

The immensely complex work of Martin Heidegger lends itself to many different interpretations. One of the earliest, and still dominating, readings is what I will call for the sake of convenience, the Kierkegaardian-Levinasian interpretation of Heidegger.

I would like to contrast this account with a Derridean reading (I have another Jacques Derrida in mind than the one John Caputo manages to assimilate to the space between Kierkegaard and Levinas).

My focus in this short paper is on James Osborn's thesis, presented on his paper, *The Overturning of Heidegger's Fundamental Ontology* (2016, *Journal of Philosophical Research*, Volume 41). According to Osborn, Heidegger was committed to forging a path of thinking integrating, without succumbing to, the dominant philosophical traditions of the 20th century (dialectical and Neo-Kantian subjectivism and positivist empiricism). He laid the groundwork in *Being and Time*, but *BT*'s weakness was in its formulation of the Ontological-Ontic Difference, which, in rendering Being as grounding condition of possibility for beings, seemed to leave it as unconditioned master concept, a first principle. With the era initiated by the *Kehre*, Heidegger developed a way to think the overcoming of the self-contradiction of a grounding concept that seeks to overcome objectification. *Ereignis* performs the unity of the difference between Being and Beings as differentiating event.

Let me flesh this out, intertwining Osborn's thinking with Levinas via Derrida's perspective. Osborn writes: "The grounding of metaphysics in some structure of Dasein as its condition of possibility or cause would be tantamount to another representation of the "beingness of beings" and thus another iteration of metaphysics." "...the analytic of this structure of Dasein remains within metaphysics and participates in its consummation in a more radical oblivion of being, and it is therefore insufficient (as the fixed, always-already structure) alone to enact authentic transformation."

Derrida, in *Violence and Metaphysics*, says of Levinas: "The thought of the Being of the existent would have the propositional logic of the truism [Osborn's 'fixed, always-already structure'], placing ethics under the heel of ontology. Being as ontological difference is the concept of an abstract predicate, seeking to cover the totality of existents in its extreme universality." "To affirm the priority of Being over the existent is to decide the essence of philosophy; it is to subordinate the relation with someone, who is an existent, (the ethical relation) to a relation with the Being of the existent, which, impersonal, permits the apprehension, the domination of the existent (a relationship of know knowing), subordinates justice to freedom" (*Totality and Infinity*, p.45). This ontology would be valid for every existent, "except for the other."

Osborn says "The self-contradiction of the ontological difference is a Dasein-contradiction, a split between Dasein's understanding and existence, a fissure (*Zerklüftung*) in the understanding of being. In saying the ontological difference, one attempts to ground that which severs all ground, and Dasein thus contradicts its own basic constitution which, as transcendence, in turn overcomes the objectification of ontological difference."

Derrida on Levinas: The ontico-ontological difference would "neutralize difference, the infinite alterity of the totally-other. The ontico-ontological difference, moreover, would be conceivable only on the basis of the idea of the Infinite, of the unanticipatable irruption of the totally-other existent.(VM186)"

This would be a going "beyond the totality of the existent or the existent-hood of the existent (the Being existent of the existent), or beyond ontic history" in the guise of the ethical relation."In our relation with the Other, the latter does not affect us on the basis of a concept"(VM175).

Derrida goes on to deconstruct Levinas's remarks:

"The thought, the pre-comprehension of Being makes possible the recognition of the essence of the existent. "Without this "letting-be" of an existent (Other) as something existing outside me in the essence of what it is (first in its alterity), no ethics would be possible. "To let be" is an expression of Heidegger's which does not mean, as Levinas seems to think, to let be as an "object of comprehension first," and, in the case of the Other, as "interlocutor afterward." The "letting-be" concerns all possible forms of the existent, and even those which, by essence, cannot be transformed into "objects of comprehension.". The "letting-be" will let the Other be what it is. "The "relation to the Being of the existent" cannot possibly dominate the "relation to the existent." Heidegger not only would criticize the notion of a relation to Being, but also the notion of domination. The Being of the existent is not a theory or a science. There are few themes which have demanded Heidegger's insistence to this extent: Being is not an excellent existent."

