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The Eclipse of Being

**Heidegger on the Question of Being and Nothing
and the Ground of Nihilism**

**By
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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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DECLARATION

The thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

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Finally, I should like to thank my supervisor, Peter Poellner whose care for his students, and whose generosity and patience with difficult ones like myself, places him among those few best educators capable of understanding, and of respect for thinking other than their own - thinkers for whom teaching is not merely a means, but matters because the life of every individual matters.

**To My Parents
and to the Memory of
Alessandro Lazzaroni**

Abstract

This thesis explores Heidegger's philosophy of Being and Nothing in the context of the problem of nihilism. Nietzsche diagnosed the present age as an age of nihilism in the sense of a 'devaluation of the highest values'. Heidegger argues that Nietzsche's diagnosis suffers from a fundamental failure to question the meaning of 'nihil' in 'nihilism'. This failure is, according to Heidegger, shared by the history of metaphysics which Nietzsche brings to completion, and it is closely connected with the failure of metaphysics to address the question of Being as such.

We shall examine the emergence of Heidegger's early phenomenological approach to the question of Being in his engagement and confrontation with Husserl's phenomenology, and trace its subsequent development in major writings of his. It will be argued that Heidegger's philosophy of Being permits for the first time a more adequate understanding of the problem of Nothing. Throughout the thesis, the horizon of the discussion is the question of the meaning and the ground of nihilism, which will also be addressed explicitly through an examination of Heidegger's confrontation with Nietzsche.

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Abbreviations

MARTIN HEIDEGGER

- HCT** *History of the Concept of Time*, trans. Theodore Kisiel (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992).
- BT** *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).
- WM** 'What is Metaphysics', in *Basic Writings*, ed. & trans. David Farrell Krell (London: Routledge, 1996).
- IM** *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried & Richard Polt (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2000).
- CP** *Contributions to Philosophy: From Enowning*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999).
- BQP** *Basic Questions of Philosophy*, trans. André Schuwer & Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994).
- N** *Nietzsche*, vol. IV: *Nihilism*, ed. David Farrell Krell, trans. Frank A. Capuzzi (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991).
- P** *Parmenides*, trans. André Schuwer & Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998).

EDMUND HUSSERL

- LI** *Logical Investigations*, vols. I & II, trans. J. N. Findlay (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970).
- Id I** *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology*, First Book, trans. F. Kersten (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1998).
- Id II** *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology*, Second Book, trans. R. Rojcewicz & A. Schuwer (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1998).
- PCIT** *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, trans. John Barnett Brough (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991).
- EJ** *Experience and Judgment*, trans. James S. Churchill & Karl Ameriks (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

- WP** *The Will to Power*, ed. Walter Kaufmann, trans. Walter Kaufmann & R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968).

Introduction

If by the end of the 19th century nihilism, as announced by Nietzsche, 'stood at the door', by the end of the 20th century it made itself so well at home that today it attracts no attention and is not even noticed. In fact, a concern for nihilism in an age where technology seems to hold in store freedom for all and promises ever new possibilities for the future, may seem outdated, untimely.

So, why redeem the question of nihilism? Is it the nostalgia for God and old fashioned morality, or is it the usual pessimism, the resentful attitude of the powerless that prompts such interest?

Here, of course, one understands 'nihilism' as proclaimed by Nietzsche in relation to the death of God and all 'eternal truths' - an event by the consequence of which all values devalue themselves and Being becomes meaningless. Nihilism, accordingly, originates from the weakness of man and his inability to sustain God or to create new gods, new truths and new values. Nietzsche thought he found the answer to the problem of nihilism in the advent of the *Übermensch* and the eternal recurrence.

Meanwhile, this thesis explores another view on nihilism, expressed in the thinking of Heidegger, who sees nihilism's origin not in the 'weakness of man', but in man's becoming the sole ground of truth. This view articulates the meaninglessness of Being, not in relation to the death of God, but as the consequence of a mis-conception of the meaning of Being and Nothing that began with Plato and continues to hold sway today. In Heidegger's view, Nietzsche belongs to the same metaphysical tradition he criticizes - a metaphysics shaped and sustained by the 'oblivion of Being' - consequently his ideas for 'overcoming

nihilism' constitute an even deeper entanglement in the problem. According to Heidegger, however, nihilism is not merely a transitional crisis, a problem for the 19th and 20th centuries, but a promise for the future, a promise yet to unfold.

This thesis will follow Heidegger in arguing that nihilism cannot be understood properly unless the meaning of Nothing is thematized and addressed in its own right. Nietzsche did not explicitly concern himself with the fundamental question of the meaning of 'nihil' in 'nihilism', or rather, it could be argued that he unquestioningly took over a certain interpretation of it – nothing as lack – from the metaphysical tradition. But did not Hegel, at least, in his *Science of Logic* explicitly raise and resolve the question of Nothing on the basis of thinking? Since this thesis will reject the idea of thinking as the ground of Being and Nothing, it will suggest, contrary to Hegel's view, that Nothing can never be an object for thinking and therefore cannot be determined as negation, the 'other' of 'something'. If Nothing is to be considered as not just another being, then it must be approached indirectly and questioned, not in terms of predication or 'whatness', but in its relation to the meaning of Being.

No other thinker has questioned the essence of nihilism in connection with the neglect or misapprehension of Nothing (and Being) as much and as thoroughly as Martin Heidegger. Nothing, for Heidegger, far from being just a convenient tool serving to challenge traditional understandings of Being, is of equal significance to Being, and as such determinative of truth. Indeed, it is Heidegger who, more than any other philosopher in the era of modernity, has insisted on the exigency of explicitly questioning the meaning of Nothing, and of doing so on the basis of raising anew the question of the meaning of 'Being'. The thesis, therefore, will seek to approach the meaning of 'Nothing' in relation to 'Being'

through a close analysis and interpretation of Heidegger's philosophy. We shall begin by tracing the emergence of Heidegger's question in his early immersion in, and engagement with, the phenomenology of Husserl. We shall then follow its first independent development in Heidegger's *Being and Time*. Finally, we shall seek to understand the development of the question in Heidegger's writings after 1930. All the while, the horizon for our interpretation of Heidegger will be that which prompted our concern with Nothing in the first instance: namely the problem of nihilism. We shall, therefore, also confront Heidegger's interpretation of nihilism in some detail with Nietzsche's earlier and perhaps more 'influential' enunciation of it.

The hermeneutic approach chosen by this thesis is to engage, as much as possible, with the texts themselves. This applies not only to Heidegger, but also, albeit to a somewhat lesser extent, to the other two philosophers figuring prominently here, in confrontation with whom Heidegger found and pursued his path of thinking: Edmund Husserl and Friedrich Nietzsche. The itinerary of our investigations will be as follows.

Chapter I will address the philosophical context from which Heidegger's early 'phenomenological' approach to the question of Being arises. This context is his close involvement with Husserl's phenomenology during the early 1920's. Heidegger at that time agreed with Dilthey that Husserl's philosophy was of 'central significance' and represented 'the first great scientific advance since Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*'¹, in which the 'great Western philosophical

¹ Martin Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*, trans. T. Kisiel, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. 24. Henceforth cited as HCT.

tradition' has been 'thought ... to an end'.² His most explicit discussion of the achievements and the limitations of Husserl's phenomenology is given in his Marburg lectures of 1925, published under the title *History of the Concept of Time*. We shall interpret and assess Heidegger's confrontation with Husserl in that text, and we shall see that, and how, Heidegger shows the question of Being to be implicit in the problem of the Being of *intentionality* in Husserl, while not being thematized as such by him.

In chapter II, we shall turn to *Being and Time* (1927), where this question is taken up and developed explicitly by Heidegger. We shall seek to understand his existential analytic of *Dasein*, undertaken as a first step towards the questioning of the meaning of 'Being as such'. Our concern will particularly lie with the following aspects of this text: The three modes of Being of entities – being-in-the-world, readiness-to-hand, and presence-at-hand – and the sense of not-being in each case. Here, Nothing will be presented as the ground of being-in-the-world - a ground that is an abyss into which all beings, including *Dasein*, collapse. The themes of death, finitude and anxiety are therefore central to this chapter.

Chapter III explores Heidegger's changing emphasis after *Being and Time* from an approach to Being and Nothing through the Being of entities, to a questioning of Being (and Nothing) as such. Our textual focus in this chapter will be twofold. We shall first interpret Heidegger's inaugural lecture of 1929, 'What is Metaphysics?' Here some of the implications of the analyses of *Being and Time* are made more explicit, but also presented with a somewhat changed accent, in

² Martin Heidegger, *Logik*, GA 21 (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976), p. 88 and p. 114.

which the history of thought as metaphysics comes into view. Why has metaphysics ignored Nothing? Why has Nothing, throughout the history of metaphysics, been excluded from truth? In order to follow this Heideggerian direction of questioning further, we shall turn to his *Introduction of Metaphysics* (1935), where Being is interrogated through the history of its determinations. The chapter will conclude with an introduction of the determination of Being as value, and some reflections on ethics. Both of these themes will serve as a transition to Heidegger's confrontation with Nietzsche.

This confrontation is the theme of Chapter IV, where we return explicitly to the question which constitutes the horizon of our entire discussion: the question of nihilism.

The final chapter is concerned with some aspects of Heidegger's interpretation of Being and Nothing and their essence in terms of *αληθεια* and *ληθη* in the lectures on Parmenides of 1942-43. May what is adumbrated in Heidegger's reading of Parmenides contribute to a beginning for a future thinking of the essence of Being?

A Note on Translations

We have modified the standard English translations of texts by Husserl, Heidegger, and Nietzsche, in a number of places. Such modifications have generally been indicated in footnotes.

(Das) Sein in Heidegger texts has in our translation always been capitalized as ‘Being’, except where it occurs in composite constructions such as *In-der-Welt-sein*. This has been done purely in order to avoid confusion with the occurrence of ‘being’ in ordinary participle constructions and in the translation of *das Seiende* (see below). The same goes for our translation and spelling of *(das) Nichts* as ‘Nothing’. This capitalization, again, is merely to avoid confusion in sentences such as, for example, ‘metaphysics has nothing to say about Nothing’.

(Das) Seiende and *Seiendes* has been translated as ‘beings’ or ‘entities’, although in quotations from the English translation of the volumes on Nietzsche we have sometimes retained the translator’s literal-minded (and unidiomatic) ‘the being’.

Chapter I

Heidegger on Husserl: Phenomenology and the Neglect of the Question of Being

Heidegger's 'discovery' of the question of Being is associated by many readers with his main work written during his phenomenological period, *Being and Time*. However, as Theodore Kisiel has shown in his detailed study of the genesis of *Being and Time*, the question of the Being of entities had been an overt theme of Heidegger's thinking at least since 1921, the beginning of a period of intense work on Aristotle.¹ Yet the immediate context shaping Heidegger's explicit formulation of, and method of approach to, the question of Being in *Being and Time* is incontrovertibly his critical engagement, in the period immediately preceding the composition of his early *magnum opus*, with the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl. Indeed, in the Introduction to *Being and Time*, he states categorically: 'Phenomenology is our way of access to what is to be the theme of ontology [i.e. the Being of entities], and it is our way of giving it demonstrative precision. *Only as phenomenology, is ontology possible*' (BT, p. 60). But *Being and Time* is itself only the last of a series of drafts on Heidegger's theme. Throughout this text, the phenomenological method – however modified – is quite explicit, yet the context of debate – in particular for many of Heidegger's critical remarks – is often not so apparent, as many readers have noted, sometimes in frustration. In order to bring this context to light, it is particularly illuminating to turn to what Kisiel has called the penultimate, 'ontoeroteric' draft of *Being and Time*, Heidegger's Marburg lectures of 1925, first published in 1979 under the title *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs*.² This text provides a unique insight at once into the development of his

¹ Theodore Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), p. 364, and pp. 227 f., esp. 238-48.

² Theodore Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time*, p. 362. For more detailed information on the history of this text, henceforth quoted as HCT, see the publisher's foreword in the English translation: Martin Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*, translated by Theodore Kisiel, (Bloomington and Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1992). See also T. Kisiel, 'On the Way to *Being*

understanding of phenomenological research and his substantial critique of Husserlian phenomenology. It is this very critique which led the author to distance himself from Husserl and in doing so to formulate the distinct understanding of the question of Being which informs *Being and Time*. The text is especially relevant to the present research because it delineates the problems that arise, according to Heidegger, through the neglect of the question of Being and indicates *why* the question of Being is urgent and *how* it needs to be addressed by phenomenology, properly understood. In other words, *History of the Concept of Time* enables us to understand Heidegger's departures from the tradition in *Being and Time* as the result of an *immanent critique* of the tradition itself. The question of Being is neither a half-forgotten ancient one, nor a newly 'invented' question external to the mainstream of the modern philosophical tradition, but a question that is simultaneously *pointed towards* and *neglected* by the most 'advanced' or at least most topical and influential philosophy of the time. Indeed, it is significant that, despite his criticisms of the shortcomings of phenomenology as conceived by Husserl, Heidegger is at pains to show that the results of phenomenological research themselves point to the question not raised explicitly by its founder. Accordingly, HCT is both appreciative of the impulses and achievements of the Husserlian enterprise and profoundly critical of its shortcomings and lacunae, which in Heidegger's view are of course very fundamental, originating in Husserl's inadequate understanding of the authentic horizon for the investigations of phenomenology.

It is important to emphasize what is *not* being claimed here. We are of course not suggesting that Heidegger 'found' the question of Being in Husserl – far from it. If this was the target of our search, we would perhaps do better to look at, say, Plato's *Sophist*, or at Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, or at Duns Scotus. Rather, our aim in this chapter is a different and twofold one: first, an elucidation of the specific methodological context and approach of Heidegger's posing of the question of Being in *Being and Time*; and secondly, an attempt to follow and understand Heidegger in

and Time: Introduction to the Translation of Heidegger's Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs' Research in Phenomenology XV (1985).

his immanent demonstration or *Aufweisung* of the hidden and unnoticed presence, the ‘trace’ we might say, of the issue of Being in the modern philosophical tradition itself through a particularly distinguished representative of it.

We shall approach Heidegger’s confrontation with Husserl in three stages. In Section 1, we shall clarify Heidegger’s own understanding of the method and meaning of ‘phenomenology’ during this crucial period. In Section 2, we shall seek to understand Heidegger’s interpretation of the achievements of Husserlian phenomenology. Section 3 will address both Heidegger’s critique of Husserl and his rejection of the fundamental direction given to phenomenology by Husserl.

1. Methodological Clarifications

1.1 The Meaning of ‘Phenomenon’

Husserl developed his idea of phenomenological research, the study of ‘phenomena’, first in the context of epistemological and logical concerns. This idea required the ‘presuppositionless’ study of cognitive acts or ‘experiences’ and their ‘objects’ purely as they are given in possible experiences. A phenomenon, for Husserl, is at its most formal something that is given, as it is given, in experience or consciousness. In fact, however, Husserl accords primacy to phenomena which are fully grasped or ‘constituted’ as ‘objects’ by consciousness. As we shall see later in developing Heidegger’s critique, according to the logic of Husserl’s analysis of truth, what a phenomenon is ‘in truth’ or *eigentlich* is what it appears as when fully present to a constituting, intuitively grasping (*anschaulich erfassend*) consciousness. To see why and indeed whether Husserl unambiguously holds this, we will need to unravel some of the details of his account of truth. At this stage, what is important for us is that Heidegger from the beginning avoids this Husserlian understanding of ‘phenomenon’ and gives a quite different explication of the proper phenomenological meaning of this central concept:

There are two basic meanings of ‘phenomenon’; first the manifest, that which shows itself; second that which presents itself as something manifest but which only gives itself out in this way - semblance.³

This claim by Heidegger is presented in HCT as based upon an etymological analysis of the relationship between *φαινομενον* and *φαινεσθαι*. *Φαινεσθαι*, which as the infinitive of *φαινομενον* means ‘to show itself’ is, in turn, related to the word *φαινω*: ‘to bring something to light’, ‘to make it visible in itself’ or ‘to put it in a bright light’. *Φα – φωσ*, which constitutes the stem of the word *φαινω* means ‘light’, ‘brightness’, ‘that wherein something can be manifest and visible’. ‘Phenomenon’, therefore, understood ‘correctly’ (i.e. etymologically) means ‘that which shows itself’. This implies that *an entity which shows itself ‘from itself’ and ‘in itself’* is a genuine phenomenon and *vice versa*. In fact, *Τα οντα*, i.e. entities, says Heidegger, are identified by the Greeks with the totality of that which shows itself from itself.

Τα οντα, or entities, can however show themselves in different manners or modes. There is, for instance, the possibility that an entity may *pretend* to be something that it is not. When an entity shows itself *as* something which it nevertheless is not, this way of self-showing is called *semblance*. In this case, though the meaning of ‘phenomenon’ - as that which ‘shows itself in itself’ - is modified, that which presents itself *seemingly* is still a phenomenon. This is because *φαινεσθαι* means also ‘showing itself *as*’ - ‘only looking *like*’. For, that which *looks like* can only do so and pretend so *if* it shows itself and manifests itself, even if such a self-manifestation happens in terms of ‘*seeming as*’. Accordingly, ‘phenomenon’ has two senses. In the first sense, ‘phenomenon’ denotes a mode of encounter with entities *in themselves* such that *they show themselves in themselves*, while ‘phenomenon’ in the second sense, i.e. as *semblance* is a *pretended self-showing*, a *pretense* to be manifest but not really being it.

Therefore, the meaning of ‘phenomenon’ must sharply be distinguished from what is generally called ‘appearance’. As Heidegger says:

³ HCT, p.83.

What has been said above is the genuine sense of phenomenon employed by the Greeks. This has nothing to do with our term 'appearance' or still less 'mere appearance'. Appearances are themselves occurrences which refer back to other occurrences from which we can infer something else which does not make an appearance. Appearances are appearances of something which is not given as an appearance, something which refers to another entity. Appearance has the distinguishing feature of reference.⁴

Here we find a second meaning (in addition to Husserl's 'intentional object') which Heidegger is concerned to ward off. In this case, it is the Kantian understanding of phenomenon or 'appearance'. To illustrate this use of the word '*appearance*', Heidegger refers to a German example: *Krankheitserscheinungen*, which means 'appearances of a disease', in English: symptoms. What is important here is to pay attention to the *referential* character of the 'appearance' which functions by indicating, announcing something or pointing at something. Here, unlike in the case of a phenomenon, where an entity, in one way or another (i.e. genuinely or seemingly) *presents itself*, something is *represented* indirectly, that is *mediately*. As the appearance operates through *reference* and only *refers* to something *with the aid of phenomena*, it could not itself be identified with a phenomenon. This is the basis of the distinction made between *semblance* and *appearance*. To understand this better, we shall take our cue from Heidegger:

Semblance is a modification of the manifest, of something manifest which it pretends to be but is not. Semblance is not phenomenon in its privative sense; it has the characteristics of showing itself, but that which shows itself does not show itself as what it is. While appearance is precisely the representation of something which is essentially not really manifest. Semblance thus always goes back to something manifest and includes the idea of the manifest. An appearance, a symptom, can be what it is, namely reference to something else which does not show itself, through the self-showing of that which appears⁵

Semblance, it is said above, 'includes the idea of the manifest', for it is itself a form of manifestation. But *appearance* is other than semblance because, in appearance, or in appearing, the *represented* something must necessarily make an appearance

⁴ HCT, pp. 80-81.

⁵ *ibid.*

through a self-showing entity, in order to appear in the first place. The appearance, therefore, *intrinsically* and already *presupposes* the original structure of phenomena: ‘self-showing’. This entails that the self-showing character of phenomena provides *the necessary condition* for the possibility of the appearance and constitutes *the ground* of the latter:

The possibility of appearance as reference of something to something rests on having that something which does the referring show itself in itself. The possibility of appearance is founded in the authentic phenomenon. Something can be referential only as a self-showing something.⁶

The identification of appearance with phenomena, on the other hand, has led, Heidegger asserts, to a profound confusion in philosophy whereby it is assumed that *behind* the appearances there stands something else, that of which they are appearances. Here, the appearance and the referential connections are taken ‘ontically’ and are presented ‘as a relation of Being’, as if there were two beings, one standing behind the other. Further, when that being which does not appear and remains in the background is given the distinction of ‘real and true entity’, the second entity is considered as a ‘*mere appearance*’. Inevitably, from such an interpretation arises the idea that there should be a ‘distinction in grades of Being’, in which case, appearance as a ‘degraded entity’ becomes the name for ‘an ontic connection of reference’ between ‘*phenomenon* and *noumenon*’, between ‘*appearance* and *essence*’:

If we now take this degraded entity, the appearance versus the essence in this sense of mere appearance, then this mere appearance is called semblance. Confusion is then carried to extremes. But traditional epistemology and metaphysics lives off this confusion.⁷

Heidegger refers to these four understandings of phenomena respectively as: ‘phenomenon’, ‘semblance’, ‘appearance’ and ‘mere appearance’ in order to show that *the phenomenon*, as that entity which shows-itself in itself, *is the necessary and*

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ *ibid.*

the primary condition 'for all the derivative kinds'.⁸ In fact, one cannot ask, says Heidegger, 'for something behind the phenomenon at all, since what phenomenon gives is precisely that something in itself'.⁹ This claim, made almost casually by Heidegger, is of course of the utmost importance and it marks the point at which Heidegger remains committed to something like a 'phenomenological reduction', albeit not quite in Husserl's sense.¹⁰ But like Husserl, Heidegger here rejects the Kantian and metaphysically realist notion of a 'thing in itself' of which the phenomena might merely be 'symptoms' and which itself was not a phenomenon.¹¹ One could also put this by saying that, like Husserl, Heidegger rejects the idea that phenomena might in their essence or in truth be something radically other than what they show themselves as - either manifestly or *as* being covered up. Indeed, if we are to inquire about the real, contrastive, counter-concept of phenomenon, this should be carried out not in terms of appearance (*Schein*) or in terms of what appearances might be symptoms of, but in terms of 'being-covered-up', or 'concealment'. An inquiry of this kind will be conducted, for example, in *Being and Time*, as well as in later writings of Heidegger. Crucially, 'to be covered up' is a possibility and a modification belonging to *phenomena themselves*. In fact, in *most* cases, what can be a phenomenon is first partly or wholly covered up and known only tentatively, and

⁸ Cf. Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, p.30.

⁹ HCT, p. 86.

¹⁰ There has been an extensive debate in the literature on whether the phenomenological reduction is operative in Heidegger's writings during this period. Some have maintained that there is nothing of the kind in Heidegger's work. See e.g. Richard Schacht, 'Husserlian and Heideggerian Phenomenology', *Philosophical Studies* 23 (1972), pp. 293-314. Many others have claimed to detect something like a phenomenological reduction in Heidegger. For one example, see Jacques Taminiaux, *Le Regard et l'Excédent*, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977), pp. 66-71. In view of the criticisms of Husserl's reductions to be discussed later in this chapter, it is clear that Heidegger rejects them *in their Husserlian form*. This does not rule out the possibility that some aspects of Husserl's method, including some associated with the reductions, may remain valid for Heidegger. In view of the quotation above, this seems to be precisely the case.

¹¹ In Husserl's case, this claim is often associated by interpreters with his later turn towards transcendental idealism. However, it could be argued that is implicit already in his early phenomenology, in particular in his idea that nothing can be merely thought (or 'emptily intended') by a consciousness which cannot be self-given to that consciousness (or 'intuitively fulfilled'). See LI VI, §14 b, p. 713: 'We must, however, note that the object, *as it is in itself* – in the only sense relevant and understandable in our context [...] is not wholly different from the object realized, however imperfectly, in perception'. See also H. Philippe, 'Transcendental Idealism', in: *The Cambridge Companion to Husserl*, ed. By B. Smith and D.W.Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 272-278.

this may even be so for essential rather than ‘accidental’ reasons. Heidegger mentions two modes of concealment: ‘*the undiscovered pure and simple*’ and ‘*the buried and disguised*’. A phenomenon could, in the first instance, be covered up in the sense of being *undiscovered* in which case there would be no knowledge of its existence. An *undiscovered* entity might be regarded as a *total concealment*. In the second instance, a phenomenon could be said to be *buried*. Concealment, in the sense of ‘being-buried’, is not as same as ‘total concealment’ because what is covered up at present was once-uncovered and known. We shall leave a more in-depth analysis of the meaning and modes of concealment to later stages of our discussion. For the time being, it is enough for us to have indicated the difference between Heidegger’s concept of phenomenon and both Husserl’s and Kant’s concepts, and to have thereby pointed to the basis of the famous dictum in *Being and Time* that ‘only as phenomenology is ontology possible’. The truth of phenomena cannot be something which is not itself a phenomenon:

There is no ontology *alongside* a phenomenology. Rather, *scientific ontology is nothing but phenomenology*.¹²

1.2 Logos and Phenomenology

The extent to which the meaning of *logos* is elaborated by Heidegger varies in his writings according to the subject matter and the context of discussion. *Λογος* in relation to logic and metaphysics, for instance, finds a full treatment in *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* where it stands for ‘speech’ in the sense of statements and predications - statements that determine something as something, that is, determining statements or *determinations*. This mode of determining is called *thinking*, and in this context *λογος* constitutes the subject matter of logic, or better, logic is ‘the science of *λογος*’. (*Science* being understood in a broader sense of Greek *επιστημη* or German *Wissenschaft* and *logic* as an abbreviated form of

¹² HCT, p. 72.

λογικη).¹³ We shall encounter another Greek sense of *logos* in Heidegger's later work *Introduction to Metaphysics* (see Chapter III).

In *The History of the Concept of Time*, Heidegger explains the meaning of *logos* as a component of the term *phenomenology* with reference mainly to Aristotle. The term *λογος* here is traced back to *λεγειν*, i.e. discourse. 'To discourse' in the sense of *λεγειν* is in fact a particular mode of discoursing defined in relation to *δηλουν*, 'making manifest'. *Λεγειν* is a kind of discourse where, in Heidegger's words, 'what is manifest includes *what* the discourse is about and *how* it should be talked about'. Accordingly, *discourse* is an articulating speech whereby what is addressed is shown distinctly and clearly - the wording articulates or 'lays apart' (expli-cates) the subject matter. The derivation of *λογος* from *λεγειν* and *λεγειν* from *δηλουν* finds a confirmation in Aristotle's definition of *logos as αποφαιεσθαι*: 'letting something be seen in itself and indeed - απο - from itself'.¹⁴

In speaking, for example, the voice operates on the basis of *αποφαιεσθαι* and lets something be seen. The voice in the vocal form of discoursing assumes the function of *φωνη μετα φαντασιας* whereby the intended content becomes visible and accessible to the listener. In fact, it is because of this essential element peculiar to the utterance, namely *φαντασια*, that what is said in the discourse, and as spoken, is meant and signified. Thus, says Heidegger, *logos* is in general *φωνη σημαντικη*, 'something vocal which shows something in the sense of a signifying, which yields something understandable'.¹⁵

According to Aristotle, there is however a distinction between *logos* that functions as *σημαντικος* and *logos* in the sense of *αποφαντικος*. *Logos* is called *σημαντικος* when *λεγειν* signifies something but it does not necessarily *assert* something about something, or make a *statement* which *determines* something as something. For example, an exclamation, a wish, a prayer, a request, each as *logos*

¹³ HCT, p.84.

¹⁴ It should be noted that our concern, at this stage, is to understand Heidegger's philosophical vocabulary and clarify the meanings he assigns to various terms. Therefore, what is important for us is not what Aristotle says but what Heidegger says that Aristotle and other authors say.

¹⁵ HCT, p.84.

σημαντικός signify something but this kind of signifying does not involve the apprehension of something in the sense of *θεωρειν*, ‘the theoretical apprehension’ or judgment. *Logos αποφαντικός*, on the other hand, is *λογος* in the sense of a *θεωρειν*, ‘discoursing in the sense of communicating the apprehension of a subject matter and only such a communication’.¹⁶ These *two modes of signifying* as two aspects of *logos* form the basis of the distinction between *λογος σημαντικός* and *λογος αποφαντικός*.

Logos, in its conjunctions with other terms, such as ‘theo-logy’, ‘anthropology’ etc. is of course always *logos αποφαντικός*. This applies also to the compound term ‘phenomeno-logy’ though with a subtle difference which denotes the essentially distinctive character of the latter compared to other sciences. Phenomenology, unlike the other sciences, does not study entities, but rather refers to *the way* in which all entities are *encountered*. Phenomenology, as the result of an *intrinsic* relationship between the *meaning* of *phenomenon* and *logos* (in the *apophantic* sense), stands for *λεγειν τα φαινομενα = αποφαινεσθαι τα φαινομενα* - ‘letting the manifest in itself be seen from it self.’¹⁷ Phenomenology aims to show *the way* or *the how* of the self-manifestation of phenomena. In this sense, phenomenology is a *methodological* term which expresses also the maxim of its research: ‘to the matters themselves’. These ‘matters’ are no other than self-showing phenomena which have ‘to be there through and for *λεγειν*, for conceptual exposition and interpretation’.¹⁸ Accordingly, *all objects of phenomenological research must have the character of phenomena*. In determining the character of a *phenomenological encounter*, Heidegger lists in particular three main achievements of phenomenological research as initiated and developed by Husserl. They are: 1) the concept of *intentionality*; 2) the idea of *categorial intuition*; 3) the *original sense of the apriori*; In explicating Heidegger’s interpretation of these achievements we hope to understand his own point of departure. In fact, as we shall see, this interpretation is far from a mere paraphrase of

¹⁶ HCT, p.85.

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ *ibid.*

Husserlian doctrines. It already contains quite distinctive emphases in which we can detect the germs of Heidegger's disagreements with Husserl, to which we shall turn subsequently.

2. The Achievements of Husserlian Phenomenology

2.1 *Intentionality*

Literally speaking *intentio* means 'directing itself toward' and according to Brentano the term was already known to Aristotle and the Scholastics. But it was only when Brentano himself spoke of 'the intentional inexistence of the object' that expressions *intentio*, *intentional* and *intentionality* became important terminology in modern philosophy.¹⁹ What concerned Brentano most was *the characterization of the psychic phenomena*. To this end, he considered the actual elements just as they were or were given in this field, and attempted to arrange them in such a way that this order would include the formation of basic concepts drawn from *the essence of the psychic itself*. He thus argued that the main *difference* between *physical* phenomena and *psychic* ones is that *there is something 'objective' inherent in all psychic phenomena*. This basic *structure of the psychic*, whereby something 'objective' 'inheres' in each lived experience, is viewed by Brentano as *intentional inexistence*, where the term 'intentionality' is employed to classify the totality of psychic phenomena as involving '*self-directness-toward*'. Brentano proposes three classes of psychic comportment: *representing*, *judging* and *interest* (the latter is also called love, emotion, and comprises all psychic manifestations that could not be fit into the two other classes).

This brief outline of Brentano's position may suffice to give the philosophical background to the use of the expression 'intentionality'. Heidegger, on the other hand, recalling Husserl's maxim 'back to the matters themselves', attempts to account for the basic constitution of intentionality and its structural coherence

¹⁹ Franz Brentano, *Psychology From an Empirical Standpoint*, (London: Routledge, 1970) First published 1879.

without drawing on such previously formed realistic or idealistic theories of consciousness. This, for Heidegger, requires a process of purification, first programmatically demanded by Husserl, whereby all those theoretical prejudices that cover and obscure the data as such must be held at bay.²⁰ Intentionality, viewed on the basis of an apprehension of the data and the matters themselves, refers to ‘a structure of lived experiences as such, and not a coordination relative to other realities, something added to the experiences taken as psychic states’.²¹ These lived experiences are *as such* intentional because comportment itself is, in its very structure, a directing-itself-toward. In fact, it is because the very Being of comporting is a directing-itself-toward that relations between comportments are of an intentional character. Hence, ‘we must come to see that all the relations of life are intrinsically defined by this structure’.²² The idea that intentionality is the structure found *in* comportments - a structure of lived experiences and not just a supplementary relation, is Husserl’s central insight:

By intentionality we do not mean an objective relation which occasionally and subsequently takes place between a physical thing and a psychic process, but the structure of a comportment as comporting to, directing itself toward. [] All theories about the psychic, consciousness, person, and the like must be held in abeyance.²³

We can see in these formulations both Heidegger’s commitment to some of Husserl’s insights and his subtle distancing himself from Husserl’s own interpretations of them. Husserl’s breakthrough consisted in seeing that ‘lived experience’ is directed towards the world itself, and not towards ‘inner’ images, ideas, or representations of it, as most ‘critical’ modern epistemologists since Descartes had assumed. Self-transcendence, or directedness-towards the world (what Husserl called ‘matters themselves’) is essential to what lived experiences are – they cannot intelligibly be characterized independently of it. Yet while Husserl ascribed

²⁰ LI, ‘Introduction’, § 7. See also our discussion of the phenomenological reductions in Section 3.2 below.

²¹ HCT, p.29.

²² HCT, p.36.

²³ HCT, pp. 36-7.

this directedness-towards to ‘intentional experiences’ or ‘acts’ as modifications of ‘consciousness’, Heidegger clearly already sees in this an unwarranted theoretical interpretation . Quite consistently, therefore, he replaces these Husserlian terms by a less theoretically loaded terminology of ‘comportments’ (*Verhalten*). Directedness-towards the world, self-transcendence, is the essential character - not of ‘acts of consciousness’, but - of ‘comportments’.

But the basic structure of intentionality is not exhaustively described by reference to ‘intentional experiences’ (or comportments) and the entities they are directed towards. Every comportment essentially intends what it is directed towards under a certain aspect or in a certain respect. No comportment can, so to speak, direct itself to an entity *simpliciter* – the entity is, rather essentially encountered *as* something or other. Husserl refers to this third component of the intentional structure as the *Sinn* – the ‘sense’ in which something is encountered. Heidegger often glosses this as the ‘entity in the How of its being intended’:

Only with the how of the being-intended belonging to every *intentio* as such does the basic constitution of intentionality come into view at all, even though only provisionally. [] Intentionality is fully determined only when it is seen as this belonging together of *intentio* and *intentum*.²⁴

Intentio, we said earlier, means ‘directing-itself-toward’. The *intentum*, on the other hand, refers to the intended entity in the How of its being intended. These moments are not juxtaposed or extrinsically related but *connected internally* on the basis of a relationship *inherent* in the structure of intentionality. That is to say that, there is an internal relation between (*intentio*) *directing-itself-toward*, and the entity intended *as* it is intended (*intentum*):

We thus have an inherent affinity between the way something is intended, the *intentio*, and the *intentum*, whereby *intentum*, the intended, is to be understood [not in the sense of] the perceived entity as an entity, but the entity in the how of its being-perceived, the *intentum* in the how of its being-intended.²⁵

²⁴ HCT, p.45.

²⁵ *ibid.*

According to this, not only are all entities essentially phenomena (as we saw in the preceding Section), but they essentially manifest themselves in comportments *as* something or other. Neither of the three components of this triad – comportment, entity (phenomenon), and sense, can coherently be abstracted from the others. This implies, for instance, that a ‘third realm’ of self-subsistent, ‘Platonic’, senses would be meaningless for Husserlian phenomenology.

In phenomenology, Heidegger remarks, *intentio* has also been understood as ‘*the act of presuming*’ or noesis. In fact, throughout HCT, Heidegger presents Husserl’s ideas, even when paraphrasing the early *Logical Investigation*, by using Husserl’s later terminology. While Husserl had distinguished, in *Logical Investigations*, between an intentional act having a certain ‘quality’ (e.g. perceiving, imagining, wishing), the object of that act, and the intentional ‘matter’ of the act (the way in which the object is given/intended in the act), he later came to use ‘noesis’ for the act and ‘noema’ for what he earlier called ‘matter’.

Heidegger gives an extended analysis and interpretation of Husserl’s account of a particular type of intentional comportment: *perception*. This has its motivation in the pivotal role played by perception in Husserl’s theory of intentionality. In being perceived, the intended entity presents itself in its *bodily-being*. In *perceivedness*, accordingly, the entity is not only given as itself but, *as itself in its bodily presence (leibhaftige Gegenwart)*²⁶:

When we start from simple perception, let us reaffirm that the authentic moment in the perceivedness of the perceived is that *in perception the perceived entity is bodily there.*²⁷

To grasp the full significance of this, we may first consider the following *difference in mode of givenness: being bodily-given and being self-given*. As an example of a case of a (merely) *self-given* entity Heidegger cites the following: ‘I can now

²⁶ The expression *leibhaftige Gegenwart* could also be translated as ‘presence in person’ or ‘living presence’.

²⁷ HCT, p.43.

envisage the *Weidenhauser* bridge; I place myself before it, as it were. Thus the bridge is itself given. I intend the bridge itself and not an image of it, no fantasy, but it itself. And yet it is not bodily given to me'.²⁸ The bridge could only be bodily-given if I did actually go to the bridge and stand before it, seeing or touching it. Thus, the self-givenness of an entity is necessarily *included* in the mode of its being bodily-given, but not *vice versa* because, when I go to the bridge, for example, the bridge is present to me or is given to me, both bodily (in person) and itself. Accordingly, '*bodily presence is a superlative mode of the self-givenness of an entity*'.²⁹

Heidegger, here again following Husserl, distinguishes self-givenness (either in imagination or in perception) from several other modes of *representing* such as *empty intending and the perception of a picture*. Empty intending denotes a mode of representation where something is intended through thinking by way of symbols or signs without having been 'seen' either itself (as self-given) or by means of a resemblance of it. For example, in a conversation about a particular object, let us assume we are speaking about a bridge, though what is intended is the bridge itself, it is not for this reason also given in its actual physical appearance. The bridge is, rather, intended in an 'empty' (but perhaps no less definite) way. Hence, the expression 'empty intending'. Husserl also calls this kind of thinking 'inauthentic thinking'. In fact, in most of our conversations, despite the fact that in speaking of something we really mean the object itself (not images or representations of it), the object is not given intuitively. In empty (or symbolic, or signitive) intending, therefore, the intended object is itself directly intended – i.e. it is not the case that we are referring to it mediately through intervening mental images or the like - but because it is devoid of any intuitive fulfillment the intention is merely 'empty'. When an entity is given to us by way of a *picture*, by contrast, we perceive

²⁸ *ibid.* Heidegger's presentation of Husserl's views here departs from Husserl's early position in *Logical Investigations*, according to which imaginatively given entities are given by way of images or pictures of them, i.e. not self-given. (Cf. LI VI, § 37, p. 761). Heidegger takes account of Husserl's revision of this view in *Ideas I*, where imagination is said to give the object *itself* (not an image or picture of it), by way of a peculiar modification of its perceptual, bodily, givenness. See *Id I*, p. 93 and pp. 244-245.

²⁹ HCT, p.41.

something which presents itself to us, or is taken by us, as *resembling* what it pictures. Here, we intend an entity A which is not self-given through another entity B which is present in person (bodily-present) and is apprehended with the sense 'resembling A'. When an entity is either self-given (in imagination or perception) or intended by resemblance, our intention of it is not 'empty' but (partly or wholly) 'intuitively fulfilled'.

As we shall see below, all the modes of intending in which the intended entity is not *leibhaftig gegenwärtig* are defined by Husserl in essential relation to those modes in which they *are* bodily-present. Husserl's account of what entities (phenomena) are is an account of what they present themselves as when (fully) bodily-present. But in order to understand this adequately, we first need to grasp the significance of the fact that bodily presence is mostly only partial.

Husserl more than any other philosopher before him was struck by the fact that when we perceive, for example, a thing in space, we do not perceive merely a side of it, but perceive the thing in its *being-all-together, in its totality*. This should really be very surprising because

[W]hen I see a sensibly perceptible object, this familiar chair here, I always see - understood as a particular way of seeing - only one particular side and one aspect. I see, for example, the upper part of the seat but not the lower surface. And yet, when I see the chair in this way or see only the legs, I do not think that the chair has its legs sawed off.³⁰

This is to say that, though in walking around the chair we are always bound to have new aspects of the object, we are nevertheless intent upon seeing the chair itself and not just an aspect of it. In Husserl's language: every side that is actually thematically seen has a non-thematic *horizon* of the co-intended parts of the chair, and it is only through this horizontal consciousness that perception can intend the *whole* chair. Hence,

[the chair's aspects] can change continually with the multiplicity of aspects being offered to me. But the bodily selfsameness of the perceived persists throughout my circling of the

³⁰ HCT, p.43.

thing. [] I have no other perception in the sense of something else perceived. The content of perception is different, but the perceived is presumed as the same.³¹

How is this possible? Husserl's explanation is that each perception contains perspectival foreshortenings or adumbrations of some of the sides not 'fully' present, and these figure as the bearers of signitive intentions, pointing towards what is, in a certain sense, absent. Without these 'signs' we would not be able to perceive the thing in its totality, but would instead always take ourselves to be perceiving, not a thing, but a thing-surface. Most perceptions are such complexions of aspects which are 'authentically' perceived and components which are only perceived adumbrationally and which act as bearers of further signitive intentions referring to absent parts or aspects of the thing. Even intuitively fulfilled intentional experiences, therefore, are often only partially fulfilled – they are presences suffused with absences. Before moving on to some of the implications of this with respect to Husserl's understanding of truth and of Being, it may be useful to linger over some of the points made by Heidegger in connection with Husserl's account of perception because here, again, we can detect certain subtle but important departures from the Husserlian position which point forward to Heidegger's own later analyses.

Corresponding to the triadic structure of all intentional comportment outlined earlier, Heidegger discusses: (a) the perceived of perceiving: *the entity in itself* (e.g. environmental thing, natural thing, thinghood); (b) *The how of being-intended* (the perceivedness of the entity, the feature of bodily-there); (c) the basic mode of *intentionality as the belonging-together of intentio and intentum*. Having already addressed (b) and (c) sufficiently for our present purposes above, we shall focus on (a) in particular.

(a) With regard to 'the entity in itself', perception, in the sense of *natural* or *everyday* perception, is explained by Heidegger through the example of a concrete chair 'that I find upon entering a room and push aside, since it stands in my way'. This occurrence is a '*natural perception*' and as such, is not a *detached observation*

³¹ HCT, p.43.

but rather an *absorption* wherein I live. I move about in my world and deal with ‘the matters at hand’ in a practical way. In this, the *natural mode of perceiving*, says Heidegger, ‘I do not perceive in order to perceive but in order to orient my self, to pave the way in dealing with something’.³² The chair as an example of something that is perceived in this natural mode is, in the terminology of this text, *a thing of the environing world, an environmental thing*.

On the other hand, *the thing* is also called ‘*natural*’ when what is said about the perceived something, the chair for instance, could also be said of any piece of wood. For this kind of assertion about the chair is not made about it qua chair-thing but qua a thing of ‘nature’ - *a natural thing*. Here, the fact that the perceived is a *chair* becomes of secondary importance. This distinction points at the same time to a *connection* between an *environmental thing* and a *natural thing*:

The distinction between plant and flower, both of which can be said of the rose, is the distinction between natural and environmental thing. The rose as a flower is an environmental thing, the rose as a plant is a natural thing.³³

The natural thing is the thing outside its practical environmental context of use. The *perceived* is, therefore, *both an environmental and a natural thing*. However, it must be noticed that the specific structures belonging to *a natural thing* present themselves, *first of all*, in well-defined *environmental* characteristics. For in my everyday dealing with things, when I say, for instance, that the chair is *hard* or the rose is *scented*, I simply mean to say that the chair is *uncomfortable* and the rose smells pleasant. These everyday sayings about something, are not, however, irrelevant to the perceived itself, the features are, rather, *constitutive* of the ‘thing itself’. ‘Hardness, material resistance, is itself present in the feature of discomfort and even only present in this way, and not just inferred from it or derived through it’,

³² HCT, p.29.

³³ HCT, p.38.

because ‘the perceived gives itself in itself and not by virtue of points of view, say, which are brought to the things.’³⁴

Two points especially are significant about these remarks. Firstly, what the tradition calls value or use characteristics are constitutive of the entities themselves and are not, as the mainstream of modern philosophy since Hume has maintained, imposed or projected by the subject on a value-indifferent worldly substratum. Husserl had already argued that ‘these value characteristics and practical characteristics belong constitutively to the *vorhanden* objects as such, whether I am turned towards them or the objects at all or not’.³⁵ But for Husserl, the grasping of those properties which according to the tradition constitute a material object qua material object continue to have a certain priority, in that any comportment towards the practical characteristics of ‘natural things’ presupposes a thematic grasp of their properties qua material (‘natural’) things.³⁶ Heidegger in this passage, secondly, suggests a reversal of this order of foundation: any encounter of ‘natural properties’ such as hardness presupposes the givenness of practical characteristics. Moreover, Heidegger raises the question, which will receive extended development in *Being and Time*, how the mode of access to the latter is to be understood.

Heidegger in this passage implicitly criticizes Husserl’s idea that we can understand the Being of ‘natural’ entities essentially as objects furnished with various strata or layers of properties, with the material stratum at the base and the ‘practical’ and ‘value’ strata built, as it were, on top of them. Here as elsewhere in *History of the Concept of Time*, Heidegger’s objection aims at the uncritical approach of Husserl and the other early phenomenologists to certain traditional concepts. Hence, he thinks that there is a host of metaphysically dogmatic assertions

³⁴ HCT, p.38-39.

³⁵ Id I, § 27, p. 53.

³⁶ Id I, § 37, pp. 76-77.

built into the structure of Husserlian intentionality - assertions which phenomenology must call into question if it is genuinely to emancipate itself from the theoretical constructions handed down by the philosophical tradition. While, for example, intentionality is viewed as the structure of psychic phenomena, the meaning of the 'psychic', just like that of consciousness, act, or person, is merely assumed on the basis of traditional conceptions. Likewise, when Husserl conceives intentionality as 'the universal structure of reason' what is meant by reason, spirit, *anima* 'does not overcome the approach operative in these [traditional] theories'.³⁷ Intentionality, therefore, should not be regarded as

an ultimate explanation of the psychic but an initial approach toward overcoming the uncritical application of traditionally defined realities such as the psychic, consciousness, continuity of lived experience, reason. But if such a task is implicit in this basic concept of phenomenology, then 'intentionality' is not the very last word to be used as a phenomenological slogan. Quite the contrary, it identifies that whose disclosure would allow phenomenology to find itself in its possibilities. '³⁸

We shall see that another of the uncritical assumptions Heidegger will challenge is the very idea that the 'bodily' manifestation (*leibhaftig*) of a 'phenomenon' can always be regarded as its perceptual, and thus object-like, manifestation.

2.2 Categorical Intuition

The second great 'discovery' of Husserlian phenomenology in Heidegger's interpretation is the idea of categorical intuition or an intuition of 'categories'. Heidegger's presentation of this in *History of the Concept of Time* is highly condensed, although he emphasizes its fundamental importance, above all in widening the sense of what can constitute a possible objectivity, and thus in widening the sense of 'Being' vis-à-vis what had become the orthodox view concerning this in German philosophy in the late 19th century, under the influence of

³⁷ HCT, p.46.

³⁸ HCT, p.47.

empiricism and neo-Kantianism. According to this view, 'Being' is equated with 'objective reality', and the latter is exhausted by what can become a possible object of sense perception (or of 'sensible intuition', in Kantian language). All components of logical form in our thought about the world are contributed by the 'subject', more precisely by various 'faculties' of the 'mind'. They are therefore 'subjective'. All logical form and conceptualization – including all 'general ideas' like colour, solidity, animality, etc – are a product of activities of the mind (Kant's 'spontaneity of the understanding') on the unstructured 'matter' of sensation. We gain our concepts of these logical form and universals by observing through 'inner sense' the mind's structuring operations; in Husserl's terminology, by reflecting on certain noeses.

Heidegger's exposition of the phenomenological overcoming of this modern orthodoxy largely follows Husserl's discussion of categorial intuition in chapter 6 of the sixth *Logical Investigation*, yet, as before, his interpretation departs in subtle but significant ways from Husserl's position and therefore points the way beyond Husserl. Let us first recall what Husserl himself called his 'principle of principles': all meanings or senses ultimately rest on 'intuition', that is, on the perceptual or quasi-perceptual self-givenness of the entities or 'objectivities' (*Gegenständlichkeiten*) intended through them. I cannot understand what is meant by the verbal sign ('empty intending') 'gold' unless I have had some intuition of gold (either in sense perception or imagination) in which a sample of that metal has been self-given to me. 'Intuition' here means simply: apprehending something self-given as it shows itself.³⁹

Without intuition all sense would remain 'empty' and thus ultimately non-sense. But if this is so, the question poses itself: how can one intuit (perceive or imagine) not just , for example, *this* gold ring, but gold *in general*? And how can one intuit that 'gold is a yellow-ish metal' (Husserl's example)? 'Being' in the sense of the copula (the 'is of predication') means the congruence of subject and predicate,

³⁹ Cf. HCT, p. 47.

the ‘belonging’ of the latter to the former: ‘S is P’ means ‘P belongs to S’. But this ‘belonging’ cannot be perceived through sense perception nor through any kind of reflection upon alleged structuring operations of the mind. I can perceive in sense perception this gold ring, but not that gold is a yellowish metal:

I can see the colour, but not the *being*-coloured [...] Being is nothing *in* the object, not a part of it, not a moment inherent in it [...] just as it is no real inner characteristic, so it is no real external characteristic, and therefore it is *in the sense of reality* not a ‘characteristic’ at all.⁴⁰

And what is true for the copula ‘is’ applies just as well to the other ‘categorical forms’ (or form words) in which states of affairs are expressed: *this* S is P; S is *not* P, *some* S’s are P, *all* S’s are P, S is P *and* S is Q; S is P *or* S is Q; etc. Husserl now maintains that these complex expressions refer to complex objects which can come to self-givenness in acts of intuition which are themselves complex in the sense of being founded upon simple acts of intuition. And these founded acts of intuition are what he calls categorial intuitions. The most important kinds of categorial intuition, and those discussed by Heidegger, are two: acts of synthesis, in which states of affairs (*Sachverhalte*) come to self-givenness; and acts of ideation, in which general objects come to self-givenness. An example of an act of ideation would be my gaining the universal concept ‘gold-(coloured)’ by looking at a particular golden object and attending to its colour moment, not as *this* particular colour moment at this place at this moment, but as something that can be shared by many things. For Husserl, such acts of ideation are what furnish us with a grasp of universals and they are a necessary condition of logical thought as such, because without them we could not understand what any general *predicates* at all.⁴¹ Acts of synthesis in which states of affairs are self-given are more complex and difficult to analyse. Their elucidation requires distinction between *straightforward* or simple (*schlicht*) and *founded* intuitions. A straightforward intuition is defined as one whose object constitutes

⁴⁰ LI VI, § 43, p. 780 (translation modified).

⁴¹ LI VI, § 52. The doctrine of eidetic intuition or ideation and its objects is first introduced and defended at greater length against empiricist and nominalist objections in LI II, especially §§ 2-4.

itself (that is to say, shows itself) *at one stroke*, without any acts of *relating* or connecting objects that, in turn, would have to be given in yet further, more basic, acts of intuition. The paradigm of straightforward intuition is the sensory perception of an object, for example a gold ring. The ring is given at one stroke, as a whole, while its parts and moments are given only *implicitly* and are not intended explicitly in separate acts.⁴² But when I think, with intuitive fullness, that ‘this ring is gold-coloured’, I focus my attention on one moment of the ring, its colour and perform an act of ideation concerning it. This separate intuition of the eidetic colour moment is then fused with the total perception of the ring, which has continued all the while, and fused with it in an act of (partial) identification. It is only when I do not merely *perform* or experience this identification, but rather *attend* to this identification and *thematize* the (partial) identity that is given in it, that the new objectivity ‘this ring is gold-coloured’ – a state of affairs – comes to intuitive self-givenness. So the intuition of a state of affairs ‘S is P’ is an act of synthesis, which is a founded act in the sense of presupposing, and being directed onto, the objects given in various other, more basic acts, including at the most basic level, acts of straightforward, sensory intuition.

What, from Heidegger’s point of view, is the significance of Husserl’s doctrine of categorical intuition? Here we need to distinguish between the achievements of Husserl’s own analysis and Heidegger’s implicit development of these analyses contained in his own interpretation of Husserl’s theory. First and most importantly, the theory breaks with the idea, common to the empiricists, to Kant, and the neo-Kantianism dominant at the time (and still powerful today), that all ‘genuine’ objectivities are particular objects (‘in’ space and time and connected by causal laws according to the empiricists, but not even this according Kant), and that all the categorial forms through which we are enabled to think these objects have their origin in the ‘subject’ and thus are not ‘genuinely objective’. Husserl’s theory does away with

⁴² LI VI, § 47, pp. 791-792.

the old mythology of an intellect which glues and rigs together the world's matter with its own forms [...] The categorial 'forms' are not constructs of acts but objects which manifest themselves in these acts. They are not something made by the subject and even less something added to the real objects [...] Rather, they actually present the entity more truly in its 'being-in-itself'.⁴³

Ultimately, what is perhaps most significant about the theory is not what was important about it for Husserl: namely that only on its basis was there any hope of actually demonstrating the categories by phenomenological methods and thus of eventually securing a rigorous and scientifically sound sense of apriority capable of constituting a solid foundation for all scientific research. To be sure, Heidegger acknowledges these aims and gives Husserl credit for having made great and fundamental advances towards them.⁴⁴ But more important, given his own philosophical concerns, was the broadening of the sphere of objective and worldly Being accomplished by Husserl and the decisive overcoming and vanquishing of the empiricist and neo-Kantian orthodoxies. This might pave the way for an even more radical re-thinking of the Being of the world.

We should not leave this important subject without giving due attention to Heidegger's subtle re-phrasings of and departures from Husserl's doctrine of categorial intuition. These are not immediately obvious and require a close and careful reading of both Heidegger and Husserl on this topic. Two of Heidegger's modifications are of special significance. They are, in fact, closely related. First, Heidegger denies, contrary to Husserl's doctrine in *Logical Investigations*, that there is a clear-cut distinction between straightforward and categorial intuition:

Even simple [straightforward] perception, which is usually called sense perception, is already intrinsically pervaded by categorial intuition.⁴⁵

Why is this so? One might argue that this claim is a consequence of Husserl's assertion – not acknowledged by Husserl himself – that all (!) the parts and moments

⁴³ HCT, p. 70.

