

8

Heidegger's Failure to Overcome Transcendental Philosophy

Eric S. Nelson

The Problem of Transcendental Philosophy

John Searle has complained that “it ought to arouse our suspicions that people who spend enormous efforts on interpreting [Heidegger’s] work disagree on the fundamental question whether he was an idealist.”¹ Scholars of Heidegger’s philosophy have similarly been unable to agree whether or to what extent he was committed to transcendental philosophy, which Kant defined as the analysis of the necessary conditions of possible experience in

¹ John R. Searle (ed.), “The Phenomenological Illusion,” in *Philosophy in a New Century: Selected Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 107.

E.S. Nelson (✉)

Department of Philosophy, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology,
Clear Water Bay, Hong Kong

general, or whether he overcame it in a “radical” new thinking of being and its history.²

The continuing disagreement concerning the role of transcendental philosophy in his thought can be attributed in large part to Heidegger himself. It reflects his shifting and ultimately inconsistent positions concerning his relationship with the transcendental heritage. In this chapter, I trace Heidegger’s changing and ambiguous relationship with “transcendental philosophy,” which he defined at various points in relation to the philosophy of the subject and subjectivity, reflective-representational thinking, and the horizontal understanding of meaning.

As he recounted in the 1963 lecture “My Way into Phenomenology,” Heidegger’s philosophical training was deeply shaped by the transcendental philosophies of Neo-Kantianism (Heinrich Rickert) and phenomenology (Edmund Husserl) that he studied at the University of Freiburg.³ Despite or perhaps because of this education, Heidegger would repeatedly endeavor to distance himself from and break with the transcendental paradigm of his Freiburg teachers, Rickert and Husserl, while still tacitly relying upon it and at times—even in his later works when it should have long been overcome—reverting to its language and argumentative strategies.⁴

²For instance, Hubert L. Dreyfus stresses Heidegger’s break with transcendental thought: “Heidegger developed his hermeneutic phenomenology in opposition to Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology.” See *Being-in-the-world: A Commentary on Heidegger’s Being and Time, Division I* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 2. Cristina Lafont emphasizes the anti-transcendental nature of Heidegger’s “linguistic idealism” and the ontological difference, which makes the distinction between the empirical and transcendental impossible, in *Heidegger, Language, and World-Disclosure* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 17. Skepticism about Heidegger’s success at overcoming transcendental philosophy is developed by Karl-Otto Apel; see “Meaning-Constitution and Justification of Validity: Has Heidegger Overcome Transcendental Philosophy by History of Being?” in Karl-Otto Apel (ed.) *From a Transcendental-Semiotic Point of View* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 103–21. A cogent case for Heidegger’s continuity with transcendental philosophy is made in Daniel Dahlstrom, “Heidegger’s Transcendentalism,” *Research in Phenomenology* 35, no. 1 (2005): 29–54. These are two Heideggerian voices, according to Steven G. Crowell, *Husserl, Heidegger, and the Space of Meaning: Paths toward Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 9.

³GA 14:93–101.

⁴On Heidegger’s relation to Husserl, see Leslie MacAvoy, “Heidegger and Husserl,” in *Bloomsbury Companion to Heidegger*, rev. edn, ed. François Raffoul and Eric S. Nelson (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 135–42.

Heidegger engaged in a number of attempts to reformulate transcendental philosophy, such as in terms of fundamental ontology and world-disclosure in the second half of the 1920s, and to break with transcendental philosophy. An early attempt to disentangle himself from the transcendental paradigm can be seen in his early post-war turn toward existence- and life-philosophy and hermeneutics, which he developed in particular through his reading of Dilthey.⁵ Heidegger attempted in his “hermeneutics of factual life” to overcome transcendental philosophy and what he depicted as its static, ahistorical conception of the constitution of meaning, through an interpretive-existential analysis of concrete situated existence.⁶ His lecture courses of the early 1920s promised a radical breakthrough and return to life in its very facticity. Theodore Kisiel has described how Heidegger's early project was adjusted through his reappropriation of transcendental philosophy as fundamentally ontological and his explicit return to transcendental philosophy, ontologically understood, in the mid-1920s during the period of *Being and Time* (1927) and *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (1929).⁷ During

⁵ For a detailed discussion of Dilthey's significance for the early Heidegger, see Eric S. Nelson, “The World Picture and its Conflict in Dilthey and Heidegger,” *Humana Mente: Journal of Philosophical Studies* 18 (2011): 19–38; Eric S. Nelson, “Heidegger and Dilthey: Language, History, and Hermeneutics,” in *Horizons of Authenticity in Phenomenology, Existentialism, and Moral Psychology*, ed. Hans Pedersen and Megan Altman (Dordrecht: Springer, 2015), 109–28.

⁶ On the context of Heidegger's hermeneutics of facticity, see Theodore Kisiel, “On the Genesis of Heidegger's Formally Indicative Hermeneutics of Facticity,” in *Rethinking Facticity*, ed. François Raffoul and Eric S. Nelson (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 41–67; Eric S. Nelson, “Questioning Practice: Heidegger, Historicity, and the Hermeneutics of Facticity,” *Philosophy Today* 44 (2001): 150–9.

