

Toward a Metaphysical Freedom: Heidegger's Project of a Metaphysics of Daseinⁱ

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Abstract

The 'Metaphysics of Dasein' is the name which Heidegger gave to a new philosophical project developed immediately after the partial publication of his masterwork *Being and Time* (1927). As Heidegger was later to recall, an 'overturning' took place at that moment, more precisely right in the middle of the 1929 treatise *On the Essence of Ground*. Between the fundamental-ontological formulation of the question of being and its metaphysical rephrasing, Heidegger discovered that a 'metaphysical freedom' stood at the root of Dasein's relation to his world and, thus, at the basis of his whole ontological questioning. This article will show how the very structure of the 1929 essay clearly illustrates the path Heidegger followed between *Being and Time* and the new philosophical beginning of the mid-1930s. It will conclude with a few critical remarks concerning Heidegger's attempt to free his thinking from traditional philosophy and to overcome metaphysics.

Keywords: Heidegger; Metaphysics; Dasein; Freedom;
Transcendence; Turning

Introduction

As soon as Heidegger finished the writing of his masterwork *Sein und Zeit*, somewhere in the fall of 1926, a shift occurred in his use of the term 'metaphysics'. We have to recall that *Sein und Zeit* was written against 'metaphysics'. The first line of the book left no doubt: "The question [of

being] has today been forgotten—although our time considers itself progressive in again affirming “metaphysics” (Heidegger, 2001a: p. 2/1).ⁱⁱ Heidegger refers here to a ‘resurrection of metaphysics’ that gained popularity at the beginning of the 20th century with authors such as Georg Simmel, Nicolai Hartmann or Peter Wust (who in 1920 wrote a book called *Die Auferstehung der Metaphysik*). According to *Sein und Zeit*, this ‘new’ metaphysics wrongly believed it was ‘spared the exertion of rekindling the *gigantomachia peri tēs ousias*’ that ‘sustained the avid research of Plato and Aristotle’.ⁱⁱⁱ

But while writing his book, Heidegger started to contemplate the possibility of something he characterized as ‘scientific metaphysics’. During the winter of 1926/27, in his lecture course dedicated to the ‘History of Philosophy from Thomas Aquinas to Kant,’ Heidegger was already speaking of his phenomenological ontology as a *scientific metaphysics* and characterized his question of being as a metaphysical one. The following years gave Heidegger the chance to develop a new philosophical project that was not perfectly identical with that of the fundamental ontology and to which he gave the name ‘metaphysics of Dasein’.

For many years, this metaphysical project could be considered a curiosity of which Heidegger spoke only in 1929, in the fourth part of *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*. But with the recent publication of the lecture courses held at the end of the 1920s in the *Gesamtausgabe*, it became impossible not to consider that Heidegger was in fact really trying to lay the grounds of a new metaphysics—really trying, so to speak, to *become a metaphysician*. Of course, this did not last. We know that in the mid-1930s, Heidegger had already started on a new path that would leave metaphysics behind. But between 1926 and 1930, we have to recognize that Heidegger tried to give a *metaphysical* answer to the question of being. And this has to be a surprising discovery if we consider that Heidegger is normally viewed as the ‘Grand Inquisitor’ who, once and for all, expelled metaphysics from contemporary continental philosophy. But at the end of the 1920s, Heidegger never spoke of *overcoming*, but rather of *retrieving* the fundamental questions of metaphysics.

This would be a harmless discovery if, during those years, Heidegger had written texts of a lesser philosophical value and if we could speak of some ‘mental turmoil’ causing Heidegger to think metaphysics was still possible. But according to many scholars, these years could be considered the most prolific years of all. Admitting that his question of being was in fact a *metaphysical* question, Heidegger produced some of his most interesting texts.^{iv}

Among the texts published at that time, the treatise *Vom Wesen des Grundes* is probably the one which best illustrates the metaphysical path Heidegger followed during these years.^v Although the text speaks only ‘silently’ of the metaphysical project, I will try to show here that it has to be regarded as a turning point between *Sein und Zeit* and the writings of the mid-1930s, such as the *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*. By coming to grips with Heidegger’s metaphysical enterprise, we will be able to understand what the 1929 treatise really represented and meant—something that is rarely achieved in the scholarly literature. My purpose here is first to give an overview of Heidegger’s metaphysics of Dasein. Then, I will show how *Vom Wesen des Grundes* accomplishes, from the first to the third sections, the characteristic ‘movements’ of this metaphysics of Dasein. The essay opens with a presentation of some fundamental ontological considerations on Dasein as being-in-the-world (*I. The Problem of Ground*). Then it goes through a redefining of this same Dasein, describing it as a ‘transcendental being’ (*II. Transcendence as the Domain of the Question Concerning the Essence of Ground*). Finally, Heidegger tries to base this transcendence on an original notion of freedom, thought as ‘freedom toward ground’ (*III. On the Essence of Ground*). These three moments correspond perfectly to the path that Heidegger’s thought followed between 1926 and 1930. Considering some commentaries the older Heidegger made on this treatise, I will show how this metaphysics of Dasein has to be seen as a ‘turning-point’ between *Sein und Zeit* and the new beginning of the mid-1930s. To conclude, I shall try to weigh the impact that this very concept of freedom might have had on Heidegger’s path, especially concerning his relation to the metaphysical tradition.

