being. Aristotle clearly distinguishes coming to be (*genesis*) from other kinds of movement because *genesis* as this transitional change (*metabole*) of coming to be from non-being implies a contradiction.²¹ This contradiction between being and non-being which essentially constitutes the being of natural beings enables us to understand the temporality of being insofar as natural beings always relate to their non-being or absence yet they nevertheless are present in a given time. Because we are essentially capable of not-being, *genesis* is always implicated by perishing (*pthora*). "Thus perishing is change to not-being, though it is also true that that which perishes changes from being; and *genesis* is a change to being, though it is also change from not-being" (*Physics*, 230a12). This relation between *genesis* and *pthora* constitutes the twofold nature of being. Just as *genesis* is a becoming present into unconcealment (*aletheia*), *pthora* as a becoming absent marks this departure and withdrawal into concealment (*lethe*).²² Aristotle's two meanings of *pathos* thereby imply this contradiction which constitutes the being of presence and absence, the being of time.

Heidegger's interpretation of *pthora* as a descent characterizes this downward movement of the being of life. During the 1921/22 lecture course,

²⁰ GA 18: 196/BCAR 132; tm; Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, 375: "Affection means not any kind of harmful alteration whatsoever, but those which are extremely injurious, as great calamities and great sorrows."

²¹ Aristotle distinguishes *genesis* from movement in *Physics*, V (225 a25 f.): "Therefore it is impossible for that which is not to move. This being the case, *genesis* cannot be *kinesis* for it is that which is not which is generated ... So too, perishing is not a motion, for a motion has its contrary in either another motion or in rest, whereas 'perishing' (*pthora*) is the *enantion*, the contrary of *genesis* ... it is a change which implies a relationship of contradiction (*antiphasin*), not motion."

²² For Augustine, this possibility constitutes the originary imperfection and finitude of all created things: "For these lovely things would be nothing at all unless they were from Him. They rise and set (*quae oriuntur und occident*): in their rising they begin to be, and they grow towards perfection, and once come to perfection they grow old, and they die: not all grow old but all die (*et non omnia senescunt, et omni intereunt*). Therefore when they rise and tend toward being, the more haste they make toward fullness of being, the more haste they make towards ceasing to be. That is their law (*sic est modus eorum*)" *Confessions*, ed. James O'Donnell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), vol. 1, bk. 4, ch. 10, para. 15, p. 39.

Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle: Initiation into Phenomenological Research, this downward movement is interpreted as “ruinance,” the fundamental category of factual life. Like *pthora* and the passing into non-being, ruinance is always informed by an essential emptiness or nullity constituting the possibility of finite existence. Ruinance brings factual life into movedness by becoming this nullity or absence.²³ Ruinance is an essential confirmation of the fact “that” life is a movement of unrest (*Unruh*). Life is weighed down by the burden of this unrest which ceaselessly drives it forward and downward. Ruinance as the burden of life constitutes the invariable weight of existence that cannot be lifted and thereby comes to be designated as a deprivation of life described as collapse, dispersion, and fallenness. This tendency toward the falling apart of oneself is the innermost fate (*Hang*) of Dasein. Ruinance makes life so difficult to bear that Dasein for the most part avoids itself and comes to fear its own being.

While fear evidently functions as a precursor to anxiety generated from the fear of Dasein losing its own being, Aristotle’s own definition of fear is initially understood according to the possibility of the mood being produced by a cause that may be unknowable and even non-existent.²⁴ During *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, Heidegger returns to Aristotle’s exposition of fear as a “painful or troubled feeling (*tarache*) caused by the impression of an imminent evil (*mellontos kakou*) that causes pain (*Rhetoric*, 1382a21 ff.).” This feeling of pain, literally a depression of existence, is caused by an external affection whereby one is moved against one’s inclination to preserve *hedone*.²⁵ There is an unavoidable sense of disquiet

²³ During the summer semester 1921 course on Augustine and Neo-Platonism, Heidegger presents this movement of passing away (*pthora*) as “*molestia*,” a burden or weight that bears down upon existence. GA 60: 244/PRL 183: “*Molestia*: a How of experiencing, a burden to, and an endangering of, having-of-oneself – in full facticity. This having-of-oneself is, as factual, such that it enacts this endangering and forms it [*sich ein-bildet*]. In the concrete and genuine enactment of experience, it gives itself the possibility of falling, but in its ownmost radical self-concern, it gives itself at the same time the full, concrete, factual ‘opportunity’ to arrive at the *being* of its ownmost life.”

²⁴ *De anima*, 403a17–24: “Now it seems that all the affections of the soul, e.g. temper, good temper, fear, pity, courage, also gladness and love and hate, exist with the body [*meta somatos*]; for the body is being affected simultaneously [*pathematon sumbainonton*] with these. This is indicated by the fact that sometimes when strong or striking affections occur, we are not at the same time irritated or afraid, but at times when the affections are weak or obscure, we are moved [*kineisthai*], and the body is agitated in a manner similar to that when we are angry. Again, a more evident example is the fact that we become afraid even if there is no external cause of fear [*methenos gar phoborou*].”

²⁵ GA 18: 250/BCAR 168; tm: “It is not so much an *epetai*, but directly a *phobos lupe tis*: ‘fearing is something like a being-toned down [*Herabgestimmtsein*],’ a disposedness [*Befindlichkeit*] that is characterized as *phuge*, ‘fleeing,’ so to speak, from my Dasein. It is a *airesis*, not an elevated Dasein, but instead it retreats from it [*es weicht vor ihm zurück*].”

(*Verwirrung*) produced by fear as we retreat from that which threatens us. The fearsome first comes to be perceived in our everyday encounters within the world and primarily presents itself through the imagination (*phantasia*). What we fear announces and shows itself (*ek phantasias*) as a possibility yet only as an indeterminate possibility. Fear as a “slumbering possibility” (*schlummernde Möglichkeit*) discloses the world since out of it something like the fearsome may arise. A certain sense of powerfulness accompanies what we fear in its ability to cause imminent harm and overpower us. As the fearful entity is brought into a definite range and bears down upon us we feel endangered and abandoned.²⁶ However, fear is not something that simply appears. Instead fear bewilders us by first closing us off from the possibility of our endangered being-in so that it can be made fully visible.

Like the mood of leisurely calm accompanying pleasure, fear is constituted by a sudden moment of anticipation. Once one genuinely believes that one is afraid, then this anticipation only increases so that we may eventually experience a countertendency inherent to the mood of fear, the hope for preservation, “In this ‘hope of being-preserved’ (*Hoffnung auf das Gerettet werden*), the characteristic disposedness in which I am concerned with what I fear is manifest. It must matter to me (*Es muß mich angehen*). It cannot be something of indifference” (GA 18: 260/BCAR 174). The fact that one is literally thrown into a threatening situation by accident only further enhances this tendency toward preservation through a kind of hope for the future.²⁷ Fear while seemingly closing us off from all possibilities instead presents us with a given possibility in such a way that Dasein is always open to being-toward its possibilities. Such a possibility of preservation presents itself with a distinctive *hexis* so that through being afraid one can become composed in relation to fear.²⁸

²⁶ Gadamer provides an eloquent hermeneutical exposition of fear; see *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum, 1999), 130: “Likewise, *phobos* is not just a state of mind, but as Aristotle says, a cold shudder that makes one’s blood run cold, that makes one shiver. In the particular sense in which *phobos* is connected to *eleos* in this definition of tragedy, *phobos* means the shivers of apprehension that come over us for someone whom we see rushing to his destruction and for whom we fear.”

²⁷ GA 18: 260/BCAR 174: “The possibility of preservation (*Rettung*) must be held to tightly, and in the anticipatory seizing of the possibility of not being done in, there resides the characteristic ‘retreating’ (*Zurückweichen*) from that which threatens one—*lupe* as *phuge*. The potential to be preserved—in short, *of being*, is there, and nevertheless *I retreat in the face of being*. This is the fundamental meaning of *tarache*. Dasein does not simply abandon itself. Instead, in hoping, it holds unto the possibility of preservation.”

²⁸ See James Dodd, “The Philosophical Significance of Hope,” *Review of Metaphysics*, 58/1 (2004), 124: “The openness of possibility, or the opening toward which Dasein is able to be, is evident even when, and perhaps especially when, there are no possibilities, or when all possibilities have

Fear also functions as the condition of possibility for courage such that one strives to preserve oneself by having at one's disposal the knowledge of how to act: "it 'preserves the mean,' it brings me into the genuine being that corresponds to the circumstances" (GA 18: 262/BCAR 175). Like *hedone*, fear constitutes a certain temporal structure, namely through the distinctive possibilities of one being-afraid in the right manner and coming to resoluteness (*Entschlossenheit*) as presented in Heidegger's account of angst and authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*) in *Being and Time*. Fear makes a disclosive orientation towards the world possible since the kind of circumspection and concerned being - alongside which accompanies fear harbors the conscience able to locate the mean within existence. "As a phenomenon of Dasein, conscience is not just a fact which occurs and is occasionally present-at-hand. It is only in Dasein's kind of being, and makes itself known as a fact only with factual existence and in it" (SZ: 269).

IV. BEING-DEPOSED

If conscience represents the ontologization of *phronesis* as an orientation toward the authentic realization of one's existence by being able to deliberate upon and choose the proper action, then this possibility of being-composed always requires a choice (*proairesis*) whereby we must want to become resolute (GA 18: 144/BCAR 84). Such a choice only arises from this situation of disquiet characterized by *tarache*. In contrast to the leisurely calm (*Ruhe*) which pervades the *hedone* of existence, the mood of fear induces a stark opposition between genuinely believing that one is in danger and genuinely believing that one can escape. This dilemma is presented in the two fundamental possibilities of choice (*airesis*) and flight (*phuge*) arising from the mood of fear, at the same time, as "going toward" (*Zugehen*), "seizing" (*Zugreifen*), going toward Dasein itself; or a disposedness whose character "retreats from" (*zurück weicht*) Dasein, "flees" (*flieht*) from it in a certain respect" (GA 18: 247/BCAR 166). While *airesis* becomes the choosing of one's being in resoluteness, *phuge* becomes the flight from one's being through fallenness.²⁹ The structure of

been rendered impossible. Even within the deficient givenness of their exclusion, possibilities remain given, in the sense of open: they remain that toward-which Dasein exists, and in no way is it the case that Dasein ever exists separated or outside of any relation to them."

²⁹ GA 18: 247/BCAR 166: "This is given in *hedone* vis-à-vis a *lupe*. *Airesis* and *phuge* are the characteristics that characterize the fundamental possibility of living as a way of being with itself [*Seins bei sich selbst*]. *Airesis* and *phuge* are the fundamental possibilities of Dasein. It is no accident that *airesis* and *phuge* appear where it is a question of the ultimate ontological interpretation of Dasein."

pathos comes to be most clearly disclosed in and through this movement. Preservation or “not-letting-perish” by becoming what you are as *genesis* is thereby always implicated by *pthora*, the downfall or ruination of existence. In this movement of *airesis* and *phuge*, Dasein finds itself underway (*unterwegs*) by being-stretched between these possibilities of coming to be and passing away. For Heidegger, this being underway is exhibited in *Being and Time* as Dasein’s potentiality-for-being-a-whole:

Factual Dasein exists as born; and, as born, it is already dying, in the sense of Being-towards-death. As long as Dasein factually exists, both the “ends” and their “between” *are*, and they *are* in the only way which is possible on the basis of Dasein’s being as *care*. Thrownness and that Being-towards-death in which one either flees or anticipates it, form a unity; and in this unity, birth and death are “connected” in a manner characteristic of Dasein. As care, Dasein *is* the “between.” (SZ 374)

The stretching along and being-stretched of its own being ultimately clarify how Dasein exists as nothing other than a movement of temporalizing (*Geschehen*). Dasein is stretched between birth and death and thereby maintains a certain persistence (*Beharrlichkeit*) in being that endures as long as it is. The connectedness of life as this stretching along, movement, and persistence corresponds to Heidegger’s earlier interpretation of *hedone* as genuine disposedness towards living. Dasein is disposed toward this persistence of life in such a way that as being-in-a-world it is a clearing (*Lichtung*).

In this movement of how Dasein finds itself as coming to be, beings are encountered and thereby come to presence by speaking about them (*logos*). However, this *logos* is ultimately grounded in the *pathe* of tranquility and fear such that the “the primary being-oriented (*Orientierung*), the illumination of its being-in-a-world is not a knowing, but rather a finding-oneself (*Sich-befinden*) ... Only within the thus characterized finding-oneself and being-in-a-world is it possible to speak about things” (GA 18: 262/BCAR 176; tm). These *pathe* present us with a new way of speaking about things so that we only come to understand things as determined by the concreteness (*Sachlichkeit*) of our moods. Because *logos* always stands in connection with the *pathe*, there resides within *logos* an essential danger that in speaking about things we are led astray. In an earlier lecture course, *Introduction to Phenomenological Research*, delivered in the winter semester 1923/24, Heidegger emphasizes that “the factual existence of speaking as such, insofar as it is here and solely insofar as it is here as speaking is the genuine source of deception. That is to say, the

existence of speaking bears in itself the possibility of deception. The lie lies in the facticity of language" (GA 17: 34/IPR 26). This lie resides not merely within *logos*, but within the *pathe* themselves always determining us in a certain way so that we come to a world oriented by a mood. The *disposedness* of Dasein is constantly stretched between these possibilities that at once bring the thing into presence yet also harbor the possibility of concealing the thing. Here Heidegger's interpretation of *pathos* as disposedness so decisively informs his understanding of truth (*aletheia*) that one may speak of truth only *pathologically*. The disposedness of *pathos* essentially *de-poses* us.

This pathology of truth reflects how Dasein finds itself oriented toward its ownmost possibility, its possibility-to-be. It is nothing other than an openness to this possibility. Dasein preserves its possibility-to-be as a possibility of being-composed by *hedone* and the mood of tranquility. Yet this possibility of becoming composed is always an openness to becoming de-composed. Both possibilities of being-composed and being de-composed constitute the essential imperfection of Dasein as a *pathos*. This decomposition and its possibility-not-to-be intimated by fear and pain first present Dasein with the choice either to flee or to pursue its facticity.³⁰ *Pathos* embodies this movement so that Dasein in becoming-what-it-is finds itself posed with the possibility of becoming-what-it-is-not. In fact, Dasein only encounters beings by first being-out-towards (*Aussein aufetwas*) its nullity or absence as the most distinctive possibility of its finite existence. Death is the end (*telos*) and inner limit (*peras*) of being which constitutes the possibility of being-alive: "Being absent is the most extreme manner of being present" (SZ 34). In the way that Dasein is always moved and thereby already thrown open to this possibility, a world becomes possible. Such a movement diagnoses the pathological condition of our Dasein.

³⁰ SZ 261: "In the first instance, we must characterize Being-towards-death [*Sein-zum-Tode*] as *Being towards a possibility* [*Sein zu einer Möglichkeit*] – indeed, towards a distinctive possibility of Dasein itself. 'Being towards' a possibility – that is to say, towards something possible – may signify 'Being out for' [*Aussein auf*] something possible, as in concerning ourselves with its enactment [*Verwicklung*]."

CHAPTER 8

Heidegger's interpretation of Kant

Stephan Käufer

When, a few years ago, I studied the *Critique of Pure Reason* again and read it against the background of Husserl's phenomenology, it was as if the scales fell from my eyes, and Kant became for me an essential confirmation of the correctness of the way I was seeking. (GA 25: 431/PIK 292)¹

With these words Heidegger closes his 1927/28 lecture course on Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. They reveal a lot about Heidegger's work on Kant. Heidegger experienced in Kant the same philosophical originality and insight that makes *Being and Time* such an enduringly important book. Indeed, Heidegger implies here that he sees substantial overlap between his own work and Kant's. When Heidegger publishes his interpretation of Kant, commentators condemn this overlap. They claim that Heidegger's interpretation distorts Kant and buries his transcendental philosophy under a mound of Heideggerian views. The aging Heidegger himself feels compelled to issue a retraction in a late preface to his *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, claiming – with uncharacteristic modesty, and falsely, as it turns out – that he had forced too much of his own thought onto Kant, subjecting the *Critique* to a reading whose basic terms are foreign to it. This presumption endures, but it is mistaken. Heidegger's Kant-interpretation is important, and it is so deeply intertwined with the existential phenomenology of *Being and Time* that it is impossible to understand one without the other. The influence goes in both directions, and Heidegger's interpretation of Kant makes *Being and Time* a deeply Kantian work. Or so I will argue.

¹ All translations in this essay are my own, except for passages from Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, for which I quote the Guyer–Wood translation.

I. CHRONOLOGY

Heidegger engages more or less intensively with Kant's work throughout his philosophical career, from his very first publications until his very last. We can roughly distinguish three phases of concentration. First, there are Heidegger's early years, the time of his dissertations before he turns to a serious study of phenomenology and earns his first appointment as a lecturer at the University of Marburg. Heidegger here shows himself to be an eager contributor to the neo-Kantian schools of interpretation that he later rejects. The young Heidegger introduces his doctoral dissertation on psychologistic theories of judgment by announcing that "the question about the proper interpretation of Kant has now been decided in favor of the transcendental-logical conception of Hermann Cohen and his school, as well as Windelband and Rickert" (GA 1: 19, 63). A close look reveals that Heidegger's neo-Kantian sympathies have a reformist edge. In this dissertation and the later *Habilitation* Heidegger is working on the theories of judgment and categories under the influence of Emil Lask, more than Rickert or the other established neo-Kantians. Like Lask, Heidegger tries in his dissertations to ground transcendental logic by combining an analysis of the unity and meaning of propositions with an analysis of the objectivity of cognition. The results are hardly overwhelming. Nevertheless, they seek to be original, insofar as the young Heidegger claims that the "transcendental-logical" conception of Kant's work, i.e. the neo-Kantian interpretation, still needs to be grounded in a detailed analysis of its basic terms, such as validity, judgment, sense, and being.

Ten years later, Heidegger is working on precisely the same basic questions, although he now approaches them on the basis of his work in phenomenology, the hermeneutics of everydayness, and his interpretation of Aristotle. A key turning point comes during the winter semester of 1925/26. Heidegger lectures on topics in logic, specifically the apophantic structure of judgments and truth, and during this lecture course Heidegger begins the second – and without doubt most productive and important – phase of his Kant-interpretation. About halfway through the semester he turns his attention to Kant's categories, deduction and schematism, and spends the remainder of the term lecturing exclusively on these topics.² At precisely that time, in December 1925, he writes to Karl Jaspers, his

² See GA 21: 269–408/see LQT.

erstwhile companion in a philosophical *Kampfsgemeinschaft*, that he is “really beginning to love Kant.”³ Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* becomes a crucial focus of Heidegger’s work over the next few years. He spends most of 1926 working on the manuscript of *Being and Time*. His 1927 lecture course *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* contains three lengthy discussions of Kant (GA 24: 35–107, 172–218, 445–452/27–76, 122–154, 313–318/BPP 27–76, 122–154, 313–318). The next semester, 1927/28, Heidegger lectures entirely on Kant in his *Phänomenologische Interpretation von Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (GA 25/PIK). In 1929 he presents his interpretation in three lectures at Davos, defends it in a memorable debate with Ernst Cassirer, and publishes his “Kantbook,” *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*. The work from this period sharply rejects the neo-Kantian approaches of his early years and constitutes the positive core of his Kant-interpretation.

Finally, a loosely connected third phase starts in the 1930s when Heidegger returns to Kant with less frequency, beginning with the second half of his 1930 lecture course *Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit* (GA 31: 139–304/EHF 101–208), and as late as his 1961 essay *Kants These über das Sein* (GA 9: 445–480/*Pathm* 337–363). The most famous of these later pieces is the 1935/36 lecture course *Die Frage nach dem Ding* (GA 41/WT). In the years after *Being and Time* Heidegger largely abandons fundamental ontology, the systematic ambitions of *Being and Time*, and the methodological priority of the analysis of *Dasein*. Instead he focuses on the historical development of understandings of being and sees this history of being in terms of epochs. This “*Kehre*” is important, and there are interesting questions to what extent the infusion of historical epochs in the later approach implies a rejection of earlier views. However, there is no reason to claim that Heidegger’s later writings on Kant constitute a revision of his main Kant-interpretation. He does emphasize different themes. In the 1920s Heidegger focuses mostly on the transcendental deduction and the schematism chapter, while *Die Frage nach dem Ding* focuses on the analytic of principles. But these interpretations fit together into a single reading according to which the *Critique of Pure Reason* is a work in ontology, and not, *pace* the popular neo-Kantian approaches, an epistemology of the natural sciences. In the 1965 preface to the third edition of the Kantbook Heidegger presents *Die Frage nach dem Ding* and *Kants These*

³ Martin Heidegger–Karl Jaspers *Briefwechsel, 1920–1963*, ed. Walter Biemel and Hans Saner (Munich: Piper, 1992), 57; *The Heidegger–Jaspers Correspondence (1920–1963)*, trans. Gary E. Aylesworth (Amherst, NY: Humanities Books, 2003), 61.

über das Sein as complements to the original Kantbook. Accordingly it makes sense to speak of a single Kant-interpretation.⁴

Heidegger's Kant-interpretation continues to be influential, in a qualified sense. The qualification is that there are few self-avowed "Heideggerian" Kant scholars, and there has never been a "Heideggerian" school of Kantianism. Nevertheless, much of the past century of Kant scholarship owes basic concepts and questions to Heidegger's pioneering work, and it is shaped by the substantial debates that Heidegger created single-handedly by undermining and rejecting the dominant readings of neo-Kantian epistemologists. So, for example, he raises the question about the status of the transcendental imagination among the fundamental faculties of the mind; and he brings to light the importance of the puzzling schematism chapter in the overall argument of the *Critique*. Unlike neo-Kantian, neo-Hegelian and positivist accounts, all of which reject parts of the *Critique* as inconsistent with or superseded by others, Heidegger insists on the internal coherence and unity of the *Critique*. Moreover, as the case of the transcendental imagination illustrates, Heidegger once again shows philosophers how to give a unified interpretation of Kant and the post-Kantian idealists. Where Lange, Cohen, and other early neo-Kantians had proclaimed a "return to Kant" in order to get away from Hegel, Fichte, Schelling, and other "offal," Heidegger shows that the German idealists are profoundly insightful Kantians. He revives the idea that a fundamental unity is implicit in Kant's thought, and draws attention to the transcendental deduction and schematism chapters as articulations of this unity.

II. "VIOLENCE"

This chronology shows that Heidegger writes *Being and Time* while he is intensely immersed in his interpretations of Kant's thought. Not surprisingly, *Being and Time* is itself a Kantian work. Heidegger explicitly discusses Kant in some sections, such as section 64 on "Care and Selfhood," in which Heidegger analyzes the notion of the self and the subject in Kant's Paralogism chapter. Other sections contain an inexplicit, but profound, engagement with Kant's philosophy; this is especially true of section 65 and other parts of Heidegger's analysis of temporality. Conversely,

⁴ For a survey of Heidegger's preoccupation with the *Critique of Pure Reason*, see Daniel Dahlstrom, "Heidegger's Kantian Turn: Notes to his Commentary on the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*," *Review of Metaphysics* (1991): 339–361.

it is also not surprising that his readings of Kant and his Kantbook share the basic framework of his existential phenomenology. This leads to the charge that Heidegger's interpretation distorts the meaning of Kant's original text. It is perhaps especially crass that Heidegger ends his Kantbook with Division IV, the "retrieval" or "revival" (*Wiederholung*) of the problem of metaphysics, which is entirely devoted to the fundamental ontology of *Being and Time*, as if this were the upshot of Kant's critical philosophy.

Heidegger introduces the language of violence himself in the Kantbook. Just before moving on to the blatantly Heideggerian Division IV, he writes:

In order to wrest from the words what they want to say, every interpretation needs to use violence. But such violence cannot roam willfully. The force of a guiding idea must drive and lead the construal.⁵

Cassirer reinforces the trope in his 1931 review of the Kantbook, the first and to date perhaps still the best examination of the merits of Heidegger's work as a Kant scholar. Cassirer writes:

Here Heidegger no longer speaks as a commentator, but as a usurper who invades the Kantian system by force of arms in order to subjugate it and make it serve his own set of problems.⁶

The idea that Heidegger's Kant-interpretation is fundamentally skewed has become commonplace. It is, perhaps, the main reason why Heidegger's Kant-interpretation has received comparatively little scholarly analysis, despite a proliferation of Heidegger scholarship. In the 1973 Foreword to the fourth edition of the Kantbook, the eighty-four-year-old Heidegger himself dismisses his Kantbook as indefensible, because the imposition of "foreign" concepts leads to an "over-interpretation" that he tries to take back in later writings (KPM pp. xiv, xviii). It is therefore worthwhile to take a few moments to examine this claim regarding the "violence" of Heidegger's Kantbook and to establish some ground rules for analyzing the positive content of the second phase of Heidegger's engagement with Kant's philosophy.

⁵ KPM 202/141. This style of Heideggerian appropriation of the tradition must be seen in connection with his idea of *Wiederholung*. In a letter to Jaspers, Heidegger writes about *Being and Time*: "I am fighting for an understanding of the central possibility that we can only *revive* [*wiederholen*] in philosophy – but also must *revive*" (*Heidegger–Jaspers Briefwechsel*, 71/*Heidegger–Jaspers Correspondence*, 73). In a note on Cassirer's review of his Kantbook, Heidegger writes: "A Kant in himself – that is a basic misunderstanding" (KPM 301/211).

⁶ Ernst Cassirer, "Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik," *Kant-Studien* 36 (1931): 17 (hereafter cited as "Cassirer," followed by the page number).

To begin with, Heidegger is of course correct in claiming that every interpretation reads a text with a particular slant. This is particularly true of the then dominant neo-Kantian interpretation whose core Heidegger sees in Hermann Cohen's *Logic of Pure Cognition*. In this work Cohen articulates the Marburg school's "logical idealism," its contention that cognition consists entirely of conceptual acts, without receptive intuition. In Kant's *Critique*, Cohen writes, "thought was preceded by an intuition. Thought had its beginnings in something external to itself. Here lies the weakness in Kant's foundations. Here lies the ground for the offal that soon fell upon his school."⁷ According to the Marburg school's "continued construction" of Kant's system, time and space are pure concepts, the transcendental aesthetic is flawed, and the schematism is unnecessary. All of this looks violent, and Heidegger's interpretation becomes influential in subsequent Kant scholarship precisely because he systematically undermines and opposes these neo-Kantian readings. Presumably, contemporary Kant scholarship also interprets his system in light of empirical results of current neuroscience and psychology. So by itself the claim that Heidegger eschews a literal reading of Kant and instead seeks to articulate what Kant's words "want to say" gives us no reason to discount his interpretation.

The charge of violence, however, is subtler, as Cassirer well knows. Cassirer does not condemn Heidegger's interpretation due to some roughly characterized systematic "bias." Nor is he simply put off by the Heideggerian "revival" in Division IV. Cassirer's criticism is directed specifically at Heidegger's concept of a "receptive spontaneity." This concept is central to Heidegger's attempt to find a unity underlying sensibility and the understanding, givenness, and thought. Heidegger argues that the transcendental imagination is the third faculty that makes both intuitions and concepts possible. In particular the imagination produces the schemata, which give concepts a sensible aspect. Cassirer's review argues that this cannot be a correct reading of *Kant*, because the very notion of "receptive spontaneity" is excluded by Kant's conceptual framework.

This concept can only be made intelligible in terms of the basic presupposition of Heidegger's manner of approaching the problem – i.e., in terms of his analysis of *Being and Time* – but in Kant's theory it remains a stranger and an intruder. (Cassirer, 17)

⁷ Hermann Cohen, *Logik der reinen Erkenntnis*, 2nd edn (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1914), 12. On Cohen's logical idealism and Heidegger's confrontation with it, see my essay, "On Heidegger on Logic," *Continental Philosophy Review*, 34/4 (2001): 455–476.

Cassirer here shows a clear understanding of the phenomenology of attuned competences that Heidegger develops in *Being and Time*, and correctly traces the conceptual connection between Heidegger's claims about the transcendental imagination and his analysis of the temporality underlying his existential phenomenology. The claim about the violence of Heidegger's interpretation, then, is not that Heidegger uses more recent concepts and insights that are not part of Kant's system; it is that Heidegger uses concepts that are explicitly excluded by the basic concepts of Kant's system. As we will see below, though, this concept and Heidegger's approach are not all that foreign to Kant's theory after all.

Secondly, note an important point about chronological sequence. In his review Cassirer presumes that Heidegger worked out his *Being and Time* view independently and then turned his attention to Kant in order to wrest his mantle away from the neo-Kantians. Interestingly, the old Heidegger himself affirms this sequence in his retraction in the 1973 Foreword to the Kantbook. He writes there:

While working on the lectures I gave in 1927/28 on "Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*" my attention was drawn to the schematism chapter and I noticed a connection to ... the problem of being and the phenomenon of time. In this way the questions of *Being and Time* entered my attempt to interpret Kant. ... In truth, however, these questions are extraneous to Kant's inquiry. (KPM pp. xiv, xviii)

In other words, Heidegger here claims that he became interested in the treatment of time in Kant's schematism in 1927, *after* having written *Being and Time*, which caused him to over-construe Kant as a proto-Heideggerian. This is just what Cassirer's "usurper" claim presumes. But we know from Heidegger's lecture notes and correspondence that he was deeply engaged in his study of Kant *before and during* the writing of *Being and Time*. Heidegger develops his existential analytic of everydayness quite early and presents much of it in the 1923 *Hermeneutics of Facticity* lectures. Here and in the 1925 *Prolegomena* he points out that care has temporal underpinnings and becomes interested in foundational notions of time. This leads him to analyze the notion of time underlying the deduction and the schematism of the first *Critique*. He first does this in the *Logic* lecture of 1925/26. So Heidegger lectured on the temporality of the schematism in 1925/26, just *before* writing *Being and Time* – as he works out his theory of originary temporality in Division II – and his conjecture that the schematism reveals originary temporality in turn influences the basic plan for that book. In fact, *Being and Time* announces this plan in its Introduction, where Heidegger writes that the analysis of

the schematism is the “preliminary stage” for the analysis of originary temporality (SZ 40). At the same time he also claims that “only when we have established the problems of temporality, can we succeed in casting light on the obscurity of [Kant’s] doctrine of the schematism” (SZ 23). While Cassirer is right that Heidegger uses the conceptual framework of *Being and Time* in his 1929 Kantbook, that framework itself derives from Heidegger’s engagement with Kant a few years earlier, during which, as he says in his Kant lectures, the scales fell from his eyes. Just after completing the manuscript for *Being and Time*, Heidegger writes to Jaspers that he “learned to understand and love Kant” precisely “*in the process* of working on this manuscript.”⁸ Consequently, the question about Heidegger’s Kant-interpretation becomes much less about how Heidegger uses *Being and Time* to butcher the *Critique*. The interesting question is how Kantian themes *already* shape the argument and basic concepts of *Being and Time*, which then in turn inform Heidegger’s Kantbook.

Finally, Heidegger’s supposed subjugation of Kant is by no means complete. It may be correct that “receptive spontaneity” goes against the grain of Kant’s basic conceptual architecture, and that Kant’s work is closer to epistemology than ontology. From the beginning there have been fruitful debates about such questions among Kant scholars like Cassirer and Dieter Henrich. Nevertheless, it cannot be correct that Heidegger merely usurps and subjugates Kant’s system. After all, Heidegger makes much of his fundamental *disagreements* with Kant. The most significant and far-reaching such disagreement lies in the analysis of the self. Heidegger persistently criticizes Kant for a latent Cartesian conception of the I as immediately present to itself and independent of its representations. According to Heidegger, Kant does not explain the nature of the I as the subject of its representations, and he fails to bring to light the temporal structure of the self. In *Being and Time* Heidegger writes:

While Kant avoids separating the I from thought, he does not approach the “I think” according to its complete nature as “I think something;” in particular he fails to see the ontological “presupposition” of the “I think something” as a basic determination of the self. ... [Instead] he once again reduces the I to an isolated subject that accompanies representations in an ontologically completely undetermined way. (SZ 321)

No amount of violence, it seems, could shoehorn Kant’s notion of the transcendental apperception, the “I think,” into Heidegger’s vocabulary.

⁸ Heidegger–Jaspers Briefwechsel, 71/Heidegger–Jaspers Correspondence, 73.

For an analysis of the positive content of Heidegger's Kant-interpretation, these reflections on the supposed "violence" of Heidegger's appropriation of Kant imply the following. First, we get a more complete idea of the significance of Heidegger's recasting of Kantian themes by explaining how Heidegger's phenomenological interpretation of Kant at the same time undermines neo-Kantian epistemological readings. Second, much of the positive content of Heidegger's work on Kant shows up as Kant-inspired arguments in *Being and Time*; in particular Heidegger's analysis of ordinary temporality can only be understood in light of his analysis of Kant's transcendental deduction. Third, this substantial overlap, which results from the mutual influence of Heidegger's phenomenological work and his readings of Kant, is bounded by a fundamental criticism that Heidegger levels against Kant's notion of the self. In the remainder of this essay I will address each of these three points in turn.

III. AGAINST NEO-KANTIAN EPISTEMOLOGY

The first point is mainly historical, so I will cover it quickly. The upshot is that Heidegger does not simply ignore competing interpretations of Kant, or brush them aside in order to proceed with his own usurpation. He engages with the dominant neo-Kantian position at the most fundamental level.

From 1912 until 1915, while the young Heidegger is working on his dissertations, he is a convinced neo-Kantian in the mold of his erstwhile mentor Heinrich Rickert. This changes over the next ten years, as Heidegger's thinking becomes more profound and independent. In 1926, in the midst of his major interpretations of Kant's work, and just after completing the manuscript of *Being and Time*, Heidegger writes to Jaspers about some of these neo-Kantians:

By the way, what people like Windelband and Rickert are supposed to have in common with Kant, that they deserve this name, is by now completely incomprehensible to me.⁹

Notably, he does not include Hermann Cohen, Paul Natorp, and Cassirer, the main proponents of the "Marburg school" of neo-Kantianism, in this slight. In his lecture courses on Kant and in his Kantbook, Heidegger,

⁹ Ibid. This comment might be inflected by Heidegger's bitterness about Rickert's negative assessment of the manuscript of *Being and Time*, which briefly blocked Heidegger's chances of an appointment in Freiburg. The Marburgers, meanwhile, were actively campaigning for a permanent position for Heidegger.

who has been a visiting professor in Marburg since 1923, continues to praise the work of the Marburg school as the “most penetrating and significant Kant-interpretation of the 19th century” (GA 25: 77/PIK 53). He substantiates this subtly ambiguous praise – which relegates Natorp and by implication also Cassirer to the previous century – by frequently using Cohen and Natorp’s work as a foil, even though he claims that his interpretation of Kant’s *Critique* is “not about the literature on the text, but about the text itself.”¹⁰ This esteem has little to do with the details of their position, which Heidegger mostly rejects. Instead it derives from Heidegger’s view that Cohen and his followers understand a deep problem of Kant’s *Critique*, that it lacks a fundamental unity. This same problem motivates Heidegger’s own efforts. Both the Marburgers and Heidegger find that this basic disunity of Kant’s system shows itself in a tension between the transcendental aesthetic and the transcendental logic and that the logic makes claims that seem to reject or replace the aesthetic.