⁷ Cf. Theodore Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 9. Kisiel depicts the development of Heidegger's *Being and Time* through “three drafts”: (i) the “hermeneutical” or “Dilthey”-influenced draft that reflects his early project of a hermeneutics of factual life (1915–21); (ii) a “phenomenological-ontological” draft that relies on working through Aristotle's ontology and a renewed engagement and struggle with Husserl's phenomenology (1921–24); and (iii) a quasi-transcendental and Kantian draft (1924–27). *Being and Time's* failure motivated Heidegger's movement away from Kant toward a renewed thinking of the anti-transcendental ontological motivations, such as the “it worlds” and the primordial happening (“*es ereignet sich*”) and upsurge of a pre-intentional and pre-theoretical “it” (*es*) or “there” (*da*), of the first draft without its existential and life-philosophical dimensions.

this period, Heidegger identified the inner truth of transcendental philosophy with the fundamental ontology of being.

A second example of Heidegger's break with transcendental philosophy, and the most frequently disputed example in the literature, is the so-called "turning" (*Kebr*) in the mid-1930s, understood as an attempt to overcome the lingering transcendental character of *Being and Time*, which is concerned with the "ontology of Dasein" or, "in Kantian terms," a "preliminary ontological analytic of the subjectivity of the subject."⁸ According to Heidegger's later self-interpretation in the 1930s, *Being and Time* had failed to address—or was in being-historical "errancy" (*seinsgeschichtliche Irre*) concerning—the genuine question of being (*Seinsfrage*) by overemphasizing the constitutive role of the subject and its distinctive temporality. The thereness of "being-there" (*Dasein*) was not yet thought radically enough. Heidegger identified transcendental philosophy after the turn, linking it with his wider "history of being" (*Geschichte des Seins*), with the priority of the subject and subjectivity that he associated with problems of modernity—rooted in the origins and historical unfolding of Western metaphysics—in works such as "The Age of the World Picture" (1938).⁹

After the "turn," Heidegger continued to alternate between the rhetoric of radically overcoming transcendental philosophy—for its subjective, horizontal, reflective-representational, and modernist character—and the possibility of an alternative conception of transcendental constitution that occurred through the "event" (*Ereignis*) of being, world, and history, rather than through the analysis of the conditions of possibility of the subject. Heidegger did not overcome his ambiguous relationship with the transcendental tradition and could not overcome transcendental philosophy. This clarifies why, despite his own self-interpretations, the transcendental interpretation of Heidegger's context and—both early and later—works remains trenchant.¹⁰

⁸ SZ 24. Page numbers for SZ refer to the German edition.

⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 83–4. On the problematic of the subject and subjectivity in Heidegger, see François Raffoul, *Heidegger and the Subject* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1998).

¹⁰ For transcendental approaches to Heidegger's thought, see for instance: *Transcendental Heidegger*, ed. Steven G. Crowell and Jeff Malpas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007); Daniel Dahlstrom,

Phenomenology as Idealism and Transcendental Philosophy

Searle's suspicions concerning the implicit idealism of Heidegger's phenomenology have significant historical precedents. In one of the earliest critiques of the phenomenology articulated in *Being and Time*, Georg Misch in his *Lebensphilosophie und Phänomenologie: Eine Auseinandersetzung der Diltheyschen Richtung mit Heidegger und Husserl* argued for the inherently subjective-idealistic character of the phenomenological movement. Misch, who was familiar with the development of Heidegger's thought throughout this period, identified Heidegger's position with a subjective, Fichtean-style ethical "idealism of freedom." Günther Anders would rechristen it an "idealism of unfreedom" (*Idealismus der Unfreiheit*) in his 1937 critique of Heidegger's philosophy in relation to his involvement with National Socialism.¹¹ Misch's description corresponds to Heidegger's "metaphysics of freedom" phase during the late 1920s and early 1930s, which was unfolded through his interpretation of German idealism and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling in particular.¹² Indeed, instead of keeping his distance, Heidegger had an affirmative sense of the achievements of German idealism, as a philosophical elevation from which later generations have fallen.¹³

"Heidegger's Transcendentalism," *Research in Phenomenology* 35, no. 1 (2005): 29–54; Dermot Moran, "Dasein as Transcendence in Heidegger and the Critique of Husserl," in *Heidegger in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Tziovani Georgakis and Paul J. Ennis (Dordrecht: Springer, 2015), 23–45.