"That Being is not above the existent does not imply that it is beside it. For then it would be another existent. Therefore, it is difficult to speak of "the ontological significance of the existent in the general economy of Being-which Heidegger simply places beside Being through a distinction ..."(Levinas, TI). "In reality, there is not even a distinction in the usual sense of the word, between Being and existent. For reasons of essence, and first because Being is nothing outside the existent, and because the opening amounts to the ontico-ontological difference, it is impossible to avoid the ontic metaphor in order to articulate Being in language"(VM173). "Being itself is alone in its absolute resistance to every metaphor" because it is the thinking of the metaphoricity of metaphor itself. Levinas interprets "the thought of Being as a concept of Being", but Being is not a concept or theory or existent.

"Heidegger is emphatic on this point: the Being which is in question is not the concept to which the existent (for example, someone) is to be submitted (subsumed). Being is not the concept of a rather indeterminate and abstract predicate, seeking to cover the totality of existents in its extreme universality: (1) because it is not a predicate, and authorizes all predication;

(2) because it is "older" than the concrete presence of the ens; (3) because belonging to Being does not cancel any predicative difference, but, on the contrary, permits the emergence of every possible difference. Being is therefore trans-categorical, and Heidegger would say of it what Levinas says of the other: it is "refractory to the category" (TI)." Being is not a determined relationship, for instance the ethical relationship. The understanding of Being always concerns alterity, and par excellence the alterity of the Other in all its originality: one can have to let be only that which one is not. If Being is always to be let be, and if to think is to let Being be, then Being is indeed the other of thought. But since it is what it is only by the letting-be of thought, and since the latter is thought only by virtue of the presence of the Being which it lets be, then

thought and Being, thought and the other, are the same; which, let us recall, does not mean identical, or one, or equal.

This amounts to stating that the thinking of Being does not make of the other a species of the genre Being. Not only because the other is "refractory to the category," but because Being is not a category.(VM176)"

Osborn begins from an interpretation of Being as categorical condition of possibility, as principle or ground, as theoretical proposition. This subjectivist beginning for Being authorizes intentionality as "the grasp of the will", that which dominates via the enclosing-totalizing neutrality of self-presence. Don't these determinations of ontology belong to a narrow mode of the present-to-hand that Heidegger dubs assertion, the proposition? Osborn makes it appear as though every mode of Being-in-the-world that Heidegger describes in BT belongs to the narrow category of propositionality. More importantly, the purpose of Heidegger's investigation of propositionality is not to identify theoretical objects as ontological givens for Being, but to establish propositional object, concept, representation, Gestell, as ontic existents in order to reveal them more rigorously as grounded ontologically (in the sense of fundamental ontology) in primordial unconcealment. Osborn's reading seems to do the reverse, attempting to ground fundamental ontology, and all of the modal analyses which spring from it, in what for Heidegger is the ontic plane of propositional representation.(For Levinas as well, the concept is on the plane of Being; "for Heidegger it is on the plane of ontic determination"(VM186)).

From this vantage, the entire project of BT subsists in the establishing of a systematic conceptual schematization, relieved only by supposed hints of a way out of the totalitarian implications of the rule of the concept. When one begins from the subjectivism of representationality, this way out must stand as the absolute other to representation, that is to say, it must arrive in the guise of the purely empirical other, as a performance of the differentiation between Subject and Object, its coming into being. Only in this way can the empirically conditioned and contingent beginning of thought avoid being mistaken for a Kantian unconditioned ground of possibility.

How can we avoid grounding fundamental ontology in theoretical schematism(or in the performative difference between schematism and existence) as its condition of possibility, and how might Being and Time look to us if we do? Let me come back to what I wrote about conceptualization in my previous post.

As an "ontologically insufficient interpretation of the logos", what the mode of interpretation of propositional statement doesn't understand about itself is that thinking of itself as external 'relating' makes the propositional 'is' an inert synthesis, and conceals its ontological basis as attuned, relevant taking of 'something AS something'. In accordance with this affected-affecting care structure, something is understood WITH REGARD TO something else. This means that it is taken together with it, but not in the manner of a synthesizing relating. Heidegger instead describes the 'as' as a "confrontation that understands, interprets, and articulates, [and] at the same time takes apart what has been put together." Transcendence locates itself in this way within the very heart of the theoretical concept. Simply determining something AS something is a transforming-performing. It "understands, interprets, and articulates", and thereby "takes apart" and changes what it affirms by merely pointing at it, by merely having it happen to 'BE' itself.

Thus, the problem of the primordial grounding of the 'is', and the analysis of the logos are the same problem.