Cohen and Natorp argue that the essence of Kant’s critical epistemology lies in the a priori conceptual contributions to cognition. According to their view, thought goes all the way down or, as Cohen puts it, “given [means the same as] capable of being found by thought. ... Only what thought itself is capable of finding can count as *given* to thought.”¹¹ Consequently, they find the very idea of pre-conceptual intuition incoherent and propose to eliminate the aesthetic altogether. According to Natorp, the transcendental deduction reveals that thought is the root of intuition, because “as a downright correction to the claims of the transcendental aesthetic, the deduction asserts the synthetic origin, i.e. thought-origin, of the unity of time and space [...]. Even the ‘pure’ manifold [of sensibility] is not there beforehand, but is first ‘given’ through pure synthesis.”¹² And so, “placing time and space ahead of the laws of thinking an object is a serious mistake in the Kantian system of transcendental philosophy.”¹³ All cognition grounds in synthesis, and Kant’s considered treatment of time and space belongs in the transcendental logic. Natorp suggests that Kant should have placed them under the category of existence.

¹⁰ GA 25: 8/PIK 6. For implicit or explicit mention of the Marburg school, see GA 25: 8, 67, 73, 78, 156, 185, 330/PIK 5 f., 46, 50, 53, 107, 126, 224. Also KPM 67/47 f., 145/101 f., 243/170 f.; GA 21: 271; GA 26: 209/MFL 164. Theirs is the only contemporary Kant-interpretation that Heidegger considers in any detail.

¹¹ *Logik der reinen Erkenntnis*, 82.

¹² Paul Natorp, *Die logischen Grundlagen der exakten Wissenschaften* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1910), 276.

¹³ *Ibid.* 276 f.

Heidegger obviously seeks a different solution to the perceived tension, one that he claims is more Kantian. Indeed, compared to the violent stroke of simply eliminating one of the two parts of Kant's doctrine of elements, one may well agree with him. Even Heidegger's version of the problem is more charitable, as in his view Kant's *Critique* does not lack unity, but rather lacks a clear articulation of the unity that holds the system together. What an interpretation needs to do is not to *correct* Kant, but to explain what is already implicit in his system, to "maintain the transcendental aesthetic and logic each on its own terms and nevertheless unify them" (GA 25: 78/PIK 54). This is possible, because there is no outright contradiction between the aesthetic and the deduction, but rather a "hidden common ground."¹⁴ Indeed, Kant's claims in the deduction are more ambiguous than Natorp makes them out to be. For instance, Kant writes about the pure synthesis of apprehension that

without it we could have *a priori* neither the representations of space nor of time, since these can be generated only through the synthesis of the manifold that sensibility in its original receptivity provides. (KrV A99)

In other words, Kant asserts in the deduction both the central claim of the aesthetic, that receptive sensibility provides the manifold, and that the representation of time is generated in a synthesis. So the tension is not merely between the "critical" deduction and the "pre-critical remainder" of the aesthetic, but it is reproduced in Kant's analysis of time in the deduction itself. This ought to make one sympathetic to Heidegger's supposition that Kant's appeals to time in the deduction do not correct the aesthetic, but rather point to a deeper notion of time that unites both intuitive givenness and active synthesis. Accordingly, Heidegger focuses his interpretation on the temporality of the threefold synthesis in the deduction and on the temporal structure of the transcendental apperception.

To be sure, there are other deep differences between Heidegger's interpretation and the Marburgers' view. Cohen and his followers establish the view that Kant's *Critique* is an epistemology that aims to ground the natural sciences. Heidegger, by contrast, argues that Kant's work aims to

¹⁴ GA 25: 78/PIK 54. According to Heidegger, this ground remains hidden from Kant because his *Critique* is beholden to a tradition that focuses on concepts and logical structures to analyze our understanding of entities. See KPM 68/48, 167/117, 243/170 f. Heidegger refers to this philosophical slant as the "dominion of logic." On Heidegger's sharp rejection of this dominion of logic in the well-known, though rarely understood, lecture: *What is Metaphysics?* (1929), see my essay, "The Nothing and the Ontological Difference in Heidegger's *What is Metaphysics?*" *Inquiry*, 48/6 (2005): 482–506.

provide the ontology of nature, by which he means all occurrent entities, and that it is not limited to the natural sciences. Further, Heidegger argues that Kant's analysis of the possibility of cognition is an ontology, insofar as it amounts to an analysis of human nature in its finitude, rather than merely focusing on the epistemological or even psychological understanding of cognition. As with the unity of the system and the place of the transcendental aesthetic, so also with these differences the important point is that Heidegger's phenomenological interpretation responds to a prominent problem in the existing literature on Kant and uses the conceptual resources of Kant's system to articulate a solution. Cassirer finds Heidegger's notion of "receptive spontaneity" to be an imposition. But seen in the context of the Marburgers' position – which incidentally includes Cassirer's own work – this notion helps solve a long-standing and fundamental interpretive issue.

IV. SYNTHESIS AND TEMPORALITY

The thesis of this essay is that Heidegger's main Kant-interpretation of the 1920s is not a "usurpation," i.e. it does not impose non-Kantian concepts from the existential phenomenology of *Being and Time* onto a view that resists those concepts. This thesis is supported in a general way by the facts about the chronological sequence of Heidegger's work. Heidegger begins to work out his Kant-interpretation before he completes his manuscript of *Being and Time*, and this suggests at least that the two projects are intermingled. But we can also make a more specific case for this mutual influence of Heidegger's existential phenomenology and his Kant-interpretation. It is no mere coincidence that Heidegger turns to Kant as he begins to work out Division II of *Being and Time*. He does so because he finds in Kant's treatment of time the key to explaining the temporality of care. It turns out that the very concepts that are fundamental for Heidegger's interpretation of Kant are also the most Kantian notions – and the most basic ones – in the overall argument of *Being and Time*, namely, the temporal ecstases and originary temporality.

We just saw in the context of Heidegger's response to the Marburg school that his Kant-interpretation rests on the idea that the presentation of time as a form of intuition in the transcendental aesthetic must be reconciled with the various claims about time as integral to synthesis in the transcendental deduction. Meanwhile, Heidegger's most basic explanation of the structure of existence, i.e., of care, is the analysis of originary temporality as the "ontological sense" of care. This notion of temporality

is both thoroughly Kantian and distinctly Heideggerian. Heidegger derives it by reflecting on the role of time in the threefold synthesis of the transcendental deduction and in the schematism, and in turn uses it to develop his interpretation of the transcendental imagination as the basic common principle of Kant's system.

Heidegger's analysis of the role of time in the threefold synthesis is precisely the point at which Cassirer claims to detect the usurping concept "receptive spontaneity." Heidegger characterizes the transcendental imagination in such terms, as the common root that makes the unity of intuitions and concepts possible by schematizing concepts. Cassirer traces this concept to Heidegger's existential conception of attuned competences in *Being and Time*, which are both active and receptive in the disclosure of entities. In the analysis of everydayness Heidegger points out that attunement and competence are two sides of the same coin. This means that in existence we disclose entities as significant through our abilities to deal with them purposively, while we are also affected by these entities in determinate ways. Disclosure in general has this dual nature, which is best illustrated with examples of how we encounter tools. Pens and paper, for instance, show up in the context of my ability to write with them. On the other hand, in projecting such competent ability I always already find myself attuned, i.e. these entities show up as mattering to me and soliciting me in specific ways that are inflected by my self-understanding in terms of the possibilities that these tools afford me. So, pens matter to me as they do because I know how to deal with them skillfully, and vice versa.

Cassirer is quite right that the phenomena of attunement and competent abilities are foreign to Kant's analysis. But Heidegger does not impose this aspect of his existential phenomenology on his reading of Kant. While Heidegger avoids the epistemological reading of the Marburg school, and instead interprets Kant's focus as the finitude of human disclosure of entities, he does not go so far as to ignore Kant's pervasive cognitivism, which understands disclosure in terms of cognition by way of representations. Indeed, the profound difference between the latent Cartesianism that Heidegger finds in Kant and his own phenomenology of pre-cognitive disclosure is the background of Heidegger's specific criticisms and rejection of Kant's notion of the self in his transcendental apperception.

The issue about the overlap between *Being and Time* and Heidegger's Kant-interpretation is a different one. It is about originary temporality, not skills and attunement as such. The existential analytic of Division I of *Being and Time* shows that skills and attunements reveal care, the

structure of existence. In Division II Heidegger asks about “the ontological sense of care.” He is looking for an explanation of how care hangs together as a unified phenomenon; that is to say, he is attempting to establish what it is about human existence that binds attunements and know-how together. How must I be constituted so that the way entities matter to me shows up in unison with my skillful comportment towards them? Heidegger provides this explanation in the somewhat obscure and often misunderstood chapter on originary temporality. Temporality is the existential deep structure that makes skillful, attuned comportment possible. In looking for this account of the temporality of care, Heidegger leans heavily on Kant’s analysis of the pure threefold synthesis in the transcendental deduction.

Shorn of the phenomenology of skills and attunement, however, “receptive spontaneity” is not foreign to Kant’s *Critique* at all. Kant introduces the transcendental deduction by writing:

If therefore I ascribe a synopsis to sense, because it contains a manifold in its intuition, a synthesis must always correspond to this, and *receptivity* can make cognitions possible only if combined with *spontaneity*. This is now the ground of a threefold synthesis, which is necessarily found in all cognition. (KrV A97, emphasis in original)

What is at stake for Heidegger is to develop an interpretation of time that resolves this tension in Kant and also makes sense of the underlying unity of Heidegger’s own analysis of care. In this way he produces both his *Being and Time* account of originary temporality and his interpretation of the transcendental imagination as the hidden common root of the *Critique*.

Kant presents his argument about the threefold synthesis in the A edition version of the transcendental deduction. The overall scheme of the argument is similar to the B version. Kant shows that cognition requires a series of synthetic acts. These, in turn, require the unity of the consciousness of the cognizer. Kant then argues that this unity itself necessarily presupposes a pure synthesis in accordance with the pure concepts of the understanding. So without the categories there could be no unity of consciousness, no synthetic acts, and hence no experience; but with the categories our experience necessarily takes on determinate forms that constitute the general content of objectivity. As Kant famously sums it up: “The *a priori* conditions of a possible experience in general are at the same time conditions of the possibility of the objects of experience” (KrV AIII).

The usual interpretation of this ambitious argument is that Kant aims to establish the objective validity of the categories, i.e. to show that they apply to objects of experience *a priori*. In the neo-Kantian readings, this validity that Kant mentions in the Introduction to the deduction (*Gültigkeit*, KrV A89) is taken to signify the validity of judgments about objects as understood in nineteenth-century theories of judgment (*Geltung*). In keeping with their focus on the epistemology of the natural sciences, the neo-Kantians take Kant's argument here to show that causal judgments about nature are valid, i.e., both true and thinkable. Heidegger, by contrast, interprets the deduction to be an account of the basic unity of pure intuition and pure understanding that makes it possible for a finite intellect to encounter objects at all, i.e., an account of what he calls "transcendence." The goal is to show that pure intuition requires the pure understanding *a priori*, and vice versa. In the A-deduction Kant explains this necessary commonality of concepts and intuition by way of the function of the pure imagination:

We therefore have a pure imagination, as a fundamental faculty of the human soul, that grounds all cognition *a priori*. By its means we bring into combination the manifold of intuition on the one side and the condition of the necessary unity of apperception on the other. Both extremes, namely sensibility and understanding, must necessarily be connected by means of the transcendental function of the imagination. (KrV A124)

Heidegger's interpretation of Kant as a whole focuses on this function of the pure imagination, which constitutes "transcendence" by grounding the combination of intuition and pure concepts. "Objective validity," in this conception of the purpose of the deduction, does not in the first instance mean the truth and thinkability of judgments about nature, but refers to the forms that objects as such must already take in order to be objects for this kind of finite intellect, i.e., in order to be objects that we can encounter in our transcendence.

In order to interpret the interconnection between pure intuition, pure understanding, and the function of the pure imagination, which brings about the combination of these two, Heidegger pursues the thread of their temporal structures. Time is the form of all intuition, while the imagination produces schemata, which are *a priori* time determinations that give the pure concepts an intuitable aspect. In this context the threefold synthesis becomes crucial to his analysis. According to Heidegger, Kant here comes close to articulating the temporal structure of transcendence as such, which in *Being and Time* he calls "originary temporality."

The threefold synthesis explains how it is possible to represent a given manifold. In contrast to earlier empiricists, Kant does not think that we can passively be given a manifold. As a manifold, the representation must have a determinate structure, and this already requires a cognitive activity that enables us to distinguish the elements of the structure from one another and organize them into the whole of the manifold. This is required even before we recognize the given manifold as a particular object, as we do, for example, when we visually resolve a splatter of black spots after staring at it for some time and suddenly see that they make up the shadows and contours of a face. The splatter of black spots already has its own organization. Without it we would not represent them as an apparently random manifold of distinct spots in certain relations to one another. At best we would represent an indeterminate blob.

Kant analyzes the required cognitive activity as having three distinct aspects, which he calls the syntheses of apprehension in the intuition, reproduction in the imagination, and recognition in the concept. When we are given a manifold of any kind, “whether through the influence of external things or as the effect of inner causes, whether they have originated *a priori*, or empirically as appearances” (KrV A98), the impressions that constitute the manifold appear to us in inner sense, and as such in some kind of time order. This time order makes the determinate organization of the impressions possible, insofar as we can distinguish them in their succession. By the same token, however, it also requires a synthesis that unifies the distinct, successive impressions into a single representation. The synthesis of apprehension in intuition is the action of “running through this manifoldness and then taking it together” (KrV A99).

In apprehending a manifold, the mind must apprehend the series of successive impressions as a single series. This requires that the mind, in running through these impressions, reproduces each one as it moves along. Otherwise, they would not add up to a series. Kant gives the example of drawing a line in thought. If I continually lose previous segments of the line as I proceed to represent the following one, I would not produce a line at all, but would be stuck thinking of an instantaneous, isolated segment that is neither the same nor distinct from the ones I represented before it. The action of reproducing previous elements of the manifold is the synthesis of reproduction. Kant notes that “the synthesis of apprehension is therefore inseparably combined with the synthesis of reproduction” (KrV A102). Reproduction, finally, requires yet another synthesis. In drawing a line in thought, I can only reproduce a line segment in imagination

if I can also identify the newly reproduced segment with the previously represented one. "Without consciousness that that which we think is the very same as what we thought a moment before, all reproduction in the series of representations would be in vain" (KrV A103). This identification happens in the synthesis of recognition in the concept. The concept supplies a rule according to which the mind unites the various impressions into a single representation. The concept of a line, in Kant's example, is the rule according to which a segment is apprehended as part of a line and then reproduced as such. The synthesis is therefore threefold. The mind can only apprehend the elements of a manifold if it also reproduces them. And it can only do this if it recognizes each element as the same again by organizing the apprehension and reproduction according to a rule. This is not merely a connection between three distinct actions that mutually presuppose one another, but an explication or analysis of three aspects of a single, unified cognitive capacity.

We perform this synthesis of apprehension, reproduction, and recognition for empirical manifolds, but also for non-empirical manifolds, such as the representations of time and space themselves. These intuitions are given a priori and so the synthesis that enables us to represent them must be an a priori synthesis. This pure, non-empirical synthesis gives us representations of time and of space. But it is also a condition for every empirical synthesis. In representing an empirical manifold, we organize impressions that we apprehend as distinct impressions according to their succession in time. This presupposes that we already have a representation of the time sequence.

This theory of the threefold synthesis is crucial for Heidegger's Kant-interpretation. It constitutes the core of his culminating interpretation of the transcendental imagination in the important third section of his *Kantbook*,¹⁵ and is equally central in his lecture course on the *Critique*. In these expositions Heidegger pushes the analysis of the temporal character of the syntheses further than Kant does. To begin with, Heidegger points out a temporal surface structure manifested by the threefold synthesis. The synthesis of apprehension produces representations of the *present* instance. Reproduction combines these present representations with previous, *past* ones. Recognition consists of our ability to identify an

¹⁵ The first two sections present important background that leads up to Heidegger's substantial interpretation in the third section, which itself culminates in the analysis of the threefold synthesis. The final fourth section is Heidegger's *Wiederholung* of Kant in the terms of *Being and Time*.

impression as the same again by ordering it according to a rule supplied by the concept. In Heidegger's analysis the concept does so by supplying a rule that already prefigures the *future* re-identification of the same impression again as this kind of thing. For instance, the line segment is already apprehended as a line segment, according to the concept of a line, and can therefore be reproduced as a line segment in the next instance. Accordingly, Heidegger proposes to modify the name of the third synthesis. "It would be appropriate to call this the synthesis of *pre-cognition*" (GA 25: 364/PIK 246). This feature gives Heidegger a superficial way to make sense of the internal unity of the threefold synthesis. "Insofar as the three modes of synthesis are related to time, and these moments of time make up the unity of time itself, the three syntheses themselves obtain their own unified ground in the unity of time" (GA 25: 364/PIK 247). The point is that apprehension is unified with reproduction and pre-cognition just as the present, past, and future constitute a unity.

This initial point introduces Heidegger's subtler one, which ties together his Kant-interpretation and his theory of originary temporality in *Being and Time*. The synthesis of apprehension in the intuition enables representations of present impressions in empirical cases. It also does so a priori in non-empirical cases, and in particular in the case of the pure representation of the manifold of time. Here, the present that is apprehended is not a present impression, but the present moment, the "now" as such. Similarly, the synthesis of reproduction in the imagination produces a representation of past "nows," which the synthesis of pre-cognition in the concept projects onto future "nows." The intelligibility of the sequence of moments itself is constituted for the finite intellect in the action of the pure threefold synthesis. As Heidegger puts it, the syntheses produce time, or are "time-forming" (*zeitbildend*, KPM 182/127 f.). According to Heidegger's construal of Kant, the transcendental imagination is the faculty that performs the threefold synthesis and hence forms the sequence of nows.¹⁶ And while time is ordinarily intelligible to us only as such a sequence,

this sequence of nows is not time in its originary guise. Rather, the transcendental imagination lets time arise [*entspringen*] as a sequence of nows, and it is therefore – as the one that lets it arise – the originary time. (KPM 175/123)

¹⁶ Compare Kant's claim in the schematism that "number is nothing other than the unity of the synthesis of the manifold of a homogeneous intuition in general, because I generate time itself in the apprehension of the intuition" (KrV A143).

Heidegger comes to a parallel conclusion in section 65 of *Being and Time*. There he writes:

Since we demonstrate that the “time” that is accessible to Dasein’s understanding is *not* originary, but arises [*entspringend*] from authentic temporality, we can justify naming this temporality the originary time. (SZ 329)

This temporality is “originary,” because it explains how the derivative phenomena hang together. So, in *Being and Time*, originary temporality explains how the various aspects of care – skillful competence, attunement, and being amidst entities – form a unity. In his reading of Kant, the transcendental imagination explains how intuitive givenness and cognitive spontaneity are unified.

The parallels between *Being and Time* and Heidegger’s Kant-interpretation go further. The threefold synthesis corresponds to the three ecstases of temporality: coming-toward, having-been, and enpresenting. The three ecstases are the basic structural characteristics of existence that constitute care and thus make up the possibility of disclosure. In the unity of the three ecstases, human existence is such that it can comport itself towards possibilities and find itself solicited by significant entities. In other words, they jointly constitute transcendence. Accordingly, in his Kant lectures Heidegger writes that “the pure syntheses are the basic forms according to which the subject must reach out” and that “in so reaching out the subject steps beyond itself. This reaching out and stepping beyond we call ecstasis, the ecstatic basic character of the subject” (GA 25: 388–90/PIK 263 f.). Like the three syntheses, the three ecstases presuppose each other in a strong sense. Heidegger writes that “only insofar as Dasein is as ‘I have-been’ can it futurally come towards itself in such a way that it comes back” and “Dasein can only be its beenness insofar as it is futural” (SZ 326). Together the originary future and past “release” the present. “Beenness arises from the future, in such a way that the having-been future releases the present” (SZ 326). And just as the threefold synthesis makes representations of a manifold possible, which for Kant constitutes the ground of experience, so the ecstases make possible that we comport ourselves towards possibilities, take over our thrownness, and find ourselves amidst entities, which constitutes the ground of experience in Heidegger’s existential phenomenology.

This parallel also extends to the schemata. For Kant, the schemata are temporal patterns in which the categories show up in representations, as permanence, absence, succession, or simultaneity. By producing the schemata, the transcendental imagination makes possible the unity of pure

concepts and intuitions. In other words, the schemata are the determinate forms in which the pure concepts of the understanding prefigure the possibilities of intelligible objects in the experience of finite intellects. Similarly, Heidegger theorizes horizontal schemata. These schemata are the determinate forms according to which, in concrete existence, we each experience the solicitations and purposiveness of the world, as the for-the-sake-of-which, in-order-to, and in-the-face-of-which (SZ 365).

V. APPERCEPTION AND THE SELF

Heidegger ultimately develops his interpretation of Kant's transcendental deduction and his own theory of originary temporality in order to give an account of the selfhood of human existence. Kant analyzes the self as the original self-consciousness, or the transcendental apperception, which is the ground of the possibility of the threefold synthesis. The synthesis can only do its work of unifying a manifold insofar as there is an original unity in which the manifold can be brought together. All impressions must be represented in one consciousness in order for experience to be possible. Since self-consciousness has this grounding function for all synthesis, Kant famously says that "the 'I think' must be able to accompany all my representations" (KrV B131). Heidegger glosses this by saying that the unity of the threefold synthesis "constitutes a dimension of possible belonging-to-me-ness [*Mirzugehörigkeit*] of all entities encounterable within this horizon" (GA 25: 388/PIK 263). On Heidegger's reading, "the basic purpose of the deduction is to reveal the transcendental constitution of the subject" (GA 25: 330/PIK 224). Similarly, his account of originary temporality in *Being and Time* is intended to explain the selfhood of human existence, as it is implicit in the fully articulated structure of care (SZ 323).

At this point, however, Heidegger's view explicitly diverges from Kant's. Having so far used Kant's transcendental deduction as a guide for his own analysis of the conditions of the possibility of care, Heidegger now turns to his fundamental criticism of Kant's system. This criticism is not that Kant conceives of the self in terms of self-consciousness. While Heidegger thinks that self-consciousness is neither essential nor sufficient for selfhood, here, as elsewhere in his interpretation, he looks beyond Kant's cognitivism.¹⁷ Rather, Heidegger claims that Kant fails at a more

¹⁷ In *Basic Problems*, Heidegger writes in this context: "How is the self given to us? Not, as one might think following Kant, as an 'I think' that accompanies all representations. ... The self

fundamental level, insofar as he does not establish the basis for the necessary unity of self-consciousness and the syntheses. Apperception can only be the ground of the threefold synthesis, insofar as it is also the ground of the originary temporal structure that enables us to synthesize representations. “The inner rupture in the foundation of the Kantian problem becomes clear here: the lack of a connection between time and the transcendental apperception” (GA 25: 358/PIK 242). If the self makes synthesis possible – or, in Heidegger’s system, unifies the ecstases – then the self must be temporal. In fact, Heidegger claims, “time and the ‘I think’ do not incongruously oppose one another, but turn out to be one and the same” (KPM 191/134).

In his Kant lectures, Heidegger explains that he diverges from Kant on the basis of *Being and Time*. Here he takes “an approach that at first is quite distinct from Kant’s and not determined by him. Only on the basis of this investigation was it possible for me to understand what Kant is seeking, or must be seeking. Only against this background can the unity of time and the transcendental apperception be conceived as a problem” (GA 25: 394/PIK 267). The non-Kantian approach Heidegger has in mind, here, is his existential phenomenology, and in particular the “extreme” phenomenology of the existential limit-situations of death and guilt in the first chapters of Division II of *Being and Time*. To understand the temporal nature of the self as Heidegger conceives of it, we must think of the subject existentially. While “with respect to the problems of self-identification, Kant takes the I as something that thinks and that can always find itself as this thinking thing,” Heidegger argues that “the self must be able to identify itself *as existing*” and that means “extending into all dimensions of temporality” (GA 25: 395 f./PIK 268).

We can briefly clarify this criticism of Kant by looking at Heidegger’s notion of the self “as existing.” In an early set of remarks on Karl Jaspers’ *Psychologie der Weltanschauung*, Heidegger focuses on Jaspers’ discussion of limit-situations (*Grenzsituationen*)¹⁸ as the “core that solidifies the whole work . . . the concrete and strongest section of Jaspers’ investigation” (GA 9: 11/*Pathm* 10). For Jaspers, the analysis of limit-situations aims to get a conceptual grasp on the whole of life (*Leben*) or existing human

is there for Dasein itself, without reflection and without inner perception, before all reflection” (GA 24: 226/BPP 158 f.).

¹⁸ For Jaspers these are struggle, death, contingency, and guilt. They all appear in *Being and Time*, though death and guilt more prominently than *Kampf* and *Zufall*. Heidegger also uses Jaspers’ term *Grenzsituation* for death and guilt a few times in *Being and Time*, albeit in quotation marks; see SZ 249 n., 301 n., 308, 349.

beings, by revealing the limits that encompass it and within which existence unfolds. Heidegger claims that the essential question still needs to be asked. "It is time to figure out to what extent we have dealt with the issue about what we ourselves supposedly 'have' and 'are' – in the context of the basic question about the meaning of 'I am'" (GA 9: 5/*Pathm* 5). Heidegger thinks the way to solve this question is to conceive of the limit situations from within, as something that we ourselves experience.

Here we have a clue, from where we must draw the sense of existence as the determinate how of the self (the I). The decisive thing is that I *have myself*, the basic experience in which I encounter myself as a self, so that living in this experience we can ask accordingly about the sense of my "I am." (GA 9: 29/*Pathm* 25)

In his remarks, Heidegger claims that Jaspers' external approach to the limit situations misses this "decisive thing."

Heidegger's criticism of Kant's transcendental apperception is similar to this earlier criticism of Jaspers. Heidegger writes that "Kant grasps the I as a subject and hence in an ontologically inadequate sense. The ontological concept of the subject does not characterize the selfhood of the I *qua* self, but the self-sameness and enduringness of an always already occurrent thing" (SZ 320). Occurrent things, however, do not "own themselves." In the *Basic Problems* lectures, Heidegger explains Dasein's selfhood as follows:

Dasein is not simply, like all entities in general, identical to itself in a formal-ontological sense – every thing is identical with itself. It is also not simply conscious of this self-identity in contrast to a natural object. Rather, Dasein has a peculiar self-identity with itself in the sense of its selfhood. It is in such a way, that in some way it owns itself, it has itself. (GA 24: 242/BPP 170)

The main thrust of the analytic of Dasein aims to spell out this peculiar self-identity. Phenomenologically, Heidegger claims, Dasein already finds itself, "its self," in being amidst things. This is what Heidegger means by saying that "the phenomenon of selfhood is already included in the care structure" (SZ 323). Originary temporality, as the ontological sense of care, explains how this is possible. In other words, originary temporality constitutes the selfhood of the existing self.

CONCLUSION

In this essay I have argued, in essence, that Heidegger's original interpretation of Kant begins in Division II, [Chapter 3](#) of *Being and Time*. Heidegger's overall argument in this second division merges his

phenomenology of the limit conditions of existence with a transcendental argument about the temporal conditions of existence. The transcendental argument is modeled after Kant's analysis of the threefold synthesis in the transcendental deduction, but Heidegger goes beyond Kant's framework in his culminating claim about the originary temporal nature of the self. In turn, this line of argument from *Being and Time* shapes the detailed interpretation of Kant that Heidegger presents in the subsequent years, both its extraordinarily useful and influential positive analyses and its critical claims about the limits of Kant's approach.

If there is a basic criticism to be made of Heidegger's approach to Kant's text, it is not that Heidegger violently imposes external themes and concepts on Kant. Instead it is that Heidegger, guided by his existentialism, unduly expands on what is at stake in Kant's analysis of the transcendental subject. The Heideggerian subject is a robust, concretely situated existing individual. Heidegger has good reasons for pursuing the analysis of such a subject and good phenomenological grounds for describing its concreteness. But it seems unjustified to expect Kant's system to accommodate this conception. Unlike Heidegger's *Dasein*, Kant's transcendental subject is not designed as a full notion of an existing self. Rather, Kant wants to tease out the minimal a priori conditions that determine *any* finite cognizer of objectively real representations. The finitude of Kant's cognizer is less concrete, and perhaps less enthralling, than the finitude of human existence.

CHAPTER 9

The death of God and the life of being: Heidegger's confrontation with Nietzsche

Tracy Colony

"Nietzsche" – der Name des Denkers steht als Titel für *die Sache* seines Denkens. Die Sache, der Streitfall, ist in sich selbst Aus-einander-setzung.¹

From the early lecture courses to the later works, one of the defining characteristics of Martin Heidegger's thought is its intricate and extensive engagement with the central figures of the Western philosophical tradition. However, on all accounts, and according to Heidegger's own self-understanding, his engagement with Friedrich Nietzsche was unlike any other. Heidegger delivered his first lecture course on Nietzsche in the winter semester of 1936/37 under the title "Nietzsche. The Will to Power." This was followed the next semester with the companion lecture course "Nietzsche's Fundamental Metaphysical Position in Western Thought: The Eternal Recurrence of the Same." With this second lecture course, Heidegger's early Nietzsche engagement in many ways reached its culmination. While Heidegger would continue to lecture on Nietzsche throughout the 1930s, 1940s, and into the 1950s, the emphasis in these later lectures was no longer on articulating Nietzsche's singularity as a thinker, but rather on interpreting Nietzsche's thought as exactly the culminating and essential expression of the metaphysical tradition as defined by its own ongoing and deepening obfuscation of the question of being. Although Nietzsche never posed the proper question of the truth of being, and thus, from the beginning, remained continuous with all preceding metaphysics, at the opening of the first lecture course Heidegger maintained, in the strongest terms, that his engagement with Nietzsche was explicitly structured as a confrontation [*Auseinandersetzung*] in which Heidegger's own philosophical task was directly implicated.

¹ From the opening line of Heidegger's Foreword to the initial publication of his Nietzsche lectures in 1961 (NI 9/Nr p. xxxix).

Now, if we do not thoughtfully formulate our inquiry in such a way that it is capable of grasping in a unified way the doctrines of the eternal return of the same and will to power, and these two doctrines in their most intrinsic coherence as revaluation, and if we do not go on to comprehend this fundamental formulation as one which is also necessary in the course of Western metaphysics, then we will never grasp Nietzsche's philosophy. And we will comprehend nothing of the twentieth century and of the centuries to come, nothing of our own metaphysical task. (NI 25 f./NI 17)

Heidegger's understanding of Nietzsche at this time as standing in close proximity to his own task is confirmed in a passage from Heidegger's *Contributions to Philosophy* which he was writing concurrently with the 1936/37 Nietzsche lecture courses. In the context of thinking and unfolding the history of metaphysics as the first beginning, Heidegger lists the particular challenge: "[T]o dare to come to grips with *Nietzsche* as the one who is nearest but to recognize that he is farthest removed from the question of being."² Without question, one of the foremost challenges confronting the ongoing reception of Heidegger's Nietzsche interpretation is the task of understanding this enigmatic composite of proximity and distance that formed the interpretive horizon for Heidegger's inaugural confrontation with Nietzsche. What was the hermeneutic presupposition which guided Heidegger's interpretation such that, although never posing the proper question of being as such, Nietzsche could still be described as standing in an essential and intimate relation with Heidegger's own thought? While commentators have often taken Heidegger's admissions of nearness to be simply gratuitous or referring to the mere chronological proximity to Nietzsche, with the recent publication of texts from this period a more accurate account of this proximity has for the first time become possible.

Heidegger first published an edited version of his major Nietzsche lecture courses with the Neske publishing house in 1961. While it was widely known that this text was reworked by Heidegger for publication, it was commonly assumed that this reworking was restricted to the kind of editing which was necessary in order to transform lecture notes into a more readable form. However, with the availability of the original manuscripts of the first two lecture courses, published as volumes 43 and 44 of the *Gesamtausgabe* in 1985 and 1986 respectively, it has become clear that Heidegger removed many significant passages, inserted others, consistently altered some terms, changed single words and generally reworked

² GA 65: 176/CPh 12.4. All translations of texts from the *Gesamtausgabe* are my own.

his initial Nietzsche lecture courses from the perspective of his much later, and more reductive, reading of Nietzsche. Moreover, Heidegger often edited out passages that explicitly contextualized the lecture courses in terms of Heidegger's own contemporaneous task of thinking.³ On the basis of the Neske version alone, it has been difficult to understand how Heidegger framed his confrontation with Nietzsche as an articulation of difference which was based upon an actual proximity. Comparing the Neske edition with the original manuscripts it becomes clear that the material which Heidegger removed or altered most often concerned his portrayal of Nietzsche's understanding of the death of God and his thinking towards the possibility of a recurrence of the divine. As I will argue, it was Heidegger's understanding of Nietzsche's witness to the need for god(s) in grounding historical existence that constituted the proximity upon which Heidegger's initial Nietzsche lecture courses were structured. By returning to the original version of the lecture manuscripts and framing them within the context of Heidegger's contemporaneous thought, the actual composition of proximity and distance which structured Heidegger's opening confrontation with Nietzsche can be brought to light. My argumentation in this essay is structured in three sections.

In the first section, I argue that an important context for interpreting the 1936/37 Nietzsche lecture courses is the theme of divinity as it appeared in Heidegger's 1934/35 Hölderlin lecture courses "Germanien" and "Der Rhein" and a few months later in Heidegger's own *Contributions to Philosophy*. In these works Heidegger articulated our current epoch as one in which the gods have departed and new ones have yet to arrive. In the second section, I argue that Heidegger framed his confrontation with Nietzsche within this context and traced the ultimate ambit of Nietzsche's thought in terms of his experience of the death of God and his awareness of the need to think and create the conditions for a possible re-advent of god(s). With the publication of Heidegger's *Contributions to Philosophy*, it has become clear that this was also what Heidegger, at the time, understood as the foremost task of thinking. In the final section, I demonstrate how, despite the many formal points of proximity, Nietzsche's thought was, for Heidegger, still enclosed within a metaphysical conception of

³ An example of this aspect of Heidegger's editing can be seen in a passage where Heidegger describes the need to approach Nietzsche's understanding of art in relation to the history of aesthetics. Whereas the English has: "[W]e must characterize Nietzsche's procedure for defining the essence of art with greater penetration and must place it in the context of previous efforts to gain knowledge of art" (N I 91/N1 77), the original manuscript continued: "in order therefore to clarify and to ground our own task" (GA 43: 89).

being as “life”. Ultimately, both Nietzsche’s experience of the death of God and what Heidegger took to be his creative preparations for a recurrence of the divine remained sealed within the horizon of “life” as the final name for metaphysical being. From this perspective, the actual sense of proximity and distance which configured Heidegger’s initial confrontation with Nietzsche comes more clearly into view. This perspective also sheds considerable light upon the reasons why Heidegger always described his confrontation with Nietzsche as unlike any other, and also perhaps, why, after the initial confrontation was completed, it was only the ever-increasing distance that Heidegger continued to chart.