¹¹ Misch described how Heidegger "is ethical-idealistically positioned, while an objective idealistic orientation is revealed in Dilthey (*ethisch-idealistisch eingestellt ist, während bei Dilthey die objektiv-idealistische Einstellung sich darin verriete*)," in Georg Misch, *Lebensphilosophie und Phänomenologie: Eine Auseinandersetzung der Diltheyschen Richtung mit Heidegger und Husserl*, 2nd edn (Leipzig: Teubner, 1931), 29–30. Cf. Günther Anders, *Über Heidegger* (München: Beck, 2001), 28; see also the discussion of Misch's critique of Heidegger's idealism in Eric S. Nelson, "Dilthey, Heidegger und die Hermeneutik des faktischen Lebens," in *Dilthey's Werk und seine Wirkung*, ed. Gunter Scholtz (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 103.

¹² On Schelling's significance for Heidegger's thinking of freedom and imagination in this key period of transition between *Being and Time* and the turn, see Christopher S. Yates, *The Poetic Imagination in Heidegger and Schelling* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

¹³ See GA 40:34; Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 45.

Jürgen Habermas, whose 1954 doctoral work was on the contradictions between history and the absolute in Schelling, connected Heidegger's thought with idealism, which unlike classical German idealism relativizes rather than grounds rational knowledge. Habermas repeatedly depicted Heidegger's early phenomenology of Dasein as a subjective decisionism and his later thinking of being as a form of "linguistic idealism" that prioritizes "the world-disclosing function of language."¹⁴ Habermas concluded that Heidegger is beholden to the worst elements of the idealistic heritage, temporalizing and relativizing it, and is unable to take an inter-subjective and communicative turn that would rehabilitate the rational claims of transcendental philosophy.¹⁵

Searle maintains in his essay "The Phenomenological Illusion" a position concerning phenomenology not unlike that of Habermas in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. He argues that in actual fact the entire classical phenomenological tradition is committed to semantic idealism or, if we abandon the claim of idealism as overly polemical, a perspectival reduction of knowledge and truth claims to a point of view or language game. Searle describes the semantic position thus: "a view is idealist in this semantic sense if it does not allow for irreducibly *de re* references to objects. All references to objects are interpreted as being within the scope of some phenomenological operator."¹⁶ According to Searle's argument, this description encompasses not only Husserl's conception of the fundamental character of the intentionality of consciousness but also less obviously idealistic operators such as Dasein (being-there) in Heidegger or the body in Merleau-Ponty.

Searle's argument appears at first glance overly simplistic and in need of complication, given the notions of passivity and

¹⁴ Jürgen Habermas, *The Postnational Constellation: Political Essays* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), 146. Also see Jürgen Habermas, *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne: Zwölf Vorlesungen* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1985), 168.

¹⁵ William D. Blattner has extensively argued that Heidegger is a "temporal idealist." See his *Heidegger's Temporal Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

¹⁶ Searle, "Phenomenological Illusion," 107. For his depiction of phenomenology as a semantically idealist or quasi-idealistic perspectivalism, see 128–32.

sedimentation in Husserl; of facticity, thrownness, and being beyond Dasein's operations of meaning and sense-making in Heidegger; of the entwinement of the body in the flesh of the world in Merleau-Ponty; or of the priority of alterity in Levinas. Classical phenomenology cannot be identified with subjective or objective idealism, even if it might well be explicitly (as in Husserl) or implicitly committed to underlying premises of transcendental philosophy.¹⁷

Searle asserts that Husserl's transcendental philosophy emphasizes meaning ("what is said") over reality ("the thing" itself): "all of his talk about the transcendental ego and the primacy of consciousness is . . . a part of his rejection of the idea that what I have been calling the basic facts are really basic."¹⁸ Searle claims in addition: "transcendental subjectivity for Husserl does not depend on the basic facts; rather, it is the other way round."¹⁹ Searle's description conflates a necessary condition of *x* with the reduction of *x* to that necessary condition; that is, the idea that the intentional and proto-intentional constitution of meaning is necessary for there to be meaningful facts for us (what he calls the semantic) with the idea that real things are predetermined and constructed through the constitution of meaning (what he calls the *de re* independent reality).

The notions of transcendental conditions in Kant and transcendental constitution in Husserl did not entail the rejection of experientially encountering things and scientifically explaining the empirical world, which correspond to the pre-predicative experience of the life-world (*Lebenswelt*), on the one hand, and the theoretical idealization of the sciences, on the other hand, as shown in Husserl's late works such as *Experience and Judgment* and *The Crisis*

¹⁷ I argue that Heidegger and Levinas never overcome the premises of transcendental philosophy in Eric S. Nelson, "Biological and Historical Life: Heidegger between Levinas and Dilthey," in *The Science, Politics, and Ontology of Life-philosophy*, ed. Scott M. Campbell and Paul W. Bruno (London: Continuum, 2013), 15–29.

¹⁸ Searle, "Phenomenological Illusion," 124.

¹⁹ Searle, "Phenomenological Illusion," 125.

of *European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1936). Husserl demonstrated how this is possible without appealing to the metaphysical realist's mystical positing of a nonconstituted or unexperienced and uninterpreted reality (the *de re* disconnected from the *de dicto*).