Heidegger writes:

"...if the formal characteristics of "relation" and "binding" cannot contribute anything phenomenally to the factual structural analysis of the logos, the phenomenon intended with the term copula finally has nothing to do with bond and binding."(BT,p160)

"The "is" here speaks transitively, in transition. Being here becomes present in the manner of a transition to beings. But Being does not leave its own place and go over to beings, as though beings were first without Being and could be approached by Being subsequently. Being transits (that), comes unconcealingly over (that) which arrives as something of itself unconcealed only by that coming-over." "That differentiation alone grants and holds apart the "between," in which the overwhelming and the arrival are held toward one another, are borne away from and toward each other."(Identity and Difference.p.64)

Derrida writes:"Being is neither subject nor predicate." "Being of the existent does not belong to the realm of predication, because it is already implied in all predication in general, and makes predication possible." "If the strange difference between Being and the existent has a meaning, or is meaning, can one speak of the "priority" of Being in relation to the existent? An important question, here, for it is this alleged "priority" which, for Levinas, would enslave ethics to ontology. There can be an order of priority only between two determined things, two existents." "To precomprehend or explicate the implicit relation of Being to the existent is not to submit the existent (for example, someone) to Being in a violent fashion.

Being is but the Being-of this existent, and does not exist outside it as a foreign power, or as a hostile or neutral impersonal element. The neutrality so often denounced by Levinas can only be the characteristic of an undetermined existent, of an anonymous optic power, of a conceptual generality, or of a principle. Now, Being is not a principle, is not a principal existent, an archia which would permit Levinas to insert the face of a faceless tyrant under the name of Being. The thought of Being (of the existent) is radically foreign to the search for a principle, or even for a root.." "It is not even ontology, if ontology is another name for first philosophy."

"Radically foreign to ethics, it is not a counter-ethics, nor a subordination of ethics to a function in the realm of ethics that is already secretly violent: the neutral."(VM171)}

Via the ontological difference, "Being grounds beings, and beings, as what IS most of all, account for Being. One comes over the other, one arrives in the other. Overwhelming and arrival appear in each other" (Identity and Difference).

To read Being and Time starting from the 'is', not as conceptual binding but as the transit of 'overwhelming and arrival', de-thrones logos, concept and representation, relegating them to where and how we actually find them in BT, as special derived cases of existential comportment toward beings. The overwhelming gesture of BT now can reveal itself as transformation-transcendence. (Let's be clear, I'm using 'transformation' in the strong sense as non-totalizing, radical otherness.). The unfolding of the book traverses a path along a

non-totalizing hermeneutic circle as non-systematic particularizing repetition, manifesting its basis in its exposition as history itself. I agree with Osborn that Heidegger's post-Kehre work does not represent a rejection of the BT project. I disagree concerning what the BT project establishes. In my reading, the Kehre and after continues to transform and deepen what is already immersed in motion(radical alterity) on every page of BT.

Osborn argues "Transcendence, temporality, being itself, whatever Heidegger calls ontological truth at any given moment—yes, it is there already. But also, and just as important for us as human beings, it must be carried out. But this "performance" is not guaranteed beforehand by a structure. It depends on both the participation of the will and being's withdrawal from the grasp of the will. This is, in my opinion, Heidegger's "gesture" beyond the will to power through thinking the revealing/concealing, presencing/withdrawing character of being. Transformation, in the strong sense found in Heidegger's texts, cannot be accounted for by the structure of an "always-already" ontological intentionality, since this latter, like the Ge-stell of technology, speaks the language of demand for presence and can't be attuned to the silent appeal of what remains of the word "being" after metaphysics..."

The will never has a grasp of itself to begin with. It is just a way we have of talking about Being when we don't see the underlying alterity that always makes desire want otherwise than what it wants in the very instant of desiring. Desire is only a willing of what it wills if thought of as a being-for-itself, auto-affection, the contingent self-identity of the moment of a program. Only when thought in this way does the problem arise of extricating ourselves from the temporary solipsism of the event (We MUST keep reason in play).Heidegger's critique of Will to Power, as I see it, faults Nietzsche for not departing radically enough from a Levinasian thinking of intentionality as the 'grasp of the Will'.

It is striking to me that the formulations of transcendence that Osborn doesn't see as mired in metaphysics of presence emerge after, but don't include, that introduced within Being in Time. What does one make of those who have not read Heidegger, who have not grasped what he was aiming at, who battle against what they see as the dangerous 'anti-science' relativisms of postmodern thinking, who contribute to the universal objectification of being? Since the "performance" of transcendence is not guaranteed beforehand by 'the structure of an "always-already" ontological intentionality', a 'withdrawal from the grasp of the will' is necessary. For Osborn then, an objectifying stasis would rule, perhaps indefinitely. in the absence of this impetus for true movement, something of the order of a churning out of instances of a programatics.