I. HOLY MOURNING, THE FLIGHT OF THE GODS,
AND THE MEDIATING BE-ING (*SEYN*)

After some preparatory reflections on the nature of poetry and language, Heidegger’s first Hölderlin lecture course began in the fall of 1934 with the interpretation of a relinquishment. The text for the lecture course, Hölderlin’s hymn “Germania,” opens with the lines: “Not them, the blessed, who once appeared, | Those images of gods in the ancient land, | Them, it is true, I may not now call ...” (GA 39: 78). On Heidegger’s reading, this sense of relinquishment at the opening of Hölderlin’s poem is not simply an acknowledgment on the part of the poet that the ancient gods of Greece are now dead and that calling to them would no longer have any meaning. Rather, Heidegger interprets this renunciation as maintaining a relation to these gods, which actually preserves their divinity. In preserving the flight of the gods as a divine absence, even in their abeyance a connection with divinity is still retained: “The having to relinquish the old gods, the bearing of this relinquishment is the *preservation* of their divinity [*Göttlichkeit*]” (GA 39: 95). For Heidegger, the root of Hölderlin’s poetry reaches into this divine absence and constitutes that poetry’s deepest animating source from out of which Heidegger articulates the grounding attunement of Hölderlin’s poetry as “holy mourning, but prepared distress [*heilig trauernde, aber bereite Bedrängnis*]” (GA 39: 137). This figuration of divine absence as what attunes the preparations for the approach of new divinities will be seen in both Heidegger’s own contemporaneous treatments of this theme and in his early orientation to Nietzsche.

Initially it would seem that Heidegger’s description of the grounding attunement of Hölderlin’s poetry is a composite of memory and anticipation – at once preserving in memory an event that is receding into

the past and preparing for an event that is approaching from out of the future. However, this initial impression is created by interpreting this grounding attunement merely in terms of linear chronology. The temporality of Hölderlin's holy mourning does not relate to the flight of the gods as a past occurrence fixed within a specific moment of historical chronology. Because this holy mourning preserves a relation to the divine by maintaining the absence of the gods as something divine, this mourning can also be seen as a link to what is also the source for any advent of gods: "The no-longer-being-allowed-to-call the old gods, this wanting to enjoin oneself into this relinquishment, what else is it – it is nothing other – than the only possible, resolute preparedness for awaiting the divine" (GA 39: 95). The ability to experience the flight of the gods as an aspect of their divinity was for Heidegger the way in which the connection to divinity was preserved by Hölderlin in an epoch when even this link between the divine and the absence of the gods was increasingly severed. Symptomatic of this loss of relation to the divine is the merely atheistic construal of the absence of gods.

In an epoch characterized by the inability to experience the absence of gods as an aspect of their divinity, one figure whom Heidegger viewed as preserving an awareness of the need for god(s) in a godless historical time was Nietzsche. Within the context of elucidating Hölderlin's holy mourning in the first Hölderlin lecture course Heidegger states: "Whoever wanted to set themselves outside of the domain of divinity, given that this is at all possible, for them there could not even be dead gods. He who seriously says 'God is dead' and bases a life upon it like Nietzsche is no a-theist" (GA 39: 95). This early reference to Nietzsche is significant in that it shows Heidegger framing Nietzsche's experience of the death of God as defining the center of Nietzsche's philosophical life. What is most significant, however, is the fact that Heidegger understands Nietzsche's experience of the death of God in a sense that is more fundamental than any merely atheistic construal of its meaning. This brief reference can be seen to foreshadow the actual scope of the upcoming confrontation with Nietzsche as someone who witnessed the absence of God not as the erasure of divinity but as articulating the necessity of preparing for the possibility of a recurrence of the divine.

The central theme of Heidegger's first Hölderlin lecture course was the articulation of Hölderlin's poetry as it emerges from an originary attunement of holy mourning that preserves the divinity of the gods in their flight. The focus of Heidegger's second lecture course can be seen to be the second aspect of the grounding attunement, the aspect that Heidegger

defines as prepared distress. His reading of Hölderlin's poetry as a preparation of readiness for a new figuration of the relatedness of human being and the divine is framed against and guided by an understanding of being as a possible site of mediation between human being and the gods. The singular focus of Heidegger's reading of the poem "Der Rhein" in the second lecture course is the passage: "Of demigods now I think [*Halbgötter denk' ich jetzt*]" (GA 39: 163). According to Heidegger, this is the fulcrum around which the entire poem can be seen to turn. The sense of middle which characterizes the being of the demigods at the center of this poem is not simply a geometric midpoint between human beings and gods which are already simply given and then brought into contact via the demigod. Rather, Heidegger interpreted the particular being of the demigods as a "mediating middle [*vermittelnde Mitte*]" (GA 39: 163) from out of which the relatedness and mutual articulation of human being and gods first unfolds. Heidegger describes the being of the demigod as "A being [*ein Seyn*] that in itself as mediating middle is doubly related to gods and humans, a being that is therefore exactly discordant in its innermost essence" (GA 39: 194).

On Heidegger's account, Hölderlin's poeticized thinking towards the middle between humans and the gods is not directed at any already extant being. Rather, it is more radically conceived as a thinking which is directed towards the founding of a being through which beings as a whole, including human beings and gods, are determined:

The thinking of demigods is the founding of that being [*jenes Seyns*], which is determined through the grounding attunement of holy-mourning prepared distress, from out of which as determining middle the being of the gods towering above and also the being of humans staying behind reveals itself. (GA 39: 185)

For Heidegger, this poeticized thinking of the mediating middle is characterized by a movement of reciprocal suffering and articulation in that the poet enters into the thinking of demigods by first being attuned by the insoluble discordance of this middle. From out of this suffering, displacement, and destruction, a further reciprocal opening and articulation of the middle is then made possible. The demigod that symbolizes the dynamic circularity of this middle (which is itself approached and opened via participation in the suffering of this mediating divinity) is the demigod *par excellence*: Dionysos.

Heidegger frames Hölderlin's many allusions to Dionysos in this poem in terms of Heidegger's own understanding of being as the site of mediation between humans and the gods. On this reading, Dionysos becomes

the name for the realm of being itself inasmuch as being is understood as at once what humans can encounter and belong to and at the same time what is needed by the gods as a site via which they enter into relation with the human sphere. Accordingly, the figure of Dionysos in Hölderlin's poem is interpreted as the one who "brings the trace of the flown gods down to the goddess" (GA 39: 188). This particular reading of the role of Dionysos in this poem provides the context for another telling early reference to Nietzsche. After describing Hölderlin's poetic saying as one which is lifted into the fundamental domain of that being named Dionysos, Heidegger continues: "We know that the last and at the same time future-preparing [*Künftiges vorbereitende*] Western interpretation of being by Nietzsche also mentions Dionysos" (GA 39: 191). This understanding of being as a mediating middle at the center of his early Hölderlin lecture courses reappeared a few months later at the center of Heidegger's own secretly written *Contributions to Philosophy* and can be seen to have constituted the then, and for a long time, unseen hermeneutic background for Heidegger's contemporaneous confrontation with Nietzsche.

In *Contributions to Philosophy* as in earlier works, Heidegger continues to call for an overturning of the traditional metaphysical image of human being as the rational animal in favor of an understanding of the human in terms of its relatedness. However, in *Contributions to Philosophy* the necessity for re-thinking human being as Da-sein is further contextualized within an understanding of being [*Seyn*] as a mediating middle for the re-encountering of the god(s). This is the innermost structural principle guiding and animating Heidegger's *Contributions to Philosophy*.⁴ Being is that to which humans most essentially belong and at the same time that which opens the possible dimension of advent for the god(s). This structuring is emphasized throughout this work: "The territory that comes to be through and as the way of enthinking of be-ing [*Seyn*] is the *between* that *en-owns* Da-sein to god; in which enownment man and god first become 'recognizable' to each other, belonging to the guardianship and needfulness of be-ing [*Seyn*]."⁵ This thinking and creating with respect to being is described in terms which are similar to those which

⁴ For an account of this theme, see my "The Wholly Other: Being and the Last God in Heidegger's *Contributions to Philosophy*," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 39/2 (2008): 186–199.

⁵ GA 65: 86 f./CPh 60; tm. Throughout *Contributions* Heidegger refers to being as a middle from out of which human beings and gods could be mutually articulated: "The between is not one that first ensues from the relation of gods to humans, but rather that between which above all grounds the time-space for the relation ... and as self-opening middle [*Mitte*], makes gods and humans decidable for one another" (GA 65: 312/CPh 219; tm).

Heidegger earlier employed to depict the sufferings of the poet whom Heidegger understood to be attuned to and by the being of the demigod. The ultimate event towards which all of Heidegger's descriptions of needfulness and preparation are oriented is the passing of the last god in the wake of which a new grounding of history would be granted. It was also an understanding of the need for creation in the sense of preparation for the god/s that was the template for Heidegger's contemporaneous interpretation of Nietzsche.

II. CREATING THE HISTORICAL MOMENT FOR THE DIVINE RECURRENCE: NIETZSCHE'S "MOST DIFFICULT THOUGHT" AND A TALE OF TWO EDITIONS

As the guiding thought for his first Nietzsche lecture course, Heidegger selected the following quotation from Nietzsche's *The Antichrist*: "Well-nigh two thousand years and not a single new God!" (N I 11/N1 1). This quotation announced the context within which his confrontation with Nietzsche was originally framed. Like the context in which the Hölderlin lecture courses were carried out, Heidegger situated Nietzsche's thought between departed and coming gods.⁶ The guiding presupposition for Heidegger's confrontation with Nietzsche was that Nietzsche understood the meaning of nihilism as the inability of the Christian God to ground historical existence and that the overcoming of this crisis was to be found in the re-grounding of history upon a new god. This context is clearly stated in a passage which was later removed in Heidegger's editing:

The common interpretation of the expression "God is dead" is what Nietzsche states here completely unequivocally: the only remaining possible standpoint today is atheism. However, Nietzsche's true position is exactly the opposite and still somewhat more. The fundamental position from out of which he stood to beings was the knowledge that without god and without the gods an historical existence was not possible. However, god is only god if he comes and must come, and that is only possible when the creating preparedness [*schaffende Bereitschaft*] and daring are ultimately held out to him, but not a taken on and merely handed-down god to which we are not obligated and by which we are not

⁶ Nietzsche and Hölderlin are brought together exactly in these terms in Heidegger's *Contributions to Philosophy*: "[E]ach in his own way, in the end suffered profoundly the uprooting to which Western history is being driven and who at the same time intimated their Gods most intimately" (GA 65: 204/CPh 142). This pairing was even more directly expressed in the original version of the first Nietzsche lecture course. In an omitted section Heidegger stated: "Nietzsche was outside of Hölderlin the only devout person who lived in the nineteenth century [*Nietzsche war außer Hölderlin der einzige gläubige Mensch, der im 19. Jahrhundert lebte*]." (GA 43: 192).

compelled. The proposition “God is dead” is no negation, rather the innermost yes to the coming. In this knowledge and questioning Nietzsche wore down his existence ... Nietzsche was willing enough to call himself a nihilist but that does not mean: someone that only says “no” and wants to drive everything into nothing, but rather one who stands without illusion in the event [*Ereignis*] of the dying god and who, however, says “no” to the common mendacity, one who says “no” because he has already said “yes” earlier and stronger and more seriously than his “Christian” contemporaries. (GA 43: 191 f.)

While it was not visible to readers of the 1961 Neske version, Heidegger’s interpretation of will to power, eternal recurrence, and above all the sense in which they were related, were originally contextualized within this wider background of Nietzsche’s experience of the death of God and the question of creative preparedness which it in turn articulated. Many later editorial decisions can be seen to have obscured this original context.

The foremost example of Heidegger’s editing of the first two Nietzsche lecture courses from the perspective of his much later reading is his insertion into the second lecture course of descriptions of the will to power as corresponding to the traditional category of *essentia* and the eternal recurrence to that of *existentia*: “[W]ill to power can be the ‘presupposition’ of eternal recurrence of the same inasmuch as the constitution of the being (its ‘what,’ *quidditas*, or *essentia*) grounds its mode of Being (the being’s ‘how’ and ‘that’ ‘it is,’ its *existentia*)” (N I 425/N2 163). This sentence apparently establishes a continuity of terminology and meaning across the whole of Heidegger’s texts on Nietzsche; yet it did not appear in the original manuscript but was added in later editing. What was originally read in the lecture was: “In the end the relationship between the constitution of beings and the manner of the being of beings is something all its own [*ein ureigenes*] and not at all captured with ‘presupposition’-relations” (GA 44: 171). On close examination, it becomes clear that in not one single instance does Heidegger interpret Nietzsche’s will to power and thought of eternal recurrence, in the first two lecture courses, in terms of *essentia* and *existentia*.

In contrast to the traditional metaphysical categories of essence and existence which would dominate Heidegger’s later interpretation of Nietzsche, in the first two lecture courses Heidegger described the will to power as “the basic character of beings” (N I 26/N1 18) and the eternal recurrence as the “essence of being [*Wesen des Seins*]” (GA 43: 20). In the Neske version, Heidegger consistently contracted his designations of the eternal recurrence from the “essence of being” to simply “being.” The effect of this editing has been to foster the appearance that the way

in which will to power and eternal recurrence were related was in terms of will to power as a fixed metaphysical essence, and eternal recurrence as its particular ontological mode. This impression has been furthered by Heidegger's later decision to change the original title of the first lecture course from "Nietzsche. The Will to Power" to "The Will to Power as Art." The later title created the impression that the sole aim of this first lecture course was an elucidation of Nietzsche's understanding of art within the metaphysics of will to power and that Heidegger's 1939 lecture course "The Will to Power as Knowledge" was merely a shift in focus.⁷ And, indeed, Heidegger's first lecture course was explicitly directed toward uncovering the way in which art, i.e., creation, constituted the innermost character of will to power. However, the illumination of this sense of creation at the conclusion of the first lecture course was not the final terminus of the lecture course in its original form, but, rather, the penultimate result which then provided the basis for Heidegger's description of the ultimate ambit of Nietzsche's thought.

What has often been overlooked in many accounts of Heidegger's interpretation of will to power in the initial lecture courses is the degree to which Heidegger framed the meaning of will to power for Nietzsche as a diagnostic and merely preliminary articulation of the character of beings.⁸ The foreground character of this way of framing the will to power doctrine is clearly stressed throughout these lecture courses:

⁷ The original title "Nietzsche. The Will to Power" can be seen to express what was originally the central question of this lecture course. Rather than an examination of art as will to power, what was originally at stake in this lecture course was exactly the question of the relation between Nietzsche and the thought of will to power. As is well known, contemporaneous attempts to appropriate Nietzsche for National Socialistic propaganda, such as those of ideologue Alfred Baeumler, were often based on the interpretation of will to power as the center of Nietzsche's thought. This attempted appropriation was often supported by construing the text *The Will to Power* as Nietzsche's *magnum opus*. Heidegger's presentation of the eternal recurrence as the center of Nietzsche's thought and his rejection of the text *The Will to Power* as even one of Nietzsche's works can be seen to have directly countered these two aspects of the "officially" endorsed *Nietzschebild*. Heidegger's sustained invective against the propagation of *The Will to Power* as Nietzsche's main work was often toned down for the Neske edition. Heidegger's position regarding *The Will to Power* was very clearly expressed: "Ever since the editors of the literary remains took matters into their own hands and published a work called *Der Wille zur Macht* [the manuscript here continued: 'that not at all and never really was' (*das gar nicht und nirgends wirklich war*) (GA 44: 159)] we have had a book falsely ascribed to Nietzsche; and not just any book but a *magnum opus*, to wit, that same *The Will to Power*. In truth, it is no more than an arbitrary selection of Nietzsche's notes from the years 1884 to 1888, years in which the thought of will to power only occasionally advanced into the foreground" (N I 413/N2 152).

⁸ This fact has been obscured in an important passage. The Neske edition reads: "In order to compose his philosophy within a planned major work, Nietzsche now carries out an analysis of all occurrence in terms of will to power. This meditation is essential, and for Nietzsche it comes to

For Nietzsche himself first of all had to make a decisive effort to visualize throughout beings as a whole their basic character as will to power. Yet this was never for him the ultimate step. Rather, if Nietzsche was the great thinker that he is, then the demonstration of will to power would always have to revolve about the thought of the actual essence of being, the eternal recurrence of the same. (GA 43: 27)

This preliminary character of will to power with respect to the thought of eternal recurrence was not originally structured in terms of the traditional generic coupling of an essence to its ontological mode. Rather, the preliminary character of the will to power in relation to eternal recurrence was originally framed in terms of the way in which the uncovering of creation as the core of reality as will to power articulated what would be necessary for thinking towards and preparing for the thought of eternal recurrence.

Heidegger originally structured the relation between will to power and eternal recurrence in terms of will to power as a determination of the deepest character of “what is” that would then articulate the necessity for the thought of eternal recurrence as what should come: “Nietzsche’s decisive consideration runs as follows: if we are to establish what properly should be, and what must come to be in consequence of that, it can be determined only if truth and clarity already surround whatever *is* and whatever constitutes *Being*. How else could we determine what is to be?” (N I 41/N1 31). The final explication of creation as will to power and thus the ultimate determination of “what is” is presented in the final hour of the first lecture course as the new meaning of the real, a meaning that arose from Nietzsche’s overturning of the Platonic opposition between appearance and reality. The uncovering of this new sense of reality is described by Heidegger as what his *entire* questioning of art as will to power in the first lecture course was directed towards: “We unfolded all our questions concerning art for the explicit and exclusive purpose of bringing the new reality, above all else, into sharp focus” (N I 243/N1 211). This final hard focus comes to rest upon an ontological account of creation as the ground of this new reality.

Heidegger interpreted Nietzsche’s new sense of reality in terms of a phenomenological conception of being as self-showing: “[B]eing-real is

occupy the midpoint for the next several years, the midpoint that defines all beings themselves” (N I 417/N2 155). However, in the Neske version, Heidegger omitted the words “but not” [*aber nicht*]. The last sentence originally read: “This meditation is essential, and for Nietzsche it comes to occupy the midpoint of his work as a thinker for the next several years, *but not* the midpoint [*die Mitte*] that defines all beings themselves” (GA 44: 162 f.; my emphasis).

in itself perspectival, a bringing forward into appearance, a letting radiate; that it is in itself a shining. Reality is radiance. ... Reality, Being, is *Schein* in the sense of perspectival letting-shine" (N I 248/N1 215). The horizon within which this shining of being comes forward is not a static transcendental form, but, rather, a horizon which is most deeply characterized by the necessity for "life" to transfigure itself. This innermost ontological necessity for transfiguration is articulated by Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche's account of the raging discordance between art and truth within the wider background of life itself. Significantly, Heidegger quotes Nietzsche's description of this discordance as something before which he stood in "holy dread [*heiligen Entsetzen*]" (N I 167/N1 142). Heidegger describes art and truth as standing in discordance within the deeper unity of life because art, understood as an ontological capacity and necessity for creation, characterizes life more originally than the more derivative, although equally necessary, immobilization of life in the medium of the true:

Discordance is present only where the elements which sever the unity of their belonging-together diverge from one another by virtue of that very unity. The unity of their belonging-together is granted by the *one* reality, perspectival shining. ... In order for the real (the living creature) to *be* real, it must on the one hand ensconce itself within a particular horizon, thus perduring in the illusion of truth. But in order for the real to *remain* real, it must on the other hand simultaneously transfigure itself by going beyond itself, surpassing itself in the scintillation of what is created in art. (N I 250/N1 217)

However, this characterization of creation as the innermost necessity which inheres within "life," in other words, creation as "the metaphysical activity of life," was not, as it appeared in the Neske version, the final context in which this sense of creation was framed.

In what was perhaps the culminating sentence of the first Nietzsche lecture course, the Neske version reads: "Art and truth are equally necessary for reality. As equally necessary they stand in severance. But their relationship first arouses dread when we consider that creation, i.e., the metaphysical activity of art, receives yet another essential impulse the moment we descry the most tremendous event – the death of the God of morality" (N I 251/N1 217). Krell's translation of "noch eine andere Notwendigkeit erhält" on page 251 of the Neske edition as "receives yet another essential impulse" and Heidegger's omission of the word "entirely [*völlig*]" before the word "different [*andere*]" obscure what was originally both a culmination of the first lecture course and a transition to the second. What is thereby obscured is the original: "creation, i.e., the metaphysical activity

of art, receives yet an *entirely different* necessity in the moment where the fact of the greatest event, the death of the moral God, is discerned" (GA 43: 271; my emphasis). In the original version, creation as the necessity for life to transfigure itself is now additionally contextualized within the event of the death of the moral God. Within this context, creation is now framed with respect to a necessity that is entirely different from the necessity of serving as the ground for the real.

The entirely different necessity towards which creation is directed (in the original manuscript of the lecture) is the necessity to create what is necessary – and, indeed, in the very essence of being – for a possible recurrence of the divine. The awareness of the necessity to think creation in the direction of the essence of being as preparation for the god(s) is what Heidegger describes as the source of Nietzsche's holy dread. Rather than a shift in focus from the *essentia* of beings as will to power to its ontological mode as *existentia*, the point of transition between the first and second lecture courses was originally Nietzsche's awareness of the need for a sense of creation adequate to the task of reconstituting the very essence of being as preparedness for re-encountering the divine. This crucial shift from creation as necessary for reality to creation as necessary for preparing for the god(s) has been obscured by Heidegger's later editing of other passages from the conclusion of the lecture course. The Neske version has: "Being able to estimate, to esteem, that is, to act in accordance with the standard of Being, is itself creation of the highest order. For it is preparation of readiness for the gods; it is the Yes to Being" (N I 254/N I 220). However, rather than "standard," Heidegger originally read "essence [*Wesen*]" (GA 43: 274), so that the highest sense of creation was thought with respect to "the essence of being," in other words, the term which Heidegger consistently used to refer to the eternal recurrence. Moreover, the final sentence of the Neske version reads: "'Overman' is the man who grounds Being anew – in the rigor of knowledge and in the grand style of creation" (N I 254/N I 220). Rather than in the "grand style" of creation Heidegger originally read in the "harshness [*der Härte*]" (GA 43: 274) of creation. However, perhaps the most significant omission was Heidegger's decision to remove the original concluding paragraph to the first lecture course in which the themes of the death of God and creation are brought together as defining what granted assurance to Nietzsche's thought and distinguished it from every contemporaneous cultural, artistic, and religious attempt at renewal.

Only a knowing that comes from originary grounds and questions grants a steady vision and decisiveness against the most dangerous nihilistic powers,

those, that is, which hide themselves behind bourgeois cultural business and artistic and religious reform movements. Those who appeal to what has been great up to now, for which they have done nothing, deny its innermost ground, the necessity of creating, for they cannot bear what is essential to creating: That is a having to destroy. And the greatest destruction lays hold of the creator himself. He must first cease to be his own contemporary, because he belongs least of all to himself, but rather, to the becoming of being. It was the knowledge about the fate of creators, in union with the knowledge of the death of God, that granted to Nietzsche's *Dasein* as a thinker great assurance in the midst of every upheaval and overturning. (GA 43: 274)

In the original version, the uncovering of creation as the metaphysical activity of life was additionally contextualized within the entirely different necessity of creating precisely as a means of preparing for the god(s).⁹ For Heidegger, this meant thinking towards and preparing for the thought of eternal recurrence of the same. In his second, and in many ways culminating, Nietzsche lecture course, Heidegger's interpretation of the meaning of the eternal recurrence is unfolded within his understanding of Nietzsche's experience of the death of God and the reciprocally articulated necessity for a sense of creation directed towards the possibility of a recurrence of the divine. This sense of creation as preparation for the god(s) can be seen to be framed in terms of the opening of what Heidegger understood as a mediating middle from out of which a future figuration of relatedness to god(s) would be articulated.

The way in which Heidegger framed Nietzsche's thought of the eternal recurrence was not as something already given or as a constant mode of being, but rather as a thought which was something that was to be prepared for. The temporality which characterized the thought of eternal recurrence was not the traditional understanding of eternity as the unchanging or unending, but, rather, an eternity which was understood to open from within the originary temporality of the moment [*der Augenblick*]. Rather than the prosaic presence of *existentia*, the innermost character of the thought of eternal recurrence was originally a futurity that was still to be decided. For Heidegger the site of the moment of eternal recurrence was understood as what Nietzsche prepared for as the site for the decision about the recurrence of god(s).

⁹ This understanding of the creator as being used by the god(s) for opening the site which is needed by the god(s) is clearly seen in Heidegger's *Contributions to Philosophy*: "How far removed from us is the god, the one who designates us founders and creators, because what is ownmost to god needs these [founders and creators]?" (GA 65: 23/CPh 17).

The form which Heidegger originally accorded Nietzsche's "most difficult thought" was not a doctrine or message which could simply be communicated or taught but rather was described as a thought that was directed towards the possibility of a radically new figuration of relatedness between the human and the divine: "[T]he thought itself defines the essence of religion anew on its own terms. The thought itself is to say what kind of religion shall exist for what kind of human being in the future. The thought itself is to define the relationship to God – and to define God himself" (N I 385/N2 123). This futurity is not to be understood in a chronological sense, but, rather, in terms of the *Augenblick* of originary temporality as the site for mediation with the divine through which a new historical time would be granted: "The ring and its eternity can be grasped solely in terms of the Moment. Accordingly, the god who is sought in the experience of the ring of fright will remain a matter of inquiry solely from within the Moment" (N I 324/N2 68). The sense of futurity which Heidegger accorded Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence was a moment in which time itself was a site of transfiguration from out of which a new future was to be granted. It was in terms of this possibility that Heidegger understood and interpreted the eternal recurrence as the center, literally the middle [*die Mitte*] of Nietzsche's thought. This interpretation is the basis for Heidegger's conclusion to the second lecture course.

Heidegger concluded his initial Nietzsche engagement with an interpretation of the phrase *amor fati*, love of necessity, as expressing Nietzsche's fundamental metaphysical position with, however, the immediate caveat: "Yet the phrase expresses Nietzsche's fundamental metaphysical position only when we understand the two words *amor* and *fatum* – and, above all, their conjunction – in terms of Nietzsche's ownmost thinking" (N I 470/N2 206 f.). Heidegger interprets the meaning of *amor* as a transfiguring will that "wants whatever it loves to be what it is in its essence" (N I 470/N2 207). The meaning of *fatum* is interpreted in terms of the necessity with which humans are related to the divine. When Heidegger combines these two interpretations, the final formula for Nietzsche's metaphysics becomes: "*Amor fati* is the transfiguring will to belong to what is most in being among beings [*Seiendsten des Seienden*]" (N I 471/N2 207). The expression "most in being among beings" is not simply an ontological determination but the exact expression which Heidegger used a few months earlier in his lecture series "The Origin of the Work of Art" to describe the nearness of the divine: "Still another way in which truth comes to shine forth is the nearness of that which is not simply a being,

but the being that is most in being [*das Seiendste des Seienden*]” (Holzw 49/BW 187). In other words, Nietzsche’s final metaphysical position is defined in terms of a transfiguring belongingness to a site of mediation for the renewed configuration of the mutual relatedness between humans and god(s).

Heidegger concludes the lecture course, and his initial Nietzsche confrontation, with reference to the utterance of the thinker as a “telling silence” that is grounded in the essence of language that has its origin in silence (N I 471/N2 208). In this sense Heidegger describes the thinker as rising to the level of the poet and yet remaining eternally distinct. This reference is clearly to Hölderlin, and the essence of language (to which Heidegger is referring) was explained in the earlier Hölderlin lecture course as grounded in our being as having been addressed by the gods: “Our being occurs as a conversation, in the occurrence of the fact that the gods address us [*uns ansprechen*], place us under their claim [*Anspruch*], bring us to speech, if and how we are, how we answer, to concede [*zu-sagen*] or deny [*versagen*] them our being” (GA 39: 70). In the absence of the god(s), silence witnesses to the character of our being as a conversation with the god(s) because silence is not simply a neuter absence, but, rather, a meaningful absence which testifies to an unbroken earlier claim and address.

It is perhaps here in Heidegger’s reading of Nietzsche’s ownmost thinking as an intimation of the need for god(s) in a godless time that the proximity with Heidegger’s own thought was the greatest. It was also here in terms of Nietzsche’s experience of need [*Not*] that Heidegger articulated what he understood to be the singular and distinguishing character of Nietzsche’s thought. While Heidegger always maintained that his confrontation with Nietzsche was structured as an articulation of the singularity of Nietzsche’s thought, the degree to which Heidegger’s reading can be seen as an engagement with Nietzsche’s singularity has been one of the most contested aspects of Heidegger’s interpretation. However, in a much quoted passage from the Neske edition Heidegger seems to concede a clear sense of singularity to Nietzsche’s thought in terms of his untimely witness to his epoch as a time of distress and need:

Whatever is a need [*Not*] in Nietzsche, and therefore a right, does not apply to anyone else; for Nietzsche is who he is, and he is unique. Yet such singularity [*Einzigkeit*] takes on definition and first becomes fruitful when seen within the basic movement of Western thought. (N I 79/N1 66)

Initially, it would seem that this singularity was merely an abstract sense of distinction vis-à-vis the history of metaphysics. However, the

singularity which Heidegger accorded Nietzsche in this passage with respect to his witness to need was more radical than the sense of singularity as merely an abstract uniqueness. In the manuscript the expression "Nietzsche is who he is, and he is unique" does not appear, rather Heidegger described Nietzsche as singular in the sense of occurring once [*einmalig*] and referred to Nietzsche's "one-timeness [*Einmaligkeit*]" (GA 43: 77). This may seem like a trivial alteration, but in fact it can be seen to have removed what was originally a more profound sense of singularity. Rather than describing a one-off event that happens once and recedes into the past, the term "*einmalig*" was the same term which Heidegger used in the Hölderlin lecture courses to describe the temporality of what stood in the ground of history and contained inexhaustible possibilities.¹⁰ The singularity which characterized Nietzsche's experience of need was not merely an idiosyncratic sense of singularity but rather a thought which was singular in its ability to unfold possibilities for grounding history.

The proximity which Heidegger originally accorded Nietzsche with respect to his own contemporaneous thought was much greater than what was discernable on the basis of the Neske version of the confrontation. However, the proximity upon which Heidegger's confrontation with Nietzsche turned was at the same time the nearness of the one furthest away in that these many points of formal symmetry were at the same time divided by the thought of the ontological difference. The silence which at once distinguished Nietzsche within the historical epoch from every other contemporaneous philosophy or movement was also, from the perspective of the question of being, still fundamentally continuous with all previous metaphysics. For this reason it remained a silence which was ultimately unable to preserve the full dimensions of the death of God or intimate the full dimensions of the site of a possible advent because it was itself still a silence enclosed within a metaphysics of being as "life." While it was Nietzsche's experience of the need for god(s) that marked the greatest proximity, it was Nietzsche's understanding of being as "life" that simultaneously positioned Nietzsche furthest from the truth of being, and, thus, furthest from what, for Heidegger, was needed by the god(s). Accordingly, the outcome of Heidegger's confrontation with Nietzsche can ultimately be seen as an articulation of difference through which Heidegger traced the nihilistic consequences of the absence of the proper question of being in a thinker and a tradition.

¹⁰ Hölderlin's Hymnen "Germanien" und "Der Rhein," GA 39: 144.

III. HEIDEGGER'S CRITIQUE OF NIETZSCHE'S CONCEPTION OF BEING AS LIFE

In 1961, at the opening of his Author's Foreword to both volumes of his *Nietzsche*, together totaling over 1,100 pages, Heidegger draws attention to one word: "Nietzsche himself identifies the experience that determines his thinking: 'Life ... more mysterious since the day the great liberator came over me – the thought that life should be an experiment of knowers.' *The Gay Science* 1882 (Book IV, no. 324)" (N I 7/N I p. xxxix). The selection of this quote is significant in that it expresses what, from beginning to end, was ultimately determining for Heidegger's confrontation with Nietzsche. Despite the early formal proximity it was always the underlying metaphysical understanding of being as "life" that circumscribed the ultimate scope of Nietzsche's thought. Although Heidegger framed his confrontation with Nietzsche in terms of his witness to the death of God and the need for creative preparedness for the god(s), the extremity of these experiences never outstripped their deeper metaphysical character as inscribed within an understanding of being as "life." Heidegger quotes from the many instances where Nietzsche indeed describes being in terms of life: "'Being' – we have no other way to represent it than as 'living.' How then can something dead 'be'?" (N I 83/N I 70). However, Heidegger repeatedly stressed that the sense of "life" which determined Nietzsche's thought was not to be understood in terms of biological categories which were then extended into the realm of ontology. Rather, this sense of "life" was to be understood metaphysically as Nietzsche's new interpretation of being as a becoming: "[L]ife' is the term for Being in its new interpretation, according to which it is a Becoming. 'Life' is neither 'biologically' nor 'practically' intended; it is meant metaphysically" (N I 253/N I 219). Nietzsche's understanding of being from the perspective of "life" as a becoming was for Heidegger the final and culminating expression of the metaphysical tradition.

The decisive role which the metaphysical concept of "life" played in Heidegger's early Nietzsche engagement has become clearer with the recent publication in 2003 of volume 46 and in 2004 of volume 87 of Heidegger's *Gesamtausgabe*. The first volume contains the text of Heidegger's 1938/39 lecture course on Nietzsche's essay "On the Advantages and Disadvantages of History for Life." The second volume contains material from Heidegger's small 1937 *Arbeitskreis* which he held simultaneously with the second Nietzsche lecture course devoted to further elaboration of the lectures. What is strikingly clear from these recent

volumes is the central and all-determining role which Nietzsche's understanding of being as "life" played in Heidegger's interpretation at this time. While Heidegger can be seen to have stressed the singularity of Nietzsche's thinking and willing with respect to the question of god(s) in the more public lecture course, at the opening of the *Arbeitskreis* Heidegger stressed the way in which, despite his singularity *within* the metaphysical tradition, Nietzsche's meditations on creation with respect to the divine ultimately amounted to a mere inversion: "Nietzsche remains in the position of the *inverter*; he must through this despite everything be at bottom dependent; he is re-active in a most extreme sense exactly in the emphasis on *action* – in the sense of *creative life*" (GA 87: 6). And further: "God is dead – confronted with this only *creative life* remains as opposing god" (GA 87: 6). This all-determining enclosure of Nietzsche's thought within the understanding of being as "life" is even more directly expressed at the opening of the 1938/39 lecture course: "The fundamental word 'life' that dominates all of Nietzsche's considerations means both beings in the whole and the *manner and way* of its being" (GA 46: 22). Indeed, the selection of Nietzsche's early essay for the 1938/39 lecture course is representative of Heidegger's orientation to Nietzsche at this time as representing the nihilistic reduction of time and history to an understanding of being, and moreover human being, as "life."

Although Heidegger unfolded his initial confrontation with Nietzsche in terms of his witness to the death of God and the necessity for creative preparedness for a new history granted by the god(s), it was the absence of the question of being in Nietzsche's thought which was decisive for Heidegger in his evaluation of Nietzsche's thought in these terms. From the perspective of Heidegger's *Contributions to Philosophy*, it was exactly, and solely, the thought of being which was able to open the proper dimensions for approaching the radically undecidable way in which the god(s) are absent in our time. Moreover, only a sense of creation which was thought in relation to the opening of the time-space of being as the mediating middle between humans and god(s) could, in turn, open the possibility of receiving a new grounding of history. The difference upon which Heidegger's confrontation with Nietzsche ultimately turned was the difference between an experience of the absence of yet need for god(s) from within metaphysics and the more original thinking towards the abyss of being as opening a difference which could maintain the proper dimensions of belonging and yet alterity between humans and god(s). Although Heidegger interpreted Nietzsche's thought as ultimately defined by his witness and response to the need for god(s), all of

Nietzsche's intimations remained enclosed within a metaphysical conception of being, and thus closed off from any possible opening upon the site of being which Heidegger, at the time, understood as the sole medium for the re-encountering of the divine.