⁴⁴ HCT, pp. 71-72.

⁴⁵ HCT, p. 60.

of a real object are given ‘implicitly’ in straightforward sense perception.⁴⁶ If explicit articulation is merely ex-plication of what is already ‘implicitly’ perceived, then it is difficult *not* to draw Heidegger’s conclusion that there is, strictly speaking, no ‘simple’, straightforward perception at all. Heidegger’s second point in this connection is that what is implicit – what we see in ‘straightforward’ perception - is saturated by pre-existing signitive or expressive patterns:

It is also a matter of fact that our simplest perceptions and constitutive states are already *expressed*, even more, are *interpreted* in a certain way. What is primary and original here?[...] To put it more precisely: we do not say what we see, but rather the reverse, we see what *one says* about the matter.⁴⁷

These genetic considerations are alien to Husserl’s approach in *Logical Investigations*.⁴⁸ It is perhaps not entirely clear how far-reaching Heidegger’s apparent criticism in this passage is: if he is remarking upon a ‘matter of fact’ this would signify a refusal to separate purely ‘a priori’ investigations from factual or ‘genetic’ ones, and thus a break with Husserl’s methodological constraints. If Heidegger’s point is about an essential meshing or interweaving of perception and signitive expression, this would call into question Husserl’s very ‘principle of principles: the priority of intuition over empty signitive intending.

We are not in a position to resolve this issue here, since Heidegger’s formulation permits both readings. For the moment, we may conclude this Section by noting how Heidegger’s interpretation of the ‘implicit’ presence of being in the sense of the copula (the ‘is’ of predication) in ‘straightforward’ perception foreshadows or parallels the way in which Being, according to *Being and Time*, is prethematically understood in pre-ontological, everyday comportment.

⁴⁶ LI VI, § 47, pp. 791-792.

⁴⁷ HCT, p. 75.

⁴⁸ See especially the exclusion of all genetic considerations in the Introduction of LI. Husserl does, however, make similar points about the influence of public, linguistic interpretedness on perception in his later ‘genetic’ phenomenology. See especially *Experience and Judgment*, § 12, pp. 57-58.

2.3 The 'Original Sense of the Apriori'

Husserlian 'phenomenology deals with intentionality in its apriori' and 'the structures of intentionality in its apriori are the phenomena'.⁴⁹ The discovery of 'original sense of the apriori' is the third seminal achievement with which Heidegger credits Husserl. An elucidation of Heidegger's interpretation of this sense may, it is to be hoped, provide us with an initial clue for approaching the issue concerning *time* and *Being* in the next chapter. It is significant that Heidegger in this connection makes the brief but pregnant remark that the clarification of the sense of the apriori 'really presupposes the understanding of what we are seeking: *time*'.⁵⁰

As Heidegger emphasizes, the term 'apriori' conveys almost naïvely the idea of a time sequence, the idea of a before and an after. Apriori, considered formally, stands for 'what from before, from earlier on already is'.⁵¹ This formal definition is of course empty for it says nothing with respect to that which is and that which comes 'first' or 'before' this something. In the tradition, however, the term 'apriori' since Descartes and Kant has been understood always in connection with *knowledge*, with *knowing* and *cognitive* comportment. What is apriori is a form of knowledge that is 'independent' of the experience of the empirically 'real'. That is, a kind of knowledge which is not gained on the basis of an empirical inductive experience but 'apriori', i.e. founded on the subject's non-empirical modes of knowing its object. *Apriori knowledge* traditionally refers, therefore, to a *subjective* knowing which, as being immanent within and derived from the sphere of the self-enclosed subject, is also characterized as an *inner* knowing, an inner vision, that both transcends and precedes the sphere of the empirically given object:

Underlying this classification of the sense of the apriori and aposteriori of knowledge is the thesis of the priority of the knowledge of subjectivity, a thesis which Descartes based on the *cogito sum, res cogitans*.⁵²

⁴⁹ HCT, p.86.

⁵⁰ HCT, p.72.

⁵¹ HCT, p.73. This remark is strong evidence for interpreting the recurrent formulation 'always already' in *Being and Time* as expressing Heidegger's structural equivalent to the apriori in Husserl.

⁵² *ibid.*

The interpretation of the sense of apriori in relation to subjective knowing was further developed by Kant to the extent that subjectivity and the apriori could no longer be thought as disjoined. Since then, the relevance of the term ‘apriori’ and its sense became restricted to *epistemological* inquiries and related questions. Kant’s central question, for instance, was whether and how ‘synthetic apriori judgments’, can have objective validity. In fact, the question of the apriori and its sense has been shaped throughout in the light of the modern preoccupation with the question of knowledge and the validation of the latter’s ground:

Even today, the apriori is still identified as the feature belonging specifically to the subjective sphere. [...] In conjunction with this Kantian concept of the apriori, the attempt is now also being made to interpret the apriori in Plato in the same way. For Plato speaks of how the true Being of entities is known when the soul speaks to itself in the *λογος ψυχης προςαντης*. The identification of *ψυχη* in the Greek sense with consciousness and the subject now supports the view that already in Plato, the discoverer of the apriori, apriori knowledge means immanent knowledge. This interpretation of Plato is absurd.⁵³

Heidegger, rather, maintains that for Plato and for Parmenides *the sense of the apriori is connected and actually identical with the concept of Being*. This understanding of the *apriori* is also the one that should be followed in phenomenology. Hence, despite all talk about the subject and consciousness, the sense of the *apriori* in phenomenology is not bound up with subjective knowledge and subjectivity. The *apriori* therefore, is neither something transcendent in the sense of an *object*, nor is it immanent. Heidegger sums up the phenomenological sense of the apriori in three points:

- 1) The scope of the apriori is universal, that is, it is ‘indifferent to subjectivity’ in the sense of not being essentially restricted to, found in, or derived from, the subjective sphere (it is, in other words, not discovered by reflection on ‘operations of the mind’).
- 2) The apriori is not merely thought but given in originary intuition. (Heidegger, slightly misleadingly perhaps, says that it is given in ‘straightforward’

⁵³ *ibid.*

intuition, although it is surely intuited in a *categorical* intuition – but we have seen that Heidegger has already questioned the strict tenability of this distinction). Heidegger regards the intuitive character of the apriori as a consequence of its universal scope and its being grounded in its respective domains of subject matter. But ultimately, its intuitive, rather than merely ‘thought’ or inferred, character follows from Husserl’s ‘principle of principles’: if the expression ‘apriori’ is meaningful at all, what it signifies must be intuitable, it must be capable of being demonstrated or shown in what manifests itself directly in the phenomena themselves.⁵⁴

- 3) The apriori is a feature of the structural sequence in the *Being* of entities, in the ontological structure of Being. Heidegger stresses the point by emphasizing once more that ‘the “earlier” is not a feature in the ordered sequence of *knowing*, but it is also not a feature in the sequential order of *entities*, more precisely in the sequential order of the emergence of an entity from an entity’.⁵⁵ For the apriori does not refer to comportment but to *Being*: ‘it is not a title for comportment but a title for *Being*’.⁵⁶ This is a crucial point which again marks a departure from anything actually said explicitly by Husserl.

The consequence of these observations is that, according to them, phenomenology is concerned with what is ‘prior’ in the sense of ‘before’, that it therefore involves an essential reference to *time*; and that it concerns neither entities nor knowing, but the *Being* of entities. It should be noted that both the reference to the Being of entities, and the essential connection with time, *cannot* be found in Husserl and mark Heidegger’s re-interpretation of Husserl in an effort to show the implicit trajectory of phenomenology conceived as ongoing research to point inexorably to the question of Being and to time as the horizon within which this question must be posed.

⁵⁴ Cf Husserl’s explicit statement that ‘the [apriori] laws of the categories [...] which abstract from all the matter of sensibility [...] all of this is not merely *meant*, but *seen*, it is given in the fullest adequacy’ (LI VI, § 9, p 831; translation modified).

⁵⁵ HCT, p.74.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*

2.4 Husserl on Truth and Being

We have already encountered Husserl's distinction between different modes of intending the same *intentionum* (that is, the same entity as it is intended, or: the same entity given in the same sense). For example, I can intend 'the frontal façade of the National Gallery' merely symbolically, through linguistic signs, or by way of a picture resembling it, or it can be self-given in an imaginative act, which in turn is a peculiar modification of actually perceiving the façade. All of these modes of intending count, to a greater or lesser extent, as intuitively fulfilling the 'empty intention' of merely signitive or symbolic meaning. But all of them can be seen as having their ultimate aim in actual perception or *originary intuition*, in which the object is bodily present or 'present in person' (*leibhaftig gegenwärtig*). The life of consciousness, for Husserl, of itself tends towards or aims at the bodily presence of the phenomena it intends, and we cannot understand either signs (language), or phantasy/imagination, or mimetic picturing, without being aware of the essential dependence of these modes of intending something on the object's bodily self-giveness in originary intuition (i.e. perception). Perception is distinguished as what fulfills empty intendings in the emphatic sense. Only perception can fulfill empty intentions 'adequately', that is, completely (although this is not possible in principle with regard to some kinds of intentions, for example those which are directed at material objects).

What is of central importance for Heidegger about this hierarchy of modes of intending is that it constitutes the basis of Husserl's understanding of truth and of Being. At the heart of this understanding is the idea of a *synthesis of identification* which can take place when what has been emptily intended is subsequently given in an intuitively fulfilled manner in originary intuition. When I think that the National Gallery is fronted by a row of columns, and I subsequently perceive the front of the National Gallery as actually being fronted a row of columns, I experience a congruence or an identity (often partial) of what I had emptily intended (in

symbolic, signitive thought) and what I subsequently perceive. This *experience of identity* between what is thought in the absence of the object and what is then bodily self-given in ordinary intuition, where the object is characterized as present ‘in person’, lies at the basis of the concepts of knowledge and truth and, ultimately, of Being for Husserl. We might say that the *difference between presence and absence* is what is presupposed by the possibility of truth. Only because something can be meant while being absent, and the same thing can also be, at least partially, present *just as it was meant* when absent, does the talk of truth have any sense.

When the noetic quality of an empty intention is one of belief, in other words, when the intention is a *positing* act, we speak of the perception which fulfills it as *confirming* it.⁵⁷ But such confirmation has many possible grades and levels. It is possible to think of an ordinary intuition (perception) in which the intended object is *completely* bodily-given, in which no partial intention in what was originally meant remains unfulfilled. There are no components in what is perceived – that is, in the noematic correlate of the act of perception – which point towards yet further fulfillments; in other words there are no adumbrational signitive components in what is perceived. Husserl calls the act in which we experience the complete congruence of what was meant as it was meant with what is thus completely or adequately given ‘in person’ *self-evidence (Evidenz)*. That is to say, self-evidence is an *act* in which we live through the experience of the complete *adequacy* of what is perceived to what was meant. Such experiences of congruence, or acts of identification, are, for Husserl, primitive phenomenological facts not capable of further explication:

Self-evidence is itself [...] the act of synthesis of the most complete congruence. Like every identification it is an objectifying act; its objective correlate is called *being in the sense of truth* or simply *truth*.⁵⁸

He goes on, however, to distinguish more precisely between Being and truth: ‘the concepts of *truth* [...] should relate to the side of the acts themselves [...] [while]

⁵⁷ LI VI, § 38, p. 765.

⁵⁸ *ibid.* (translation modified).

the concepts of *being* (being-in-truth) should relate to their *objective correlates*'.⁵⁹

Husserl proposes two concepts of Being and, correlatively, two concepts of truth (although he initially discusses all four as senses of 'truth'): (1) the first concept of Being, which is the one Heidegger will focus on is defined as follows:

the truth [i.e. *being-in-truth*] is, as the correlate of an act of identification, a *state of affairs*, and as correlate of an identification of congruence an *identity: the complete co-inciding between what has been meant and what is given as such*. This co-inciding is *experienced* in [the act of] self-evidence, in so far as the self-evidence is the actual performance of the adequate identification.⁶⁰

A second sense of being-in truth is obtained, (2) when we focus on the objective correlate, the *object that is bodily-given just as it was meant*. As Heidegger paraphrases Husserl's point:

The true can also be understood in terms of the very object which is [e.g. a state of affairs][...] Here, the true amounts to that which *makes* knowledge *true*. Truth here comes down to *being-real*.⁶¹

It is important to realize that this sense of truth/Being is, when taken on its own, an abstraction. It is essentially derivative of the first sense in which the truth is given (experienced):

The concept of truth as *adaequatio* can be taken in a double sense, as it always has been in history: on the one hand as the *correlate* of identification [...] and on the other as [...] this very act of bringing into co-incidence. [...] Both conceptions try to direct the concept of truth to one side and so are incomplete. Neither the one directed toward the state of affairs nor the one oriented toward the act captures the original sense of truth.⁶²

It is clear from this that for Heidegger, although not – at least not explicitly - for Husserl, what Husserl is trying to articulate in his first formulation is the 'original sense of truth', and all others are derived and abstracted from it. This is obviously the case with the two concepts of truth which focus on the side of the act (or of

⁵⁹ LI VI, p. 768 (translation modified).

⁶⁰ LI VI, § 39, p. 765 (translation modified).

⁶¹ HCT, p. 53.

⁶² *ibid.*

‘knowing’). We can define truth (3) as the ideal relation of bringing-into-congruence, or, in other words, the *ideal essence* of the act of self-evidence: the ‘idea of absolute adequation as such’.⁶³ For Heidegger, this definition is not only one-sided; since it deals with an *ideal* or eidetic relationship, it must be ‘founded’ on *individual happenings or performances* of identification in which the truth is actually experienced. The same can be said about (4) the last concept of truth as the *correctness of a judgment*, in other words, as the adequacy of its intentional matter *in specie* to the object. Here, finally, we have arrived at the ‘traditional’ concept of truth. Just as with the third concept, it is clear that this is a ‘founded’, non-basic concept which presupposes the first concept of truth/Being.

Husserl’s concept of truth constitutes, according to Heidegger, an important advance over traditional approaches, primarily in two respects. First, Husserl significantly *widens* the concept of truth. Truth is for him ‘originally’ not a ‘property’ of a ‘judgment’. In fact, even nominal (that is, non-propositional) acts can enter into the truth relation with simple, straightforward perceptions:

Phenomenology returns to the broad concept of truth whereby the Greeks (Aristotle) could call true even perception as such and the simple perception of something.⁶⁴

Of course, if straightforward perceptions are themselves implicitly categorial, as Heidegger has argued, then this departure from the tradition may be less fundamental than it looks at first. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, Husserl’s first and ‘original’ sense of truth/Being is the concept of a happening and it can readily be interpreted as the concept of an *emergence* of entities from *absence* (‘empty intending’) to *presence*. ‘Truth’ in Husserl’s ‘original’ sense refers to an *event-like dynamic relation between what is absent and what is present*, and it cannot be reduced merely to one pole of this duality (for example, merely to what is present).

There is, in fact, much greater ambiguity in Husserl’s formulation of the first concept than may have appeared so far from Heidegger’s interpretation of it. For

⁶³ LI VI, § 39, p. 766.

⁶⁴ HCT, p. 55.

Husserl describes being-in-truth as *both* a ‘state of affairs’ *and* as something ‘experienced’ in the ‘performance’ of an identification. But a state of affairs is an *ideal object* in Husserl’s ontology, the objective correlate of a judgment. So it is not fully clear whether, for Husserl, the first sense of truth/Being really applies to something that corresponds to, and is *adequately given*, in the *performance (Vollzug)* of the act of identification, in which case one could indeed speak of truth/Being as a *dynamic happening*. Alternatively, Husserl may be claiming that the identity of the meant content and the intuited content is *only* adequately given in a thematizing perception of the identity, which previously was experienced unthematically, ‘through a separate act of objectifying apprehension, through a special *looking at* the present truth... *a priori* the possibility exists at any time to look at the congruence and to bring it to intentional consciousness in an adequate perception’.⁶⁵ According to this interpretation, being-in-truth is an *object*, namely the *thematically objectified congruence* (identity) between the meant and the perceived content, which is unthematically experienced, but not itself adequately given, in the act which Husserl calls *Evidenz*. What speaks for this interpretation is that Husserl explicitly calls being-in-truth a ‘state of affairs’, and, secondly, that he later elucidates ‘being in the sense of truth’ as ‘the adequately perceivable[!] in general’.⁶⁶ Now, Heidegger seems explicitly to reject this interpretation when he says that

[i]n the coming into coincidence of the presumed [meant] with the intuited, I am solely and primarily directed toward the subject matter itself.[....] The correlation is peculiar in that something is experienced but not grasped [*erfasst*]. So it is really only in grasping the object as such, which amounts to not grasping the identity [!], that this identity is experienced. [...][T]his intentionality, itself unthematic in its performance, is immediately and transparently experienced as true.⁶⁷

As a result of this reading he is able to present a ‘charitable’ interpretation and development of Husserl’s ambiguously articulated ‘original’ concept of being-in-truth as the concept of a dynamic happening in the way we have outlined above. If

⁶⁵ LI VI, § 39, p. 766 (translation modified).

⁶⁶ LI VI, p. 768.

⁶⁷ HCT, p. 52.

Heidegger is aware that Husserl himself might have tended towards the objectifying interpretation of the concept, this is at least not explicitly said in the text. But Heidegger makes it clear that any such interpretation would be questionable :

We shall later raise the *fundamental question of the sense of Being* and thus come to face the question of whether the concept of Being can really be originally drawn in this context of being-true and the corresponding being-real, and whether truth is a phenomenon which is originally conceived in the context of assertions or, in the broader sense, of objectifying acts.⁶⁸

2.5 Husserl's Mature Methodology: the Phenomenological Reductions

In Husserl's first main work, *Logical Investigations*, on which Heidegger's interpretation of Husserl - and our own interpretation of this interpretation - up to this point has concentrated, the methodological basis of phenomenology had not yet been clearly worked out. To be sure, Husserl states in the 'Introduction' that phenomenology is concerned with the descriptive elucidation or clarification (*Aufklärung*) of the essences of intentional experiences; that it must make no claims which are not based on adequate intuitions of such essences on the basis of individual samples; that it must use no theoretical (in particular no metaphysical and scientific) presuppositions; and that it makes no claims about 'real Being' but only about ideal possibilities and essential relations.⁶⁹ Yet the intentional acts themselves whose essences are to be 'elucidated' are taken as individual acts occurring within 'streams of consciousness' 'in' nature (although their 'reality' is a matter of no concern to the phenomenologist). It is only later, in *Ideas I* (1913), that Husserl attempts to develop a secure methodological foundation for phenomenology in the form of what he came to call the *phenomenological reduction*. At its origin is the 'suspension' of our natural attitude to the world that takes the world in general in its

⁶⁸ HCT, p. 54.

⁶⁹ LI, 'Introduction', §§ 6-7.

entirety as *vorhanden* in the sense of ‘being real’.⁷⁰ Husserl calls this suspension or ‘bracketing’ of the *Generalthesis* of the reality of the world *εποχη*. What *εποχη* means in the phenomenological analysis of acts is that the analysis ‘does not really go along with the act’, but approaches the object of the act and thematizes it in terms of *how it is understood* in the intention. In other words, the givenness in the act and of its objective correlate becomes the theme of the analysis, entailing that any object is not ‘directly presumed as such, but in the how of its Being’.⁷¹ The ‘how of an entity’s Being’ means that the entity is viewed entirely, i.e. exclusively, to the extent that it is the object of intentionality. This ‘bracketing’ of the reality of the world, Heidegger points out, does not purport that ‘the entity is not’, but attempts to make ‘the mode of Being of the entity’ thematic. In fact, in Heidegger’s interpretation, the sole function of this phenomenological ‘suspension of the transcendent thesis’ is to make the entity ‘present in regard to its Being’.⁷²

The term ‘suspension’ is thus always misunderstood when it is thought that in suspending the thesis of existence and by doing so, phenomenological reflection simply has nothing more to do with the entity. Quite the contrary: in an extreme and unique way, what really is at issue now is the determination of the Being of the very entity.⁷³

It is to be noted that Husserl himself does not speak of the reduction as making thematically present the *mode of Being* of the intended entity, but rather its *mode of givenness*, or rather, the *entity as it is given*.⁷⁴ But, as we saw in Section 1.1, for Heidegger it is senseless to speak of an entity in abstraction from its showing or manifesting itself. There is no being ‘behind’ or radically separate from what shows itself (including what shows itself ‘as hidden’). In this respect also, Heidegger arguably draws explicitly a conclusion which is implied by Husserl’s own claims, but which is not actually developed by Husserl.

⁷⁰ Id I, §§ 30-31. For discussion of Husserl’s various ‘paths’ towards the phenomenological reduction. see R. Bernet, I. Kern, and E. Marbach, *An Introduction to Husserlian Phenomenology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1995), pp. 65-75.

⁷¹ HCT, p.99.

⁷² *ibid.*

⁷³ *ibid.*

⁷⁴ Id I, § 87.

The *εποχή* can in principle be carried out with respect to any comportment of consciousness – i.e. any individual acts of perceiving, imagining, wishing, deliberating and the like. In performing the *εποχή*, consciousness is envisaged in such a manner that I do not go along with the positing of the object in perceiving or in deliberating: I do not posit the object *as real*. I rather, thematize the acts and their objects according to *the how* of their givenness. On the basis of this ‘not going along with any transcendent thesis’, we arrive to the initial sense of reduction as *transcendental reduction*. What remains and endures after this reduction, that is, after the concrete experiential continuity of my life is reduced, is the field of my stream of consciousness and its noematic correlates. This field may be called *transcendental consciousness*, since it is not (considered as) a part or residue of nature – unlike Descartes’ *cogito* that remains as a residue of the actual, real world throughout Descartes’ procedure of systematic doubt – but is the condition of possibility of all object-like structures and entities. Transcendental consciousness, we may say, is not a *part* of the world, but is a necessary correlate and condition of the world – hence the relation between it and what is ‘constituted by’ it (i.e. what manifests itself to it) can never be a causal relation; it is rather an essential correlation.⁷⁵ But the transcendental reduction made possible by the *εποχή* is only the first step of Husserl’s mature philosophical method. A second reduction called *eidetic reduction* suspends also this individual stream of experience *as individual* and focuses on the unity of the stream of experience *ideatively*.⁷⁶ After this step the acts and their objects are no longer regarded as concrete individuations of my concrete being (as this stream of experience) but the concretely lived experience (*noesis*) is considered as the universal structure that belongs to a perception, representation or judgment as such, and the various particular moments of the correlated entities-as-intended (*noemata*) are regarded, in each case, as instantiating

⁷⁵ Id I, § 53. For Husserl, unlike Descartes, what is suspended is ‘the entire world, *including ourselves and all our cogitare*’ (Id I, § 33, p. 63, my emphasis). It is therefore quite wrong to accuse Husserl of any obvious or straightforward ‘Cartesianism’. This does not rule out the possibility that certain Cartesian assumptions of a less obvious kind may persist in Husserl’s phenomenology.

⁷⁶ Id I, §§ 69-71.

universal essences. This means that in *eidetic reduction* the questions of *when* and *where* a perceiving, judging, wishing, etc, take place and whether this perceiving and the like are *mine* or not are of no importance. Consciousness is here neither concrete nor individual. In Husserl's terminology the field to which we arrive through *transcendental* and *eidetic reduction* is called *the field of pure consciousness*.

We have almost reached the crucial point of our analysis. For, as Heidegger emphasizes, in Husserlian phenomenology pure consciousness occupies the position of absolute Being - *pure consciousness is absolute Being*. The significance of this claim and its consequences constitute the basis of Heidegger's critique of Husserl and previous phenomenological research in general. To understand why the reduced consciousness is absolute we need to recall that for Husserl the transcendent world does not belong to the immanently real whole of the stream of experience and hence that the reality of the thing is other than the reality of the stream of consciousness. 'The chair is not a lived experience or an experiential thing. Its kind of Being is totally different from that of lived experience'.⁷⁷ Meanwhile, 'everything objective in what is called *immanent* perception [i.e. reflection] is identified by the same kind of being as immanent perception itself'.⁷⁸ Husserl speaks of the stream of lived experiences as 'a region of being which constitutes a sphere of *absolute position*'. This is because 'the object of immanent perception is absolutely given'.⁷⁹ While transcendent perception – the perception of what is not *reell* immanent in the stream of consciousness - apprehends every perceived thing in its bodily character, an apparently perceived thing might still not be: our 'perception' might turn out to have been delusory. By contrast, all entities that are given in the reflection upon the acts (i.e. immanent perception) have an existence which 'cannot in principle be denied'.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ HCT, p. 100.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*

⁷⁹ *ibid.*

⁸⁰ *ibid.* Cf *Id I*, p.102: 'Anything physical which is given "in person" can be non-existent, but no experience which is given "in person" can be non-existent'.

Hence, the distinguishing feature of immanence lies in its *mode of givenness* (for Heidegger that means: mode of *Being*) that is *absolute*:

We now see that the sphere of pure consciousness is obtained by way of transcendental and eidetic reductions is distinguished by the character of being *absolutely given*. Pure consciousness is thus for Husserl the sphere of absolute Being. Nothing is altered in the absolute Being of lived experiences by the contingency of the world of things. Indeed, these experiences are always presupposed for all of that.⁸¹

At this point the question arises whether there is a fundamental difference between Husserl's position and that of Descartes. For Heidegger the kinship between Descartes and Husserl is indeed closer than we might have thought:

The transcendent world, whose exemplary index for Husserl as well is to be found in the basic stratum of the material world of things, is what Descartes characterizes as *res extensa*. Husserl himself at the point where he observes that the reflection has come to a climax, refers to Descartes. He says that what comes to a head is simply what Descartes thought in the *Meditations*, to be sure with another method and another philosophical goal.⁸²

Heidegger refers in this connection to Husserl's statement about the 'fundamental detachability of the entire natural world from the domain of consciousness'.⁸³ But it is questionable whether Husserl actually meant by this that thought, representation, and self-consciousness can in principle be detached from the world of material things. We shall discuss this issue below in Section 3.1.3. In any case, Heidegger's essential point in this connection is that the question of the Being of intentionality, the *Being* of consciousness, is not examined nor raised as an issue, but assumed. For, if pure consciousness, as Husserl maintains, is indeed the sphere of absolute Being, what does 'absolute Being' mean here? And what meaning does 'Being' assume in speaking of the 'relative' Being of the transcendent world or the reality of things?

⁸¹ HCT, p.101.

⁸² *ibid.*

⁸³ Cf. HCT, p. 105: The idea that consciousness can in principle exist on its own is 'a consideration which, as is well-known, Descartes had already employed'.

3. Critique of Husserlian Phenomenology

The time has now come to turn to Heidegger's critique of Husserl's version of phenomenological research. We have seen that Heidegger gives Husserl great acclaim for his ground-breaking 'discoveries', but in paragraphs 10 - 13 of *History of the Concept of Time* he turns towards an equally fundamental critique of Husserl's enterprise and of the basic direction of phenomenological research envisaged by him. We shall seek to understand the direction of Heidegger's critical questioning under three headings; (1) the Being of consciousness; (2) the phenomenological reductions; (3) the natural attitude.

3.1 The Being of Consciousness

At the opening of his critical discussion of phenomenology Heidegger raises the following question: Does the elaboration of intentionality, as the thematic field of phenomenology, address the question of the Being of this field, that is, the Being of consciousness? *Prima facie* this seems to be the case. Husserl after all gives various specifications or 'determinations' of what consciousness is and how it is. Heidegger addresses four interdependent characteristics accorded to the Being of consciousness by Husserl and brings to attention the problematic aspects of each of these determinations.

3.1.1 Consciousness as Immanent Being

Husserl claims that the Being of consciousness is 'immanent' Being as opposed to 'transcendent' Being of real and also of ideal objects (essences). Heidegger argues that immanence, which from a formal point of view implies 'to be in another', characterizes here the field of consciousness and lived experiences or that of acts apprehending them, the acts of reflection. It thus refers to a *relation* between lived experiences, between the reflecting act and the reflected. Immanence, as this relation of real inclusion in another, being in another, is affirmed of lived experiences to the extent that they are objects of apprehension through reflection. When I reflect on an

experience, the reflected-upon experience is immanent in the reflecting experience, while no real object can in principle be immanent in an experience. However, immanence, Heidegger points out, cannot be a determination of the entity *in itself* (with regard to its Being), but only a relation between several entities. Hence, what is determined here, is *not* the Being of the entity as such (consciousness or experience) but a relationship ‘of Being’ between entities. For, ‘this relation is characterized as a *reell* in-one-another, but nothing is actually said about the Being of this being-in-one-another, about the “immanent reality”, about the entity for the whole of this region’.⁸⁴ Another way of formulating this point would be to say that this determination remains silent about what a lived experience is *independently* of being reflected upon and thus independently of becoming contained in - ‘immanent’ in - another experience.

3.1.2 Consciousness as Being Given Absolutely

In the case of the second determination there is a similar problem. For lived experiences are called *absolute* because they are experienced in themselves or give themselves directly to reflection without adumbrations or profiles, again unlike real objects. Lived experiences are, therefore, called ‘absolute’ because of this absolute givenness in reflection.⁸⁵ But, the determination ‘absolutely given’ refers again merely to the ‘relation of a lived experience as an object for another lived experience’.⁸⁶ That is to say, because the lived experience is actually considered by Husserl as ‘adequately given’ in reflection, i.e. in its particular mode of ‘being-an-object’, one lived experience becomes an *object* for another such entity. But unlike a real object, it is given adequately and, in this sense, absolutely. Again, Heidegger observes, ‘the entity *in itself* does not become a theme. What does become thematic is the entity insofar as it is a possible *object of reflection*’.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ HCT, p.103.

⁸⁵ Id I, § 44, pp. 95-96.

⁸⁶ HCT, p.104.

⁸⁷ *ibid.* My emphases.

3.1.3 *Consciousness as Absolute, in the Sense of Independent Being*

The third determination defines consciousness in accordance with the traditional sense of *substance*, i.e. as that which ‘it needs no *res* in order to be’.⁸⁸ Here, the characterization of consciousness as absolute means that consciousness is ‘the presupposition of Being on the basis of which reality can manifest itself at all’.⁸⁹ To see Heidegger’s point, it suffices to recall Husserl’s first determination of consciousness as immanent Being. As we have seen, in the case of the first determination, transcendent Being or reality is the object of intentionality because lived experiences are ‘immanently’ given while everything else, if it *is* at all, must manifest itself to consciousness. Consciousness therefore does not need the external world or the Being of transcendent reality in order to maintain its continuity. In fact, ‘real being can be otherwise or even not be at all, while consciousness is capable of displaying in itself a closed continuity of being’.⁹⁰ Accordingly, consciousness is self-constituting Being in the sense that it ‘for its part is not constituted once again in another consciousness but [...] in constituting itself, itself constitutes every possible reality’.⁹¹

Consciousness, immanent and absolutely given Being, is that in which every other possible entity is constituted, in which it truly ‘is’ what it is. Constituting Being is absolute. All other Being, as reality, is only in relation to consciousness, that is, relative to it.⁹²

The point is indeed made quite explicitly by Husserl in *Ideas I*, where he says:

The common way of talking about being is thus reversed. The being which for us is the first is itself the second, that is, it is what it is only in ‘relation’ to the first.⁹³

The outcome of Husserl’s identification of what comes ‘first’ with consciousness, leads, in Heidegger’s analysis, to the subordination of reality (the Being of the

⁸⁸ HCT, p.103. *Res* is here understood ‘in the narrower sense of *reality, transcendent Being*, that is, any entity which is not consciousness’.

⁸⁹ HCT, p.104.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*

⁹¹ HCT, p.105.

⁹² *ibid.*

⁹³ *Id I*, § 50, p. 112.

‘external world’) to the Being of consciousness. Reality, therefore, becomes relative to and dependent upon the consciousness. Heidegger’s criticism is twofold. First, he questions whether such a determination of Being is at all original; whether phenomenology makes any contribution, any advance on the tradition in this respect. For, if there is something only in so far as consciousness is, then consciousness is the *apriori* in the sense of Descartes and Kant. Doesn’t this imply ‘the priority of subjectivity over every objectivity’?⁹⁴ Isn’t this a conception of consciousness where ‘idealism in the sense of neo-Kantianism, enters into phenomenology’?⁹⁵ Now, it could be argued that Husserl’s position here is less traditional than it seems in Heidegger’s interpretation. For to say that consciousness might in principle persist in its own continuity without a world of transcendent objects does not necessarily mean that *representational* consciousness and *self-consciousness* might be thus independent of any ‘reality’. This was arguably Descartes’ view, but Husserl’s position may only be that something like a ‘conscious’ experiencing might conceivably remain after the ‘annihilation’ of the world of natural objects (but not *vice versa*), although this consciousness might not be able to represent a world of *objects* and to be explicitly self-conscious (i.e. capable of thinking ‘I think’).⁹⁶ Heidegger’s second, and perhaps less controversial, criticism is that this determination of the Being of consciousness is again only *relational* and does not characterize ‘the entity in its Being’.⁹⁷ For it merely says that, *in the order of constitution*, consciousness comes first, or is ‘prior’, while transcendent Being (‘reality’) is derivative or ‘posterior’. But what or how this entity which comes first in the order of constitution is *in itself* remains again unaddressed.

⁹⁴ HCT, p.105.

⁹⁵ HCT, p. 106.

⁹⁶ Husserl speaks of the possibility of a consciousness remaining after the world has been ‘annihilated’ in the (in)famous § 49 of *Ideas I*. The interpretation suggested above recommends itself especially in the light of Husserl’s claims in *Ideas II* about the essential constitutive role of the *body*. Heidegger, significantly, ignores these analyses, although he acknowledges his acquaintance with them. See HCT, p. 121.

⁹⁷ HCT, p. 105.

3.1.4 *Consciousness as Pure Being*

Consciousness is characterized as pure ‘in the sense of being the essence, the ideal Being of lived experiences’.⁹⁸ In this regard, which focuses on what remains after the eidetic reduction has been performed, consciousness figures no longer as concrete and individual, as actual and mine, as a particular living being, but purely in its essential content. Consciousness is therefore pure to the extent that it excludes every individualized actuality and presents itself as *ideal* Being. What is at issue in the fourth determination is not, in Heidegger’s words, ‘the concretion of lived experiences but their essential structure, not the real Being of lived experience but the ideal essential Being of consciousness itself, the *apriori* of lived experiences in the sense of the generic universal which in each case defines a class of lived experience or its structural contexture’.⁹⁹ Thus, the concrete manifestation of consciousness is supposed to be *abstracted* from. Therefore the ontological character of *lived* intentionality remains, yet again, indeterminate.

None of the four determinations, Heidegger maintains, are drawn from the entity itself. Therefore, none of the determining characteristics of consciousness, of lived experiences, are properly phenomenological:

The determinations of Being are not derived by considering the intentional in its very Being, but to the extent that it is placed under scrutiny as [respectively] *apprehended*, *given* [in reflective thematization], *constituting*, and *ideatively* taken as an essence. It is from such perspectives, which in the first instance are alien to consciousness[!], that these determinations of Being are derived.¹⁰⁰

Heidegger’s explanation for Husserl’s failure to address the question of the Being of consciousness is that the horizon of Husserl’s work remains ultimately a very traditional one: it is the idea of an *absolute science*, and his guiding question remains

⁹⁸ HCT, p.103.

⁹⁹ HCT, p.106.

¹⁰⁰ HCT, pp. 106-107.

throughout, how can consciousness become the possible *object* of an absolute science? But has not modern philosophy, ever since Descartes, occupied itself with this same idea?

The elaboration of consciousness as the thematic field of phenomenology is not derived phenomenologically by going back to the matters themselves but by going back to a traditional idea of philosophy.¹⁰¹

While Heidegger perhaps ignores, or at least downplays, the ways in which Husserl's analyses move beyond the conception of consciousness as an *object* of scientific study, especially in his *Ideas II* and in the *Lectures on the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, he is arguably correct about Husserl's self-understanding.¹⁰² Husserl never explicitly revokes the position expressed in *Ideas I* that lived experiences are only 'adequately' or 'completely' self-given in thematic reflection on them.¹⁰³ Bearing in mind his definition of being as 'the totality of what can be adequately perceived',¹⁰⁴ this implies that the Being of lived experiences continues to be considered by him as the Being of objects of thematic observation, as Heidegger claims. Hence, in this respect, Heidegger's criticism seems justified. But if this criticism is relevant, it is of a very fundamental nature. For we need to remember that for Heidegger, as (in theory) for Husserl, what *is*, is essentially what *shows itself from itself*. But if the very ontological condition of any such self-showing or self-manifesting remains unaddressed, phenomenology has, in a very obvious sense, a void at its centre.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*

¹⁰² See Section 3.4 of this chapter for a discussion of some of these developments of Husserl's thought ignored by Heidegger.

¹⁰³ *Id I*, § 44, p. 97.

¹⁰⁴ *LI VI*, § 39, p. 768.

3.2 Critique of the Phenomenological Reductions

Let us now turn to Heidegger's objections to the methodological basis of Husserl's mature phenomenology: the phenomenological reductions. We recall that these consist in a two-step procedure whereby, first, the 'reality' of what is given in the natural attitude as 'the actual world' is suspended or 'bracketed'. Secondly, the phenomenological residue – what is given in its mode of givenness (or: what is given in so far as it is given) – is subjected to an ideative regard, such that the given is no longer considered as, for example, '*this A*', but as '*A-ness*'. The first step is often called the *transcendental reduction*, while the second step goes by the name of *eidetic reduction*. Heidegger has fundamental objections to both of these components of Husserl's method. Since his criticism of the eidetic reduction is a continuation of what was discussed above in Section 3.1.4, we shall consider it first.

From Heidegger's point of view, the eidetic consideration of the given to the extent that it manifests itself in pure consciousness, can never reach the Being of the intentional in any genuine sense. For, the eidetic reduction precisely disregards any particular individuation of lived experiences (the particular acts) as *mine*, and concerns itself exclusively with the structure of the acts and their correlates, i.e. their *what-content*. As the focus of the eidetic reduction remains on the *what* question, it simply fails to thematize the mode of Being of the acts, their Being an act as such. Thus, what comes to be discussed is merely the what-content of the structure of the intentional rather than the essence of its Being *qua* individuated.

What is really at issue here is the relation between *essence* and *existence* which is brought out more clearly in the following example:

when I seek to distinguish the essence of color from that of sound, this distinction can be made without my asking about the manner of Being of these two objects. This means that in determining the *essentia*, (the essence of color and sound) I disregard their *existentia*, their particular individuation, whether the color is the color of a thing, in this or that illumination. I look only to what pertains to every color as color, regardless of whether it exists or not. I disregard its existence, and so all the more the essence of its existence.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ HCT, p.110.

Why can I distinguish the essence of colour from that of sound without asking about the manner of Being of these entities? Because in both cases we are dealing with entities with the same manner of Being: colours and sounds are both *genera* within the regional ontology of material nature. Now, if, on the basis of this example, we view Husserl's analysis of intentionality, we notice that he proceeds according to the same principle - a methodology that brings into evidence the *what-content* (*essentia*), but *not* the Being of the acts (their '*existentia*'). Yet,

[f]rom the what I never experience anything about the sense and the manner of the that - at any rate, only that an entity of this what-content (*extensio*, for example) can have a certain manner of Being. What this manner of Being is, is not thereby made clear. Merely looking at the what-content means seeing the what as apprehended, given, constituted.¹⁰⁶

Every what-content is an ideal object, hence an entity grasped¹⁰⁷ and constituted by something other than itself, namely by consciousness. The eidetic reduction, therefore, could be judged successful only if it is believed that the mode of access to consciousness is the same as to an entity with the manner of Being of an ideal object. But even if it were possible to consider other entities in such a manner, we have good reasons - including those given by Husserl himself - to wonder whether the intentional is an entity just like any other entity. What if, as Heidegger asks, 'there were an entity whose what is precisely to be and nothing but to be, then the ideative regard for such an entity would be the most fundamental of misunderstanding'.¹⁰⁸ Heidegger's rhetorical question suggests that the Being of the intentional can only be understood in its own Being through '*existentia*', *never* through any *essentia*. The whole of *Being and Time* is of course an extended argument for this claim, and for the further claim that the meaning of *existentia* is itself modified fundamentally when it is no longer interpreted within the horizon of *essentia*. We shall have to consider

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ I shall use the translation 'grasp' for Husserl's *erfassen*, rather than 'apprehend', which is used by many translators. The problem with this translation is that it invites confusion with *auffassen*, Husserl's term for how hyletic data are 'taken up' or 'interpreted' as having a certain sense. *Erfassen* is to thematize, to objectify. *Auffassen* is to interpret, apprehend, or to 'take' something in some way or other. The two meanings are obviously related, but they are not the same.

¹⁰⁸ HCT, p.110.

these points in the context of *Being and Time*, as well as of Heidegger's later thinking on metaphysics (see especially chapter VI.3). For the moment, we cannot simply assume their truth, in which case Husserl's whole procedure would of course be manifestly misguided. But even according to Husserl's own analysis, the Being of consciousness is radically different from the Being of any act-transcendent object, including any ideal object. Hence Heidegger is surely correct to argue that it can never be given *in its own mode of Being* as the objective correlate of any ideative acts. But perhaps Husserl might reply that eidetic insights may still function as *necessary* pointers or *indicators* towards the mode of Being of individualized acts. Otherwise we could receive no illumination about consciousness at all through judgements using general predicates. In other words, it might still be the case that we can *only* understand the mode of Being of the intentional on the basis of performing eidetic reduction, while also conceding that any conscious act given in the eidetic reduction has its mode of Being modified thereby. The question to ask Heidegger at this point is perhaps: even if the *intrinsic* mode of Being of the intentional can only be disclosed through actually existing and never through reflective and ideative grasping of it as an object, could its mode of 'existence' be disclosed at all if part of the *essentia* of existing did not consist in representing and objectifying, through ideative acts, other entities *and also itself*. In this case, self-objectification would not be merely 'alien to consciousness',¹⁰⁹ but would actually belong to its *own* (hence non-alienated) manner of Being.

Heidegger's second criticism concerns the original 'suspension' of the reality of the world, and also of the cogitations, in the transcendental reduction. As we have already seen, Husserl arrived at pure consciousness by starting, in the first place, with the concrete consciousness as is given in the natural attitude and then 'suspending' the reality (in the wider sense) of this factual consciousness. Heidegger accordingly seems correct to observe that 'the sense of the reduction is precisely to make no use of the reality of the intentional':

¹⁰⁹ HCT, p. 106.

In its methodological sense as a disregarding, then, the reduction is in principle inappropriate for determining the Being of consciousness positively. The sense of the reduction involves precisely giving up the ground upon which alone the question of the Being of the intentional could be based.¹¹⁰

But does the reduction really consist in ‘disregarding’ the ‘reality of the intentional’? This is not as clear as it may seem at first sight. Husserl says that in the *εποχή* we suspend every positing judgement about what appears. When we study the perception of an apple tree, we are not interested in whether there really is an apple tree, or whether we are hallucinating. All that is of interest is the apple tree that appears *as really, perceptually, given*. But we are not concerned with whether this appearance as real is veridical or whether we are, for example, suffering from a perceptual illusion (a quasi-perception).¹¹¹ Analogously, when we phenomenologically study an experience of anger that is given as real anger, we do not need to ‘suspend’ the anger’s being given *as real*. This is not what *εποχή* means for Husserl. Does this mean that Heidegger has misunderstood Husserl’s doctrine of ‘bracketing the world’? Perhaps not. Heidegger’s discussion of reflection implies that he interprets the *εποχή* as essentially involving a *reflective* attitude. If this is so, it may turn out that Heidegger believes Husserl’s position to imply a necessary abstaining from any concern with the Being of the intentional, although this may not be Husserl’s intention.

Heidegger elucidates reflection as follows. When we perceive a thing and reflect upon this we are directed toward a particular act or experience such that we are *thematically* focused upon the perception and not upon the perceived. When we have the perception itself as the theme, the perceived (the object of perception) is co-apprehended, but we no longer ‘*live directly* in the perception’, but rather ‘*live thematically* in the apprehension of the perceptual act and of what is perceived in it’.¹¹² But in considering reflection in this way, says Heidegger:

¹¹⁰ HCT, p.109.

¹¹¹ Id I, § 88, pp. 213-216.

¹¹² HCT, p.99.

I do not really live in the perception of the chair but in the attitude of the immanent reflective apprehension of perceiving the chair, not in the thesis of the material world but in the thematic positing of the act apprehending the perception and of its object as it is there in the act.¹¹³

This ‘not living in the perception of the chair’ means that in thematic reflective consideration of the perception I do ‘not go along with’ the concrete perception, I rather, in a sense, abstain or refrain: ‘This [...] is called *εποχή*’.¹¹⁴ Heidegger’s here identifies one of the great ambiguities in Husserl’s philosophy. Often Husserl presents phenomenology as essentially a method that consists in *reflection* on experiences.¹¹⁵ At other times he either denies this or at least recognizes the problematic nature of such an approach.¹¹⁶ But it is clear that Husserl believes that phenomenology consists in *objectifying* manners of givenness (senses), and that, in the case of experiences (noeses as opposed to noemata), such objectifying involves reflection. Yet he also insists that what reflection discovers – the experience – was already present pre-reflectively, and necessarily so.¹¹⁷ If this is the case, Heidegger’s criticism of the transcendental reduction would in effect be a re-iteration of the point he has made regarding the first two determinations of consciousness: they determine consciousness as it is grasped or objectified in reflection, but not as it is ‘in itself’, that is, pre-reflectively. Similarly, the transcendental reduction *qua* reflection on acts would be in principle unable to reach the Being of pre-reflective consciousness.

For Heidegger, the whole purpose of the reduction and the demarcation of the region of pure consciousness as absolute Being is, yet again, to provide a scientific basis for specifying the reality of the real. All entities are recognized in Husserlian phenomenology to the extent that they manifest themselves in pure consciousness, which is no other than the region to which we arrive through phenomenological reduction. The ‘reality’ of the intentional is no different. That is to say, its actuality is

¹¹³ *ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹¹⁵ E.g. *Id I*, § 50, p.114.

¹¹⁶ In *Id I*, § 108, pp. 256-257 ‘we grasp [noematic predicates] in the object that appears [...] In no manner do we reflect on the act in this’. (Translation modified).

¹¹⁷ *Id I*, § 45, p. 99. Also PCIT, appendix IX, pp. 122-123.

likewise *constituted* in consciousness.¹¹⁸ The intentional, for Husserl, ultimately is ‘a being *for* a consciousness, [...] a being which consciousness posits in its experiences’.¹¹⁹

3.3 Critique of the ‘Natural Attitude’

But does not the reduction, in any case, start from consciousness, as yet unmodified, but rather, as given in the ‘natural attitude’? And does it not follow from Heidegger’s criticism that the originary mode of access to the ‘reality’ of consciousness as it is in itself would have to be from *within* the natural attitude? Indeed, but the question is, to what extent is the Being of the intentional really experienced and interrogated in what Husserl regards as the natural attitude. To what extent is this experience real and genuine? What Being is attributed here to the intentional, to the Being of the acts? According to Heidegger, it is

that of real occurrences in the world, living beings which are objectively on hand, which in accord with their Being are inserted into the ‘fundamental layer’ of all reality, into material thingness. The Being of the intentional, the Being of acts, the Being of the psychic is thus fixed as a real worldly occurrence just like any natural process.¹²⁰

Heidegger’s second question is: *how is the I given* in the natural attitude? For Husserl, in this attitude:

I am “a real object like others in the natural world,” that is, like houses, tables, trees, mountains. Human beings thus occur *realiter* in the world, among them I myself. I perform acts (*cogitationes*). These acts belong to the “human subject,” hence are “occurrences of the same natural reality.” The totality of such a continuity of lived experiences in the human or animal subject can be called an *individual stream of lived experiences*. The experiences are themselves ‘real occurrences in the world’ ‘in animal beings’.¹²¹

In the natural attitude, I direct myself toward real objects, for I am a real object like others in the natural world. I can also direct myself toward myself, i.e. toward my

¹¹⁸ HCT, p. 112. Heidegger is here citing from *Id I*, § 49.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ HCT, p.111.

¹²¹ HCT, p.96.

own experiential continuity. In thus directing myself toward my own experiential continuity (considered as real occurrences), I perform an act called (natural, or mundane) reflection. In this performance, acts themselves are an object just like any other object, except that the 'object and the way of apprehending it belong to the same stream of experience'¹²², individuated through its 'attachment' to the same animal organism. The stream of experiences as a whole is, however, a self-contained totality that rejects or excludes the things and real objects comprising the entire material world, for the reasons we discussed in Sections 3.1.2 and 3.1.3. Hence, Heidegger says, 'over against the region of lived experiences, the material world is alien, other'.¹²³ But at the same time, because the stream of experience is also a real occurrence in material nature, it must as such be somehow *conjoined* with the real world in order to form a concrete togetherness, that is, the unity of psycho-physical animal things. In fact, Husserl says:

the psychic is not a world for itself, it is given as an ego or ego-experience [...], and this turns out to be empirically tied to certain physical things called organisms.¹²⁴

Now the question is, how can consciousness, as a part of the animal unity, be at once *conjoined* with material nature in the concretion of every factual living being (man), and be also radically *other* in its Being from all real objects? What is revealed through this question is a double involvement of consciousness or the experiential totality in the structure of reality. For Heidegger, this double status of consciousness, as united with and separate from the real world, means on the one hand that there are *two* ontologically 'co-ordinated' spheres of Being, neither of which, due to their very conjunction, can be prior to the other: the immanent sphere of lived experience and the transcendent sphere of the material world. But on the other hand, the objectivity of the material world is for Husserl only possible on the basis of the immanent sphere, it is after all constituted by it:

¹²² *ibid.*

¹²³ HCT, p.97.

¹²⁴ *ibid.* Heidegger cites from Husserl's 'Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft', *Logos I*, pp.298f

Now this separation into two spheres of Being is remarkable precisely because the sphere of immanence, the sphere of lived experience, establishes the possibility within which the transcendent world, separated from it by a gulf, can become objective at all.¹²⁵

If there is a 'gulf' between the immanent sphere of consciousness, of lived experiences and the transcendent sphere constituted by the material world, and if the material world gains its objectivity on the basis of such an independent region, how can the individual 'streams of consciousness' of which this region consists also turn out to have a location in the sphere of material and animal nature supposedly constituted by it? Heidegger does not further pursue the question after raising it, which suggests that he regards Husserl's position on this fundamental matter as clearly incoherent. But even if there was a way of deflecting Heidegger's criticism, the question would remain: how are we to understand the 'conjunction' of two radically heterogeneous domains of Being? What, phenomenologically, does it mean? Clearly, what would be required for this would be a phenomenology of *embodied consciousness* which yet preserves Husserl's claims regarding the 'independence' and heterogeneity of consciousness. Husserl arguably attempted this task in the second volume of *Ideas*, but again Heidegger barely mentions Husserl's phenomenology of the body in that work.

We may find an explanation for this in another, perhaps more fundamental, objection of Heidegger's to Husserl's 'natural attitude'. In fact, what passes itself as 'natural' here is a certain scientific attitude which assumes that humans are given 'naturally' to themselves as living beings, as zoological objects. But is it man's 'natural' mode of self-givenness to experience himself as ζῷον? As a living being in the broadest sense and an object of nature which occurs in the world? Heidegger replies:

It is an experience which is totally *unnatural*. For it includes a well-defined theoretical position, in which every entity is taken a priori as a lawfully regulated flow of occurrences in the *spatio-temporal* exteriority of the world. Even if the 'thing of nature called man' is

¹²⁵ HCT, p.98.

experienced as the $\zeta\omega\upsilon\nu$ occurring in the world and his mode of Being and his reality are determined, this does not mean that his comportments, the intentional in its Being, are examined and defined.¹²⁶

What is defined in the process that begins with the natural attitude and returns to reality via the reductions, is, in Heidegger's analysis, merely the determination of the intentional as 'a being on hand, as a thing to which comportments are perhaps *added* as "appendages" but [these] are not really relevant for determining the character of the Being of this entity and do not constitute its way of Being'.¹²⁷ As 'Being' obtains its sense here from the reality of nature, so the Being of acts finds its definition in advance, i.e. theoretically and dogmatically. This analysis leads Heidegger to reiterate that the question of Being itself is left undiscussed and phenomenological research has proceeded in a fundamental neglect of that which must be its theme: 'intentional comportment and all that is given with it'. We shall return to the justness or otherwise of these Heideggerian criticisms of the natural attitude in Section 3.4 below.

3.4 Husserl's Development: The Personalistic Attitude and Time Consciousness

Heidegger's interpretation and criticism of Husserlian phenomenology in HCT is based largely on Husserl's works up to 1913, especially on *Logical Investigations* (1901) and on *Ideas I* (1913). But it is well known that Husserl's views developed significantly in his later thinking. This is especially true for some of the issues – such as the description of the natural attitude, and the view of consciousness as an object of reflection – which are central to Heidegger's criticism. Does this mean that Heidegger's criticisms are not relevant to Husserl's later thought? To judge this issue, we have to consider, first of all, whether Heidegger was aware of these developments. There seems little doubt that he was, since in HCT he actually refers to some of them, especially to Husserl's acknowledgement of what he calls the

¹²⁶ HCT, p.113.

¹²⁷ *ibid.*

personalistic attitude in the *Logos* essay and in *Ideas II*, the manuscripts of which Husserl had sent to Heidegger.¹²⁸ With regard to the analysis of absolute subjectivity contained in the lectures on time consciousness, Husserl had given seminars to advanced students on this during the winter semester of 1920/21, at a time of very close proximity between Husserl and Heidegger at Freiburg, when Husserl, already thinking of Heidegger as a favoured pupil and potential intellectual heir, took great pains to familiarize Heidegger with all the fruits of his own research. It is, for this reason alone, highly unlikely that Heidegger remained unaware of the material on time consciousness.¹²⁹ But there is evidence in HCT itself that Heidegger was aware of these analyses. He briefly announces a discussion of Husserl on time ‘under the caption “Stream of Lived Experience and Absolute Time-Consciousness”’,¹³⁰ but this discussion then in fact never takes place.