To complicate the picture further, Searle's criticisms of Husserl overlap with Heidegger's and those of other later phenomenological critics: the fundamental intentionality and relationality of consciousness, without which there would not be meaning, acting or knowing for Husserl, is construed as predetermining the entirety of reality when it is making the experience and interpretation of reality possible. Intentionality does not isolate the ego or mind in itself; it designates the irreducible constitutive relationality that allows humans to encounter things and "know facts" in meaningful ways precisely because consciousness has relational and intentional characteristics that make these processes possible.

Phenomenology cannot be semantic idealism in Searle's sense. Husserl did of course describe his phenomenology as transcendental idealism and transcendental subjectivism. This indicates the difference between: (i) idealism₁ as the constitution of all—including material and natural—reality out of the subject, or the ideational (semantic) nature of all reality (which Husserl never maintained); and (ii) idealism₂ as the constitution of sense and meaning from the fundamental non-dual co-relationality of subject and object disclosed through the phenomenological reductions:

Consciousness describes how the world becomes manifest: The attempt to conceive the universe of true being as something lying outside the universe of possible consciousness, possible knowledge, possible evidence, the two being related to one another merely externally by a rigid law, is nonsensical. They belong together essentially; and as belonging together essentially, they are also concretely one, one in the only absolute concretion; transcendental subjectivity.²⁰

²⁰ Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology* (Dordrecht: Springer, 1977), 84.

Heidegger's Ambiguous Relationship with Transcendental Philosophy

Heidegger repeatedly sought to redefine and/or break from and overcome the idealism of his mentors and of the Western metaphysical tradition. In these attempts, it is evident that Heidegger—who declared himself a follower of the “realist” Husserl of the *Logical Investigations* (1900–01)—shared some of Searle's concerns about the idealizing tendencies of Husserl's phenomenology throughout his lecture courses of the 1920s and his later break with the transcendentalism of *Being and Time* itself.

Being and Time, however Heidegger's thought is ultimately interpreted, is clearly composed in the context of the project of transcendental philosophy, as can be seen in the text itself. His account of the temporality of Dasein in *Being and Time* aimed at elucidating “time as the transcendental horizon for the question of being.”²¹ The language of “transcendental horizons” is borrowed from Husserl. The term “horizon” indicates how the transcendental dimension cannot consist purely in a description of the activities of the ego and subject, to the extent that the subject is referred to ever wider conditions and horizons of meaning-constitution and genesis. In Heidegger's argument, time cannot be said to be constituted by the subject, as existentially reinterpreted temporality constitutes the very sensibility of Dasein's being from the unchosen thrownness of birth to the inappropriable facticity of death, which indicates two occasions that define human Dasein while defying the meaning and sense-making activities of the subject.

Nonetheless, in *Being and Time* and *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, the notion of the transcendental is pushed in other directions that Husserl rejected as a betrayal of transcendental phenomenology for the sake of a renewed metaphysics (in his critique of Heidegger's ontological language) and philosophical anthropology (in his criticism of Heidegger's use of existential language).²² Husserl argued that *Being*

²¹ SZ 39.

²² See Edmund Husserl, *Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology and the Confrontation with Heidegger (1927–1931)*, Collected Works, vol. 6 (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1997).

and Time failed because of its departure from, rather than its lingering commitment to, the philosophy of transcendental subjectivity. Heidegger had reified phenomenology into an existential anthropology.²³

The continuing affinities and the growing distances between Husserl and Heidegger are apparent in the latter's interpretation of the transcendental in passages such as this one: "*Being is the transcendens pure and simple*. The transcendence of the being of Dasein is a distinctive one since in it lies the possibility and necessity of the most radical *individuation*. Every disclosure of being as the *transcendens* is *transcendental* knowledge. Phenomenological truth (disclosedness of being) is *veritas transcendentalis*."²⁴ What is noteworthy about this passage in this context is that Heidegger is harkening to the scholastic, presumably more ontological, sense of "transcendental" in this passage and connecting it with the more or less existential question of the singular and unique being of the self in its individuation. Heidegger's 1915 qualifying dissertation had concerned the problem of the relation between universal categories of meaning and the form of individuation (the *haecceitas* or "thisness") in scholasticism.²⁵ As "existential," categories are only meaningful insofar as they are enacted and embodied in diverse ways of being; as "ontological," they concern the question of how being is and how beings are rather than the issue of how to access epistemically their reality through knowledge.

Neo-Kantian and Husserlian transcendental philosophy had for Heidegger prioritized the question of knowledge and the knowing subject in its concern for the logical and epistemic conditions of possibility.²⁶ It is

²³ Husserl, *Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology*, 505; see also Edmund Husserl, "Phänomenologie und Anthropologie," in *Aufsätze und Vorträge (1922–1937)*, *Gesammelte Werke XXVII*, ed. Thomas Nenon and Hans Rainer Sepp (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989), 164–81. See my discussion in Eric S. Nelson, "What Is Missing? The Incompleteness and Failure of Heidegger's Being and Time," in *Division III of Heidegger's Being and Time: The Unanswered Question of Being*, ed. Lee Braver (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015), 210.