In his Author's Foreword to the *Nietzsche* volumes Heidegger stated that the publication as a whole aimed to provide a view of the path of thought he followed from 1930 to "The Letter on Humanism." As has become clear, the view of that path is much clearer from the perspective of the original lecture manuscripts. By returning to these more complete versions and framing them within the hermeneutic context of Heidegger's contemporaneous thought, a more exact understanding of the meaning and significance of those lectures for Heidegger's own path can be brought to light. From this perspective, Heidegger can be seen to have accorded Nietzsche's thought a proximity to his own which, on a formal level, was much closer than has traditionally been said. Heidegger's confrontation with Nietzsche was also the way in which Heidegger, at that time, articulated the history of metaphysics as the first beginning with respect to which the transition towards the second would be prepared. The way in which Heidegger originally understood Nietzsche to have completed the history of metaphysics was not with the thought of recurrence as *existentia*, but, rather, was in terms of the need for a recurrence of the divine. The particular discordance which characterized Heidegger's confrontation with Nietzsche turned upon the common experience of metaphysics as a crisis and the underlying awareness of the need for what was beyond death, life, and being.

CHAPTER 10

Heidegger's poetics of relationality

Andrew J. Mitchell

Heidegger's post-war concern with poetry addresses a diverse assemblage of poets and poetic styles, from the post-romantic lyricism of Rainer Maria Rilke, to the eerie expressionist poems of Georg Trakl, to the austere aestheticism of Stefan George, to name only the most prominent figures in Heidegger's readings. In all of these cases, Heidegger proceeds to think with the poets toward an understanding of being and language. His concern throughout is with relationality, the relation between the things of the world and the words of language. The world is not a collection of objects that would stand over against a subject. The word is not a means of expression for such subjects either. Instead, relationality requires that we think existence, whether that of the subject or the object, as opened onto a world beyond it and as inherently defined by this exposure, both affecting the world and being affected by it in turn. What Heidegger's later interpretations of the poets present us with, then – in the readings of Rilke (1946), Trakl (1950, 1952), and George (1957–1958) – is a steady development and deepening of this thought of relationality and thus of the connections between word and world. Heidegger's poetic work is ultimately no mere appendage to his more ontological concerns, but an unrelenting attempt to think the meaning of being apart from the confines of metaphysics. This transpires in a thinking of relationality.

I. RAINER MARIA RILKE: THE SHATTERING OF SONG

Heidegger's 1946 treatise on Rilke, "What Are Poets For?," written for the twentieth anniversary of the poet's death, situates Rilke as a poet writing in an era of the completion of metaphysics. Rilke's poetry "remains overshadowed by the mitigated metaphysics of Nietzsche" (GA 5: 286/OBT 214), Heidegger writes, and this entails that his tack in reading Rilke will be similar to that of his Nietzsche interpretations and pursue a twofold agenda. On the one hand, he shows how Rilke adheres to a number of

traditional metaphysical commitments – understanding being as will (in his thinking of existence as something proffered forth as risk), as inherently connected to representation in consciousness (whether rational or of the heart), failing to think the “clearing” of presencing (GA 5: 278, 301, 311/OBT 208, 226, 233) – and, on the other hand, Heidegger will show this metaphysical position at the “end” of metaphysics to be more than a simple closure, but an opening onto a thought of existence apart from the presence/absence dualism of metaphysics. This other manner of existence is that of relationality, something that Rilke struggles to express despite himself.

The Rilke interpretation concerns the objectification of the things of the world. Things exist in relations with others, the network of which makes up the world (or what Rilke will term the Open). Human consciousness, aided by technology, objectifies these things into objects that stand opposed to a subject. The objective drive threatens to overtake the entire world (Heidegger’s opening remarks on Hölderlin’s conception of the destitute world approaching its midnight set the scene; GA 5: 270/OBT 201). Rilke’s poetry, however, announces a reversal of this objectified existence through poetic speech or song. While Heidegger distances himself from Rilke’s metaphysical commitments, he nonetheless tacitly approves of the agenda and uses his reading of Rilke as a forum for thinking through this transformation.

Heidegger’s unfolding of Rilke’s poetic thought begins with Rilke’s conception of existence as something that has been wagered or hazarded (*das Wagnis*) by Nature (“it risks us,” *es wagt uns*, cited at GA 5: 277/OBT 207).¹ To exist as risked is to exist in a peculiar way. What is risked is not protected by or in the possession of another; it is exposed instead to a danger. But what is risked is likewise not simply relinquished to this danger without further ado. The gambler who makes a bet has not yet lost that money, though it is yet to be won back. What exists finds itself in precisely such a middle ground, at stake and risked.

Being in the middle like this is an ontological condition, it names a particular relationship to being. Heidegger marshals a constellation of etymologically related terms to help tease out the nature of this relationship. What is risked (*das Gewagte*) lies in the balance (*die Wage*, which in medieval German meant something like “danger”). What hangs in the balance weighs (*wiegt*) upon the scales. What weighs in this manner

¹ Since my concern here is to pursue a few recurrent themes in Heidegger’s post-war interpretations of poetry, I will cite the poems as they appear within Heidegger’s works.

is of a certain weight (*das Gewicht*), not solely physically, but likewise in the sense of a weighty issue or heavy topic, a matter of grave concern, importance (*Wichtigkeit*), or difficulty (*Schwierigkeit*).² What is neither secured, nor relinquished, but held in the balance as risked, does not stand there isolated and alone. It is subject to the force of gravity (*die Schwerkraft*). Heidegger follows Rilke in thinking this gravity as a relation of connection between things, “It is the ground as the ‘with,’ which mediately holds the one to the other and gathers everything in the play of risking” (GA 5: 282/OBT 211; tm). What exists is held by the attractive force of gravity, a force that provides a medium between things, allowing for their co-presence and mutual connection (hence its description as the “with”). Gravity’s pull (*der Zug*) brings everything into a relation (*der Bezug*) “with” others and Heidegger takes pains to insure that “relation” not be understood as “the human ‘I’ relating an object to itself” (GA 5: 283/OBT 212). There are neither self-enclosed Is nor objects, when thought from the perspective of gravity, risk, and relation.

It is in their conceptions of this relational field, however, that Heidegger and Rilke differ. Rilke’s name for this field of relations is “the Open,” the place of an existence that would be free of all barriers and restrictions, that would be beyond all these and wherein things could exist *infinitely*, which for Rilke means both existing in full presence and in perfect belonging to the world (the Angel is the figure of this pure belonging for Rilke). Heidegger’s interpretation would seem to reach the height of violence when he writes that “What Rilke experiences as the Open, is precisely what is closed” (GA 5: 284/OBT 213; tm), yet this is more than mere bluster from him. What Rilke wants by the term “Open” is what Heidegger thinks in terms of the closed or concealed, since for Heidegger what lies beyond the limit of revelation and appearing is the concealed. Rilke’s Open is Heidegger’s concealed, that which we never attain qua finite beings. Heidegger is committed to the thought that existence is thoroughly finite, limited, and that any encounter or relation requires just such a limit, where the one might touch the other, without, however, losing itself entirely there (see GA 5: 284/OBT 213). Identity is precisely this relation to alterity, something that Rilke’s vision of pure belonging cannot admit.

² Heidegger also connects the weight of a matter with what tips the scales and sets them in motion (*Bewegung*), deriving the term for the balance (*die Wage*) from *wägen*, *wegen*, to make a way (*Weg*). This idea of being underway will be taken up in consideration of Trakl’s work, below.

Heidegger and Rilke likewise differ in their approaches to the objectified world of technology. Rilke would view the Heideggerian conception of an essential concealment as a detriment to the human. The human is turned away from the Open due to human representation, which objectifies the world and creates a seemingly impermeable buffer between the human and the Open, assisted and exacerbated today by contemporary technology. Heidegger points out how the “self-assertion of technological objectification is the constant negation of death,” by which “death itself becomes something negative” (GA 5: 303/OBT 227). This dualism of the positive and negative, the present and the absent, is concomitant with the reign of objectivity, where the discrete object is entirely what it is on its own and fully present in its place and fully absent from anywhere else. Heidegger, of course, sees death as neither negative nor positive, but something between these two. Death is what we neither fully have nor fully lack; we live in the world of our death. We are in a relation to death (the insight of *Being and Time*), never possessing it or lacking it. The dualist metaphysics of objectification is the target of Rilke’s poetry, the site where he attempts to effect a transformation. But he does not give up the presence/absence dualism in favor of a thinking of relationality, i.e., the non-discrete existence of what resides between presence and absence in this middle ground. Instead, Rilke seeks to “affirm” the “whole relation,” viewing death as “*the side of life* turned away from us, unlit by us” (cited at GA 5: 302/OBT 227) and proposing that we “read the word ‘death’ *without* negation” (cited at GA 5: 303/OBT 227). Where technology would make of death something negative to flee from, Rilke makes it something positive to affirm. Neither, however, attends to any mode of being apart from that of presence and absence, affirmation and negation.

For Rilke, the human is capable of effecting a transformation in this technological world through poetic speech. According to Rilke’s poem guiding Heidegger’s reflections, humans are the ones who are not only risked into existence, but are able to will this risk and be even more risky than nature, i.e., being, itself. They are more risky “by a breath” (cited at GA 5: 277/OBT 207). This breath is that of speech, language. Being exceeds itself, it “preeminently goes beyond itself (the *transcendens* par excellence)”³ (GA 5: 310/OBT 232). Being exceeds itself in language, “Being traverses, as itself, its region which is demarcated (*temnein*, *tempus*) by the fact that it essences in the word. Language is the region (*templum*),

³ Heidegger writes “*transcendens schlechthin*,” a revisioning of the famous claim from *Being and Time* (SZ 38).

i.e., the house of being" (GA 5: 310/OBT 232). As Heidegger explains, "If we go to the fountain, if we go through the woods, we are already going through the word 'fountain,' through the word 'wood,' even if we are not saying these words aloud or have any thoughts about language" (GA 5: 310/OBT 232 f.). Language is a medium through which we move and through which things appear.

If language is in excess of being, or is the excess of being as the medium out beyond them, then the ones who risk more are the ones who say more. They say more by speaking in a way different from that of the everyday language of commerce. This everyday speech treats language as a means, a tool for information transfer, subordinate to its goal, "When in our representing and producing relationship to beings, we conduct ourselves by making statements, then such saying is not what is being willed. Making statements remains a way and a means" (GA 5: 315 f./OBT 237). In place of this, Heidegger proposes a language no longer determined by goals outside of itself, but one that "pursues what is to be said solely in order to say it" (GA 5: 316/OBT 237). In Rilke this is the role of song. Song does not represent something else, it is that thing itself. Song is not a way of controlling the world, of manipulating it with tools (language). Instead, song is a way of receiving from the world (which Heidegger equates with creating, *schöpfen*; GA 5: 298/OBT 224) and letting things appear. For the singers, "Their singing is wrested away from all deliberate self-assertion" (GA 5: 316/OBT 237; tm). Heidegger goes so far as to speak of the "shattering" of words in this, their elision before the things themselves in a song "that is truly a singing, song whose sound is not attached to something to be attained in the end but instead is shattered even in the sounding, so that only the very thing that is sung comes to presence" (GA 5: 317/OBT 238). Refusing the control of self-assertion (giving up the "cares" of control, becoming without care, *sine cura*, secure), song involves us in the things around us, and thereby puts us at stake within the world as well. We participate in the world's appearing. The words we move through in the world are sung words, not simply means of reference. Singing means "to belong in the region of beings themselves. As the essence of language, this region is being itself. To sing the song means: to be present in presencing itself; it means: existence" (GA 5: 316/OBT 237; tm).

Heidegger's Rilke interpretation, then, presents a kind of poetic speech, song, as distinct from propositional language and proposes that song grants us a facilitating role in the presencing of what exists. Through song we come to see the world as not independent of us, as objectively distanced from us ("over against" us), without relation, but instead as

something we participate in – without, however, ever fully belonging to it as Rilke proposes. The technological objectification is not so easily overcome. Rilke's failure, in Heidegger's view, is a failure properly to understand the relationship between these two orders, proposing instead a vision of infinite belonging through his figure of the Angel. Heidegger's subsequent readings of poetry articulate this finitude of non-belonging as the condition for any encounters and relations at all.

II. GEORG TRAKL: THE LANGUAGE OF DEPARTURE

In his readings of Trakl, Heidegger finds a poet who emphasizes human finitude without the adherence to a thought of presence and infinitude that burdened Rilke. Finitude is inseparable from relationality, insofar as the limit of the finite is always an opening onto a beyond. The finite being is exposed to a world that affects it. Trakl traces these effects through the figure of the wanderer in his poetry. The finite being is affected by the world to which it is exposed, so much so that it is unsettled, set in motion, and never confined in place. It is from the outset essentially related to what lies beyond it and drawn out into this world of relations. Such wandering is coincident with human finitude and it is consequently no accident that the limit or threshold appears in Trakl's poetry as a site of encounter and transformed vision. Heidegger's readings of Trakl (the 1950 lecture "Language" and the 1952 lecture "Language in the Poem") detail the transformations of the human underway in the world. Understood as exposed and relational, the human enters a world of radiant things. Trakl's poetry likewise provides Heidegger with the opportunity to discuss the language appropriate to such a world.

In "Language in the Poem," Heidegger pursues the motif in Trakl of a human who wanders to the forest's edge in blue twilight (blue is the color of transition for Trakl). At the forest's edge, the wanderer catches sight of an animal, and in this twilight "the animal face freezes and transforms itself into the countenance of a deer [*das Wild*]" (GA 12: 40/OWL 166; tm). Heidegger goes on to elaborate the difference between the animal as understood by metaphysics and the twilight blue deer as it figures in Trakl's poetry. The animal of philosophy, the animal named in the human definition as "*animal rationale*," is an animality that is denied all aspects of intellection. This animal functions as the brute sensible, as opposed to human super-sensible rationality. The animality of the blue deer, Heidegger claims, is no longer something that can be defined (domesticated) by mutually exclusive and discrete categories such as those

of the animal and the rational. For Heidegger, the blue deer has abandoned the animality of the *animal rationale* and thereby has abandoned “the hitherto essential figure of the human” (GA 12: 42/OWL 167; tm). It does so because it is no longer defined by what it contains, but by that to which it is exposed, what it encounters at the limit: “The blue deer is an animal whose animality presumably does not consist in its animal nature, but in that thoughtful looking” whereby it meets the gaze of the wanderer (GA 12: 41/OWL 166; tm). Instead of determining animality by an exclusive opposition, animality is determined by a look that looks past its own limits, is determined by what lies beyond its own borders, so much so that the irrational animality of the *animal rationale* is transfigured and made “thoughtful.” Because this animality is determined by exposure, it is nothing fixed. “This animality is still far away, and barely to be seen. The animality of the animal here intended thus vacillates in the indefinite” (GA 12: 41/OWL 166; tm).

The human, too, is transformed in this transformation of the animal. Liberating the animal of the *animal rationale* upsets the definition of human being. Every circumscription or definition of a thing, Heidegger would have us see, is simultaneously the exposition of a surface. The animal, the living being, the human are now defined by what lies beyond them. They are essentially creatures of relation. They are effected by what lies past their bounds, not separated from that beyond but interfacing with it. This standing at the limit is no fixed stance (and in a word of Nietzsche’s the human is the “not yet firmly established [or fast-standing] animal”; GA 12: 42/OWL 166 f.; tm). Being effected by what lies beyond changes what lies within. The limit is neither what is bounded nor what is surpassed, but is instead unsettled and stretched taut between these. Being at the limit is being set in motion, being underway. And it is only when one is opened onto the world like this, effecting and effected by that world, by what lies beyond one’s limits, that any sort of encounter can take place (one of Heidegger’s criticisms of Rilke). In this scene of encounter at the forest’s edge, both blue deer and human are defined by what lies beyond them, both are thus finite, and this means that both are thus mortal, and Heidegger does not hesitate to name the blue deer one of “the mortals” (*die Sterblichen*). In abandoning the “hitherto essential figure of the human,” human and animal come together in a community of mortals: “The name ‘blue deer’ names the mortal, who thinks of the stranger and with him would like to wander into the native place of the human essence” (GA 12: 42/OWL 167; tm). Mortality is a matter of determination through exposure to the other, an occurrence of the limit

as site of contact and relation between one's own and what lies beyond (the wild). The mortals arrive at the limit by getting underway and it is only out along these exposed twilight paths that we find the "native place of the human essence."

Mortal existence, lived at the limit, inclines one into relationship with the world, a world that greets one through the radiance of things. Heidegger's essay "Language" follows a wanderer who is again underway, but this time instead of arriving at the edge of a forest he comes to stand at the threshold of a cottage. Here, at the threshold, the wanderer is welcomed into a shining world of things:

Wanderer, quietly enter here;
pain has turned the threshold to stone.
There in pure brilliance shines
upon the table, bread and wine.

[cited at GA 12: 15/PLT 192–193]

With the wanderer's arrival at the threshold, the things are allowed a space of appearing. We no longer impose ourselves upon them to bend them to our aims, nor are we trapped inside ourselves behind a wall they cannot reach. Standing at the limit, a transformative relation takes place. Heidegger explains it as the "tear of difference [*Der Riß des Unterschiedes*]," the limit or threshold between the thing and what lies beyond it that both separates and draws into relation, that "allows the pure brilliance to shine" (GA 12: 25/PLT 202 f.; tm). To abandon the encapsulated identity of the metaphysical subject entails an abandonment of metaphysical objectivity as well, otherwise there is no difference. Things are no longer confined and trapped in themselves as objects. Instead, they shine in brilliant radiance. And these things are no longer objects opposed to a subject across an empty void. As we have seen, this middle ground is essential to those beings defined by exposure and what lies beyond them. This "between" is no longer an absence bounding present objects. Instead it is a welcoming space we enter into amidst things. So, immersed in the world, things shine. As worldly things they radiate beyond themselves.

The shining thing is no longer objectively confined, it becomes a being of relation. As the contextual entities that they are, something essential for things remains beyond them. Things are not just what they are, they belong in place and are implicated in the world (they gesture the world, Heidegger will say). For this reason, they cannot be identified as simply present-at-hand or completely available for assessment and a subsequent assignment of value. Without this readily assignable value they do not

serve as means for the purposes of a subject. Their shining is a shining of this freedom from subordination and objectification.

Shining is just this phenomenon of surface and limit, of things being so essentially defined by exposure and what lies beyond them that they radiate or “gleam” into that beyond. Nowhere do we encounter anything other than the surface of the thing. Shining is the phenomenality of surface and limit. The bread and wine shine so brilliantly upon the table because they are wholly at their surface. Nothing lies behind, beneath, or inside of the things that they would hold in reserve from the wanderer at the threshold (everything is *arriving*). The things at the table reach out in *offering* themselves to the wanderer.

The language of Trakl’s poetry is not a description of this world, it is the evocation of it and participation within it. Just as the shattering of song in Rilke’s poetry gained us entry into the world, so too does poetic language bring us to this world of relations for Trakl. With the wanderer underway in the world and the things streaming past their objective locations, the poetic language of Trakl can only speak “in that it corresponds to that being-underway” (GA 12: 70/OWL 191; tm). Arguing against the traditional understanding of language (as a means of inner expression, as a human activity, and as representational), Heidegger construes poetic language as an intimate correspondence to this radiant presencing of things.

In the essay “Language,” poetic language is a naming, as with Trakl’s naming of the bread upon the table, though this is not a matter of applying titles to already present-at-hand objects. The things on the table are not such objects, but are shining beyond themselves to reach us. Naming is a calling (*rufen*) that partakes of the same liminal tension of being underway that we observed with the wanderers in Trakl’s poetry. Provisionally, we might say that calling calls out to what is absent that it may come here to presence. But let us immediately note that if what we call out to were entirely absent, there would be no chance of calling to it, never the slightest impulse to do so. Likewise, if it were to be entirely present here before us, there would be no need to call to it. What is called is neither present nor absent; this is what calling attests for Heidegger. Calling “brings the presence of what was previously uncalled into a nearness” (GA 12: 18/PLT 196). Calling invites what is called to enjoy this mode of being, one that is neither so present as to not need calling, nor so absent as to be beyond all calling, but something in between the two. “The place of arrival that is mutually called in the call is into a presence sheltered in absence” (GA 12: 19/PLT 197; tm). Calling of this sort does not reify the thing into an object. It calls what is called so that it might “come into the between of

difference" (GA 12: 26/PLT 203; tm), which, as we have seen, is a spacing (tear) of difference that both separates and brings into relation.

In "Language in the Poem," Heidegger casts this language and its correspondence in terms of ambiguity. "The language of this poetry," Heidegger says, "speaks from out of transition" (GA 12: 70/OWL 191; tm) and thus must forego claims to a simple, locatable, self-identical presence. It too wanders. Poetic language cannot be univocal; instead, "The language of the poem is essentially of multiple meanings [*wesenhaftmehrdedeutig*]" (GA 12: 70/OWL 192; tm). This is not a matter of a simple ambiguity, but "the poem speaks from out of an ambiguous ambiguity [*zweideutigen Zweideutigkeit*]" (GA 12: 71/OWL 192; tm). This ambiguous ambiguity does not consist of multiple meanings to the same term, where a word would mean either one thing or another. Such a view would still think ambiguity as an oscillation between two or more present terms and meanings. Ambiguous ambiguity, however, cannot be thought of as an undecidable alteration between present meanings. The second ambiguity renders the two opposed meanings unstable. Or, rather, it does not derive ambiguity from present meanings at all, but instead locates it in the space "between" these meanings, a place which itself is neither one nor the other. Throughout his Trakl readings, Heidegger presents a world underway, a finite world of encounter and approach. The human, the things, and language are all set into motion and stripped of any pretension to presence. This being underway is the only belonging we can know.

III. STEFAN GEORGE: THE RENUNCIATION OF THE WORD

In Heidegger's two interpretations of Stefan George, the 1957/58 lecture triad "The Essence of Language" and the 1958 lecture "The Word," the issue of relationality comes explicitly to the fore, motivating an understanding of language as the relational medium for the emergence of things. Heidegger's guide in both of these investigations is the concluding stanza of George's poem "The Word," which presents the poetic occupation as one of bringing new-found things to a fate goddess who draws names for them out of a deep well. One day, the poet reaches her with a "treasure rich and frail [*Kleinod reich und zart*]" (cited at GA 12: 152/OWL 60) and looking into her well she finds no name for such a thing. The treasure instantly slips from the poet's hand and he gives voice to the concluding stanza that provides the focus of Heidegger's investigations:

And so sadly I learned the renunciation:
 No thing may be where the word fails.
 [cited at GA 12: 153/OWL 60]

The nature of this renunciation and the relationship between word and thing that it enables are at the center of these readings.

The renunciation in question is not a refusal to speak on the part of the poet. On the contrary, renunciation is a “speaking” or “saying” (*Sagen*) for Heidegger. But it is a manner of speaking that arises from a humbling experience. What is renounced is the poet’s previous claims to mastery over language, the “claim of the poet to mastery of his saying,” the “self-certainty of the poet” (GA 12: 213/OWL 145; tm). As we saw in the Trakl reading, the traditional metaphysical subject must be opened and exposed to something beyond itself. Renunciation is the dehiscence of self-enclosure, which Heidegger terms a “turning back to where we properly already reside” (GA 12: 179/OWL 85; tm). This is not a step away from ourselves but to the limits of ourselves. This turning back is commensurate with an understanding of ourselves as no longer self-enclosed but, with every enclosure equally delineating a surface of exposure to a beyond, as connected with what lies outside ourselves (to the point where this very language of inside/outside reveals its inadequacy). Such a subject no longer entertains the fiction of an enclosed sphere of thought that language would serve to express. Without this interiority, there is no longer anywhere to bring back what has been domesticated or “mastered.” Insofar as language was previously understood to facilitate our mastering of the world, “as though the words were like handles which grasped the already extant and what was held for extant” (GA 12: 161/OWL 68; tm), the abandonment of mastery coincides with a shift in our relation to language.

The renunciation of our presumed priority or privilege over language lets a new relationship to language appear, as voiced in George’s closing line, “No thing may be where the word fails” (cited at GA 12: 153/OWL 60). The word does not simply attach to what lies about already. “The word suddenly shows another, higher reign. It is no longer a name-giving handle for what is present and already represented, not only a means of presenting what lies before us. On the contrary, the word first bestows presence, i.e. being, in which something appears as a being [*worin etwas als Seiendes erscheint*]” (GA 12: 214/OWL 146; tm). Heidegger calls this higher reign of the word *wherein* beings appear as things the “secret” of the word. The renunciation of the poet, then, is not a denying oneself the word, but “is in truth a not-denying-to-oneself: the secret of the word”

(GA 12: 220/OWL 151; tm). Abandoning mastery and the instrumental view of language as a means lets this secret of the word appear, but just what is the connection between this secret of the word and the appearance of things?

To answer this, we must first understand that this other reign of the word is coincident with the slipping away of the poet's treasure for want of a name. The other reign of the word, whereby it lets things first be, rather than simply acting as an appendage to something already extant, is tied to this peculiar unnamable. For Heidegger, what is unnamable is ultimately the essence of language itself. This follows from the renunciation of mastery for him. Once we give up our own priority over language, then we find ourselves thrown into a language that precedes us and always already has addressed us. This address takes the form of a promise and avowal that is extended to us: "If we are to think through the essence of language, language must first promise [*zusagen*] itself to us, or must already have done so. Language must, in its own way, avow [*zusprechen*] itself – its essence, to us. Language essences as this avowal [*Zuspruch*]" (GA 12: 170/OWL 76; tm). But in being delivered to us in this way, language participates in what we might term the logic of giving. To be given, something cannot be completely detached from the donor, otherwise it cannot be seen as a gift. Likewise it cannot be completely received by the recipient; otherwise this connection to the donor is lost, the very connection that makes the gift a gift. Giving establishes a relationship between donor and recipient that neither of them controls. The recipient never "has" the gift entirely and the donor has never given it entirely.⁴ In promising itself to us, then, language too remains beyond our possession. Heidegger notes this fact, "whenever and however we speak a language, precisely language itself never enters our words," concluding that "Only because in everyday speaking language itself does *not* bring itself to language, but much more keeps to itself, are we able to go ahead and speak a language, to deal with something and about something in language, to enter into conversation, to remain in conversation" (GA 12: 151/OWL 59; tm). If language were given entirely to us as our innate, ever internal possession, we could not speak. Just as if language were entirely to keep to itself. The idea of a fully present language at our disposal is coincident with the thought of mastery that poetic renunciation leaves behind. Giving up our own possessiveness and arrogance,

⁴ Indeed, Heidegger goes so far as to set up a parallel between, if not equate, language and the "*es*" of *es gibt* (cf. GA 12: 182/OWL 88).

we see ourselves addressed by language and come to understand language as that which reaches us while ever holding itself back. The secret of language, then, is this play of withholding and extension that allows language to reach us and us to enter it. Heidegger's readings of George culminate in establishing a connection between this sense of language and the appearance of things.

The secret of language is not that it would exist somewhere else and hold itself back from us, but rather that it exists in a manner that is not wholly present anywhere, i.e., it is "between" presence and absence, a relationship, what Heidegger will even call "the relationship of all relationships" (GA 12: 203/OWL 107; tm). But it is precisely relationality that we have such a tendency to misconfigure: "We are not in the position, and even when we are, then only rarely and barely, to experience a relationship that reigns between two things, between two essences, purely from out of itself. We instantly represent the relationship on the basis of that which time stands in the relationship" (GA 12: 177/OWL 83; tm). For Heidegger's sense of relationality, it cannot be thought as a mitigating party between two others. Indeed, he even objects to thinking relationality as something holding between word and thing: "This relationship however is not a relation between the thing on the one side and the word on the other. The word itself is the relationship which each time holds the thing in itself in such a manner that it 'is' a thing" (GA 12: 159/OWL 66; tm). This relationality is what allows the parties to emerge in the first place: "The word would stand not only in a relationship to the thing, rather the word 'would be' itself that which holds and bears the thing as thing, would be as this bearing: the relationship itself" (GA 12: 177/OWL 82 f.; tm).

Heidegger's consideration of poetic language places us before a difficult thought that things would not be distinct from language. Heidegger's conception here hearkens back to the Ancient Greek identification of being and language, or *logos*, "The same word *logos*, however, as the word for saying, is at the same time the word for being" (GA 12: 224/OWL 155; tm).⁵ Language would provide the relational extension of things, the space *wherein* they emerge. In the Rilke reading, this was presented as the idea of language as the surplus of being, but now the nature of this surplus comes into view.

⁵ The point is one found in Heraclitus, and Heidegger's own essay on the Heraclitean *logos*, entitled "Logos," dates from 1951, right in the midst of this intensive period of post-war concern for poetry.

Things do not precede their context and then fall into a situation, they are always from the outset relational and contextual. What exists never exists alone, but always in a context that marks the thing. If it did not, then things would remain objectively independent and extractable from their contexts without consequence. To exist relationally is to exist contextually and this means to be marked by that experience of exposure, to be defined essentially by what lies beyond oneself. This marking and being marked, this differentiation, is already linguistic. The world is already articulated, i.e., linguistic. Following George's poem, the word lets the thing be because the word provides the medium through which its differentiating articulation can appear. The difficulty here is to think language no longer as a means of communication between things, but as a medium wherein things first emerge in communicative radiance. Language forms the relations of things by existing beyond things and providing the space of contact between them. These resonances of the thing through language are the thing itself (we should recall Heidegger's claim in reading Hölderlin that the poet's words are not about a river, they are the river itself).

Thinking language as a medium means that all that appears does so sensibly, meaningfully. Meaning occurs through the connections and relations made possible by the medium of language. Thinking language as a medium of appearing thus entails renouncing the notion that humans would bestow meaning on a brute nature, a conception that still trades on a sensible/super-sensible distinction. Heidegger explains that

It is much more important to consider whether, in any of the ways of representing the structure of language that we have introduced, the corporeal aspect of language, its vocal and written character, is adequately experienced; whether it is sufficient to associate sound exclusively with the body represented in physiological terms, and to order it within the metaphysically conceived region of the sensuous. (GA 12: 193/OWL 98; tm)

Language is not simply a medium conveying meaning, it is a sensual medium as well, "It is just as characteristic of language to sound and ring and vibrate, to hover and to tremble, as it is for what is spoken to carry a meaning. But our experience of this property is still exceedingly clumsy, because the metaphysical-technological explanation intervenes everywhere and drives us away from considering the matter properly" (GA 12: 193/OWL 98; tm). Whatever appears or shines in the world does so meaningfully. Thanks to an understanding of language as a medium that first lets things be things (and not as the possession of a subject), the meaning of the world precedes us and welcomes us.

CONCLUSION

Following Heidegger's thinking of poetic language through the 1940s and 1950s allows us to appreciate the richness of Heidegger's continuing endeavor of thinking the relation between being and language. The diversity of poets considered allows Heidegger to approach this issue from a number of perspectives that ultimately support one another in the elaboration of a path of thought. From the insights in the Rilke reading, that being would be the gravitational support of things, and that poetic language would be a way for realizing the relational character of things through a participation in their presencing, to the thought of the Trakl readings where the relational character of things is grounded in a thinking of finitude and exposure, the language of which must remain essentially ambiguous, to finally the considerations of George that present relationality as coincident with a renunciation of subjective mastery and the entry into language as a medium for these relations, Heidegger's thinking of poetic language is inseparable from his understanding of being. Heidegger's concerns with language do not end with the George readings, they continue throughout the 1960s and 1970s in his treatments of the poet Johann Peter Hebel and his friendship with the poet René Char, among others. While Heidegger could be said to remain "on the way" to thinking the relationship between being and language, it is likewise true that all of these meditations are ultimately so many ways of thinking human finitude as relationally extended, as itself "on the way."

PART III

Interpreting Heidegger's Critics

CHAPTER II

Analyzing Heidegger: a history of analytic reactions to Heidegger

Lee Braver

The relationship between analytic and continental philosophy has been, let us say, a troubled one. For long stretches there has been no relationship to speak of, but rather two traditions operating independently, dismissing the other as either dry tedium or barren obfuscation. When contact was made, it has often been for analytic philosophers to hold up various continental figures as demonstrative of their field's intellectual emptiness. Hegel was the first occupant of the role of gibberish-spouter-in-chief,¹ then Nietzsche had his day (aided by his posthumous appropriation by the Nazis), while Derrida has served more recently as a convenient scapegoat. Yet Heidegger, taking obfuscation to new heights from which he mounts attacks on logic and reason, may be the longest serving and most passionately impugned of them all.² Analytic opinions are frequently formed, not on the basis of reading his work, but on reports given by those stalwart enough to venture into his writings.³ In this essay, I discuss four points of contact between the traditions, the first three being moments when significant analytic philosophers wrote on Heidegger. It is these readings that have largely set the tone for standard analytic views of Heidegger.

¹ Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy and its Connection with Political and Social Circumstances from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1945), 730: "Even if (as I myself believe) almost all Hegel's doctrines are false, he still retains an importance which is not merely historical, as the best representative of a certain kind of philosophy." See also, Russell, *My Philosophical Development* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1959), 141. Kant also has some claim on being the first, given Russell and Moore's attack on all things idealist.

² Hans-Johann Glock accordingly refers to Heidegger as "an arch-bogey of analytic philosophy" in his *What is Analytic Philosophy?* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 159.

³ J. J. C. Smart's blurb for Paul Edwards' *Heidegger's Confusions* (New York: Prometheus, 2004) sums up this attitude, gratefully praising Edwards because he "explains clearly why those of us who are repelled by Heidegger's style of philosophizing are right not to read him." It is an impressive repulsion, indeed, which needs no exposure to that which repels it.

I. GILBERT RYLE: A ROAD NOT TAKEN

Gilbert Ryle's 1929 review of *Sein und Zeit* in *Mind* is a fascinating document.⁴ What may surprise contemporary readers raised in the wake of the analytic-continental split the most is how little this distinction figures into Ryle's thinking. The review is humble, largely positive, and well informed about the book's background in Husserlian phenomenology.⁵ Ryle makes a number of points that will become standard analytic objections, but with a tone of sympathy and respect rather than dismissive contempt.

For instance, Ryle warns readers of the book's difficulty due to the fact that Heidegger "imposes on himself the hard task of coining, and on us the alarming task of understanding, a complete new vocabulary" (Ryle, 57). This rampant coinage of terms may be the most common complaint made against Heidegger but, while Ryle finds this technique "confusing," he also concedes that it is "necessary" for Heidegger's project (Ryle, 58). If standard terms are infected with, and so unconsciously perpetuate, traditional philosophical theories (like Cartesian dualism), then Heidegger can only forge a new way of thinking by creating new, unburdened terms. Their disorienting effect forms the first step towards a reorientation of our thinking. Ryle calls these terms "the language of the village and the nursery," objecting that Heidegger confuses what is temporally prior in human development with what is logically prior in understanding the world (Ryle, 58 f.). I think Ryle is mistaken here, since Heidegger's real focus is the average everyday behavior we all engage in most of the time (SZ 16 f., 334).

Ryle gives up about two-thirds of the way through *Sein und Zeit*, admitting that at this point "for the reviewer at any rate, the fog becomes too thick" (Ryle, 60). The usual insults again appear to be gathering, but fail to come forth. Instead, Ryle ends with modesty before a work whose greatness he recognizes: "I hazard this opinion with humility and with reservations since I am well aware how far I have fallen short of

⁴ Ryle's review of *Sein und Zeit* first appeared in *Mind*, 38 (1929): 355–370 and is reprinted in *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy: Critical Essays*, ed. Michael Murray (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1978), 58–64 (hereafter cited as "Ryle").