In our context, the important question is not the historical issue of influence or neglect, but rather the question of whether Husserl’s ideas on the personalistic attitude and time consciousness render Heidegger’s criticisms obsolete. With respect to the personalistic attitude, this is first elaborated in chapter 1 of the third Section of *Ideas II*, with the title ‘Contrast between the Naturalistic and the Personalistic World’. In this text, written for the most part between 1912 and 1917, Husserl acknowledges that the ‘natural’ attitude in which we live most of the time does not apprehend others or ourselves as *animalia*, bodies equipped with ‘streams of consciousness’, that is, as psycho-physical organisms, as ‘natural objects, themes for the respective natural sciences’. Rather, our natural (in the sense of ordinary, prevailing, everyday) attitude is a personalistic one, in which others are given as persons, for example as friends or enemies, as members of the same club or town or

¹²⁸ HCT, pp. 119-126.

¹²⁹ Some commentators have therefore explained Heidegger’s silence on this material in HCT precisely on the grounds that some of the reflections in it converge quite closely with his own analysis of temporality as the sense of being-in-the-world. See Thomas Prufer, ‘Heidegger, Early and Late, and Aquinas’, in *Edmund Husserl and the Phenomenological Tradition*, ed. R. Sokolowski (Washington, D.C.: Cath. University of America Press, 1989), pp. 197-215. For details on Heidegger’s role in editing Husserl’s lectures on time consciousness, see Edmund Husserl, *Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology and the Confrontation with Heidegger (1927-1931)*, eds. T. Sheehan and R. Palmer (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1997).

¹³⁰ HCT, p. 124.

church, as neighbours or strangers, and so forth. We share with some of these persons an environment (*Umwelt*) which contains

not mere things, but objects of use (clothes, home equipment, weapons, tools), works of art, literary products, the means for religious and legal actions [...] and it contains not only individual persons: the persons are rather members of communities which have [...] their own ethical and legal orders [...] The members of the community, of the marriage or family [...] 'know' themselves as its members, they find themselves dependent on it in their consciousness...¹³¹

For the later Husserl, as Heidegger recognizes, 'the naturalistic is *subordinated* to the personalistic [attitude]'.¹³² What is definitive of it is that the *Umwelt* shows up in terms of characteristics of *familiarity*, and of *practical* and *evaluative* characteristics. Yet Husserl's analysis of 'personal Being' in terms of immersion in an *Umwelt*, for Heidegger, does not constitute a significant advance over Husserl's earlier investigations in the crucial respects. We can isolate primarily two reasons for this negative judgement of Heidegger's.

First, if we enquire about the *positive* sense of this personal Being, 'we are again referred back to the immanent structure of consciousness - the immanent reflection of the acts and lived experiences, without these acts on their part being actually defined'.¹³³ What we get is a characterization of experience as an inner inspection of itself, or as the ego of intentionality. The ego considered, as subject of *cogitationes*, shows yet again, according to Heidegger, the extent to which Husserl's thinking draws from that of Descartes:

The very expression here already reminds us quite clearly of Descartes. Every such ego at once has its nature side as the underground of subjectivity. Mind is not an abstract ego but the full personality. Ego, man, subject as person cannot dissolve into nature, for then what gives sense to nature would be missing.¹³⁴

¹³¹ Id II, p. 191. (Translation modified).

¹³² HCT, p. 122.

¹³³ HCT, p.120.

¹³⁴ HCT, p.122.

For Husserl, the appropriate *mode of access to the person* remains on the basis of an immanent reflection on acts, that is, of the inner inspection of oneself (*inspectio sui*).¹³⁵ ‘Only now the theme is not the pure consciousness and pure ego but instead the isolated individual consciousness and ego’.¹³⁶ No doubt, the isolation is conditioned by the body and therefore, the experiential context is here an embodied, particular ego-subject that finds itself in a personalistic *Umwelt*, but nothing has changed about the fundamental position that the Being of consciousness is to be determined on the basis of what reveals itself in objectifying reflection.

Heidegger’s second critical consideration relates to Husserl’s views about the *order of constitution* involved in personal Being. That Being ‘is ordered according to the sequence in which the matters of the real themselves stand’. That is to say, ‘the fundamental stratum is still the naturally real, upon which the psychic is built, and upon the psychic the spiritual’.¹³⁷ Therefore, with view to the constitution of the spiritual world, despite there being an emphasis on the genuinely ‘natural’ character of the personalistic attitude, nature, understood as the object of scientific investigation continues to occupy nevertheless a primary and fundamental position in the multi-layered constitutional hierarchy. The result is that the person as such, i.e. the Being of the person, is not thematized in a primordial manner:

[...]even if the Being of acts and the unity of the experiential stream were determined in their Being, the question of the Being of the full concrete man would still remain. Can this Being be, so to speak, assembled from the Being of the material substrate, of the body, and form the soul and the spirit? Is the Being of the person the product of the kinds of Being of these layers of Being?¹³⁸

The approach that operates via ‘prior division and subsequent composition’ and views the person as a ‘multi-layered thing of the world’ cannot grasp the sense of this being called man. The personalistic attitude, through its division of man and ordering of acts, of the intentional, into the layered scheme of the physical, body, soul, spirit,

¹³⁵ Id II, § 54, pp. 223-226.

¹³⁶ HCT, p.124.

¹³⁷ *ibid.*

¹³⁸ HCT, p.125.

is still guided by the same reflection that conducted the elaboration of pure consciousness. For, although the personalistic attitude does not consider man as a reality of nature, man nevertheless is a reality of the world conceived in this stratified manner. Ultimately, this stratification shows that Husserl remains committed to a *prior definition of man as rational animal*, consisting of a level of rationality built upon a level of animality which in turn is built upon a stratum of merely physical nature. This definition, Heidegger observes, is not drawn from experience but taken for granted from tradition and left unchallenged by Husserlian phenomenology. For the personalistic attitude shows us that

In the background of all questions about the intentional, the psychic, about the consciousness, lived experience, life, man, reason, spirit, person, ego, subject, there stands the old definition of man as animal rationale. But is this definition drawn from experiences which aim at a primary experience of the Being of man? Or does it not come from the experience of man as an occurrent [*vorhanden*] thing of the world - animal - which has reason - rational - as an intrinsic property?¹³⁹

In fact, there are two important issues which Heidegger's criticism raises together. First, whether it is legitimate to give a constitutional analysis of the Being of the person which makes reference to a level or moment of this Being which is the Being of an 'occurrent thing'. Heidegger seems to be suggesting that any such moment would have to be *alien* to the Being of the person, while Husserl (like later Merleau-Ponty) argues that, for personal Being to be possible it is *necessary* that the entity which 'is' in this manner of Being should *also* and with equal primordially be able to see itself as an object – in other words, that object-being is one moment or 'side' of personal Being (while not exhausting it). We shall need to return to this issue in the context of the analysis of Dasein in *Being and Time*. Secondly, granted the legitimacy of such an ontological 'compositionism', is it acceptable to regard the fundamental constitutional level, in which all others are founded, as the level of material nature with its sensory 'thing'-properties. Husserl continues to hold this view, which he already expressed in *Ideas I*, also in the Second Book of *Ideas*.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ HCT, p.125-126.

¹⁴⁰ Id II, § 50, p. 196.

Heidegger, as we shall see, explicitly and extensively argues against it in *Being and Time*.

With regard to Heidegger's criticism that Husserl always considers the Being of the person within the horizon of reflective self-thematization in the *inspectio sui*, Husserlians sometimes point to the *Lectures on the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time* to dispute this. In the later parts of these lectures and in the appendices Husserl analyses what he calls 'absolute subjectivity', the flow of lived experience in which all objects become constituted – i.e. in which they manifest themselves - and which therefore cannot itself be an object, since this would require another consciousness in which the first could manifest itself. This absolute subjectivity is 'timeless' in the sense of not being 'in' sequential time: 'subjective time constitutes itself in the absolute timeless consciousness which is not an object'.¹⁴¹ It is not a series of now-points, but has an 'ecstatic' structure, comprising the necessary togetherness of retention, now-phase, and protention.¹⁴² Since there is nothing enduring (no temporal object) in it, it is a pure 'flow', but with the peculiarity that there is nothing in it that flows, and that, therefore could flow faster or more slowly:¹⁴³

It is absolute subjectivity and has the absolute properties of something to be *metaphorically* designated as a 'flow' [...] For all this we lack names.¹⁴⁴

This 'flow' can only be objectified through reflection (*inspectio sui*) in its elapsed, retentive phases, hence absolute consciousness is in its now-phase in principle not accessible to objectification.¹⁴⁵ Does not all of this show that Husserl does offer an analysis of the Being of consciousness which is both contentful and not conducted in terms of the Being of an object of reflection and, more generally, of the Being of an occurrent object? This may be so, but it is unclear whether Husserl himself was fully

¹⁴¹ PCIT, appendix VI, p. 117.

¹⁴² PCIT, § 39, pp. 87-88.

¹⁴³ PCIT, appendix VI, p. 118.

¹⁴⁴ PCIT, § 36, p. 79.

¹⁴⁵ PCIT, appendix IX, p. 123.

aware of the implications of these analyses. That he was not thus aware is also suggested by the fact that, alongside the passages mentioned above, we find others in which experiences are said to be immanent objects.¹⁴⁶ It seems to remain true, then, that Husserl did not systematically move beyond the horizon of questioning constituted by the guiding idea of experiences as ‘adequately given’ in reflection, and this is Heidegger’s central criticism we have discussed in this chapter.

In following Heidegger’s analysis, we have aimed to bring to the fore those implicit limitations that are, in one way or other, connected with *the neglect of the question of Being and its sense*. The fact that, the interrogation of the sense of Being, and of the Being of the intentional in particular, is necessary rather than optional, should, if our interpretations of Heidegger’s analyses are adequate, be by now evident. If whatever is manifests itself in intentionality, then an analysis of the Being of intentionality is a *presupposition* of the analysis of Being *tout court*. It should also be evident that classical phenomenology operates in the neglect of explicitly posing this question and often follows in an uncritical manner certain traditional assumptions, especially when it comes to the most primordial determination of the theme most proper to it, intentionality. In defining its thematic subject matter, not out of the matters themselves, but out of an old traditional prejudgment of it, phenomenology comes to contradict the maxim of its own philosophical research and becomes ‘*unphenomenological*, that is to say, purportedly phenomenological’.¹⁴⁷ For, whenever the question of the Being of an entity is raised, Husserlian phenomenology tends to take up determinations of Being and categories which can be found already in Plato or Aristotle. The problem with recurring to the traditional definitions of Being does not mean that those determinations are worthless; on the contrary, the point of Heidegger’s objection is that classical phenomenology merely uses these definitions without taking any trouble to actually bring the question of Being into an interrogative experience. He says:

¹⁴⁶ E.g. PCIT, § 37.

¹⁴⁷ HCT, p.128.

The question posed by Plato in the Sophist, ‘what then do you mean when you use [the word] ‘Being’? In short, what does ‘Being’ mean? This question is vigorously posed, so full of life. But ever since Aristotle it has grown mute, so mute in fact that we have continually dealt with Being in the determinations and perspectives handed down by the Greeks. So muted is this question that we think we are raising it without actually coming within its reach at all, without seeing that the mere application of old concepts, whether these be the expressly conscious and most traditional concepts or the even more abundant unconscious and self-evident concepts, does not yet and does not really include the question of Being.¹⁴⁸

We have reached the end of our initial discussion of phenomenology. The principal task that we had set ourselves was to understand the context through which Heidegger came to formulate the question of Being. With this aim in mind, the text we have mainly analysed has shown at once Heidegger’s affiliation with phenomenology, but also his reasons for his breakaway from Husserl and traditional phenomenology. In the course of this chapter, we have made an attempt to clarify his understanding of phenomenology, its meaning, its method of inquiry and his criticism of phenomenological research. Whether Heidegger remains a phenomenologist throughout his career is a question that we leave open. In the next chapter we shall look at Heidegger’s approach to the question of Being in the context of *Being and Time* and consider the implications of his analysis with regard to the question of nothing.

¹⁴⁸ HCT, p.129.

Chapter II

The Nothingness of Being-in-the-World

Heidegger's critique of Husserl enables us to see to what extent the question of Being and, indeed, the sense of Being as such, are relevant to phenomenological enquiry.¹ In fact, it was a reflection upon the neglect of the question of the Being of the *intentional* – a kind of immanent critique of Husserlian phenomenology – that showed the continuing but unacknowledged, 'forgotten' relevance and urgency of the problematic of Being in general. In *Being and Time*, considered by many his *magnum opus* and first published in 1927, Heidegger takes up the question and attempts to work out the sense of Being by considering the Being of the entities themselves. He does this by shifting the focus of discussion, for reasons which will emerge, from the Being of *intentionality* or 'consciousness' to the Being of the privileged entity named '*Dasein*', but also addressing - to a much lesser extent - the kinds of entities characterized in their mode of Being as '*ready-to-hand*' and '*present-at-hand*'. The analysis of *Dasein* constitutes the main content of *Being and Time* and in elucidating the method and design of his investigation, Heidegger speaks of the ontological analytic of *Dasein* as uncovering the ground for an understanding of the meaning of Being in general.

As we shall see in the course of our analysis, Heidegger asserts an equivalence of Being and meaning, so that any attempt to conceive the two terms apart amounts to 'non-sense'. This point is of paramount importance in relation to our concern with Being. For to the extent that Being is meaning or significance, we may understand its converse (that is, 'Nothing', in traditional terminology) as the collapse of significance, or meaninglessness. But such an interpretation, even if correct, would be no more than an empty claim if we fail to bring into evidence the

¹ 'Phenomenological questioning in its innermost tendency itself leads to the question of the Being of the intentional and before anything else to the question of the sense of Being as such'. (HCT, p. 136).

why and the how of this equation and neglect Heidegger's discussion of those structures and significances that belong to Being.

In this chapter, we shall therefore give a detailed interpretation of central strands in Heidegger's 'fundamental ontology' of *Being and Time*, the work in which Heidegger resurrects the question of Being from the neglect into which it has fallen, as he had argued in *History of The Concept of Time*. No understanding of Heidegger's philosophy of Being, either in the 'earlier' or the 'later' phases of his path of thinking, is possible, we believe, without an adequate interpretation of the ground-breaking argument of *Being and Time*. However, since this thesis is not entirely about *Being and Time*, we have found it necessary to be selective. We have focused in greater detail on those aspects of Heidegger's argument which we regard as central to the issue of primary interest to us: Being and its relation to Nothing. Our trajectory in this chapter will therefore begin (in Sections 1 to 4) with an examination of the methodological points addressed by Heidegger in the Introduction: the idea of a phenomenological approach to ontology, and the priority of human being (*Dasein*). For Heidegger, the path towards an understanding of Being in general must lead through an understanding of the essentially individualized Being of one particular kind of entity: *Dasein*. We shall not attempt to assess this claim in advance of having followed through its implications and ramifications in Heidegger's existential analytic, but we shall return to an assessment of the reasons for it at the end of our path through *Being and Time* (in Section 11). Once it is accepted that an adequate approach to the question of Being needs to proceed via an elucidation of the mode of Being of *Dasein*, it becomes necessary to unravel the complex web of structural moments which constitute the Being of this entity: consequently we shall need to explicate *Dasein's* structure as being-in-the-world and its various structural moments. This task will have to include an analysis of the world as environment (Sections 5 and 6), and of being-in as the ecstatic structure of projection, affectedness, and falling (Section 7). It is only on the basis of this understanding of the fundamental structure of everyday being-in-the-world that we can grasp the

significance of Heidegger's analysis of *authentic* being-in-the-world as resolvedness and its structural moments: anxiety (Section 8), anticipatory being-towards-death (Section 9), and the call of conscience (Section 10). In authentic being-in-the-world *Dasein* becomes transparent to itself in its own Being, and this transparency, as we shall see, reveals to *Dasein* its Being as essentially co-constituted by not-ness (*Nichtigkeit*). It is here that Heidegger's profound analysis of the essential identity-in-difference of Being and Nothing will first make its appearance, albeit within the restricted context of an analysis of the Being of the entity he calls *Dasein*. Since, as Heidegger insists, authenticity is only an existential *modification* of inauthentic being-in-the-world, it essentially *presupposes* the earlier analysis of average everydayness, which is therefore far from indispensable and cannot simply be left behind, if what Heidegger means by 'authenticity' is to be understood aright. The analysis of authentic resolvedness – that is, of the pre-judgemental self-transparency of *Dasein* as constituted in its Being by *Nichtigkeit* – is in its turn not superseded, but rather presupposed by Heidegger's later approach towards the question of Being (and Nothing) 'as such', which will occupy us from chapter III onwards.

Being and Time is of course an extraordinarily complex text and our focus on the central issue of Being in its relation to Nothing has forced us to neglect some aspects of the argument presented in it. Among the areas we have (relatively) neglected are Heidegger's analysis of everyday being-with-others (*das Man*), and his analysis of discourse as an *existentiale*. More controversially, perhaps, we shall not examine in detail Heidegger's interpretation of the structure of being-in-the-world in terms of temporality in Division Two of *Being and Time*, although we shall briefly indicate the kind of approach to this aspect of the work which seems to us most fruitful (see Section 7). It is perhaps arguable that Heidegger's analysis of care in Division One does more to illuminate the later analyses on temporality in Division Two than *vice versa*. Some influential commentators have even argued that the reluctance of many interpreters to engage in detail with the analysis of temporality has its ground in deep-seated problems in this analysis itself, and that little is lost through this relative

neglect of it.² But we need not take a position on these debates here. It may suffice to say that, in the context of *our* question, the detailed analysis of temporality is less central than other aspects of *Being and Time*, and we have therefore focused on the latter. As regards the important question of history, which comes into view in chapter 5 of Division Two of *Being and Time*, we shall leave this question for consideration in the context of later works by Heidegger (see chapters III to V of this thesis).

1. Heidegger's Approach to Ontology in *Being and Time*

Heidegger, in outlining the details of his procedure, announces as a necessary preliminary task needing to be performed the task of *destroying* the traditional content of ancient ontology. The destruction of the history of ontology, despite sounding negative, is not so in its aim ('to bury the past in nullity is not the purpose of this destruction'³). Quite the contrary, Heidegger argues that by loosening up the hardened traditions we might dismantle certain concealments and thus arrive 'at those primordial experiences in which we achieved our first ways of determining the nature of Being'.⁴ And as all understandings and interpretations of Being are carried out within the horizon of time, an adequate interpretation of Being depends on whether or not our conception of time is genuine in the first place. For 'time has long functioned as an ontological - or rather an ontical - criterion for naïvely discriminating various realms of entities'.⁵ Here, of course, Heidegger alludes to the traditional procedure of dividing entities into 'temporal', 'a-temporal' and 'supra-temporal' where 'timeless' or 'eternal' meanings are contrasted with meanings that are 'temporal' in the sense of 'being in time'.

² This thesis is especially associated with the controversial claims made by Margot Fleischer, *Die Zeitanalysen in Heideggers 'Sein und Zeit'*, (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1991). I am grateful for this reference to my supervisor, Dr. Peter Poellner.

³ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), p.44. Henceforth cited as BT.

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ BT, p.39.

Hitherto no one has asked or troubled to investigate how time has come to have this distinctive ontological function, or with what right anything like time functions as such a criterion; nor has anyone asked whether the authentic ontological relevance which is possible for it, gets expressed when 'time' is used in so naïvely ontological a manner. Time has acquired this 'self-evident' ontological function 'of its own accord' so to speak; indeed it has done so within the horizon of the way it is ordinarily understood.⁶

In considering the basis of ancient ontology in the light of the problematic of temporality, Heidegger's main objective is to show that the Greeks gained an understanding of Being in terms of time, i.e. in terms of *παρουσία* or *ουσία* which means 'presence' (in an ontologico-temporal sense). Accordingly, the Greeks comprehended entities in their Being as 'presence' and this means that the entities were grasped 'with regard to a definite mode of time - the 'present'.⁷ Since Aristotle's essay on time, Heidegger says, *all* interpretations of this phenomenon, be it that of Kant or that of Bergson, have remained essentially Greek, that is, Aristotelian in their basic ontological orientation, consequently in their treatment of the phenomenon of time. Heidegger, in thus arguing for the historical significance of the intricate relation between time and the meaning of Being, sees the task of destroying traditional ontology as an inevitable process on the way to elucidating the meaning of Being: 'the question of Being does not achieve its true concreteness until we have carried through the process of destroying the ontological tradition'.⁸

Phenomenology in Heidegger's understanding means, as we recall from chapter I, *αποφαινέσθαι τα φαινόμενα* – 'to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself'.⁹ But, what is it that phenomenology is to let us see and what is it that it calls a 'phenomenon' in a distinctive sense? It is what proximally and for the most part does *not manifestly* show itself:

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ BT, p.47.

⁸ BT, p.48.

⁹ BT, p.58.

It is something that lies hidden, in contrast to that which proximally and for the most part shows itself; but at the same time it is something that belongs to what thus shows itself and it belongs to it so essentially as to constitute its meaning and its ground.¹⁰

But as we saw in chapter I, the ‘hidden’ (i.e. that which is replaced, covered up or disguised) which phenomenology cares about is not this or that entity but the Being of entities. And because this Being can be covered up, hence hidden to such an extent that it could be completely forgotten, phenomenology seeks to work out ways in which Being can *become* a phenomenon in terms of its ownmost content. In other words, because ‘covered-up-ness’ is a modification of ‘phenomenon’¹¹ and because the phenomena are often *not* given (in the sense of manifestly showing themselves as themselves), there is a need for phenomenology and indeed a phenomenological method of description as interpretation or hermeneutic. Phenomenology, therefore, becomes the mode of access to what is to be the theme of ontology. In fact, Heidegger maintains ‘*only as phenomenology, is ontology possible*’¹², and adds: ‘with regard to its subject-matter, phenomenology is the science of the Being of entities - ontology’.¹³

[O]ntology and phenomenology are not two distinct philosophical disciplines among others. These terms characterize philosophy itself with regard to its object and its way of treating that object. Philosophy is universal phenomenological ontology, and takes its departure from the hermeneutic of *Dasein*, which, as an analytic of existence, has made fast the guiding-line for all philosophical enquiry at the point where it arises and to which it returns.¹⁴

2. The Formulation of the Question of Being

The enquiry on Being begins, characteristically, via a reflection upon the formal structure of an enquiry (that is, any enquiry) where Heidegger makes a number of remarks on what essentially belongs to any question whatsoever and how enquiry

¹⁰ BT, p.59.

¹¹ BT, p.60.

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ BT, p.61.

¹⁴ BT, p.62.

operates. He argues that an enquiry, as a kind of seeking, must be guided in advance by what is sought, i.e. it must contain ‘that which is asked about’ and ‘that which is interrogated’. That is to say, the ‘object’ of the enquiry must already be present in the question. In other words, ‘in what is asked about there lies also *that which is to be found out by the asking*’.¹⁵

Now if the asking is about Being, the question becomes a peculiar one. For, when we enquire about something, we take no notice of the ‘is’ that we use constantly in order to formulate our questions. In fact, in an ordinary enquiry, the ‘is’ has no other sense than that of highlighting the intended object. But, as soon as we focus the attention upon the ‘is’ itself and ask, for example, ‘what is *is*?’, the enquiry appears to lose its sense altogether as we fail to grasp the ‘object’ of the question. This indicates to what extent Being, as that which is interrogated, is unlike any other object of enquiry and to what extent it requires an approach other than ones we are accustomed to. Hence Heidegger argues, in order to succeed in an investigation that is about Being, the question of Being must be *formulated* with special care. And in order to formulate the question adequately we must know about the structural characteristics of an enquiry and be able to see what the question could ask for and what information, or sight, it might already contain.

Heidegger, from the very beginning, renders clear that what should be at issue with regard to Being, is the *sense* or the *meaning* of Being. The question, therefore, does not ask, ‘what is Being?’, or whether there is anything like Being at all. It, rather, asks *what is the sense of Being? What is understood and what is meant by ‘Being’?*¹⁶ As the question becomes specific, the enquirer assumes a particular position with regard to Being. For, the question of Being, thus formulated, reveals in advance several factors both about Being and the questioner of Being. What does the question reveal? To begin with, the questionability of the sense of Being shows that Being may lay its meaning open or *make itself accessible* to the questioner. It also

¹⁵ BT, p.24.

¹⁶ Heidegger’s reason for formulating the question thus will be analysed in Section 11 of this chapter.

shows that the questioner *already knows of Being* or has a certain understanding of Being - an understanding which despite being vague and indeterminate is nevertheless of prime importance.

Out of this understanding arise both the explicit question of the meaning of Being and the tendency that leads us towards its conception. We do not *know* what 'Being' means. But even if we ask, 'What is "Being"?', we keep within an understanding of the 'is', though we are unable to fix conceptually what that 'is' signifies. We do not even know the horizon in terms of which that meaning is to be grasped and fixed. *But this average understanding of Being is still a fact.*¹⁷

Furthermore, the question shows that Being must be *presupposed* at the beginning of the enquiry. For even if, as Heidegger points out, 'such "presupposing" has nothing to do with laying down an axiom from which a sequence of propositions is deductively derived'¹⁸, the question nonetheless affirms in advance that Being is *necessarily* meaningful. This seems to imply somehow ambiguously that, whatever 'Being' might mean, this meaning belongs to Being itself.

Hence, the formulation of the question, we may say, conditions and guides the enquiry in a certain specific fashion. For if, as the question suggests, Being is meaning, or, *to be is to mean* something, and if this meaning should belong to Being itself, then the task of bringing forward the meaning of Being, could *not* entail *giving* meaning to the latter but, rather, *revealing* those meanings that belong to Being itself. These are meanings that are either hidden from us, or were once revealed but have now become forgotten, buried over or distorted by misunderstandings throughout history. In fact, it is, in part, due to these historical distortions, that Heidegger insists upon raising the question of Being anew. For, as we saw in our discussion of Husserl, without raising this question explicitly, philosophical enquiries as well as the endeavours of the positive sciences operate within a naïve and limited frame of presuppositions taken over uncritically from the tradition.¹⁹

¹⁷ BT, p.25.

¹⁸ BT, p.28.

¹⁹ Heidegger maintains that scientists and philosophers alike have forgotten the question of Being and have, rather, grown complacent in their interrogative attitude with regard to the meaning of Being.

Basically, all ontology, no matter how rich and firmly compacted a system of categories it has at its disposal, remains blind and perverted from its ownmost aim, if it has not first adequately clarified the meaning of Being, and conceived this clarification as its fundamental task.²⁰

In examining the structure of the question of Being, we notice that the question, ‘what does “Being” mean?’, despite its precise formulation, still contains perplexities. To say the least, the question announces two enquiries at once, namely: What does ‘Being’ mean in the case of this and that entity? What does ‘Being’ mean in general? Here, the twofold character of the question engenders a certain uncertainty as to with which one of these questions the enquiry on Being must begin. For, if we start by considering the former question first, then we would run immediately into the following difficulty: we say the chair *is* just as much as honesty *is*, justice *is* - the wind *is* just as much as man *is*, the world *is*, god *is*. Now, how should we be able to enquire about the meaning of ‘is’ in relation to each entity, without already knowing what ‘*is*’ means in the first instance? For, how are we to know whether or not the ‘*is*’ maintains always one and the same meaning in all the above mentioned examples, without having yet answered the question of the meaning of Being in general? But, if we make the enquiry into the meaning of Being-as-such our prior task, where or in which direction do we have to look in order to discern the meaning of Being in general yet remain faithful to the principle of phenomenological research, that is, without running into total abstraction.

Conceding that there are two questions within the very same enquiry and perhaps a quasi circularity²¹ within the formulation of the question of Being, it might

Hence, he asks, how come that today we are not even bothered by the very question that troubled the mind of thinkers such as Parmenides, Plato and Aristotle? And what does this neglect, this omission of the question of Being reveal? It reveals the history of our own Being which has become one of decadence: ‘That this neglect is possible and reigns in this manner for thousands of years manifests a particular mode of Being of *Dasein*, a specific tendency towards decadence [*Verfall*]. This means that *Dasein* in this mode of Being of falling [*Verfallen*], from which it does not escape, first really comes to its Being when it rebels against this tendency’. (HCT, pp.129-130). This *historical* dimension in the neglect of the question of Being is taken up in much greater detail in Heidegger’s later works. See esp. our discussion in chapters III to V.

²⁰ BT, p.31.

²¹ Heidegger is, of course, aware of the charge that his approach to the question of Being is a circular one. But he rejects such criticisms by saying that ‘factically there is no circle at all in formulating our

nevertheless be helpful to recall that Being, for Heidegger, is (in *Being and Time* as it was in the *History of the Concept of Time*) always the Being of entities themselves - entities that *are* and are in their Being *as they are*.²² Hence, in speaking of ‘Being in general’, the latter should *not* be understood as yet another being, that is, another entity. For, Being is and always remains the Being of the entities themselves. In Heidegger’s words, Being is that ‘which determines entities as entities, that on the basis of which entities are already understood’.²³ For, ‘everything we have in view, everything towards which we comport ourselves in any way, is Being, what we are is Being, and so is how we are. Being lies in the fact that something is, and in its being as it is’.²⁴ If, in accordance with Heidegger’s elucidation, we say that Being encompasses *all that is*, then it follows that Being is not a mere moment in the process of thinking; but that which is itself the primordial *source* of thinking; that which provokes and calls for thinking. But does such an account of Being make the task of finding a right beginning any easier? If Being ‘permeates’ everything which entity should be considered first as to its Being?

3. The Priority of *Dasein*

In Heidegger’s view, the only way to make a beginning is to choose one entity first and aim to render this entity transparent in its own Being. To justify the choice that is to be made, Heidegger points to the fact that ‘the questioning is itself an entity which is given with the question of the Being of an entity in the act of carrying out the

question as we have described. One can determine the nature of entities in their Being without necessarily having the explicit concept of the meaning of Being at one’s disposal. Otherwise there could have been no ontological knowledge heretofore. Of course “Being” has been presupposed in all ontology up till now, but not as a concept at one’s disposal - not as the sort of thing we are seeking. This “presupposing” of Being has rather the character of taking a look at it beforehand, so that in the light of it the entities presented to us get provisionally articulated in their Being. This guiding activity of taking a look at Being arises from the average understanding of Being in which we always operate and which in the end belongs to the essential constitution of *Dasein* itself. (BT, pp. 27-28).

²² In this respect, Heidegger’s approach in BT corresponds to *one* element of *metaphysical* philosophy as characterized later by him (e.g. in the essay ‘Nihilism as Determined by the History of Being’). Metaphysics does not question Being *as such*, but rather enquires about the Being of entities. Where the approach of BT differs from any metaphysical approach is in the recognition that there is an entity (*Dasein*) who is not defined by an *essentia* or whatness, but whose ‘essence’ is to exist.

²³ BT, pp.25-26.

²⁴ *ibid.*

questioning'.²⁵ This indicates that the entity from which we must take our departure could neither be optional nor chosen arbitrarily. Rather, it must be that entity for which the very question of Being is an issue. The entity that questions, that seeks to discern, to determine Being, and has all these behaviors as constitutive modes of its Being, is no other than we ourselves, the *questioners*. Heidegger denotes this entity 'which each of us is himself and which includes enquiring as one of the possibilities of its Being',²⁶ by the term *Dasein*. Hence, the exposition of the constitution of *Dasein* and the analysis of its meaning become the substantial theme of *Being and Time*.²⁷

Heidegger, however, renders explicit that the elaboration of the 'existential analytic of *Dasein*', which earlier was defined in terms of 'the phenomenology of *Dasein*'²⁸, does not originate from a special kind of interest in the psychology of man or from a particular interest in anthropology. Rather, the decision springs from the fact that *Dasein*, as the questioner of Being, shows a distinct *relatedness towards Being* as it continually renders this very question an issue for itself. As we shall see, implicit in Heidegger's approach is the idea that Being can only be understood *in relation to that which understands it* - i.e. Being is intrinsically and essentially meaning/sense and therefore we need to investigate what 'making sense' or 'significance' means and how it characterizes itself. That is to say, *Dasein* in being

²⁵ HCT, p.147.

²⁶ BT, p.26.

²⁷ In our previous discussion (in chapter I), the position assigned to intentionality by Husserl might have provided us already with an idea as to what entity constitutes the real theme of phenomenology. One might, accordingly, view Heidegger's almost exclusive elaboration of *Dasein*, as a subtle continuity between the former theme of phenomenology (intentionality), and the present theme of *Being and Time* (*Dasein*). But this would in some ways be misleading. As Dreyfus, among others, stresses, *Dasein*, which in colloquial German can mean 'everyday human existence', is not a conscious subject, though 'many interpreters make just this mistake. They see Heidegger as an "existential phenomenologist", which means to them an edifying elaboration of Husserl. The most famous version of this mistake is Sartre's brilliant but misguided reformulation of *Being and Time* into a theory of consciousness in *Being and Nothingness*. The best way to understand what Heidegger means by *Dasein* is to think of our term "human being", which can refer to a way of Being that is characteristic of people or to a specific person - a human being. The challenge is to do justice to the fact that *Dasein* names beings like you and me, while at the same time preserving the strategy of *Being and Time*, which is to reverse the Cartesian tradition by making the individual subject somehow dependent upon shared social practices'. See Hubert Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, pp.13-14.

²⁸ HCT, p.148.

as it is, always comports itself ‘freely’ or ‘spontaneously’ towards Being, for Being always means something to it. Hence, the fact that the question of the meaning of *Dasein* assumes priority in the enquiry concerning the meaning of Being in general, does not assert an evaluative or a chronological priority of *Dasein* over above *Sein* (Being). But because *Dasein* shows to have a special relation towards Being, Heidegger seeks to work out the meaning of Being by considering first the sense of *Dasein* - that is, the sense of its ‘being-there’, because *Dasein* somehow understands itself in its Being.

There is some way in which *Dasein* understands itself in its Being, and that to some degree it does so explicitly. It is peculiar to this entity that with and through its Being, this Being is disclosed to it. *Understanding of Being is itself a definite characteristic of Dasein's Being. Dasein is ontically distinctive in that it is ontological.*²⁹

Considering the question of *Dasein's* priority in a historical context, Heidegger turns his attention particularly to Aristotle and Aquinas. He argues that despite their failure to grasp *Dasein's* genuine ontological structure, its ontico-ontological priority was nevertheless pointed out by them quite early. Aristotle, for instance, with regard to the question of ‘what makes the Being of man’ talks about man’s soul in terms of entities (*η ψυχη τα οντα πως εστιν*). He says, ‘the soul which makes up the Being of man’ has many ways of being among which *αισθησις* and *νοησις* are those in which the soul discovers always entities in their Being (both in the fact that they are, and in their being as they are). In following Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas employs

²⁹ BT, p.32. In this connection we need to recall the sense of *τα οντα* and *λογος*, discussed previously, in order to gain a clue as to what Heidegger means by terms such as ‘ontical’ and ‘ontological’. We need, however, to explicate their senses further. The expression ‘ontic’ is often used by Heidegger in order to designate beings a in mere *apophantic* sense. So terms such as ‘ontic’ and ‘ontical’ concerns beings (*τα οντα*) in their emergence as ‘this’ and ‘that’. (See Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, p. 20) Of course, *Dasein* like other entities is also an ontic being except that *Dasein* in being ontical is, at the same time, onto-logical because it has an *interpretation* of Being. *Dasein* being ontico-ontological, therefore, means that this ontic being has, so to speak, always a ‘*λογος*’ of Being. Here, *λογος* stands for an *un-theoretical* understanding or, if we like, an interpretation that is not yet developed in any explicit way. But if, Heidegger adds, ‘we should reserve the term “ontology” for that theoretical enquiry which is explicitly devoted to the meaning of entities, then what we had in mind in speaking of *Dasein's* “being-ontological” is to be designated as something “*pre-ontological*”.’ (BT, p. 32).

Aristotle's notion of the soul to discuss those characters of Being that *transcend* every possible classification in the sense of some generic kind of subject-matter. Thus engaged in the task of deriving the '*transcendentia*', Aquinas aims to demonstrate 'that the *verum* is such a *transcendens*'.³⁰ To this end he refers to an entity whose way of Being is most appropriate to 'come together with' entities of other kinds. 'This distinctive entity, the *ens quod natum est convenire cum omni ente*, is the soul (*anima*). Here the priority of "*Dasein*" over all other entities emerges, although it has not been ontologically clarified. This priority has obviously nothing in common with a vicious subjectivizing of the totality of entities'.³¹

The point of this discussion lies in Heidegger's aim to establish a historical precedent for the ontico-ontological priority of *Dasein* in order to provide a grounded demonstration that could clarify the necessity for *fundamental ontology*. By the term '*fundamental ontology*' Heidegger means to distinguish the ontological enquiry that seeks for the meaning of Being through the existential analytic of *Dasein*, from ontologies pursued otherwise. For he says, '*fundamental ontology*, from which alone all other ontologies can take their rise, must be sought in the *existential analytic of Dasein*'.³² It is clear that what renders this ontology 'fundamental' is *Dasein*'s ontico-ontological priority over all other entities. This, in the case of any ontology that has for its theme entities whose character of Being is other than that of *Dasein*, means that the very possibility for having such ontologies is founded upon *Dasein*'s ontical structure, 'in which a pre-ontological understanding of Being is comprised as a definite characteristic'.³³ *Dasein*, for instance, has the possibility of understanding the ways of Being which are not necessarily that of its own. Sciences, we may say, are ways in which *Dasein* comports itself towards various entities.

Dasein then revealed itself as that entity which must first be worked out in an ontologically adequate manner, if the enquiry is to become a transparent one. But now it has been shown

³⁰ BT, p.34.

³¹ *ibid.*

³² *ibid.*

³³ BT, p.33.

that the ontological analytic of *Dasein* in general is what makes up the fundamental ontology, so that *Dasein* functions as that entity which in principle is to be interrogated beforehand as to its Being.³⁴

The first step, in carrying out the task of *fundamental ontology*, consists of understanding and interpreting *Dasein* as this entity which is accessible to us. To avoid misunderstandings of *Dasein*'s ontico-ontological priority, Heidegger adds:

In demonstrating that *Dasein* is ontico-ontologically prior, we may have misled the reader into supposing that this entity must also be what is given as ontico-ontologically primary not only in the sense that it can itself be grasped 'immediately', but also in that the kind of Being which it possesses is presented just as 'immediately'. Ontically, of course, *Dasein* is not only close to us - even that which is closest: we *are* it, each of us, we ourselves. In spite of this, or rather for just this reason, it is ontologically that which is the farthest. To be sure, its ownmost Being is such that it has an understanding of that Being, and already maintains itself in each case as if its Being has been interpreted in some manner.³⁵

Certainly, by saying that '*Dasein*'s own Being is thus interpreted pre-ontologically in the way which lies closest',³⁶ Heidegger does not mean to say that such pre-ontological interpretation of oneself provides an appropriate guidance when considering one's ownmost state of Being as an ontological theme. He rather points out that, though ontically *Dasein* is 'closest' to itself, and pre-ontologically it is 'surely not a stranger', *ontologically*, however, *Dasein* is '*farthest*' to itself.³⁷

Summarizing the reasons why *Dasein* should be the entity which must first be interrogated ontologically, we may say that the first priority is an ontical one: '*Dasein* is an entity whose Being has the determinate character of existence'.³⁸ The second priority, following from this, is *Dasein*'s ontological character: '*Dasein* is in itself "ontological", because existence is thus determinative for it. But with equal primordially *Dasein* also possesses - as constitutive for its understanding of existence - an understanding of the Being of all entities of a character other than its

³⁴ BT, p.35.

³⁵ *ibid.*

³⁶ *ibid.*

³⁷ BT, p.36.

³⁸ BT, p.34.

own'.³⁹ On the basis of the first and second characterization, *Dasein* gains a third priority, i.e. it provides the ontico-ontological condition for the possibility of other ontologies.

Heidegger's explanation of why any interrogation of Being must begin with the Being of *Dasein* is thus a development and modification of the earlier phenomenological idea, to be found in Husserl above all, that any elucidation of the 'sense' of entities presupposes a phenomenological analysis of that through which any such sense is 'constituted', which for him was of course intentional experiences or transcendental 'consciousness'. Since, as we saw earlier, for Husserl there could not *be* any entities which did not manifest themselves by way of some kind of sense – that is, in some mode of givenness – this implied, as Heidegger understood clearly, that any phenomenological analysis of the very Being of entities requires from the outset an analysis of the mode of Being and the structure of 'intentionality'.

4. *Dasein's* Existence

In the vocabulary of *Being and Time*, the mode of Being in terms of which *Dasein* always understands itself and towards which it can always, in one way or other, comport itself is called 'existence' (*Existenz*). Just as the term '*Dasein*' serves to bring into evidence the distinctiveness of this entity, so the term 'existence' serves to highlight the *way* through which *Dasein is* and is 'as' it is rather than 'what' it is. So the designation of this entity in terms of '*Dasein*' does not express its 'what' but points to its being-(there). Thus because *Dasein's* essence cannot be defined by 'citing a "what" of the kind that pertains to a subject-matter',⁴⁰ Heidegger declares '*Dasein's* essence lies in its existence', that is, in the fact that *Dasein* exists and has, as its own, its existence to be. Therefore, 'its being-what-it-is (*essentia*) must, so far as we can speak of it at all, be conceived in terms of its Being (*existentia*)'.⁴¹

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ BT, p.32.

⁴¹ BT, p.67.

But the meaning of term ‘existence’ must be distinguished from the ontological signification of the traditional term ‘*existentia*’ because the latter term, ontologically speaking, amounts to a mode of Being which is essentially inappropriate to an entity such as *Dasein*. That is to say, because all elucidations of *Dasein* are obtained by considering *Dasein*’s existence-structure, or because the characters of its Being are defined in terms of existentiality, Heidegger calls these ‘*existentialia*’ rather than ‘categories’. Accordingly, *Dasein*’s characteristics should never be understood as properties, for *Dasein* ‘is never to be taken ontologically as an instance or special case of some genus of entities’.⁴² This means that, the *existentialia* and categories are fundamentally distinct from one another and the entities which correspond to them require different kinds of primary interrogation. In Heidegger’s words, ‘an entity is either a “who” (existence) or a “what” (presence-at-hand in the broadest sense)’.⁴³

To avoid getting bewildered, we shall always use the interpretative expression ‘presence-at-hand’ for the term ‘*existentia*’, while the term ‘existence’, as a designation of Being, will be allotted solely to *Dasein*.⁴⁴

Hence, we may say, for example, *Dasein* exists, but *not* gravity and light exist, because these entities have no understanding of what it is to be. To entities such as these, their Being is ‘a matter of indifference; or more precisely, they “are” such that their Being can be neither a matter of indifference to them, nor the opposite’.⁴⁵

Heidegger introduces a further distinction between ‘*existentiell*’ and ‘*existential*’ understanding. The expression ‘*existentiell*’ denotes individual *Dasein*’s understanding of itself in terms of its own existence. Such understanding does not require a theoretical perspicuousness of the ontological structure of existence. Rather, *Dasein*’s pre-ontological understanding of Being suffices in providing it with

⁴² *ibid.*

⁴³ BT, p.71.

⁴⁴ BT, p.67.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

a web of meanings or possibilities in relation to which each *individual Dasein* makes sense of its own existence. Heidegger says:

The question of existence never gets straightened out except through existing itself. The understanding of oneself which leads *along this way we call 'existentiell'*. The question of existence is one of *Dasein's* ontical 'affairs'. This does not require that the ontological structure of existence should be theoretically transparent.⁴⁶

Meanwhile, questions regarding the *structure* of existence and enquiries concerned with the constitution of existence have an analytic where the character of understanding is not *existentiell* but *existential*. Thus by 'existentiality' Heidegger means the mode of Being that is constitutive only for those entities which *can exist*, namely: *Dasein*.

5. Being-in-the-World

'Being-in-the-world' constitutes the most fundamental structural characteristic of *Dasein* - a structure which as Heidegger says, is not pieced together from parts conceivably being prior to it, but is '*a priori*', primordially a whole. Indeed, the compound expression 'being-in-the-world' seeks to emphasize the unitary aspect of this phenomenon where the sense of 'in' differs from that which designates the kind of Being which one entity has when it is spatially contained 'in' another one. For when we say, the water is 'in' the glass, or the garment is 'in' the cupboard, the 'in' denotes a relationship between two entities that are extended 'in' space and are 'at' a location *in the same way*.

The analysis of the sense of being-in leads to a clearer distinction among the modes of Being of entities and a classification of these into ontological (rather than ontic) 'kinds'.⁴⁷ One such kind is *being-present-at-hand* (*vorhanden*) which applies, among others, to entities that can be in one another because their way of Being (in the world) could be characterized through a mere location 'in' space (or time), or as

⁴⁶ BT, p.33.

⁴⁷ This classification corresponds to a certain extent to Husserl's distinction between ontological 'regions' – although Heidegger of course regards the Husserlian distinctions as not fundamental enough, remaining *within* the horizon of object-Being (presence-at-hand).

occurrences: 'all entities whose Being "in" one another can thus be described have the same kind of Being - that of being-present-at-hand - as things occurring "within" the world'.⁴⁸ The term *vorhanden*, translated usually as present-at-hand, but sometimes as 'extant' or 'occurrent', is not defined very clearly by Heidegger in *Being and Time*, but it is arguably intended to denote object-being in a broadly Husserlian sense. An object (a present-at-hand entity) is self-given 'in person' in perception ('looking') and has been individuated in such a way that it can be referred to *as the same* in *different* contexts. Thus a present-at-hand entity is essentially *abstracted* or abstractable from the original context of encounter. This implies that presence-at-hand is the mode of Being not only of spatio-temporal objects, but also of Husserl's ideal objectivities.

Now, because *Dasein*'s way of Being is unique, the sense of its 'being-in' (-the-world) cannot be the same as the water's being in the glass; for even if one is to consider *Dasein* as something extended and located in space, this will not be in the same way as water or other such entities. In fact, the 'in', according to Heidegger's analysis of *Dasein*'s mode of being-in, takes its sense from 'innan' which means 'to reside', 'to dwell'. Here, 'an' signifies 'I am accustomed', 'I am familiar with', 'I look after something'⁴⁹ and 'I am', in this connection, means 'I reside', 'I dwell alongside' the familiar world. Hence, 'being-in' as a characteristic of *Dasein*'s mode of Being, is an *existential* or *existentiale* which refers not to a special 'in-one-another-ness' of things present-at-hand, but to '*being alongside*' the world. And this, Heidegger emphasizes, 'never means anything like the being-present-at-hand-together of things that occur' just as 'there is no such thing as the "side-by-side-ness" of an entity called "*Dasein*" with another entity called "world".⁵⁰ Of course, *Dasein* is not 'worldless' and to the extent that it is spatially 'in' the world like other present-at-hand entities *Dasein* can be (within certain limits and in certain circumstances) viewed as merely present-at-hand. But, this in fact requires the viewer to ignore

⁴⁸ BT, p.79.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

⁵⁰ BT, p.80.

completely the existential state of 'being-in' as the very characteristic of *Dasein's* mode of Being. Heidegger says, 'by delimiting being-in we are not denying every kind of "spatiality" to *Dasein*. On the contrary, *Dasein* itself has a "being-in-space" of its own; but this in turn is possible only on the basis of being-in-the-world in general'.⁵¹

The consideration of *Dasein* as something that is *just* present-at-hand is certainly erroneous, but there is a certain analogue of the 'present-at-hand' that belongs solely to *Dasein* or is *Dasein's own*. For though *Dasein* can and does understand its ownmost Being as a kind of 'factual being present-at-hand', this, i.e. the *factuality* of the fact of one's own *Dasein*, its 'that it is', is ontologically different from the factual occurrence of some kind of, let us say, minerals. *Dasein* is, factually, in-a-world: 'Insideness', as we saw, could be a contingent property among other properties of two things present-at-hand, but *Dasein's* 'being-in' can never be such a property - 'a "property" which it sometimes has and sometimes does not have, and *without* which it could *be* just as well as it could with it'.⁵² *Dasein* is never "proximally" an entity which is, so to speak, free from 'being-in'-the-world, but which sometimes has the inclination to take up a "relationship" towards the world'.⁵³ Now in order to gain any understanding of the nature of such a 'relationship' we need to know what 'the world' means in this context. Evidently there is no straightforward answer to this complex and historically loaded question and Heidegger's highly elaborate discussion of the topic is not always transparent. We will, however, attempt to clarify some of the most relevant points by considering first the question of how 'the world' should be approached.

One way of approaching the world as a phenomenon would be to describe what shows itself in entities within the world and give an account of occurrences in them. But given that such accounts confine themselves to ontical descriptions of things 'in' the world and are so evidently pre-phenomenological in their approach,

⁵¹ BT, p.82.

⁵² Cf. BT, p.174.

⁵³ BT, p.84..

they are of no relevance to Heidegger's concern for the meaning of 'world'. Another way, which is no less problematic, is a kind of phenomenological account of the world such as Husserl's that aims to exhibit the Being of entities considered as present-at-hand, and attempts to fix it in categorial concepts. But, as was highlighted in chapter I, there is a problem here regarding the supposedly fundamental thinghood of 'things of nature' and the everyday 'things invested with value' which are according to Husserl and most of the tradition founded upon the former. That is to say, given that the thinghood of things 'invested with value' is ultimately based upon the thinghood of nature, all concern for the Being of the world must ultimately turn into and be founded on an investigation concerned with the Being of nature. And this in turn must become an enquiry into substances and substantiality. Now this manner of knowing the world is, as Heidegger sees it, not just limited but profoundly deficient. For to conceive the world as nature in ontologico-categorial terms is precisely to *deprive* the world of its worldhood. Hence 'neither the ontical depiction of entities within-the-world nor the ontological interpretation of their Being is such as to reach the phenomenon of the "world",⁵⁴ for in both cases the world has already been *presupposed*. In fact, 'nature as the categorial aggregate of those structures of Being which a definite entity encountered within-the-world may possess, can never make *worldhood* intelligible'⁵⁵ because 'worldhood' is a fundamental-ontological concept and *not* a categorial one. In other words, 'worldhood' stands for the structure of one of the constitutive moments of being-in-the-world, and because being-in-the-world is a way that defines *Dasein*'s character existentially, worldhood is itself an *existentiale*. Accordingly, when the world is considered ontologically, the enquiry cannot proceed by a mere identification of entities 'in' the world by categorial characteristics totally different from those of *Dasein*. Rather an ontological enquiry about the world must be carried out within the confines of the analytic of *Dasein*.

⁵⁴ BT, p.91.

⁵⁵ BT, p.93.

This means to consider *the world as a characteristic of Dasein itself* and understand it as the ‘wherein’ a factual *Dasein* as such resides.

6. The World in terms of *Dasein*'s Average Everydayness: Environment

According to Heidegger the method by which the phenomenon of the world is to be met must involve a study of everyday being-in-the-world. This average everydayness encounters the world as the *environment*:

From this existential character of average being-in-the-world, our investigation will take its course towards the idea of worldhood in general. We shall seek the worldhood of the environment by going through an ontological interpretation of those entities within-the-*environment* which we encounter as closest to us.⁵⁶

The term ‘environment’ though it might suggest an idea of spatiality - the ‘environ’ understood as ‘around’ and ‘about’ or *circa* - does not necessarily refer to space. Heidegger argues that, conversely, the spatiality suggested by the expression ‘environment’ can only become intelligible in terms of the structure of worldhood. The error made by traditional ontology consists, in fact, in beginning with spatiality and ending up consequently with an interpretation of the Being of the world as *res extensa*.⁵⁷ Meanwhile, a phenomenological exhibition of the entities encountered in the environment - of what *constitutes* the environment, in other words - requires precisely not a bare perceptual cognition, but an examination of the everyday ‘attitude’ where the entities are not considered as objects of a theoretical knowledge but are taken as what gets used, what gets produced, what gets dysfunctional and so forth. In other words, at issue here is, or should be, a certain kind of *concern* (*Besorgen*) that manipulates things and puts them to use. For ‘this is the way in

⁵⁶ BT, p.94.

⁵⁷ Heidegger’s reference is, of course, to Descartes’ idea of the world as *res extensa* and its counterpart *res cogitans* which, as Heidegger points out, ‘does not coincide with *Dasein* either ontically or ontologically’. *ibid.*

which everyday *Dasein* always is: when I open the door, I *use* the latch'.⁵⁸ Things such as 'the door', 'the latch' and all other entities that one encounters in one's concerned dealings are often referred to as *equipment* in order to avoid the term 'things' (*res*) and therefore to prevent any prejudgment on behalf of the character of thinghood.

However, as Heidegger points out, there 'is', strictly speaking, no such thing as *an* equipment but a totality of equipment to which any 'piece' of equipment essentially belongs. Such a totality is constituted by various modes of the '*in-order-to*', such as manipulability, usability, serviceability and so forth. That is to say, equipment *is* by virtue of belonging to other equipment. Hence, the '*in-order-to*' is a structure which contains an assignment or reference of something to something:

Ink-stand, pen, ink, paper, blotting pad, table, lamp, furniture, windows, doors, room. These 'things' never show themselves proximally as they are for themselves, so as to add up to a sum of *realia* and fill up a room. What we encounter as closest to us is the room; and we encounter it not as something 'between four walls' in a geometrical spatial sense, but as equipment for residing.⁵⁹

An equipment, therefore, can show itself as an individual item only because of such 'arrangement', that is, only if a *totality* of equipment has already been met, i.e. discovered. Now the kind of Being that belongs to environmental equipment, that Being in which equipment manifests itself in its own right, is what Heidegger calls '*readiness-to-hand*' (*Zuhandenheit*). An entity of this kind could certainly not be grasped thematically (as if it was an occurring thing), but can only be understood when it is used and dealt with. When hammering with a hammer, for example, or in other such dealings whereby something gets used, the '*in-order-to*', or instrumental character, which is constitutive for the equipment we are using, is unthematic background, being subordinated to our concern. In fact, 'the less we just stare at [thematically perceive] the hammer-thing, and the more we seize hold of it and use it, the more primordial does our relationship to it become, and the more unveiledly is

⁵⁸ BT, p.96. (My emphasis).