I The Metaphysics of Dasein (1926-1930)

After the publication of the first two sections of the uncompleted *Sein und Zeit* in the Spring of 1927, Heidegger remained silent for two years. In fact, we have to wait until the spring of 1929 for a second major publication: *Vom Wesen des Grundes*.^{vi} Even if one could legitimately expect this text to complete the fundamental ontology of 1927, Heidegger preferred to work on a problem that was only discreetly mentioned in *Sein und Zeit*: Dasein’s transcendence.^{vii} In the next few years, Heidegger was not so much to try to answer the *Hauptwerk*’s unresolved questions as to develop what he called a ‘metaphysics of Dasein,’ an attempt to give a *metaphysical* answer to the question of being. Pleading for a ‘metaphysical’ thinking whose central topic would be *transcendence*, Heidegger surprisingly rallied for a short period to philosophical paths he would soon try to *overcome*.

Under the auspices of metaphysics, Heidegger produced some of his most powerful philosophical texts. This leads us to believe that this temporary association between Heidegger's thought and metaphysics was not a simple 'fall' back into traditional or transcendental schemes—even though some texts, such as the 1946 *Letter on 'Humanism,'* seem to put it this way. The publication of Heidegger's manuscripts allowed the discovery of this unknown phase of his *Weg* (1926-1930), which corresponds to the development of a 'metaphysics of Dasein'.

But despite the obvious philosophical value of these texts, it may seem paradoxical to take this attempt to lay anew the grounds of metaphysics seriously. From the mid-1930s on, Heidegger worked on an 'overcoming of metaphysics,' a project that surely overshadowed that of a 'metaphysics of Dasein'. However, one has to remember that in the mid-1920s Heidegger was passionately fond of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*,^{viii} and that he interpreted it as the sole explicit attempt in all history to investigate metaphysics' conditions of possibility. In his turn, Heidegger wanted to proceed to a recasting of the essence of metaphysics in order to provide it with an authentic base.

As I mentioned earlier, Heidegger first exposed a positive concept of 'metaphysics' in the winter semester of 1926/27. From this moment on, Heidegger spoke of a 'scientific metaphysics' and opposed it to a 'popular concept (*vulgärer Begriff*) of metaphysics' (Heidegger, 2006: pp. 7-10). Invoking Kant, who is said to have 'tried to destroy the non-philosophical metaphysics in order to achieve a scientific metaphysics,' Heidegger defines the 'popular' metaphysics as dealing ontically with God and the world's ground. On the contrary, the scientific metaphysics does not approach 'being from its ontical origin,' but moves within the 'sobriety and coldness of the concept' (Heidegger, 2006: p. 7). The same would be said in the *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* in the next semester, in which Heidegger wrote:

The transcendental science of being has nothing to do with popular metaphysics, which deals with some being behind the known beings; rather, *the scientific concept of metaphysics* is identical with the concept of philosophy in general—critically transcendental science of being, ontology. (Heidegger, 1975: p. 23/17; *my italics*)

From this moment on, the fundamental ontology that Heidegger presented in *Sein und Zeit* and that attempted to deal with being without referring ontically to some hidden being, fell under this new concept of scientific metaphysics.

Even though the lecture course of 1927 did not say much about a new metaphysical project, it was nonetheless the first one to expose the concept of transcendence that would characterize Dasein during these metaphysical years. In this lecture course, Heidegger presented a ‘phenomenology of transcendence’ that would become, through a redefining of transcendence, a harsh critique of Husserl’s ‘transcendental phenomenology’ (Heidegger, 1975: pp. 249, 447/175, 314) as well as a rejection of the Neo-Kantian interpretation of Kant’s concept of transcendental knowledge (Heidegger, 1975: p. 425/299).

This new concept of transcendence—with which the second section of *Vom Wesen des Grundes* deals—seeks to characterize Dasein’s relation with beings in terms of a ‘surpassing’ from *beings* to *being*, or a ‘going beyond’ beings toward their being. At the beginning of the second section of *Vom Wesen des Grundes*, Heidegger defines transcendence as meaning:

something that properly pertains to *human Dasein*, and does so not merely as one kind of comportment among other possible kinds that are undertaken from time to time. Rather, it belongs to human Dasein as the *fundamental constitution of this being, one that occurs prior to all comportment*. (...) Transcendence (...) is that surpassing that makes possible such a thing as existence in general. (Heidegger, 1976: p. 137/107-8)

Transcendence was to become the ground for all comportments of Dasein, fundamentally because Dasein has no relation with beings if it does not transcend beings toward their being.