⁵ In discussing temporality, Ryle notes that Heidegger edited Husserl's 1905 lectures on time (Ryle, 58), and he traces one source of the notion of care to Brentano and Husserl's intentionality (Ryle, 60). This familiarity demonstrates the dynamic exchange between "analytic" and "continental" philosophers early in the twentieth century discussed by Michael Friedman and Michael Dummett; see Michael Friedman, *A Parting of the Ways: Carnap, Cassirer, and Heidegger* (Chicago, Ill.: Open Court, 2000), pp. xi, 156 f. and Michael Dummett, *Origins of Analytical Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 26, 193.

understanding this difficult work" (Ryle, 64). I do not believe I have encountered this attitude – the sense that the work under examination may exceed one's comprehension rather than offering nothing to it, that the failure to understand may be at least partially one's own fault rather than resting entirely with the willfully perverse author – in any other major Anglo-American analysis of a continental work. He ends the review with praise:

I have nothing but admiration for his special undertaking and for such of his achievements in it as I can follow, namely the phenomenological analysis of the root workings of the human soul. He shows himself to be a thinker of real importance by the immense subtlety and searchingness of his examination of consciousness, by the boldness and originality of his methods and conclusions, and by the unflagging energy with which he tries to think beyond the stock categories of orthodox philosophy and psychology. (Ryle, 64)

Another soon-to-be-standard analytic objection Ryle brings up is the way Heidegger's "sentences ... on first reading seem to be mere dogmatic assertions" (Ryle, 61). Continental thinkers irresponsibly eschew the requisite philosophical tools of rational argumentation in favor of mystical insight, poetry, or the like. But Ryle places Heidegger's style within the context of his overall project, insisting that these assertions "[tell] us explicitly what we must have known 'in our bones' all the time" (Ryle, 61) or, in more technical jargon, that they phenomenologically unpack Dasein's pre-ontological understanding. Perhaps due to his familiarity with phenomenology, Ryle is highly sensitive to the fact that Heidegger is employing a distinctive method that suits his project rather than letting his capricious imagination run riot.

This leads to Ryle's one substantive objection to *Sein und Zeit*. Phenomenology's reliance on the direct intuition of phenomena as evidence renders it susceptible to presuppositions sneaking in and distorting the phenomena; we are in danger of seeing what we think we should see rather than what actually lies before us (Ryle, 61, 64). Now this is precisely the objection Heidegger raises against Husserlian phenomenology – as Ryle himself notes (Ryle, 56). "*Contrary to its most proper principle,*" Heidegger writes, "phenomenology defines its most proper thematic matter not out of the matters themselves but instead out of a traditional prejudgment of it, albeit one which has become quite self-evident."⁶ So Heidegger was sympathetic to this kind of objection, and actually came to

⁶ GA 20: 178/HCT128; see also SZ 21, 67, 241, 311, 387; GA 20: 119 f., 146 ff./HCT 87, 106 f.; GA 24: 29 f., 165 f., 175 ff., 285 f./ BPP 22 f., 117, 124 f., 201.

believe that presuppositions had in fact corrupted his early work. What's odd is the particular prejudice Ryle finds.

If I were to speculate on how Ryle might view *Sein und Zeit* before reading his review, I would have expected him to be fairly sympathetic with it, given the ways it anticipates Ryle's own *The Concept of Mind* twenty years later. Both books attack the Cartesian model of the mind as an inner space housing ghostly thoughts in favor of an interpretation of knowledge as a know-how which occurs in intelligent interactions.⁷ But, in fact, it is Heidegger's "practical" formulation of understanding that turns out to be the target of Ryle's "fundamental objection" (Ryle, 59). Ryle argues that a knowing relation must underlie "any and every conscious experience" (Ryle, 63), such that our being-in-the-world must be supported by the knowledge that the world exists, our use of tools by knowledge of their nature. Heidegger explicitly denies both claims, of course.⁸

Ryle's objection amounts to the claim, in the terms he later uses, that every knowing-how must be founded upon a knowing-that. In 1949 he rejects the "trend to treat intellectual operations as the core of mental conduct ... to define all other mental-conduct concepts in terms of concepts of cognition."⁹ Instead, he carves out the category of knowing-how as one of the "many activities which directly display qualities of mind, yet are neither themselves intellectual operations nor yet effects of intellectual operations. Intelligent practice is not a step-child of theory. On the contrary theorising is one practice amongst others."¹⁰ This is quite close to the idea that Ryle criticized when he found it in *Sein und Zeit* in 1929.

Ryle notes how Husserl remained locked into a Cartesian framework with a representational conception of knowledge which leads to idealism (Ryle, 55 f.), but he misses how successfully Heidegger extricates himself from this tangle. He reads *Sein und Zeit*'s fundamental ontology with its focus on Dasein as continuous with Husserl's privileging of inner perceptions as a higher kind of evidence than external perceptions (Ryle, 61 f.). Ryle even merges the two philosophers' ideas into a single "Husserl-Heidegger treatment of Meaning" (Ryle, 63). Heidegger's emphasis on the practical (see SZ 61, 143; GA 20: 217 f./HCT 162) is one of the most

⁷ See Michael Murray's discussion of this common ground in *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy*, 278, 283.

⁸ See SZ 61, 67, 69 for tools; see SZ 202, 206; GA 20: 295 f./HCT 215 f.; and GA 56/57: 91 f./TDP 71 f. for "belief" in the external world.

⁹ Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (New York: Harper & Row, 1949), 26; see also *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy*, 274.

¹⁰ Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, 26.

important ways Heidegger escapes Husserl's Cartesianism but, at the time of the review, Ryle saw theoretical knowledge as the necessary substrate for any interaction (Ryle, 59).

Finally, we come to perhaps the most common target of all: the question of being. Look at what Ryle says about this in 1929: "some would quarrel with the original assumption that there *is* a problem about the Meaning of Being. But as the (perhaps departmental) question of the relation between Being *qua* timeless 'subsistence' and existing *qua* existing in the world of time and space seems to me a real one, I do not take up this cudgel" (Ryle, 62). Now, Ryle mistakenly identifies being as "the universal which [individual entities] exemplify" (Ryle, 56), an interpretation raised and rejected on the second page of *Sein und Zeit* (SZ 3). However, the distinction between the traditional view of being as constant presence and Dasein's mode of being as temporal existence is one of the main topics of the book. Here, Ryle tries to grasp Heidegger's meaning sympathetically rather than dismissing it as dark nonsense. Just a few years later, in his well-known essay "Systematically Misleading Expressions," which lists all sorts of problematic kinds of sentences, Ryle concludes that "those metaphysical philosophers are the greatest sinners, who, as if they were saying something of importance, make 'Reality' or 'Being' the subject of their propositions."¹¹ I do not know what caused this change of mind, but it closed off what could have been a fruitful bridge between Heidegger and the analytic tradition.

II. RUDOLF CARNAP: SHUTTING THE DOOR

Perhaps the most famous or, depending on one's allegiances, most infamous analytic treatment of Heidegger is to be found in Rudolf Carnap's 1931 "The Elimination of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis of Language."¹² This essay lays out a general account of how language works which, like the *Tractatus*, simultaneously plots its limitations. Carnap wholly endorses Russell and early Wittgenstein's distinction between the surface appearance of language and its true logical form, which arms us

¹¹ Gilbert Ryle, "Systematically Misleading Expressions," in *The Linguistic Turn: Essays in Philosophical Method with Two Retrospective Essays*, ed. Richard M. Rorty (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 89.

¹² Rudolf Carnap, "The Elimination of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis of Language," in *Logical Positivism*, ed. A. J. Ayer (New York: Free Press, 1959; hereafter cited as "Carnap"); originally published as "Überwindung der Metaphysik durch logische Analyse der Sprache," *Erkenntnis*, 2 (1931): 220–241.

against naively swallowing the implications of natural grammar; we need to open sentences up to examine the logical gears and springs whirring inside. Philosophical confusions arise when these two grammars come into conflict, and they are dissipated by knowledge of language's true nature. Periodically opening up our sentences to examine their internal logical mechanism will prevent linguistic breakdowns. Carnap uses excerpts from Heidegger's 1929 inaugural address "What Is Metaphysics?" as examples of how metaphysics rides natural language as it goes off the rails, though he admits that he faces an *embarras de richesses* of candidates (Carnap, 69, n. 2, 73, 80). While semantic problems result from using a word without meaning (i.e., determinate relations to protocol sentences, whatever those turn out to be), Heidegger is primarily guilty of syntactic violations, that is, the improper combination of words that sires only "pseudo-statements" incapable of being conceived. On the surface, these sentences may look like law-abiding denizens of speech but logical analysis reveals their true identity as misbegotten mutants incapable of expressing meaning.¹³

In particular, Heidegger is misled by the apparent form of sentences featuring the word "nothing." Since recent advances in logic had revealed that this word actually plays the role of "a logical particle that serves for the formulation of a negative existential statement" rather than a name, we can rephrase Heidegger's sentences without even mentioning the word, leaving behind nothing of the nothing (Carnap, 71). Heidegger's ideas are based on a grammatical mirage which vanishes once logical analysis shows what is really going on inside these sentences.

And this is the key to the disagreement: how should we understand this transformation of natural language into logically perspicuous notation? This issue leads us to the larger question of the relationship between logic and language, thinking, and the rest of philosophy. Carnap considers logic the queen of all disciplines, including the other branches of philosophy, because its grasp of the true nature of language determines what can be expressed and what cannot. If an utterance violates these rules, the speaker may have an image or emotion attached to the string of words, but such subjective phenomena do not make a genuine meaning (Carnap, 64, 71, 78 ff.). Logic plays the role of universal referee; it knows when sentences are obeying the rules and when not, which authorizes it to eject law-breakers. Logic's grasp of the form of all expressions enables

¹³ See Carnap, 60 f. and Rudolf Carnap, "On the Character of Philosophical Problems," *The Linguistic Turn*, 54.

it to rule over all that is expressed, awarding it the epistemological throne on a technicality.

Once philosophy surrenders the right to investigate reality to science and all treatment of values to art, “what remains is not statements, nor a theory, nor a system, but only a *method*: the method of logical analysis” (Carnap, 77, see also Carnap, 60). Negatively, logic eliminates meaningless words and pseudo-statements; positively, it clarifies the proper use of concepts and sentences. Ignoring tautologies and contradictions, proper language consists in empirically verifiable assertions about the world (Carnap, 76). Since all empirical verification is, at bottom, a form of science, philosophy is and can only be “the logic of science, i.e., the logical analysis of the concepts, propositions, proofs, theories of science.”¹⁴

“What is Metaphysics?” serves Carnap’s purposes perfectly because Heidegger explicitly states there that metaphysics must break the rules of logic. This incompatibility between metaphysics and logic confirms Carnap’s own view, though where he takes it to be the *reductio* of the former, Heidegger considers the latter to be undermined by the incompatibility. However, I don’t think Carnap quite grasps the point of Heidegger’s challenges to logic. Heidegger is not rejecting logic per se, but rather “the sovereignty of ‘logic’ within philosophy” and the “superiority of science,” as quoted by Carnap (Carnap, 71 f.). Heidegger’s standard move in examining traditionally unquestioned ideas like logic or the correspondence theory of truth is not to reject them, but rather to place them within a larger context, showing their dependence on something more primordial. This move undermines the target’s presumption to being the most basic, self-legitimizing level, without calling for its outright removal. This is how I understand Heidegger’s later strategy of overcoming metaphysics by what we might call, adapting Quine’s phrase, a “doctrinal ascent” from an understanding of being or beingness to the truth of being. Instead of acting as though our basic ideas “had fallen from heaven as a truth as clear as daylight” (VA 12/BW 314) we should examine how they are taken up by thinkers at particular times; in a Husserlian vein, we “bracket” their self-evidence in order to take this very self-evidence as our topic.¹⁵

At this deeper level, Heidegger wants to understand how we know when and how to apply a negation. This comes out in his analysis of the

¹⁴ Carnap, “On the Character of Philosophical Problems,” *The Linguist Turn*, 54 f.

¹⁵ For more on this topic, see the commentaries on “What is Metaphysics?” and “Letter on Humanism” in my *Heidegger’s Later Writings* (New York: Continuum, 2009).

relationship between negation and the not: “how could negation produce the not from itself when it can make denials only when something deniable is already granted to it?”¹⁶ In order to negate something or to entertain a negative judgment, the subject matter must strike us as negatable and deserving of negation, which shows that something must ground logic itself. We’ve agreed on a set of guard-rails for thinking, but how do we know these are right, especially in the wake of the massive revolution in logic that so impressed Carnap (Carnap, 60, 74)? How do we arrive at or evaluate logical axioms? How do we move from one step to the next in an argument? We simply have to see that these are right or that this is the way to continue, as Wittgenstein’s later writings argue at great length. Logic depends on our being primed to see things in a certain way, which is why Heidegger frequently argues that speaking and thinking are responses.

Heidegger appears to allude to Carnap several times, even naming his own and Carnap’s as the “most extreme counter-positions” in contemporary philosophy in 1964 (*Wegm* 70/*Pathm* 56). He characterizes Carnap’s project as the desire “to subjugate all thinking and speaking to a sign-system which can be constructed logically or technically, that is, to secure them as an instrument of science.”¹⁷ Carnap treats language as a “calculus” which determines all “mechanical operations with the symbols of the language.”¹⁸ He wants to construct an ideal “logical syntax” in the service of science which would prevent pseudo-statements “as it were automatically.”¹⁹ In his well-known 1950 essay “Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology” he argues that “the acceptance or rejection of ... linguistic forms in any branch of science, will finally be decided by their efficiency as instruments.”²⁰

Heidegger helpfully states Carnap’s suspicion of the incompatibility between metaphysics and logic, and Carnap returns the favor. This picture of language is a perfect example of our contemporary technological understanding of being which treats all beings as resources for our benefit. Everything shows up as instrumental for achieving our goals with maximum efficiency, which reaches its peak with language: “man acts as

¹⁶ *Wegm* 115 f./BW 105; see also, *Wegm* 356/BW 261; VA 21/BW 323.

¹⁷ *Wegm* 70/*Pathm* 56; see also, *Wegm* 315, 316 f./BW 221, 223; UzS 262 f./BW 420 f.

¹⁸ Carnap, “On the Character of Philosophical Problems,” *The Linguistic Turn*, 57.

¹⁹ Carnap 68; see also, *ibid.* 60, 77 and Rudolf Carnap, “Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology,” *The Linguistic Turn*, 73; this essay by Carnap was originally published in *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, 4 (1950): 20–40.

²⁰ Carnap, “Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology,” 83.

though *he* were the shaper and master of language, while in fact *language* remains the master of man. Perhaps it is before all else man's subversion of *this* relation of dominance that drives his essential being into alienation."²¹ Instead of being in control of language and thought, Heidegger believes that our speech responds to what presents itself to us. Even Carnap's project of eliminating metaphysics can only persuade if we are prepared to find metaphysics impossible and the virtues of modern logic attractive. We cannot be in charge of *these* preferences without triggering an infinite regress; choices must be based on criteria which themselves were not chosen.

Since we are dependent upon the ideas being "sent" us, ideas which have radically shifted throughout history, Heidegger tells us to cultivate an openness to fundamentally new ways of thinking. Carnap's views rule out this possibility in principle: "our knowledge can only be quantitatively enlarged by other beings, no matter whether they know more or less or everything, but no knowledge of an essentially different kind can be added."²² Also, by making all languages comparable according to their degree of efficiency, Carnap underplays how deeply they orient us. Pragmatic considerations cannot step outside linguistic frameworks to compare them neutrally since these considerations are as informed by our contemporary thinking as anything else is: "the truth of a principle can in general never be demonstrated by success. For the *interpretation* of a success *as* a success is, after all, accomplished with the help of the presupposed but unfounded principle" (GA 42: 239/STF 138).

Carnap's reading became the standard analytic view of Heidegger for quite some time: in addition to being an obscurantist, Heidegger spun metaphysical nonsense in sad ignorance of modern advances in logic.²³ He was stuck humorlessly toiling away at alchemy while others sped ahead with modern chemistry.

²¹ VA 140/BW 348; see also *Wegm* 316 f./BW 223; *Wegm* 76/*Pathm* 60. One of Heidegger's main criticisms of contemporary thought is that it is excessively anthropocentric. Thus, he criticizes a prevailing illusion (with Kantian roots) "that everything man encounters exists only insofar as it is his construct" (VA 36/BW 332). Carnap's view that we can pick up and put down various languages as they suit our needs bears a close resemblance to this sort of anthropocentrism.

²² Carnap, 73; this view is maintained in later analytic philosophy by Donald Davidson.

²³ Charles Guignon writes that "for at least a generation of analytically trained American philosophers, Heidegger was known only through a paragraph from 'What Is Metaphysics?' that Carnap cited to demonstrate the power of the logical analysis of language to ferret out metaphysical nonsense"; see *Richard Rorty*, ed. Charles Guignon and David R. Hiley (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 5.

III. RICHARD RORTY: A FAILED ATTEMPT

Richard Rorty had already made a name for himself in analytic circles when he started writing about continental thinkers (and Dewey) in the early 1970s.²⁴ Indeed, this record of accomplishment lent him what credibility he had when he made his philosophical Nixon to China move. Once begun, Rorty went all the way, embracing the most despised figures. Of all the continental philosophers he wrote about, he named Heidegger as the most important.²⁵ He even worked on a book on Heidegger for some time before publishing its abandoned remains in *Essays on Heidegger and Others*.²⁶ Rorty considers Heidegger “the greatest theoretical imagination of his time ... an exemplary, gigantic, unforgettable figure,”²⁷ and “one of the great synoptic imaginations of our time” (EHO 67).

Heidegger enjoys a place alongside Wittgenstein and Dewey in Rorty’s first pantheon of twentieth-century philosophers who help us set aside the issues that have obsessed us. All three want to disenchant the pictures or ideas that cripple thought, with Heidegger’s “greatest contribution” being his insistence on the need to tell a historical narrative of how this dominance came about.²⁸ This emphasis marks one of the defining differences between analytic and continental thought for Rorty: whereas analytic philosophy neglects the history of philosophy in favor of chasing the latest fads,²⁹ “Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger ... specialize in narratives which ‘place’ rival canons.”³⁰ Both *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*,

²⁴ In his 1967 introduction to *The Linguistic Turn*, Rorty refers to Heidegger a couple of times, defending his style as a result of an “attempt to do philosophy in an entirely new way” rather than “(as Heidegger’s critics take it) the perversity of the methods employed” (*The Linguistic Turn*, 34). He also tries out what will become his standard view of Heidegger and Sartre as “heretical disciples of Husserl” (ibid. 35).

²⁵ Richard Rorty, *Take Care of Freedom and Truth Will Take Care of Itself: Interviews with Richard Rorty*, ed. Eduardo Mendieta (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), 38 (hereafter cited as “TCF”).

²⁶ Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism (Essays: 1972–1980)* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), p. xviii (hereafter cited as “CP”); *Essays on Heidegger and Others: Philosophical Papers*, vol. 2 (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 1 (hereafter cited as “EHO”); and TCF 19.

²⁷ Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 118 (hereafter cited as “CIS”).

²⁸ Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 12 (hereafter cited as “PMN”) and *Philosophical Papers*, vol. 1: *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 71, 73 (hereafter cited as “ORT”); see also CP 46; TCF 94.

²⁹ TCF 54, 76, 85 f.

³⁰ EHO 22, see also CIS 79, 96; TCF 42, 76, 94; ORT 61, n. 31; and Richard Rorty, *Philosophy as Cultural Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 182 (hereafter cited as “PCP”).

(1979) and the introductory essay to *The Linguistic Turn* (1967) adopt this method, telling a synoptic narrative of analytic philosophy (and its roots in early modern thought) in order to explain, and so free us from, its contemporary state. Thus, of the three, Rorty's method places him closest to Heidegger.

Rorty's gift was to see a large pattern developing in analytic thought, and then to connect it to a parallel account of continental philosophy. His first major expression of this came in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* which tells the story of Russell and Husserl yearning for scientific rigor and apodictic truth, only to have their projects undone by their rebellious students.³¹ The first wave of analytic philosophers – Frege, Russell, early Wittgenstein, the logical positivists – regresses from the historicist advances made by Hegel to early modern forms of scientism, foundationalism, and empiricism.³² These early analytic thinkers took science as their model and sought to build philosophical systems on firm foundations, often forms of atomistic empiricism (TCF 36, 49). Then, in the 1950s and 1960s, a “sharp break” occurred, largely due to the work of later Wittgenstein, Sellars, Quine, and Kuhn (TCF 37). Collectively, this holistic second wave undermined the dream of an ideal language constructed on empiricist foundations, or any other kind of foundation. Since this wave emerged from the process of internally working out analytic philosophy's own doctrines, Rorty describes it as a Hegelian *Aufhebung* in which “analytic philosophy ... transcends and cancels itself” (CP p. xviii) or, more colorfully, he observes that “the notion of ‘logical analysis’ turned upon itself, and committed slow suicide.”³³ Rorty's problem with this process is the “slow” part.

Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature represents Rorty's attempt to do what Heidegger often does: trace the history of the issues commanding our present attention in order to reveal their roots in contingent events, thereby removing their self-evidence. “Understanding why [certain assumptions] are made requires an understanding of intellectual history rather than an understanding of the meanings of the relevant terms.”³⁴ Rorty's history offers a therapeutic genealogy; by showing that an organizing image or scheme came about at a particular time in history due to

³¹ *The Linguistic Turn*, 35; PMN 166–169; EHO 32, n. 9; PCP 143, 148.

³² CIS 3, 79, n. 1; CIS 3; TCF 42, 76, 86, 92; CP p. xli; PCP pp. ix, 116, 148; TP 255.

³³ CP 227; see also CP 211, 220; EHO 50; TCF 28, 76, 142; PCP 180. At one point, Rorty spots the seed of analytic philosophy's destruction in its very birth, since Frege's context principle leads straight to holism (PCP 144).

³⁴ PMN 37; see also PMN 148, 162, 391; CP 46; and PCP 129, 150.

the confluence of contingent factors (often the appearance of a creative genius), the topics that follow in its wake appear “optional” (PMN 46). As Wittgenstein argues, pictures – principally the ocular conception of knowledge which leads to representationalism – hold us captive to a set of problems which Rorty considers fruitless or, at the very least, far more trouble than they’re worth. Heidegger insists that the method for finding our way out of the fly-bottle is to retrace the historical steps that led us into it, which is just what *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* does. Both Heidegger and Rorty “are trying to encapsulate the whole sequence which runs from Plato and Aristotle to Nietzsche and Carnap, set it aside, and offer something new” (CP 46). Of his three heroes, Heidegger supplies Rorty with both the target of his criticism as well as the weapon with which to attack it.

Alongside his considerable admiration, Rorty raises a number of serious objections to Heidegger’s thought, especially as his ideas develop. Although *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity* casts Heidegger as one of the pioneer “ironists” for showing the contingency of all that makes us who we are (see CIS 75; EHO 16, 34), he was not quite ironic enough. Rather than simply re-describing the idiosyncratic set of figures who happened to have formed him, as Proust and Derrida do, Heidegger turns the history of philosophy into that most dreaded of things in Rorty’s world – The Story of Something Big.³⁵ Rorty defines metaphysics here as the attempt to escape our finitude and dependence on chance by allying ourselves with something beyond us, something outside history, which can vindicate us and legitimate our projects. In Freudian terms, it is the ultimate father-figure giving us his blessing, approving who we are and what we do. Irony, on the other hand, is the realization not only that no such thing exists but also that, if it did, it could not supply that kind of legitimation (CIS p. xv). The story of how we became who we are is full of chance and luck, told by creative geniuses, signifying nothing – or at least nothing beyond how we happened to come to think the way we do. This does not result in facile relativism (the claim that all options are the same) since we cannot step outside our values to see them as simply another option (see, e.g., CIS 50, TCF 90). Rather, we are “thrown” into an “ethnocentric” commitment to our inherited form of life, even after we realize that it possesses no transcendent guarantee (PMN 385).

³⁵ “I think of my work as trying to move people away from the notion of being in touch with something big and powerful and nonhuman” (TCF 49). A list of places where Rorty attacks *this* notion would be virtually coterminous with his writings, a world-sized map so to speak.

Although Heidegger is a great ironist, he casts his work in the medium of theory which, unlike fiction, has an intrinsic tendency to betray contingency.³⁶ The ironic theorist resists the Platonic drive to escape time, but he still tries to encompass all of history in such a way as to release its grip on him. "This redescription of the past, and in particular of Nietzsche ... enabled Heidegger to picture himself a thinker of a new kind. He wanted to be neither a metaphysician nor an ironist, but to combine the advantages of both."³⁷ This metaphysical relapse happens in a number of ways in Heidegger's work. First, he sometimes forces the history of philosophy into a Hegelian or Whig pattern by herding epochs into a tale of the progressive forgetfulness of being, with Nietzsche exhausting the pool of possibilities set up at Plato's inception.³⁸ Philosophy retains an exclusive expertise at discovering the secret laws of history. We know the Truth of all the other truths. But, since the imagination of creative geniuses can never be anticipated and encircled in advance, this Hegelian ambition can never be fulfilled.³⁹ Second, Rorty objects to the pursuit of what he calls the "historically sublime," allegedly releasing the thinker from the fateful shadow of the past in order to create something absolutely new which can never be woven into a later narrative, something that will always remain a decisive break.⁴⁰ As Derrida argues (often against Heidegger), such a desire to bring closure to the history of metaphysics is itself the latest form of metaphysics.

Rorty initially found Heidegger cheerfully edifying in that he was happy for his work to be just a disentangler of philosophical knots, relevant only to his time (PMN 369 f.). But Rorty came to believe that the later Heidegger made the history of philosophy into the destiny of the West rather than just the books he happened to like.⁴¹ Good ironists go metaphysical by connecting their own intellectual biography with the history of something big so that, for example, Spirit's long journey home happily culminates with Hegel's realization that history just is Spirit's long journey home.⁴² This is how Rorty reads Heidegger's comment that he wants to preserve the force of elementary words.⁴³ These ghosts of

³⁶ CIS 102, 105, 107 f.; PCP 91. ³⁷ CIS 111; see also CIS 28, 96, 104, 106; EHO 70, 75.

³⁸ EHO 51 f., 65; CIS 101, 105, 112. ³⁹ CIS 29, 125; EHO 12 f.

⁴⁰ CP 49; EHO 49; CIS 101, 105 f. ⁴¹ EHO 49, 67; CIS 101. ⁴² CIS 100, 102, 125.

⁴³ CP 52; CIS 119, 122; EHO 37. I assume this would be a representative quote: "there is Being only in this or that particular historical character: *physis, logos, en, idea, energieia*, Substantiality, Objectivity, Subjectivity, the Will, the Will to Power, the Will to Will ... The manner in which it, Being, gives itself, is itself determined by the way in which it clears itself. This way, however, is a historic, always epochal character" (GA 11: 72 f./1aD 66 f.). Rorty seems to give a different analysis of Heidegger's elementary words at CIS 113 f.

philosophy's past are elementary because they channel numinous being's utterances, the way some editions of the Bible print Jesus' words in red.

Heidegger's reverence toward the history of philosophy, his "fatal attachment to the tradition" (CP 52), keeps him from pragmatism, to his detriment: "the Heideggerian thinks that the philosophical tradition needs to be reappropriated by being seen as a series of poetic achievements ... The pragmatist thinks that the tradition needs to be utilized, as one utilizes a bag of tools."⁴⁴ This devotion to the history of philosophy keeps Heidegger obsessing over it instead of just dropping it as a ladder no longer needed (CIS 97). Ironically, his constant efforts to overcome metaphysics are what prevent him from ironically doing so. Heidegger should have followed the line that Rorty repeatedly quotes about ceasing the effort to overcome metaphysics altogether and just leave it to itself.⁴⁵

Many of these problematic views follow from Heidegger's belief that philosophy is the ruling discipline, "the philosophy professor's conviction that everything else stands to philosophy as superstructure to base."⁴⁶ Metaphysicians explore what it means to be in their epoch, while all other disciplines merely splash around in their wake. But Rorty's pragmatism recognizes no hard and clear divisions between disciplines, and certainly awards none any permanent or intrinsic privilege over the others. What is useful is true and there are many ways of being useful, including creating brand new ways of being useful. Heidegger's philo-centrism (philosophophilia?) prevents him from being a liberal,⁴⁷ another of Rorty's keywords,⁴⁸ meaning "people who think that cruelty is the worst thing we do" (CIS p. xv). Rorty often berates Heidegger for ignoring mundane suffering.⁴⁹ It is because he has caught hold of the destiny of the West that he can ignore the destitute. Rorty's ironic pragmatic liberalism says that

⁴⁴ EHO 9; see also EHO 3; CP 50; CIS 116. ⁴⁵ CP 50; EHO 37, 69; CIS 97, n. 1, 118, 129, n. 19.

⁴⁶ EHO 49; see also EHO 67; CIS 118 f., 122. For example, "metaphysics grounds an age, in that through a specific interpretation of what is and through a specific comprehension of truth it gives to that age the basis upon which it is essentially formed. This basis holds complete dominion over all the phenomena that distinguish the age" (GA 5: 75/QCT 115; see also *Wegm* 302/*Pathm* 232; N I 493, 538 /N3 19, 56).

⁴⁷ Heidegger also fails to contribute to solidarity (CIS 120), so contingency is all he has going for him.

⁴⁸ Since irony is just owning up to one's contingency while liberalism is important and distinct from solidarity, a more accurate title would be *Liberalism, Irony, and Solidarity*. Admittedly, it doesn't sound as good.

⁴⁹ EHO 19, n. 27, 40, n. 26, 69, 72, 74, 80; CP 52; CIS 111, n. 11; PCP 79; ORT 74. "What threatens man in his very nature is the willed view that man, by the peaceful release, transformation, storage, and channeling of the energies of physical nature, could render the human condition, man's being, tolerable for everybody and happy in all respects" (*Holz*w 294/PLT 114). This is about as far from pragmatism as one can get.

we ought to use anything that effectively reduces suffering. While science and medicine have represented the obvious options since Descartes, one of Rorty's more original moves is highlighting the power of philosophy and art to provide us with the means to describe ourselves anew. Such exploitation of being's elementary words violates Heidegger's reverence, which means that Rorty wants "to stand Heidegger on his head – to cherish what he loathed," namely, contemporary anthropocentrism (CIS 113, n. 13, see also CIS 116). Rorty sides with Nietzsche and Sartre (and Carnap and Ayer, see PCP 169) in dispensing with being in order to empower us to take charge of our ways of thinking, reformulating them in the most advantageous manner possible, while Heidegger sees this as both impossible and a primary source of our suffering. Briefly, Rorty agrees with Sartre that "we are in a situation where there are only human beings," while Heidegger insists that "we are precisely in a situation where principally there is Being" (*Wegm* 330 f. /BW 237).

Rorty derides this tendency: "Heidegger's hope is just what was worst in the tradition – the quest for the holy which turns us away from the relations between beings and beings" (CP 52; see also EHO 26). He often condemns "Heidegger's attempt to make language into a kind of divinity, something of which human beings are mere emanations."⁵⁰ This leads to Heidegger's lofty disdain for mundane problems and his refusal to use philosophy as a resource: one doesn't dig latrines with a communion chalice. For Rorty, when it stinks, you dig with whatever's handy.

Many of these criticisms revolve around Heidegger's desire "to retain a sense of humility, or a sense of gratitude, towards something which transcends humanity" (EHO 64). But I think this is the wrong way to understand being. We cannot control being, but it isn't something beyond us; in fact, it isn't any kind of thing at all. What Heidegger wants to capture with these phrases is our thrownness into and utter dependence on our particular culture. All decisions must take place within the space of possibilities we find ourselves in, including actions that expand or alter this space. Although later Heidegger does often "treat Language as if it were a quasi-agent" (EHO 3), this is due to the fact that he is operating with a vocabulary redolent with all the traditional assumptions he's trying to undo. Our grammar only allows subject-object and active-passive formulations, while Heidegger seeks to escape these dualisms.⁵¹ Unfortunately,

⁵⁰ CIS 11; see also CIS 22, 102; EHO 3, 52.

⁵¹ *Wegm* 311/BW 217: "We are still far from pondering the essence of action decisively enough"; see also *Wegm* 346/BW 252.

like Derrida's *bricoleur*, "thinking ... tries to find the right word for [the relationships among language, Being, and man] within the long-traditional language and grammar of metaphysics" (*Wegm* 331/BW 237), a fact Heidegger came to regret about *Being and Time* (*Wegm* 324 f./BW 231; ZSD 36/TB 29). He is using the terminology of agency under erasure or by analogy, with strong caveats about its limitations. Where Rorty saddles him with a notion of being as transcending humanity, Heidegger insists that "the fundamental idea of my thinking is exactly that Being, relative to the manifestation of Being, *needs* man and, conversely, man is only man in so far as he stands within the manifestation of Being."⁵² Sometimes his erasing is too light – for example, "language is not a work of human beings: language speaks" (*Wegm* 72/*Pathm* 57) – but the overall point is to emphasize our thrownness, an idea Rorty is quite sympathetic with.

Heidegger does cultivate an attitude of gratitude but, like anxiety, it has no intentional object; it is the experience of wondering at the fact that we are open at all.⁵³ Rorty claims that "in Heidegger's History of Being, there is no room for contingency in the narrative" (CIS 100) and, certainly, when he claims that Nietzsche exhausts all possibilities, he does sound dangerously close to Hegel. But Heidegger often insists that the history of being lacks any detectable rhyme or reason. Epochs' incommensurability ruins attempts to arrange them into a sequence, even though this is precisely what he does at times.⁵⁴

Much of Rorty's work is dedicated to showing that analytic and continental philosophy have been invisibly converging for some time now. By initiating dialogue across the gap, he hopes to improve both sides and increase philosophy's relevance in the "the conversation of mankind." Although there's plenty of pox to cover both houses, analytic thought earns the greater part of his scorn. Its ambition to emulate science, once philosophy's ability to discover facts about the world or ground science

⁵² *Martin Heidegger im Gespräch*, ed. Richard Wisser (Freiburg and Munich: Alber, 1970), 69/*Martin Heidegger in Conversation*, trans. B. S. Murphy (New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann, 1977), 40. I call the idea expressed by Heidegger here "Mutual Interdependence" and discuss it at greater length in my *A Thing of This World: A History of Continental Anti-Realism* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 273–279. See also in this connection, Thomas Sheehan's "Facticity and Ereignis" in the present volume.

⁵³ John Caputo makes this point against Rorty as well; see John Caputo, "The Thought of Being in the Conversation of Mankind: The Case of Heidegger and Rorty," *Review of Metaphysics*, 36 (1983): 661–685.