⁵⁹ BT, pp.97-98.

it encountered as that which it is - as equipment'.⁶⁰ Heidegger means to say that the kind of *manipulability* specific to the hammer is essentially uncovered through the hammering itself and not through looking at it ('intuiting it') in a detached objectifying manner. But the manipulation and the use that we make of equipment is not merely a 'blind' activity. Implicitly drawing a contrast with the classical (and Husserlian) idea of adequate understanding as *intuitus*, Heidegger says that the use of environmental equipment is rather guided by having a 'sight' of their own kind - a sight which he calls *circumspection*. Here, the distinction between 'practical' and 'theoretical' does not consist of acting blindly in one case and detached observing in the other, as if an act without theoretical cognition must be sightless. Rather, just as 'non-circumspective' observation is not a rule free looking, absorbed skillful *Besorgen*, Heidegger maintains, does require 'observation' but such observation is not of the detached theoretical kind.⁶¹

The work that one finds or encounters in one's concerned dealings, that is, when one is working on something, as when hammering with the hammer or sewing with the needle, is the work to be produced as the 'towards-which' of equipment such as the hammer and the needle. As the work itself has a peculiar *usability* which belongs to it essentially, the kind of Being proper to it is, therefore, that of equipment. In this usability 'it [the work] lets us encounter already the "towards-which" for which *it* is usable. A work that someone has ordered is only by reason of its use and the assignment-context of entities which is discovered in using it'.⁶²

But what precisely is revealed along with equipment that we use? Heidegger says, as the 'environment' is discovered, 'nature' is encountered too. This is the

⁶⁰ *ibid.*

⁶¹ There has been some debate on how this 'sight' of circumspection is to be understood. Given Heidegger's emphasis on the 'inconspicuousness' and 'withdrawal' of the 'with-which', the 'in-order-to' and the 'werein' of everyday *Besorgen*, it seems most appropriate to interpret circumspection as a mode of unthematic ('background') awareness. See e.g. Hubert Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, pp. 64-69. Others have questioned, however, whether such skillful everyday coping can be adequately elucidated as involving only unthematic awareness. See e.g. Theodore Schatzki, 'Coping with Others with Folk Psychology', in: M. Wrathall and J. Malpas (eds.), *Heidegger, Coping, and Cognitive Science*, (Cambridge/Mass.:MIT Press, 2000), especially pp. 35-38.

⁶² BT, p.99.

‘nature’ which we find in what he calls natural products (presumably products made from natural materials) and which should neither be understood as ‘the power of nature’ nor as mere presence-at-hand. For when nature becomes a present-at-hand decontextualized object, ‘the nature which “stirs and strives”, which assails us and enralls us as landscape, remains hidden’.⁶³ In any case, readiness-to-hand is the kind of Being that pertains to envioning nature:

In roads, bridges, buildings, our concern discovers nature as having some definite direction. A covered railway platform takes account of bad weather; an installation for public lighting takes account of the darkness, or rather of specific changes in the presence or absence of daylight - ‘the position of the sun’. In a clock, account is taken of some definite constellation in the world-system. When we make use of the clock-equipment, which is proximally and inconspicuously ready-to-hand, the envioning nature is ready-to-hand along with it.⁶⁴

It must be pointed out that Heidegger, despite a certain ambivalence, does not intend to say that because of *our* concernful dealing with things, these entities which are *in themselves* present-at-hand are *for us* ready-to-hand. For this would mean that the Being of the entities ‘in-and-for-itself’ is one thing while this Being *for Dasein* is quite another. And this amounts to saying that readiness-to-hand is one of *Dasein*’s idiosyncratic (subjective) modes of determining entities. But, being-ready-to-hand, in Heidegger’s account, is not merely one possible way of *looking at* the entities encountered, nor is it a way of delineating some of their aspects. Readiness-to-hand, rather, defines entities as they are *in themselves*, that is, ontologico-categorially. Of course, in the process of dealings and work, whereby the entities are encountered and discovered, the person is always there along with the work that comes forth. And because the work which is produced has an *assignment* to the person who is to use it, there will always be along the ready-to-hand entities also that entity for which the product is ready-to-hand, namely *Dasein*. In other words: there is a *reciprocal dependency* here. Just as the mode of Being of *Dasein* can only be elucidated

⁶³ BT, p.100. In this passage, however, Heidegger seems to be talking about nature as an *aesthetic* ‘object’, a mode of Being not fitting neatly into the dichotomy of readiness-to-hand and presence-at-hand.

⁶⁴ BT, pp.100-101.

concretely with reference to its involvement with environmental equipment, so the ready-to-hand equipment can only be elucidated in its Being with reference to *Dasein*. The possible interpretation of this view as a kind of *Daseins*-perspectivism (all Being is relative to *Dasein*) will be discussed in Section 11 below.

What precisely does ‘assignment’ mean? It means for something to have an involvement in something else. The ‘with’ (something) and the ‘in’ (something) indicate a relationship which Heidegger calls ‘assignment’ or ‘reference’: ‘When an entity within-the-world has already been proximally freed for its Being, that Being is its “involvement”’. This *a priori* letting-something-be involved is, accordingly, the condition of the possibility of encountering anything ready-to-hand:

To say that the Being of ready-to-hand has the structure of assignment or reference means that it has in itself the character of having been assigned or referred. An entity is discovered when it has been assigned or referred to something, and referred as that entity which it is. *With* any such entity there is an involvement which it has *in* something. The character of Being which belongs to the ready-to-hand is just such an *involvement*.⁶⁵

Any entity that shows itself in its Being to concern is not ‘proximally’ a ‘world-stuff’ i.e. just something present-at-hand, but is already something environmentally ready-to-hand. So an involvement comes forth and shows itself because a *totality* of involvement has already been discovered and it is here that, as Heidegger puts it somewhat quaintly, ‘lurks an ontological relationship to the world’. For in order to let entities be involved in such a way that they are ‘set free’ for a totality of involvements, we must have disclosed beforehand whatever that is for which they have thus been ‘freed’. That is to say, discoveredness belongs solely to *Dasein* as the possibility of *its* Being. Indeed, Heidegger says, only because an *understanding* of Being belongs to *Dasein*’s Being, do entities become accessible within-the-world.

An equipmental whole, then, involves the following structural moments which are *essentially* a totality, in that they refer to each other. There is a ‘wherein’, that is, a practical context, in which *Dasein* assigns itself, usually non-deliberately, to

⁶⁵ BT, p.114.

executing some task with piece of equipment (the 'with-which'), which is defined by its 'in-order-to' (its instrumental character); *Dasein* assigns itself thus on the way 'towards' some goal (not thematically envisaged), which in turn has its place in virtue of some 'for-the-sake-of-which' (a final point or overall project *Dasein* understands itself in term of). The 'wherein' of this structure constitutes the phenomenon of the *world*.⁶⁶

What makes up the *worldhood* of the world is the *structure* of that to which *Dasein* environmentally assigns itself. The world, as that wherein *Dasein* understands itself in this way, is always something primordially familiar to *Dasein*. Does such familiarity require those relations which are constitutive for the world as world to be theoretically transparent? Not necessarily; but the very possibility of interpreting these relations in an explicit ontologico-existential way is grounded in such a familiarity with the world. This familiarity is in turn constitutive for *Dasein* and its understanding of Being:

In the act of understanding the relations indicated above must have been previously disclosed; the act of understanding holds them in this disclosedness. It holds itself in them with familiarity; and in so doing, it holds them *before* itself, for it is in these that its assignment operates.⁶⁷

These relationships of assigning have, Heidegger says, the character of *signifying* and *Dasein* in its familiarity with these relationships signifies to itself, i.e. it gains its Being and its ability-to-be in a primordial fashion. Hence, what Heidegger calls 'significance' is, we may say, the relational totality of this signifying which constitutes the structure of the world and that of the 'wherein' *Dasein* as such already is. *The worldhood of the world is this structure of significance.*

Dasein's familiarity with *significance* provides it with an ontical condition of the possibility of discovering entities. These are of course entities that *Dasein*

⁶⁶ We may perhaps illustrate this structure with a modified example from Dreyfus: Someone is writing on a blackboard *in* a classroom situation ('wherein'), *with* a piece of chalk ('with-which'), that shows up for him as something *in order to* write, as a step *towards* explaining Heidegger ('towards which'), *for the sake of* being a good teacher. (Cf. Hubert Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, p. 92).

⁶⁷ BT, p.120.

encounters in a world with involvement, entities that have readiness-to-hand as their kind of Being and can make themselves known as such, i.e. as they are in themselves. Significance is an existential characteristic of *Dasein's* being-in-the-world. A certain kind of concern belonging to the everydayness of being-in-the-world allows the entities with which we concern ourselves to be encountered in such a way that the worldly character of all that is within-the-world comes to the fore (i.e. becomes thematic).

As Heidegger argues, one such type of occasion arises when, for example, an equipmental tool gets damaged or broken. When this happens, i.e. when we handle a tool that is broken, we thematically discover its *usability*. This is the reason why Heidegger insists upon the illegitimacy of certain theoretical approaches to entities and their Being, for:

The ready-to-hand is not grasped theoretically at all, nor is itself the sort of thing that circumspection takes proximally as a circumspective theme. The peculiarity of what is proximally ready-to-hand is that, in its readiness-to-hand, it must, as it were, withdraw in order to be ready-to-hand quite authentically.⁶⁸

The broken tool, which just lies there being useless, now reveals that as well as having been something ready-to-hand it has always also been present-at-hand, i.e. has been in the sense of extension (*res extensa*) or quality and other such categories.⁶⁹

Heidegger analyses two other kinds of case, obtrusiveness (missing equipment) and obstinacy (something standing in the way of concern) in which, together with the case of conspicuousness just discussed, the ready-to-hand can partly lose its readiness-to-hand and as this happens, the mode of Being of presence-at-hand (the Being of a de-contextualized object in Husserl's sense) in what is ready-to-hand emerges. It is, however, important to note that in none of these cases

⁶⁸ BT, p.99.

⁶⁹ For a discussion of this emergence of the present-at-hand, see Joseph Rouse, 'Science and the "Theoretical" Discovery of the Present-at-Hand', in D. Ihde and H. J. Silverman (eds.), *Descriptions*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985), pp. 200-210.

(unusable thing, missing thing, and thing for which one's concern has no time) the readiness-to-hand itself - which has been understood while dealing with the ready-to-hand - disappears completely, to be replaced by presence-at-hand. Rather, readiness-to-hand 'takes its fare well, as it were, in the conspicuousness of the unusable'.⁷⁰ And it is because readiness-to-hand still shows itself that the *worldly* character of the ready-to-hand continues to show itself as well. It seems to be implicit in this analysis of Heidegger's that in the *complete* absence of concerned dealing with the ready-to-hand, the world would vanish too. Since the world is a constitutive moment of the Being of *Dasein*, this case would appear to be impossible for as long as *Dasein* exists.

If we now contrast Heidegger's treatment of the everyday world with Husserl's analysis of the 'environment' and its role in his later writings, we can perhaps note the following fundamental differences. Husserl recognized that we mostly do not encounter 'natural things' but things 'invested with (practical) value', which are often given as use-things or instruments. But, firstly, he thought that we could only be aware of them as use-things in so far as we *also* grasp them thematically as natural things (being of such and such a size, shape, weight, colour, etc). In this sense, all Being of equipment remained for him founded in 'natural' Being, understood in this traditional way. But natural objects as understood by the tradition are essentially *atomic*: they are what they are by themselves and (in principle) independently of each other. Moreover, Husserl did not give a detailed phenomenological description of how use-things are disclosed to us, implying that the 'use' character (the in-order-to) of something may in principle be 'perceived' in the way that its colour is perceived. Heidegger departs quite radically from Husserl in all these respects. He recognizes that the Being of equipment cannot be 'adequately given' as what it is in 'perception', but only in using it. In using equipment, it is not 'given' in terms of 'natural' characteristics which would allow it to be detached from

⁷⁰ BT, p.105.

its context of use (its 'wherein'). Hence equipment is not an object at all and has a different mode of Being from objects: its Being is readiness-to-hand, which is *holistic*, for it only is what it is in the whole context of assignments and references that constitute it. Moreover, the Being of objects is founded in the readiness-to-hand of equipment.⁷¹ Heidegger thus reverses the order of foundation asserted by Husserl. Readiness-to-hand thus is a fundamental and irreducible mode of Being essentially distinct from the Being of objects (presence-at-hand) and presupposed by it. But there remains a limited affinity with earlier phenomenology. Just as for Husserl, the Being of consciousness could not be understood without recourse to the objects which it directs itself towards, so for Heidegger the Being of *Dasein* cannot be understood without recourse to the ontic transcendence of coping with ready-to-hand equipment.

We have seen that whereas the structure of the Being of the ready-to-hand is determined by references and assignments, that of the world is understood in terms of involvement and *significance*. On the basis of this, Heidegger argues that entities are thematically disclosed 'in their Being' only when our concern is interrupted. In concern we *cannot observe* the assignments themselves but they are, nevertheless, 'there' as we concernfully submit ourselves to them. But as soon as something becomes unusable and no longer serves a purpose, the assignment itself becomes *explicit* or *thematic*. And this lets us to see the 'towards-this' itself and everything related to it. Here the *context* of equipment, as a totality always implicitly 'sighted' beforehand in circumspection, lights up before us and only with this the world comes explicitly into view. As our circumspection comes face to face, as it were, with emptiness, we can see for the first time *what* the missing thing was ready-to-hand *with* and *for*. That is, we see the whole or the totality of involvements as this *signifying* in which *Dasein* has its being-in-the-world.

⁷¹ BT, p. 88.

Now the question that Heidegger puts to his own argument is this: ‘if we have thus determined that the Being of the ready-to-hand (involvement) is definable as a context of assignments or references, and that even worldhood may so be defined, then has not the “substantial Being” of entities within-the-world been volatilized into a system of relations? And inasmuch as relations are always “something thought”, has not the Being of entities within-the-world been dissolved into “pure thinking”?’⁷² In setting himself to answer this question, Heidegger reminds us of the need to keep distinct different dimensions of ontological problematics, namely: (a) the Being of readiness-to-hand; (b) the Being of presence-at-hand and (c) the worldhood of the world (or the Being of that ontical condition which makes it possible for entities within-the-world to be discovered at all). The first two concepts of Being are categorical (pertaining to entities whose Being is other than that of *Dasein*), while the third kind of Being is an existential structural moment of being-in-the-world, i.e. of *Dasein*. The context of references or assignments, which, as significance, is constitutive for worldhood could of course formally be considered as a system of relations. But, given that in such formalizations the phenomena are leveled off, they lose their real phenomenal content. In any case, the phenomenal content of these ‘relations’ and ‘relata’ (the ‘in-order-to’, the ‘for-the-sake-of’, and the ‘with-which’ of an involvement) are not merely something thought, something *first* posited in an ‘act of thinking’. They are rather pre-predicative relationships of Being wherein concerned circumspection as such already resides. Hence, Heidegger says

This ‘system of relations’, as something constitutive for worldhood, is so far from volatilizing the Being of the ready-to-hand within-the-world, that the worldhood of the world provides the basis on which such entities can for the first time be discovered as they are ‘substantially’ ‘in themselves’. And only if entities within-the-world can be encountered at all, is it possible, in the field of such entities, to make accessible what is just present-at-hand and no more.⁷³

⁷² BT, p.121.

⁷³ BT, p.122.

7. Projection, Affectedness, Falling: The Ecstases of Being-There

Heidegger returns to a comprehensive analysis of being-in - one of the structural moments of being-in-the-world - in chapter 5 of his work. This suggests that the foregoing analysis of concerned dealing with equipment has abstracted from certain essential aspects of it. The structure of being-in in its totality Heidegger will eventually call *care: Dasein*, unlike a stone, is essentially such that its Being consists in things *matter*ing to it. Initially, Heidegger implies that being-in has three constitutive moments: affectedness, understanding, and discourse – and he proceeds to discuss each of these. But he revises this later, when he says in § 68 that

When the ‘there’ has been completely disclosed, its disclosedness is constituted by understanding, affectedness, and falling; and this disclosedness becomes articulated by discourse.⁷⁴

This suggests that the structure of being-in is actually threefold and is necessarily articulated in discourse. This schema seems indeed to be the one Heidegger ultimately has in mind, because it will be interpreted in Division Two in terms of the three ecstases of original temporality, as follows:⁷⁵

Affectedness	---	Falling	---	Understanding
Pastness	---	Presencing	---	Futurity

Let us start our interpretation of being-in with the moment which enjoys a certain priority over the others, namely *understanding (Verstehen)*. Heidegger has already argued that the essence of *Dasein* is its existence; that is, the fact that its Being is an issue for it. This ‘being an issue for it’ is to be understood as *Dasein’s* essentially *projecting itself* towards *possibilities to be*. This discussion is now taken up more explicitly in § 31. Heidegger argues that *Dasein* is what it understands itself as. We could gloss this by saying that *Dasein* is essentially its self-interpretation. But this self-understanding is not originally a Husserlian *inspectio sui*, expressed in

⁷⁴ BT, p. 400.

⁷⁵ Cf. William Blattner, *Heidegger’s Temporal Idealism*, pp. 39-68, and pp. 102f.

statements about oneself as a series of ‘experiences’ or inner objects, but a comportment towards some possibility-to-be:

When we are talking ontically we sometimes use the expression ‘understanding something’ with the signification of ‘being able to manage something’, ‘being a match for it’, ‘being able to do something’. In understanding as an *existentiale*, that which we have such an ability for is not a ‘what’, but Being as existing. The kind of Being which *Dasein* has, as ability-to-be, lies existentially in understanding. *Dasein* is not something present-at-hand which has the added extra that it is able-to, it is primarily being-possible.⁷⁶

Thus the ‘essence’ of *Dasein* is *Dasein’s* interpreting itself in and through its comportment, in its ability to be in some way or other, or, as we could also say, in its *projecting* itself. *Dasein’s* primary way of being its project (*Entwurf*) is to project itself towards something, not to thematize the project. The latter can only be secondary because it takes away the character of possibility from the project which is essential to it. Hence, *Dasein* is possibility rather than actuality, and ontically this possibility means something like ‘ability in action’. *Dasein* is constitutively ahead-of-itself, projecting itself in terms of some for-the-sake-of-which.

But *Dasein* cannot project itself towards just anything at all. Its possibility is not, as Heidegger puts it, ‘free-floating’. For *Dasein* also has something analogous to the sheer factuality of the properties of an occurrent thing. Heidegger calls this *Dasein’s* facticity or thrownness, and it is disclosed in affectedness (*Befindlichkeit*).⁷⁷ ‘Affectedness’ as an *existentiale* means how things matter to *Dasein* already: it manifests itself ontically as the mood (or attunedness: *Stimmung*) *Dasein* at any time ‘finds itself’ in:

⁷⁶ BT, p. 183. Translation modified. We have chosen the translation ‘ability-to-be’ for *Seinkönnen* in order to highlight the connection which Heidegger stresses here with competence or ability. The Macquarrie-Robinson translation as ‘potentiality-for Being’ is misleading because it insinuates the traditional Aristotelian understanding of possibility as ‘potentiality’, a lesser mode of Being than ‘actuality’. The Being of *Dasein* as possibility is to be sharply distinguished from such categories applicable to the present-at-hand (ibid.)

⁷⁷ We have followed Dreyfus (among others) in translating *Befindlichkeit* as ‘affectedness’, partly because it retains the central ‘feeling’-connotation of the German term, and partly because it does not have the mentalistic overtones of the Macquarrie-Robinson translation as ‘state-of-mind’.

The expression 'thrownness' is meant to suggest the facticity of its being delivered over. The 'that it is and has to be' [...] is disclosed in Dasein's affectedness'.

It is crucial for Heidegger's understanding of affectedness (and mood) that it reveals something about the world. It is not primarily given in 'reflection', but can only be adequately understood in terms of how the world appears through it. Mood co-discloses the world by allowing it to 'touch' (affect) us. As such, it is beyond 'willing' and for this reason reveals our thrownness or facticity. Thrownness consists in how things already matter to me prior to any willing of mine. My abilities-to-be (i.e. my understanding) depend on this affective self-disclosure. We shall not analyse affectedness further here, since the privileged mood of anxiety will be discussed in some detail below.

The third moment of the structure of being-in is designated by Heidegger as *falling* (*Verfallen*). This expression denotes Dasein's being *absorbed* (*benommen*) by and busy with the intrawordly in familiarity. Heidegger discusses two modes of falling in particular. Firstly, *Dasein's* non-self-conscious immersion in the world in coping with the ready-to-hand; and, secondly, *Dasein's* choiceless 'falling in with' the public world and its 'norms' in everyday being-with. The first of these modes seems to enjoy a certain priority, since according to Heidegger, the Being of Others as being-there-with is primarily and mostly disclosed through the concerned dealing with equipment in the work world: 'one' is what 'one' does.⁷⁸

The moments of projection, affectedness, and falling are equiprimordial and in their unity constitute being-in. The detailed interpretation of this structure in terms of temporality in Division Two of *Being and Time* is beyond the purview of this investigation, but we may briefly indicate Heidegger's approach concerning this issue. Husserl had interpreted the most fundamental sense of time as 'absolute subjectivity', the pre-objective flow of 'consciousness' constituted by the necessary togetherness of the three moments of retention – primal impression (now-phase) -

⁷⁸ See e.g. BT, pp. 153-154, and p. 161.

protention.⁷⁹ This structure is ‘ecstatic’ in that every phase of the ‘flow’ of absolute (pre-reflective) consciousness is essentially characterized by thus *pointing back and pointing forward*, this ‘pointing’ constituting necessarily the most basic self-givenness of pastness and futurity, according to Husserl. Heidegger, as we have seen, replaces Husserl’s conception of intentionality as consciousness with being-in(-the-world). The fundamental mode of the ‘givenness’ (i.e. disclosedness) of the past thus becomes *Dasein’s* self-disclosedness as ‘determined’ in thrownness (affectedness), while the fundamental disclosedness of the future is *Dasein’s* unthematic being-ahead-of-itself in understanding, i.e. projection. Correspondingly, the ‘present’ (Husserl’s ‘now-phase’) is disclosed first and usually in *Dasein’s* rendering-present in its concerned immersion in the world in environmental coping.⁸⁰ Hence Heidegger can say:

Future, the character of having been, and the present, show the phenomenal characteristics of ‘towards oneself’, ‘back to’, and letting encounter’. The phenomena of ‘towards...’, ‘back to...’, ‘alongside...’, make temporality manifest as the εκστατικον pure and simple.⁸¹

After these brief indications concerning Heidegger’s subsequent temporal interpretation of the threefold structure of being-in, we return to our main theme.

⁷⁹ One is tempted to say that absolute consciousness has this structure ‘at any moment’, but this would be to interpret the primary and most fundamental sense of ‘time’ in terms of a secondary and derivative one, namely in terms the series of now-points ‘in’ which experiences can be situated after objectifying reflection and with the help of secondary memory (recollection). But absolute subjectivity is not given as ‘in time’ in this way, hence it is, in one sense, ‘timeless’. See our discussion in chapter I, Section 3.4.

⁸⁰ Cf. Thomas Sheehan, ‘Heidegger’s New Aspect: On *In-Sein*, *Zeitlichkeit*, and *The Genesis of Being and Time*’, in: *Research in Phenomenology* 25 (1995), pp. 211f.

⁸¹ BT, p. 376-377.

8. Anxiety and the Closure of Beings:

The 'Nothingness' of Being (-in-the-World)

The interpretation of anxiety assumes central importance in the existential analytic because Heidegger argues that the Being of *Dasein* as a structural whole can neither be grasped by our immanent perception of experiences - that is, reflection in Husserl's sense - nor can it be disclosed on the basis of our everyday environmental experiencing. But what reveals the Being of *Dasein* in its totality and brings it before itself in such a way that it becomes perspicuous to itself is, rather, a distinctive and rare attunedness called *anxiety*. Thus, it is in anxiety that *Dasein* is first disclosed to itself as *care*. To see Heidegger's point and to judge its sustainability, we shall start by discussing the phenomenon of anxiety - its characteristics and its effects upon *Dasein*.

Heidegger's first statement with regard to anxiety is that it is a mode of affectivity and as such it is a fundamental *existentiale* which, seen from an ontical point of view, is one of the most familiar phenomena known to us as 'mood' or 'attunement'. Considered ontologically, 'mood' is a primordial mode of Being, in which *Dasein* is disclosed to itself *prior* to all cognition and volition, and beyond their range of disclosure. This means that any possibility of encountering entities within-the-world is grounded upon prior disclosedness of the world which is constituted, in part, by one's affectedness. Letting something be encountered, as we have mentioned in other occasions, has not the character of staring at it, but implies a 'circumspective concern'. But to be affected in any way or by anything as useful, unserviceable, resistant, or threatening is only possible if being-in as such has already been determined existentially in such a way that what it encounters within-the-world can '*matter*' to it, or as Heidegger says, *Dasein's* openness to the world is made essentially by the attunement of affectivity.

*Existentially, affectivity implies a disclosive submission to the world, out of which we can encounter something that matters to us. Indeed from the ontological point of view we must as a general principle leave the primary discovery of the world to 'bare mood'.*⁸²

Now to understand the phenomenon of anxiety and the ways in which it manifests itself it is crucial to reckon that states-of-mind are in general not reflected upon. Hence, to have a mood is not related to the psychological, at least not in the first instance, nor is it 'an inner condition which then reaches forth in an enigmatical way and puts its mark on things and persons'.⁸³ The mood of anxiety, therefore, should not be mistaken with psychological pathos, extreme depression or any other similar state that might arise due to some malfunction in the brain or because one's ontic affairs do not proceed according to one's plans and desires. Anxiety can assail anyone and in any given moment for no apparent reason. Its distinguishing characteristic lies in this, that it *refers to nothing in particular and comes from nowhere in the world*. In a comparison between fear and anxiety Heidegger remarks that in fearing we fear *something in particular* and sense a menace coming from *somewhere definite*. But, when a mood such as anxiety invades us we feel *threatened*, but threatened by nothing specific, nor can we point to any definite 'place' from where it might have come. Indeed, that in the face of which anxiety arises is so indefinite that one feels to be anxious about nothing at all.

This peculiarity by which anxiety distinguishes itself from all other moods,⁸⁴ is also that which endows it with a devastating power - a suffocating effect that shatters *Dasein* and pushes it to the extreme limits of its Being as 'there-being' or 'being-in-the-world'. Anxiety engulfs the whole of that structure called being-in-the-

⁸² BT, pp.176-177.

⁸³ *ibid.*

⁸⁴ Some of the characteristics of anxiety – that it is not directed at any particular intrawordly entity and that it takes over the whole of the person – had however also been ascribed by Scheler to the (for him) central and contrasting 'spiritual feelings' of bliss and despair: 'The light and darkness of these feelings appears to bathe *everything* given in the inner world and the outer world in these acts. They "permeate" all special contents of experience. Their peculiarity can also be seen in the fact that they are *absolute* feelings that are not relative to extra-personal value-complexes or their motivating powers. For we cannot be in despair "over something" or blissful "over something" [...] It can even be said that if this "something" is given or if it is subject to explanation, we are certainly *not* yet blissful or in despair [...] either they are *not* experienced at all, or they take possession of the *whole* of our Being. (Max Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics*, p. 343).

world. And this opens a frightening new perspective before *Dasein* - a horizon where 'the "world" can offer nothing more, and neither can the *Dasein*-with of others'.⁸⁵ In fact, what oppresses *Dasein* the most is what anxiety brings into the open as a palpable possibility: the possibility of the dissolution of the ready-to-hand and everything intrawordly into meaninglessness; the possibility of senselessness of the world and consequently the nothingness of *Dasein*'s Being as being-in-the-world. If that which threatens one in anxiety is not an entity in the sense of some definite intrawordly item, then anxiety has brought everything into irrelevance by denying involvement to entities within-the-world and, hence, significance to being-in-the-world. In anxiety, Heidegger says, 'the totality of involvements of the ready-to-hand and the present-at-hand discovered within-the-world, is, as such, of no consequence; it collapses into itself; the world has the character of completely lacking significance'.⁸⁶ Here, the entire web of reference and assignment, relation and involvement breaks down. *Dasein*'s familiarity with the world collapses, and with it, the world itself sinks into nothingness; nothing matters any longer.

Such a perspective, which in everyday concerned absorption in the world would be impossible to conceive, is an enduring possibility that *Dasein* lives through in the state of anxiety. Heidegger describes the effects of this phenomenon and its impact upon *Dasein* in terms of 'uncanniness'. In the state of anxiety *Dasein* feels 'uncanny' (*unheimlich*, *Nichtzuhause-sein*⁸⁷) because, it loses its self-assured 'tranquilized' absorption in the world of its concern. As anxiety brings about the collapse of everyday familiarity, a sense of loss and estrangement invades *Dasein*. The public world of the 'they' sinks away and the 'world' can no longer offer any comfort. In this state of 'alienation' or 'uncanniness', 'being-in' enters the existential mode of 'not-being-at-home' and *Dasein* becomes estranged and totally

⁸⁵ BT, p.233.

⁸⁶ BT, p.231.

⁸⁷ BT, p.233. The term *unheimlich* is standardly used to denote a sense of threatening, uncanny, strangeness. One feels *unheimlich* alone in a forest in the dark, for example. Heidegger combines elements of this ordinary signification with the literal meanings of the word's semantic components, viz. being un-home-ly, not being at home. To some extent analogously, the English word 'uncanny' is derived from what is 'beyond one's ken'.

individualized. In Heidegger's words, 'anxiety individualizes *Dasein* and thus discloses it as "*solus ipse*".'⁸⁸

This 'existential solipsism' must not, however, be mistaken with traditional notions of an isolated 'subject-thing'. For in this context, the phenomenon of anxiety, far from turning *Dasein* into a 'worldless occurrence' it impels it to face its world (as world) and itself (as being-in-the-world). In other words, in anxiety, *Dasein* gets thrown back upon 'its authentic potentiality-for-being-in-the-world'.⁸⁹ A potentiality which otherwise, that is, in the state of average everydayness, gets denied by *Dasein*'s constant attempt to 'turn-away' or 'flee' by 'falling' into the publicness of the 'they'. In fact as Heidegger says, 'when *Dasein* "understands" uncanniness in the everyday manner, it does so by turning away from it in falling; in this turning-away the "not-at-home" gets "dimmed down"⁹⁰ and this shows phenomenally 'what falling, as fleeing, flees in the face of':

It does not flee *in the face of* entities within-the-world, they are precisely what it flees *towards* - as entities alongside which our concern, lost in the 'they', can dwell in tranquilized familiarity. When in falling we flee into the 'at-home' of publicness, we flee in the face of the 'not-at-home'; that is, we flee in the face of the uncanniness which lies in *Dasein* - in *Dasein* as thrown being-in-the-world, which has been delivered over to itself in its Being.⁹¹

Thus, it is important to note that, for Heidegger, the kind of being-in-the-world that is 'familiar and tranquilized' is itself a mode of *Dasein*'s uncanniness, not the reverse. That is, because the mood of 'uncanniness' is one of the essential constituent characteristics of being-in-the-world, the feeling of 'being-not-at-home' is more primordial than that of 'being-at-home-in the-world'.

There are, of course, a number of questions needing to be raised at this juncture but the point which must be clarified at the start of our reflection is that the term 'nothingness'- just as the expression 'uncanniness'- refers to the nothingness of

⁸⁸ BT, p.232.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*

⁹⁰ BT, p.234.

⁹¹ *ibid.*

being-in-the-world. In fact, the ‘Nothing’ in this context is not a ‘pure Nothing’ but nothing-*within-the-world* - Nothing that reveals itself to *Dasein* as being-there (in-the-world). This explains passages like the following:

Anxiety ‘does not know’ what that in the face of which it is anxious is. ‘Nowhere’, however, does not signify nothing: This is where any region lies, and there too lies any disclosedness of the world for essentially spatial being-in. Therefore that which threatens cannot bring itself close from a definite direction within what is close by; it is already ‘there’, and yet nowhere; it is so close that it is oppressive and stifles one’s breath, and yet it is nowhere. In that in the face of which one has anxiety, the ‘it is nothing and nowhere’ becomes manifest. The obstinacy of the ‘nothing and nowhere within-the-world’ means as a phenomenon that *the world as such is that in the face of which one has anxiety*.⁹²

Now we may ask why anxiety, or better, that which is revealed by anxiety (as the insignificance and nothingness of the world or the feeling of homelessness and alienation) is an *intrinsic* constituent of being-in-the-world? For, as we have seen, Heidegger argues that ‘anxiousness as affectedness is a way of being-in-the-world; that in the face of which we have anxiety is thrown being-in-the-world; that which we have anxiety about is our ability-to-be-in-the-world.’⁹³

We have said that in anxiety the world’s significance collapses and through this the world becomes for the first time obtrusive *as* world. But what exactly is meant by this collapse of significance? Given that *Dasein* is its own ability-to-be, which is essentially dependent on contexts of involvement constituted by structures of significance, does not the collapse of the latter take away *Dasein*’s ability-to-be? And if so, would this not constitute the end of *Dasein qua Dasein*?⁹⁴ We need to point out, first of all, that the collapse of significance (intrawordly entities and the world as a whole ‘taking on the character of insignificance’) should not be understood, for example, as entities appearing separated from their in-order-to, or their toward-which, or their for-the-sake-of-which. Anxiety is not, in other words, the

⁹² BT, p.231.

⁹³ BT, p.235.

⁹⁴ Commentators who interpret anxiety as divesting *Dasein* of any ability-to-be (making it unable to project itself) therefore tend to identify anxiety with death. See e.g. William Blattner, *Heidegger’s Temporal Idealism*, pp. 76-81. But while there is clearly an important connection for Heidegger between anxiety and *authentic* being-towards-death, we cannot simply thus equate anxiety and death (as the impossibility to exist).

upsurge of ‘absurdity’ as illustrated by Sartre in Roquentin’s experience of the root of the chestnut tree in his novel *Nausea*. In anxiety, chairs, desks, pens, or football pitches remain what they are. But *Dasein* can no longer understand itself in terms of *any* particular for-the-sake-of-which to which these items belong. *Dasein* is, in this sense, *severed* from its *wordly* possibilities: ‘the “world” has nothing to offer any more, nor does the being-there-with of Others’.⁹⁵ But this does not take away *any* ability-to-be from *Dasein*. If it did, *Dasein* would cease to be. Rather, Heidegger emphasizes that anxiety discloses me to myself as individualized pure ability-to-be:

Anxiety makes manifest in *Dasein* its being-towards its ownmost ability-to-be – that is, its being free for the freedom of choosing itself and taking hold of itself.⁹⁶

It seems, then, that what anxiety confronts me with is the nothingness *of the world* – as its ‘not mattering’ – and through this ‘not mattering’ the world itself stands out as world. But this cannot mean that in anxiety nothing at all matters to *Dasein*. What anxiety makes manifest to me is my non-identity with any wordly for-the-sake-of-which (my lacking an *essentia*), and the possibility of my *choosing* mattering.

In order to address the questions raised by this adequately, we need to elucidate, first, the Being of *Dasein* in terms of *care* and understand the structure of the latter and, second, to consider *Dasein*’s ability-to-be-a-whole. These discussions will provide us with an opportunity to consider the meaning of *not-being-in-the-world* and will permit us to see why being-in-the-world is itself the source of nothingness, hence anxiety. As *Dasein*’s possibility-for-being-a-whole coincides with its possibility-of-not-being-in-the-world, an existential account of *death* will be the central theme of our next discussion. And because the analysis of the phenomenon of *conscience* seeks to sustain the truth of *Being and Nothing* in terms of an *authentic and inauthentic* understanding, we will conclude by analyzing Heidegger’s interpretation of this phenomenon.

⁹⁵ BT, p. 232.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*

9. The Question of *Dasein*'s Totality: Being-towards-Death

Being-in-the-world, as Heidegger constantly remarks, is a structure which is primordially whole. Yet, because the constitution of this structural whole and its everyday mode of Being is phenomenally manifold, a grasp of such totality and an ontologico-existential definition of it seems quite improbable, even more so because the whole in question is not the sum total of various constitutive elements but a single phenomenon: '*a single primordially unitary phenomenon which is already in this whole in such a way that it provides the ontological foundation for each structural item in its structural whole*'.⁹⁷ This phenomenon which must always be viewed in its totality and which explains all structural aspects of *Dasein*'s modes of Being is, in Heidegger's terminology, 'care' (*Sorge*). *Care*, accordingly, is a phenomenon that can neither be torn apart nor be derived from certain special acts or, be it, drives such as willing, wishing, or urge, because such phenomena are all rooted with ontological necessity in *Dasein* as *care* not *vice versa*. In other words,

Care as primordial structural totality lies 'before' every factual 'attitude' and 'situation' of *Dasein*, and it does so existentially *a priori*; this means that it always lies *in* them. So this phenomenon by no means expresses a priority of the 'practical' attitude over the theoretical. When we ascertain something present-at-hand by merely beholding it, this activity has the character of care just as much as does a 'political action' or taking a rest and enjoying oneself. 'Theory' and 'practice' are possibilities of Being for an entity whose Being must be defined as 'care'.⁹⁸

The phenomenon of care consolidates, we may say, all those earlier descriptions of *Dasein*: '*Dasein* is an entity for which in its very Being, that Being is an issue'; '*Dasein* is an entity whose essence is determined by its existence', and so forth. For caring, considered from an ontological point of view is, in one way or another, - that is, from the most involved use of equipment to sheer 'disinterested' beholding -

⁹⁷ BT, p.226. (Italics mine).

⁹⁸ BT, p. 238.

making Being into an issue. To make Being into an issue means in turn that *Dasein*, as long as it is, directs itself *towards* its ability-to-be. Thus, Heidegger says, *Dasein* is primarily *being-possible*; *Dasein* is in every case what it can be, and in the way in which it is its possibility.

Of course *Dasein* is not something present-at-hand and its being-possible must therefore be distinguished both from possibility in the logical sense and from the contingency of things present-at-hand. For while possibility, as a category of presence-at-hand, denotes that which is not (yet) actual and not (at any time) necessary and that which it is ontologically ‘on a lower level than actuality and necessity’⁹⁹, possibility, as an *existentiale*, is the primordial characteristic of *Dasein* as *existing* in-the-world. Indeed, *Dasein* is determined in terms of possibility because existence means primarily ability-to-be (*Seinkönnen*). And because *Dasein*’s essence is in part constituted by existence its determination as ‘being-possible’ lies in its very essence. This is ‘a potentiality which understands and for which its own Being is an issue’.¹⁰⁰

However, the explication of existence in terms of potentiality-for-being or ability-to-be presents a problem with regard to our possibility of grasping *Dasein* in its totality. For if *Dasein*’s essence consists of its existence and if the latter means ability-to-be, then as long as *Dasein* exists, it must - as such a potentiality - *not yet be* something. Indeed, Heidegger says, ‘any entity whose essence is made up of existence, is essentially opposed to the possibility of our getting it in our grasp as an entity which is a whole’.¹⁰¹ And this means that ‘in *Dasein* there is always something outstanding, which, as an ability-to-be for *Dasein* itself, has not yet become “actual”’.¹⁰² We may point out that the reason why *Dasein* cannot be ontically experienced as a whole and be determined ontologically in its being-a-whole is due to the peculiarity that lies in the Being of this entity - (*Dasein* is always ahead-of-itself because ‘being-

⁹⁹ BT, p.183.

¹⁰⁰ BT, p.275.

¹⁰¹ BT, p.276.

¹⁰² BT, p.279.

ahead-of-itself' is the main constitutive item in care, i.e. the Being of *Dasein*) - not to a deficiency within our cognitive faculties. But what does such a lack of totality signify in relation to *Dasein*'s being-in-the-world? Does it mean that *Dasein* can never be-in-the-world in the 'full' sense of Being? Does it mean that its being-there will always be marked by not-being, hence incompleteness? Indeed, for if the 'ahead-of-itself' is an essential item in the structure of care, then it must be equally essential to the basic constitution of *Dasein* that in it there should constantly be something still unsettled. Because if *Dasein* were to 'exist' in such a way that nothing more was outstanding in it, then it would, for this very reason, 'be'-not-there. That is to say that the 'not-yet' is so fundamental to the Being of *Dasein* that, if it ever overcomes what is 'still outstanding' in its Being, its very Being would simultaneously be annihilated altogether. In fact, the analysis of the Being of this entity shows that *Dasein* can never reach its 'wholeness'. For if it does so 'this gain becomes the utter loss of being-in-the-world'¹⁰³, in which case *Dasein* can never again *be* as the entity it is. But must we not in this case dismiss the question of *Dasein*'s totality as inadequate? Heidegger disagrees. The question, as he maintains, should not be put aside, at least not before one has made sure that the presentation of the 'end' and 'totality' has been phenomenally appropriate to *Dasein*; and the analysis of 'being-ahead' and 'being-not-yet' has been genuinely existential. He, thus, raises the following concerns

Has not the impossibility of getting the whole of *Dasein* into our grasp been inferred by an argument which is merely formal? Or have not at bottom inadvertently posited that *Dasein* is something present-at-hand, ahead of which something that is not yet present-at-hand is constantly showing itself? We must answer these questions before the problem of *Dasein*'s totality can be dismissed as nugatory.¹⁰⁴

To say that, 'when *Dasein* achieves its wholeness it loses its being-there' means obviously that, in gaining its totality, *Dasein* dies. But what is much less obvious is, in Heidegger's view, our understanding of *Dasein*'s death in a sense that is distinct and proper to this entity. Hence, a point that remains constant in the background of

¹⁰³ BT, p.280.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*

almost everything that Heidegger says throughout his analysis of death consists of a pronounced opposition to any understanding (religious or scientific) of dying in terms of a change over from *Dasein* to something present-at-hand or ready-to-hand. For Heidegger the deceased, as distinct from the dead person, is always more than a piece of equipment or something just present-at-hand-and-no-more. No doubt by dying *Dasein* leaves the 'world' behind and becomes 'not-being-there', but we must not assume for this reason that it, *qua Dasein*, takes over meanings alien to its Being. Thus, to be alongside someone who is not-in-the-world in a mode of respectful solicitude - as we are in the funeral rites and commemoration - should never be confused with a concerned being-alongside something ready-to-hand.

Yet, the dying of others, Heidegger says, 'is not something which we experience in a genuine sense; at most we are always just "there alongside"'.¹⁰⁵ We do certainly suffer the death of others, especially loved ones, but in such suffering what we experience is not death but 'loss': '*Death* does indeed reveal itself as a loss, but a loss such as is experienced by those who remain'.¹⁰⁶ To think that with the death of others we gain an experience of dying for ourselves implies that one can 'share' or 'participate' in someone else's death. But this idea rests upon the presupposition that 'any *Dasein* can be substituted for another at random' -¹⁰⁷ an assumption that has, in turn, its basis in the everyday mode of Being where, being-with-one-another and sharing the 'world' is a common possibility of *Dasein*. But what may be taken for granted in *Dasein*'s everydayness is of no use when it comes to accessing or sharing others' experience of dying, for there is no such possibility.

By its very essence, death is in every case mine, in so far as it 'is' at all. And indeed death signifies a peculiar possibility-of-being in which the very Being of one's own *Dasein* is an

The fact that, as non-existent, *Dasein* becomes no-more-possible suggests that if we define *Dasein*'s existence in terms of potentiality and understand the latter to be the opposite of actuality, then we may say that, only as dead can *Dasein* be actual.

¹⁰⁵ BT, p.282.

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ BT, p.283.

issue. *No one can take the other's dying away from him.* Dying is something that every *Dasein* itself must take upon itself at the time.¹⁰⁸

Heidegger claims that the only adequate way of approaching and delimiting death is to encounter it first as a phenomenon. This can be achieved by elucidating phenomena that are constitutive of death, namely, the 'end' and the 'totality' that are within *Dasein* itself. Accordingly, we must look for the existential meaning of *Dasein's* coming-to-an-end in *Dasein* and understand 'ending' as that which can constitute being-a-whole for the entity which exists. As we have seen, a constant 'lack of totality' is one of the most certain factors in *Dasein's* Being. Phenomenally, this 'not-yet' belongs to *Dasein* as long as it is. But what concerns us now is whether or not this 'not-yet' should be understood as something 'still outstanding', and if so what could 'outstanding' mean in relation to *Dasein's* death? In accordance with the most common interpretation, the expression 'still outstanding', finds its sense in terms of something missing. Hence, Heidegger says, 'outstanding as missing' is 'a way of being missing'¹⁰⁹ that is grounded upon a 'belonging-to'. That is to say, something which belongs to an entity is not-yet together with this entity but, as soon as what is missing joins the entity to which it belonged originally, the 'not-yet' gets eliminated. Here, as we can see, there is no modification in the Being of the entity when nothing is outstanding and the entity is 'all together' or when something is missing in it. Can such lack-of-togetherness define the 'not-yet' which inheres to *Dasein's* existence as its possibility for dying? Surely not. For the 'togetherness' of *Dasein* - if that is to signify this entity's 'completeness' - can never be constituted by continuous adding up and gathering together of entities that are already ready-to-hand or present-at-hand within the world. Quite the contrary, in the case of *Dasein*, as soon as the 'not-yet' is filled up *Dasein* ceases to be all together. 'Any *Dasein* always exists in just such a manner that its "not-yet" belongs to it'.¹¹⁰ Hence, the

¹⁰⁸ BT, p.284.

¹⁰⁹ BT, p.286.

¹¹⁰ BT, p.287.

‘not-yet’ with respect to *Dasein*’s kind of Being is not a ‘not-yet-being’ which will in some point in time be actual, but a kind of ‘not-yet’ that ‘is’ *not at all* and will at *no time* ‘be actual’. Hence, what is at issue here is the *Being* or *not-Being* of the ‘not-yet’ which pertains to *Dasein* as its fundamental character. For *Dasein* ‘must as itself, *become* - that is to say, *be* - what it is not-yet’.¹¹¹ If we consider entities whose Being is constituted by becoming we notice that, in the case of entities other than *Dasein*, becoming denotes attainment of perfection and fulfillment. But ‘even “unfulfilled” *Dasein* ends’.¹¹² Having said that, do we know what the ‘end’ means?

‘Ending’ in terms of everyday usage of the word means ‘stopping’. We say, the road stops here or the rain has stop. Of course the road does not disappear because it breaks off and stops here, but ending in this sense modifies that which was previously present-at-hand: the road is no-longer-present-at-hand because it stops here. Accordingly, what we mean to say in occasions like these, is that the road is no longer present-at-hand. Clearly, the ‘end’ of *Dasein* is not adequately understood on any such models taken from the domains of the present-at-hand or the ready-to-hand. The existential analysis of death as distinct from other possible interpretation of this phenomenon must seek to illuminate what lies beneath all ontical and biological explorations by accentuating a problematic that is ontological. Such an analysis is of course subject to a characterization of *Dasein*’s basic state which in turn is subordinate to an ontology of life. Considering death as a phenomenon of life, the latter, Heidegger remarks, ‘must be understood as a kind of Being to which there belongs a being-in-the-world’.¹¹³ The term ‘dying’, accordingly, presents that *way of Being* in which *Dasein* is towards its death. However, the definition of death, as the end of being-in-the-world, contains no suggestion as to what comes after death. Heidegger never questions whether we can still live after death nor does he explores the possibility of being otherwise, i.e. being as no-*Dasein*. He says, ‘our analysis of death remains purely “this worldly” in so far as it interprets that phenomenon merely

¹¹¹ BT, p.288.

¹¹² BT, p.289.

¹¹³ BT, p.290.

in the way in which it *enters into* any particular *Dasein* as a possibility of its being'.¹¹⁴ In fact, Heidegger's discussion of death is founded entirely upon *Dasein*'s basic state of being where death, as one of *Dasein*'s inherent possibilities, is determined in terms of *Dasein*'s being as being-towards-the-end. To define death in terms of *Dasein*'s Being means to view the phenomenon in relation to the ontological signification of care and its fundamental characteristics which, as we have seen, are: (a) existence, in the 'ahead-of-itself'; (b) facticity, in the 'being-already-in'; (c) falling, in the 'being-alongside'. How do *Dasein*'s existence, facticity and falling reveal themselves in the phenomenon of death?

Heidegger's first positive definition of death describes it as something 'impending'; something that stands before us. This, he explains, means that death is a possibility-of-being which *Dasein* must *take over*. By thus standing before death *Dasein* also stands before its ownmost ability-to-be – an ability that makes *Dasein*'s being-in-the-world into an issue. For death is the possibility of no-longer being-able-to-be-there. Standing before itself as this extreme possibility *Dasein* on the one hand assigns itself completely to its own ability-to-be, for this possibility is *Dasein*'s ownmost and non-relational. Furthermore, the determination of *Dasein*'s essence by its existence and the definition of existence in terms of an ability-to-be renders clear that *Dasein*, as long as it exists, cannot surpass the possibility of its death under any circumstances. Hence, Heidegger says, 'death is the possibility of the absolute impossibility of *Dasein*'.¹¹⁵ Now it is obvious, at least by implication, that death is not a kind of possibility which *Dasein* gradually acquires for itself during its being-in-the-world. Far from it, for this is a possibility into which *Dasein* has already been thrown.

If *Dasein* exists, it has already been thrown into this possibility. *Dasein* does not, proximally and for the most part, have any explicit or even any theoretical knowledge of the

¹¹⁴ BT, p.292.

¹¹⁵ BT, p.294.

fact that it has been delivered over to its death, and that death thus belongs to being-in-the-world.¹¹⁶

However, *Dasein* flees in the face of its own death by way of *falling* and in this ‘falling being-alongside’, as Heidegger remarks, ‘fleeing from uncanniness announces itself’.¹¹⁷ For *Dasein*, despite existing at all time as a dying entity, for the most part prefers to cover up its being-towards-death by avoiding facing it. We may now see how existence, facticity and falling are defining characteristics of being-towards-the-end and why are they as such constitutive for the existential conception of death.

Yet, if being-towards-death belongs primordially to *Dasein*’s being then it must in one way or another manifest itself in everydayness. In public everydayness, Heidegger says, death is “known” as mishap which is constantly occurring - as a “case of death”.¹¹⁸ Here, death is encountered as something well-known that occurs within-the-world much like an event that is not yet present-at-hand for oneself. This is revealed in idle talk of the ‘they’ where death is referred to in an inconspicuous and evasive manner as ‘one dies’. But given that the ‘one’ is precisely ‘nobody’, death, in everyday understanding, belongs to nobody in particular.

Is there a way for *Dasein* to understand death authentically? Such an *authentic* comportment towards death would be an understanding of it which does not seek to evade it or cover it up, but to ‘let it show itself from itself as it is’. Could *Dasein* sustain and affirm itself in such an ‘authentic’ being-towards-its-death? In the first place we must stress the fact that being-towards-death is a distinctive possibility of *Dasein* itself - a possibility of *Dasein*’s Being. But because death as such a possibility is not something ready-to-hand or present-at-hand, its *actualization* would deprive *Dasein* of the very ground for existing. In fact, Heidegger says ‘the more unveiledly this possibility gets understood, the more purely does understanding

¹¹⁶ BT, p.295.

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹¹⁸ BT, p.296.

penetrate into it *as the possibility of the impossibility of any existence at all*.¹¹⁹ If *Dasein* were to actualize its possibility for death it would have to bring about its own demise. Hence, the only way in which *Dasein* can comport itself towards something possible *in its possibility*, i.e. its own death, is by anticipating it. This permits *Dasein* to understand its own extreme ability-to-be – a possibility in which nothing less than its own Being is at issue. Anticipation, furthermore allows *Dasein* to see the non-relational character of death and to confront the fact that ‘*death lays claims to it as an individual Dasein*’.¹²⁰ In thus becoming face to face with its own death *Dasein* frees itself for the possibility of authentic existence.

Anticipation discloses to existence that its uttermost possibility lies in giving itself up, and thus it shatters all one’s tenaciousness to whatever existence one has reached. In anticipation, *Dasein* guards itself against falling back behind itself, or behind the ability-to-be which it has understood.¹²¹

By the disclosure of death as an unavoidable possibility, anticipation discloses also all other possibilities that lie ahead of this possibility, and thus the possibility of existing as a *whole ability-to-be*, because clearly *Dasein*’s possibility for being-a-whole coincides with its possibility for being-towards-death.

How does such an anticipatory understanding project itself upon a possibility which, on the one hand, is constant and certain and on the other, indefinite as to ‘when’ this possibility may become possible? Heidegger’s answer is that, in anticipating its end, *Dasein* understands itself as Being under a *constant threat*. Such an understanding is made possible by the attunedness of (authentic, non-covered-up) anxiety in which *Dasein* faces ‘the “Nothing” of the possible impossibility of its existence’.¹²² What precisely is the connection, in Heidegger’s analysis, between authentic anxiety and authentic being-towards death?

Anticipating death as one’s insurpassable possibility individualizes *Dasein* radically. It does not mean to ‘think about’ or contemplate death, but lucidly to

¹¹⁹ BT, p.307.

¹²⁰ BT, p.308.

¹²¹ *ibid.*

¹²² BT, p.310.

surrender oneself or expose oneself to the threat of finally being unable-to-be, and to hold oneself in this as a constant threat. In anticipating death, *Dasein* constantly confronts ‘the “Nothing” of the possible impossibility of existence’.¹²³ What makes this possible is the affectedness of (authentic) anxiety. For it is anxiety which radically individualizes *Dasein* in such a way that it both discloses it to itself as pure ability-to-be and severs it from intrawordly entities and indeed the world as a whole: *only* in anxiety is the world disclosed to *Dasein* as ‘not what matters’. Thus, because anxiety grounds *Dasein*’s self-understanding as anticipating being-towards-death, Heidegger can say that ‘being-towards-death is essentially anxiety’.¹²⁴ This, according to Heidegger, is an ‘impassioned freedom towards-death - a freedom that has been released from the illusion of the “they”, and which is factual, certain of itself, and anxious’.¹²⁵

10. The Call to *Nichtigkeit*

Does this authentic ability-to-be have any factual support? Does such an ontological possibility have also an ontical basis? For after all each *Dasein* always exists factically. In view of this, Heidegger says,

This existentially ‘possible’ being-towards-death remains, from the existentiell point of view, a fantastical exaction. The fact that an authentic ability-to-be is ontologically possible for *Dasein*, signifies nothing, so long as a corresponding ontical ability-to-be has not been demonstrated in *Dasein* itself.¹²⁶

Heidegger wants to show that *Dasein* not only throws itself factically into such a being-towards-death but that it - by reason of its own Being - even demands an authentic ability-to-be determined by anticipation. *Dasein*, as absorbed in public everydayness and lost in the ‘they’ is, for the most part, immersed in an inauthentic

¹²³ *ibid.*

¹²⁴ *ibid.*

¹²⁵ BT, p.311.