²⁴ SZ 38.

²⁵ GA 1:203, 253. On the significance of *haecceitas* for Heidegger, see John van Buren, *The Young Heidegger: Rumor of the Hidden King* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 105–7.

²⁶ See, for instance, GA 58:180.

this understanding of the complicity of the transcendental, subjectivity, and the epistemological essence of modern philosophy since Descartes that Heidegger would place into question by rethinking them in more primordial ontological and life-existential senses in the 1920s and in endeavoring to confront and overcome them altogether in his later thinking.

Heidegger's controversial redescription of Kant's conception of the transcendental as concerned with the ontological question of being instead of the epistemological problem of possible knowledge developed through his readings of medieval scholastic philosophy, its antecedent origins in Aristotle, and his perhaps polemical reinterpretation of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* as an ontological work, which brought him into dispute with the Neo-Kantian reading of Kant. Heidegger would debate with Ernst Cassirer over the very character of the critical philosophy in the Swiss town of Davos in 1929.²⁷ Kant's transcendental philosophy becomes in Heidegger's reading a general ontology: nothing less than the ontological determination of the region of all beings.²⁸ The question concerning possible conditions is primarily a question of being (*Seinsfrage*) that Kant had failed to pose radically enough and with adequate self-understanding.

Heidegger rethought the question of the conditions of possibility as the question of the possibility of essence in his confrontation with Kant's critical philosophy, which would soon turn toward German idealism as a step beyond Kant. In the context of his reading of Hegel and Schelling, transcendental philosophy will no longer be rethought as ontology. Heidegger would abandon the project of *Being and Time* (1927) and *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (1929) as insufficiently radical. Transcendental philosophy belongs to the very forgetting of the ontological question of

²⁷ On the historical context and intellectual implications of the Davos debates, see Michael Friedman, *A Parting of the Ways: Carnap, Cassirer, and Heidegger* (LaSalle: Open Court Publishing, 2000); Peter Eli Gordon, *Continental Divide: Heidegger, Cassirer, Davos* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

²⁸ GA 25:58. Compare Frank Schalow, "Heidegger and Kant: Three Guiding Questions," in *Bloomsbury Companion to Heidegger*, rev. edn, ed. François Raffoul and Eric S. Nelson (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 105–11. Compare my discussion of Schalow's analysis of Heidegger's Kant in Nelson, "What Is Missing?" 202.

being, as it is tied to the abstract understanding of subjectivity introduced through René Descartes's conception of the ego *cogito*. Subjectivity, and the transcendental philosophy associated with it as the "philosophy of subjectivity," are inherently bound together and to be overcome, for the mature Heidegger.²⁹

To the extent that *Being and Time* is still indebted to and haunted by the transcendental perspective, it is a failure and necessarily incomplete, and yet, in Heidegger's self-interpretation, it is a meaningful step towards his thinking and history of being that emerged in the 1930s.³⁰ Even though *Being and Time* attempted to overcome an ahistorical and abstract consciousness in favor of historical-concrete existence, it remained within the reifying and false abstractions of the tendency of transcendental thinking.³¹ Transcendental philosophy is only one more name among others for the philosophy of the modern subject that is the culmination of the history of metaphysics and its forgetfulness of being.³²

Heidegger and advocates of his later thought maintained that his new transformative thinking signifies an overcoming of transcendental philosophy.³³ Each time Heidegger further developed his thinking, he

²⁹ On transcendental philosophy as the philosophy of subjectivity, see GA 14:96; on subjectivity and modernity, see GA 67:242.

³⁰ On Heidegger's conception of the history of being, see Eric S. Nelson, "History as Decision and Event in Heidegger," *Arbe* 4, no. 8 (2007): 97–115; Eric S. Nelson, "Heidegger, Levinas, and the Other of History," in *Between Levinas and Heidegger*, ed. John Drabinski and Eric S. Nelson (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014), 51–72.

³¹ Martin Heidegger, *Briefe an Max Müller und andere Dokumente*, ed. Holger Zaborowski and Anton Bösl (Freiburg and München: Alber, 2003), 102.

³² GA 48:75. For a justification of idealism as a crucial interpretation of modern self-reflexivity and freedom, see Robert B. Pippin, *Idealism as Modernism: Hegelian Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

³³ On Husserl's critique of Heidegger, see Steven G. Crowell, "Does the Husserl/Heidegger Feud Rest on a Mistake? An Essay on Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology," *Husserl Studies* 18, no. 2 (2002): 123–40; Sebastian Luft, "Husserl's Concept of the 'transcendental person': Another Look at the Husserl–Heidegger Relationship," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 13, no. 2 (2005): 141–77. On the transition from *Dasein* to *Sein* and Heidegger's later critique of the philosophy of the subject, compare Bret W. Davis, *Heidegger and the Will: On the Way to Gelassenheit* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2006), 197; Patricia J. Huntington, *Ecstatic Subjects, Utopia, and Recognition: Kristeva, Heidegger, Irigaray* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 188.

associated his previous phases with the lingering traces of transcendental philosophy. It should be asked: Did Heidegger overcome transcendental philosophy in and through the turn and his mature thought, and is it necessary to overcome it? A critical reading of the entirety of his works indicates that it is question-worthy whether he ever overcame his ambiguous relationship with his transcendental heritage. It is perhaps the case that transcendental philosophy continues to be the best way to make sense of his projects despite his own anti-transcendental self-interpretations.