⁵⁴ See CP 171/§ 125; see also, GA 66: 47, 232, 351 f./*Mindf* 39, 206, 313; GA 11: 137 f./PT 55 f.; GA 14: 61/TB 52. I call this idea the "Unmooring" and discuss it at greater length in my *A Thing of This World: A History of Continental Anti-Realism*, 279–291.

or even analyze concepts is no longer taken seriously, has led to hyper-specialization and increasing isolation (EHO 21). Continental attention to history and literature make it a much better conversation partner (PCP 126). Rorty tried to improve the situation by weaving literature into his discussions of philosophy (especially in CIS) and, starting with the anthology *The Linguistic Turn*, sought to become analytic thought's very own Heidegger by showing the historical background of contemporary issues. For the interests of this essay, he tried to make Heidegger intelligible and relevant to analytic concerns and, on this account, I would have to say that he failed (TCF 9). Instead of lending continental thinkers some of his early credibility, these writings robbed Rorty of much of his. He became rather pessimistic about a rapprochement, though this also stopped bothering him.⁵⁵ He expected analytic philosophers to continue drifting apart from each other since the most interesting figures have little in common with each other or with founding figures like Frege or Russell, but are relatively easy to bring into conversation with continental figures.⁵⁶

IV. HUBERT DREYFUS: SUCCESS AT LAST

Where Ryle abandoned the attempt to explain Heidegger's ideas and show their worth to analytic philosophers, and Carnap never had any interest in doing so, and Rorty failed to heal the ensuing rift, Hubert Dreyfus finally achieved some success. I take John R. Searle's praise to be representative:

Dreyfus has probably done more than any other English-speaking commentator to make the work of Heidegger intelligible to English-speaking philosophers. Most philosophers in the Anglo-American tradition seem to think that Heidegger was an obscurantist muddlehead at best or an unregenerate Nazi at worst. Dreyfus has usefully attempted to state many of Heidegger's views in a language which is, for the most part, intelligible to English-speaking philosophers. For this, we are all in his debt.⁵⁷

Dreyfus has demonstrated the value of Heidegger's work (primarily *Being and Time*, Division I and "The Origin of the Work of Art") by explaining

⁵⁵ CP 226 f., TCF 49, 54 f., PCP 145.

⁵⁶ Not coincidentally, one of Rorty's favorite philosophers in the last decade or so of his life was Robert Brandom, who explicitly appropriates Hegel; see PCP 145.

⁵⁷ *Heidegger, Coping, and Cognitive Science: Essays in Honor of Hubert L. Dreyfus*, vol. 2, ed. Mark A. Wrathall and Jeff Malpas (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000), 71.

it clearly and applying it precisely to what Rorty saw as the greatest obstacle to analytic-continental dialogue: science.⁵⁸

Some of the most important early efforts at creating an artificial intelligence (AI) took place at MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) just as Dreyfus was beginning his career there. The early practitioners of AI subscribed to what Dreyfus calls "cognitivist AI" and John Haugeland calls "good old fashioned AI" (GOF AI), which conceives of intelligence as the manipulation of representations according to strict rules.⁵⁹ Allen Newell and Herbert A. Simon, two important champions of this approach, cite Frege, Russell, and Whitehead's formalization of logic as demonstrating how a formal system of variables with rule-governed interactions can account for logical reasoning.⁶⁰ This made thought itself amenable to scientific study and, combined with Turing machines which manipulate symbols algorithmically, capable of physical replication. Thus, Newell and Simon base the field of Cognitive Science on the Physical Symbol System (PSS) Hypothesis. The claim that a physical symbol system is sufficient for intelligence means that a machine that properly instantiates it will be intelligent, and the claim that it is necessary entails that all intelligence (including ours) works by syntactic manipulation of symbols.

When a trained Heideggerian like Dreyfus came across such a program, he immediately saw its conception of intelligence as the fulfillment of "Plato's vision, refined by two thousand years of metaphysics."⁶¹ People like Simon and Newell were trying to put into practice a view that Heidegger (as well as Wittgenstein and Merleau-Ponty) had subjected to extensive withering criticism decades earlier. Dreyfus must have felt a bit like a time-traveler stumbling on a group of stock investors in September

⁵⁸ EHO 21; TCF 49, 86; PCP 122, 145, 181. The other great obstacle, discussed above, is the analytic focus on the timely in contrast to the continental emphasis on history. Promisingly, the history of analytic philosophy is coming into its own now.

⁵⁹ *Mind Design II: Philosophy, Psychology, Artificial Intelligence*, ed. John Haugeland, rev. edn (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997), 16.

⁶⁰ See *Mind Design*, 88, 108; Terry Winograd and Fernando Flores, *Understanding Computers and Cognition: A New Foundation for Design* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1986), 175 and Terry Winograd, "Heidegger and the Design of Computer Systems," in *Technology and the Politics of Knowledge*, ed. Andrew Feenberg and Alastair Hannay (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 109.

⁶¹ Hubert L. Dreyfus, *What Computers Still Can't Do: A Critique of Artificial Reason* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992), 72, see also, 176, 192, 231 (hereafter cited as "WCS"); Hubert L. Dreyfus and Stuart E. Dreyfus, *Mind Over Machine: The Power of Human Intuition and Expertise in the Era of the Computer* (New York: Free Press, 1986), 99; Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), 5, 115; and *Mind Design*, 162. Winograd and Flores agree with this assessment (see Winograd and Flores, *Understanding Computers and Cognition*, 14, 30, 139).

1929 or Neville Chamberlain in 1938; studying Heidegger gave him a clear insight into the futility of their project. In his 1972 *What Computers Can't Do*,⁶² he predicted that, despite extremely confident promises by virtually all computer scientists at the time, this form of AI would not be able to replicate human intelligence. Like a cognitivist Cassandra, Dreyfus foretold the doom of the discipline's first wave,⁶³ and much of this came to pass. Instead of fleeing or dismissing science as continental thinkers were expected to do, Dreyfus welcomed the attempt to put these traditional ideas into practice because their real-world results would convincingly determine their credibility (in welcoming and even doing scientific research, Dreyfus followed Merleau-Ponty rather than Heidegger). Philosophers have free rein to theorize however they like while ensconced in their armchairs, but "having to program computers keeps one honest ... AI research has called the Cartesian cognitivist's bluff" (*Being-in-the-World* 119).

Particularly important to Dreyfus' critique is *Being and Time's* distinction between our usual "non-thematic circumspective absorption in references or assignments constitutive for the readiness-to-hand of a totality of equipment" (SZ 76) and the disengaged thematic examination of atomistic present-at-hand objects. Normally we interact with holistic groups of equipment in our environment without consciously thinking about what we're doing. Under certain circumstances, especially when equipment breaks down, we can step back from our absorption in the task at hand to make it the focus of our attention. But this very examination transforms these mundane interactions into theoretical analyses of present-at-hand objects. Whereas our dealings are generally unthinking immediate reactions to a holistic totality of equipment, thematizing them reveals the conscious manipulation of self-sufficient objects. Since this is what shows up for the theoretical attitude, and since abstract thinking has long been considered the highest form of intelligence, theorists view intelligence as the intentional manipulation of representations of inert lumps. And in fact Simon and Newell base their models of thinking on empirical studies of human intelligence conducted by having people explain how they are thinking while they solve problems.⁶⁴ Test subjects are thus forced into the

⁶² This was preceded by his 1964 report on RAND's AI program led by Newell and Simon, but it was *What Computers Can't Do* that brought his views to public attention.

⁶³ "My work from 1965 on can be seen in retrospect as a repeatedly revised attempt to justify my intuition, based on my study of Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and the later Wittgenstein, that the GOF AI research program would eventually fail" (WCS p. xi).

⁶⁴ See *Mind Design*, 94 f.; WCS 170; *Being-in-the-World*, 209.

theoretical observation of present-at-hand objects, and such reports form the data for building intelligence. Given the nature of Turing machines and the success of modern logic's formalized symbol manipulation, the conception of intelligence as a set of facts and rules for processing them became the inescapable assumption organizing the entire field.⁶⁵

For Heidegger, mindless coping is not only our primary and most common way of existing, but also serves as a kind of (non-epistemological) foundation for objective knowledge. Despite what most philosophers have believed, "knowing is a *founded* mode of access" (SZ 202), based on a holistic know-how which cannot be captured in a list of "known-that" atomistic facts or rules.⁶⁶ We encounter entities in terms of their place in a holistic background web of purposes⁶⁷ which cannot be made fully explicit for a number of reasons. First, it makes distinctions far finer than our vocabulary allows.⁶⁸ Second, our interests, body, and cultural training meaningfully organize the world, orienting our actions.⁶⁹ Computers do not live in a situation the way we do, which is why they cannot determine which factors are relevant, the famous frame problem.⁷⁰ When cognitivist computer scientists try to solve this problem, they do so in light of their understanding of intelligence: they give the computer more facts and rules. As Dreyfus predicted, this approach has been an abject failure.

While Dreyfus' objections were initially dismissed,⁷¹ the inability of cognitivist AI to replicate what a four-year-old can easily grasp has given his objections greater weight. The Heideggerian analysis Dreyfus has been contributing to cognitive science has also inspired productive new directions of research.⁷² Prominent among these "Heideggerian

⁶⁵ "Given the nature of computers as possible formal symbol processors, AI turned this rationalist vision into a research program and took up the search for the primitives and formal rules that captured everyday knowledge. Commonsense understanding had to be represented as a huge data structure comprised of facts plus rules for relating and applying these facts ... Our sense of relevance was holistic and required involvement in ongoing activity, whereas symbol representations were atomistic and totally detached from such activity" (WCS p. xi; see also WCS 3, 71 f., 179; *Mind Design*, 154).

⁶⁶ *Being-in-the-World*, 205; WCS pp. xi–xii, xxvii, xlii, 206, 244 f.

⁶⁷ SZ 68; *Mind Design*, 163; WCS 210.

⁶⁸ This conclusion is based on extensive empirical research as reported in *Mind Over Machine*. The five-stage analysis of skill mastery presented in depth here is often summarized in other publications.

⁶⁹ *Mind Design*, 150; WCS 52 f., 62, 266; *Being-in-the-World*, 205.

⁷⁰ *Mind Design*, 176; WCS 201, 258.

⁷¹ Paul M. Churchland and Patricia Smith Churchland, "Could a Machine Think?" *Scientific American* (January 1990): 33; Winograd and Flores, *Understanding Computers and Cognition*, 16; Winograd, "Heidegger and the Design of Computer Systems," 110, 125.

⁷² Dreyfus "has made a major contribution to computing and cognitive science ... There has been a steady undercurrent of re-evaluation and new thinking ... Dreyfus has made a deep contribution

computer scientists” are Philip Agre and David Chapman at MIT⁷³ and Terry Winograd.⁷⁴ Movements that arose independently of Dreyfus but are much more compatible with his views than GOFAI are connectionist neural nets (which abandon the attempt to represent knowledge or the external world) and Rodney Brooks’ bodily engaged non-representing robots.⁷⁵ Although there is much more to Heidegger than the analysis of mindless coping that Dreyfus focuses on, this has been the one successful beachhead for showing that Heidegger has something to offer analytic thinkers.⁷⁶

to the creation of a culture of reflection – of questioning the deep premises – that informs and shapes computing and cognitive research. Dreyfus has also played a key role as the primary introducer and interpreter of Martin Heidegger to the computer and technical world” (*Heidegger, Coping, and Cognitive Science*, pp. viii–ix); see also Philip Brey, “Hubert Dreyfus: Humans versus Computers,” in *American Philosophy of Technology: The Empirical Turn*, ed. Hans Achterhuis, trans. Robert P. Crease (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 61.

⁷³ Brey, “Hubert Dreyfus: Humans versus Computers,” 60 f.

⁷⁴ Winograd, “Heidegger and the Design of Computer Systems,” 108, 124, and Winograd and Flores, *Understanding Computers and Cognition*, 9, 70.

⁷⁵ Winograd, “Heidegger and the Design of Computer Systems,” 110 ff.; see also, Sean Kelly, “Grasping at Straws: Motor Intentionality and the Cognitive Science of Skilled Behavior,” in *Heidegger, Coping, and Cognitive Science*, 175 and H. M. Collins, “Four Kinds of Knowledge, Two (or Maybe Three) Kinds of Embodiment, and the Question of Artificial Intelligence,” *Heidegger, Coping, and Cognitive Science*, 190.

⁷⁶ For more on this topic, see my “Never Mind: Thinking of Subjectivity in the Dreyfus–McDowell Debate,” *Is the Mental a Myth?* (New York: Routledge, forthcoming).

Lévinas and Heidegger: a strange conversation

Wayne J. Froman

During the academic year of 1928–1929, Emmanuel Lévinas attended the University of Freiburg with the purpose of studying with Edmund Husserl. As Lévinas himself would later put it, “I went to Freiburg because of Husserl and discovered Heidegger.”¹ As Husserl’s successor, Heidegger had arrived in Freiburg himself in 1928 and Lévinas was a student in Heidegger’s first Freiburg lectures, *Introduction to Philosophy* (GA 27). Lévinas would come to regard Heidegger as a thinker of major importance and *Being and Time* one of the premier texts in philosophical history. Lévinas did assess features of Heidegger’s thought critically. In order to understand the points at issue, it is necessary to understand them in the context of Lévinas’ overall thought, and it is also necessary to understand them in the context of Heidegger’s overall thought. The context thus expands rapidly. Lévinas’ favorable judgments regarding Heidegger’s thought would eventually come with a specific reservation, as in the following response by Lévinas to a question in a recorded conversation with Dutch philosophers at the University of Leyden in March 1975: “It is from this idea that I have even understood better certain pages of Heidegger [specifically, the discussion of ‘mineness’ (*Jemeinigkeit*) in *Being and Time*]. You know, when I pay homage to Heidegger, it is always costly to me, not because of his incontestable brilliance, as you also know.”² The reference is clearly to Heidegger’s public support, in the early 1930s, of the National Socialist regime in Germany. It is well documented that Lévinas was imprisoned at a German military prison-camp during most of World War II and that members of his family were put to death in Nazi camps. For a serious reader of Lévinas, these facts are not impertinent. The context here expands

¹ *The Cambridge Companion to Lévinas*, ed. Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi (Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. xvii.

² Emmanuel Lévinas, *De Dieu qui vient à l’idée* (Paris: Vrin, 1982), 56 f.; “Questions and Answers,” in *Of God Who Comes to Mind*, trans. Bettina Bergo (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), 92.

immeasurably. But even so, while Lévinas by no means discounted the significance of Heidegger's political activity in those years, he did not infer from that activity that Heidegger's thought compelled consent to a Nazi agenda and therefore could be, and should be, dismissed out of hand. This much is evident, notwithstanding the fact that Lévinas would make reference to a certain violent impulse in Heidegger's thought, and that Lévinas' favorable assessments would become more muted, as in the 1975 comment above. Lévinas found a certain violent impulse throughout the philosophical tradition that did not preclude favorable judgments apropos individual thinkers, Plato and Kant, for example, and what he judged important in Heidegger's thinking cannot be assimilated to any sort of political reductionism. (Although they understood the source differently, Heidegger too detected a violent impulse in the tradition. But Heidegger still characterized leading thinkers as individual peaks of mountains that have to be engaged one at a time.) Moreover, it remains the case that what Lévinas found important in Heidegger's thought is not assimilable in this way, in spite of the scarcely contestable fact that political matters so strongly merited serious philosophical attention in those years and, indeed, far beyond any response on Heidegger's part. Furthermore, to impugn Lévinas' thought as well, by virtue of his attentiveness to Heidegger, displays the same reductionist impulse. What political positions Lévinas might take clearly would not be consistent with whatever public support Heidegger gave National Socialism. Such an assessment of Lévinas' thought simply moves all too eagerly in the direction of putting a stop to raising questions such as those concerning the meaning of Being or a possibility that morality may amount to a certain naivety regarding ourselves as well as others, questions that do not lend themselves to such reductionism. These considerations also apply to assessments that, given Heidegger's signal achievement of declaring philosophy to be at an end, whatever comes after that – for example, Lévinas' thought – should be dismissed out of hand.³

³ Jacques Derrida, in his essay "Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Lévinas", from 1964, much closer to the events that mattered in this regard, a time when neither Heidegger nor Lévinas had said a last word, and when the thought of impugning Lévinas' thought for his attentiveness to Heidegger had not occurred, touches on all this much more lightly. He writes: "Lévinas acknowledges, moreover, that his 'reflections,' after having submitted to inspiration by 'the philosophy of Martin Heidegger,' are governed by a profound need to depart from the climate of this philosophy' (*De l'existence à l'existant*, 1947). In question here is a need whose natural legitimacy we would be the last to question; what is more, we believe that its climate is never totally exterior to thought itself. But does not the naked truth of the other appear beyond 'need,' 'climate,' and a certain 'history'? And who has taught us this better than Lévinas?" See Jacques Derrida, *L'écriture et la différence* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1967), 214 f.; *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 145.

I. HEIDEGGER'S CRITICISM OF WESTERN METAPHYSICS:
AN OBLIVIOUSNESS TO TIME

Both Heidegger and Lévinas raised such far-reaching questions (as the ones just mentioned) via challenges to the philosophical tradition of the West. For Heidegger, that challenge concerned the Greek response to the question that set philosophical thought in motion, the question as to the meaning of Being, and that response was that Being is equal to presence, the defining feature of the metaphysical tradition. The response took shape in the culmination of Greek thought with Plato and would govern the tradition as Platonism ever since, obscuring any ongoing questioning in Plato's own thought and eventually losing touch fully with the question. Aristotle's sense of Substance, *ousia*, had taken the culmination of Greek thought to its furthest point and, nearly twenty-five-hundred years later, it would be Hegel who brought the culmination of Greek thought within reach. The ending of metaphysics occurs in Schelling's thought and here something enters philosophy that had not previously been there. Heidegger associates Schelling with Hölderlin, the poet for whom the heavenly fires still burned in the distance, and whose poetry, on Heidegger's understanding, offered a possibility of another beginning.

Heidegger's major text *Being and Time* would seek to reopen the question concerning Being. The text comprises an analysis of the entity or the being that we are and that Heidegger designates as *Dasein*, ex-istence, or being-in-the-world. The point is that we and world are not first apart such that we become engaged with the world only at a subsequent point. As who we are, we are already in-the-world, and the question concerning the "who" of *Dasein* is bound up with the question concerning Being's meaning. How that is to be understood is the issue for the *Dasein*-analysis of *Being and Time*. "The Preparatory Fundamental Analysis of *Dasein*," the first Division of Part One (which is called "The Interpretation of *Dasein* in Terms of Temporality and the Explication of Time as the Transcendental Horizon of the Question of Being," and which is the only Part that ever saw the light of day), identifies three fundamental *existentialia*, or features of the structure of *Dasein*, namely, disposition or mood, understanding, and discourse, which disclose the being-in-the-world that is *Dasein*. Disposition discloses basically in terms of a movement away and toward world. For example, fear involves a movement away from whatever one is fearful of, and toward that for which one is fearful. The point here is that *Dasein* is always characterized by one or another mood, even unawares,

and is not first mood-free only to be overtaken by a mood at a subsequent point. Understanding discloses basically in terms of possibilities that are intrinsic to being-in-the-world. Such possibilities are crucially futural and as such cannot be reduced to an empirical context. Importantly, Heidegger points out that there is a sense in which this means that *Dasein* is “more” than it is, and being-in-the-world is not a lesser version of a higher state. Heidegger writes:

Da-sein is constantly “more” than it actually is, if one wanted to and if one could register it as something objectively present to its content of being. But it is never more than it factically is because its potentiality of being belongs essentially to its facticity [which is to say, its always already being in the world]. But as being possible, *Da-sein* is also never less. It is existentially that which it is *not yet* in its potentiality of Being. (SZ 145)⁴

In that *Dasein* is possibilities, it is never simply present somehow apart from those possibilities.

Finally, in regard to discourse, the point is that language is not added on, so to speak, after the fact. Heidegger writes:

All discourse about ... which communicates in what it says has at the same time the character of *expressing itself*. In talking, *Da-sein* expresses itself not because it has been initially cut off as “something internal” from something outside, but because in being-in-the-world it is being outside when it understands. What is expressed is precisely this being outside, that is, the actual mode of attunement (of mood) which we showed to pertain to the full disclosedness of being-in. Being-in and its attunement are made known in discourse and indicated in language by intonation, modulation, in the tempo of talk, “in the way of speaking.” The communication of the existential possibilities of attunement, that is, the disclosing of existence, can become the true aim of “poetic” speech. (SZ 162)

Heidegger designates the unifying factor in regard to the *existentialia* as Care. This is precisely not to be understood in the sense that *Dasein* is first in some way independent only later to become solicitous about what is encountered in the world, but rather, more accurately, in the sense that *Dasein*, as *Dasein*, has cares (although the “has” is clearly also problematic

⁴ In Joan Stambaugh’s translation of *Sein und Zeit* (where this passage is found on p. 136), she inserts a hyphen in the word *Dasein*, thus *Da-sein*, as she does throughout the text, in response to an express wish on Heidegger’s part, although in the original German the hyphen appears only rarely for a specific purpose. The reported intent is to avoid misleading connotations that can result from the standard translation of the word when found in traditional philosophical German. That hyphen is retained here in all citations from *Being and Time*.

in expressing that matter in this way). It is the sense of "being outside," which pertains to each of the *existentialia*, which are themselves *equiprimordial*, that cannot be comprehended within substantialist metaphysics, and this is what I want to emphasize. *Dasein* is not just present without, so to speak, any further ado.

Until this point, the question of the wholeness of *Dasein* has not been addressed but it will have to be addressed in order to assure that the analysis does not revert to substantialist metaphysics. Heidegger does so in Division II, "*Dasein* and Temporality." It is the "being outside" that is the obstacle to a grasp of *Dasein's* wholeness by cognition, and Heidegger emphasizes that this is not because of a defect of cognition, but rather pertains to that which is to be understood, i.e., the wholeness of a being that is outside. This wholeness is to be found in what Heidegger designates as the authentic present, the Moment (*der Augenblick*). This Moment marks an alignment of *Dasein's* futurity, in the mode of anticipatoriness in regard to death or mortality, the possibility of having no further possibilities, and *Dasein's* resolute response to the call of conscience, which calls *Dasein* back toward *Dasein's* facticity, *Dasein* as always already in-the-world. The "back" here is an indication of a past. The character of this alignment, this "anticipatory resoluteness," this authentic present or Moment, reinforces the point to the effect that *Dasein* cannot be comprehended within substantialist metaphysics. Moreover, the temporalizing indicated here definitely cannot be measured in terms of the progression of now-points that belongs to substantialist metaphysics.

Heidegger will go on to a reinterpretation of the *existentialia* based on the temporalizing of *Dasein's* being and he will discuss the "everydayness" characteristic of *Dasein* accordingly. Finally, Heidegger will specify this temporalizing as the source of *Dasein's* historicity, and its relation to "within-timeness" as the origin of the mode of reckoning or calculating with time characteristic of the common concept of time. As indicated in "The Outline of the Treatise" that appears at the end of Heidegger's "Introduction" to *Being and Time*, Part One was supposed to comprise three divisions, and the third would bear the title "Time and Being," indicating a turn about to take place at this point. Then, Part Two would comprise three divisions to carry out a "de-structive" retrieval of the question concerning Being by way of analyses of the contributions of Kant, Descartes, and Aristotle, respectively. Much of these analyses are to be found in texts from Heidegger's lecture courses. A lot has been made of the incompleteness of the text as an indication of a failure of the treatise. Nevertheless, as it stands, it certainly puts considerable obstacles in the

way of any continuation of or derivation from substantialist metaphysics, and that is the point that I have been trying to emphasize in this review of *Being and Time*. In Heidegger's later work and treatment of such themes as technology, art, language, and poetry, his challenge to substantialist metaphysics intensifies. This is particularly evident in his major albeit incomplete text from 1936–1938 (first published in 1989), *Contributions to Philosophy: From "Das Ereignis,"* where "das Ereignis" – the event-of-proprietation, the source of the "ontological difference" between Being and beings – first becomes the leading topic, in place of Being.

II. LÉVINAS' CRITICISM OF WESTERN METAPHYSICS: AN OBLIVIOUSNESS TO THE OTHER

At this point, we turn to Emmanuel Lévinas. For Lévinas, the metaphysical tradition has been characterized, in fact, driven, by an intent to turn alterity into sameness. This reaches a limit in regard to my relatedness to an Other (*l'Autrui*, a fellow human), and this is central to Lévinas' own understanding that ethics is actually what comes first in thinking no less than in life. In responding to alterity, metaphysics has in fact displayed a violent impulse toward the Other in her or his alterity. An indication of this is, for Lévinas, how the tradition puts ontology before metaphysics, a point to which we are going to return shortly. If metaphysics is to come first, then it has to be ethics. My relatedness to an Other is actually a "relation that is not a relation." Lévinas describes how my entrance, so to speak, into that relation comes by way of an Egoity, an "I-ness," that amounts to a sameness. Here is the passage from his first original text of major proportions, *Totality and Infinity*:

The alterity, the radical heterogeneity of the other, is possible only if the other is other with respect to a term whose essence is to remain at the point of departure, to serve as *entry* into the relation, to be the same not relatively but absolutely. *A term can remain absolutely at the point of departure of relationship only as an I*⁵

Lévinas elaborates on this point of departure for the relation to an Other, which is not yielded at any point, in terms of a "pre-intentional" enjoyment, a *jouissance*, a term that is related to jubilation. This, Lévinas specifies, is creatureliness. The creature needs, and, in effect, lives *from* these needs. Such need differs from desire (which, as desire, does not reach satisfaction) and pertains to relatedness to the Other.

⁵ *Totalité et infini: essai sur l'extériorité* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1961), 6; *Totality and Infinity: An Essay On Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingus (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 36.

It is by virtue of an encounter with an Other, with the face (*le visage*) of an Other, that sameness or creaturely enjoyment is limited. I encounter the face of an Other at a height that does not allow circumventing or surmounting. That height also marks a certain destitution of the Other, in the sense that in terms of the Other's alterity, the Other is always in the position of an "outsider," someone beyond the reach of ordinary or standard means of care. Lévinas illustrates this in terms of the biblical injunction to care for the widow and the orphan. The face of the Other does not enter the space of appearance. In terms of this height and this destitution of the Other, the Other makes a demand on me that limits the sameness of my creaturely enjoyment, and this can go as far as to reach the bread in my mouth. The differing that is effected by such an encounter has a positive character by virtue of how it lies at the heart of critical reasoning, in contrast to reasoning that seeks to reduce alterity to sameness, by virtue of how it accounts for one's freedom, which is different from spontaneity, by virtue of how it accounts for the sense of justice, and by virtue of how it lies at the heart of language. Relatedness to the Other cannot be totalized. This is what the tradition has attempted to do by reducing this alterity to sameness, and this is the sense in which this relatedness amounts to a relation that is not a relation. While I-ness, such as Lévinas describes it, remains the entry into the relation, in a sense, this I-ness relies on the relation, which means in a sense it is already there at the start, and Lévinas, by analogy, likens this to how Descartes' initial finding, specifically the Cogito, is dependent on a finding that comes subsequently, namely, the existence of God.

In order to understand fully the implications of all these considerations, it is helpful to understand the French context for Lévinas' work. The very largely silent interlocutor in Lévinas' *Totality and Infinity* is Jean-Paul Sartre, who had addressed the question of an Other at length in his *Being and Nothingness*. Where Sartre is concerned, first, with the opening up of consciousness, that consciousness is involved in a "hollowing out" of a world. This entails an attempt by consciousness to provide itself with an essence. Consciousness is for-itself, while it opens up in the midst of an in-itself that is *massif*, indeterminate, and full with itself through and through. Consciousness's attempt to provide itself with an essence will always fall short by virtue of the fact that it basically is nothingness. But in the course of that attempt, consciousness encounters other consciousnesses in the world, and the result is an ongoing attempt at objectification. Likewise, other consciousnesses will seek to objectify me, and this is detected in a sense of an objectifying gaze that cannot be coming from

me, but rather must be an intimation of another consciousness. In that no being in-and-for-itself is possible, by virtue of the nothingness of consciousness, the result is conflictual, with no exit, unless understanding all of this can lead somehow to a liberation.

Importantly, Lévinas does not say that it only takes an acknowledgement of the alterity of the Other to resolve any and all difficulties that arise in regard to my encounter with the Other. This is definitely manifest in his second major work, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, where Lévinas actually tracks the course of an encounter with the Other through a sense of the Other's proximity (which accounts for how the Other can "get under my skin") to a persecution wherein I find myself to be the source of the Other's imposition on me, and then from this persecution to an expiation by me for that imposition, to finally a substitution that Lévinas characterizes as a one-for-the-other.⁶ In such an encounter, I am altogether for the other along the lines of only taking the Other's side and, by virtue of the fact that at this point only I can respond to the Other, I come into my own. Here is Lévinas' description of this "substitution":

In this substitution, in which identity is inverted, this passivity more passive still than the passivity conjoined with action, beyond the inert passivity of the designated, the self is absolved of itself. Is this freedom? It is a different freedom from that of an initiative. Through substitution for others, the oneself escapes relation. At the limit of passivity, the oneself escapes passivity or the inevitable limitation that the terms within relation undergo. In the incomparable relation of responsibility, the other no longer limits the same, it is supported by what it limits. Here the overdetermination of the ontological categories is visible, which transforms them into ethical terms. In the most passive passivity, the self liberates itself ethically from every other and from itself.⁷

Clearly, it is also a misunderstanding to think that Lévinas regards any mode of inclusion of Others as a panacea. The difference between Lévinas and Sartre on the question of the Other is not that of a utopianism versus a realism. For Lévinas, the issue of the alterity of the Other is a recurrent and difficult issue in life. The question is how one will respond, and for Lévinas what is called for is a welcoming response that reaches a point

⁶ Emmanuel Lévinas, *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1974), 77–166; *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague and Boston: Kluwer, 1981), 61–129.

⁷ "Substitution," in *Revue Philosophique de Louvain*, 66, no. 91 (1968), trans. Alphonso Lingis, in *The Lévinas Reader*, ed. Seán Hand (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 104. This essay is incorporated in *Totality and Infinity*.

where the self is liberated, ethically, from every other and from itself. Lévinas characterizes this liberation as an "authentic subjectivity," which distinguishes it from any and every subjectivity amounting to a reduction of otherness to sameness.

Lévinas' understanding of this liberation at the limit of passivity bears comparison to the anticipatory resoluteness that marks, on Heidegger's understanding, the authentic present. Lévinas finds that this point of liberation in passivity marks diachrony. The primary difference between Lévinas and Sartre is that for Lévinas the welcoming response accords with a peace that is first, before conflict and war, rather than a result. This peace is inherent in the relation to the Other precisely by virtue of its being a relation that is not a relation and therefore intrinsically not totalizable. Both Lévinas and Heidegger found that Sartre's ontological work is posed from the start within the context of the metaphysics of the tradition, which means, for Lévinas, an effort to reduce otherness to sameness, and, for Heidegger, an ongoing identification of Being with presence. It is doubtful that either one could find Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason* a satisfactory resolution of issues left unresolved by *Being and Nothingness*.⁸

III. LÉVINAS' DISAGREEMENTS WITH HEIDEGGER

The relation that is not a relation that is so crucial for Lévinas clearly is not just fully present as itself, and substantialist metaphysics will not assimilate this relation. It is true that Lévinas will say that it is the Other that is Substance, *ousia*. But his saying so is comparable to Heidegger saying that his question concerns Being, when it is clear that this Being is not the tradition's understanding of "beingness" or Being as quality. The relation that is not a relation, so crucial to Lévinas' thought, is a step that distances Lévinas from Sartre, and it brings him closer to Heidegger. Might one not ask, then, whether ethics as thought by Lévinas qualifies as an ethics implicit in Heidegger's thought but never made explicit? Why not?

The problem here turns out to be that the relation that is not a relation brings with it critical assessments of features of Heidegger's thought, and these critical assessments can clarify disagreements on specific points

⁸ It is also helpful to understand Lévinas' sense of alterity within the phenomenological context going back to Husserl. In Husserl's development of phenomenology, the issue concerned how an Alter Ego is to be understood in regard to the Transcendental Ego of the phenomenologist. Husserl addressed this question in his *Cartesian Meditations*, but posthumously published manuscripts indicate that this remained problematic for him.

mentioned above, such as the import of desire, the character of freedom, and the origin of language. A first such critical assessment on Lévinas' part is that the priority of ontology for Heidegger maintains a traditional priority that Lévinas specifies as follows:

Western philosophy has most often been an ontology: a reduction of the other to the same by interposition of a middle and neutral term that ensures the comprehension of being.⁹

Based on this description, Heidegger's analyses remain bound up with an epistemological issue, as is indicated in this citation by the phrase "comprehension of being" assured by a middle and neutral term. In *Being and Time*, however, Heidegger takes himself to be reversing the modern priority of epistemology over ontology, by identifying knowledge as a founded mode of relating to entities encountered in the world, one that involves a distinct orientation and procedures, and thereby already assumes both world as well as *Dasein's* being-in-the-world. While it is true that one of Heidegger's early conversations or debates was with neo-Kantianism,¹⁰ what Lévinas identifies here as ontology actually comes closest to *metaphysica generalis* as distinguished from *metaphysica specialis*. Heidegger's thought is closer to *metaphysica generalis* than *metaphysica specialis*. But, ultimately, on Heidegger's understanding, the distinction addresses an issue that was already shaped by the tradition's initial neglect, in effect, of the difference between a being, on the one hand, and Being, on the other hand, or, in Heidegger's terms, a neglect of the ontological difference. The tradition lost touch with this decisively with Aristotle's identification of Being with a highest being, that is, with a divinity. As a result, the tradition takes on the character of "onto-theology," and this will govern the tradition from that point on.¹¹ The distinction between *metaphysica generalis* and *metaphysica specialis* cannot recover the sense of the ontological difference, and eventually the result is the epistemological priority. Even if Lévinas were to establish the priority of alterity as he understands it vis-à-vis Heidegger's ontological difference, this characterization of Heidegger's thought would still come up short.¹²

⁹ *Totalité et infini*, 13; *Totality and Infinity*, 43.

¹⁰ See Stephan Käufer's essay "Heidegger's Interpretation of Kant" in the present volume.

¹¹ See Iain Thomson's essay "Ontotheology" in the present volume.

¹² Derrida notices this issue pertaining to Lévinas' announced inversion of the traditional priority of ontology before metaphysics, where metaphysics would actually be ethics. He writes in "Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Lévinas" (where, indeed, not much at all escapes his notice): "The Being of the existent (for example, God) [for Heidegger] is not the absolute existent, nor the infinite existent, nor even the foundation of the existent

That takes us to a second critical assessment by Lévinas and this pertains directly to the question concerning beings and Being. According to Lévinas, as a result of Heidegger's overriding concern with Being, Heidegger misses the incomparability of the Other whom I encounter vis-à-vis other worldly entities, an incomparability that Lévinas specifies via his discussion of the face of an Other. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger discusses *Dasein's* relatedness to other *Dasein* as basically a being-with, *Mitsein*. Heidegger discusses solicitous interaction with other *Dasein*, including a standing in for another *Dasein* by addressing that *Dasein's* concerns and a leaping ahead of another *Dasein* that has the effect of restoring that *Dasein* to that *Dasein's* being as *Dasein*. Clearly, Heidegger is aware of a difference between solicitous relatedness to other *Dasein* and relatedness to other entities that do not have the character of *Dasein* but are involved in the concerns of the *Dasein* that is mine. But in that the basic relatedness remains a being-with, it amounts, for Lévinas, to a co-existence, or a being alongside, even where those solicitous interactions are concerned, and this misses the incomparable alterity of the Other.