¹²⁶ *ibid.*

mode of Being. To emerge from inauthenticity, *Dasein* in the first instance must rescue itself by finding itself and by bringing it back to itself. But in order to do so *Dasein* needs to have this ability attested, in other words, it needs to see itself in its possible authenticity. This ability, Heidegger claims, is attested by the phenomenon of ‘conscience’ which reveals itself as a *call (Ruf)* – as the voice of conscience.

Conscience, as a phenomenon of *Dasein*, discloses by giving ‘something’ to understand. Indeed, the call of conscience much like an appeal calls *Dasein* to its proper possibility-for-being-its-self by summoning it to its ‘being-guilty’. In ‘hearing’ the call *Dasein*, Heidegger says, understands the appeal as its *wanting to have a conscience*. Of course *Dasein*, as a ‘being-with’ who has lost itself in the publicness, is more inclined to listen to the idle talk of the ‘they’ than hearing this voice. But because *Dasein* is capable of listening it can be brought back to itself if the possibility of another kind of hearing interrupts its listening-away. This possibility, which must be given by *Dasein* itself and which ‘lies in its being appealed to without mediation’¹²⁷, is no other than the call of conscience. Hence, ‘in the tendency to disclosure which belongs to the call, lies the momentum of a jolt - of a violent shaking up. The call is from afar unto afar. It reaches him who wants to be brought back’.¹²⁸

The call has a clear direction: it directs itself towards *Dasein*’s self. But the self to which *Dasein* gets called is not, according to Heidegger’s analysis, ‘an “object” on which to pass judgment’, nor is it that self which ‘inertly dissects its “inner life” with fussy curiosity’, nor the self that one has in mind when ‘one gazes “analytically” at psychical conditions and what lies behind them’.¹²⁹ The call appeals only to that self which is in no other manner than ‘outside itself’, that is, transcendence as being-in-the-world. In thus appealing the call discloses *Dasein* to itself by passing over the ‘they’ and dispersing it in such way that the ‘they’ collapses into insignificance. The call of conscience maintains itself always in an

¹²⁷ BT, p.316.

¹²⁸ *ibid.*

¹²⁹ BT, p.318.

inconspicuous indefiniteness. It is audible yet silent, for it is a discourse without words or utterance - a silent discourse that talks about Nothing.

The call asserts nothing, gives no information about world-events, has nothing to tell. 'Nothing' gets called *to* this self, but it has been summoned to itself - that is, to its ownmost ability-to-be.¹³⁰

But who does the calling? What kind of connection is there between the caller and the called? And how is their relationship determined ontologically? Considering the characteristics of the call, the question seems at first an un-answerable one. In fact, Heidegger states that

If the caller is asked about its name, status, origin, or repute, it not only refuses to answer, but does not even leave the slightest possibility of one's making it into something with which one can be familiar when one's understanding of *Dasein* has a 'worldly' orientation.¹³¹

If, however, it is quite inappropriate to raise existentiell questions with regard to what factually the caller is or might be, it is perfectly fair to pursue an existential enquiry regarding the facticity of the calling and the existentiality of the hearing. The fact that what the caller is cannot be known in a definite manner does not mean that the caller is just nothing or is of no importance. On the contrary, Heidegger maintains that, not letting itself to be known and talked about are positive characteristics of this phenomenon - a phenomenon that maintains itself constantly in a peculiar indefiniteness, for all determinations go against its kind of Being.

It might help us to come a step closer to the caller if we turn our attention for a moment from the question of 'who does the calling' to the question 'where does the call come from'. The voice of conscience, as it is known, is not something which we ever expect or are prepared for in advance. Nor is it planned intentionally by us and performed with our agreement. When the call comes it rather comes unexpectedly, without warning and 'even against our will'. Having said that, the call

¹³⁰ *ibid.*

¹³¹ BT, p.319.

does not come from someone else who is there with me but from me and yet from 'beyond me' *qua* public self (*man selbst*).¹³²

But should we, on the basis of such phenomenal data, interpret the voice of conscience as an alien power that holds *Dasein* under its control and domination? Certainly not, for this would imply that there is a being who is in the possession of such power and that it is this very power that makes itself known (as being God, for instance). Of course, from Heidegger's point of view, the point here lies not in whether one finds in God a convincing explanation for the call of conscience or whether one is inclined to explain it biologically, but in seeing that these seemingly different approaches in terms of something's Being or not-Being present-at-hand are totally inadequate modes of conceiving the kind of Being that characterizes the caller:

[T]hese explanations are procedures that are facilitated by the unexpressed but ontologically dogmatic guiding thesis that what *is* must be *present-at-hand*, and that what does not let itself be objectively demonstrated as *present-at-hand*, just *is not* at all'.¹³³

The fact that the call is not performed by me should not lead us to the conclusion that the caller must be sought in an entity other than *Dasein*. For the only kind of being that can provide us with a clue to interpreting the Being of the 'it' which does the calling is *Dasein* and its existential constitution - that is, *Dasein* in its facticity as thrown being-in-the-world. To be sure, thrownness is a 'fact' that determines *Dasein* as an entity that has to be as it is and as it can be. But *Dasein*'s facticity, its that-it-is, is essentially other than the factuality of something present-at-hand. For *Dasein* does not encounter itself as something occurring in nature, something present-at-hand within-the-world nor is the 'thrownness' an inaccessible characteristic of *Dasein* and therefore an unimportant feature in its constitution. Thrownness, despite being often covered up, belongs to the disclosedness of the 'there' and reveals itself constantly in

¹³² BT, p.320.

¹³³ *ibid.*

Dasein's current affectedness. But *Dasein* as we discussed earlier chooses to flee in the face of its thrownness thus revealed to it in the mood of anxiety. We have described this fleeing as a flight in the face of the uncanniness which individualizes *Dasein* and brings its being-in-the-world face to face with the 'Nothing' of the world. The call, however, discourses in the uncanny mode of keeping silent because uncanniness, despite being covered up by the 'they', is the most fundamental kind of being-in-the-world. Thus Heidegger says

In its 'who', the caller is definable in a 'worldly' way by *nothing* at all. 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'?¹³⁴

But what if, Heidegger now asks, this *Dasein* who in facing up to Nothing is anxious with anxiety about its ability-to-be and who is holding to itself in the very depths of its uncanniness should be the caller of the voice of conscience? Indeed, we must not look else where or resort to powers other than *Dasein* for this would result not in clarifying the uncanniness of the call but rather in its annihilation. *Dasein* is at the same time both the caller and the called. For, the call of conscience or conscience itself is possible only on the basis of *Dasein*'s Being as care.

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 ability-to-be.¹³⁵

In order to characterize what is attested by the conscience we must determine the character of hearing that accords genuinely with the voice of conscience. The call, Heidegger maintains, is genuinely heard by authentic understanding. The question, therefore, is to define what it is that which is said or implied when the appeal is thus understood. Earlier we said that the call 'says' nothing in terms of the 'they' and gives nothing to be talked about, for it is but the reticent voice of conscience that

¹³⁴ BT, p.321.

¹³⁵ BT, p.322.

comes forth from the uncanniness of thrown individualization. However, in hearing the voice we have been given something to understand - something that we are compelled to interpret in one way or other. In fact, all experiences and interpretations of conscience, as Heidegger remarks, 'are at one in that they make the "voice" of conscience speak somehow of "guilt"'.¹³⁶

The call either addresses *Dasein* as 'guilty', or refers to a possible 'guilt' - (conscience gives warning) - or affirms, as a good conscience, that one is 'conscious of no guilt'. Whatever the ways in which conscience is experienced or interpreted, all our experiences 'agree' on this 'guilty'!¹³⁷

As one may expect, Heidegger's interpretation of conscience and what the call discloses as 'guilt' have very little in common with the normally understood meaning of these phenomena. However, starting the investigation with what the everyday interpretation of *Dasein* says about guilt, Heidegger refers to several 'vulgar' senses of this phenomenon.

In the first place, 'being-guilty' means to 'owe' something or 'have something due on account'. This sense of 'being-guilty', which is analogous to 'having-debts', is a mode of Being with others that arises in the context of our daily relationship with each another - that is, 'in the field of concern'. In these contexts being-guilty denotes a kind of lack which is due to a failure to satisfy a certain demand or requirement which applies to one's existent being with others. Formally speaking, being-guilty here means, '*being-the-basis* for a lack of something in the *Dasein* of another'.¹³⁸ But because being-guilty in the sense of breaking a requirement or a law - or being-guilty as 'having debts' and as 'having responsibility for' - are ways in which *Dasein is*, the phenomenon of guilt must, in Heidegger view, be conceived more fundamentally on the basis of *Dasein's* Being, rather than in relation to ways in which *Dasein* may or may not happen to behave. In other words, one is not guilty because one has done something, has for instance, broken the law or

¹³⁶ BT, p.325.

¹³⁷ BT, p.326.

¹³⁸ BT, p.328.

harmed someone else. Rather, one is guilty on the basis of what or who one is - that is, on the basis of one's own Being. Accordingly, a genuine analysis of the phenomenon of guilt must be carried out without taking into account *Dasein's* concernful being with others - hence, without a connection to any notion of law, duty or compassion.

The idea of 'guilty!' must be sufficiently formalized so that those ordinary phenomena of 'guilt' which are related to our concernful being with others, will *drop out*. The idea of guilt must not only be raised above the domain of that concern in which we reckon things up, but it also be detached from relationship to any law or 'ought' such that by failing to comply with it one loads himself with guilt.¹³⁹

This makes it clear that all understandings of guilt and interpretations of conscience on 'ethical' grounds are irrelevant to an authentic understanding of guilt as what the call of conscience calls towards. Of course, there are no explicit discussions of Aristotelian ethics or Kantian morality in *Being and Time*, but everything that Heidegger says in relation to the ground of guilt contains an implicit criticism of traditional (religious and philosophical) interpretations of this phenomenon.¹⁴⁰ In a wider sense, the basis for this rejection lies in the tradition's approach to ontology and its unilateral interpretation of Being as being-present-at-hand, and consequently the 'not' as not-being-present-at-hand. In relation to the meaning of guilt, for instance, Heidegger says, 'ontology came across the 'not' and made use of it. But is it so obvious that every 'not' signifies something negative in the sense of a lack?'¹⁴¹ To interpret the burden of guilt in terms of a failure to respect the law or an 'ought' means to define 'guilt' as a *lack*, as something that is *missing*. A lack - as the not-being-present-at-hand of that which ought to be - means a distinct kind of Being that is proper to the present-at-hand. Now the 'guilty' is certainly something that can apply to existence. But can something be missing occasionally from *Dasein's*

¹³⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ For a discussion of these implicit criticisms, see e.g. P. Poellner, 'Existential Moments', in H. Friese (ed.), *The Moment* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2001), pp. 64-70.

¹⁴¹ BT, p.331.

essence - something that is not yet present-at-hand but could eventually be brought back and added to it, as if existence was something present-at-hand?

Has anyone ever made a problem of the ontological source of notness (*Nichtheit*), or, prior to that, even sought the mere conditions on the basis of which the problem of the 'not' (*Nicht*) and its notness and the possibility of that notness can be raised? And how else are these conditions to be found except by taking the meaning of Being in general as a theme and clarifying it?¹⁴²

Admittedly, the idea of 'guilty' still implies something like the 'not'. But given that the 'not' which lies in the concept of guilt has no relation to being-present-at-hand, but to existence, any account of it requires an existential understanding wherein its character can be conceived as a 'not' *other* than a '*privativum*' or a 'negation'. This means that the idea of 'guilty' should be defined as 'as *being-the-basis of a notness*' - that is, 'being-the-basis for a Being which has been defined by a "not".'¹⁴³ Now to see how Heidegger intends to exhibit something like this in *Dasein*'s Being and argue for its existential possibility we need to remind ourselves of care and its constitutive moments - that is, facticity (thrownness), existence (projection) and falling.

'Facticity' denotes *Dasein*'s thrownness in the world and emphasises the fact that *Dasein* is an entity that has been thrown and brought into its 'there' *not* of its own will or agreement. The fact that *Dasein* is not its own ground, but must stand on a basis which it has not laid for itself, means that *Dasein* is this thrown basis. Therefore, this 'being-a-basis' stands for *not* having any control, any power over one's own self or one's Being from the ground up. Here, the meaning of the 'not' has no relation to 'not-being-present-at-hand' for it is a 'not' that belongs to *Dasein*'s Being and it is as such constitutive of its thrownness: 'This "not" belongs to the existential meaning of "thrownness". It itself, being a basis, *is* a notness of itself'.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² BT, p.332.

¹⁴³ BT, p.329. We have chosen to translate Heidegger's expression *Nichtigkeit* as 'notness', in the light of this definition of its meaning given by Heidegger. The standard translation as 'nullity', while not strictly false, tends to disguise this close connection between *nicht* and *Nichtigkeit*.

¹⁴⁴ BT, p.330.

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, in as much as this basis first arises from its own projection; rather, as being-its-self, it is the *Being* of its basis.¹⁴⁵

However, because *Dasein* is no less an existing being than it is a thrown one, it can and must project itself upon possibilities into which it has been thrown. This means that, *Dasein* despite the impossibility of ever getting this basis into its own hands - as it were - must, as existing, take over its being-a-basis. Hence Heidegger says, 'to be its own thrown basis is that ability-to-be which is the issue for care'.¹⁴⁶ To say that *Dasein* is its basis existentially means that *Dasein* relates to itself in terms of possibilities. Having said that, as thrown into its 'there' *Dasein* cannot keep pace with its possibilities, for it exists not before its basis but as this basis. In fact, the projection is not only determined by the notness of being-a-basis, but as projection it is itself essentially not. In other words, in the structure of projection (existence), as in that of thrownness (facticity), there lies essentially a notness. This notness constitutes *Dasein's* Being free for its existentiell possibilities and characterizes it as an entity that has to choose:

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.¹⁴⁷

Does this mean that 'notness' applies equally to care? Is care too in its essence a notness? Indeed, Heidegger says, 'care is permeated with notness through and through'.¹⁴⁸ This shows the extent in which the existential notness as the ground of guilt is different from privation and lack which arises in *Dasein* by failing to attain certain goals and ideals that it may have set up for itself. For, if we recall the definition of guilt as being-the-basis of a notness, we see that it is on this null basis

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ BT, p.329.

¹⁴⁷ BT, p. 331.

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*

that *Dasein* as such is guilty. That is to say, *Dasein* is already 'not' in its being as projection; it is 'not' before committing itself to an ideal and before undertaking any specific project where it might or might not fail to attain. Hence, Heidegger says

This essential being-guilty is, equiprimordially, the existential condition for the possibility of the 'morally' good and for that of the 'morally' evil - that is, for morality in general and for the possible forms which this may take factually. The primordial 'being-guilty' cannot be defined by morality, since morality already presupposes it for itself.¹⁴⁹

Being-guilty, in this primordial sense, reveals itself to *Dasein* in the experience of uncanniness. Indeed, in uncanniness *Dasein* is joined with itself primordially and faces its notness as the possibility of its ownmost ability-to-be. And this is precisely what the call - as the call of care - gives us to understand: the call summons *Dasein* to being-guilty on the basis of its ownmost being-a-notness.

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*.¹⁵⁰

When *Dasein* understands itself aright - that is, when it hears the call of conscience authentically - it becomes free for choosing itself over above the they-self and this signifies that *Dasein* has chosen to have conscience and be-guilty authentically. Thus wanting to have conscience characterizes the authentic understanding of the call which discloses *Dasein*'s Being in the uncanniness of its individualization.

The disclosedness of *Dasein* wanting to have conscience is thus constituted by the affectedness of anxiety, by understanding as the projection of oneself upon one's ownmost being-guilty, and by discourse as reticence.¹⁵¹

Ultimately it seems, then, that anxiety, anticipating death, and hearing the call of conscience are structural moments of a *unitary* phenomenon which Heidegger

¹⁴⁹ BT, p.332.

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁵¹ BT, p.343.

designates as authentic existence or *Entschlossenheit* (resolvedness). Hearing the call means transparently understanding oneself in terms of the twofold finitude or ‘notness’ of having to choose and of being thrown (not being *causa sui*). We might say that such self-understanding constitutes the authentic past and the authentic present. Anticipating death is the third, futural, dimension of authentic temporality: *Dasein*’s holding itself in the ‘not’ of the constant threat of its own *impossibility-to-be*. What underlies and makes possible such authentic understanding of the three temporal ecstases is anxiety, in which the world as a whole sinks into nothingness for *Dasein* – it ceases to matter - and *Dasein* comes to see itself as pure ability-to-be that is not *defined* by anything wordly. Only through anxiety does *Dasein* in this specific sense become able to sever itself from the world (while yet necessarily remaining being-in-the-world) and to choose itself in its own notness. *We may therefore conclude that ‘authentic existence’, for Heidegger, is in each of its structural moments defined as a disclosure of, and confrontation with, Nothing.* In so far as authenticity *qua Entschlossenheit* is the un-covered-up truth/Being of *Dasein*¹⁵² – for *Dasein* is revealed in it ‘from itself and as it is’ – it follows that the Being of *Dasein* is *essentially* pervaded by Nothing. We shall consider the possible implications of this for ‘Being as such’ below.

The aim and the guiding thread throughout our analysis of *Dasein* was to build a basis that could sustain and help us to take the question of Being and its relation to Nothing further. To this end a detailed discussion of the constitution of *Dasein* proved to be necessary, for ‘Nothing’, as we have seen, announced itself at the heart of being-there.

¹⁵² *ibid.*

11. Being without Meaning

In this Section, we shall attempt to draw together some of the results of our foregoing interpretation of Heidegger's existential analytic. Heidegger attempts to pose the question of Being via an analysis of a privileged entity, namely *Dasein*. Its privilege consists in the fact that unlike other entities it has an understanding of Being, which means that it comports itself towards it. (In Husserl's language, it 'intentionally directs' itself towards Being, although for the most part not thematically). It emerged that the Being of this entity cannot be brought into an explicit understanding without including in the analysis two other kinds of entities, namely equipment and occurrent objects. The modes of Being of these entities are not directly equiprimordial, however, for it turned out that the Being of objects – presence at hand – which had provided the paradigm for all previous ontological approaches, is in fact derivative, being founded on readiness-to-hand. Hence the latter is analysed in much greater detail by Heidegger than presence-at-hand. But equipmentality or readiness-to-hand is a mode of Being which is only possible, it would seem, as *one structural moment* in the complex structure which is the Being of *Dasein*. Only if there is a being such as *Dasein* can there be equipment and, more generally, environment. But if presence-at-hand is founded in readiness-to-hand, as Heidegger clearly suggests, this would seem to imply that only if there is *Dasein* can there be any entity which has the mode of Being of an object. This means that of the three fundamental modes of Being discussed by Heidegger in *Being and Time*, namely (1) *Dasein* (existence), (2) readiness-to-hand, and (3) presence-at-hand, the last two are dependent on *Dasein*, *just as Dasein is dependent on them*, i.e. they are in this sense 'co-original', although, as we saw, there is an asymmetry between readiness-to-hand and presence-at-hand. But if this is the case, we are tempted to ask: has Heidegger made only a beginning in *Being and Time*, by exploring the Being of *Dasein*, or has he in fact achieved, at least in basic outline, what was the stated overall aim of his ontological enquiry: to raise the question of Being *in general*. The answer to our question clearly depends at least in part on whether the modes of Being thematized in *Being and Time* are intended to

be exhaustive – whether they are all the modes of Being there are. There are some reasons to doubt this. We saw, for example, that the mode of Being of aesthetic ‘objects’ does not really fit into any of the three kinds discussed and that Heidegger seems to be aware of this.¹⁵³

But if we confine ourselves to the Being of the kinds of entities discussed, is it really true that they can only ‘be’ if there is *Dasein*? *Dasein* is of course being-in-the-world as care, and care consists in ‘things’ meaning something to *Dasein* (‘meaning’ here includes being boring, being irrelevant, etc). Our question can therefore also be formulated as: can there be no Being without meaning? The question has provoked some debate in the literature on Heidegger, partly because of Heidegger’s Delphic response to it:

[A]ll the modes of Being of entities within the world are founded ontologically [...] upon the phenomenon of being-in-the-world. [...] Of course only as long as *Dasein is* (that is, only as long as an understanding of Being is ontically possible), ‘is there’ Being. When *Dasein* does not exist, ‘independence’ ‘is’ not either, nor ‘is’ the ‘in itself’. In such a case this sort of thing can be neither understood nor not understood. [...] *In such a case* it cannot be said that entities are, nor can it be said that they are not. But *now*, as long as there is an understanding of Being and therefore an understanding of presence-at-hand, it can indeed be said that *in this case* entities will still continue to be. As we have noted, Being (not entities) is dependent upon the understanding of Being;¹⁵⁴

Being ‘is’ only as long as *Dasein* is, but entities can continue to ‘be’ even when *Dasein* does not exist! How are we to understand this? There is a temptation to conclude from this that Heidegger cannot mean by ‘Being’ that which determines how entities *are*, but only how and as what they are *intelligible*. Heidegger simply *defines* Being as meaning or intelligibility.¹⁵⁵ But this view is difficult to accept. There are innumerable passages in both the early and the late writings which show very clearly that he thinks of Being as that which determines how beings are. So if his conclusion in *Being and Time* is that there is no Being without understanding of

¹⁵³ BT, p. 100.

¹⁵⁴ BT, pp. 254-255.

¹⁵⁵ This highly problematic view is especially associated with Hubert Dreyfus. See his *Being-in-the-World*, pp. 10-11 and pp. 254-257. For one critique of it, see William Blattner, *Heidegger's Temporal Idealism*, pp. 238f.

Being, then this is not merely the trivial outcome of a definition of Being as 'intelligibility'. What he seems to be saying in the above passage is rather this. It is part of what we mean by presence-at-hand that the present-at-hand can be even without *Dasein* 'being around'. In fact, even a transcendental idealist like Kant would agree with this. When and where there are no 'subjects', there are still objects, namely as possibilities of perception. In this sense, even an unperceived star in the most distant galaxy still 'is', for Kant. Heidegger in the last two lines of our quotation therefore says only what most people, including Kantian transcendental idealists, would accept. But all of this is only true as long as we have not ontologically interrogated the Being of presence-at-hand as such. (In Kantian language, it is true from the 'empirical' standpoint, but not from the transcendental one.) But if we raise the fundamental ontological question (which is alien to the empirical standpoint of science) about what makes possible presence-at-hand in the first place, we find that the Being of something as a present-at-hand 'possibility of perception' (for example) is itself only possible if there is *Dasein*. At this fundamental ontological level of questioning, everything *is* and is *as* it is (in its mode of Being) only if and in so far as there is *Dasein*. The question of Being can therefore not be raised without reference to an understanding of Being. For the Heidegger of *Being and Time*, therefore, Being is 'meaning', we might say, but not simply because it has been *defined* in this way. And 'meaning' itself here has to be interpreted in a very wide sense indeed, which includes the essentially enigmatic.

In *History of the Concept of Time*, Heidegger interpreted Husserl's first sense of truth as the fundamental one (relatively speaking, i.e. within the Husserlian framework of enquiry): the performance of the identifying act in which the identity of what was emptily intended and what is subsequently intuited is experienced. Heidegger paraphrased this sense of truth as 'living in the truth' or being-in-truth. In *Being and Time*, being-in-truth is grasped, more fundamentally, as the disclosedness of *Dasein* itself in which all discovering of entities and 'states of affairs' is founded.

Being 'is' only where *Dasein* is in its there. Thus, being-in-truth is, at the most fundamental level, the disclosedness of *Dasein* as care:

In so far as *Dasein* is its disclosedness essentially, and discloses and uncovers as something disclosed to this extent it is essentially 'true'. *Dasein* is 'in the truth'.¹⁵⁶

But since falling belongs essentially to *Dasein's* mode of Being, and in falling entities and modes of Being take on the character of semblance, it belongs to the disclosedness of *Dasein* that it is also closed off to itself and that entities are covered up (hidden or disguised). Thus, in another sense of 'truth' (as that which is not semblance) *Dasein* is equiprimordially 'in the untruth'. Clearly, in *this* sense of truth, *Dasein* is in the truth only in so far as it is *authentically* disclosed to itself as being-in-the-world. Hence Heidegger says:

[W]e have interpreted disclosedness [*Erschlossenheit*] existentially as the primordial truth. Such truth is primarily not a quality of 'judgement' nor of any definite comportment, but something essentially constitutive of being-in-the-world as such. [...] In resolvedness [*Entschlossenheit*] we have now arrived at that truth of *Dasein* which is most primordial because it is *authentic*.¹⁵⁷

What makes possible this 'most primordial truth' is the confrontation with nothingness in authentic resolvedness. This confrontation has its essential condition, as we saw, in the attunedness of anxiety. Being is thus revealed most genuinely ('authentically') in the irruption of nothingness into (and as) being-in-the-world. This interpretation seems to us to be confirmed by Heidegger's elaboration of the question of Nothing in his inaugural lecture of 1929, 'What is Metaphysics'. Here he is explicit on some of the issues and connections which were only adumbrated in *Being and Time*:

¹⁵⁶ BT, p. 263.

¹⁵⁷ BT, p. 343.

[...] the Nothing reveals itself in and through anxiety, although, to repeat, not in such a way that the Nothing becomes manifest in our malaise quite apart from beings as a whole. Rather, we said that in anxiety the Nothing is encountered at one with beings as a whole.¹⁵⁸ The Nothing does not remain the indeterminate opposite of beings but reveals itself as belonging to the Being of beings. 'Pure Being and pure Nothing are therefore the same'. This proposition of Hegel's [...] is correct. Being and Nothing do belong together [...] because Being itself is essentially finite and reveals itself only in the transcendence of *Dasein* which is held out into the Nothing.¹⁵⁹

Nothing is an essential 'moment' of Being, although not one that is or could ever be, in Hegelian fashion, 'sublated'. This is because Nothing is primordially not an object of thought at all - hence its neglect by the ontological tradition which conceived of Being as the Being of objects (whether ideal or 'real'). We shall examine the nature of this occlusion of nothingness by the metaphysical tradition in more detail in the next chapter.

12. Concluding Remarks

It has emerged from our investigations in this chapter that the question of 'who man is' is most intimately bound up with the question of the essence of Being. The human being, as Heidegger says in later writings, should be understood 'within the question of Being', where 'the human essence is to be grasped and grounded, according to the concealed directive of the inception, as *the site* the Being necessitates for its opening up'.¹⁶⁰ To be sure the connection between Being and being-there, or *Dasein*, is such that the perspective of the enquiry oscillates necessarily from one pole to the other. This oscillation however, has often been overlooked and has - in the light of Heidegger's later enquiries - been interpreted as a 'turning' (*Kehre*) or a shift from *Dasein* to Being or more generally from the Being of entities to Being as such. But the later emphasis on the question of Being as such is, in our view, a *progression* presupposing the fulfillment of the project set at the very start of Heidegger's enquiry

¹⁵⁸ Martin Heidegger, 'What is Metaphysics', in: *Basic Writings*, p. 102. (Henceforth cited as WM.)

¹⁵⁹ WM, p. 108.

¹⁶⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. by R. Polt and G. Fried; (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 219.

into the meaning of Being. As all Heidegger's early texts testify, the question for Heidegger has always been about 'Being'. Thus the privilege that has been given to the exploration of *human* Being in Heidegger's early texts such as *Being and Time* must be viewed as *a way towards* the question of Being as such.

In any case, judging that the analysis of *Dasein* as being-in-the-world provides a sufficient basis to understand the Being of man, we consider the existential analytic of *Dasein* as the first phase of the enquiry into the question of Being as such. Having said this, the expression 'first' here must not be interpreted in the sense of 'foundation', 'ground' or 'beginning'. Indeed, to conceive of an entity such as *Dasein* as the foundation of that which is not an entity at all (Being as such) would be a gross misunderstanding. For in order for man to be as a being and be who or what it is, the beginning must have already taken place. In other words, *Dasein*'s facticity is such that, as an entity that is, it can only be a 'thrown-being-in-the-world'. In the 'Letter on Humanism' - as in many other writings - Heidegger addresses this problem and attempts to clarify a confusion that might have arisen regarding his early and later positions vis-à-vis the question of Being. He asks: 'but does not *Being and Time* say, "only so long as *Dasein* is is there Being"? To be sure. It means that only so long as the clearing of Being propriates does Being convey itself to man. But the fact that the *Da*, the clearing as the truth of Being itself, propriates is the dispensation of Being itself. This is the destiny of the clearing. [...]The sentence does not say that Being is a the product of man. The "Introduction" to *Being and Time* says simply and clearly, even in italics, "Being is the *transcendens* pure and simple".'¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ Martin Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism', in: *Basic Writings*, p.240

Chapter III

Nothing and the Question of 'Being as such'

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger's analysis of an entity who questions Being concluded, one might say, that man's fundamental source of 'knowledge' lies not in reason but in the affectedness of 'mood'. It is in anxiety that man is first transparently disclosed to himself as being-in-the-world - as *Dasein*. And it is here that he 'discovers' something essential about his existence as a whole: That he is-toward death and as existing in-the-world is constantly dying; and that he is compelled to face up to the finitude of his very Being and the nothingness of his existence. Anxiety, accordingly, unveils the notness that determines *Dasein* in its ground and brings man to see that his Being hangs onto Nothing.

1. Stepping Back from the Omission of Nothing

In his inaugural lecture of 1929, 'What is Metaphysics?', the question of Nothing, which was more alluded to and raised indirectly than actually elaborated *per se* in *Being and Time*, is finally addressed explicitly. Nevertheless, as we shall see, the discussion of it here always refers back to the results of the existential analytic of *Being and Time* and hence essentially presupposes them.

In 'What is Metaphysics?', Heidegger asks: if Nothing has such a pivotal role in determination of the Being of entities then should it not be viewed by metaphysics with the same care and attention that is accorded by it to beings (as a whole)? And should not science, whose theories today seem to dictate the meaning of existence, of life and Being in general, occupy itself with Nothing which, after all, pervades the who of the questioner, of the scientist? Yet Heidegger observes that science wishes to know nothing of Nothing. This occlusion goes hand in hand with the essential characteristic of metaphysics, namely its exclusive concern with the interpretation of the *essentia* or whatness of beings as a whole and its neglect of the

question of Being. In fact, metaphysics is just as much, and for related ‘reasons’, the forgetfulness of Being as it is the neglect of Nothing. It is precisely these interconnected omissions which characterize the history of metaphysics as the history of nihilism. For nihilism, as understood by Heidegger, does not consist in an excessive preoccupation with Nothing, but on the contrary in banishing and ignoring that which stands for the unaccountable essence of man and Being: Nothing.

To go expressly up to the limit of Nothing in the *question* about Being, and to take Nothing into the question of Being - this is the first and only fruitful step toward the true overcoming of nihilism.¹

1.1 Nothing as Not-Being and Negation

It is, however, doubtful whether metaphysics and its traditional method of questioning, which seeks for generic qualities or *properties* that constitute *what* beings in their totality are, can address the question of Nothing without turning it into something and thus passing it by. For in order to ask ‘*what* is Nothing?’ metaphysics must posit Nothing in advance as an object of reference. This objectification obviously makes Nothing into a being and thus the question subverts itself. It follows from this that ‘thinking’, that is, predicative judgement, cannot capture Nothing. Nothing cannot be made into the logical subject of a proposition without eluding our grasp. The recognition of this leads to a second approach, which has indeed been the dominant one in the tradition. This is the determination of Nothing as negation. Here beings as a whole are our ‘logical subject’ and we negate them in their totality: we entertain the thought that ‘they are not’. But is Nothing a mere counter-concept or *contrarium* to Being (as understood by metaphysics, i.e. the totality of entities in regard to having some whatness or other) - that is, its negation or privation? Is Nothing, for instance, as Aristotelian metaphysics believed, a non-being in the sense of unformed prime matter that - unlike beings which partake in *εἶδος* - is unable to

¹ Martin Heidegger: *Introduction to Metaphysics*; Trans. by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 217-218. (This new translation henceforth cited as IM).

take on a form and therefore have an outward appearance? Or, again, is Nothing the complete absence (lack) of beings apart from God who - as Christian dogma assumes - is the sole proper being in the sense of the 'absolute' *actus purus* that *excludes* all potentiality and nothingness? What if Nothing turns out to be the *origin* of negation? What if Nothing could be shown to be primordial with respect to negation? Would not, in this case, the very possibility of negation, as an act of reason or the logical intellect, be dependent upon a more original revelation of Nothing?

In order to find something, Heidegger remarks, we must in some way already 'know' that it is there: 'At first and for the most part man can seek only when he has anticipated the being at hand of what he is looking for'.² Thus it seems that in our search for Nothing we are guided by a certain anticipation whereby we are somehow aware of Nothing, though in a very rough manner. This means that, just as and *because* there is a certain pre-understanding of Being, there is also an awareness of Nothing, even if common parlance and understanding may interpret it as mere negation. Even this common understanding of Nothing points to the direction from which alone Nothing can be disclosed, namely: Being. That is to say, to understand Nothing as the complete negation of the totality of beings, as the tradition has predominantly done where it has concerned itself with Nothing at all, beings as a whole must be given in advance in order for them to be negated subsequently. But how can *Dasein*, who is essentially finite, encompass the totality of beings in order then to negate it? One can, no doubt - Heidegger says - 'think the whole of beings in an "idea" - presumably in the Kantian sense - then negate what one has thus imagined in one's thought, and thus "think" it negated'.³ But just as the affirmative judgement cannot be the origin of our understanding of the 'that it is', but rather *presupposes* such an understanding, so the negative judgment cannot be our most fundamental exposure to the 'not', but presupposes a more original encounter with it:

² WM, p.97.

³ WM, p. 99.

How could negation produce the not from itself when it can make denials only when something deniable is already granted to it? But how could the deniable and what is to be denied be viewed as something susceptible to the not unless all thinking as such has caught sight of the not already?⁴

Heidegger's point here is of the utmost importance. We would interpret his implicit argument in these rhetorical questions as follows. The 'that it is' can never be primordially grasped through 'logic', because logic presupposes the prior discovery of the entities of which it makes predications. But we have seen in *Being and Time* that any such discovery is only possible on the basis of the disclosedness of the world through *significance*. Thus every logical negation always, as it were, comes 'too late', since it only concerns entities rather than that which is their basis – the world. Moreover, logical negation can only concern a derivative – 'founded', rather than foundational - kind of entities, namely those whose mode of Being is presence-at-hand (object-being), for the concepts of *judgement* and *object* are correlative.

In fact, we gained a more primordial 'knowledge' of Nothing, not by following a process of representational thinking, but through the existential analytic of *Dasein*, where Nothing revealed itself as such in the depth of *Dasein's* very essence, i.e. its existence.

The Nothing takes over our Being in anxiety, which is the drainage of significance from the world in its totality. It is crucial to realize that Nothing as disclosed in anxiety does *not* reveal itself as a being. Nor does it ever become an 'object' grasped by anxiety, as if the latter were a new 'medium' through which Nothing could be representationally caught. In anxiety, Nothing is encountered at once with beings. This does not signify that beings are annihilated by anxiety and one is consequently left with 'nothing' (no beings). Rather, Nothing lets itself be encountered *with* and *in* beings *as* a slipping away of the whole and *not* as the outcome of an annihilation or negation of beings. Anxiety as such, Heidegger says, knows nothing of 'the expressive function of a negating assertion'⁵ for here all utterance of the 'is' falls silent. Nothing, as we noted earlier, 'speaks' only in the

⁴ WM, p. 105.

⁵ WM, p.101.

silent mode of reticence and it is this silence, which springs out from Nothing itself and which provokes Being to retreat in the face of it, that oppresses *Dasein* the most.

1.2 Nothing as Nihilation

Nothing, as Heidegger maintains, is essentially ‘repelling’ and in thus repelling it wards off beings all together. This is because the essence of Nothing is not annihilation or a negation of beings, but *nihilation*. Indeed, Nothing relates or ‘acts’ solely as a repulsion towards beings, *as* their sinking away. Nihilation, unlike negation and annihilation, does not let itself be rendered predictable and controllable by rules, laws, or logical calculi of representational thinking because, before Nothing, that which does the thinking and sets the rules is itself ‘in retreat’ like the rest of beings. Here, what nihilates is Nothing itself. Nothing as addressed by Heidegger belongs originally to the essential unfolding of Being and it therefore must not be viewed as another kind of being - an object of opposition or, in his language, a counter-concept to beings. The nihilation of Nothing rather occurs in the essence of entities.

Now, the significance of such a ‘repelling’ gesture towards beings on the whole lies in the fact that nihilation is not an accidental occurrence but discloses all entities and brings them forward as that which is radically other than Nothing. In this manner entities show themselves *as* entities: ‘that they are beings - and not Nothing’.⁶ This ‘and not Nothing’ is therefore not a mere ornamental figure of speech or an added afterthought, but expresses the very possibility on the *basis* of which entities in general are revealed as beings. As Heidegger puts it: ‘The essence of the originally nihilating Nothing lies in this, that it brings *Da-sein* for the first time before beings as such’.⁷ In fact it is on the basis of Nothing that *Dasein*’s existence can reach beings. That is to say, existence in each case rises out of Nothing that is somehow already laid open. Accordingly, *Da-sein* - whose essence is existence - now signifies: ‘being held out into Nothing’. In turn, such ‘holding out into Nothing’

⁶ WM, p.103.

⁷ *ibid.*

means that *Dasein* is always already 'beyond' beings. In other words, being-there or *Dasein* is transcendence.

Holding itself out into the nothing, *Dasein* is in case already beyond beings as a whole. This being beyond beings we call 'transcendence'. If in the ground of its essence *Dasein* were not transcending, which now means, if it were not in advance holding itself out into the nothing, then it could never be related to beings nor even to itself.⁸

As that which is beyond beings or as pure transcendence, *Dasein* is henceforth 'the place' where Nothing can reveal itself. In Heidegger's words, '*Being held out into Nothing - as Dasein is - on the ground of concealed anxiety makes man a lieutenant of Nothing*'.⁹ Now if metaphysics is an enquiry 'beyond' and over beings, then the question of *Dasein* or the question of who man is, is a genuinely metaphysical question because it brings us face to face with the nothingness of beings, but also because, 'going beyond beings occurs in the essence of *Dasein*'. Metaphysics, therefore, is neither a contingent division of academic philosophy nor a field of arbitrary speculative notions, but belongs to the essence of man: 'Metaphysics is the basic occurrence of *Dasein*. It is *Dasein* itself'.¹⁰ *Dasein*'s transcendence or the fact that being-there is 'held out into Nothing', signifies that *Being itself is essentially finite*.

We may be inclined to ask, if existence is held out into Nothing and if Nothing can only be disclosed in the mood of anxiety, must not *Dasein* be constantly anxious in order to exist? But did not we say that 'authentic' anxiety occurs rarely? Heidegger's point seems to be this. The fact that one does not experience anxiety as such in one's daily life does not mean that anxiety is not there but that one is absorbed so profoundly in everyday intraworldly business that one has become closed, *verschlossen*, to the truth of existence, or else one has chosen to live in ignorance. Acknowledging anxiety means to have access to a 'resolved' and 'authentic' mode of existence, while those who attempt to conceal it live in

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ WM, p.106. (Italics mine).

¹⁰ WM, p. 109.

semblance or ‘inauthenticity’, whereby the finitude of existence is covered-up, distorted or (unsuccessfully) denied altogether. In the ‘fallen’ or ‘inauthentic’ modes of existing, which characterize our everyday being-in-the-world primarily and usually, we flee from Nothing by turning towards beings. Yet, if we understand the matter aright, we are led to see that such turning away from Nothing is itself not simply our own doing, but is what is most proper to the essence of Nothing itself: Nothing repels beings (and us) away from itself because its essence is nihilation. Nothing nihilates and in thus nihilating guides us incessantly towards beings.

It should now have become clearer why the ‘not’ cannot originate in negation, and why negation is founded in the ‘not’ that emerges from the nihilation of Nothing. Something can fall prey to negation and be susceptible to it only if thinking has formerly gained a ‘familiarity’ with Nothing - with ‘not’ that can become undistortedly manifest only when the nihilation of Nothing and hence, Nothing itself, is released from concealment. Having said this, negation is itself of course a kind of nihilative comportment and as such it is of prime importance. But this act, as Heidegger insists, is by no mean the only or indeed the most primordial ‘authoritative witness of the revelation of Nothing belonging essentially to *Dasein*’.¹¹

Admittedly, the enquiry concerning Nothing places us before metaphysics itself, where the legitimacy of its method becomes questionable. For Nothing, as our discussion has sought to show, is not the indeterminate opposite of beings, but it belongs to the essence of Being. Being and Nothing, in other words, are essentially related, and are indeed the ‘same’,¹² but their identity-in-difference differs from any that would allow for ‘reconciliation’ or *Aufhebung*.

2.1 Why Are There Beings Rather Than Nothing?

In *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger, returning once more to Nothing’s being repellent to thought, asks: what if one’s concern for the fundamental rules of logic

¹¹ WM, p.105.

¹² WM, p. 108.

should be rooted in a misunderstanding? And what if one's fear of Nothing should also be based on such a misconception? Such a misunderstanding would not be fortuitous, it would rather have its roots in an age-long failure to comprehend the question of Being - a failure to understand that is ultimately based upon the oblivion of Being. For why should we accept, as if it were a matter of course, that logic and its rules are adequate to provide a standard for dealing with the question of Being as such, while the truth could well be the other way round? In other words, the considerations we have brought forward so far at the very least suggest the question whether logic may not itself have its ground in a particular fundamental response to Being? In this case, will not all thinking that follows strictly the laws of thought be impotent from the start of even understanding the question of Being in a way that is not pre-determined by that original response?

Nothing remains in principle inaccessible to all science. Whoever truly wants to talk of Nothing must necessarily become unscientific. But this is a great misfortune only if one believes that scientific thinking alone is the authentic, rigorous thinking, that it alone can and must be made the measure even of philosophical thinking. But the reverse is the case.¹³

Science will always judge Nothing, if not understood in terms of negative propositions, as a fanciful absurdity, and will therefore be always indignant if it is asked to confront it. In any case, in order to 'deal with' the question of Nothing, science would perforce absorb Nothing into its mode of thinking and thereby transform it to suit the requirements of representational thought and the corresponding language. But Nothing does not lend itself to such treatment or, as Heidegger prefers to say, Nothing cannot be vulgarized for all authentic speaking about it always remains extraordinary.¹⁴

¹³ IM, pp. 27-28.

¹⁴ Hence, 'true discourse about nothing can never be immediate like the description of a picture for example'. As an illustration of how one may 'truly' speak about nothing, Heidegger cites a poem from Knut Hamsun's work *The Road Leads On*:

'He sits here between his ears and hears true emptiness. Quite amusing, a fancy. On the ocean something stirred, and there, there was a sound, something audible, a water chorus. Here nothing meets nothing and is not there, there is not even a hole. One can only shake one's head in resignation.' (IM, p. 29).

In looking back to the beginning of Western philosophy and its historical unfolding, we see that, in contrast to modern scientific attitude, ever since Being came into question (albeit, within metaphysics, not *as such*), the question about Nothing was raised in parallel. Indeed, far from being an aside, the question of Nothing was asked ‘with the same breadth, depth, and originality with which the question about beings is asked’.¹⁵ Thus, in following the path of philosophy at its inception, Heidegger asks: ‘why are there beings rather than nothing?’ This question, as he says, is the widest of all conceivable questions, for it confines itself to no particular entity or being or any kind of being.¹⁶ The question is not interested in particulars nor does it ask *what* kind of nature this and that being might have, what its *telos* might be, how can it be transformed, etc. The question is such that it embraces ‘everything’ and this means that ‘all that is not Nothing comes into the question, and in the end even Nothing itself - not, as it were, because it is something, a being, for after all we are talking about it, but because it “is” Nothing’.¹⁷

The question ‘why are there beings rather than nothing?’ may give the impression that the enquiry aims at the source and the ground of beings or that, it seeks for the *foundation* of what is. This, of course, is not the case. In fact, the ground in question, as it will turn out, is not a ground at all. One needs to remember that Heidegger’s quest has no interest in the causes or ‘sufficient reasons’ of beings. Instead, the careful formulation of the question involves a deliberate attempt to abstain from the usual practice of tracing the origins of a being to another being until one reaches a being that one names ‘the Supreme Being’, the *causa prima*. Heidegger does not merely ask ‘why are there beings?’, but ‘why are there beings at all - that is, why is there something, anything, in the first place - *rather than nothing?*’ The addition ‘rather than nothing’ is not superfluous or merely ornamental,

¹⁵ IM, p.26.

¹⁶ In this connection is interesting to note that Heidegger here interprets *Being and Time*, in conformity with our reading of that text in chapter II, as already having been concerned with the question of Being as such, rather than the Being of particular kinds of entities *per se* (e.g. *Dasein*): ‘But if we think along the lines of *Being and Time*, the “question of Being” means asking about Being as such.’ (IM, p. 20).

¹⁷ IM, p.2.

but an essential contribution to the determination of that which Heidegger is asking about. If the question is put in abbreviated form, i.e. ‘why are there beings?’, the starting point of the enquiry should have to be beings, entities. This direction of questioning constrains one ontically to question the beings as to their *ground*, because by starting from beings the enquiry progresses inevitably towards a foundation. But this mode of questioning is not suitable to the ‘subject matter’ to be interrogated here. It is only when we start with the implicit assumption that Being as a whole is present and take for granted that beings or entities are always and incessantly there, that we can meaningfully ask ‘why are there beings?’, which means: where and what is their ground? But here one no longer asks after Being as such and as a whole. Meanwhile, the question ‘why are there beings *rather than nothing?*’ interrupts this regression towards a ground and interprets the ‘why’ differently. For the question now explicitly holds beings out into the possibility of not-being and asks: why do they not ‘fall back’ into not-being? Consequently, beings are no longer regarded as that which just happens to be there, ever present-at-hand, but they become, as it were, unstable, insecure, as not-being is envisaged as their ‘natural’ condition. Hence, the search for the ‘why’ does not attempt to provide a present-at-hand foundation in order to explain the presence of something else that is present-at-hand, but points to a kind of *event* that is the emergence of beings in the sense of their opening up, coming forward through Nothing:

The ground in question is now questioned as the ground of decision for beings over against Nothing - more precisely, as the ground for wavering of the beings that sustain us and unbind us, half in being, half not in being, which is also why we cannot wholly belong to any thing, not even to ourselves;¹⁸

2.2 How Does it Stand with Being?

‘Why are there beings rather than nothing?’. With this question one establishes oneself in the midst of beings in such a way that they lose their self-evidence *as*

¹⁸ IM, p.31.

beings. And as beings move and waver between the extreme possibilities of either Being or Nothing, the questioning too loses all firm basis: *Dasein*, our being-there comes now 'into suspense, and nevertheless maintains itself, in this suspense'.¹⁹ This is not to say that our questioning changes beings - for they remain what and as they are - but it shows that beings, whose constant being-there or presence we never doubt might, could just as easily *not be*. This possibility, i.e. the potentiality for not-being, is not something that we add to beings by thinking, rather it lies within beings themselves. To illustrate the point Heidegger gives the example of a piece of chalk, which has extension; is a relatively solid, grayish-white thing with a definite shape, and in addition to all that, is a thing to write with (its 'in-order-to'). The possibility of being something that leaves traces on the blackboard, that can be used up and consumed, are inherent characteristics of its Being. The chalk, as this particular entity, *is in* this possibility: It 'has in itself a definite aptitude for a definite use'.²⁰ Other beings are their possibilities in quite different ways, as we say in our discussion of *Dasein*. Beings, in being their possibilities, essentially are in their oscillation between Being and Nothing. To the extent that beings uphold themselves against their extreme possibility of not-being they stand in Being - yet without ever overcoming that extreme possibility.

The example illustrates the fundamental distinction between the being (the piece of chalk) and that which makes up its Being. What does this distinction consist in? In one sense, being means '*what* at any time is in being'-²¹ for example, the chalk with its various 'qualities'. In another understanding, however, Being signifies that 'which brings it about',²² that by virtue of which something, instead of not-being (*nichtseiend*), comes-to-be, or again, 'that which makes up the Being in the being, if it is a being'.²³

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ IM, p.32.

²¹ IM, p.33.

²² IM, p.31.

²³ IM, p.33.

In accordance with this twofold meaning of the word 'being' the Greek *to on* often designates the second meaning, that is, not the being itself, *what* is in being, but rather 'the in-being', beingness, to be in being, Being. In contrast, the first meaning of 'being' names the things themselves that are in being, either individually or as a whole, but always with reference to these things and not to their beingness, *ousia*. The first meaning of *to on* designates *ta onta (entia)*, the second means *to einai (esse)*.²⁴

But Heidegger's question ultimately aims neither at 'beings', nor even at 'the Being of beings', but at Being as such:

How are we even supposed to inquire in to the ground for the Being of beings [...] if we have not adequately conceived, understood and grasped Being itself? [...] So it turns out that the question "Why are there beings at all instead of nothing?" forces us to the prior question: "How does it stand with Being?"²⁵

Here we do detect a shift of emphasis away from Heidegger's approach in *Being and Time*: what comes into question is now explicitly 'Being as such'. While, as we have argued, this was also the ultimate *aim* of *Being and Time*, Heidegger's 'method' in that work was to proceed via an investigation of the Being of specific kinds of entities, most centrally and fundamentally, of course, of *Dasein*.²⁶

But as soon as we make an attempt to 'grasp' Being, it is always as though we were reaching into Nothing. In this case, is not Being after which we enquire rather like Nothing? Perhaps 'in the end the word "Being" is no more than an empty word. It means nothing real, tangible, material. Its meaning is an unreal vapor'.²⁷ Did Nietzsche, then speak the truth? But what if it was not 'Being' that has lost or never had meaning, but Nietzsche and Western metaphysics failed Being? The traditional metaphysical understanding of Being, Heidegger remarks, as the 'most universal concept', and thus as the emptiest concept, bears witness to the fact that ontology has

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ IM, p. 35.

²⁶ We may say that *Being and Time* approaches Being through *Dasein*, while the direction of questioning in *Introduction to Metaphysics* (and after) begins with Being as such and approaches *Dasein* from such a 'prior' interrogation of Being: 'Within the question of Being, the human essence is to be grasped and grounded, according to the concealed directive of the inception, *as the site* that Being necessitates for its opening up.' (IM, p. 219).

²⁷ *ibid.*

indeed failed to grasp or even to question the essence of Being as such. Because metaphysics conceives the Being of entities as a whole in terms of their *whatness* as predicable in judgments, it is unable to think Being otherwise than in terms of what beings ‘have in common’, that is, as the highest, entirely contentless, genus.²⁸ But if ‘Being’ has thus lost its meaning, this may be because the metaphysical tradition has misconstrued it in a very specific fashion. The main task of *Introduction to Metaphysics* consists, we may say, in showing that, contrary to the guiding assumptions of the history of Western philosophy in general and Nietzsche’s claim in particular, the talk of the indeterminateness and emptiness of Being as such is itself erroneous. That Being is in fact determinate and far from contentless for us is expressed in a series of everyday conjunctions/oppositions which delimit it against an Other:²⁹ Being and becoming; Being and seeming; Being and thinking; Being and ought (*Sein und Sollen*). In each of these interrelated aspects of delimitation, Being is disclosed in a determinate way. However, the way in which these delimitations are understood has undergone a radical transformation in what we can now call the *history of Being*. Thus any genuine questioning of the meaning of ‘Being as such’ must of necessity become a historical questioning, which accordingly must begin with a *retrieval of the inception* of the history of Being in early Greek thought.

2.2.1 *Being as Φύσις*

In chapter I, we referred to the Greek meaning of beings, of entities, in the sense of *τα ὄντα* and *φαινόμενα*. For Heidegger, as we know, tracing words back to their original meanings, is a way of evoking experiences that have become lost, deformed or forgotten in the ‘course’ of history. For instance, he points out that with the translation of the Greek word *φύσις* into the Latin term *natura* the original meaning

²⁸ For a more detailed discussion of this issue and the essence of metaphysics, see chapter IV, Section 3.

²⁹ ‘The word “Being” is thus indefinite in its meaning, and nevertheless we understand it definitely. “Being” proves to be extremely definite and completely indefinite. According to the usual logic, we have here an obvious contradiction. [...] We see, if we do not deceive ourselves [...] that we are standing in the midst of this contradiction. This standing of ours is more actual than just about anything else that we call actual –’ (IM, p. 82).

of *φύσις* is lost. Something analogous, he adds, ‘is true not only of the Latin translation of this word but also of all other Roman translations of the Greek philosophical language’.³⁰ Such translational procedures, accordingly, are not innocent, harmless manoeuvres, but the first phase in a process in which the originary essence of Greek thinking is progressively alienated and deformed. The early Greeks’ fundamental experience of the self-revelation of Being apprehended Being as such, by virtue of which beings first become, as *φύσις*.³¹ Being in this sense meant self-blossoming emergence, opening up, unfolding. This is an unfolding that opens itself up, the appearance of that which manifests itself in such unfolding and endures in it. Thus *φύσις*, as the field or the realm of that which arises, is not the same or was not conceived in equivalent terms to those phenomena which we today regard as constituting ‘nature’. *Φύσις*, was rather that which opened up the possibility for all phenomena, including the possibility for nature to appear and to endure, in the first place. *Φύσις*, therefore, must not be understood as a process among other processes that we detect and recognize in entities (such as the process of growth in the plants), but as an event by virtue of which entities first become and remain. Hence, Heidegger maintains, *φύσις* - ‘this inward-jutting-beyond-itself’- was, for the Greeks, Being itself:

Φύσις originally encompassed heaven as well as earth, the stone as well as the plant, the animal as well as man, and it encompassed human history as a work of men and the gods; and ultimately and first of all, it meant the gods themselves as subordinated to destiny. *Φύσις* means the power that emerges and the enduring realm under its sway. This power is the process of a-rising, of emerging from the hidden, whereby the hidden is first made to stand.³²

Thus, *φύσις* was for the early Greeks the realm of Being as such and as a whole - a realm whose essence and character was understood as that which emerges and endures. This realm, reinterpreted as that which ‘is experienced primarily through

³⁰ IM, p.13.