Three Attempts to Rethink Transcendental Philosophy

We will now briefly and schematically consider three examples of Heidegger's attempts to reconsider transcendental thought: his early project of a hermeneutics of facticity, his thinking of world-constitution and disclosure as an approach to the question of meaning, and his being-historical thinking of the event and history of being, which is supposed to overcome his earlier transcendentalism as well as that of the western metaphysical tradition.

The Hermeneutics of Factual Life

First, beginning with his early post-war interest in life-philosophy and hermeneutics (Dilthey), Heidegger attempted to "overcome" transcendental philosophy and its "static," ahistorical, idealizing conception of constitution through a hermeneutics of factual life, only to return to an explicitly transcendental-horizonal language in the period of *Being and Time* and *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. It is noteworthy that he recurrently rejected transcendental philosophy and then would return to it by employing its language and strategies. An early example of this ambivalence is his early project of a hermeneutics of facticity or factual life. He contrasted a philosophy that sought to clarify the factual conditions of life and lived-experience with the dead and empty

abstractions of a transcendental philosophy that was intrinsically limited in its capacity to articulate the structures of factual life immanently from out of itself.³⁴

For instance, he claimed in an early criticism of Husserl that “the being is pure because it is defined as *ideal*; that is, *not real* being.”³⁵ Husserl’s reductions draw from “the initially given concrete individuation of a stream of experience what is called the pure field of consciousness, that is, a field which is no longer concrete and individual, but pure.”³⁶ Thus, in emphasizing ideality instead of facticity, transcendental phenomenology cannot encounter and draw from the real being and concreteness of the entity in question.³⁷

Heidegger’s early argumentation employs the lived and interpretive “categories of life”—a Diltheyan idea that contests the ahistorical, static categories of consciousness and the reductive interpretation of reason offered by traditional transcendental philosophy, and a forerunner to the existential categories or “existentials” unfolded in *Being and Time*—and, more fundamentally, *logos*; that is, the communicative event and enactment of factual existence in and through the constitutive medium of language.³⁸ It is in this situation that Heidegger redefined the transcendental dimension of his project by the mid-1920s as an existential-ontological one, which would provide a prior basis to history and nature, interpretation and explanation, by exploring the quasi-transcendental constitution of human existence as communication, event, and enactment.³⁹

The “concrete” issues of life are not addressed by remaining at that level of understanding of consciousness, for Heidegger. They demand a radically ontological thinking achieved through strategies such as “formal

³⁴ For instance, see GA 60:13.

³⁵ GA 20:145–6; translation from Martin Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 106.

³⁶ GA 20:138–9; translation from *History of the Concept of Time*, 101.

³⁷ GA 20:146–8; see *History of the Concept of Time*, 106–8.

³⁸ See my “Biological and Historical Life,” 22.

³⁹ GA 61:173.

indication” and hermeneutical anticipation that poses the question of one’s own life/existence in relation to the question of the meaning of being. This would be articulated through his hermeneutics of authentic and inauthentic speech, logos as revealing and as concealing, which he unfolded in confrontation with Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* in the lecture courses on the *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy* (1924) and *Plato’s Sophist* (1925).⁴⁰

Heidegger’s thinking of the originariness of language in the mid-1920s distinguished his project from other prevalent forms of transcendental philosophy that focused on the constitutive role of consciousness and the self. This indicates the fundamental role of his thinking of language and, as we will see next, of world as well, which Searle has depicted as perspectival semanticism. It is, however, the residual transcendental character of Heidegger’s thinking of language, world, and being that releases it from Searle’s critique.

Transcendental Philosophy and World

The relationship between world-constitution and transcendental philosophy offers a second example of Heidegger’s shifting attitude toward the transcendental paradigm. In the late 1920s, he identified the truth of transcendental philosophy with ontology and time as the condition of the finite subject. Time is the transcendental horizon of the question of being posed by Dasein. Is this a temporal idealism, as Blattner has argued?⁴¹ It is, to the extent that it is Dasein’s originary temporality that clarifies the notion of time that happens to it, even if it happens as inappropriate in moments such as birth and death.

In *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, a lecture course from 1928, Heidegger analyzes the transcendental character of world in Kant’s first Critique as ontologically what cannot be part of another world or be

⁴⁰ A particularly helpful work for exploring the priority of language in the 1920s is Scott M. Campbell, *The Early Heidegger’s Philosophy of Life: Facticity, Being, and Language* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012).