Possibly, some mediation here could help. In regard to Lévinas, the encounter with the face of the Other is not the only crucial mode of relatedness that he discusses. The final section of *Totality and Infinity* is called "Beyond the Face." Here Lévinas discusses eros and relations of "filiality" and "fraternity."¹³ Such relations are not on the order of the utter alterity of the encounter with the face of the Other. Moreover, in *Beyond Being or Otherwise than Essence*, the one-for-the-other, "substitution," wherein a self-liberation is effected, seemingly requires a specific

in general. This is why the question of Being cannot budge the metaphysical [meaning 'ethical'] edifice of *Totality and Infinity* (for example). It is simply out of reach for the 'inversion of the terms' *ontology and metaphysics* that Lévinas proposes. The theme of this inversion does not play an indispensable role, have meaning and necessity, except in the economy and coherence of Lévinas' book in its entirety" (*L'écriture et la différence*, 211/*Writing and Difference*, 143). Agreed, but with regard to this inversion, Lévinas' initial characterization of Heidegger's thought as a reassertion of Western philosophy's "neutral term that ensures the comprehension of being" will still be problematic after the entirety of Lévinas' book is taken into account. That is to say, on the one hand, that I agree with Derrida that Lévinas' own thought does not fail with this initial problematic characterization of Heidegger's thought as being bound up with the traditional sense of ontology. But my point, on the other hand, is that Lévinas is identifying Heidegger's thought here with "metaphysics generalis," from which it ultimately differs. The success of Lévinas' inversion (doing metaphysics first) does not require the negation of Heidegger's thought and Lévinas' other critical assessments – for example, regarding "co-existence" and the priority of world vis-à-vis what or who is encountered in the world – are not dependent on such a negation. But the initial identification is still problematic by itself.

¹³ *Totalité et infini*, 229–257; *Totality and Infinity*, 251–280.

relatedness that is not on the order of the utter alterity that characterizes the encounter with the face, a relatedness indicated by the term “substitution” itself. It is pertinent in this regard that questions having to do with “the third” and justice are raised by Lévinas in *Beyond Being or Otherwise than Essence* in association with the self-liberation that he describes, although not much more is said other than that those relations are there at the start, evidently a reference to the entry into the relation to the Other that *Totality and Infinity* specified as an I-ness or a sameness that is creatureliness.¹⁴ The question is whether modes of relatedness to others that do not reduce to co-existence but perhaps could be characterized as indirect, when compared with the relation that is not a relation, are allowed for by these points in Lévinas’ texts, and moreover whether those relations would not necessarily have to be simply derivative or parasitical in regard to the encounter with the face of the Other.

In regard to Heidegger, the following point in *Being and Time* is crucial to his discussion of being-with:

Da-sein in itself is essentially being-with. The phenomenological statement that *Da-sein* is essentially being-with has an existential-ontological meaning. It does not intend to ascertain ontically that I am factically not objectively present alone, rather that others of my kind also are. If the being-with meant something like this, being-with would not be an existential attribute that belongs to *Da-sein* of itself on the basis of its kind of being, but something which occurs at times on the basis of the existence of others. (SZ 120)

The question here is whether instead of a relation that “occurs at times,” there could be a relation that would have to be thought in terms of the temporalizing that *Dasein* is. In this case, the essentiality of *Dasein*, including, specifically, being-with, might have to be thought more along the lines of Heidegger’s post-*Being and Time* sense of *das Wesen*, essence, as verbal, as “lingering” or “whiling.” Heidegger understood this as prior to the ontological difference. The point here is that such a relation might not *be* in a manner that ultimately conforms to a “with.”

While these suggestions could be indicative of some higher ground that neither subordinates Heidegger’s thought to that of Lévinas, nor vice versa, we come now to a third critical assessment by Lévinas that does not seem to allow for much higher ground, if any at all. This critical assessment by Lévinas pertains more explicitly to the encounter at issue rather than the alterity of the one whom I encounter. For Heidegger, although

¹⁴ See, for example, *Autrement qu’être ou au-delà de l’essence*, 200–207; *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*, 157–162.

the beings encountered in each case differ in regard to their "kind of being," when I encounter another *Dasein*, and when I encounter a being that is, say, a piece of equipment that is "ready-to-hand," in Heidegger's terms, in each case the being is encountered in a world. That point, for Lévinas, indicates a subordination to world of my relation to an Other, and thereby compromises this relation's ethical character, which is the crucial factor here.

Heidegger may agree with the ascription here of a priority of world, but at the same time, at least for Heidegger, that priority would not indicate a shortcoming of what he thinks. The event of world, or world's coming to light, must be prior to my encounter with an entity or being, whether that is, say, a piece of equipment, or another *Dasein*. For Lévinas, insistence on this point is indicative of remaining in the context of sameness, or of I-ness, and that is a mark of paganism. Whatever one makes of Heidegger's tentative thinking, later on, of the event of world in terms of a gathering of a "Quadrant" or a "Fourfold" of earth, sky, mortals, and gods, the word "paganism" need not conjure up images of bloody rituals but pertain simply to the initial sense of the word in reference to a life of cultivation of the earth and the mythic context that comes about with such a life. Here, from a sub-division in *Totality and Infinity* that is called "The Mythical Format of the Element," is Lévinas' description:

But this overflowing of sensation by the element, which appears in the indetermination with which it offers itself to my enjoyment, takes on a temporal meaning. In enjoyment quality is not a quality of something. The solidity of the earth that supports me, the blue of the sky above my head, the breath of the wind, the undulation of the sea, the sparkle of the light, do not cling to a substance. They come from nowhere. This coming from nowhere, from "something" that is not, appearing without there being anything that appears – and consequently *coming always*, without my being able *to possess* the source – delineates the future of sensibility and enjoyment ...

This coming forth from nowhere opposes the element to what we will describe under the name of face, where precisely an existent presents itself personally. To be affected by a side of being while its whole depth remains undetermined and comes upon me from nowhere is to be bent toward the insecurity of the morrow. The future of the element as insecurity is lived concretely in the mythical divinity of the element. Faceless gods, impersonal gods to whom one does not speak, mark the nothingness that bounds the egoism of enjoyment in the midst of its familiarity with the element. But it is thus that enjoyment accomplishes separation. The separated being must run the risk of the paganism which evinces its separation and in which this separation is accomplished, until the

moment that the death of these gods will lead it back to atheism and to the true transcendence.¹⁵

The point here where alterity gets excluded is where the future of the element as insecurity is *lived concretely* in the mythical divinity of the element.

It is, however, quite difficult to ascribe this exclusion to Heidegger in that it would appear to have the character of a “making present,” and in *Being and Time*, that is precisely how Heidegger characterizes *inauthentic Dasein* in contrast to being in the authentic present of the Moment. Furthermore, when Heidegger, after *Being and Time*, goes from reliance on the leading term “Being” to the more archaic spelling of the German, that is, from *Sein* to *Seyn*, or to a crossing out of the term while leaving it, crossed out, in the text, or to the term *das Ereignis*, the event of appropriation, as leading term, he does so not because he wants to insist on making present, but instead because he realizes that the term Being eventually lends itself to its own identification with presence. For Heidegger, ultimately, *das Ereignis* is not at all Greek. Presumably this means that it does not pertain to the Greek mythic context from which metaphysical thought descends.

While for Lévinas the priority of the event of world vis-à-vis the encounter with an Other compromises the ethical character of that encounter, for Heidegger, reversing the priority amounts to starting with a being rather than re-opening the question concerning Being, and this is tantamount to sustaining the equation of Being and presence. Evidence to this effect, in Lévinas’ work, would lie in Lévinas’ appeal to “creatureliness,” which is how Lévinas understands “separation.” For Heidegger, a creature, understood as an *ens creatum*, is a being that simply is present, and this is equivalent, fully, to understanding Being as presence. But this understanding hardly seems to fit Lévinas’ description of creatureliness in terms of enjoyment or jubilation, *jouissance*, and in terms of a living *from* needs. Moreover, the medieval account of creation that Heidegger specifies is a rather unlikely source for Lévinas’ sense of creatureliness.

At this point, then, it would appear that no high ground is available. Perhaps, at the risk of finding no ground, we should instead descend, in search of a common question at the source of the opposition. In Lévinas’ essay “From Consciousness to Wakefulness,” there is a passage where

¹⁵ *Totalité et infini*, 115 f.; *Totality and Infinity*, 141 f.

Lévinas would appear to come closest to the point where the alterity of the Other is already there at the point of sameness or I-ness, the entry into that relation that cannot ever be totalized, a point that reappears, in effect, in Lévinas' discussion of the one-for-the-other of "substitution" in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* when a self-liberation is effected in the most passive passivity. Here is the passage:

Is not the *living* of life an exceeding? Is it not a rupture of the container by the uncontainable which precisely, thus, animates or inspires? Should not awakening be inspiration? Irreducible terms. The *living* of life – an incessant bursting of identification. As if, like a dazzling or burning, life were, beyond the *seeing* already the pain of the eye exceeded by light; beyond contact, already the ignition of the skin touching – but not touching – the ungraspable. The Same, disturbed by the Other who exalts him ... Non-rest or non-perdurance in the Same, a non-state: should we call the *otherwise*, which thus withdraws itself from being, a "creature"? Perhaps. But on condition that it not be understood as a lesser being, nor as some sort of modification or derivation of being. For the priority or the ultimacy of the Same – as also consciousness, knowledge, thematization, and being – put themselves into question.¹⁶

Might we not say that this comes closest to a "creaturely awareness" that runs the course of Lévinas' texts, animating them with a prayer-like quality? The hesitation here at the word "creature" itself indicates that such prayer would not proceed from a prior faith.

Are we close here to a sense of what Heidegger means in *Being and Time* when he characterizes *Dasein* as "thrown projection," "thrown" in that *Dasein*, in its facticity, knows not where it comes from nor where it is going, and "projection," in the sense of intrinsically being possible, or "not yet," and is this where the poetic word will later come into play for Heidegger? Maybe. But the factor here that I want to call attention to is Lévinas' characterization of the "creature" in terms of a "withdrawal from being" amounting to an otherwise. For Heidegger too there is definitely a sense of a withdrawal prior to any manifestation or emergence. This point is found in the discussion of mood or disposition in *Being and Time* in terms of the movement away from and toward world where Heidegger emphasizes that the movement away, a forgetting, precedes the movement toward, the remembering. It is also found when Heidegger later thinks the Greek *aletheia*, translated as "truth" or as "Wahrheit," where the

¹⁶ Emmanuel Lévinas, *De Dieu qui vient à l'idée* (Paris: Vrin, 1982), 146; *Of God Who Comes To Mind*, trans. Bettina Bergo (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), 29 f.

German word involves a sense of sheltering or protection, and Heidegger notes that *lethe*, a forgetting, precedes “unforgetting,” manifestation, or emergence. In the text *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)* we find that the event of appropriation, *das Ereignis*, is intrinsically an *Enteignis*, a disappropriation. Is this withdrawal Lévinas’ otherwise?

Lévinas would say “no” because creatureliness means separation, the point of entry into a relation that is not a relation, the “true transcendence” ever distinct from “always already being-in-the-world” or a prior event of appropriation. Heidegger would also say “no.” In the mid-1930s lecture course “Introduction to Metaphysics,” Heidegger specifies that to appeal to what is meant by creation when addressing the question concerning Being amounts to already having an answer without questioning. In other words, such an appeal would simply put an end to his questioning thought. Heidegger also specifies here that what is meant by creation comes from faith, to which he adds that faith, to be faith, must be willing to engage in the questioning in regard to Being.

IV. WHAT REMAINS TO BE ASKED

Here, we reach a point at which it would appear that any possible access to higher ground is now exhausted. Even so, in the course of the conversation (and it is by way of Heidegger’s occasional references to creation that the comparison turns out to be a conversation), significant misunderstandings have been uncovered. Specifically, Heidegger’s thinking, on the one hand, is not a matter of an incessant making present. At the same time, Lévinas’ thinking, on the other hand, is not equivalent to the identification of Being and presence. Beginning with these points, it would appear that each could say “yes” to the other’s “yes,” but at the same time say “no” to the other’s “no.” Specifically, Lévinas could say “yes” to a thinking of Being that, while ontological, is not a matter of a cognition preceding a relation that is not a relation. But, at the same time, Lévinas would say “no” to a prohibition on ethics before ontology. Heidegger could say “yes” to an ethics that, while ontic, is not a matter of presuming an identity between Being and presence. But, at the same time, Heidegger would say “no” to a prohibition on thinking Being before ethics. Importantly, the “no’s” in both cases would be altogether as crucial as the “yes’s.” Consequently, there is no dialectical reversal here to take us to higher ground, no method for getting from one to the other “position,” or vice versa (if one might put it that way,

even in quotation marks, although we are way far beyond any practice of position taking).

If there is a point here that is certain, it would be that substantialist metaphysics is not the context of this conversation. The question that takes shape, then, in the course of this strange if not uncanny conversation is: what might it take in order for it to proceed?

CHAPTER 13

Derrida's reading of Heidegger

Françoise Dastur

As is well known, Derrida's first works – *The Problem of Genesis in Husserl's Philosophy*, the Introduction to Husserl's *Origin of Geometry*, and *Speech and Phenomenon* – were dedicated to Husserl's phenomenology which, together with Heidegger's analysis of existence, had been since the 1930s the major reference for most important French philosophers of this period: Lévinas, Ricœur, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty. Derrida found in Husserl the main themes of thought (the role of writing in science in *Origin of Geometry* and the conception of soliloquy and voice as self-presence in the first *Logical Investigation*¹) that constituted the basis of his project of deconstructing logocentrism and phonocentrism, as expounded in the fundamental book published in 1967 under the title *Of Grammatology*. But if it is clear that Derrida discovered these themes in Husserl, it is nevertheless Heidegger's thinking that constitutes not only his major reference, but the very milieu, the "element" of his philosophical enterprise. From the middle of the 1960s, with the text dedicated to Lévinas under the title "Violence and Metaphysics," in which we find his first reading of Heidegger, until the very end of the 1990s, with "L'animal que donc je suis,"² where Heidegger's conception of animality is once more analyzed, Derrida never ceased to be engaged in a critical dialogue with Heidegger's thinking. As he explained in an interview in 1967, nothing of what he attempted in this period, which was the most decisive for his entire work, "would have been possible without the opening of the Heideggerian questions," and especially without the attention given to what Heidegger names the ontological difference, in spite of the fact that this difference seems to him to be

¹ On these two points, see Françoise Dastur, "Finitude and Repetition in Husserl and Derrida" in *Spindel Conference 1993, Derrida's Interpretation of Husserl*, ed. Leonard Lawlor, Supplement to *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 32 (1994): 113–130; and Françoise Dastur, "Derrida and the Question of Presence," *Research in Phenomenology*, 36 (2006): 45–62.

² Jacques Derrida, *L'animal que donc je suis* (Paris : Galilée, 2006).

still retained in metaphysics.³ In another interview from 1971, he is even more explicit on this point and declares that he has sometimes the feeling that the Heideggerian problematic is the most “profound” and the most “powerful” defense of what he himself tries to call into question under the name of “thought of presence.”⁴

From there, it becomes clear that Derrida’s project consists in deconstructing in a more decisive manner than Heidegger himself what Derrida calls the “metaphysics of presence” that constitutes the core of Western thinking. It is therefore around the concept of “presence” that in this first period, that is to say, from 1964 to 1967, Derrida engaged in a debate with Heidegger. The culmination of this first critical debate with Heidegger was the lecture entitled “The Différance” given on January 27, 1968 in Paris in the French Society of Philosophy. A second and longer phase of the same debate, centered around the question of animality and “what is proper to man,” began with the lecture given in October 1968 in New York on *The Ends of Man* and continued with the series of texts entitled *Geschlecht* until the long 1987 lecture “Of Spirit” and the 1997 lecture “L’animal que donc je suis.”

1. THE QUESTION OF PRESENCE AND THE DE-CONSTRUCTION OF METAPHYSICS

Derrida’s first reading of Heidegger in the long text dedicated to Lévinas and published in 1964 under the title “Violence and Metaphysics”⁵ shows that, in contrast to the French “existentialists,” he understood the deep meaning of the Heideggerian question of being, which does not aim only at providing the basis of a philosophical anthropology. In his critical analysis of Lévinas’ *Totality and Infinity*, which had just been published, he undertakes in fact a defense of Heidegger’s position, which cannot be reduced, as Lévinas wants, to a “thought of the same” (ED 144) or of totality (ED 207) and is neither “ontology” nor a “philosophy of power” (ED 201), but on the contrary a thought that is as close as possible to non-violence (ED 218). He goes even as far as declaring that Heidegger’s thought cannot be considered a negative theology (ED 217) or reduced to a “new paganism of the place” and to “a complacent cult of sedentarity,” but that the Lévinassian metaphysics of the face presupposes and includes

³ Cf. Jacques Derrida, *Positions* (Paris: Minuit, 1972), 18. All translations, if not otherwise mentioned, are my own.

⁴ Ibid. 75.

⁵ Jacques Derrida, *L’écriture et la différence* (Paris: Seuil, 1967), 117–228 (cited hereafter as “ED”).

the thought of being (ED 212). In the same text, however, Derrida underscores that, in his view, the Lévinassian theme of the trace, which is always referred to an absolute invisibility, should lead to a rehabilitation of writing and not only of the living word, because Hebraism, which is praised by Lévinas, cannot “lower the letter” (ED 152). And declaring that there is a proximity between the two thinkers, both of whom in opposite ways call into question the philosophical adventure resulting from Platonism (ED 221), he concludes that if Judaism can be defined as the experience of the infinite Other and if the Greek thinking was able to receive otherness in general in the heart of logos, as is the case in Plato’s *Sophist*, we have to recognize that we are living in the difference between the Jew and the Greek, according to Joyce’s sentence: “Jewgreek is greekjew. Extremes meet” (ED 228). We find here the first hint to the “outside” from which the deconstruction of Western thinking should find its starting point, as Derrida will explain later in “The Ends of Man.”⁶

In 1964 Derrida was not yet speaking of “deconstruction,” this word imposing itself upon him only in *Of Grammatology*, as he will later recall in his 1985 letter to a Japanese friend,⁷ noting that he then wanted to adapt to his own ends the Heideggerian word of *Destruktion* or *Abbau*. But it has to be underlined that the Derridian deconstruction is something other than the Heideggerian *Destruktion*, which is defined in *Sein und Zeit* as “the destructuring of the traditional content of ancient ontology carried out along the guidelines of the question of being,” in order to get back to “the original experiences in which the first and subsequently guiding determinations of being were grounded” (SZ § 6: 22). According to the meaning Derrida gives the word, “deconstruction” cannot be defined; it cannot be understood as an analysis, i.e., a regression toward “the simple element or an indecomposable origin”; it is not even an operation or an act, but rather something that takes place in itself and which has to do with the delimitation of the ontological. This is what he emphasized in *Of Grammatology*, where deconstruction does not mean “demolition” but “de-sedimentation” of all significations having their source in the signification of logos, an epoch to which Heidegger in a way still belongs.⁸ In his 1988 *Memoires for Paul de Man*, Derrida nevertheless risks giving a definition of deconstruction, saying that it only means “more than one language,”⁹ which implies that there is no “native tongue” of philosophy,

⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Marges de la philosophie* (Paris: Minuit, 1972), 162 (cited hereafter as “*Marges*”).

⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Psyché: Invention de l'autre* (Paris: Galilée, 1987), 388 (cited hereafter as “P”).

⁸ Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Minuit, 1967), 21 f. (cited hereafter as “G”).

⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Mémoires pour Paul de Man* (Paris: Galilée, 1988), 38; see also, *Le monolinguisme de l'autre* (Paris: Galilée, 1996), 2.

contrary to Heidegger's contention in his 1955 Cerisy lecture ("What is Philosophy?") that the Greek language alone is *logos*, bringing us immediately near the thing itself and not near a mere verbal signification.¹⁰ Not surprisingly, Derrida quotes this passage in a critical manner in *Geschlecht IV*.¹¹ For the question for Derrida is not to go back to an original experience of being, an approach that belongs for him only to the epoch of *logos*, but to let appear the *transfer* of signification between different languages, a transfer that does not refer to any original or proper "experience."

But, as Derrida emphasizes in *Of Grammatology* (where he wants to show that writing comes first, the privilege of *phonè* being not the result of a choice, but corresponding to a historical moment [G 17]), it is still necessary to pass by way of the question of being, as it was asked by Heidegger alone, in order to have access to the non-difference between signifier and signified which is the basis of Derrida's concept of writing (G 37). It has to be recalled that Derrida's enterprise in *Of Grammatology* is nothing other than the deconstruction of the notion of sign itself as grounded on the difference of signifier and signified, this difference between something sensible (sound or graphic sign) and something intelligible (signification) being of metaphysical and even of theological origin. Derrida considers here that Heidegger, who explicitly renounced use of the traditional name of "ontology" to designate his own being-question (GA 40: 44/IM 43), does not see in being, which is historical through and through, a mere "signified" and is aware of the fact that Western metaphysics developed itself on the basis of the domination of a linguistic form which privileges the third person singular in the indicative present. Derrida is there referring to the 1935 lecture course "Introduction to Metaphysics" (GA 40: 98/IM 96), but a later text could also be mentioned, where Heidegger acknowledges that the Western languages are all languages of metaphysical thinking and wonders whether they are or not definitely imprinted by onto-theo-logy.¹² But on the other hand, Derrida sees also in the Heideggerian thought of being the attempt to re-establish being as the *primum signatum*, as a "transcendental" signified, which can only be *spoken*, the voice, the "pure auto-affection" being nothing else than the absolute erasure of the signifier (G 33). Derrida attaches great importance to the passage, in the text that Heidegger dedicated in 1955 to Jünger ("The Question of Being") where Heidegger puts a cross over the word "being"

¹⁰ *Was ist das – die Philosophie?* 20/WisP 45.

¹¹ Jacques Derrida, *Politiques de l'amitié* (Paris: Galilée, 1994), 370 (hereafter cited as "PA").

¹² "Identität und Differenz," in GA 11: 78/1aD 73.

in order to avoid the almost ineradicable habit of seeing in being something subsistent and facing man¹³ – a gesture which Derrida sees as a way, in writing, of delimiting logocentrism and metaphysics of presence (G 38). But it is in fact Hegel who is for Derrida “the first thinker of writing” (G 41) not only because he has taken into account Leibniz’s praise of non-phonetic writing, but also because he has shown the necessity of the written trace in a philosophical discourse. It is clear here that the “outside” of Western metaphysics from which the Derridian deconstruction wants to find its point of departure is not only Hebraism and its idea of an “infinite Other,” but also China and its ideographic writing.

Yet it is with the help of the Lévinassian concept of trace that Derrida undertakes to define writing. On the basis of Saussure’s theory of the arbitrary nature of sign, which means for him that all signs either phonic or graphic are instituted and therefore mundane, Derrida develops his own problematic of proto-writing (*archi-écriture*, G 83) in order to make clear that “the question is not to rehabilitate writing in the narrow sense, nor to reverse the order of dependence between speech and writing” (G 82), proto-writing including both writing in the “narrow” sense and speech, since in both of them we find this same movement of the trace. Nevertheless, Derrida indicates that he continues to call it merely “writing,” because it communicates in an essential manner with the vulgar concept of writing, which “could only impose itself through the dissimulation of proto-writing” (G 83). In 1967 Derrida read carefully Lévinas’ text entitled “The Trace of the Other” that was published in September 1963, just at the moment when Derrida had already finished writing his essay on “Violence and Metaphysics.”¹⁴ Following Lévinas, Derrida sees in the trace the relation to the other, to an absence that has to be referred to an absolute past that was never present, to what is “otherwise than being.” But he wants to use this notion in accordance with “a Heideggerian intention” in order to undermine an ontology which has determined the meaning of being as presence and the meaning of language as speech (G 103).

It seems therefore possible *with* Heidegger, but in going further than him on the same way, to acknowledge that the meaning of being is not a transcendental signified but a *trace*. Signifiers are traces, not because they refer to *present* signifieds which have a positivity on account of their being the representations of the things themselves, but they are traces, or better *proto-traces* (*archi-traces*, G 90) because, as in Saussure’s language

¹³ “Zur Seinsfrage,” in GA 9: 410 (*Wegm* 405)/*Pathm* 310.

¹⁴ See the footnote in ED 117.

model, they are differences devoid of all positivity and they do not signify by themselves but only in their “systematic” interplay. The Derridian concept of the trace presupposes the indefinite *differing* (in the sense of postponing) of the *Sache selbst*, just as the Saussurean concept of language as a form and not a substance presupposes the reduction of reference. The process of signification has no origin and no end and it takes place only because, as Derrida says at the end of *Speech and Phenomenon*, “*la chose même se dérobe toujours*” (“the thing itself always evades”). With Derrida, we are forever in the Dresdner Gallery mentioned by Husserl in the first book of *Ideas*,¹⁵ in this labyrinth that is the world, where we find only images which are not images of real things in their presence-absence, but images of images of images. Derrida considers Husserlian phenomenology to be dominated by the principle of live presence, presence in the flesh which should be given to an originary intuition or perception. Because phenomenology, as well as the entire Western tradition, is subjected to the desire for presence, it is by definition always a phenomenology of perception,¹⁶ insofar as it intends to let us see the phenomenon itself, to *present* it. Phenomenology thus remains a humanistic dream, the dream of “a full presence, of the reassuring foundation, of the origin and end of the game” (ED 427), insofar as the game, or better the labyrinthine nightmare, begins and ends for Husserl with perception. The game or process of signification is for Husserl an *interlude* between two presentations. But Derrida does not believe that anything like perception or presentation exists, if by perception we understand “the concept of an intuition or of a given originating from the thing itself, present itself in its meaning, independently from language, from the system of reference.”¹⁷ However, because trace or “différance” is only “*une biffure de la présence*,” a crossing-out of presence, Derrida acknowledges the necessity of passing through phenomenology in order to avoid the danger of misunderstanding the trace as an empiric mark, which explains why a thought of

¹⁵ See Edmund Husserl, *Ideen I*, § 100. In 1967, Derrida declared that his four first books were nothing more than a commentary on this sentence from Husserl, which is to be found as exergue and conclusion of the essay on *Speech and Phenomenon*, thus giving a tremendous importance to the Husserlian idea of the remarkable reflexivity of imagination. Once the image is no longer considered a *modification* of perception, i.e., of presence, we enter the world of infinite reflexivity already thematized by Plato in his critique of the Third Man argument (*Parmenides*, 132 b).

¹⁶ Jacques Derrida, *La voix et le phénomène* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967), 117.

¹⁷ See the transcription of the discussion following “Structure, Sign and Play” (ED 409–436) in *The Structuralist Controversy*, ed. R. Macksey and E. Donato (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970), where Derrida declares: “As to perception, I should say that once I recognised it as a necessary conservation. I was extremely conservative. Now I don’t know what perception is and I don’t believe that anything like perception exists” (p. 272).

the trace can neither break with transcendental phenomenology nor be reduced to it (G 91). But crossing-out presence means nothing else than taking into account the “possibilities” that phenomenology contains, as Heidegger explained (SZ 38), insofar as the process of de-presentation or non-presentation appears to be as “original” as presentation itself for Husserl in the crucial experience of temporality and of the other (G 91). And this crossing-out of presence has already taken place inside Heidegger’s thought with the crossing-out of being in *Zur Seinsfrage*, as Derrida already pointed out (G 38). Under the St. Andrew’s cross which cancels the word *Sein*, Derrida discovered the process of a simultaneous tracing and erasing, which constitutes the trace in itself, as he explains in “Ousia and Grammè” (M 77). The crossing-out of the word *Sein*, because it *makes readable* the erasing of the transcendental signified, [is] in his view the “last writing” of the metaphysical epoch as well as the “first writing” in the proper sense of the word (G 38).

For Derrida, more than Hegel or Heidegger, it is Nietzsche, through his radicalization of the concept of interpretation, who has really contributed to liberate the signifier from its dependency upon the *logos* (G 31). When Derrida declares that “the advent of writing is the advent of play” (G 16), in the sense of the un-limitation of the process of signification, in which the signified can always function also as a signifier, and when he says that what has to be thought at first is the “worldgame” itself (G 73), he is referring to Nietzsche. Nietzsche is the source of the theme of play that can be found in some of Heidegger’s texts such as “The Thing” and *The Principle of Reason*, as Derrida points out in a short note in *Of Grammatology* (G 73).¹⁸ For Derrida, the concept of game thought as worldgame is the result of the absence of the transcendental signified, according to his own definition of game that he gives in *Of Grammatology*: “We could name ‘jeu’ (game or play) the absence of the transcendental signified as unlimitation of the game, that is to say as the undermining of onto-theology and of the metaphysics of presence” (G 73).¹⁹ There is a game, i.e., unlimited interplay, when and if the signified is lacking, when and if there is a failure of presence, when and if there is something missing, a center, an

¹⁸ For more detail on this point and the following development, see Françoise Dastur, “Heidegger and Derrida: On Play and Difference,” *Epoché, A Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 3/1–2 (1995): 1–23.

¹⁹ The French word *jeu* coming from the Latin *jocus* (cf. joke) has also the sense of *ludus*, of an entertainment following rules (game), so that it can be translated, depending on the context, either by “play” or by “game” in English. It is in fact a highly polysemic word: the French dictionary *Littré* (often cited by Derrida) distinguishes no fewer than thirty-one different meanings of the word.

origin, or an absolute *archè*. Play needs something like an empty space in order to be set free, that is to say, to have a field of infinite substitutions, where each signified is able to become in turn a signifier because nothing forbids or prohibits the permutation of *all* terms. The movement of signification is then what Derrida calls a movement of *supplementarity*: it occurs in addition to the lack of foundation of the signification, it is “superabundant,” i.e., superfluous, because, being without origin or finality, it lacks all forms of necessity. But it is also a *supplement* in the sense of having a vicarious function: it takes the place of the lacking presence and that is why play is said to be “the disruption of presence” (ED 426). Play is thus always interplay of presence and absence, because it is what allows the substitution of one term by another one, the supply of one term through another one. But this alternation of presence-absence is the *effect* of play and not what makes play possible. Presence and absence are *functions* of play, as well as are subject, centre, origin, which, for Derrida, have nothing else than a functional value. We must think being (presence and absence) on the basis of play, not play on the basis of being. Only then will we stop considering history a “nightmare,” as Joyce said,²⁰ and stop feeling lost in the Dresdner labyrinth: the “experience” of the labyrinth is the nostalgic longing for a lost presence, whereas the “joyous affirmation of the worldgame” has nothing to do with a philosophy of disappointment and loss (ED 427). The failure of presence, instead of being felt as a loss, should be an invitation to “active” interpretation: in Nietzsche’s terms, we should be able to transform a passive nihilism, which is a negation of life, into an active nihilism, free from nostalgia and hope, indifferent to archeology as well as to eschatology.

At the end of the first part of *Of Grammatology* Derrida stresses that the metaphysical concept of time cannot be used to describe the structure of the trace, which refers to an absolute past (G 97), because even in Husserl’s phenomenology of time-consciousness, the linearity of time is still presupposed. Derrida acknowledges that such a “linear” concept of time is precisely what Heidegger has named the “vulgar concept of time,” showing that it has determined from inside the entire ontology (G 128). It is precisely on this point that he engages in his first direct critical debate with Heidegger in the 1968 text entitled “Ousia and Grammè,” which deals with the longest footnote of *Being and Time*, in § 82, where Heidegger gives a very brief outline of the history of time in Western

²⁰ See Jacques Derrida, Preface to *L’Origine de la Géométrie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), 105.

thinking from Aristotle to Hegel and Bergson (SZ 432 f.). Derrida explains that his commentary on this note aims at dealing with the Heideggerian question of presence, but also at showing the relation between the problem of presence and the problem of the written trace, which is the problematic that he develops in the same period in *Of Grammatology* (*Marges*, 37). In spite of the fact that he tends to acknowledge that *Sein und Zeit* constitutes a step beyond metaphysics (*Marges*, 53), he considers that the distinction between an “authentic” and an “unauthentic” temporality is still connected with the idea of “fall,” the concept of fallenness (*Verfallen*) being in his view by no means extractible from “its ethico-theological orb” (*Marges*, 50). It seems here that Derrida does not want to take into account Heidegger’s warning not to attribute any negative value to this term, which should not be interpreted as a fall from a purer and higher primordial condition (SZ 175 f.). He even suspects that there is “some Platonism” in fallenness (*Marges*, 74), which implies that authenticity and inauthenticity could be understood on the basis of the Platonic difference between sensible world and intelligible world. But fallenness means in Heidegger’s view the mere fact of being absorbed in the tasks of the everydayness, which involves something like a loosening of *Dasein*’s transcendence,²¹ a kind of “potential drop” in *Dasein*, which is its “normal” state of being, in comparison to which the “jump” into authenticity can be understood as the fact of restoring the process of transcendence, which happens in the philosophical attitude of wonder in front of the world. It is indeed possible to give an ethical or theological meaning to this existential difference, as it was the case in Judaism with the idea of the original sin, but it does not mean that Heidegger is only giving there a laicized version of a theological idea. It is in fact rather the opposite: the theological conception of the original sin was possible only on the basis of an existential experience, which is also the basis of the philosophical conception of thought as an experience of “elevation” and “awakening” from a state of immersion in everydayness.

After a long analysis of the Aristotelian conception of time, which, according to Derrida, is not completely under the domination of the present (*Marges* 56), Derrida’s conclusion consists in suggesting that there is no “vulgar” concept of time, because the concept of time belongs in its entirety to metaphysics, as does the opposition between the originary and the derivative. But, at the same time, he insists on the fact that his

²¹ On this point, see Eugen Fink, “Philosophie als Überwindung der Naivität,” in *Nähe und Distanz* (Freiburg and Munich: Alber, 1976), 123.

question remains "internal to Heidegger's thought" (*Marges*, 74), in the sense that it is possible to discover "two gestures" in Heidegger, or, as he says, "two hands" and "two texts" (*Marges*, 7): one by which Heidegger, remaining *inside* metaphysics, would show how the temporal present of beings comes from a more original thought of being itself as presence (*Anwesenheit*) and another one by which the determination of being as presence would become in itself problematic and would define as such the limitation of the Western way of thinking, opening the possibility of going "before or beyond Greece," which means for Derrida that what has to be thought is a "difference older than being itself" (*Marges*, 77).

II. THE QUESTION OF DIFFERENCE

It becomes clear therefore that the ambiguity that Derrida discerns in the Heideggerian text comes in his opinion from the insufficient determination of the difference as ontic-ontological difference or difference between being and beings (*Sein und Seiendes*), insofar as being can be thought as presence *only* in relationship to beings thought as *present* entities. The thought of difference, which is in itself the biggest blow dealt to the metaphysics of presence, is nevertheless also, in the form of the ontological difference, the greatest reinforcement of the presence-value of being. That is why, rather than a means of "overcoming" metaphysics, it becomes the best way of holding back thought *inside* metaphysics, as Derrida explains in his 1967 interview.²² At this point, Derrida invokes another gesture, "a gesture which should be more Nietzschean than Heideggerian," in order to open oneself to a "différance" (with an a) that is not already determined as the difference between being and beings.²³ Nietzsche is then, as it seems, a better thinker of difference than Heidegger because he is the thinker of *forces*, of which consciousness is not the cause, but only the effect, and because forces are not *presences*, but only differences. Nietzsche thinks the dynamic *dissension* of different forces which are *nothing* outside their differences, as Derrida explains in his 1968 lecture "The Différance,"²⁴ whereas Heidegger thinks under the ontic-ontological difference only a mere *distinction* between two (present)

²² *Positions*, 19: "The ultimate determination of difference as ontic-ontological difference ... seems to me still held back in a strange way within metaphysics."