³¹ IM, p. 15.

³² IM, p.14.

what in a way imposes itself most immediately on our attention, is the later, narrower sense of *physis: ta physei onta, ta physika, nature*'.³³

How does Being as φυσικς delimit itself in the distinctions mentioned above? With respect the first of these distinctions, Heidegger in fact only provides a brief 'guideline'. When Parmenides declaims in his didactic poem that 'Being [is] without genesis and without decay,/complete, standing fully there alone', this 'says the same' as Heraclitus's dictum that 'all is in flux'.³⁴ What we can infer from this is that φυσικς is beyond 'being' (as constant presence at all times) and 'becoming' (as happenings and changes 'in time'). It is what makes both of these possible. In this sense, Being as φυσικς encompasses and surpasses both 'being' and 'becoming'. Becoming in another sense, as the 'no longer, and not yet', that which maintains itself through change, yet offering an inconstant view and thus always also being other than what is open to view, needs to be understood in relation to the second distinction, between Being and seeming.³⁵ Heidegger discusses the distinction of Being and seeming/appearing (*Scheinen*) in considerable detail. In the basic sense of *Scheinen* as appearing, Being as φυσικς is essentially appearing: 'Φυειν, the emerging that reposes in itself, is φαινεσθαι, lighting-up, self-showing, appearing'.³⁶ But *Scheinen* can also mean 'seeming' or 'semblance': insofar as Being is appearing and thus offering an appearance or 'look', it is also and essentially the possibility of semblance, that is, of the covering-up or distortion of unconcealment: thus 'both *truth* in the sense of unconcealment [i.e. appearing] and seeming as a definite mode of the arising self-showing belong necessarily to *Being*'.³⁷ For early Greek thinking, seeming thus both belongs to Being and yet also differs from it, however offensive this may seem to ordinary logic. And this is also true for becoming as a mode of

³³ IM, p.16.

³⁴ IM, pp. 101-103.

³⁵ IM, p. 121.

³⁶ IM, p. 106. Cf. our discussion of Heidegger's understanding of 'phenomenon' in *History of the Concept of Time* (chapter I, Section 1.1).

³⁷ IM, p. 115.

seeming. Heidegger grasps this constitutive relation of belonging and difference in terms of the notion of *strife* or struggle (πολεμος):

Only by undergoing the *struggle* between Being and seeming did they wrest Being forth from beings, did they bring beings into constancy and unconcealment³⁸

How does the third distinction - between Being and thinking - manifest itself in Being experienced as φυσικς? Heidegger seeks to unfold this distinction through going back to what he claims are the original meanings of λογος and νοειν in the thought of Heraclitus and Parmenides respectively. For Heraclitus, ‘φυσικς and λογος are the same’ while *logos* is understood by him as the gatheredness (*Sammlung*) of beings: ‘The gathering together of the highest contending is *polemos*, struggle in the sense of confrontation the setting-apart-from-each-other (*Aus-einander-setzung*)’,³⁹ and ‘for this reason, rank and dominance belong to Being’.⁴⁰ When Parmenides, in turn, says that ‘thinking [νοειν] and Being [ειναι] are the same’, what does he mean by this? Heidegger interprets νοειν as ‘apprehension’ the ‘taking up a position to receive the appearing of beings’.⁴¹ Does this mean that Being is conceived in dependence to human thinking? By no means, for the human being is not the ‘subject’ or ‘agent’ of this apprehending:

Apprehension and what Parmenides’ statement says about it is not a faculty of the human being, who is otherwise already defined; instead, apprehension is a happening in which humanity itself happens, in which humanity itself thus first enters history as a being [...] apprehension is the happening that has the human being. [...] What is fulfilled in this saying is nothing less than the knowing entrance-into-appearance of the human being as historical (preserver of Being).⁴²

³⁸ IM, p. 111 (Italics mine).

³⁹ IM, p. 140.

⁴⁰ IM, p. 141. It is perhaps not superfluous to mention, although we do not wish to enter into a broader discussion of this terrain, that the terms Heidegger is using here were also prominent in the political discourse of the time when *Introduction to Metaphysics* was written. *Sammlung* was a standard term in that context with a meaning equivalent to the French *rassemblement*.

⁴¹ IM, p. 179.

⁴² IM, p. 150.

Heidegger is explicit that this apprehension in which humanity receptively ‘takes in’ what appears by ‘taking a position to receive it’ and ‘bring it to a stand’ defines the *essence* of the human. The passivity in the connotation of these formulations is itself ‘polemically’ countered by Heidegger’s further explication of apprehension as *violent de-cision (Entscheidung)*. Φύσις as the emerging ‘holding sway’ (*Walten*) itself has the essential character of overwhelming (*über-wältigend*) power. Humanity comes to its own Being in and through this overwhelming sway, which it ‘apprehends’ through ‘violence-doing’. The latter is itself perhaps best understood, not in terms of ordinary notions, but in an essential sense: doing violence as venturing beyond ‘the homely, the accustomed, the usual, the unendangered’⁴³, - as being ‘uncanny’. Heidegger thus arrives, in interpreting Sophoclean tragedy in these terms at a conception of the human being as *shattering against* the overwhelming sway of φύσις:

[...] as those who do violence, [human beings] overstep the limits of the homely, precisely in the direction of the uncanny in the sense of the overwhelming.⁴⁴

Historical humanity’s being-here means: being posited as the breach into which the excessive violence of Being breaks in its appearing, so that this breach itself shatters against Being [...] In willing the unprecedented, the violence-doer casts aside all help. For such a one, disaster is the deepest and broadest Yes to the overwhelming.⁴⁵

This may itself appear as a rather ‘forced’ reading of Parmenides’ saying that ‘thinking and Being are the same’. But we may anticipate that in the light of the above statements, the accusation of interpretive ‘violence’ would hardly disturb Heidegger.⁴⁶

⁴³ IM, p. 161.

⁴⁴ IM, p. 161.

⁴⁵ IM, p. 174.

⁴⁶ In fact, he explicitly mentions and dismisses the objection: ‘According to the usual opinion of today, what we have said is in fact just a result of that violent character and one-sidedness, which has already become proverbial, of the Heideggerian mode of interpretation’ (IM, p. 187). But, ‘the authentic interpretation must show what does not stand there in the words and which is nevertheless said. For this the interpretation must necessarily use violence. (IM, p. 173). For some questions regarding Heidegger’s violence in interpreting Sophocles, see Clare Pearson Geiman, ‘Heidegger’s Antigonés’, in R. Polt and G. Fried (eds.), *A Companion to Heidegger’s Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), esp. pp. 164-172.

The fourth distinction – Being and ought – is not to be found in early Greek thinking. It is essentially modern, although it is prepared in Platonic philosophy. It will occupy us later in this chapter, and even more so in the next chapter, when we turn to Heidegger’s confrontation with Nietzsche and value thinking.

2.2.2 *The Transformation of Being*

The fundamental determinations of Being we have discussed become essentially transformed at the end of Greek philosophy in Plato and Aristotle. The transformation at its heart involves a change from the understanding of Being as φύσις to Being as ἰδέα or εἶδος in Plato. We need not occupy ourselves here with an ‘explanation’ of this transformation, which Heidegger calls the collapse of unconcealment (but see chapter IV). What is important for us here is merely the character of the change itself. It involves a concealing *restriction* of the understanding of Being from the essence (the emerging sway that brings itself to appearance) to its *consequence*: the appearance as the perceptual ‘look’ offered by that which thus manifests itself. While the ‘apprehending’ which understands Being as φύσις ‘takes beings [in their Being] with regard to the fact *that* they set themselves forth and as *what*’,⁴⁷ the understanding of Being as ἰδέα takes them fundamentally as *what* they are. *What* a being is, its outward appearance to a perceptual ‘look’, is also what allows it to *come to presence*.⁴⁸ Accordingly, the understanding of Being as ἰδέα determines its further fundamental interpretation as

⁴⁷ IM, p. 195.

⁴⁸ For Heidegger, the questioning of the ‘what’ of beings as a whole is definitive of metaphysics. In this sense, as he will argue in the Nietzsche lectures, all metaphysics is Platonism. But if this is so, how are we to interpret the title *Introduction to Metaphysics*? ‘If one chooses the designation “metaphysics” for the treatment of the “question of Being” in an indefinite sense, then the title of this lecture course remains ambiguous. For at first it seems as though the questioning held itself within the purview of beings as such, whereas already with the first sentence it strives to depart this zone in order to bring another domain into view with its questions. The title of the course remains *deliberately* ambiguous. The fundamental question of the lecture course is of a different kind than the guiding question of metaphysics. Taking *Being and Time* as its point of departure, the lecture course asks about the “*disclosedness of Being*” [...] Disclosedness means: the openedness of what the oblivion of Being closes off and conceals. (IM, p.20-21).

ουσια, that is, *constant presence*. Under this new dispensation, *becoming* is therefore opposed to Being as the μη ον, what is-not. ‘True’ Being is that which is never ‘no more and not yet’ but that which is always identically the self-same. But what about ‘thinking’? Inasmuch as Being is now interpreted as constant presence, that which becomes, i.e. the ‘reciprocal relation between emerging and decaying in appearance’,⁴⁹ is seen to *fall short* of the paradigmatic Being of the ever-present idea as prototype. Becoming becomes a *mere* appearance, a seeming now regarded as a *defect*. As a result, ‘ον and φαινόμενον (what is and what appears) are disjoined’⁵⁰ Because Being resides now in the ever-present ‘look’, the truth is now the look itself or that which resembles it as closely as possible. This means that truth is now conceived as *mimesis*. This in turn prepares the way for the restriction of truth to that which re-presents correctly - at the final stage of this development, to *correct judgment* or assertion. But that which can be represented as it is in and from itself, is, as we have seen in our previous discussions, essentially an *object*, or, in Heidegger’s language, something whose mode of Being is presence-at-hand. Thus, the transformation of Being, which Heidegger grasps as the collapse of unconcealment at the end of Greek philosophy in Plato and Aristotle, involves a fundamental re-alignment in all the distinctions through which Being is determined. While Being as φύσις was polemically the ‘same’ as becoming, seeming, and thinking, we now get a series of *exclusive* oppositions, with each of the terms of each distinction being now of course understood differently from before:

Being, in contradistinction to becoming, is the *enduring*.

Being, in contradistinction to seeming, is the enduring prototype, *the always identical*.

Being, in contradistinction to thinking, is what lies at the basis, *the present-at-hand*.

⁴⁹ Cf. IM, p. 122.

⁵⁰ IM, p. 197.

In addition, Heidegger argues, the transformation of Being prepares the way for a further, modern, conception of Being:

Being, in contradistinction to the ought, is what lies at hand in each case as what *ought to be* and has *not yet* been actualized, or already has been actualized.⁵¹

All these meanings, i.e. endurance, perpetual self-identity, presence-at-hand, express in the end just one interpretation of Being, namely: Being as ‘constant presence’ or *ov* in the sense of *ουσια*. In an important passage, Heidegger draws attention to the fundamental limitation that inheres in this understanding of the meaning of Being, which for us has become ‘traditional’. If becoming, seeming, thinking and the ought are not Being (for they are that which opposes and delimits Being) then, they must either be nothing or be still somehow ‘in being’.

Surely, that over against which Being is set in opposition - becoming, seeming, thinking, the ought - is not something that we have thought up. But if all that stands over against Being in the divisions is not nothing, then it itself is in being, and in the end is in being even more than what is taken as in being in accordance with the restricted essential determinateness of Being.⁵²

Yet, if these four opposing determinations are not nothing - which they are clearly not - and if they are not the same as Being - from which they are excluded - then, in what sense of Being are they ‘in being’? What is the sense of Being in becoming, in seeming, thinking, and the ought? These questions indicate clearly that ‘the concept of Being that has been accepted up to now does not suffice to name everything that “is”. Hence if Being is to be opened up and grounded in *its* originary distinction from beings, then an originary perspective needs to be opened up’.⁵³

There is no doubt that for Heidegger this ‘originary perspective’, which can guide the opening up of Being, is *time*.⁵⁴ Having said this, time itself - as the ground

⁵¹ IM, p. 216.

⁵² IM, p.218.

⁵³ IM, pp.218-219.

⁵⁴ ‘In such a meditation, “Being and time” means not a book but the task that is given. The authentic task here is what we do not know; and insofar as we know this *genuinely* - namely *as* a given task - we always know it only in *questioning*’. (IM, p.220).

that has given to Being its meaning since antiquity - has still not been exposed in its essence. Since Aristotle, time itself has been viewed by 'the tradition' as something that somehow comes to presence. Thus, time in the inception of Western philosophy, despite leading the way to the aperture of Being, remained and had to remain concealed. For the end of Greek philosophy, instead of considering time as that unique perspective within which Being is to be interpreted, conversely made Being in the meta-categorical sense of present-at-hand-ness that perspective by which time was to be determined.

2.3 The Restriction of Being by 'the Ought'

There can be no doubt that an important part of the immediate background of Heidegger's thoughts concerning Nothing is Nietzsche's conception of nothingness as the experience of meaninglessness - a conception that for him defines nihilism as a condition in which highest values devalue themselves. The confrontation with Nietzsche is fully engaged in only in Heidegger's lectures on that philosopher, to which we shall turn in the next chapter. However, the ground for this confrontation is prepared by Heidegger's brief remarks on the fourth determination of Being: its delimitation by 'the ought'. In fact, by the end of *Introduction to Metaphysics*, not only his criticism of Nietzsche's particular philosophical approach to values, but also his reservations with regard to value-thinking in general (*Wertdenken*) - including Max Scheler's phenomenology and the neo-Kantianism of thinkers like Rickert - have been adumbrated in outline. His critique of values deals with two aspects of the problem at once: (a) it contains a criticism of those of his contemporaries who engage in 'value-thinking' as the fashionable philosophical approach of the time, and (b) it denounces values as an outcome of metaphysics that began with Plato's idea of the 'Good' and culminated in Nietzsche's philosophy of the 'will to power'.

Heidegger argues that the introduction of the notion of value is due to a separation of Being and the ought that was prepared by the determination of Being as

idea in the Platonic sense. Of course, for Plato the idea of ideas is the idea of the Good (*του αγαθου*). The Good, which Heidegger here interprets as that which can accomplish what is proper to it,⁵⁵ is the measure as such. Hence, it is the *αγαθον* that first endows Being with the power to open, to unfold essentially as *ιδεα*. Now, Heidegger asks: Is not therefore Being in Plato's metaphysics dependent and therefore second in the rank to that which grants such power, in other words, to the idea of the Good? Because the Good, as the highest idea is 'the archetype of the prototype', Being as *ιδεα* comes necessarily into opposition to something else 'to which it itself, Being, remains assigned'.⁵⁶

We need no far-reaching discussions now in order to make it clear that in this division, as in the others, what is excluded from Being, the ought, is not imposed on Being from some other source. Being itself, in its particular interpretation as *idea*, brings with it the relation to the prototypical and to what ought to be.⁵⁷

This means that, in so far as Being is understood as *idea*, the Good, as the highest idea, must stand beyond and above Being. Thus, the de-grading of Being (determined as *ιδεα*) by itself determines the positing of something above Being that 'Being never yet is, but always *ought* to be'.⁵⁸

It became clear that the ought arises in opposition to Being as soon as Being determines itself as *idea*. With this determination, thinking as the *logos* of assertion (*dialegesthai*) assumes a definitive role.⁵⁹

In fact, the positing of the ought above Being means that Being here is *governed* by the ought, whereas in the distinction between Being and thinking, the latter is thought as the *ground* that sustains and determines Being. This implies that 'Being is no longer what is definitive, what provides the measure'⁶⁰ - a conception that, according to Heidegger, will lead to the principle of self-sufficient reason in the

⁵⁵ IM, p. 210.

⁵⁶ IM, p.211.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*

⁵⁸ *ibid.*

⁵⁹ *ibid.*

⁶⁰ IM, p.210.

modern era, where the division and the opposition between Being and the ought become the fundamental framework for any scientific research. But it is only Kant whose attunement with the Enlightenment understanding of beings first enunciated in Descartes - as whatever can be thought in mathematical-physical terms - brings the process to its final stage of fulfillment: the categorical imperative is now explicitly set over against 'nature' thus understood.

For Kant, beings are nature - in other words, whatever can be determined and is determined in mathematical-physical thinking. The categorical imperative, which is determined both by and as reason, is opposed to nature. Kant more than once explicitly calls it the ought, considering the relation of the imperative to what merely is, in the sense of merely instinctive nature.⁶¹

However, the Kantian opposition of the 'ought' that stands above Being (conceived now as mathematicized nature) is unstable. Heidegger's reasons for this claim are only briefly hinted at, but seem to come to this: the categorical imperative is supposed to have the authority of an overriding norm. But where does it derive this authority from, unless it either has itself some 'real' ontological status, or derives from something else which has such a status.⁶²

Faced with this challenge, 19th century value thinking seeks to ground the ought in *values as such*, arguing that an ought can originate solely from that which raises such a demand on its own, that which has a value in itself and *is* itself a value. But this move opens the door to a number of new problems. For instance, if values stand opposed to the Being of beings, in the sense of facts, then how could values *be*? But, if values themselves cannot *be* then, in which sense does a value obtain? One (neo-Kantian) way of resolving the problem, Heidegger notes, has been to say,

⁶¹ IM, p.212.

⁶² Hans Sluga has interpreted Heidegger's implicit argument along similar lines: 'The categorical imperative demands that we act as rational beings and, hence, on universalisable principles. If, however, we are necessarily and always rational, the formula can have no imperative force. It can only state a natural and universal fact about us. If, on the other hand, we take the formula (more realistically) to have the force of a real injunction, then it must be possible for us to act either rationally or not, and then it tacitly presupposes that being rational is desirable, is a good for us.[...] the Ought [...] will tacitly presuppose the assumption of a substantive good.' (Hans Sluga, 'Conflict is the Father of All Things': Heidegger's Polemical Conception of Politics', in R. Polt and G. Fried (eds.) *A Companion to Heidegger's Introduction to Metaphysics*, pp. 219-220.)

not that values *are*, but that values are *valid*. For ‘what is easier than to understand Plato’s ideas in the sense of values, and to interpret the Being of beings on the basis of the valid?’⁶³ Yet, because validity seems necessarily to be validity *for* a subject, in order to save the *self*-grounding ought that has been elevated to the level of values, a Being must finally be attributed to values themselves - a Being that, despite its sophisticated sound, is no other than *being-present-at-hand* or object-being. With ‘the Being of values, the maximum in confusion and deracination has been reached’.⁶⁴ For no matter how much effort one may expend in this direction, value thinking in general will, according to Heidegger’s analysis, remain the outcome of a metaphysics that polarizes the ‘ought’ and the ‘is’- a metaphysics that advocates subjectivity as the sphere of values in opposition to valueless nature as the domain of inanimate thinghood. On the basis of this conclusion, Heidegger asks: But why should we have to find ourselves in a position where we must make up for having interpreted Being as devoid of measure in the first place? Does not the fact that we find it necessary to introduce values show that we were wrong to conceive of Being as that which can no longer provide the measure? For if *Being as such* cannot constitute for us a standard and a measure, as has been assumed at the outset – ambiguously in Plato’s Being as idεα and explicitly in the Enlightenment’s Being as ‘nature’ - then the *particular* mode of Being that is the Being of values cannot do so either. In this case, should we not admit that Being itself can, after all, provide us with measure? Yet, we are reluctant to allow this because of the conviction that Being is merely an empty word continues to prevail.

⁶³ IM, p.212. Heidegger here seems to have in mind Max Scheler’s phenomenology of value which attributes ‘objective being’ to values. For a more detailed discussion of Heidegger’s criticism of this version of value thinking, see chapter IV, Section 2.

⁶⁴ IM, p.213.

2.4 Ethics without Values?

Heidegger's position on value thinking, even if one accepts the legitimacy of the questions he raises, may still seem to remain deeply problematic. For if we consider to what extent the notion of values is interwoven with ethics, to denounce values may seem to result in leaving behind ethics altogether. Likewise, if there is a parallel between ethics and metaphysics, this seems to imply that with the 'overcoming of metaphysics' all ethical values would also be 'overcome'. Despite these questions obtruding themselves, Heidegger remains reluctant to engage directly with ethical issues. And when he does so, his indirect and untimely ways leave much room to interpretation, if not guesswork. Instead of engaging once more with the abundant and familiar literature written in condemnation of Heidegger's approach to ethics, we would like to consider one interpretation which argues favourably, along ostensibly Heideggerian lines, for the possibility of an ethics without values.

According to Frank Schalow,⁶⁵ Heidegger believes that the notion of value conceals the *ethos* of ethics by subjecting it to a metaphysical dichotomy that divides 'the is and the ought', 'nature and freedom'. But the fact that Heidegger shows no sign of defending or discussing explicitly the implications of his position might suggest that he either has no concern for ethics or else believes in the possibility of an ethics without values. Opting for the second interpretation, Schalow explores this possibility by focusing on Heidegger's notion of freedom. He argues that Heidegger attempts to understand freedom in relation to a conception of being-human that is attuned to the Greek understanding of nature as *φύσις*. *Dasein*, accordingly, is not a mere 'natural' being, but that unique kind of being through which the self, nature and all beings as a whole are revealed in their emergence and withdrawal. This suggests that the analysis of *Dasein*'s transcendence and its corresponding freedom - i.e. the idea that *Dasein* has the possibility of a direct participation in the openness of its temporal ecstases - are not completely devoid of ethical implications. Indeed,

⁶⁵ Frank Schalow., 'At the Crossroads of Freedom: Ethics Without Values', in: R. Polt and G. Fried (eds.), *A Companion to Heidegger's Introduction to Metaphysics*, pp.250-262.

transcendence, in Heidegger's view, though it is not a striving towards a divine being or a movement towards a higher value - as is the case for Scheler - makes the ethical possible.

[T]hrough its self-transcendence, its surpassing of being-in-totality, *Dasein* can cultivate a response to the other. Such a response is an extension of its own Being as care (*Sorge*), the structural totality of *Dasein*'.⁶⁶

Here that which orders and guides the self in the first instance towards any kind of ethical matters or concerns is the controlling of its freedom by its limitations - that is, *Dasein*'s finitude. This means that a concern for 'the good' can and does arise within the boundaries that are set through the reciprocal relationship between 'freedom and governance', 'decision and lawfulness'.

As Schalow points out, in *Being and Time*, Heidegger states clearly that a 'metaphysics of morals' (i.e. an ontology of *Dasein* and existence) lies at the basis of all theories of value as their unexpressed ontological presupposition. With this, Heidegger questions and problematizes the very idea of an 'objectivity' of values. Any such 'objectivity' reflects *Dasein*'s 'subjectivity' in a particular mode. Where 'objective values' are posited, the 'they-self' assesses worth by appealing to what are in fact pre-given cultural preferences and by relying on external measures of valuation that have established themselves, such as social roles and positions, power and prestige. Hence, values in Heidegger's view display *Dasein*'s absorption in the 'they-self' and its tendency to 'fall'. As fallen, *Dasein* measures its worth by appealing to an external standard of approval or disapproval held by everyone - which is, of course, the anonymous no-one.⁶⁷ Given that 'worth' as assessed by the 'they-self' reflects *Dasein*'s 'inauthenticity' as fallen, values obstruct the disclosure of *Dasein*'s Being as care. This is why, in Schalow's view, Heidegger prefers the 'formalism' of self-responsibility in accord with one's essence as care: that is,

⁶⁶ Schalow, 'At the Crossroads of Freedom', p. 253.

⁶⁷ This interpretation finds some support in Heidegger's analysis of the 'vulgar' interpretation of conscience in BT, pp. 339-341.

Dasein's choosing itself as ability-to-be. For, in renouncing any external ('objective') guidelines, the behaviour of the 'authentic self' cuts through the comparative, externally determined disposition of the 'they-self', taking its direction from no other source than the call of conscience. Heidegger's idea of freedom, accordingly, does not relate to the 'will', but to Being. In other words, he attempts to hold out a vision whereby freedom and Being are considered as reciprocal concerns.

The move, though unorthodox, should not after all be surprising, as it constitutes a counter-movement against metaphysics that has turned towards the 'subject' and has relocated the evaluative principle, once assigned to the Good, in human subjectivity. But did we not say earlier that implicit in Heidegger's account is a critique of the alleged *objectivity* of values? In fact, Heidegger here finds the historical continuity of a metaphysics that connects Western thinkers as distant and as different as Plato (the arch-'objectivist') and Nietzsche (interpreted as an exponent of a radical 'subjectivism'). Indeed, for Heidegger, both thinkers - to the extent that they think in the oblivion of Being - are just two sides of the same coin. Nietzsche, by re-locating the source of both Being and values in the will to power, claims that the fundamental aim of his thought is to overcome age-old metaphysical constructs which have afflicted philosophy since Plato. But what he cannot see is that 'the will to power' is itself the outcome of that very metaphysics which he is aiming to overcome. And if life means 'nothing' and is 'meaningless', it is not because Being is devoid of meaning, but because the human will is now given the power to subordinate all beings and impose its design on what is. In fact, for Heidegger, 'Nietzsche's metaphysics of will to power unleashes the extreme possibilities of Western philosophy by prefiguring the organization of all beings in the service of technology, the global drive toward control, manipulation, and domination'.⁶⁸ In support of Heidegger's understanding of freedom, Schalow argues that, whereas the anthropocentric focus on willing conceives freedom in terms of subjective volition,

⁶⁸ Schalow, 'At the Crossroads of Freedom', p.257. These issues will be addressed in greater detail in chapter IV.

freedom as proposed by Heidegger takes on the form of an invitation to participate in openness. This participatory role of de-cision (*Ent-scheidung*) - which *Being and Time* called 'resolvedness' (*Entschlossenheit*) - shows a way of residing in harmony with Being's manifestations, where freedom unfolds as a reciprocating between Being and *Dasein*. This kind of freedom, accordingly, is not a possession of the subject but has its seat in the ecstatic realm of openness, i.e. it belongs or resides within the open expanse of Being that guides whoever chooses to participate in this disclosive event.

But, as freedom assumes primarily an ontological meaning and becomes an 'attribute' of Being, a power that one receives rather than a capability that one has, one wonders whether it is still relevant to the ethical and political concerns of human beings? Whether it can still appoint the possibility of good and evil? One possible answer could lie in the subtlety hidden in Heidegger's idea of *freedom as a gift*. For, as Schalow also notes, 'if Heidegger's concept of freedom is to include a social dimension, then a second level for allocating its power must be operative within human choice'.⁶⁹ In other words, the power of freedom must be understood as what is distributed and shared through a partnership between self and other. In terms of ethics, this would mean that the self is free to the extent that it embraces and protects the freedom it has in common with the other. The idea of 'authentic solicitude' which was explored in *Being and Time* - as that mode of care by which *Dasein* acknowledges its caring for the other by freeing the other's being-towards his or her own possibility⁷⁰ - defines such an act of freedom as 'letting be'. That is: seeking the other's 'emancipation' in such a way as to let the other be as other.

In letting the other be, freedom is a way of responding to the other through an act of solicitude. Affects are not involuntary reactions but instead are modalities of openness that orient the decisions that we make. Thus the affect of compassion can be an instance of *Dasein's* ecstatic openness, a way of being attuned to the other's situation. This reciprocal

⁶⁹ Schalow, 'At the Crossroads of Freedom', p.260.

⁷⁰ Cf. the characterization of 'authentic' being-with as 'solicitude which leaps forth and liberates' in *Being and Time*, p. 344.

attunement, or way of co-responding to the other, lies at the heart of any ethical awareness. We can say that responsibility and responsiveness become co-extensive.⁷¹

2.5 Conclusion: Being as Historical

The fundamental question of metaphysics, i.e. ‘why are there beings rather than nothing?’ and the prior question to which it forces us, namely ‘how does it stand with Being?’ are, according to Heidegger, *historical* questions through and through. Heidegger understands history as a kind of happening that is never synonymous with the past, because the past is that which is no longer happening. History is not what is contemporary either, because this merely ‘passes by’, as it were, without ever happening. But history in the sense of happening ‘is determined from the future, takes over what has been, and acts and endures its way through the *present*.⁷² To ask ‘how does it stand with Being’ means to recapture, to retrieve, the beginning of a historical existence that has been buried under centuries of neglect and misconceptions. In this way we can prepare our existence to be transformed into a new beginning and begin, as it were, once again. This ‘crucial form of historicism’ which begins in the ‘fundamental event’ is, from Heidegger’s point of view, certainly possible, on the condition that:

An inception is not repeated when one shrinks back to it as something that once was, something that by now is familiar and is simply to be imitated, but rather when the inception is begun again more originally, and with all the strangeness, darkness, insecurity that a genuine inception brings with it.⁷³

The question ‘how does it stand with Being?’, far from being an abstract or an academic one, is intimately connected with the question ‘how does it stand with us?’, with our *Dasein* in history. Certainly, all questions concerning our present mode of

⁷¹ Schalow, ‘At the Crossroads of Freedom, p.261.

⁷² IM, p.47.

⁷³ IM, p. 41.

Being are historical, providing that we understand the relation between metaphysics and history in a Heideggerian sense:

Our asking of the fundamental metaphysical question is historical because it opens up the happening of human *Dasein* in its essential relations – that is, relations to beings as such and as a whole - opens it up to possibilities not yet asked about, futures to come, and thereby also binds it back to its inception that has been, and thus sharpens and burdens it in its present.⁷⁴

‘How do we stand today?’ For Heidegger, ‘seen metaphysically, we are staggering. Everywhere we are underway amid beings, and yet we no longer know how it stands with Being’.⁷⁵ For what if Being were not an empty word, a vapour, but ‘the spiritual fate of the West’?⁷⁶ What if the neglect and forgetfulness of Being, itself forgotten, were to be the innermost ground of decline?⁷⁷ While Nietzsche sees modern nihilism as a transitional crisis occasioned in part by the insight that the very concept of Being is merely the final wisp of evaporating reality - and with this, the long history of self-deception and of a metaphysics that confuses what is with what is not, comes finally to its end - nihilism, for Heidegger, is on the one hand profoundly embedded in the oblivion of Being, and on the other, in the complete and exclusive occupation with present beings. This nihilism, or better, nihilism thus understood ‘is the *ground* for the nihilism that Nietzsche exposed in the first book of the *Will to Power*’.⁷⁸ With these as yet enigmatic remarks, let us finally turn to Heidegger’s reading of Nietzsche.

⁷⁴ IM, p. 47.

⁷⁵ IM, p.217.

⁷⁶ IM, p. 40.

⁷⁷ IM, p. 39.

⁷⁸ IM, p.217.

Chapter IV

Heidegger, Nietzsche, and the Essence of Nihilism

We have seen that, according to *Introduction to Metaphysics*, the thought of the Being of beings as value represents the last stage of metaphysics. This statement receives a much fuller elaboration in Heidegger's confrontation with Nietzsche's philosophy, developed in lecture courses held during the years 1936-40, especially in the course taught in Freiburg in 1940, entitled *Nietzsche: The Will to Power (II. European Nihilism)*, and in the essay 'Nihilism as Determined by the History of Being', written between 1944 and 1946.¹ In these writings, Heidegger, taking his departure from an interpretation of Nietzsche, proceeds to unfold a line of thinking concerning nihilism which seeks to think the 'nihil' in 'nihilism' more fundamentally or 'essentially' than was possible for Nietzsche himself. Indeed, Heidegger's meditation arrives at the observation that

Metaphysics is a history in which there is essentially nothing to Being itself: *metaphysics as such is nihilism proper* [eigentlich].²

Nietzsche's philosophy is interpreted by Heidegger as essentially metaphysical and moreover, as the *completion* of metaphysics and thus of nihilism, despite Nietzsche's call for an 'overcoming of nihilism':

Thought in terms of the essence of nihilism, Nietzsche's overcoming is merely the fulfilment of nihilism. In it the full essence of nihilism is enunciated for us more clearly than in any other fundamental position of metaphysics. What is authentically its own is the staying-away [*Ausbleiben*] of Being itself. But insofar as the staying-away occurs in metaphysics, such authenticity [*Eigentlichkeit*] is not admitted as the authenticity of nihilism.³

¹ Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. IV, translated by Frank Capuzzi, edited by David Farrell Krell, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982). Henceforth cited as N.

² N, p. 211.

³ N, p. 219.

Nietzsche could not recognize the essence of nihilism, and of the nihilism manifesting itself in his work, since he remained entirely *within* metaphysics, albeit in the manner of bringing it to its completion. It is clear even from the brief remarks quoted above that Heidegger is not simply setting out a concept of nihilism which is entirely unrelated to Nietzsche's. Indeed he emphasizes the close connection of Nietzsche's philosophy with his own (Heidegger's) understanding of nihilism which, he suggests, is a more fundamental understanding of what Nietzsche himself sought to address, but failed – had to fail – to think authentically. In order to follow Heidegger's line of thought it is therefore necessary to engage with his interpretation of Nietzsche's analysis of European nihilism. Since this interpretation in some respects quite explicitly goes against what is said on the surface of Nietzsche's text, we shall first seek to understand what that text does in fact, on the surface, say, in order then to move to Heidegger's interpretation of its more essential meaning.

Like Heidegger, we shall take as the primary basis of our discussion of Nietzsche's understanding of nihilism the notes assembled in Book 1 of *The Will to Power* under the heading 'European Nihilism'.⁴ Given that many Nietzsche scholars would contest that such a textual focus on the *Nachlass* notes captures the 'essential' Nietzsche, this may be an appropriate place for some more general reflections on the vexed issue of Heidegger's textual interpretations. After all, not only his reading of Nietzsche, but also his – in scholarly terms – unorthodox interpretations of Plato or Parmenides have been challenged by philologists and other scholars. We may surmise that Heidegger's response to such *wissenschaftliche* objections would in such cases be essentially the same: putatively neutral, *wissenschaftlich* scholarship can never hope to grasp what is

⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. By Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, edited by Walter Kaufmann, (New York: Vintage Books, 1968). Henceforth cited as WP, followed by fragment number. WP is of course not a book by Nietzsche, but a collection of notes from his *Nachlass*, selected and arranged by the original editors after Nietzsche's death. However, as Heidegger stresses, this provenance of the text does not necessarily or by itself invalidate what is said in the individual notes as genuine expressions of Nietzsche's thought.

fundamentally being said in the texts of the essential thinkers, for such scholarship remains constitutively within the horizon of objectifying *Historie*. The presumption that the operative terms in those texts are used with a meaning that is establishable or even intelligible from within an essentially representational paradigm of thinking is a hermeneutic fore-judgement that may itself be called arbitrary. Examples of his rejection of this fore-judgement of course abound in his writings, but one from the present context of his confrontation with Nietzsche may suffice for purposes of illustration, since the pattern is repeated elsewhere. Nietzsche often refers to nihilism as a ‘psychological’ state (e.g. WP 3). Yet, according to Heidegger, we have to understand this only seemingly straightforward term as having a more ‘essential’ meaning in this case, and in fact to be a reference to metaphysics:

If Nietzsche speaks of nihilism as a ‘psychological state’, he will also operate with ‘psychological’ concepts and speak the language of ‘psychology’ when he explains the essence of nihilism...Nonetheless, we must detect a more essential content in such language, because it refers to the ‘cosmos’, to beings as a whole.⁵

Just as the meaning of ‘Being’ is not accessible at the fundamental level to objectifying judgement, so the deeper, essential sense of what is spoken in the texts of the essential thinkers, is not in principle accessible to seemingly ‘neutral’ philological investigation. And indeed, it is clear that this view is consistent with Heidegger’s analysis of the derivative and levelling character of all objectifying judgement. But, it may perhaps be retorted, what are our standards of interpretation to be, if not those of ‘objective’ philological scholarship? For Heidegger, any such demand for a ‘standard’ to be chosen by human will is itself symptomatic of the ‘nihilistic’ mode of thinking constitutive of modernity. This is to be contrasted – albeit not by way of simple opposition – with a mode of thinking which attempts to think the truth of Being as such (see Section 4 of the

⁵ N, p. 26. See also N, pp. 28-9.

present chapter). A remark Heidegger makes about such thinking in *Contributions to Philosophy* may suitably be taken to apply also to the interpretive questions we are currently considering. What then becomes clear is that the dispute between Heidegger and his philological critics is not one that could possibly be decided on any ‘neutral’ ground. Heidegger thus seems to us entirely correct when he indicates, time and again, that there is no such neutral ground of hermeneutics. In this sense, Heidegger’s readings and their truth or otherwise are indeed a matter of a de-cision (which, as should be obvious by now, is very far from saying that they ‘lack rigour’, for their rigour is not, nor does it aim to be, that of standard *wissenschaftlich* philology):

This knowing, such unpretentious boldness, can be born only in the grounding-attunement of reservedness. But then it also knows that every attempt to justify and to explain the venture from the outside – and thus not from within what it ventures – lags behind what is ventured and undermines it. But does that not continue to be arbitrary? Certainly. The only question is whether this arbitrariness is not the utmost necessity of a distressing distress – that distress that forces the thinking saying of Being into word.⁶

1. Nietzsche on European Nihilism

In *The Will To Power*, Nietzsche announces ‘the advent of nihilism’ as the ‘history of the next two centuries’, Nihilism ‘stands at the door’ and we ‘already live in the midst of’ incomplete forms of it.⁷ What is nihilism? A characterization of Nietzsche’s concept of nihilism, as understood by himself, is by no means straightforward, since he uses a number of different formulations for it and distinguishes several different senses of ‘nihilism’. The sense which is

⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 171. (Henceforth cited as CP).

⁷ The citations in this sentence are from WP, Preface 2, WP 1, and WP 28.

most prominent in these notes grasps nihilism as ‘the radical repudiation of value, meaning, and desirability’:⁸

Nihilism as a psychological state will have to be reached, first, when we have sought a ‘meaning’ in all events that is not there: so the seeker eventually becomes discouraged.⁹ *Radical nihilism* is the conviction of an absolute untenability of existence when it comes to the highest values one recognizes...¹⁰ Now that the shabby origin of these values is becoming clear, the universe seems to have lost value, seems ‘meaningless’ – but that is only *a transitional stage*.¹¹

Nihilism is here described by Nietzsche as a *psychological state*, which he sometimes simply calls a ‘feeling of meaninglessness’, occasioned by the realization that the ‘highest values’ one used to recognize are non-existent. What has brought about this realization are our cognitive endeavours guided by one of these values themselves, the ‘truthfulness’ enjoined by the morality of the ‘ascetic ideal’ which codifies the highest values that have governed our life hitherto.¹² How does this ‘feeling’ manifest itself? Nietzsche speaks of weariness, disgust, even an ‘inability to endure this world’.¹³ It is clear from these descriptions that what is being characterized is what he then goes on to distinguish as ‘passive nihilism’: a condition he also summarizes under the concept of *exhaustion*. Symptoms of this condition are, according to Nietzsche, widespread in contemporary culture and can be found especially in phenomena of *flight* from this ‘world’ that has become unendurable. Foremost among these forms of flight are the longing for intoxication and for states of unconsciousness (a ‘deadening of the affects’).¹⁴ But if nihilism as a psychological state is a suffering from meaninglessness, how are we to understand that ‘meaning’ which

⁸ WP 1.

⁹ WP 12.

¹⁰ WP 3.

¹¹ WP 7.

¹² Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Essay III, Section 24; in: *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, translated by W. Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, edited by W. Kaufmann, (New York: Vintage Books, 1989). Henceforth cited as GM.

¹³ WP 12 A.

¹⁴ For the desire for intoxication as a symptom of passive nihilism, see WP 48; for the longing for unconsciousness, see WP 48. See also GM III, Sections 17 and 19.

is experienced as absent in it? To put it differently, what are those 'highest values' which rendered existence meaningful prior to their withdrawal or deposition? Nietzsche's most developed discussion of this can be found in WP 12, which is also the fragment at the centre of Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche. Here Nietzsche sets out three ways in which a 'meaning' now lost used to manifest itself:

1. First, meaning (value) was seen as residing in the notion of a goal or end of history, towards which it was moving teleologically, whereas 'now one realizes that becoming aims at *nothing* and achieves *nothing*':

This meaning could have been: the 'fulfillment' of some highest ethical canon in all events, the moral world order; or the growth of love and harmony in the intercourse of beings; or the gradual approximation of a state of universal happiness...¹⁵

It is clear that what Nietzsche has in mind here are teleological conceptions of history as found pre-eminently in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, but in secularised forms also characteristic of (for example) orthodox Hegelianism, Marxism, and Comtean positivism.

2. Secondly, meaning used to manifest itself in the idea of a 'grand unity in which the individual could immerse himself as in an element of supreme value':

Some sort of unity, some form of 'monism': this faith suffices to give man a deep feeling of standing in the context of, and being dependent on, some whole that is infinitely superior to him, and he sees himself as a mode of the deity.¹⁶

In this form of meaning, value is seen as inhering not in the end or goal of the process of world history, but rather in the unified totality of reality as such. Nietzsche's language (monism, man as a mode of the deity) suggests that he has in mind above all Spinozist metaphysics and its descendants. Here the individual human being is seen as an essentially dependent part or moment of nature, the

¹⁵ WP 12 A.

¹⁶ *ibid.*

latter conceived as a necessarily interrelated and unified whole, in which, due to its self-subsistent plenitude of being, 'perfection' - 'supreme value', in Nietzsche's language - resides.

3. Finally, meaning has been found in the idea of a world of being separate from this world of becoming: 'to pass sentence on this whole world of becoming as a deception and to invent a world beyond it, a *true* world' in which there is no becoming and passing away. This is probably Nietzsche's most familiar description of what he elsewhere calls the ascetic ideal:

The idea at issue here is the valuation the ascetic priest places on our life: he juxtaposes it (along with what pertains to it: 'nature' 'world', the whole sphere of becoming and transitoriness) with a quite different mode of existence which it opposes and excludes, unless it turn against itself, deny itself: in that case, the case of the ascetic life, life counts as a bridge to that other mode of existence.¹⁷

Nietzsche's primary historical example for this ascetic valuation in its pure form is Platonism and, of course, the 'Platonism for the people' Christianity, although he frequently also cites Buddhism in this connection.

The three modes of meaningfulness elucidated above are referred to by Nietzsche in one passage as the 'categories "aim", "unity", "being"'¹⁸, and we shall see that this formulation will be of central importance for Heidegger. Meanwhile we may ask whether there is anything like a unifying principle underlying the modes of meaning mentioned by Nietzsche. And indeed there seems to be. What they have in common is the idea that individual human existence receives its value, its 'justification' if we wish, through orienting itself towards something beyond it and other than it. Individual human beings perceive their meaning as bestowed upon them through acting for the sake of something other and 'greater' than them:

¹⁷ GM III, 11.

¹⁸ WP12 A.

The nihilistic question ‘for what?’ is rooted in the old habit of supposing that the goal must be put up, given, demanded *from outside* – by some *superhuman authority* [...] the authority of *reason*. [...] Or *history* with an immanent spirit and a goal within, so one can entrust oneself to it. One wants to get around the will, the willing of a goal, the risk of positing a goal *for oneself*;¹⁹

At bottom, man has lost the belief in his own value when no infinitely valuable whole works through him; i.e., he conceived such a whole in order *to be able to believe in his own value*.²⁰

These formulations are ambiguous in an important respect. When Nietzsche says that the common feature of the forms of ‘meaning’ recognized hitherto is that what makes human comportment ‘meaningful’ is something that is in some sense ‘given...from outside’, does this refer only to the *origin* of such comportment, or also to its *end*? Other formulations, however, indicate clearly that Nietzsche has both senses in mind. Man has conceived of his comportments as meaningful if they were both experienced as *demanding* by an external source of value (God, reason, history, etc.), and directed towards it as the *goal* of the individual comportment. This is why Nietzsche says that what underlies these forms of ‘meaning’ is a ‘moral evaluation’: that the *telos* of human comportment is to be *outside the individual*, and that his comportment is therefore to be, in this precise sense, ‘unegoistic’:

The nihilistic consequence (the belief in valuelessness) as a consequence of moral valuation: everything egoistic has come to disgust us (even though we recognize the impossibility of the unegoistic);²¹

Nihilism ensues when the belief in the actuality, or indeed the very possibility, of such comportments disappears. This implies that what ultimately precipitates nihilism is a *psychological* realization, and this seems to explain Nietzsche’s statement in *Beyond Good and Evil* that psychology has now become the most fundamental science, the ‘queen of the sciences’.²² Nietzsche here uses an epithet

¹⁹ WP 20.

²⁰ WP 12 A.

²¹ WP 8.

²² Friedrich Nietzsche. *Beyond Good and Evil*, section 23.

that has traditionally been applied to metaphysics, which suggests that he is thinking of his own thought as *replacing* metaphysics. We shall leave a further discussion of this matter until we have given Heidegger's interpretation of this passage. For Nietzsche, passive nihilism is a 'transitional stage'²³. From what has been said so far, it is not difficult to understand why this should be so. In the condition of nihilism the world appears 'meaningless' because the values of the ascetic ideal that used to be recognized as 'highest' are seen as non-existent (or 'impossible'). What remains after their demise is the world of 'becoming' and of individual existence which was considered as worthless by humanity in thrall to the values of the ascetic ideal. But once it is fully recognized that these values were illusory, it is only a short way to the further realization that there is *no reason* to consider what remains after their demise as worthless. This is the realization that the values of the ascetic ideal arise from *the same ground* as that which they represent as worthless: the world of becoming and of individual 'egoism', a world which Nietzsche increasingly came to conceptualize under the title 'will to power'. Nietzsche saw the consequences of this realization as cataclysmic, and called the historical period defined by them 'the period of catastrophe' or the 'tragic age':

The repudiated world versus an artificially built 'true, valuable' one – Finally one discovers of what material one has built the 'true world': all one now has left is the repudiated one [...] At this point nihilism is reached: all that one has left are the values that pass judgement [on the repudiated world] – nothing else. Here the problem of strength and weakness originates:

1. The weak perish of it;
2. those who are stronger destroy what does not perish;
3. those who are strongest overcome the values that pass judgement.

In sum this constitutes the tragic age.²⁴

Nietzsche seems to think of (1.) as the completion of passive nihilism:

²³ WP 7.

²⁴ WP 37. Cf. also WP 56.

Morality [...] taught men to hate and despise most profoundly what is the basic character trait of those who rule: their will to power [...] If the suffering and oppressed lost the faith that they have the right to despise the will to power, they would enter the phase of hopeless despair. This would be the case if this trait were essential to life and it could be shown that even in this will to morality this very 'will to power' were hidden, and even this hatred and contempt for the will to power were still a will to power.²⁵

The responses mentioned under (2.) and (3.) in the quotation above are designated by Nietzsche as 'active nihilism'. He associates his own work in particular with (3.), the overcoming of the 'values that pass judgement' on becoming and the will to power: 'that I have hitherto been a thorough-going nihilist I have admitted to myself only recently':²⁶

Nihilism [...] can be a sign of strength: the spirit may have grown so strong that previous goals ('convictions', articles of belief) have become incommensurate [...] It reaches its maximum of relative strength as a violent force of destruction – as active nihilism.²⁷

While Nietzsche does not explicitly relate these particular remarks to his own philosophy, there can be little doubt that he saw it, or at least one side of it, as the destructive force *par excellence*. Almost all his later thinking seeks to hasten and to deepen the fall of the values of the ascetic ideal and to 'overcome' them. What renders Nietzsche's reflections on active nihilism perplexing is that, among the values and articles of belief to be 'destroyed' by it, he does not emphasize those which he has highlighted in his description of the ascetic ideal: the belief in a *telos* of history; or in a metaphysical holism and monism ('unity'); or in a 'true world' of changeless being behind the apparent world of becoming. Rather, he emphasizes as the most fundamental target of the destructive energy of active nihilism the idea of a truth that is independent of value-constituted 'perspectives':

²⁵ WP 55(6).

²⁶ WP 25.

²⁷ WP 23.

[T]hat there is no truth, that there is no absolute nature of things nor a ‘thing in itself’. This, too, is merely nihilism – even the most extreme nihilism.²⁸

The most extreme form of nihilism would be the view that *every* belief, every considering-something-true, is necessarily false because there simply is no *true world*. Thus: a *perspectival appearance* whose origin lies in us [...] That it is the measure of strength to what extent we can admit to ourselves, without perishing, [this] merely apparent character [...] To this extent, nihilism, as the denial of the truthful world, of being, might be a *divine way of thinking*.²⁹

‘Perspectivism’, the view that there is no ‘absolute truth’, is here introduced by Nietzsche explicitly as the expression of ‘active nihilism’ and thus as a part of his project of ‘overcoming the values that pass judgement’ on the world of appearances and becoming. According to perspectivism, all truth is perspectival: it applies to, or consists of, value-laden view-points and perspectival appearances from such view-points. Thus, there is no absolute, non-perspectival reality ‘behind’ the human perspective – all there is beyond the human perspective and its relative truths are other, non-human perspectives and their relative truths.³⁰

Why does Nietzsche think that such a doctrine might ‘overcome’ the values of the ascetic ideal? Perhaps he believes this because, in a perspectival world of this kind, the values of the ascetic ideal can find no application: in such a world there cannot be a pre-ordained *telos* towards which human history moves *anyway*; nor can there be a ‘grand unity’, since the perspectives are essentially plural; nor, obviously, can there be a ‘true world’ of being opposed to the world of appearances.

‘Active nihilism’ is essentially a destructive energy. When Nietzsche calls himself an extreme nihilist, should we conclude from this that this destructive endeavour is Nietzsche’s last word? This would hardly do him justice. For there are many places where Nietzsche indicates that the destruction of ‘previous goals’, that is, the values of the ascetic ideal, is only the first stage of

²⁸ WP 13.

²⁹ WP 15.

³⁰ See e.g. WP 556, WP 565, WP 567, WP 568.

a revaluation of values which would terminate in the affirmation of ‘new values’ and thus of a new form of ‘meaning’ This new ‘meaning’ would of course, from the view-point of the ascetic ideal, seem ‘terrible’ and as the apotheosis of the meaningless. In the notes on European nihilism, Nietzsche hints briefly at such a new meaning:

Does it make sense to conceive a god ‘beyond good and evil’? [...] Can we remove the idea of a goal from the process and then affirm the process in spite of this? This would be the case if something were attained at every moment within this process – and always the same.³¹

The idea of an affirmation of the process of becoming without a *telos* is developed further in Nietzsche’s thought of the eternal recurrence and of *amor fati*.

My formula for greatness in a human being is *amor fati*: that one wants nothing to be different [...] Not merely bear what is necessary [...] but love it.³²

We cannot discuss this thought of Nietzsche’s in detail here. It may suffice to remark that the success or failure of his declared endeavour to overcome nihilism would seem to be closely connected to the possibility or otherwise of such ‘greatness’.

2. Heidegger’s Interpretation of Nietzsche

Our interpretation of Nietzsche on European nihilism has so far been guided by a deliberate effort to stay close to the linguistic ‘surface’ of what Nietzsche’s text says. It has, of course, like all readings, involved a selection among the available textual material, and an accentuating of some aspects over others – but we have

³¹ WP 55(4).

³² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, ‘Why I Am so Clever’, 10; in : *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, edited by W. Kaufmann, trans. W. Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, (New York: Vintage, 1989).

sought to follow the accentuations and emphases in the texts *themselves*, partly by focusing on formulations which occur, with slight variations, quite frequently in Nietzsche's writings. Heidegger's procedure in reading Nietzsche is deliberately different. To begin with, Heidegger claims that Nietzsche reaches his 'essential' philosophy only in the *Nachlass* notes, and that these can therefore be read adequately without any reference to the writings published by himself. Secondly, Heidegger maintains that Nietzsche's formulations, even in the notes collected in the *Will to Power*, are sometimes significantly misleading and therefore require an interpretation which reaches past the semantic surface of Nietzsche's language to its 'essential content'.³³

After these preliminary remarks, let us now turn to Heidegger's interpretation itself.

For Heidegger, we cannot understand what Nietzsche means by nihilism without realizing that Nietzsche is first and foremost a metaphysician. 'Nihilism' in Nietzsche designates Nietzsche's own metaphysics. This metaphysics is essentially defined not by 'perspectivism' but by the concepts of will to power and the recurrence of the same³⁴ What is 'will to power'? 'Power' is understood by Heidegger here in the sense of essentially instrumental, 'technological' domination. When Nietzsche says, in some notes, that 'the world is will to power', this means, according to Heidegger: Because the 'transcendent', the 'beyond', and 'heaven' have been abolished, only the 'earth' remains. The new order must therefore be the absolute dominance of pure power over the earth through man.³⁵

Such power is by no means 'subject-less', but rather presupposes a conception (and self-conception) of man as *sub-iectum*, as his own ground. This is where Nietzsche's essential affinity to Descartes is to be located, as will be elucidated

³³ See footnote 4 above.

³⁴ N, pp. 5-7. No reference to Nietzsche's texts is given by Heidegger for the interpretive claims made in this and in the last sentence.