⁴¹ Blattner, *Heidegger’s Temporal Idealism*.

reduced to any possible ontic physical world.⁴² This is an account of the world as a meaningful whole that is irreducible to any part and a transcendental thesis about the world that remains the point of departure for Heidegger's later thinking of world.⁴³

Heidegger is seen in this same lecture course refining his depiction of the transcendental paradigm by introducing his conceptions of the transcendental dispersion and dissemination of neutral Dasein into non-neutral ways of being through thrownness.⁴⁴ Thrownness is not the ontic fact of being born but rather the transcendental-ontological structure disclosed through the facticity of ontic birth. Human finitude and mortality, which remain crucial to Heidegger's later understanding of human existence between heaven and earth, are not merely anthropological facts of human life; they are a transcendental-ontological condition of meaningfulness and meaninglessness, instead of a bare, finite, empirical duration of time.

In *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, transcendental philosophy is inquiry into the understanding of being emerging from Dasein's ecstatic transcendence. In this context, especially in the late 1920s in works such as "On the Essence of Ground" (1928/29), the transcendental signifies Dasein's transcending, or surpassing and overstepping, of limiting structures and the exposure of being-in-a-world: that is, "transcendence as being-in-the-world" and "world co-constitutes the unitary structure of transcendence."⁴⁵

In "On the Essence of Ground," Heidegger stated that "world co-constitutes the unitary structure of transcendence; as belonging to this structure, the concept of world may be called transcendental. This term names all that belongs essentially to transcendence and bears its intrinsic possibility."⁴⁶ The co-relational character of mortal and immortal, world and earth, in their difference and conflict does not eliminate the sense of

⁴² See the discussion in GA 26:224–5; translation in Martin Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 175.

⁴³ For an extended assessment of the problematic of world in Heidegger, see Lafont, *Heidegger, Language, and World-Disclosure*.

⁴⁴ See GA 26:173–4; translation in *Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 138.

⁴⁵ Translation from Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 109.

⁴⁶ Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, 109.

the whole that Heidegger here described as transcendental. The idea of transcendental method continues to be heard in his later notion of way (*Weg*) as world-disclosing, which happens to a wanderer on the way to whom the world is being disclosed. Heidegger's poetic thinking resonates with the poetic dimensions of the transcendental tradition at work in Hölderlin and Schelling. World is a meaningful whole: "world is not a mere collection of the things—countable and uncountable, known and unknown—that are present at hand," Heidegger noted in "The Origin of the Work of Art," but world is fundamentally world opening and the worlding of the world.⁴⁷ The openness of world is a reinterpretation of the phenomenological account of world-constitution. The world remains constitutive of meaning, even in the modern epoch in which the world is darkened and the meaningfulness of things seemingly lost.

Heidegger's Thinking of Being

We should now turn to the history and event of being and consider whether it has overcome the transcendental paradigm. The turn in the mid-1930s was interpreted by Heidegger and his subsequent supporters as a radical break with the lingering transcendental character of *Being and Time*, which continued to forget the question of being by over-emphasizing the role of the subject in the form of "being-there" (*Dasein*). Transcendental philosophy became increasingly identified after the turn, linking it with the history of being, with the priority of the subject and subjectivity that were associated with the problems of modernity. As I discuss in another place, the post-turn Heidegger persistently conjoins and critiques the transcendental conception of the subjectivity of the subject and the modern experience of the priority of the subject as an ahistorical and worldless reification.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Translation from Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, 23.

⁴⁸ Nelson, "What Is Missing?" 211. On the transcendental sense of subjectivity, and posing the question of subjectivity more radically, compare Heidegger, GA 2:24, 106, 229, 382; GA 26:129, 160, 190, 205, 211; GA 27:11. For Heidegger's later critique of the subject, see GA 5:243; GA 69:44; GA 79:101, 139.

Even after 1935 and the turn toward being, Heidegger continues to hesitate at times between the rhetoric of radically overcoming transcendental philosophy and the possibility of an alternative, desubjectified conception of transcendental constitution occurring through the impersonal constitutive media of history, language, and world, rather than constitution occurring through the activity of the subject or Dasein. In a passage from 1936/37, later published in *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, Heidegger describes the significance of the constitutive interplay of history, language, and world for human life: "only where there is language, is there world, that is, the constantly changing cycle of decision and work, of action and responsibility, but also of arbitrariness and turmoil, decay and confusion. Only where world holds sway is there history."⁴⁹

History, language, and world are not accidental attributes found in empirical life to be explained by scientific inquiry or understood through lived-experience. Heidegger sharply distinguishes between contingent ontic-empirical histories (*Historie*) and an ontologically (that is, in the last analysis despite Heidegger's intentions, transcendently) conditioning history (*Geschichte*) of being. Language has a transcendental character in conditioning, structuring, and speaking through the speaker. The world happens to the finite mortal human subject who is called to wait and listen for the murmurs of being.