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Marges*, 18. It should be noted here that in his reading of Nietzsche Derrida relies on the interpretation of the Nietzschean concept of force given by Gilles Deleuze in his book *Nietzsche et la philosophie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962).

terms. The opposition between Nietzsche and Heidegger can at this point be simplified into the following formulation. Nietzsche thinks being as the fallacious effect of the dynamic movement of difference commanding the metaphysical belief in grammar, the metaphysical grammar or logic which extracts an imaginary subject from the pure event. Thus, Nietzsche sides with Heraclitus who thinks the *hen diapheron eauto*, the difference of the One with itself (*Marges*, 23) and therefore the unity of what is discordant and of what is concordant, as it is said in Fragment 51.²⁵ Heidegger on the contrary thinks difference as an effect of being, remaining thus more a thinker of being than a thinker of difference. That is why, against Heidegger and with Nietzsche, Derrida invokes "a difference which (is) 'older' than the ontological difference or the truth of being" (*Marges*, 23). "The displacement, both infinitesimal and radical," of Hegelian thought that Derrida tries to bring about (*opérer*), as he says in "Différance" (*Marges*, 15), has to do with the meaning of difference as contradiction in Hegel, who inserts the difference *into* discourse and makes it a *logical* difference, so that it can be integrated and dissolved in the self-presence of the synthesis, the *Aufhebung* being the operation by which identity is restored after having made the difference "internal" to the self-presence of the absolute subject.²⁶ Instead of thinking difference as contradiction (*Widerspruch*), Derrida prefers to speak of difference in terms of conflict (*Widerstreit*) because, seen in this light, difference no longer refers to *logos*, but is understood as a difference of forces that can never be brought back to identity. And only a difference understood as conflict can finally be involved in a play, as it is the case with Heraclitus, with Nietzsche, and, as we will see, also with Heidegger.

But is it really possible to claim that Heidegger, after having deconstructed the authority of the *present* in metaphysics, continues nonetheless to think being as the presence of what is present in a metaphoric, that is to say still metaphysical, way, as Derrida asserts in "The Ends of Man" (*Marges*, 157)? We can assume that Derrida found in the Husserlian phenomenology the best paradigm of what he calls "metaphysics of presence" and that he found it there because Husserl, with his enlarged concept of intuition (including categorial as well as empirical intuition), thinks to the end the Western philosophical tradition which has always privileged seeing and perceiving as the best means of knowledge, insofar as only in

²⁵ Fragment 51 speaks of a *palintropos harmoniê*, a harmony of opposing forces similar to the harmony of a bow or of a lyre.

²⁶ See *Positions*, 59.

seeing do the things present themselves in person or, as Husserl says, “in the flesh.” But Derrida, as we have seen, was also able to detect in Husserl the importance of what resists intuition in the constitution of the object of perception and of the other person. Husserl himself declared in 1932 to Dorion Cairns that “earlier he had taken for granted that the object was perceived in its original self-givenness with a horizon that was not original but could be clarified through free variations,” but that “to-day he sees that the object itself is, in its being and determinations, correlate of the horizon.” And, as the best critic of his own earlier assertions, he concluded: “Being is always and only given as correlate of a horizon; *it is never self given in originality*.”²⁷ The principle of principles, the principle of the giving intuition cannot therefore be fully respected and find its limits in things themselves as far as they are “transcendent,” that is to say, not liable to be entirely present to consciousness. But does this mean that there is no presence at all, nothing that can appear and be perceived, no *phainesthai* and no *phainomenon*, and therefore no phenomenology, but – since the failure of presence has to be “supplemented” – only traces, *grammes*, and therefore a grammatology? It seems that here the Derridean gesture looks like an *inversion* of the metaphysical “dream of presence,” very similar to the Nietzschean *Umkehrung* of Platonism and even more similar to the Sartrean reversal of essentialism into existentialism, the reversal of a metaphysical statement remaining a metaphysical statement, as Heidegger pointed out in his *Letter on “Humanism”* (Wegm 325/LH 232).

Heidegger himself has always considered that the fundamental principle of phenomenology was not the principle of evidence but the principle of the return to the things in themselves (ZSD 69/TB 64) and this is the reason why, in spite of his critique of intuition as presentation, he continued up to the end to define his thought as a phenomenology, in the form of a “phenomenology of the inapparent,” as he did in his last 1973 seminar (VS 137/FS 80). There is a phenomenology for Heidegger because there is a phenomenon, but, as he already pointed out in *Sein und Zeit*, anticipating in a way what Husserl will later concede, the phenomena are not “given” (SZ 36). The phenomenon of the Heideggerian phenomenology is not what appears “in the first instance” and “in most cases,” but what *does not* immediately appear but nevertheless belongs to what appears in the sense that it constitutes its meaning and ground, i.e., the being of beings (SZ 35). This strange determination of the phenomenon as

²⁷ D. Cairns, *Conversations with Husserl and Fink* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1976), 97.

something concealed is the basis of the Heideggerian "identity" between phenomenology and ontology, insofar as nothing else stands "behind" the phenomenon of phenomenology (SZ 36). But, if "ontology is only possible as phenomenology" (SZ 35), it means that, already on the level of *Sein und Zeit*, being cannot be identified with *pure* or *full* presence: this explains why, at the end of § 7 (SZ 38), Heidegger declares that being is "the *transcendens* pure and simple," not because being is a "transcendental signified," i.e., an external presence in comparison to all other significations, but because being is *not* and can never be *immediate* presence.

It seems that Derrida still continues, in spite of his denials, to think the proximity and distance of being to the essence of man, to *Dasein*, as a relation between two different entities *present* to each other. But if, as Derrida himself acknowledges, "*Dasein* is not merely man in the metaphysical sense" (*Marges*, 148), i.e., is not a self-present subject, it means that what constitutes what is "*proper*" to it is the openness to otherness, what Heidegger calls *ekstasis* or temporality. Therefore, we do not have two terms, being and *Dasein*, that we should think as united in an inseparability and co-propriety (*Marges*, 160), but only a *single relation*, *das Verhältnis*, of which Heidegger says in the *Letter on "Humanism,"* that it is being itself (*Wegm* 329/LH 235). After the so-called *Kehre*, it indeed becomes impossible, provided that it was ever possible before, to think being as pure presence, because Heidegger now insists on the withdrawal of being and thinks the "event" of being, *das Ereignis*, as the simultaneity of *Lichtung* and *Verbergung*, of clearing and concealing. Metaphysical thinking is then said to be oblivious to being in the sense that it is unable to think the withdrawal of being, the concealing which occurs *with* the clearing of beings: metaphysics thinks only beings (*das Seiende*) and not being (*das Sein*), precisely because being means for it only the presence of what is present (*die Seiendheit*) and not the *event* of presence, which is simultaneously presence *and* absence, the self-withdrawing of being happening on behalf of the apparition of beings. Derrida did not sufficiently take into account the *aletheic* dimension of being in the "second" Heidegger, and consequently the Heideggerian transformation of phenomenology into aletheiology, where the emphasis is put on concealment, on the *lèthè* itself in the sense that the concealment does not disappear with the clearing, but continues to play within, so that the coming into presence, the "advent" of truth, can only be thought as a *conflict* between light and darkness, as the interplay of presence and absence. And this brings us to the question of the status of difference in Heidegger.

The first critique of the determination of difference as ontic-ontological difference is to be found in Heidegger himself.²⁸ The ontological difference is a necessary first step in the being-question because it is a first attempt to differentiate being from the beingness of beings; but it is still an unsuccessful determination of the difference because being is there still considered from the viewpoint of beings so that being will inevitably appear as something other than beings instead of being understood as the dimension of their apparition. Derrida takes into account the necessity of starting with the determination of the difference as difference between being and beings before erasing this determination to think a more “originary” difference (G 38). This is exactly Heidegger’s position when he undertakes to think difference no longer as grounded in the transcendence of *Dasein*, but as a dimension of being itself, as duplicity (*Zweifalt*), as the double-fold of being and beings which make them inseparable. And in *Identität und Differenz*, where Heidegger defines difference as *entbergend-bergender Austrag*, as *Unter-schied*,²⁹ he aims at thinking the *Zwischen*, the “space” between being and the beings, as “older” than themselves. The word *Austrag*, which means something like “issue,” “decision,”³⁰ is the name chosen by Heidegger to express the unfolding of the difference, the “event” of difference, and to indicate that difference has a dynamic character, that it is not a relation between two terms already present but the *advent* of their distinction and simultaneously of their relation. The thinking of difference as a process brings Heidegger to a reversal of being and difference. Whereas the ontological difference was still thought as a difference *in* being, now it is being itself that is thought as coming from difference: Heidegger positively declares that what is in question in thinking (*die Sache des Denkens*) is nothing else than “being, thought on the basis of difference” (*Sein gedacht aus der Differenz*) (GA 11: 72/IaD 65).

It is true that the Derridean *différance* has more than one meaning: in *Positions* Derrida elaborates at least four different “meanings” of “*différance*.”³¹ But the main reason for changing the e into an a was the need to express the “active” movement of the production of difference

²⁸ Especially in *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, but also in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (VA 77 f./EP 93 ff.; VA 240 ff./EGT 87 ff.), in *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (UzS 118, 122, 126, 127, 135, 143/OWL 26, 30, 33, 34, 40, 46), where the difference is thought as *Zweifalt*, duplicity, and finally in *Identität und Differenz*.

²⁹ See GA 11: 72/IaD 65.

³⁰ The word *Austrag* has probably to be understood here in the sense of the settlement of a quarrel as in the expression “*einen Streit austragen*.” But *austragen* means also to carry (*tragen*) apart (*auseinander*) being and the beings.

³¹ *Positions*, 17 ff.

(*Marges*, 14) and thus to manifest the dynamic nature of *différance*. This is exactly what Heidegger also tried to do, in using the possibilities offered by the German language, with the words *Unterschied* and *Austrag*. Derrida thinks that he has gone further than Heidegger, when he underlines that “*différance* is not a process of appropriation in any kind of sense” (*Marges*, 27, n. 1). Heidegger does not think the unfolding of the ontological difference as a mere process of appropriation because, not only is the advent of being an interplay of presence and absence and not the realm of pure presence, but there is also no appropriation without deappropriation, insofar as deappropriation (*Enteignis*) belongs to the advent of appropriation (*Ereignis*) as such (ZSD 23/TB 22 f.). The most original phenomenon is not for Heidegger the co-appropriation of man and Being, the correlative *Erschlossenheit* of *Dasein* and *Sein*, which he will later call *Ereignis*, but the deappropriation of both, *die Enteignis*, which is nothing other than the abyssal depth of the *lèthè* from which comes everything that is (present) (ZSD 44/TB 41). Because Heidegger is the thinker of *lèthè*, he is, perhaps more than Nietzsche, the thinker of the active oblivion of the metaphysical side of being, by which it appears as a pure and constant presence, unspoiled by death and time, on behalf of the custody of the other side of being by which it acknowledges itself as the “gift” of death, night, and oblivion.

The Derridean “*différance*” is therefore on the one hand, a name for the unfolding of the ontological difference, but on the other hand, the word *différance* was preferred to the more common word *différenciation*, because this word would not express the idea of postponing (*différer*) which constitutes another meaning of the polysemic *différance* (*Marges*, 14). In this regard, *différance* has the meaning of the infinite postponing of presence, i.e., this failure of presence that we cannot find in Heidegger where there is never absence or withdrawal of being without the presence of (present) beings. To call into question the privilege of presence means for Heidegger the attempt to think being without beings, i.e., without seeing in being the *foundation* of beings (ZSD 2/TB 2). It means the critique of the logic of foundation as constituting what Nietzsche called the metaphysical grammar. It does not mean, however, the critique of being or of presence in itself, but rather the attempt to think being as *Ereignis* and the *coming* into presence (*die Anwesenung*) and not only the presence already at-hand (*die Vor-handenheit*). Heidegger is not only a thinker of *lèthè*, he is the thinker of *alètheia*, i.e., of presence as originating from absence and not of absence as supplemented by what is nothing other than the mere shadow of presence. If a formula can help, it

could be said that Derrida is the thinker of the absence of presence, i.e., of a presence indefinitely postponed, whereas Heidegger is the thinker of the presence of absence, i.e., of the “strangeness” of beings emerging from nothing and supported by nothing.³² Is the thinker of the “manifestation of nothingness”³³ more liable to be considered a negative theologian than the thinker of the indefinite postponing of presence?³⁴ The answer to this question could be given in going back to the concept of play.

The thought of play could be considered as the only way, as Nietzsche suspected it, to break with the theological approach to life in general. Heidegger is rather elliptic on the theme of play, in spite of the fact that he makes a fairly frequent use of the “metaphor” of play. Being is play, because it is without reason (*ohne Warum*), as he explains at the end of *The Principle of Reason* (SG 186 ff./PR 111 ff.). Metaphysical thinking has always seen in being, understood as beingness, the *Grund*, the reason and ground of the beings and, at least since Aristotle, the metaphysical thought of the foundation of beings, archeo-logy, has determined the realm of philosophy as *epistèmè tôn prôtôn archôn*, the science of the first principles, and has given its frame to the onto-theological way of thinking. To think being, otherwise than as reason or ground, i.e. as play, means then to call into question the traditional, onto-theological way of thinking. But Heidegger thinks the absence of ground in being as *Ab-grund*, abyss, i.e., as the originary abyssal depth of being and not as a failure of being. That is why the play of being is not free play in an arbitrary sense. It is, as Heidegger says, “free from all kind of arbitrariness” (*frei von jeder Willkür*), in spite of the fact that it escapes the domination of the principle of reason (SG 186/PR 112). Play does not constitute for Heidegger “the field of infinite substitutions in the closure of a finite ensemble,” as is the case for Derrida (ED 423). Instead of thinking the play as originating from the lack of a centre, Heidegger thinks the worldgame as a fourfold movement of “excentration” (as we might put it in French), what he calls “the Fourfold” (*Das Geviert*). Mortals and gods, earth and sky are bound together, not because they all have their center in a fifth entity, but because they are in themselves nothing else than the movement of transappropriation (*Vereignung*) by which they become four without losing the simplicity of their mutual reliance (see “Das Ding”

³² “Was ist Metaphysik?” *Wegm* 119 f./*Pathm* 94 f. ³³ Ibid.

³⁴ In the discussion following his lecture on “The Différance,” Derrida acknowledges that the infinite distance between his discourse and negative theology is also an infinitesimal one; see *Derrida and Différance*, ed. David Wood and Robert Bernasconi (University of Warwick: Parousia Press, 1985), 132. This could also be said of Heidegger.

in VA 172/ PLT 177). It then becomes clear that what constitutes “what is proper” (*das Eigene*) to each of the Four is the result of a movement of expropriation (*Enteignung*) by which they all lose their separate substantial being (VA 172/PLT 177). When Heidegger calls the worldgame “the round of propiation” (*der Reigen des Ereignens*), it means that “what is proper” to each thing is always the result of such a process of expropriation by which a momentary face of the world is offered to the equally momentary being that we are, a being always already involved in the worldgame, but that has nevertheless to play and to submit to the game (VA 173/PLT 178; SG 188/PR 113). The notion of *Spiel* is then for Heidegger the most appropriate means of thinking the “event” of being, of escaping the metaphysical postulation of being as eternal and infinite.

For Derrida, it has a quite other function, because he sees in play an infinite process originating from a finite ensemble, whereas for Heidegger the finitude of existence implies the finitude of being itself. For Derrida, infinity can originate from finitude because finitude is no longer thought in a classical way as (human) limitation in regard to an actual infinity, but as the lack of such an actual infinity, as the indefinite, because unsuccessful, process of supplementation. The process of signification has therefore no external anchorage, insofar as only a “transcendental signified” could exceed the movement of *différance* and the process of signification.³⁵ It possesses no intentionality and consequently does not mean anything; Derrida accordingly declares clearly in his 1967 interview that “to take the risk of not meaning anything is to enter the play of difference.”³⁶ From there comes the idea of a “bottomless chessboard,” devoid of all “depth,” i.e., of a play that has no underlying ground that supports it.³⁷ The absence of a ground of play, claimed both by Heidegger and Derrida, has nevertheless a different meaning for each of them. For Heidegger it means the chaotic nature of being which can never be submitted to any kind of theology.³⁸ For Derrida it means the absence of depth of being, its radical impropriety and non-verity, the triumph of appearance and of superficiality over depth and consideration of the chaos.

³⁵ See *Positions*, 41. ³⁶ *Ibid.* 23.

³⁷ *Marges*, 23. In the discussion following “The *Différance*” Derrida declared that he found in Mallarmé the idea of the chessboard and of the game; see *Derrida and Différance*, 136.

³⁸ On this point, see Heidegger’s *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* (EzHD 52–63/EHP 75–85) and NI 350/N2 91 f.

III. THE QUESTION OF "WHAT IS PROPER" TO MAN

After this first and decisive phase, Derrida's debate with Heidegger becomes less intense and focuses mainly on the question of Heidegger's belonging to the "metaphysical humanism" that he was nevertheless the first to criticize in his *Letter on "Humanism."* Once again, it is as if the question for Derrida is to go further than Heidegger on the same way. The 1968 New York lecture "The Ends of Man" takes place in a context which was in France profoundly marked by the development of structuralism, as indicated by the fact that one of the quotations put at the head of the text is a sentence from Foucault announcing the forthcoming "end" of man (*Marges*, 131). Derrida begins by declaring that the first French translation of *Dasein* as "human reality" (*réalité humaine*) is "monstrous" but significant (*Marges*, 136). This explains in his view that there is a "profound justification" for the fact that Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger have been "amalgamated with the old humanistic metaphysics" in the French thinking of the 1960s (*Marges*, 141 f.). If he recognizes that Heidegger's relation to metaphysical humanism is "the most difficult" question and if he does not want "to confine the totality of Heidegger's text in an enclosure that he has delimited in a better way than anyone else," Derrida nevertheless points out that the thinking of what is proper to man is "inseparable" from the question of being (*Marges*, 147 f.). Because Heidegger's thinking is guided by the motive of the proximity of being to the essence of man, his *Letter on "Humanism,"* in which he undertakes the delimitation of humanism and metaphysics, remains a revaluation of the dignity of man (*Marges*, 153 f.). Derrida sees a link between the phenomenological metaphoric of light and the motives of proximity and propriety (*Marges*, 160 f.) which seems to indicate a remote influence of Lévinas' critique of light. In that critique the author of *Time and the Other* sees the basis of the process of knowledge understood as clarification, in which the illuminated object is something encountered as if it came from us and does not have a fundamental strangeness,³⁹ so that the discourse on being is in fact still a discourse on the ego, a real alterity being encountered only "beyond" being. It is therefore not a surprise to read that the undermining of the co-propriety of man and being (which has its location in the language and *oikonomia* of the West) "comes from a certain outside" which can only be the thought of the infinite Other (*Marges*, 161).

³⁹ Emmanuel Lévinas, *Le temps et l'autre* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1979), 47; *Time and the Other*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Duquesne University Press, 1997), 64 f.

The debate with Heidegger's conception of man will be reengaged later at the beginning of the 1980s, when Derrida, as director of studies in the École des hautes études en sciences sociales, started a seminar dedicated to the question of philosophical nationalism. In this context he was led to work on the question of nationality in Fichte and Heidegger. From there come the series of texts entitled *Geschlecht* written in 1983, 1985, and 1989, as well as the book *De l'esprit (Of Spirit)*, dating from 1987. In all these texts Derrida remains quite respectful of Heidegger's specific way of thinking, but he nevertheless does not hesitate to question some pre-suppositions which he means to discover in Heidegger's texts. This often leads him to focus too much on some key passages and to leave aside the general movement of Heidegger's thinking.

It is quite evident, as was already pointed out, that Derrida asks his questions from a site which is *his* site and which situates him in this period at a greater distance from Heidegger than before. It can be said that the thinking of the alterity of the other progressively became more and more important in his work, so that in the last years of his life he seemed to stay in a great proximity to the Lévinassian "metaphysics of separation." This explains why Derrida questions the privilege given by Heidegger to the notion of *Versammlung*, assembling or gathering. The debate which opposes Derrida to Heidegger is clearly a debate between a *writer* of dissemination and a *thinker* of gathering so that the privilege granted by Heidegger to unity is constantly suspected by Derrida in his texts on *Geschlecht*.

The subtitle of *Geschlecht I*, published in 1983 in a collective volume on Heidegger,⁴⁰ is "Ontological Difference, Sexual Difference." Derrida's purpose in this text is to situate the term *Geschlecht* in Heidegger's way of thinking. Derrida wants therefore to detect the presence of this polysemic term in Heidegger's work, exactly in the same manner as he will do later with the term "spirit" in his long 1987 lecture. The word *Geschlecht*, which has in German the meaning at the same time of race, species, generation, lineage, and sex, appears only once in Heidegger's work in the sense of sex in his 1928 lecture course (GA 26: 171/MFL 136). Derrida thus underlines the fact that Heidegger, in opposition to other Western thinkers, such as Plato and Nietzsche, and even Kant, Hegel, and Husserl, never speaks of sexuality, as if the discourse on sexuality had to be reserved to natural or human sciences, or to religion and morals, because the sexual difference

⁴⁰ See Michel Haar, *Martin Heidegger* (Paris: L'Herne, 1983). Repr. p. 395 f.

does not belong to the existential structure of *Dasein*, with which alone philosophy has to deal (P 415).

In a famous appendix to his 1928 course (which was published only in 1978), Heidegger explains that the term *Dasein* is neutral in the sense that it is the name of the "essence" of the human being in general, so that this neutrality means that *Dasein* does not originally belong to any of the two sexes, but that it possesses the capacity of becoming either of them on the ontic level. What Derrida seems to question here is the very possibility of the difference between the ontological and the ontic level, and with it the very possibility of an existential and not only existentiell analysis of *Dasein*. He contends that, by seeing in sexuality a derivative phenomenon, Heidegger still behaves like a traditional philosopher and does not succeed in showing that the neutrality of *Dasein* has a real positivity. Derrida's own question concerns the duality itself and its necessity in regard to sexuality. *Geschlecht I* ends here, so that it constitutes only the beginning of a questioning on the possibility of a sexual discourse which could escape the logic of duality.

Two years later Derrida returned to his debate with Heidegger in *Geschlecht II*, a lecture given in Chicago, the subtitle of which is "Heidegger's Hand." Derrida begins, in the first part of the lecture, with Fichte's Seventh *Discourse to the German Nation*, in which the word *Geschlecht* appears in a sentence which says that "all those who believe in spirituality and freedom of spirit belong to our *Geschlecht*, wherever they are born and whatever language they speak." Such a *Geschlecht* has therefore nothing to do with blood, nor with soil, nor with a definite language and is only defined by spirituality. But Derrida points out that, because the word *Geschlecht* belongs to the German language in such a manner that it cannot be translated into one single word in another language, there is a contradiction in Fichte, who aims at the institution of a universal spiritual community, but on the basis of a word that belongs to a definite language, the German language. Derrida underlines that in his *Discourses to the German Nation* Fichte banishes the use of all words of Latin origin, such as *Humanität*, because they are abstract words which have no immediate meaning for the Germans. In commenting on Fichte's use of the word *Geschlecht*, Derrida has shown the impossibility of giving a translation of it, but he has also made clear that this word concentrates in itself the question of the definition of the human species.

The next step of the lecture deals with a passage of Heidegger's course *What Calls for Thinking?* where Heidegger, quoting Hölderlin, defines the human being on the basis of the hand (WhD 52 f./WCT 11). Derrida

analyzes the French translation of a verse of the poem *Mnemosynè*, namely, “*Ein Zeichen sind wir, deutungslos*” (*A sign we are, devoid of signification*), which has been rendered in French as “*Nous sommes un monstre privé de sens*.” The German word *Zeichen* (“sign”) is translated here as “*monstre*” (“monster”) because this word comes from the verb *montrer*, meaning to show, which is the French translation of the German *zeigen*.⁴¹ Heidegger explains, on the basis of this verse, that “the hand signs [*zeichnet*] probably because the human being is a sign [*ein Zeichen*].” In the French translation, this becomes: “The hand shows [*montre*] probably because the human being is a monster [*monstre*].” In his commentary Derrida develops the idea that the hand could therefore be understood as a monstrosity specific to the human being as the being which has the capacity of designing. In the same passage Heidegger defines the work of thinking as *Handwerk*, as a work of the hand, comparable to the work of the carpenter, which implies that thinking is not a mental but a corporeal process. But it has to be emphasized that the human hand cannot be defined as a grasping organ and as the organ of a living being. Derrida recalls here that Heidegger constantly condemned the racial and biological ideology of the Third Reich, but he nevertheless wonders if this rejection of biologism does not come from a metaphysical humanism which can still be found in Heidegger’s thinking. This is a very controversial point, which concerns the understanding of Heidegger’s thought as a whole, but which cannot be addressed here.⁴² Derrida’s analysis of the hand aims at showing that Heidegger’s argumentation is based on the opposition between giving as a human capacity and taking as a specific capacity of the animal. This explains the passage, quoted by Derrida, from Heidegger’s 1942/43 lecture course 43 (GA 54: 119), which says that “the human being does not ‘have’ hands, but the hand contains in itself the essence of the human being” (P 434).

From there Derrida returns to his main concern, to the theme of *Geschlecht*, and explains that the text (which should have been called *Geschlecht III* and from which a small section had already been distributed to some of the participants) will be left aside and that he will just give a very brief sketch of it.⁴³ He begins by merely stating a fact: the polysemic

⁴¹ Martin Heidegger, *Qu'appelle-t-on penser?*, trans. G. Granel (Paris: Gallimard, 1959), 92.

⁴² See Françoise Dastur, “Pour une zoologie ‘privative’ ou comment ne pas parler de l’animal,” *Alter*, *Revue de Phénoménologie*, 3 (1995): 281–318. This critical paper, which was nevertheless dedicated to Derrida, remained without any response on his side.

⁴³ See David Krell, “Marginalia to *Geschlecht III*: Derrida on Heidegger on Trakl,” text published in *New Contemporary Review*, as part of the “Derrida Memorial Issue.”

word "*Geschlecht*" cannot be referred to any unifying referent, which is the reason why he prefers to call it a mark rather than a word, because a mark does not refer to a semantic unit, but to a historical discontinuity. This reminds us of what Nietzsche says in *Genealogy of Morals*, where he explains that certain words contain in themselves in an arbitrary manner various historical meanings. What Derrida wants to do is something similar to a genealogy of the mark *Geschlecht*, which is quite different from going back to the etymology of the word, as Foucault showed in his reading of Nietzsche, where he opposed the Nietzschean genealogy to the Heideggerian etymology. In order to produce such a genealogy, Derrida undertakes a commentary on the text Heidegger dedicated to Trakl in 1953. He points out the passage where Heidegger himself underlines the polysemic character of the word *Geschlecht* in order to indicate the possibility of finding a unity in which the multiplicity of its meanings could be gathered, a unity which does not suppress the differences as does the identity, but preserves them in a whole. Derrida ends his lecture by indicating five focal points around which all his own questions are concentrated. The fifth and last point, the most interesting, has to do with the idea of the decomposition of the essence of the human being and the curse which strikes the sexual difference and transforms it into a dissension or a discord.

Derrida questions here Heidegger's claim to situate Trakl before Platonism and Christianity. In this appeal to something more originary than Platonism and Christianity, he sees a presupposition which merely grants the possibility of thinking them, a kind of transcendental way of thinking which consists only in a repetition in an ontological mode of what Platonism and Christianity say. According to Derrida, this way of proceeding can already be found in *Sein und Zeit*, where Heidegger wants to convey in *Verfallenheit* (fallenness), *Ruf* (appeal), and *Sorge* (care), a so-called "more originary" meaning than they have in the Christian discourse. As do many other interpreters of Heidegger's work, Derrida thinks that Heidegger has only repeated on the philosophical level Christian schemes of thinking in trying to eliminate their original theological contents. Heidegger could be therefore considered a crypto-Christian, which would mean that nothing really new could be found in the existential analysis. This is the reason why, as we have already seen, Derrida very early questioned the Heideggerian opposition of originary and non-originary time in "Ousia and Grammè." The writing of dissemination implies in itself the absence of all originary, insofar as the idea of origin presupposes in itself the idea of a unity. As soon as one tries to imagine

an original multiplicity or a multiple origin, the difference between the originary and the non-originary disappears and all historical singularity seems to be the mere repetition of another one. This explains why he does not want to consider *Geschlecht* as a word. For Derrida there is never any semantic unity, there is only the use of certain marks or signs in different contexts. There is therefore an essential discontinuity between the various meanings of a term, and this comes from the context and not from the history of the term itself. To produce the genealogy of one of these marks means to draw up an inventory of all the various contexts in which this mark appears, without being ever able to bring them to a unity. It is possible in that respect to detect a kind of proximity between Derrida and Wittgenstein, at least the “second” Wittgenstein who in his *Philosophical Investigations* speaks of “language games” and rejects the very idea of an essence of language.

What is important here is to understand the Derridean meaning of repetition. If every sign is a mark and therefore a re-mark as far as it is not originary, if there are only derivative marks, it is impossible not only to establish any hierarchy, but also to think history as a continuous flow of time. The metaphor which can be used here is the spatial metaphor of the labyrinth, which already appears at the end of *Speech and Phenomena*. There is therefore no longer a past or a future, and the very idea of a destination becomes obsolete. We are condemned to a kind of nomadic wandering, a situation that has also been defined by Heidegger as the fundamental situation of the human being in “On the Essence of Truth.” But, above all, the very idea of a beginning, *ein Anfang*, which is so important for Heidegger, loses its meaning. Is this not in the end a negative vision of history? Derrida denies it, as he wants to be, like Nietzsche, a thinker of the affirmation, of the “yes” to life.

Derrida’s debate with Heidegger’s interpretation of Trakl goes on in the small section of the unpublished text of *Geschlecht III*, which represents only a small part (thirty-three pages) of the one hundred pages that Derrida wrote on Heidegger’s text on Trakl⁴⁴ and ends with the analysis of the meaning of spirit in Trakl to which Derrida comes back two years later, in 1987, in *Of Spirit*, which was originally the long concluding lecture of a conference on Heidegger which took place in the *Collège international* in Paris. In this lecture Derrida’s purpose was the recollection of all the contexts in which Heidegger uses the word *Geist* (spirit) from

⁴⁴ On this point, see Françoise Dastur, “Heidegger and Derrida on Trakl,” *Phenomenology and Literature*, ed. Pol Vandavelde (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2010), 43–57.

1927 in *Sein und Zeit* to the 1953 text on Trakl. What is the most interesting for Derrida in this last text is the passage where Heidegger declares that Trakl "avoids" the word *geistig*, because it was in the same manner that Heidegger twenty-six years earlier recommended "avoiding" in the existential analysis the use of certain terms, amongst them "spirit," "person," "soul," and "subject." Heidegger explains that the use of the word *geistig* presupposes the Platonic opposition between the sensible and the intelligible and that it constitutes a negative approach of spirit. In order to determine spirit in a positive manner which could be different at the same time from the metaphysical determination of *geistig* and from the Christian determination of *Geistlichkeit*, one has to relate spirit to flame.

Derrida concludes his lecture with three remarks concerning the relation that Heidegger establishes between spirit and flame, in which he shows that it is necessary to appeal to a trio of languages, the Greek *pneuma*, the German *Geist*, and the Latin *spiritus*. In opposition to the Greek and the Latin languages, which see in spirit a breath, Heidegger assigns to the German language the "supplement of originary status" by which it is possible to find an access to the true meaning of spirit. What Heidegger describes is therefore the history of the meaning of the thing "*pneuma-spiritus-Geist*." Derrida questions here the closed character of this triangle of languages, which he calls a "brutal foreclosure,"⁴⁵ meaning the omission of another language which also speaks of spirit in terms of breath. This language is Hebrew and, as Derrida points out, it is in fact the Hebraic term of *ruah* which has been translated in Greek in the New Testament by *pneuma* and in Latin by *spiritus*. What Derrida questions is therefore the definition Heidegger gives of Western history as having its departure in Platonism and Christianity without making any mention of the Hebraic origin of Christianity itself. The mere fact of taking into account this fourth language, Hebrew, means for Derrida the beginning of a deconstruction of the Heideggerian concept of history.

As Derrida remarks, in the Hebraic thinking, spirit, i.e., *ruah*, can carry evil, which means that it is necessary to oppose a holy spirit to an evil spirit. But Heidegger tries to show that the thinking of evil in Trakl has nothing to do with Christianity, in the same manner as he already tried in his 1936 course on Schelling to withdraw the Schellagian metaphysics of evil from the ethical and Christian horizon. For Derrida, this cannot be done, because this thinking of evil as being spiritual that Heidegger

⁴⁵ Ibid. 100.

presents as a non-Platonic and non-metaphysical thinking finds in fact its origin in Judaism, on the basis of which Christianity was developed.

Another point which is also interesting for Derrida is the relation of spirit to the soul, which can be referred to the Christian opposition *pneuma-psyche* that can be found in St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, an opposition which is based again on the Hebraic distinction between *ruah* and *nephech*. This opposition has to do with the sexual difference and this explains why the origin of evil can be understood as the discord between spirit and soul, the masculine and the feminine. We have to underline here that for Heidegger himself this opposition has merely an ontological meaning. He explains that, on the one hand, spirit makes gift of the soul in its ecstatic movement of deportation outside of itself, but that, on the other hand, it is the soul that "nourishes" spirit and guards it, in such an essential manner that without soul there would be no spirit, which recalls what Heidegger said in *Sein und Zeit* about the fact that there is being only as long as *Dasein* is (SZ 212). For Derrida this opposition is founded on the identification of the masculine with spirit, which is also a feature of Judaism, and in particular of Lévinas' Judaism, whereas the role of the soul is the traditional feminine role of guarding and nourishing. What is evil, however, is not the division in itself between the masculine and the feminine, because the division happens in order to allow the gathering of both, but evil is the discord or dissension, which is the origin of the decomposition of the species, the absence of harmony between soul and spirit. Derrida remarks that for Heidegger spirit is at the same time the movement of deportation that opens a way, and also what is at the origin of gathering. This could imply (but this is not Derrida's conclusion) that in a paradoxical way a division could be the origin of a gathering, exactly as Schelling already showed, that in order to have gathering, unity, peace, and love, it is necessary to run the risk of war, division, and pain.

Derrida's conclusion consists in showing that Heidegger opens two ways of thinking, exactly in the same manner as in 1968 he discovered in him two different "gestures." The first one could lead where Trakl, according to Heidegger, wants to go, toward a more originary West than the Platonic and Christian West, but this originary West would then be heterogeneous to all metaphysics, to Christianity as well as to its Hebraic origin. Heidegger says that this originary West is more "promising" than the Platonic and Christian West and Derrida sees in this an appeal to a salvation which is offered to the Western human being. But Derrida does not think that such a way can really be opened, because it seems to him

that it is impossible to extract Trakl's poetry from the Christian thinking of spirit. The second way seems to him more probable. It leads to the origin of Christianity⁴⁶ and consists only in a repetition of its theological content, a repetition which nevertheless leads to its truth. This is precisely what some theologians could answer to Heidegger, because they want to rebel against the traditional image of Christianity and go back to a more originary vision of it, which could also be accepted not only by "the messianic Jew," but even by "the Moslem and some others," at least by all those who have spoken of spirit.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Derrida speaks here legitimately of "the several names" that we could give to the origin of Christianity (*Of Spirit*, 107), but he has in fact named only *one* name, Judaism, in which he says that it is also possible to find "an inexhaustible thinking about *fire*" (*Of Spirit*, 101). However, the thought of fire and the identification of fire and spirit can be found in the Persian Mazdeism, whose influence on Judaism and Christianity should not be underestimated, especially in respect to the opposition of a holy spirit and an evil spirit which has been taken up again in Judaism and Christianity.

⁴⁷ *Of Spirit*, III.

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