On the face of it, this would seem to accord with Heidegger's admonitions concerning the dangers of Gestell. However, is there not, every moment, within the thinking of each individual who participates in the most apparently rigidly schematic orientations, a radical mobility WITHIN the will to conceptual schematism that is easy to miss (and in fact has been missed for most of Western history, according to Heidegger)? As Heidegger points out in Identity and Difference, "the manner in which the matter of thinking-Being-comports itself, remains a unique state of affairs. The inauthentic modes of the ready-to-hand, the present-to-hand, average everydayness, authentic Being, Ereignis all mark different factual experiences. Yet what is

common to all possible modes of Being is a certain radical mobility. Even if the effect of this mobility is subtle enough that it appears for all intents and purposes as though the reign of the dominating objectivizing scheme were absolute, it is crucial to recognize that even in such situations that seem to exemplify the a priori neutralization of otherness, a more originary but radically self-dissimulating a priori, that of Being, is in play, always right now, this instant.

Derrida would imagine Heidegger would argue that there is a crucial distinction to be made between a certain self-aware understanding of Being which involves a 'leap' or 'spring', which Heidegger concentrates on after the Kehre, and the strong transcendence implied by BT's structuration of temporality, which is already a 'performance', a 'carrying out' in simply being. "Since Being is, it cannot simply be produced, but precisely must be respected by a glance and a speech." (VM179)

But is there a notion of transformation, transcendence, differentiation, event, performance that doesn't 'take time' but avoids being a concept, intention, presence, structure? Is it impossible to think of such a notion without inadvertently lapsing into metaphysical totalization? Derrida's Heideggerian would argue that alterity only becomes a problem when it believes that there is such a thing as irreducible empirical self-presence, temporal immediacy, in the first place. Any notions of a 'split' within will, intention, presence, will then be misread as positing smaller bits of presence (Being as internally structured concept, the 'always already'). This cycle is only broken by breaking free of the idea of presence as subsistence, interiority, which has to be overcome by exposure to an absolute other. But as Derrida has argued, Being is not an interior, an enclosure, it does not subsist. And it is not the escape from enclosure, interiority, or in between enclosure and overcoming as the event of their differentiation.

The issue here centers on the understanding of temporality. Osborn points to the fundamental role of temporality, as Temporalität, in facilitating Heidegger's transition from Being as concept to Ereignis. He articulates traditional time "as a container, as a series of disjunct and isolated segments" and rethink it via the ecstasies of retention, present and futurity. It seems to me, though, that Osborn's understanding of temporality owes more to Husserlian time-consciousness than to Heidegger. Husserl conceives the 'both-together' of the pairing of past and present-presentation as a conjunction of separate, adjacent phases or aspects: the past which conditions the present entity or event, and the present object which supplements that past. I am not suggesting that these phases are considered as unrelated, only that they each are presumed to carve out their own temporary identities. For instance, Zahavi, following Husserl, views the internally differentiated structure of 'now' awareness as consisting of a retentional, primal impressional, and protentional phase.

While he denies that these phases are different and separate elements claiming them instead as an immediately given, ecstatic unity, their status as opposing identities is suggested by his depiction of the association between past and present as a fracturing, the fracture between Self and Other, between immanence and transcendence. I read Osborn's articulation of the Ontological-Ontic difference as difference between presences, whereas I understand the overcoming-arriving difference of Heideggerian temporality, as difference WITHIN presence (it has its effect WITHIN Osborn's notion of the ontological as well as within his articulation of the ontic). This does not

make it an interiority or enclosure. On the contrary, it exposes and subverts the presumed interiority of conceptuality, representation, will from within its own resources, in the same moment.

I'll conclude with Derrida:

"By making the origin of language, meaning, and difference the relation to the infinitely other, Levinas is resigned to betraying his own intentions in his philosophical discourse. But the true name of this inclination of thought to the Other, of this resigned acceptance of incoherent incoherence inspired by a truth more profound than the "logic" of philosophical discourse, transcendental horizons of language, is empiricism. The profundity of the empiricist intention must be recognized beneath the naivete of certain of its historical expressions. It is the dream of a purely heterological thought at its source. A pure thought of pure difference. Empiricism is its philosophical name, its metaphysical pretention or modesty.(VM189)"