³⁵ N. p. 8.

below. Power *qua* domination is essentially an endless and limitless *process of overpowering*, since it consists in surpassing whatever level of power has already been attained.³⁶ The process of overpowering, since it acknowledges no end and indeed nothing besides itself, could be said to *recur ever again to itself* and this is what the ‘eternal recurrence of the same’ means. The term ‘becoming’, according to Heidegger’s interpretation, unites the meanings of ‘will to power’ and ‘eternal recurrence of the same’: the ‘term becoming signifies the overpowering of power, as the essence of power, which powerfully and continually returns to itself in its own way’.³⁷ The *subiectum* that fashions itself in the image of the will to power, the recurrence of the same, and becoming, understood in this way, would be no longer man as we have known him in the past, but a new kind of man, the *Übermensch*.³⁸ Nihilism, then, is Nietzsche’s name for his own metaphysics as interpreted by Heidegger. But has Nietzsche not explicitly defined nihilism as a *psychological* state? Heidegger responds to this objection that Nietzsche does not mean by ‘psychology’ what is ordinarily meant by it. Rather, he uses this term to designate a particular metaphysics, namely the metaphysics ‘that posits man [...] as the measure and centre, as ground and aim of all being.’ Hence, ‘Nietzsche’s “psychology” is simply coterminous with metaphysics’.³⁹

³⁶ Heidegger again gives no reference in this instance, but he is almost certainly thinking of Nietzsche’s argument in passages like WP 695 and WP 699.

³⁷ N, p. 8.

³⁸ It seems that Heidegger’s interpretation of the *Übermensch* here is strongly influenced by the figure of the ‘worker’ in Ernst Jünger’s influential treatise *Der Arbeiter*. This becomes especially clear in the following passage: ‘What is needed is a form of mankind that is from top to bottom equal to the unique fundamental essence of modern technology and its metaphysical truth; that is to say, that lets itself be entirely dominated by the essence of technology [...] In the sense of Nietzsche’s metaphysics, only the Over-man is appropriate to an absolute “machine economy” and vice versa;’ (N, p. 117, my italics). We know that Heidegger read Jünger’s essay ‘Total Mobilization’, containing a condensed version of the argument of *Der Arbeiter*, shortly after its publication in 1930, and regarded it as ‘showing an essential comprehension of Nietzsche’s metaphysics’. (See R. Wolin (ed.), *The Heidegger Controversy*, p. 121).

³⁹ N, pp. 28-29. Heidegger’s evidence for this reading consists in a passage from *Beyond Good and Evil*, section 23. His interpretation of this passage presupposes that the phrase ‘will to power’ is used in this passage not in a psychological sense, but in a metaphysical sense. Critics might therefore argue that the interpretation presupposes precisely what it claims to demonstrate – that there is no autonomous ‘psychology’ in Nietzsche which is not derived from a particular metaphysics.

In discussing Heidegger's interpretation, we have so far not made reference to a concept which is obviously central for Nietzsche: the concept of *value*. For Heidegger, this concept is also essentially connected with Nietzsche's metaphysics and cannot in fact be understood apart from it. When Nietzsche speaks of his philosophy as attempting a 'revaluation of all values', he refers by this to his metaphysics of the will to power (and hence to nihilism): 'The revaluation thinks Being for the first time as value. With it, metaphysics begins to be value thinking.'⁴⁰ In fact, the very *concept* of value is essentially tied to a metaphysics of power:

Values are essentially related to 'domination' Dominance is the being in power of power. Values are bound to will to power; they depend on it as the proper essence of power.⁴¹

What does this mean? Does it mean that *in Nietzsche's metaphysics*, and only in it, values are seen as in fact (that is 'contingently') 'posited' by the will to power, because the world is *in fact* 'will to power'? If this was the case, there would be no *essential* dependency of the concept of value on the concept of the will to power, since Nietzsche nowhere says that *any possible world* has to be will to power by some kind of absolute necessity. However, it is clear and explicit that Heidegger maintains that the concept of value is essentially dependent upon the concept of will to power:

If metaphysics is the truth of beings as a whole and therefore speaks about the Being of beings, from what interpretation of being as a whole does value thinking originate? Our answer is that it originates from a determination of beings as a whole through the basic trait of will to power.⁴²

Heidegger's primary textual reference in this regard is WP 12 B, where Nietzsche says:

⁴⁰ N, p. 6.

⁴¹ N, p. 50.

⁴² N, p. 60.

all these values [of the ascetic ideal] are, psychologically considered, the results of certain perspectives of utility, designed to maintain and increase human constructs of domination – and they have been falsely projected into the essence of things. What we find here is still the *hyperbolic naiveté* of man: positing himself as the meaning and measure of the value of things.

It is questionable, however, whether Nietzsche is saying here that all values are essentially (with absolute necessity) ‘constructs of domination’. If this was his point, he would be saying that the advocates of the ascetic ideal, when they claim to believe in the value of the ‘unegoistic’ – i.e. the opposite of domination - are making, so to speak, a ‘logical’ error, and misunderstand the very concept of value itself. But this does not seem to be his point. Rather, he often says that we can demonstrate, with ‘psychological honesty’, that ‘unegoistic motives’ are in fact other than what they claim to be - that they are deceptions. Therefore, those who claim to believe in unegoistic values do not *in fact* do so.⁴³ Does this imply that, for Nietzsche, the idea of *values not governed by the will to power* is simply ‘nonsense’, or that it is a misunderstanding of what values in their very essence are?

Heidegger, in putting forward this interpretation, in fact seems to be going beyond what Nietzsche himself says – we might say that he *radicalizes* Nietzsche’s own interpretation of values, which Nietzsche had already regarded as a radical departure from all previous understandings of value or ‘the good’.

What is the thinking that underlies this radicalization and grounds it? We can find the following line of thinking on this issue in Heidegger. The notion of value derives ultimately from Plato’s *ἰδέα του αγαθου*, the ‘idea of the good’. Plato, at the beginning of metaphysics, understood the Being of beings as enduring presence in the unconcealed and, in this sense, as ‘visibleness’. The

⁴³ The best known example of this kind of ‘psychological’ demonstration is Nietzsche’s analysis of *ressentiment* and of the origin of ‘slave morality’ in GM I, 10-14. It is remarkable that Heidegger does not mention this or indeed any of Nietzsche’s ‘psychological’ analyses in his discussion of Nietzsche’s value thinking in this lecture course.

idea itself is αγαθον, according to Heidegger's interpretation of Plato, and is conceived by Plato as suitability, as what is 'good for something', for it makes possible that entities come into the unconcealed. The Being of beings, for Plato, thus is both enduring presence and what *makes this possible*.⁴⁴ At the beginning of modernity, when Being as enduring presence is replaced by Being as representedness, beingness as what makes possible entities accordingly becomes *conditions of the possibility of objects*, and it does so explicitly in Kant's philosophy. But thinking in terms of 'values' adds a further element to the idea of 'condition for something'. This is the idea of a 'view-point' which 'estimates'. There are only values if there are points of view which estimate.⁴⁵ To 'estimate' involves assessing and comparing. (For Nietzsche, this is expressed in the terminology of 'higher' and 'lower' values.) The estimating in question here is specified by Heidegger as 'reckoning with' something:

A value *is* a value because it has validity. It has validity because it has been posited as valid. It is thus posited by an envisioning of something that *through* the envisioning first receives the character of a thing with which one can reckon and that therefore has validity [i.e. is of value].⁴⁶

How is this to be understood? Heidegger elucidates:

Reckoning thus understood is a self-imposed positing of conditions in such a way that the conditions condition the Being of beings. [...] When do 'conditions' [...] come to be values? Only when the representing of beings as such comes to be that representing which absolutely posits itself on itself and has to constitute of itself and for itself all the conditions of Being.⁴⁷

But this is precisely how the will to power has been interpreted by Heidegger:

For Nietzsche, subjectivity is likewise absolute, albeit in a different sense [from Hegel's] [...] Here truth is in its essence error, so that the distinction between truth and untruth falls away. The distinction is consigned to the command decision of the will to power, which absolutely enjoins the respective roles of various perspectives according

⁴⁴ N, pp. 168-171.

⁴⁵ N, pp. 62-63.

⁴⁶ N, p. 62.

⁴⁷ N, p. 177.

to the need for power [...] power is the disposing over the true and the untrue, the verdict concerning the respective roles of error, semblance, and the production of semblance for the preservation and enhancement of power remain solely with the will to power itself⁴⁸

Since for Heidegger ‘Being’ and ‘truth’ are fundamentally equivalent,⁴⁹ this implies that in the metaphysics of the will to power, the subject of will to power ‘posits itself on itself and has to constitute of itself and for itself all the conditions of Being’. It follows from this that there can be belief in ‘values’ *only* if the world is conceived, explicitly or not, in terms of self-grounding subjectivity, i.e. as will to power:

‘Value’ is essentially use-value, but ‘use’ must here be equated with the condition of the preservation of power; that is, always at the same time, with the condition of the enhancement of power.⁵⁰

Before commenting on this argument of Heidegger’s, it is necessary to ask again: is it intended to apply only to *Nietzsche’s* concept of value? Or is it directed at *any* concept of value or worth that goes beyond the Platonic idea of the ‘good’ as interpreted by Heidegger (το αγαθον as ‘what is suitable for, what makes possible...’) by adding an element of ‘estimation’, of ‘higher’ and ‘lower’? If the former was the case, the claim might seem hardly controversial, although we have seen above that Heidegger in fact radicalises Nietzsche’s concept of value, in so far as this can be judged from what Nietzsche explicitly says. Heidegger’s references to the ‘philosophy of value’ of the neo-Kantians Windelband and Rickert and to ‘phenomenology of value’ (at that time mainly associated with the philosophy of Max Scheler) indicate,⁵¹ however, that the target is certainly not only Nietzsche and does indeed seem to be ‘value thinking’ and valuing quite generally. This is confirmed by Heidegger’s remarks in the ‘Letter on Humanism’, written in 1946-7, that

⁴⁸ N, pp. 143-144.

⁴⁹ This is stated explicitly also in the Nietzsche lectures. See N, p. 131.

⁵⁰ N, p. 66.

⁵¹ N, p. 59.

by the assessment of something as a value what is valued is admitted only as an object of man's estimation. But what a thing is in its Being is not exhausted by its being an object, particularly when objectivity takes the form of value. [...] Every valuing, even when it values positively, is a subjectivizing. It does not let beings: be. Rather, valuing lets beings: be valid – solely as the objects of its doing.⁵²

Perhaps we can summarize Heidegger's statements about value thinking and valuing in the following observations: (1) in valuing, what or how something 'is' in its Being is imposed through a *doing by the subject* of valuing; (2) the Being of something in so far as it is 'envisioned' as a value is the Being of an object; (3) the Being of a value is essentially dependent upon '*man's estimation*'; (4) the Being of a value is essentially the Being of a use-object. (5) what it is 'of use' for is essentially the preservation and enhancement of the power of man.

It is not our intention here to 'assess' these Heideggerian interpretations. It is more important for us to understand the issues that are at stake. It may be helpful in this regard to consider briefly how value thinkers, including Nietzsche, might respond to these observations, without ourselves seeking precipitately to adjudicate in this matter.

(1.) Nietzsche himself often claims that all values are 'imposed' through a doing of the valuer. But in this respect he departs, of course, strongly from the main tradition of philosophical thinking on value, according to which the idea of value essentially is the idea of 'being *affected*' by something and of being therefore 'passively' receptive to it. According to some value thinkers, the greater or 'deeper' this affection is, the more the subject tends to disappear and be *absorbed* in it.⁵³ Other philosophers of

⁵² 'Letter on Humanism', in: *Basic Writings*, edited by David Farrell Krell, (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 251.

⁵³ For Schopenhauer, this 'absorption' of the subject was characteristic of the experience of *aesthetic* value. According to him, in this experience all willing or striving subsides and the willing *subject* vanishes together with it. See Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, Book 3.

value have argued that the idea of an active imposing of values through ‘willing’ mistakes the very essence of the Being of values.⁵⁴

(2.) The claim that values are *objects* is not made by Nietzsche, and is perhaps especially associated with Scheler’s phenomenology of value.⁵⁵ Scheler means by this that, for example, the ‘beauty’ of a painting is given as a quality *in the painting itself*; it is not discovered through *reflection* and hence not, in this sense, ‘subjective’. On the other hand, among the values recognized by Scheler are values which belong to the ‘person’ and to ‘acts’ (intentional experiences) ‘immediately’.⁵⁶ An act of love, for example, is of value, and experienced as such, in and by itself. But since neither the person nor the person’s intentional acts are essentially objects for Scheler,⁵⁷ it could be argued that values, according to his own account, cannot *essentially* be objects either, although they can essentially be *made* into objects, just like intentional experiences can be made into objects when we reflect on them.

(3.) That the Being of values *qua* values is essentially dependent on *man* would be disputed both by Nietzsche and by other value thinkers. For Nietzsche, *all* perspectives, human or non-human, are governed by values. An animal can experience something as pleasurable and *eo ipso* experience it as valuable, although it can of course not conceptualise it as such. Similarly, for Nietzsche, there may be perspectives in which values are given of kinds of which human beings have no inkling at all. In so far as values, for Nietzsche and other value theorists, are essentially subject to differentiation in terms of greater or smaller, higher or lower, they

⁵⁴ See e.g. Max Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Value*, trans. M. S. Frings and R. L. Funk (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), pp. 246-247. Charles Taylor has argued in a well-known essay that what fundamentally ‘matters’ or is of value to me cannot be willed by me and can therefore not be the result of my *doing*. See Charles Taylor, ‘Responsibility for Self’, in: *Free Will*, edited by G. Watson, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1983), p.

⁵⁵ Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics*, pp. 12f.

⁵⁶ *Formalism in Ethics*, pp. 100-101.

⁵⁷ *Formalism in Ethics*, p. 386f.

involve the possibility of ‘estimation’, of representing something in the mode of assessing and comparing it. But it could be argued that while such active ‘reckoning’ of the subject is essentially involved in *any* representation, the primary experience of value, as a *living in* the value and being absorbed in it, is not such a representation and hence does not and *cannot* actively assess in this way. It belongs to its essence, however, that it can subsequently become the object of assessment and comparison.

- (4.) The idea that every value *qua* value is necessarily use-value ‘for’ something would be disputed by value thinkers as mistaking the essence of the matter. They would argue that, if something is to be ‘of use for’ something else, that something else must already have been recognized as either worthy in itself (as an ‘end’), or as in turn useful for something that is of value in itself. The idea of use-value is *founded in* the idea of some ‘intrinsic’ value which is not merely of use for, or suitable for, something else. As we saw earlier, while for traditional ethics that intrinsic value did not necessarily reside in or belong to the valuer himself/herself, Nietzsche denied this by ‘psychologically’ analysing anything ‘unegoistic’ as an illusion. The only intrinsic value recognized by humans, according to the later Nietzsche, is the enhancement of power of the valuer in an endless process of ‘overpowering’. But there are indications in his writings that it might be a misunderstanding to interpret this process as necessarily one of self-grounding *stabilization and empowerment of the subject*:

Heroism – that is the attitude of a man who strives towards an aim that is such that, reckoned in relation to it, he does not count at all. Heroism is the good will to self-destruction. [...] Unconditional love includes – also the desire to be mistreated: it is a

defiance against oneself, and self-giving [*Hingabe*] turns ultimately into the wish for self-destruction: ‘To perish in this sea!’⁵⁸

[...] true goodness, nobility, greatness of soul [...], which does not give in order to take, - which does not want to *raise* itself by being good, - *wasteful expenditure* as the type of true goodness, the rich fullness of the *person* as its presupposition⁵⁹

3. Metaphysics and the Authentic Essence of Nihilism

We have already mentioned that, for Heidegger, Nietzsche’s ‘classical nihilism’ fails to think the essence of nihilism authentically. This is due to the fact that Nietzsche thinks nihilism from within metaphysics, and thus is unable to consider the ‘nihil’ in ‘nihilism’ in a way that is appropriate to its essence. Nietzsche, as a metaphysician, does not and cannot take ‘the question of the nothing seriously’.⁶⁰ But this is itself part and parcel of the fact that metaphysics does not think Being as such. Metaphysics cannot consider the nothing in its authentic essence because, for it, ‘there is nothing to Being’. But precisely for this reason, the history of metaphysics itself is nihilism proper. In this Section we shall seek to understand Heidegger’s path of thinking that leads to this conclusion.

We have so far been using the term ‘metaphysics’ without elucidating it in any detail. In the text we are considering Heidegger gives a number of different, but ultimately overlapping and mutually illuminating descriptions of metaphysics. Metaphysics thinks the Being of beings (entities) by thinking beings as such and as a whole. It does so by means of *categories*, which govern assertory thinking, that is, *judgement*.⁶¹ What is essentially asserted and

⁵⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. G. Colli and M. Montinari, (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1967ff.). Section VII, volume 1, fragment 1[67]. The fragment was written between 1882 and 1883. For drawing my attention to this and the subsequent fragment I wish to thank my supervisor, Dr. Poellner.

⁵⁹ *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, Section VIII, volume 3, fragment 15[85]. The fragment was written between early 1888 and January 1889, i.e. shortly before Nietzsche’s final collapse.

⁶⁰ N, p. 21.

⁶¹ N, p. 41.

assertable by judgement is *what* beings are. The Being of entities is therefore thought by metaphysics in terms of ‘what beings as such are’, that is, in terms of *quidditas* (whatness) or *essentia*. It is true that metaphysics distinguishes *that* something is (its *existentia*) from *what* it is (its *essentia*). But this does not mean that metaphysics does after all ponder Being as such when it speaks of *existentia*, the ‘that it is’. For even here, Being is not thought as such, but in terms of, and from, beings. Furthermore, *existentia* is subordinated to whatness in the following sense: when metaphysics speaks of a being’s ‘truly existing’, this means for metaphysics merely that this being *corresponds most closely* to whatever has been defined as the What of beings.⁶² Beings (entities) ‘are’, but what it means to say *that they are* is never pondered by metaphysics *as such*. Because metaphysics thinks the Being of entities by predicating (judging) what entities are, it cannot think Being other than as what all beings have in common, the most universal of predicates, or the highest genus. Thus to speak of Being within metaphysics is merely to *look away* from all concrete rich, particularities of entities, and retain only what is ‘abstracted’ from these, what is common to all. This yields the *concept* of Being as ‘beingness’, the most universal, empty, concept, although ‘it remains true that every fundamental metaphysical position does think Being according to an interpretation all its own’.⁶³ But while metaphysics in this way stands in the differentiation of Being and beings, and makes use of it, it does not genuinely question it: ‘With such differentiation of Being from beings nothing is said about the inner content of the essence of Being.’⁶⁴ In this sense, Western metaphysics is the history in which there is *nothing to Being*. And this history, for Heidegger, *is* nihilism, understood authentically. Before considering this understanding of nihilism in more detail and in its relation to Nietzsche’s concept, we need, at least briefly, to address the question of the unity of metaphysics. It is clear that there is such a unity in

⁶² N, p. 206-207.

⁶³ N.,p. 157.

⁶⁴ N, p. 156.

Heidegger's interpretation of the history of metaphysics. Nietzsche's valiative thought, which is equivalent with the metaphysics of will to power, completes and fulfills that history. But this completion is not merely an extraneous or haphazard 'coming to an end'. Rather,

Because Nietzsche's philosophy is metaphysics, and all metaphysics is Platonism, at the end of metaphysics, Being *must* be thought as value; that is, it must be reckoned as a merely conditioned conditioning of beings. The metaphysical interpretation of Being as value is prefigured in the beginning of metaphysics.⁶⁵

This is of course not meant to imply that Nietzsche's metaphysics is ultimately identical with Plato's. Nor should the 'must' in Heidegger's formulation be taken to indicate some 'lawfulness' of essential history, whereby we could determine, by way of a quasi-Hegelian logic, the necessary stages of the development of metaphysics. Ultimately, it seems that we cannot fully grasp the essence of this 'must', for to grasp it would require an unconcealment of the inner essence of Being itself, but such unconcealment would run counter to that very essence. However, we can certainly notice affinities and differences in the fundamental metaphysical positions.

When Plato, at the beginning of Western metaphysics, grasps the Being of beings as *ἰδέα* or *εἶδος*, this means, that 'outward appearance' wherein beings come to enduring presence in the unconcealed. But this is at the same time to think Being as the 'prior', as *a priori* in the sense of the condition, as what makes beings *possible*. 'It is the essence of *idea* to make suitable; that is, to make the being [*das Seiende*] as such possible, that it may come to presence into the unconcealed'.⁶⁶ Thus the *ἰδέα* is of itself *ἀγαθόν*, rather than there being a special 'idea of the good', as one of the standard interpretations of Plato has it. However, for this Platonic conception of Being as 'suitability' to be transformed into Nietzsche's conception of Being as value – that is, as what must be reckoned

⁶⁵ N, p. 165. Italics mine.

⁶⁶ N, p. 169.

with for the preservation and enhancement of power of the subject – there had to be a fundamental transformation of metaphysics into the metaphysics of subjectivity. This transformation, which inaugurated modernity as an epoch of essential history, was emphatically announced in Descartes's *cogito, ergo sum*. For Descartes, the ground which makes possible is the subject of the *cogito*. For according to Descartes, it is the *subject* that must decide or legislate for itself what is to count as true. It must do so by means of a 'method' which has been chosen by the subject as binding and which conceives of thinking as *cogitatio* in a very particular sense. To think 'properly' for Descartes is to have 'clear and distinct ideas' and to accept only what is presented in them. But to accept as 'true' only what is presented in 'clear and distinct' ideas is to determine the true in terms of what can be grasped or mastered as a representation that is fully transparent to it. Hence, the true for Descartes is equivalent to the certain, to what is securely in the representational possession of the subject.

In important passages, Descartes substitutes for *cogitare* the word *percipere* (*per-capio*) – to take possession of a thing, to seize something, in the sense of presenting-to-oneself by way of presenting-before-oneself, representing. [...] The presented-to, the represented – *cogitatum* – is therefore something for man only when it is established and secured as that over which he can always be master unequivocally, without any hesitation or doubt, in the radius of *his own* power to enjoin.⁶⁷

Descartes's metaphysics can therefore be interpreted as the metaphysics of self-empowering subjectivity. It may perhaps be objected that this reading does hardly do justice to Descartes. For does he not say that we should only accept as true what is presented in those ideas which we cannot doubt, that is, which are *beyond* our powers to question, and which are therefore irresistible for us, which 'overpower' us?⁶⁸ This interpretation is in a certain sense correct, but it misses the essential point. For the self-empowering of the subject lies in the enjoining

⁶⁷ N, p. 104-105.

⁶⁸ R. Descartes, 4th *Meditation*, in *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, ed. E.S. Haldane and G. T. R. Ross.

and choosing of the *standard* of what is to count as true. Moreover, that standard or measure is determined by Descartes explicitly in such a way as to secure the further progress of representation.

Descartes's *cogitatio* is not only a 'grasping', it is also *deliberative*, involving a process of doubting. It is though this deliberative holding-to account of what is presented that the *cogitatio* gives rise to – or 'co-posit's', in Heidegger's formulation - the subject in an emphatic sense. The existence of the subject is therefore not *derived* by Descartes from the *cogito* in a syllogism, but is co-given through the *cogitatio* as understood by him. The deliberative holding to account and taking possession of what is given in 'clear and distinct' ideas makes what is thus given into objects in the emphatic sense – something that stands over and against a subject. Both objects in that sense and the explicitly self-conscious subject that grasps itself as standing over and against a world of objects *emerge together* in the Cartesian philosophy of subjectivity which sets the metaphysics of modernity onto its course.⁶⁹ This is why Heidegger can make such seemingly paradoxical remarks as that thinking of the Being of beings as objective is subjectivism: such thinking 'subjectivizes beings into mere objects'.⁷⁰ Heidegger does not refer to Kant in this context, but we may perhaps observe that this interdependence and belonging-together of the conceptually self-conscious subject and a world of objects standing over against it becomes explicit in Kant's claim that the 'I think' must be able to accompany all my representations ('ideas') as a condition of the possibility of a world of objects.⁷¹ What prompts this conception of the Being of beings as representedness - as objectivity for a subject?

Liberation *from* the revealed certitude of the salvation of individual immortal souls is in itself liberation *to* a certitude in which man can by himself be sure of his own definition and task. The securing of supreme and absolute self-development of all the capacities of

⁶⁹ Cf. N, pp. 107-108.

⁷⁰ 'Letter on Humanism', p. 251.

⁷¹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, esp. B 130-135.

mankind for absolute dominion over the entire earth is the secret goad that prods modern man again and again to new resurgences, a goad that forces him into commitments that secure for him the surety of his actions and the certainty of his aims. The consciously posited binding appears in many guises and disguises.⁷²

When Heidegger speaks of the ‘self-development of all the capacities of mankind for absolute dominion over the entire earth’ as the goal underlying the Cartesian philosophy, there is no shortage of statements of Descartes which confirm this.⁷³

We have already seen how and why Heidegger interprets Nietzsche’s philosophy as the completion and fulfillment of the development that began with Descartes.

We have seen that Heidegger does not pretend to give an explanation, a ‘sufficient reason’ – whether causal, logical, or psychological’- for this development. To be sure, we can point to affinities in which modernity is intimated or prefigured: in particular the Christian-Lutheran demand for the ‘certitude of salvation’ as what ultimately matters, which becomes transformed into Descartes’s certitude of representational knowledge. But any attempt to give a ‘sufficient reason’ or ground for why the history of metaphysics is as it is would of course itself be a *metaphysical* explanation. It would be ‘nihilistic in the ‘authentic’ or proper sense in that it would be conducted in a mode of thinking in which there is nothing to Being. Since metaphysics does not question Being as such, nor does it think Nothing as such. ‘Nothing’, for metaphysics, means merely the negation of beings in negative judgements, nothing more than this. In the essay ‘Nihilism as determined by the History of Being’, appended to the Nietzsche lectures, albeit written somewhat later, Heidegger attempts to pose the question of the ‘nihil’ in nihilism on the basis of a mode of thinking which does not approach Being through beings, but moves ‘in the realm of Being itself’.⁷⁴ Metaphysical thinking at its inception, we saw, thinks Being as that which makes beings possible. Through the ‘what’ entities as such can manifest

⁷² N, p. 99.

⁷³ Especially of course his remark in the *Discourse on the Method*, that the aim of philosophical thinking should be to create the conditions for making us ‘the masters and possessors of nature’.

⁷⁴ N, p. 223.

themselves or come into the unconcealed. So it is not accidental or extraneous that metaphysics, in tarrying with and concerning itself with beings ‘in their totality’, should pass over or ignore Being as such. To use an analogy from sense perception which may to some extent throw light on the essential connection involved here: the figure on the differently coloured background of a painting becomes possible only through, or on the basis of, the background: there can be no figure without background. But if the figure or *Gestalt* is to become possible or *stand out as such*, the background which makes it possible must recede. In the language of phenomenology: it must become unthematic. Analogously, thinking cannot thematize Being as such if beings are to be possible. This means that Being, at the inception of Western metaphysics does not accidentally withdraw into the background or stay away: it does so essentially.⁷⁵ Moreover, since it cannot be the case that thinking is simply other than Being, but is itself in Being – is the way Being manifests itself, we might express this happening by saying that Being withdraws in or through the history of metaphysical thought: the fact that for metaphysics there is nothing to Being is the staying away or concealing itself as which Being *is*. It is *as* this history of self-concealment in the thinking of beings as such, or as the history of ‘nihilism proper’, that Being ‘has’ to be, since it would be a fundamentally erroneous oversight or misunderstanding of the differentiation between Being and beings (entities) to think that Being could be ‘separate from’ beings and the history of beings. For this would make it merely into another being, although a privileged one, as in onto-theology. But what is definitive of metaphysical thought is that this concealment or staying away of Being is *itself* concealed, that is, not questioned or pondered at all. Metaphysics does not recognize this concealment,

not because it repudiates Being itself as to-be-thought, *but because Being itself stays away*. But if that is so, then the ‘unthought’ does not stem from a thinking that neglects something. [...] Being [*das Sein*] itself occurs essentially as the unconcealment in

⁷⁵ N, p. 211.

which the being [*das Seiende*] comes to presence. Unconcealment itself, however, remains concealed as such. With reference to itself, unconcealment as such keeps away, keeps to itself. *The matter stands with the concealment of the essence of unconcealment. It stands with the concealment of Being as such. Being itself stays away. Thus matters stand with the concealment of Being in such a way that the concealment conceals itself in itself.*⁷⁶

The history of metaphysics is thus the history of the essential staying away or twofold concealment of Being itself. This line of thinking gives rise to two questions with special urgency within the context of our discussion. First, what are the consequences of it with respect to thinking the ‘nothing’ in nihilism in its authentic essence? Secondly, what can we make of Nietzsche’s demand to ‘overcome nihilism’, once we understand nihilism in its authentic essence?

For metaphysics, ‘Nothing’ is a matter of negative judgement. This judgement denies that some entity, or indeed entities as such, instantiate some whatness or other. Entities are *not* so-and-so. In this mode of thought, ‘Nothing’ is opposed to ‘Being’ in the sense that the so-being of some entity, or of entities as a whole, *excludes* their not-so-being, and it does so as a matter of ‘logic’. However, for a thinking which moves ‘in the realm of Being itself’, this cannot be the end of the matter. Such a thinking questions Being as such, and this means that it questions it in its withdrawal or staying away *as which Being is*:

Being is not segregated somewhere off by itself, nor does it also keep away; rather, the staying-away of Being as such is Being itself. In its staying-away Being veils itself with itself. This veil that vanishes for itself, which is the way Being essentially occurs in staying-away, is Nothing as Being itself. Do we sense what occurs essentially in Nothing which is now to be thought? [...] we are voicing the assumption that Being – thought as such – can no longer be called ‘Being’. Being as such is other than itself, so decisively other that it even ‘is’ not.⁷⁷

Nothing is the *veil* of Being’s concealment or withdrawal, as which Being is. Hence, Nothing, thought as such, is not opposed to Being in the sense of being excluded by it. Rather we might say, it is the essence of Being as such. As

⁷⁶ N, pp. 213-214.

⁷⁷ N, pp. 214-215.

Heidegger notes, this may sound ‘dialectical’ and may easily be misleading. For one thing, there can be no question that Nothing, as Being’s differing from itself, is in any way involved in a process of sublation. In staying away, there is Nothing to Being, and as such Being ‘is’. In so far as there is essentially Nothing to Being, Being is essentially as *promise* and *mystery*:

That which according to its essence preservingly conceals, and thus remains concealed in its essence and entirely hidden, though nonetheless it somehow appears, is in itself what we call the *mystery*. In the inauthenticity of the essence of nihilism, the mystery of the promise occurs, in which form Being is itself, in that it saves itself as such. [...] *The essence of metaphysics consists in the fact that it is the history of the secret of the promise of Being itself.*⁷⁸

Metaphysics, as the inauthentic thinking of the essence of nihilism (i.e. of itself) is not aware of the promise *as* promise or the mystery *as* mystery. But after everything that has been said we should be in a position to realize that this inauthenticity belongs itself to the *essence* of the history of Being as nihilism: ‘The inauthenticity of nihilism is not eliminated from its essence. That indicates that nonessence belongs to essence’.⁷⁹ Hence, ‘to overcome nihilism’ may mean several quite different things. In one sense it may mean the attempt to overcome metaphysics in the sense of bringing the history of Being in its default ‘under oneself’. But such ‘an overcoming of Being itself not only can never be accomplished – the very attempt would revert to a desire to unhinge the essence of man’.⁸⁰ But ‘overcoming metaphysics/nihilism’ may also mean something else, which has nothing to do with a desire to eliminate metaphysics. Rather, it may mean

surrendering the metaphysical interpretation of metaphysics. Thinking abandons the pure ‘metaphysics of metaphysics’ by taking a step back, back from the omission of

⁷⁸ N, pp. 226-227.

⁷⁹ N, pp. 220-221.

⁸⁰ N, p. 223.

Being in its staying-away. In the step back, thinking has already set out on the path of thinking to encounter Being itself in its self-withdrawal.⁸¹

Heidegger leaves no doubt that this is 'the way we have attempted to think it'.⁸²

Indeed, he goes further: 'Instead of such [eliminative] overcoming, only one thing is necessary, namely that thinking, encouraged by Being itself, think to encounter Being in its staying away as such'.⁸³ This would be to heed the essence of nihilism authentically.⁸⁴

Nihilism, then, in Heidegger's understanding of it, contains nothing negative. But in this case we may ask, finally: what is the connection with Nietzsche's concept of nihilism? Is it not simply a different concept altogether? We have already seen that Heidegger denies this. But is there any 'actual' relation between nihilism as thought by Heidegger and the 'negative' and 'destructive' phenomena Nietzsche associates with this term? Heidegger expresses a surmise about this relation, but he does so in the form of a question:

But how will we even pose the decisive question if we have not first pondered the essence of nihilism and at the same time brought ourselves to ask whether the staying away of the question concerning the essence of nihilism does not partly occasion the dominance of those [negative and destructive] phenomena? Is it the case that the dominance of destructive nihilism and of our not asking, not being able to ask, about the essence of nihilism ultimately derive from the same root?⁸⁵

⁸¹ N, p. 227.

⁸² N, p. 227.

⁸³ N, p. 225. We should not leave Heidegger's confrontation with Nietzsche without speculating at least briefly about Nietzsche's likely response to these thoughts. Without being able to enter fully into this issue, we may at least assume that Nietzsche would query the provenance and the force of Heidegger's talk of 'what is necessary' and 'what is worthy of thought' (N, p. 203). Does this not mean that such thought *matters*? And if this is what it means, does it not tacitly or openly employ a notion of value or worth? And if so, what is the origin and the authority of this 'worth'? Is it assumed to hold sway and to have a 'claim' on man (N, p. 223) even independently of man's recognizing it as a 'need' or 'distress' (*Not*)? And if so, is it not, from a Nietzschean perspective, yet another articulation of the ascetic ideal?

⁸⁴ As Miguel de Beistegui argues, the 'step back into the essence of nihilism is the only genuine response to the historical unfolding of nihilism. Not will, but thinking itself is the way in which nihilism comes to be experienced on the basis of its essence'. (*Heidegger and the Political*, p. 82).

⁸⁵ N, pp. 221-222.

4. 'Overcoming' Nihilism, and the Abandonment of Being

The question of the relation between nihilism as understood by Nietzsche ('classical nihilism') and nihilism thought according to its authentic essence is addressed more explicitly in the earlier text *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*, written between 1936 and 1938. What comes to the fore in this, as well as in other contemporaneous writings of Heidegger, is the theme of *Seinsgeschichte* (the history of Being) as what necessarily determines and self-concealingly manifests itself through the history of metaphysics as nihilism. We have so far been deliberately cautious in drawing upon this aspect of Heidegger's thinking of Being and its relation to Nothing, although it has obtruded itself in the preceding Section of this chapter. Our reserve in this respect has not been motivated by a wish to deny either the presence or the importance of this dimension of Heidegger's later thinking. However, it has been a central aim of this thesis to show how and why the question of Being, as understood by Heidegger, can be interpreted as emerging from an intimate engagement and *Auseinandersetzung* with the tradition itself, a tradition embodied in the context of the present discussion in the figures of Husserl, Nietzsche and, to a lesser extent, of Plato and Descartes, as representatives of decisive stages of Western thinking of the Being of beings.⁸⁶ More particularly, it has been our aim to demonstrate how the neglect of the question of Being can be traced in and from the lacunae of the metaphysical tradition *itself*, and how this neglect can indeed,

⁸⁶ This assessment of the importance of these thinkers should be uncontroversially recognizable as consonant with Heidegger's own assessment, except perhaps in the case of Husserl, whose name all but disappears from Heidegger's post-1929 writings. However, for reasons outlined in the introduction to Chapter I, we have chosen not to disregard Heidegger's earlier view of Husserl's philosophy as the philosophy in which 'the great tradition of Western philosophy' has been 'thought ... to an end'. See Martin Heidegger, *Logik*, ed. W. Biemel, GA 21, (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976), p. 88 and p. 114.

as Heidegger maintains, be seen as intimately connected with the heedlessness of the tradition in relation to the Nothing which *is* Being in its withdrawal. In other words, the profound significance and importance of Heidegger's departure from, and confrontation with, the metaphysical tradition, is one which can be recognized even *independently* of Heidegger's interpretation of that tradition and of its fundamental neglect and obliviousness to Being as such (*Seinsvergessenheit*), as itself symptomatic or expressive of a 'necessary' withdrawal and progressively deepening self-concealment of Being – that is, of the 'abandonment' of beings by Being (*Seinsverlassenheit*). The thesis has thus implicitly also been seeking answer the question to what extent it might be possible to think what Heidegger brought to light as the *Seinsvergessenheit* of Western metaphysics without the further interpretation of this obliviousness as the *necessary* history of Being's self-concealing *abandonment* of beings. The present study thus attempts to bring into view a possibility whose viability cannot be judged in the abstract, but only in its enactment. However, it is equally clear and indeed undeniable that in Heidegger's reflections *Seinsverlassenheit* plays an increasingly pivotal role, determining not only the interpretation of the significance of the neglect of Being/Nothing by metaphysics (i.e. essential nihilism), but also his conception of the possibilities of a thinking 'after' the end of metaphysics, which is referred to in some texts, especially in the *Beiträge*, as the 'other beginning'.

'Nihilism' as understood by Nietzsche is not, if we follow the reflections of *Beiträge* on this question, merely a *different* phenomenon from Heidegger's 'essential nihilism':

What Nietzsche is the first to recognize – in his orientation to Platonism – as *nihilism* is in truth, and seen according to the grounding question that is foreign to him, only the foreground of the far deeper happening of the forgottenness of Being, which comes forth more and more directly in the course of finding the answer to the guiding-question [of metaphysics]. But even the forgottenness of Being (depending on the definition) is not the most originary destining of the first beginning: rather, it is the abandonment of Being that was perhaps most covered over and denied by Christianity.⁸⁷

Nietzsche did not describe a different phenomenon from nihilism in Heidegger's sense, rather he gave a 'provisional', 'idealistic', and 'moralistic' interpretation of a happening which 'must be grasped more fundamentally as the essential consequence of the abandonment of Being'.⁸⁸ Nietzsche's characterization of nihilism is 'idealistic' in the sense that it refers, if we accept Heidegger's reading, to Nietzsche's own metaphysics of the will to power in which the Being of beings is thought as *value*, a concept which is claimed to have its origin in Plato's thought of the *ιδεα του αγαθου*, transformed under the aegis of the representing subject of modernity into that which can be reckoned on in the self-empowerment of the subject. However, in an important passage, Heidegger does explicitly acknowledge that Nietzsches *own* conception of nihilism seems to have revolved around the 'psychological' diagnosis of the 'goallessness' of contemporary culture. The 'overcoming' of nihilism, according to at least some of Nietzsche's formulations (e.g. WP 20), would have to consist in a positing of new goals by man himself. According to Heidegger, such an 'overcoming' of nihilism through the self-empowering 'willing' of new goals signifies only a deeper entanglement in nihilism, as understood by him (not by Nietzsche), and ultimately expresses merely the depth of the utter abandonment of Being:

⁸⁷ CP, p. 80. Also p. 83.

⁸⁸ CP, p. 96.

And therefore the greatest nihilism is where one believes to have goals again ... The essential mark of 'nihilism' is not whether churches and monasteries are destroyed and people are murdered or whether this does not happen... rather, what is crucial is whether one knows and wants to know that precisely this tolerating of Christianity, and Christianity itself ... are merely pretexts and perplexities in *that* domain which one does not want to acknowledge and to allow to count as the domain of decision about Be-ing [*Seyn*] and not-Be-ing. The most disastrous nihilism consists in passing oneself off as protector of Christianity ... Be-ing has so thoroughly abandoned beings and submitted them to machination and 'lived experience' that those illusive attempts at rescuing Western culture ... must necessarily become the most insidious and thus the highest form of nihilism.⁸⁹

One thing that emerges clearly from this passage is that Heidegger's concept of nihilism is indeed quite different from Nietzsche's: for Nietzsche, nihilism is, centrally, the absence of a belief in 'goals'. So when Heidegger says that what from such a perspective may appear as an overcoming of nihilism (through a rediscovery of 'goals', whether new or old) is in fact the 'most disastrous nihilism', this cannot mean that such an expediency involves merely a more profound entanglement in what *Nietzsche* wanted to overcome: what it signifies is rather a deepening of the forgottenness of Being, a phenomenon which Nietzsche simply did not recognize, let alone regard as question-worthy. However, Heidegger is not merely being misleading when he suggests that his own understanding of nihilism is 'the more originary and essential determination of that which Nietzsche recognized for the first time as nihilism'.⁹⁰ Not only is Nietzschean nihilism merely a symptom or 'foreground' of the forgottenness of Being, but, more importantly, what is retained in Heidegger's understanding from Nietzsche's concept of nihilism is the sense of *derelection*. Yet, this 'nothingness' is not interpreted, as in Nietzsche, 'moralistically' – that is, in

⁸⁹ CP, pp. 97-8.

⁹⁰ CP, p. 83.

terms of human conceptions of desirability, and hence as something to be eliminated – but ‘ontologically’ as *refusal*:

But how do we understand the Nothing here? ... *As the overflow of pure refusal.*⁹¹ ...
But how would it be if Be-ing itself were the self-withdrawing and would hold sway as refusal?⁹²

The essence of nihilism experienced authentically grasps the dereliction of the forgottenness of Being which is the history of Western metaphysics not as a human *error* which might be eliminated or overcome,⁹³ but as the necessary happening of Being’s double self-concealment. Being *is* in the Nothing of its refusing itself to beings, that is, in its abandoning of beings, which is a ‘self-withdrawing of/from all estimation and measuring’.⁹⁴ Any ‘overcoming’ of metaphysics in the sense of an opposition to it is thus necessarily a deepening of nihilism, since any such opposition requires necessarily an objectifying or re-presenting of metaphysics as something ‘over against’ oneself which can be made or unmade by ‘willing’. In the vocabulary of *Beiträge*, the understanding of Being evinced in such a setting oneself up over against metaphysics (the history of Being) remains obviously within the confines of *machination*, that is, within the interpretation of the beingness of beings as re-presentable under the horizon

⁹¹ CP, p. 173.

⁹² CP., p. 174. In *Beiträge*, Heidegger uses the archaic spelling *Seyn* (translated as: Be-ing) when speaking ‘of’ Being as experienced authentically in its own truth, while the standard spelling *Sein* (translated as: Being) is used in relation to Being as thought within the guiding question of metaphysics (i.e. ‘what is the beingness of a being?’)

⁹³ CP, p. 131. Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Basic Questions of Philosophy*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 158-60. (Henceforth cited as BQP).

⁹⁴ CP, p. 176.

of *τεχνη* (of making and what can be made), an interpretation which has its inception in Plato.⁹⁵

Nevertheless, we are not condemned merely to a continuation of metaphysics understood in terms of ‘doctrines’. For Heidegger, the ‘crucial question’ is on the contrary precisely ‘whether modernity is grasped as an end and an other beginning is inquired into, or whether one sticks obstinately to the perpetuation of a decline that has lasted since Plato’.⁹⁶ This possibility of an ‘other beginning’ haunts the pages of the *Beiträge*. Indeed, once the step has been taken to an interpretation of *Seinsvergessenheit* as the manifestation or expression of a deeper ground, namely the necessary abandonment of beings by Being, it is clear that such an other beginning cannot be merely *one* possibility of *human* thinking. Rather, the other beginning, if it is to *be* at all, is itself necessary and ultimately not initiated by human thinkers: ‘any kind of metaphysics *has and must come to an end*, if philosophy is to attain its other beginning’.⁹⁷ Hence Heidegger sometimes simply speaks in the present continuous of ‘the crossing to the other beginning, into which Western thinking *is now entering*’.⁹⁸ Thus the thinking-saying of a philosophy which thinks the truth of Be-ing must experience *itself* not as the doctrine or view of a thinker, but as something that

comes from an other beginning. This saying does not describe or explain, does not proclaim or teach. This saying does not stand over against what is said. Rather, the saying itself *is* the ‘to be said’, as the essential swaying of Be-ing. This saying gathers Be-ing’s essential sway unto a first sounding, while it itself [this saying] sounds only out of this essential sway.

⁹⁵ CP, pp. 76, 92, 129.

⁹⁶ CP, p. 94.

⁹⁷ CP, p. 121 (emphasis added).

⁹⁸ CP, p. 3 (emphasis added).

The other beginning, then, is and must be far removed from a merely oppositional overcoming of metaphysics (i.e. of the essence of nihilism). Rather, the other beginning would be a thinking which moves in the realm of Be-ing as such, one that situates itself within the purview of the grounding question ‘what is the truth of Be-ing?’ If the history of the first beginning is the history of metaphysics, and this history is the self-concealing Nothing (abandonment, not-granting, refusal) as which Be-ing essentially is, then the only authentic ‘overcoming’ (*Überwindung*) of metaphysics is a *return into, or retrieval* (*Verwindung*) of metaphysics, but a return which does not go along with metaphysics, but rather grasps it through a distantiation as *Seinsverlassenheit*. Indeed, we might say that the other beginning, the only possible overcoming of nihilism (in Heidegger’s sense), is a renunciatory leap into the abandonment of Be-ing, an abandonment which was itself concealed (i.e. not thought authentically) within and as metaphysics:

Leaping into the other beginning is returning into the first beginning and vice versa... Returning into the first beginning is rather and precisely distancing from it, is taking up that distant-positioning which is necessary in order to experience what began in and as that beginning... Only the distant-positioning to the first beginning allows the experience that the question of truth ($\alpha\lambda\eta\theta\epsilon\iota\alpha$) *necessarily* remained unasked in that beginning and that this not happening determined Western thinking in advance as ‘metaphysics’.... The other beginning is not counter-directed to the first. Rather, as the other it stands outside the counter and outside immediate comparability.⁹⁹

The *Verwindung* of metaphysics, which is the crossing to the other beginning, thus has a double character: it *retains* the first beginning by retrieving or returning into it (rather than leaving it behind), but it also *distances* itself from it

⁹⁹ CP, p. 130 (emphasis added). Cf. BQP, p. 161.

in by encountering it, not in terms of its own metaphysical self-interpretation, but *as* the abandonment of Being:

[History of the first beginning] is the history of metaphysics. It is not individual attempts at metaphysics that tell us anything now at the end of metaphysics but rather 'only' the history of metaphysics....Because this knowing awareness thinks nihilism still more originarily into the abandonment of Being, this knowing is the actual overcoming of nihilism; and the history of the first beginning thus completely loses the appearance of futility and mere errancy.¹⁰⁰

In thus encountering the first beginning authentically *as* the necessary and essential abandonment of Be-ing, it could be said that we are both furthest and closest to the truth of Be-ing: 'Be-ing is reachable only by a leap into the abandonment by Being'.¹⁰¹ This 'leap', to reiterate a point made earlier, cannot be a question of human willing relating itself to something in principle separable from it as an over-against (an ob-ject of machination). It rather experiences itself as a becoming 'en-owned and .. belong[ing] to Be-ing',¹⁰² such that 'Be-ing itself grounds humanness'.¹⁰³ In the crossing to the other beginning, it is not a human fore-grasping that sets the standard, and consequently 'we do not know *whither* we go nor *when* the truth of Be-ing becomes the true nor *whence history as the history of Be-ing takes its ... path*'.¹⁰⁴

It has of course not been our aim in the above discussion to unfold all aspects of Heidegger's thought of the other beginning, nor indeed to assess his interpretation of the oblivion of Being in the Western metaphysical tradition as itself determined 'more originarily' by a necessary abandonment of beings by

¹⁰⁰ CP, p. 123.

¹⁰¹ CP, p. 172 (final emphasis added).

¹⁰² CP, p. 177.

¹⁰³ CP, p. 129.

¹⁰⁴ CP, p. 124.

Being. Yet, we may at least ask: despite the disclaimers in the last quotation, does not Heidegger's interpretation have significant *implications* with respect to both 'whither' and 'whence'? As we have seen, this interpretation does not seem to permit – that is, it explicitly excludes – any understanding of metaphysics and its Platonic fundamental orientation as (for example) mere futility or error. Indeed, a crossing to an other beginning is said to be possible *only* through a *Verwindung*, that is, a retaining-passing-through, of the essential history of nihilism. Is it perhaps at least in part for this reason that this interpretation leaves out of detailed consideration, in regard to the question of an other beginning, any putative 'alternatives' external to Western metaphysical thinking? However sympathetic we may be to Heidegger's analysis of the fundamental neglect at the heart of Western metaphysics, it could be asked whether his 'meta-metaphysical' interpretation of that neglect in terms of the essential history of Being is not, in the end, too exclusively determinate about the 'whence', and therefore also perhaps too restrictive about the possible paths to be taken in the transition towards an unknown 'whither'. We shall briefly return to these issues at the end of our final chapter. But, as stated at the beginning of this Section, these are questions that ultimately point beyond the thematic focus of the present study, which is a re-tracing of Heidegger's confrontation with the Western metaphysical tradition.

Chapter V

A-ΛΗΘΕΙΑ and *ΛΗΘΗ*: Heidegger's Reading of Parmenides

Heidegger's interpretation of Parmenides' approach to the question of 'truth' not only concerns itself with the inherent connection between the meaning of Being and 'truth' (*αληθεια*), but it also establishes a distinctive relationship between the forgetfulness of Being (diagnosed as the source of nihilism), and the historical transformation of the essence of 'truth'.¹ In the lectures on Parmenides the question of the sense of 'truth' and 'un-truth' is given the same attention that the question of the *meaning* of Being and its Other enjoys elsewhere. Heidegger's historical tracing of the meaning of the 'opposition' itself casts light on the extent of the modern limitations in this regard. For us, just as was the case with the meaning of Nothing in our previous discussions, the sense of 'un-truth' will here be of prime importance. For, as will become evident during the course of our analysis, what constitutes the counter-essence to 'truth', what comes to oppose 'truth', is as indispensable for the determination of 'truth' as is Nothing vis-à-vis Being.

1. The History of the Transformation of the Essence of Truth

Heidegger's reading of the sense of 'truth' (*αληθεια*) in Parmenides' fragments draws a historical perspective on the transformation of the essence of 'truth' and brings into debate the question of the past by means of future possibilities. Here, the inquiry concerning who *we*² could be tomorrow proceeds in terms of a primordial understanding of the truth of Being. Given that Heidegger sees history as a

¹ As in the case of Nietzsche (and of Plato for that matter), Heidegger's interpretation of Parmenides has been disputed on scholarly-philological grounds. Here as in those other cases, a Heideggerian response would be unlikely to take the form of a 'philological justification' of his readings. For some generalisable comments on these interpretive issues, see the introduction to Chapter IV. See also footnote 46 of Chapter III on Heidegger's controversial reading of Sophocles.

² The 'we' refers to 'the moderns of modern metaphysics, a humanity that, as regards an essential experience of Being, has erred into the dead end of the oblivion of Being'. See P, p.161.

happening that 'is determined from the future, takes over what has been, and acts and endures its way through the *present*'³, it should not be too surprising to find that all questions concerning our present mode of Being are historical questions. But what does 'history' mean and when or how does the history of 'truth' begin?

Before dealing with these issues, it must be made clear that the historical perspective which Heidegger draws on truth, despite having, at first glance, some similarities with Nietzsche's approach to the question of truth, is fundamentally of a different order. There is no doubt that Nietzsche's treatment of truth falls into the same pile that comes under Heidegger's direct criticism - a criticism that sees modern 'research', helped by sophisticated technical tools and gadgets, as conflating the technique of historiography with history itself. And this, for Heidegger, bears witness to the fact that, despite all the learned talking and clever thinking which goes on among its devotees, man has already lost the meaning of history altogether.

Modern views of history, since the 19th century, like to speak about 'meaning conferral'. This term suggests that man, on his own, is capable of 'lending' a 'meaning' to history, as if man had something to lend out at all, and as if history needed such a loan, all of which indeed presupposes that history 'in itself' and at first is meaningless and in every case has to wait for the favor of a meaning bestowed by man.⁴

Thus Heidegger, unlike Nietzsche, does not conceive of truth as a human creation or construction. Truth, for Heidegger, cannot be fabricated at some point 'in' history by the arrival of some particularly creative thinker. This is also because Heidegger's understanding of history differs from that of Nietzsche and others. For, if 'history' is to be conceived essentially, i.e. thought in terms of the ground of the essence of Being itself - as Heidegger proposes - then it (i.e. history) is the transformation of the essence of truth. Therefore, it refers solely to the uniqueness of that primordial essence which is the source of all essential features of history and its essential consequences. This renders clear that, in considering the history of truth, Heidegger

³ IM, p.47.

⁴ P, p.56.

is not interested in the treatment of the *concept* of truth in a historiographical fashion. His aim is the history of the essence of Being and this for him means the truth itself.

For, he says,

if unveiling is the essence of truth, and if in accordance with the transformation of this essence of truth the assignment of Being is also transformed, then the essence of 'history' is the transformation of the essence of truth.⁵

It is obvious that Heidegger sees his own way of thinking as more attuned with the 'early' ways of approaching truth than with that of his modern 'contemporaries'. In order to compare and confront these modern views he time and again invokes the thoughts of 'primordial' thinkers who are of a different order, i.e. who are not philosophers in the sense in which we know the so-called post-Socratic thinkers. There are, however, only few thinkers, such as Anaximander, Heraclitus and Parmenides, who qualify as 'primordial' or 'early' thinkers. What distinguishes these thinkers from others is their *mode* of thinking which is said to be fundamentally of another kind. The difference, Heidegger argues, lies predominantly in the fact that the early thinking is a kind of retreating in the face of Being - a retreating that provokes the thought of Being rather than the mastering of beings. These thinkers are called 'primordial' not because they have begun the history of thinking and are, therefore, the first ones to think, but rather because the beginning is that which lays a claim on them and begins something with them. These thinkers, Heidegger maintains, are 'begun by the beginning, "in-cepted" [*An-gefangenen*] by the inception [*An-fang*]; they are taken up by it and are gathered into it'.⁶ Thus while we commonly think of history as a series of events and processes in the sense of their 'coming to pass', Heidegger - more in tune with this 'primordial' mode of thinking - conceives of historical happenings under the horizon of 'destiny', 'destining' and 'assignment'. We therefore hear him refer to history in terms of a 'sending' [*das Geschicht*] or the 'assignment of Being'. Here what is the essentially 'send-able or

⁵ P, p.55.

⁶ P, Introduction, p.8.

trans-mittable and the self-transmitting' refers to the uniqueness of the relation between *Dasein* and Being - which echoes the argument of *Being and Time* - that is, *Dasein*'s understanding of Being.