Heidegger's later thinking might be interpreted as a philosophy of the transcendental passivity of the subject. Still, it is Dasein that exists in and from the between (*Zwischen*) of the ontological difference between being and entities. This openness and its play of concealment and unconcealment, in which being is a transcendental field of uncertainty, cannot be fully disclosed or understood and can even be crossed out and erased. This thinking transforms and yet cannot fully displace *Being and Time's* transcendental horizon and conditions of the question concerning the sense of being.

According to Heidegger, innerworldly beings are only disclosed and manifest in the context of the world-clearing of being in which humans find themselves and which happens prior to any transcendental thinking or

⁴⁹ GA 4:38; translation from Martin Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2000), 56.

projection by Dasein or the human subject.⁵⁰ The transcendental is no longer located in the conditions and structures of subjectivity, much less of an epistemological character of a knowing subject. Nonetheless, history's historicizing, language's speaking, and the world's worlding have a transcendental character in contrast with, for instance, accounts that explain them as ontic phenomena through natural and material constitution.

Heidegger's mature thinking of world-opening and world-clearing as an ontological event would be more primordial than and prior to—and yet, however, resonates with—the idea of transcendental constitution understood as the conditions of possibility for the relationship between world and being, on the one hand, and the finite mortal human subject, on the other.

Conclusion

Heidegger's problematic and tense relationship with transcendental philosophy shapes his early efforts to transform and overcome it, as well as the trajectory of the question concerning the meaning of being. Based on the indications briefly discussed above, Heidegger did not embrace or turn to the historically available alternatives to transcendental philosophy, such as naturalism and materialism (e.g., physical constitution) or historicism and social constructivism (e.g., social-cultural constitution). The model of the transcendental conditions and constitution of the meaningfulness of the world reverberates throughout his later thinking of a more originary and primordial world-disclosure and world-clearing.

Meaningfulness appears to be no longer explicitly tied to the meaning-making activity of the human subject, as being becomes the necessary condition of possible meaningfulness for humans.⁵¹ Being always surpasses

⁵⁰ Compare Martin Heidegger, *The Piety of Thinking: Essays* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1976), 95.

⁵¹ For an account of Heidegger that stresses the priority of being over any act of meaning or sense, and the irreducibility of *Sein* to *Sinn*, see Richard Capobianco, *Heidegger's Way of Being* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014). On the priority of *Sinn* in interpreting *Sein* in Heidegger, see Thomas Sheehan, *Making Sense of Heidegger: A Paradigm Shift* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015).

its historical epochs and human perspectives, such that it is irreducible to semantic perspectivalism or idealism. Yet it is mortal humans who interpret, poeticize, and dwell in response to and in the context of this event of being. The non-dual and irreducible relationality of subject and object as a condition of meaning links Heidegger's later thinking with transcendental phenomenology at the same time as he disorients the Husserlian subject.

It is accordingly questionable whether Heidegger: (i) eliminated the constitutive role of meaning and the subject in projecting it onto being and the history of its event and epochs, which he persistently distinguished from ontic-empirical histories; (ii) achieved a coherent and experientially appropriate nonrepresentational and non-horizonal notion of the sense and meaning of being; and (iii) articulated a philosophy that could be "naturalized" without undermining its very structure and sense that prioritizes the event of meaning.⁵²

As argued in this chapter, despite his anti-transcendental gestures and rhetoric, and despite Husserl's view that Heidegger had betrayed transcendental philosophy for the sake of philosophical anthropology, Heidegger could not consistently abandon or overcome the problematic of transcendental philosophy through his displacement of the constitution of sense and meaning from the subject (*Dasein*) and its horizon of meaning to the event and openness of being (*Sein*), as advocates of his later thinking have claimed. Heidegger remained too early for being, insofar as he could not arrive at a purely ontological understanding of being and its meaning that transcended the philosophy of the subject and modernity.⁵³

Eric S. Nelson is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. His areas of teaching and research include modern European, East Asian, and intercultural/comparative philosophy and religion.

⁵²The most comprehensive and compelling attempt to address the issues at stake in "naturalizing Heidegger" can be found in David E. Storey, *Naturalizing Heidegger: His Confrontation with Nietzsche, His Contributions to Environmental Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2015).

⁵³I would like to express my appreciation to the editors of this volume, Halla Kim and Steven Hoeltzel, for their encouragement, patience, and suggestions.

He is particularly interested in questions of communication, interpretation, and social interaction (hermeneutics and ethics). He has published over 70 articles and book chapters on Chinese, German, and Jewish philosophy. He is the coeditor with François Raffoul of the *Bloomsbury Companion to Heidegger* (Bloomsbury, 2013) and *Rethinking Facticity* (SUNY Press, 2008). He has also coedited, with John Drabinski, *Between Levinas and Heidegger* (SUNY Press, 2014); with G. D'Anna and H. Johach, *Anthropologie und Geschichte: Studien zu Wilhelm Dilthey aus Anlass seines 100. Todestages* (Königshausen & Neumann, 2013); and with A. Kapust and K. Still, *Addressing Levinas* (Northwestern University Press, 2005). He has a forthcoming monograph on Chinese Philosophy in early twentieth-century German thought with Bloomsbury.