If the essence of man is founded in the fact that he is that being to whom Being itself reveals itself, then the essential trans-mittal and the essence of 'sending' is the unveiling of Being.⁷

As may have already become apparent Heidegger's critique of the conventional sense of 'truth' bears a significant similarity to his approach to the traditional understanding of Being. The very question which was raised with regard to the *meaning of Being* is now raised with regard to the *meaning of truth*. What does 'truth' mean for us? Is truth subject to change or does it have always the same meaning? If, for a primordial thinker such as Parmenides, *αληθεια* means essentially something other than truth as we think it today then, what consequences does this have? Throughout history, Heidegger argues, the essence of truth has assumed distinct meanings and has been transformed from the early Greek *αληθεια* to the Roman conception of truth as *veritas*, to the medieval *adequatio*, and from there to modern *certitudo* - that is, truth in the Cartesian sense of certainty, validity and assurance.

With Nietzsche, truth in this last sense has, according to Heidegger, in its course of unfolding as the essence of *veritas* become *certitudo*, 'the certainty of life', where its 'advantage' or 'value' is based upon a correctness which is the essential certainty of the will to power. This, for Nietzsche, is the ultimate reality, a kind of truth he also calls 'justice', because all that is real takes its reality from correctness as the essence of the will to power. However, Nietzsche, Heidegger points out, was well aware of the problematic aspects that went along with basing everything on the self-assurance of power. For to say that 'the mere preservation of an already attained level of power already represents a decrease in the degree of power',⁸ shows a

⁷ P, p.55.

⁸ P, p. 58. Heidegger gives no reference for this interpretation of Nietzsche, but he is presumably again referring to Nietzsche's discussion of the feeling of power in WP 695.

realization on the part of Nietzsche that in the very essence of assurance resides a constant ‘back-relatedness’ to itself which creates an ever-renewed need for ‘self-elevation’. It is in fact precisely because of this persistent back-relatedness that the self-assurance as self-certainty had to assert itself as ‘*absolute*’:

The fundamental outline of the metaphysical essence of reality as truth, and of this truth as absolute certainty, is prepared by Fichte and appears for the first time in Hegel’s metaphysics of the absolute spirit. Here truth becomes the absolute self-certainty of absolute reason. In Hegel’s metaphysics and in Nietzsche’s, i.e. in the 19th Century, the transformation of *veritas* into *certitudo* is completed. This completion of the Roman essence of truth is the proper and hidden historical meaning of the 19th Century.⁹

The transformation of the essence of truth has obviously altered also the essence of truth’s Other. So we see that by the turning of the essence of truth from *αληθεια* to *veritas*, the essence of un-truth comes to mean *falsum*. This conversion is the presupposition for the modern characterization of the essence of falsity as *error*, with the consequence of rendering the correct or incorrect use of man’s power of judgment as what matters most. This means that what defines and determines truth as ‘correctness’ is now that which assures man’s self-certainty. Thus, while the correct use of the power of judgment establishes the self-certainty of man, the incorrect use of the human power of affirmation and denial leads to error.¹⁰

Now in view of the primordial meaning of truth as fundamentally other than *veritas*, correctness and certainty, it is clear that what opposes truth should correspondingly come under scrutiny. That is to say, if the definition of *falsum* cannot fulfill the essence of that which stands in opposition to truth in the primordial sense, then we must ask what is the meaning of untruth - a question which can only be answered if we gain an understanding of the primordial meaning of truth, *αληθεια*, in the first instance.

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ This is a condensed version of the argument given in the Nietzsche lectures of 1940 concerning Cartesian metaphysics and its completion in Nietzsche as constituting the essence of modernity. See our discussion in chapter IV, Section 2.

2. The Meaning and Character of *Αληθεια*

The Greek term *αληθεια*, which means ‘unconcealedness’ (*Unverborgenheit*);¹¹ points first to something like ‘concealedness’. The indication leaves both *that* which was concealed previously with a view to un-concealedness, and the *who* that does the concealing, undetermined. This indeterminateness is due to the fact that, among the early thinkers, whatever might be intimated with regard to the opposite of truth remains obscure - that is, it remains a suggestion constituting a subject of debate. They do, however, talk about the like of concealedness and address it under the various forms of ‘closing off’, such as veiling, masking, covering, conserving, preserving and holding back, etc. In each of these cases, concealedness, despite the multiplicity and indeterminacy of its meaning, remains firmly that which *defines* truth as *unconcealedness*. In other words, unconcealedness as such always obtains the clarity of its features only from these modes of concealedness.

In view of the meaning of truth as unconcealedness, we may consider the sense of untruth as *ψευδος* by leaving aside modern interpretations of the term and by focusing instead on its more original meaning. *Πευδος*, according to Heidegger’s analysis, receives its essence from the realm of concealedness and it therefore determines itself in reference not to *verum* but *αληθεια*. The term *ψευδος* in the original sense means something like ‘dissembling’ - a kind of dissembling concealment, or a hiding in the strict sense (which, like veiling, is a mode of concealing). Hence, ‘*ψευδος* in the sense of dissembling concealment, i.e. hiding, permits the corresponding privative formation to *α-ψευδες*, i.e. the non-hiding, the *dis-hiding*. And in this light the Greek opposition of *αληθες* and *ψευδος* no longer seems odd’.¹² Furthermore, if we consider that for the early Greeks concealedness is a fundamental characteristic of all appearance of entities and of every manifestation

¹¹ Heidegger remarks that: ‘It should be kept in mind that in the following we will be speaking of “unconcealedness” [*Unverborgenheit*] and “concealment” but that the obvious expression “unconcealment” [*Unverbergung*] is avoided, although it is the “most literal” translation’. (See P, p.12). *Unverbergung* refers literally to a happening, while the suffix - *heit*, as in *Unverborgenheit*, connotes a state or condition.

¹² P, p.32.

of beings, then we realize that the ‘proper’ translation of *ψευδος* should read not even ‘hiding’, but ‘being hidden’.

Αληθεια is tied to the verbal stem *λαθ*, which means ‘concealing’. To the stem *λαθ* - pertains the verb *λανθανω*, ‘I am concealed’; the aorist participle, *λαθων, λαθον*, means ‘being concealed’.¹³

Evidently, if ‘being hidden’ is a form of concealedness, then *ψευδος* should connect with the term ‘being concealed’, i.e. *λανθανειν*. Heidegger refers to a number of examples in order to show the precise linkage between the meaning of *ψευδος* and *λανθανειν* and to bring out the mistake that is standardly made in their translations and interpretations. In the following passage from Homer’s *Odyssey*, for instance, Heidegger objects to the rendering of *ελανθανω* as ‘*he* concealed’, rather than the correct ‘*he was* concealed’. This seemingly minor observation, seen in the context of Heidegger’s overall position on the nature of truth, is in fact quite important. For ‘being hidden’, just like ‘being concealed’, are not modes of ‘will-driven’ activities carried out by man in control of his affairs, but events that ‘come over’ beings and man himself. Thus, whereas the usual translation reads: ‘But then he [Odysseus] shed tears, without *the others* noticing it, Alkinoos alone was aware of his sorrow...To all other guests *he* concealed his flowing tears’,¹⁴ Heidegger’s suggestion is to translate the first line literally as, ‘Odysseus, was concealed to the others as one shedding tears’.¹⁵ Correspondingly, Heidegger translates a passage from the *Iliad* as ‘Athena was concealed to Hector in her giving back of the lance’.¹⁶ Here, the ‘concealed’ and the ‘unconcealed’ are not characteristics of the *noticing*, but *features of the being*. Thus the famous Epicurean proverb does not say ‘live unnoticed’, but *λαθε βιωσας*, i.e. ‘be concealed in the way you conduct your life’.¹⁷ In other words, concealedness denotes the manner of Being and defines a certain character of the Being of man among others. Hence, Heidegger concludes:

¹³ P, p.27.

¹⁴ P, p.23 (italics mine).

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ *ibid.*

λανθανομαι says: I am concealed from myself in relation to something which would otherwise be unconcealed to me. This is thereby, for its part, concealed, just as I am in my relation to it. The being sinks away into concealment in such a manner that with this concealment of the being I remain concealed from myself. Moreover, this concealment is itself concealed.¹⁸

We have said that truth in terms of unconcealedness points to something like concealedness. Now, the expression ‘unconcealedness’ indicates also that a ‘*cancelling*’ has occurred whereby concealedness has been *taken away*. This shows that, in the early Greek experience of truth, concealedness is not allowed and, though it is always possible, it does never arise. This tension is perfectly present in the form of the word itself. In fact, the impossibility of determining the precise meaning of the prefix ‘un-’ (as in *un-concealedness*) or ‘α’ (as in *α-ληθεια*) reveals already something about the basic feature of the primordial essence of truth. For the term *αληθεια* tells us that ‘in the essence of truth as un-concealedness there holds sway some sort of conflict with concealedness and concealment’¹⁹ - an opposition and a conflict that reside at the heart of unconcealedness itself. This means that truth, i.e. unconcealedness, must essentially be drawn out of concealment in a conflict with it. But as Heidegger remarks, the fact that here ‘who is struggling’ and ‘how the struggle takes place’ are left indeterminate, does not allow us to think that ‘among humans truth is something to be sought out and to be struggled for. Rather, the sought and struggled for, regardless of the conflict in man over it, is in its very essence a conflict: “unconcealedness”’.²⁰

But what does ‘conflict’ here mean? Does it mean ‘fight’, ‘war’, ‘competition’ or something else? Normally, when we come across the expression *πολεμος*, we immediately think in terms of our modern understanding of conflict, hence we say that according to Heraclitus ‘war is the father of all things’. This results in a major difficulty to grasp the oppositional character of unconcealedness as a

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ P, p.14.

²⁰ P, p.17.

conflict inherent in the very essence of truth. In addition, since for us ‘truth’ means that which is beyond all conflict, we conceive of what comes in opposition to truth as something false. And once ‘untruth’ in the sense of mere ‘falsity’ comes to be understood as ‘incorrectness’ this becomes the incompatible rival of ‘correctness’, which excludes the latter. But truth as ‘correctness’ is not of the same essence as truth in the sense of unconcealedness. Hence, the opposition between correctness and incorrectness, validity and invalidity, explains nothing regarding the distinctive character of the opposition which resides in truth as unconcealedness. These traditional modes of oppositional thinking are entirely misleading here. In fact, as Heidegger puts it, ‘the bastion of the prevailing essence of truth, *veritas* and truth as correctness and certitude, is occluding the primordial understanding of *αληθεια*’.²¹ Similarly, a long-standing traditional assumption that characterizes the opposition between truth and untruth as a conflict between ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ mis-directs our attention from the fact that there is no negativity, at least not necessarily, in what stands in opposition to *αληθεια*. For ‘the Greeks’ experienced the essence of concealedness as the basic characteristic of Being itself. And given the rich essence of *αληθεια*, truth in this sense cannot have falsity and dissemblance as its only or primary opposites. Rather, as we have already mentioned, the modes of concealment are varied and multiple and often bear no sign of the ‘negativity’ that characterizes the false and the distorted. This goes to show that the elevation of falsity as what excludes truth (rather than inherently belonging to it) into the position where it alone presents the opposition to the truth is peculiar to Western metaphysics. Meanwhile, as Heidegger remarks,

the Greeks experience and express concealment in many ways, not only within the sphere of the everyday handling and considering of things, but also from the ultimate perspective of beings as a whole. Death, night, day, light, the earth, the subterranean, and the supraterranean are pervaded by disclosure and concealment and remain mired in this essence. Emergence into the unconcealed and submergence into concealment dwell primordially everywhere.²²

²¹ P, p.61.

²² P, p.67.

Thus in order to understand the conflictual character of unconcealedness, we must pay heed to the diverse forms under which concealedness presents itself.

3. Forms of Concealedness

In the initial stage of our reflection concerning the opposite of unconcealedness we have discussed the essence of *ψευδος* in relation to *λανθανω* or ‘being hidden’ where we said that *ψευδος* is a hiding in the strictest sense. Then, on the basis of the statement that hiddenness is a mode of concealment, we sought to understand Heidegger’s thought that the essence of *αψευδες* (the ‘non-hiding’ or the ‘dis-hiding’) must be determined in reference to *αληθεις*: ‘the unconcealed’. In order to show this connection - which in the case of *α-ψευδες* is of course not an etymological one - we mentioned that the verb *λανθανω* (I am concealed) pertains to the stem *λαθ* (concealing) which in turn is tied to *αληθεια* (unconcealedness). The main point that emerged from these remarks was that beings as such are determined by concealedness and unconcealedness which are, in turn, fundamental characteristics of Being itself.

To be sure, whereas we conceive concealing as a kind of ‘putting away’, as something that has disappeared or perhaps been destroyed, the Greeks understood concealment as something that preserves, ‘shelters and saves the concealed for what it is’.²³ The concealment that preserves is, Heidegger says, characteristic of what is called the ‘rare’. For the truly rare is not something that is available at times and just for a few but something that is available always and to everyone, with the exception that ‘it dwells in a concealment harboring something utterly decisive and holding in readiness high claims on us’.²⁴

²³ P, p.62.

²⁴ *ibid.*

A *secret* or a *mystery* is such a mode of concealment. But, if the secret in the mystery is to be a genuine kind of concealment, then it must also be experienced, i.e. be ‘disclosed’ as that which is closed-off, as a concealment, a mystery. Meanwhile, terms such as ‘open secret’ and ‘open mystery’ are too often misapplied to cases where there is no secret to be intrigued by and nothing mysterious. Rather, everybody knows what should not have been known and what should have been kept secret. But what is implied by the ‘open mystery’ in the genuine sense is that there is something which is concealed from us, something that is a secret and we yet all know it, i.e. it is open to us but only in its closed-off form. Thus, the significance of the openness of the ‘open mystery’ resides, not in solving the mystery and thereby destroying it, but in leaving the concealedness untouched and allowing it to appear in this concealedness. In Heidegger’s words, ‘the “open mystery” in the genuine and strict sense occurs where the concealing of the mysterious is simply experienced as concealedness and is lodged in a historically arisen reticence’.²⁵

Now within the mysterious there occurs another type of concealment known as the ‘*clandestine*’ which gives rise to something like ‘*conspiracy*’. Here, the ‘*inconspicuous*’ also makes its appearance by assuming the shape of ‘*camouflage*’ and ‘*deception*’. Heidegger refers briefly to another sense of concealment as ‘*the merely not yet known*’ which includes, among others, the world of scientific and technical discoveries: ‘When the concealed in this sense is brought into unconcealedness, there arises “the miracles of technology” and what is specifically “American”’.²⁶

In seeking to penetrate more deeply into the sense of concealedness, Heidegger draws out further implications involved in the meaning of *λαθον, λαθεις* - as opposed to *α-ληθεις* - by considering the verb *λανθανεσθαι* or *επιλανθανεσθαι*: ‘*forgetting*’. Forgetting, in the Greek sense, is a concealment. What happens in forgetting something - whatever this may be - is that the forgotten

²⁵ P, p.63.

²⁶ P, p.64.

falls away into concealedness in such a manner that the falling away itself stays concealed to the person who has forgotten. Accordingly, the forgetter

is concealed to himself in his relation to what is happening here to that which we then call, on the account of this happening, the forgotten. The forgetter not only forgets the forgotten, but along with that he forgets himself as the one for whom the forgotten has disappeared. A concealment takes place here that at once befalls the forgotten and the forgetter, without, however, obliterating them.²⁷

The most appropriate term to explain such a concealment is the word '*oblivion*' or '*obliviation*' (*Vergessung*) which indicates that into which the forgotten falls. It is important to point out that in '*obliviation*', as an event of concealment, man is ruled out from the forgotten. Of course, traditionally one considers forgetting as an act or behaviour of man, as relating to something that one cannot retain or something that for biological, psychological or other such reasons escapes one. In this understanding, forgetfulness may mean poor attention, an inclination towards distraction or the loss of memory, *amnesia*. Meanwhile, the oblivion in question here does not, according to Heidegger, testify only to a human negligence and is not a mere consequence of people happening to forget this or that thing. Oblivion, as the event of obliviation, is the concealedness belonging to a characteristic of concealment and as such it is related to $\lambda\eta\theta\eta$. Hence, $\lambda\eta\theta\eta$, oblivion, 'is a concealment that withdraws what is essential and alienates man from himself, i.e. from the possibility of dwelling within his own essence'.²⁸ To repeat, forgetting here is not a subjective state because it does not relate only to the past - that is, to the 'recollection' of what has gone by in the past - nor does it refer to thinking as 'representation'. To forget means rather, 'no-longer-being-there-with-it and by no means only a no-longer-remembering as the lack of a representation'.²⁹ Thus, because the essence of oblivion is concealedness, forgetting is a concealment that can shift and hold the essence of man in its entirety in hiddenness. In forgetting,

²⁷ P, p.71.

²⁸ P, p.72.

²⁹ P, p.83.

Heidegger says, man is separated from the unconcealed and is placed into concealedness in such a way that concealment on the whole does not appear at all:

Ληθη, oblivion, is the concealment that lets the past, the present, and the future fall into the path of a self-absenting absence.[...] *ληθη* conceals while it withdraws. It withdraws while, withholding itself, it lets the unconcealed and its disclosure lapse into the ‘away’ of a veiled absence.³⁰

But what can really be said about *ληθη*, when inceptive Greek thinkers, as it seems, themselves keep silence over it?³¹ Where forgetfulness itself falls into oblivion - there the unconcealed closes-off and immerses itself into concealedness. Yet something, somehow, must be said about *ληθη*, for it is precisely *ληθη* that defines *αληθεια*.

4. *Ληθη*, the *Δαιμονιος Τοπος*, or ‘the District of the Uncanny’

Seeking to evoke something of the inceptive Greek experience of *ληθη* Heidegger mentions Pindar’s ode and also refers to Hesiod’s theogony where he gives an account of the provenance of the essence of *ληθη* out of *ερις* (strife) and *νυξ* (night).³² But he pays particular attention to two stories told by Plato in *Πολιτεια* (*The Republic*). The first myth, known as Plato’s ‘cave allegory’, is concerned with a place (a cave) that denotes a hiding, a concealing and unconcealedness. The second is a rich and complex story where *ληθη* is said to be a hidden ‘demonic place’ (*δαιμονιος τοπος*), a signless realm where there flows a mysterious river. The ‘place’ is the field of concealedness. The *μυθος* tells the story of the warrior ‘Er’ and runs briefly like this: After having received mortal wounds on the battle field, Er lies

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ Yet, “to keep silent” is not merely to say nothing. Without something essential to say, one cannot keep silent. Only within essential speech, and by means of it alone, can there prevail essential silence, having nothing in common with secrecy, concealment, or “mental reservations”. The Greek thinkers and poets largely keep silent over *ληθη*. (P, p.73).

³² P, p.88.

dead on the ground for ten days. When they come to collect the dead, Er's body is said to be the only one remaining intact, i.e. non-decomposed. The body, however, is taken home and laid on the funeral pyre, waiting to be buried on the twelfth day. But in the meantime Er comes back to life and reports what has happened. Thus, in accordance with Heidegger's interpretation, Plato says

'his "soul", after it was elevated from the here, went with many (others) on a journey, and they arrived then at some kind of - as we say - "demonic" place; and there were two chasms (*χασματα - χαος*, openings) in the earth next to one another, and there were also two others (openings) in the sky opposite to each other. *Διχασται* were pointing toward order but were sitting between these gaping openings in the earth and in heaven. To Er, the brave warrior, the pointing ones gave the task to become *αγγελον ανθρωποις γενεσθαι των εκει* (614d3), a messenger to men about "the there". Hence it was necessary for him *ακουειν τε και θεασθαι παντα τα εν τω τοπω* (614d3) - to hear as well as to see everything in that place, a place said to be *δαιμονιος*'.³³

The fact that Plato introduces expressions such as the 'there' (*εκει*) to denote the place that man visits after his death and the 'here' (*ενθαδε*) which refers to man's life here on earth, may appear a little odd. For one expects from a thinker of the status of Plato to be quite aware that there could be no rational argument to sustain such beliefs about what comes after death. But the truth is that Plato makes no effort to provide a well reasoned argument regarding what happens after someone dies. He just reports an old legend that he has heard.

However, Plato seems to believe that man's death signals not his end but his transition from the 'here' to the 'there' - a transition, which being itself a journey, comes eventually to a close and gives way to a further transition. Hence, Plato refers to the course of man's life and his residence in the *πολις* in terms of a *περιοδος*, a periodic path, we may say, within a locally and temporally determined circuit. But where is the beyond onto which man steps after his death and before his emergence into a new life form? Is the 'there' the place where angels and demons dwell? Is it a 'heaven', a 'hell', a 'limbo' or a 'purgatory'? We are of course familiar with re-incarnation doctrines and claims for the immortality of man's soul, often attributed to

³³ See P, p.99.

Plato himself. But Heidegger believes that it is precipitate to interpret Plato's thoughts by means of such notions. What may be said in this regard is that 'death brings the present course to a close, but is not the end of the Being of a man'.³⁴ In any case, it is revealing to see that when it comes to what matters most - i.e. what determines the *πολις* as the 'where' of Greek life and death - Plato, who is the forerunner of the new form of thinking, has recourse to *μυθος* and seeks to include the old mythical language of his predecessors.

Let us return to the story itself and consider the warrior's characterization of the 'there' as '*demonic*'. Obviously, what is 'demonic' or *δαιμονιος* for the Greeks has little in common with our conception of the 'demonic' as something inhabited or created by 'demons' or 'evil spirits'. Nonetheless, it is not evident that we – in so far as we cannot experience the essence of *αληθεια* - will ever be able to comprehend the nature of το *δαιμονιον*. For *δαιμονιον*, as that which characterizes *ληθη*, stands in direct relation to *αληθεια* which constitutes in turn the essence of Being and as such determines all that emerges into Being (*φυσις*) and everything that *ordinarily is*. In fact, 'the demons' (the *δαιμονες*), as Heidegger says, could be who they are and be in the way that they are - i.e. the self-showing ones, the pointing ones which descend from Being into beings - only within the realm of the disclosure of Being itself.

³⁴ P, p.93. On the Christian interpretation of Plato, Heidegger's remarks may be worth quoting at length: 'According to our usual, that is, in the broadest sense, "Christian", modes of representations, what is being raised here is the question of the "beyond". Christianity, from early on, following the path of Judeo-Hellenic teachings, has in its own way seized upon the philosophy of Plato and has seen to it that from then until now the Platonic philosophy, held out as the high point of Greek philosophy, should appear in the light of Christian faith. Even the thinking before Plato and Socrates is understood on the basis of Plato, as is evident in the ordinary designation of this thinking: it is "pre-Platonic" philosophy, its fragments the "fragments of the pre-Socratics". Not only does Greek philosophy appear in a Christian theological interpretation, but even within philosophy it is presented as the first stage of Christian-occidental thinking. For the first metaphysical-historical meditations on the history of philosophy, understand Greek philosophy as the stage of immediate thinking, not yet meditated and not yet come to itself. Only this latter, certain of itself, in the modern sense the first "true" thinking, is actual thinking. Christianity functions here as the stage of mediation. In the wake of Hegel, the historiographical research of the 19th century adheres to all these his basic concepts but at the same time, in a remarkable self-deception, rejects his "metaphysics" and files to "Schopenhauer" and "Goethe"; yet even there Greek philosophy in general and the philosophy of Plato in particular are represented within the horizon of a Christian Platonism. The same holds for Nietzsche as well, whose much celebrated interpretation of the "pre-Platonic" philosophers is actually Platonic, i.e., Schopenhauerian, and utterly un-Greek'.

Night and day take their essence from what conceals and discloses itself and is self-lightening. That which is lighted, however, is not only what is visible and seeable but prior to that - as the emerging - it is what surveys everything that comes into the light and stays in it, i.e., everything ordinary, indeed in such a way that it precisely appears in the ordinary itself and only in it and out of it.³⁵

Thus, because the *δαιμονιος* determines the basic relation of Being to man, the term itself continues to appear in Plato's and Aristotle's writings, although in the later period of Greek thinking the language of *μυθος* is abandoned. For example, we are familiar with the Aristotelian expression *ευδαιμονια*, but may not know of its connection with *δαιμονιος*. We know *ευδαιμονια* to mean 'happiness' and understand it in relation to the human psyche. This, according to Heidegger's analysis, results from the Roman-Christian interpretation of the word as *beatitudo*, i.e. the condition of the *beatus*. But *ευδαιμονια* originally means 'the holding sway in the appropriate measure of the "εϋ" - the appearing and coming into presence of the *δαιμονιον*'.³⁶ Hence, Plato talks of the *δαιμονιον* in terms of an inner voice which is determined on the basis of Being itself. Such an attunement is certainly in connection, not with external entities, some kind of being-at-hand, but with Being itself. Here the *δαιμονιον*, as the divine that penetrates into unconcealedness, gives rise to the uncanny whose explicit voice we hear in the legends, in *μυθος*. The term *δαιμονιος* occurs also when Aristotle describes the essence of thinkers in relation to their knowledge of the 'demonic'. A passage from *Nichomachean Ethics* reads:

It is said they (the thinkers) indeed know things that are excessive, and thus astonishing, and thereby difficult, and hence in general 'demonic' - but also useless, for they are not seeking what is, according to straightforward popular opinion, good for man.³⁷

Aristotle uses the word 'demonic' in an all-encompassing fashion to describe that which from the 'ordinary' person's view-point is excessive, astonishing and difficult. Here, what distinguishes the ordinary opinion as ordinary is not the number

³⁵ P, p.102.

³⁶ P, p.117.

³⁷ The reference is to *Nichomachean Ethics*; Z7, 1141 b. P, p.100.

of people, 'the many', but their attitude - an attitude that Heidegger recognizes as an obsessive and forgetful pursuit of beings. For a busy person, what is current, what he does and what he pursues is often a matter of ease and without major difficulty, because 'he can always find, going from one being to the next, a way of escape from difficulty and an explanation'.³⁸ Thus, for Aristotle, it seems, the 'straightforward', the 'normal' or the 'ordinary' defines everything that remains within the boundaries of beings, of the real, of the 'facts'. But as soon as the focus turns upon Being, there comes the extra-ordinary, the excessive that lies beyond the normal and the ordinary, yet shines through it.

This, Heidegger says, is the 'uncanny' in the literal sense, something that is not to be clarified by elucidation on the basis of beings. For the uncanny is the simple, the insignificant that remains ungraspable as it surpasses all planning and withdraws itself from all kinds of manipulative calculations. What amazes the common experience - when and if in the midst of the everyday hustle and bustle with beings it succeeds to focus on Being - is Being itself, i.e. the emergence into unconcealedness and the recession into concealment that shows itself in each and every ordinary being. In other words,

the astounding is for the Greeks the simple, the insignificant, Being itself. The astounding, visible in the astonishing, is the uncanny, and it pertains so immediately to the ordinary that it can never be explained on the basis of the ordinary.³⁹

Hence, to translate *το δαιμονιον* as 'the uncanny' would be correct if, so Heidegger argues, we recognize that the uncanny is not identical with the *δαιμονιον* but takes its essence from the *δαιμονιον*. But, now we may ask, if the uncanny is not *δαιμονιον*, then what is the sense of the *δαιμονιον* itself?

The *δαιμονιον* is what surrounds and encompasses everything that is ordinary. And to the extent that it manifests itself in the ordinary without being itself the ordinary the *δαιμονιον* is said to be the uncanny or the extraordinary.

³⁸ P, p.100.

³⁹ P, p.101.

Accordingly, the uncanny cannot be the exceptional, but the normal, the ‘most natural’, provided that we understand nature in its Greek sense as *φύσις*. In this sense, the uncanny is ‘that out of which all that is ordinary emerges, that in which all that is ordinary is suspended without surmising it ever in the least, and that into which everything ordinary falls back’.⁴⁰ To repeat, this is because *το δαιμονιον* is the essence and the ground of the uncanny. *Το δαιμονιον* is what inhabits and what shows itself in the ordinary. Furthermore, to exhibit oneself by means of pointing and showing is in Greek ‘*δαιω* (*δαιοντες* - *δαιμονες*)’.⁴¹ These ‘are not “demons” conceived as evil spirits’⁴² but are what indicate, what point toward and what determine beforehand the ordinary without itself departing from the ordinary.

Το δαιμονιον is what shows itself in pointing at what is ordinary and in a certain way therefore what is also present everywhere as the perfectly ordinary, though nevertheless never the merely ordinary.⁴³

We have thus far made an attempt to explain the meaning of *δαιμονιον*. Now we must turn our attention to the rest of the *μυθος* where the returning warrior describes further the ‘place’ as the place it is: the *δαιμονιος τοπος*, ‘the district of the uncanny’.

5. The Last Place within the *Δαιμονιος Τοπος*

As we have already mentioned, in the concluding section of the *Πολιτεια*, Plato discusses the essence of the *πολις* in relation to the *δαιμονιος τοπος*. Heidegger translates this as ‘the district of the uncanny’. The *τοπος* in question, he says, is the ‘place’ in the sense of ‘the originally gathering holding of what belongs together’ - ‘a manifold of places reciprocally related by belonging together’ - ‘a settlement or a

⁴⁰ P, p.102.

⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁴² *ibid.*

⁴³ *ibid.*

district [*Ortschaft*].⁴⁴ A *δαιμονιος τοπος*, therefore, means the ‘where’ in which the uncanny shines explicitly and ‘the essence of Being comes to presence in an eminent sense’.⁴⁵ Now the *δαιμονιος τοπος* as the place of the gods, is ‘neither on “earth” nor in “heaven”’ but has only things that ‘point to the subterrestrial and the supraterritorial’.⁴⁶ And according to the legend, the last place within this district where all wanderers must stop before their transition to a new course of life is the field of *ληθη*: *το της ληθης πεδιον*, ‘the field of withdrawing concealment in the sense of oblivion’.⁴⁷

It is said that *ληθη*, as the field that gathers the whole wandering, is inhabited by the ‘demonic’ in its highest and most extreme form. And as the warrior narrates,

the way to the field of *ληθη* leads through a blaze consuming everything and through an air that asphyxiates everything; ‘Also, it (namely this field of withdrawing concealment) is itself bare of all that grows as well as completely void of everything the earth lets spring forth’.⁴⁸

The domain of *ληθη*, as the story implies, opposes all *φυσις* and forbids every emerging, manifesting or coming forth. Here, every disclosure of beings, of entities, of what is ordinary is impeded: *ληθη* is the place where everything disappears. But it would be perhaps too simplistic to think that what distinguishes this field - as the field that it is - is the absoluteness of such withdrawal in a quantitative sense of the term. For the point does not lie in the fact that everything disappears in this place and there remains nothing, but that *the void, the nothing that remains is what comes into presence* there and there alone. In Heidegger’s words, ‘the “away” of the withdrawn comes into presence itself in the essence of the withdrawal’.⁴⁹ Accordingly, the barrenness of the void is not mere nothing but the nothing of the withdrawal. The place of *ληθη*, as the ‘where’ in which the uncanny resides, is indeed ‘demonic’, not

⁴⁴ P, p.117.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁶ P, p.118.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁹ P, p.119.

only because the withdrawal of all phenomena occurs here, but also because in this place the letting disappear presents itself in a most exalted manner. In fact, there is nothing ordinary in this field and, as the legend has it, all the wanderers encounter here is a river called *Αμελης* - which means, 'Carefree'.

The name *Αμελης* indicates that the river which flows in the field of the *ληθη* partakes of the essence of this domain. For the river maintains its presence only as withdrawing concealment and its water knows no care (*μελετη*) for what opposes the going away, disappearance and concealedness. In sum, the river whose water, as the narrator says, 'no vessel could cover, i.e. contain',⁵⁰ is ignorant of unconcealedness - that is, the care that saves and secures all beings in the unconcealed and keeps them constantly therein. The term 'care' - with which we are already familiar from *Being and Time* - does not refer to a type of distress and worry or some kind of preoccupation, but relates solely to the care over unconcealedness.

Hence in the realm of essential thinking, where the essence of Being is thought, just as is unconcealedness, whenever the word 'care' occurs something else is intended than regretfulness of a human 'subject' staggering around in the 'nothing in itself', in a 'lived experience' objectified into empty nothingness.⁵¹

That is to say, the 'carefreeness' here means exclusively the lack of concern for the truth - not caring about *αληθεια*, hence a kind of 'loyalty' toward *ληθη* and concern for the domain of the withdrawing concealment. Such carefreeness, Heidegger remarks, is also *δαιμονιον*.

The story continues by telling that, once the journey through the *δαιμονιος τοπος* is accomplished, those who are to embark on a new life on earth must first drink from the water of the river 'Carefree'. But the amount of water they are to drink must be of a precise measure. For those who drink the right amount of water will, in returning to earth, carry with them an attachment, a fundamental belonging to the field of the essence of concealment. Meanwhile those who drink

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁵¹ *ibid.*

excessively, i.e. more than the recommended measure, will not be saved. They will not be on earth as a human being because they would have no means of relating disclosively - that is, in speech or, as it is for the Greeks, in *μυθος*, *λογος* - since all and every being will be concealed to them.

Complete, measureless oblivion, i.e., concealment, would exclude the last ground of the essence of man, because such oblivion would allow no disclosure and would deny unconcealedness its essential foundation.⁵²

Thus *ληθη*, as that which withdraws, that which prevents emerging or *φυσις*, has a crucial part in preparing the source and the basis of the essence of unconcealedness. Man himself, as the myth says, 'stems from the district of the uncanny divine place of withdrawing concealment'.⁵³ We must take notice that, since *ληθη* belongs in an essential sense to *αληθεια*, concealedness can never be a simple negation or a mere elimination of unconcealedness. For, as we have seen, the saving and conserving of the unconcealed occurs in a direct and necessary relation with concealedness.

The conserving is grounded in a perpetual saving and preserving. This preserving of the unconcealed comes to pass in its pure essence when man strives freely for the unconcealed and does so incessantly throughout his mortal course on earth.⁵⁴

The important outcome of the warrior's tale consists, we may say, in demonstrating that the *α* - in *α-ληθεια* is not a mere undetermined universal in the sense of 'un'- or 'not'-. Rather *α-ληθεια* is itself founded on *ληθη*. In this essential belonging together there is nothing that mediates between the two and no transition takes place, as they pertain immediately, in themselves and by their essence, to each other. From Heidegger's point of view, what is decisive in this story⁵⁵ is the fact that the

⁵² P, p.123.

⁵³ P, p.124.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

⁵⁵ Heidegger translates the concluding lines of the warrior's story as follows:

'After they lay down to rest and midnight struck, a thunderstorm and an earthquake set in, and from there (from the field of *ληθη*) all of a sudden everyone else was carried away, going toward the emerging prominence (toward being on earth) like a flight of stars (shooting stars)' (621 b1ff.). 'He himself, however, was indeed prevented from drinking the water' (621 b4f.). (See P, p.125).

unconcealed is not drawn out of concealedness, but the voice that we hear comes from the domain of their unity; or as he puts it,

the *μυθος* does not tear away from concealment something unconcealed but speaks out of that region from which springs forth the original essential unity of the two, where the beginning is.⁵⁶

The account of the *μυθος* of *ληθη* seems to be the last word of early Greek thinking with regard to that which is opposed to *αληθεια*. Considering what has been said thus far, it is clear that what stands against *αληθεια* could never be the opposite or contradiction in a simple ('logical') sense, nor could it ever be the mere lack or the denial of it. For *αληθεια* may be preserved and be kept unforgotten only by means of its counter-essence *ληθη*. Although common opinion may be convinced that things are preserved authentically if they are grasped and constantly at hand, Heidegger maintains that it is the self-withdrawing concealment which orders mankind to save and to preserve. And, though difficult for us to see, the self-withdrawing concealment is for the Greeks 'the simplest of the simple, preserved for them in their experience of the unconcealed and therein allowed to come into presence'.⁵⁷

Hence, Plato could have not invented the *μυθος* of *ληθη* because no *μυθος* could be invented or found through seeking. The word of legends is rather 'a response to the word of an appeal in which Being itself dispenses itself to man'⁵⁸ and it is only within the sphere of what is thus disclosed in advance that a seeking can take place. To be sure, there is a significant lapse of time between Plato and Homer. By the time of Plato, there is already a shift in people's aptitude to respond and express the appeal of Being. This, Heidegger remarks, does not mean that by the passing of time the legendary word becomes weaker, but that man's perception

⁵⁶ *ibid.*

⁵⁷ P, p.127.

⁵⁸ P, p.128.

becomes dispersed and more variegated to the extent that it is no longer possible to experience as present the simple.

The legendary word of Homer has not faded away. The otherwise silent *μυθος* of *ληθη* exists. Therefore even the Platonic *μυθος* of *ληθη* is a remembering of, not merely a thinking 'about', the *ληθη* Pindar and Hesiod mention. This remembering utterance of the *μυθος* preserves the primordial unveiling of the essence of *ληθη*.⁵⁹

We may still wonder why Plato insists at all upon this story when his aim is to discuss the essence of the *πολις*. How exactly is the analysis of the 'demonic' field of *ληθη*, the district of the uncanny, relevant to a dialogue of the *πολις*? The clue comes from the relation that Plato draws between the *πολις* and Being in terms of the conflictual character of *αληθεια*. The myth of *ληθη* is here to testify that *αληθεια* constitutes the ground of the Greek *πολις* and that the relation between the *πολις* and Being is a primordial one.⁶⁰ In fact, the bond between Being and the *πολις*, Heidegger says, shows how little Plato's *Πολιτεια* has in common with our modern understanding of *republic* and with the Roman *res publica* ('*res populi*, i.e. that which concerns the organized and established people, what is most their "business"')⁶¹. The *πολις* is neither a city nor a state and it 'is just as little something "political" as space itself is something spatial'.⁶²

Because the Greeks are the utterly unpolitical people, unpolitical by essence, because their humanity is primordially and exclusively determined from Being itself, i.e. from *αληθεια*, therefore only the Greeks could, and precisely had to, found the *πολις*, found abodes for the gathering and conserving of *αληθεια*.⁶³

In addition we may say that the state, according to the modern view, is the site of power - a power which has often been characterized as 'demonic' and 'evil'.⁶⁴ But

⁵⁹ *ibid.*

⁶⁰ The term *πολις* furthermore, shares the same root with the ancient Greek word for 'to be', *πελειν* which means 'to emerge, to rise up into the unconcealed'- (for 'evidence', Heidegger refers to Sophocles). See P, p.90.

⁶¹ P, p.89.

⁶² P, p.95.

⁶³ P, p.96.

⁶⁴ See Nietzsche. *Untimely Meditations*, p.114. Also *Thus spoke Zarathustra*, 'Of the New Idol'. pp. 75-78.

how could any modern and Christian notions of 'evil' and 'demonic', loaded with moral connotations, characterize the power within the *πολις* that guides 'the Greeks' in their experience of the place as the place of their gathering?

The essence of power, as meant in modern thinking about the state, is founded in the metaphysical presupposition that the essence of truth has been transformed into certitude, i.e., into the self-certitude of the human being in his self-positing, and that this latter is based on the subjectivity of consciousness.⁶⁵

But what is the *πολις*? What kind of a place is it? The *πολις* is 'the pole, the place around which everything appearing to the Greeks as a being turns in a peculiar way'.⁶⁶ This is the place where entities are able to manifest themselves in the full totality of their condition because here beings are let to appear in their Being. To say that the pole allows beings to appear in their Being, does not imply that beings are created by the pole but that the pole is where unconcealedness of beings as a whole takes place. The *πολις*, Heidegger says, is 'the abode, gathered into itself, of the unconcealedness of the beings'⁶⁷ - 'the abode of the essence of Greek humanity'. The *πολις* as 'the essence of the place' is thus 'the settlement of the historical dwelling' of this humanity.⁶⁸

Now, given that *αληθεια* is conflictual in its nature, the *πολις*, as the 'place' that is raised and sustained by *αληθεια*, is also the abode of oblivion and distortion in its multiple forms - hence, the home of all excesses, of the most radical oppositions to the unconcealed - a 'place' where counter-beings, the 'demons' appear in their manifold diversity. Jacob Burckhardt was one of the first to speak of the Greek *πολις* in terms of frightfulness, horribleness, atrociousness, etc.⁶⁹ -

⁶⁵ P, p.90.

⁶⁶ P, p.89.

⁶⁷ P, p.90.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁹ Heidegger, stressing Burckhardt's influence on Nietzsche, adds that 'in the introduction to his lectures on the "history of Greek culture", Jacob Burckhardt knowingly inserts a thesis he heard as a student from his teacher in classical philology at Berlin, Bockh, and it runs as follows: "the Hellenes were more unhappy than most people think". Burckhardt's presentation of the Greeks, which he often repeated in his lectures at Basel from 1872 on, was based entirely on this insight, or, rather, surmise. Nietzsche had in his possession an auditor's transcript of these lectures, and he cherished the manuscript as his most precious treasure. Thus Jacob Burckhardt himself contributed to the fact that

experiences that are also expressed in Greek tragedy. For the *πολις*, as the pole around which the Greeks gather their life, is, as we said, the place that lets all beings appear in their ‘true colours’ that is, in their Being. Therefore, if the Greeks are to say anything about man’s experience, his life and his existence in the *πολις*, this would necessarily be a ‘tragic’ tale. For tragedy, for the Greeks, is an expression inspired by Being and the experience of its essence as *αληθεια*. And since it is this very experience that in the first instance gives voice to tragedy, Heidegger can go so far as to say: ‘there is only *Greek* tragedy and no other besides it’.⁷⁰

6. In Place of a Conclusion

We may end our investigation by indicating yet one more direction pointed to by the term ‘unconcealedness’. This is the original meaning of ‘*freedom*’ sketched by Heidegger in terms of the ‘open’, the ‘clearing’ and the ‘letting-be’, as what is primordially self-opening or free:

To disclose, i.e. to let appear in the open, can only be accomplished by what gives in advance this open and thus is in itself self-opening and thereby is essentially open, or as we may also say is ‘freedom’. The still concealed essence of the open as the primordial self-opening is ‘freedom’.⁷¹

Does this mean that ‘freedom’ is the ground and the condition of the possibility for any disclosure whatsoever, for unconcealedness? Indeed. Heidegger says clearly that ‘the open is by no means first and only a result or consequence of disclosure but is itself ground and the essential beginning of unconcealedness.’⁷²

This implies that the laws of nature, i.e. *φυσις*, are grounded not in some kind of necessity opposed to freedom, but in freedom in the sense of that which lets the beings be, that by virtue of which disclosure is possible. Yet, is it not the case that

Nietzsche still thought the essence of the Greek world and of its *πολις* in a Roman way’. For further discussion on this topic, see P, pp.90-91.

⁷⁰ P, p.90.

⁷¹ P, p.143

⁷² P, p.143.

freedom determines itself as freedom only through a struggle against nature? Perhaps. But while metaphysics conceives 'freedom' in terms of the 'will' and understands the freedom of the latter in relation to human or divine actions, Heidegger proposes to think the essence of freedom with a view to the essence of the 'open' and in fundamental unity with *αληθεια*. This, for Heidegger, is an urgent need because he maintains that, since the modern concept of freedom is totally unaware of the essential unity bonding together the meanings of Being/*Αληθεια*/openness, it falls short of reaching the essence of man. In fact, from Heidegger's point of view 'we', the so called 'free men', may have not even attained to that freedom which is proper to our Being, for we have not yet grasped what that freedom is to which man 'must first attain, in accord with his essence, if he is to be able to let beings be in the open what they are as beings'.⁷³

This brings us to question the commonly held idea of freedom believed to have governed the Greek 'cities'. In other words, Heidegger's account of the primordial sense of freedom raises the suspicion that we may have been misled in our interpretation of freedom, just as we were in our standard conceptions of *Πολιτεια* in terms of the Republic, of the *πολις* in terms of 'bourg' and city, and the *δαιμονιος* as 'demonic'. If this the case, then the Greeks' care and demand for 'freedom', their conception of the *πολις* as the 'free' place would have nothing in common with modern notions of civil liberties, autonomy and self-determination of human will or reason. Rather, the care would have been care for unconcealedness, for 'nature' (*φυσις*), for an existence guided by the meaning of unconcealedness, of the 'open', of the 'letting-be' that pervades *αληθεια*. In sum, if, as Heidegger says, 'the open, to which every being is liberated as to its freedom, is Being itself',⁷⁴ then the Greeks would have understood freedom in the sense of the openness of Being itself. This leads Heidegger to the statement that, since man, as the one who has forgotten Being, is alienated from the open, his experience of freedom, his idea of himself as

⁷³ P, p.143.

⁷⁴ P, p.150.

being-free is neither Greek nor primordial, but is a metaphysical one. Man, Heidegger says, 'forgets Being and in such forgetting learns nothing more than the overlooking of Being and alienation from the open'.⁷⁵

It is however striking to think that the modern city or Republic may have its foundations, not in 'freedom', but in alienation, in concealedness and in the oblivion of Being. Perhaps this is why, here, freedom is conceived as having everything, every aspect of life, every being, under the control of the citizen-subject. Perhaps this, as a way of keeping busy, is man's mode of sustaining himself in the oblivion. But just as anxiety is capable of striking the 'happy man', as if out of nowhere, so can the feeling of repression, coercion, alienation and homelessness envelop the 'free man' at 'home' at any moment. This may explain why Heidegger accounts for the 'alienation' and the 'homelessness' of *Dasein* in relation to the oblivion of Being, and why he views every advance toward a greater control and domination of beings as further estrangement from the 'truth' and deeper entanglement in nihilism. Being, he says, 'from whose bestowal man cannot withdraw, even in the most extreme oblivion of Being, does, however, flow away from man into the indeterminate totality of beings as a consequence of his alienation from *αληθεια*. In this way Being is identified without distinction with beings or else is cast aside as an empty concept'.⁷⁶

In fact, Nietzsche described Being as an empty concept and no more than a vapour because he was, according to Heidegger, the 'last to experience this homelessness'.⁷⁷ But since he was looking for a way out from within metaphysics he could do no better than to reverse the old metaphysics - an attempt that had, in any case, already been made by Feuerbach. For Heidegger, however, homelessness is the symptom of the oblivion of Being with the consequence that the truth of Being remains unthought. Therefore, it is not Nietzsche's care for a new 'homeland' and his concern for the overcoming of homelessness that impresses Heidegger, but what

⁷⁵ P, p.151.

⁷⁶ P, p.151.

⁷⁷ 'Letter on Humanism' in: *Basic Writings*, p.241.

transpires in Hölderlin's verses. In the 'Letter on Humanism', for instance, Heidegger remarks that Hölderlin seeks the homeland in the nearness to Being.⁷⁸ but as Being remains concealed, the world's destiny which is voiced in his poetry finds no way of becoming manifest as the history of Being itself. Thus, because the estrangement of modern man and his homelessness constitute, as Heidegger believes, the destiny of the world, it is essential to think that destiny in terms of the history of Being and to recognize that the only way to 'overcome' homelessness is to *prepare* the way so that Being can come to the fore and can be experienced in its truth. For otherwise, 'expelled from the truth of Being' man would continue to 'circle round himself as the *animal rationale*':

In the face of the essential homelessness of man, man's approaching destiny reveals itself to thought on the history of Being in this, that man finds his way into the truth of Being and sets out on this find.⁷⁹

In this connection Heidegger also takes up Marx's notion of 'estrangement':

what Marx recognized in an essential and significant sense, though derived from Hegel, as the estrangement of man has its roots in the homelessness of modern man. This homelessness is specifically evoked from the destiny of Being in the form of metaphysics, and through metaphysics is simultaneously entrenched and covered up as such.⁸⁰

The Marxist view of history, Heidegger adds, rises above other historical accounts because Marx, through the experience of alienation, was able to reach an essential dimension of history.⁸¹ Meanwhile, because neither Husserl nor the Sartre of *Being and Nothingness* genuinely recognized the importance of the historical in Being, both classical phenomenology and existentialism remain blind to that dimension within

⁷⁸ 'When Hölderlin composes "Homecoming" he is concerned that his "countrymen" find their essence. He does not at all seek that essence in an egoism of his nation. He sees it rather in the context of a belongingness to the destiny of the West. But even the West is not thought regionally as the Occident in contrast to the Orient, nor merely as Europe, but rather world-historically out of nearness to the source. The homeland of the historical dwelling is nearness to Being'. See 'Letter on Humanism' in: *Basic Writings*, pp. 241-242.

⁷⁹ 'Letter on Humanism' in: *Basic Writings*, p.244.

⁸⁰ *ibid.* p.243.

⁸¹ 'No matter which of the various positions one chooses to adopt toward the doctrines of communism and to their foundation, from the point of view of the history of Being it is certain that an elemental experience of what is world-historical speaks out in it'. *ibid.* p.244.

which a positive, i.e. a creative dialogue with Marxism could be first attained. Having said this, such a productive dialogue with Marxism requires, in Heidegger's view, a re-thinking of materialism - away from 'naïve notions but also from the cheap refutations'⁸² - on the basis of its metaphysical resolution that accounts for the appearance of what there is in terms of the material of labour.⁸³ For to say that materialism asserts that everything is at bottom just 'matter' is too simplistic, since it says nothing about the essence of materialism - an essence which is concealed in the essence of technology.⁸⁴

Now, because Heidegger considers the reign of technology a destiny within the history of Being, technology comes to represent a truth grounded in the oblivion and hence in the history of metaphysics, which is in turn just one discernible stage of the history of Being itself. But if metaphysics is only a phase, only one possibility within the history of Being, then we may ask what is meant by the talk about the *end* of philosophy? In what sense has philosophy entered its end? To be sure, in 'The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking', Heidegger says that 'Nietzsche characterizes his philosophy as reversed Platonism. With the reversal of metaphysics that was already accomplished by Karl Marx the uttermost possibility of philosophy is attained'.⁸⁵ This possibility is philosophy as metaphysics whereby all there is, i.e. beings as a whole, are thought in their belonging together with Being and represented in thinking as that which provides the ground. Since the beginning, metaphysics has thought Being as the Being of beings and conceived it as the ground of beings - a ground that by showing itself as presence brings each and every being to presencing in their own peculiar way. On the basis of this same ground Heidegger traces the

⁸² *ibid.* p.243.

⁸³ With regard to labour and productivity the extent of Marx's debt to Hegel is so widely discussed that it might not even need mentioning. However, Marx' *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* also contain important remarks concerning the theme of alienation in relation to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. See in particular, 'Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy as a Whole' in: *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, pp.125-148.

⁸⁴ 'Letter on Humanism' in: *Basic Writings*, p.243.

⁸⁵ 'The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking' in: *Basic Writings*, p.433.

achievements of modern metaphysics from the middle ages to Nietzsche in a few lines:

In accordance with the giving type of presence, the ground has the character of grounding as the ontic causation of the actual, the transcendental making possible of the objectivity of objects, the dialectical meditation of the movement of absolute spirit and of the historical process of production, and the will to power positing values.⁸⁶

Thus, seen from the 20th century point of view, or from Heidegger's position, philosophy enters into its final stage as the completion of metaphysics. A completion which does not entail - at least not necessarily - the end of philosophy in the sense of its complete cessation, but a completion that leads 'from one end to the other'. Heidegger makes use of the term 'end' to convey the sense of gathering that belongs to the place. The end of philosophy, he says, 'is the place, that place in which the whole of philosophy's history is gathered in its uttermost possibility. End as completion means this gathering'.⁸⁷ Today, in view of the separation of the sciences from philosophy and their independent development in all domains of beings, it has become difficult to see that these sciences have all grown out of philosophy and are in any case the outcome of a possibility that was enclosed in philosophy itself since the age of the Greeks.⁸⁸

But, if the end of philosophy proves to be 'the triumph of the manipulable arrangement of a scientific-technological world',⁸⁹ should we understand the end of philosophy in the sense of its evolving into the sciences? Should we consider such progress as the complete actualization of all the possibilities posited in the thinking of philosophy? Or should we believe that there are further and other possibilities for philosophy than its mere dissolution in the technologized sciences? In other words, can philosophical thinking do more or do other than what it has done up until now?

⁸⁶ *ibid.* p.432.

⁸⁷ 'The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking' in: *Basic Writings*, p.432.

⁸⁸ Technology 'does not go back to the *techne* of the Greeks in name only but derives historically and essentially from *techne* as a mode of *aletheuein*, a mode, that is, of rendering beings manifest [*Offenbarmachen*]' . See 'Letter on Humanism' in: *Basic Writings*, p.244.

⁸⁹ 'The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking' in: *Basic Writings*, p.435.

Is there still an important task reserved for thinking, ‘a task accessible neither to philosophy as metaphysics nor, even less, to the sciences stemming from philosophy’⁹⁰? Heidegger’s reply to the latter question is certainly affirmative, since he believes in the possibility of a thinking that is neither metaphysics nor science. But what kind of thinking this may be, is for the moment but a question - a guiding question whereby thinking prepares its own transformation in the process of learning first what remains reserved and in store for it. Such a transformation will guide us into other horizons, other possibilities, it will show us different ways of relating to ourselves, to each other, to nature and to the divine. Here may lie an avenue towards understanding, facing up to, and perhaps ‘overcoming’ nihilism.

Meanwhile we may end our discussion with a note addressed to the ‘alienated’ and ‘homeless’. There is a yet more terrible sense to repression, to anxiety, to homelessness and to alienation than they may have experienced, for the homeland to which they hope to return is yet to be envisaged, not upon well-known models, but by *learning to think otherwise*. But what can we expect from philosophy? Perhaps not much. But one thing is certain: philosophy can show its possibilities only once we have prepared the terrain by having learned to pay heed to what has been forgotten, by having learned to see through the history and perhaps even to go beyond it. With this in mind, Heidegger’s *way* of thinking may come as a great source of encouragement and inspiration. Having said this, Heidegger, while having some familiarity with non-Western modes of thought, does not consider in any detail thinking other than that which originates from Greek, Roman, or biblically inspired modes of questioning. Does it really seem likely that ‘the Greeks’ were surrounded by an immense, endless and thoughtless desert and where the only ones to whom Being revealed itself? If we really wish to think differently, should we perhaps widen the horizon of our thinking and let the fresh air blow away our fear of

⁹⁰ *ibid.* p.435.

looking further, beyond the limitations and prejudices hardened by centuries? But then again, this might be a question only for the 'alienated' and 'homeless'.

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