This redefining of the essence of Dasein from care (*Sorge*) to transcendence does not constitute *per se* a refutation of *Sein und Zeit*’s theses, but still indicates that Dasein’s constitution has now to be considered from a surpassing perspective—which the expression *meta-physics* perfectly describes—that the *ontological* vocabulary probably failed to acknowledge. This would appear even clearer with the coining of the expression ‘metontology’ in the summer of 1928 that surely indicates, as we will see, some surpassing of the ontological horizon.

The lecture course of the winter semester 1927/28 dealt with Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* as a model for any attempt to lay anew the grounds for metaphysics. This course was the first one to ask the fundamental question ‘what is metaphysics?’—and not merely ‘what is philosophy?’—and ended up clearly associating *Sein und Zeit* with metaphysical ambitions: ‘Universality of *being* and radicality of *time* are the two titles which together denote the tasks which a further thinking of *the possibility of metaphysics* calls for’ (Heidegger, 1977: pp. 426-7/289; *my italics*). The ontological

question concerning being and time was now closely linked to the problem of the possibility of metaphysics. This metaphysical meditation would in fact constitute Heidegger's principal occupation for the next few years.

The project of a 'metaphysics of Dasein' was first mentioned in the lecture course of summer 1928 on Leibniz. It was also in this lecture course that Heidegger proposed—conjointly with the late Max Scheler—to risk again the step into an authentic metaphysics, that is, to develop metaphysics from the ground up' (Heidegger, 1978: p. 165/132). The exchanges Heidegger had with Scheler before his sudden death are probably in part responsible for the interest the former took in metaphysics. Let us recall that Scheler's essay *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos*, published in 1928 just before his death, concluded with the presentation of some 'contributions to a metaphysics of man' which recalls Heidegger's project. This 1928 course was contemporary to the writing of *Vom Wesen des Grundes* and even though the treatise does not mention the metaphysics of Dasein, it openly considers that 'a more radical and more universal conception of the essence of transcendence, necessarily entails a more originary elaboration of the idea of ontology *and thus of metaphysics*' (Heidegger, 1976: p. 140/109-10; *my italics*).

The lecture course of 1928 insisted on something that stands at the basis of transcendence: freedom, a concept that was fully developed in the treatise *Vom Wesen des Grundes*. In both texts Heidegger develops an ontological concept of freedom that increasingly occupied him until the lecture course of summer 1930, entitled *Vom Wesen der Freiheit*, and in the 1930 conference *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit*, in which Heidegger asserted something as surprising as '*the essence of truth (...) is freedom*' (Heidegger, 1976: p. 186/142).

The year of 1929 was to be Heidegger's most openly metaphysical year. For that matter, his lecture course *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik*—'Meine erste wirkliche Metaphysikvorlesung!' (Letter to Julius Stenzel on November 23rd, 1929; see Heidegger and Stenzel, 2000: p. 7)—and his well-known conference *Was ist Metaphysik?*—in which Heidegger affirms that metaphysics is the 'fundamental occurrence in our Dasein' (Heidegger, 1976: p. 122/96)—are both important texts. But for the idea of a metaphysics of Dasein, the lecture course of the summer semester 1929 on German idealism is probably more essential, as Heidegger then contrasted his own finite metaphysics with Hegel's absolute metaphysics.

The lecture course of summer 1930 on human freedom concluded Heidegger's metaphysical project. Having dealt with the metaphysical problem of freedom, Heidegger attempted a rare

incursion into Kantian practical philosophy. Criticizing Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*, this course introduced a metaphysical understanding of freedom that contrasted with Kant's concept. According to Heidegger, this concept refers to spontaneity, and is thus grounded in the mere ontical notion of causality.

This lecture course was the last one to use the expression 'metaphysics of Dasein' as well as the last one to consider metaphysics in its possibility. But the last exhaustive presentation of this metaphysics was certainly the conference of March 1930, given in Amsterdam, entitled *Hegel und das Problem der Metaphysik*—to be published in Volume 80 of the *Gesamtausgabe*.^{ix} In this interesting text, Heidegger tries to justify his retrieval of the metaphysical undertaking beyond its achievement with Hegel's absolute metaphysics and he introduces the important distinction between the metaphysical '*Leitfrage*' and '*Grundfrage*'—the 'leading question' and the 'fundamental question'. For the last time, Heidegger speaks of the possibility of metaphysics and not yet of its overcoming. However, if Hegel accomplished metaphysics by exhausting all the possibilities of the question concerning 'beings as such and as a whole' (the *Leitfrage*), he nonetheless missed the question concerning the condition of possibility of the understanding of being—that of the relationship between being and time (the *Grundfrage*).

As we will now see, this interpretation of the relation between traditional metaphysics and the metaphysical question concerning being and time vanished during the next lecture course, dedicated to Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. But what is of foremost importance for us is to get a grasp of the progression Heidegger's thought went through during these years: *from the redefining of care and being-in-the-world in terms of transcendence to the understanding of transcendence in terms of freedom*. What precisely happened between the two interpretations of Hegel's metaphysics—that of March 1930 and that of the winter semester 1930/31—such that the metaphysical project came to an end?

The lecture course that followed the end of this metaphysical interlude has to be considered a breaking point in many ways. First of all, we have to remember that in this lecture course Heidegger openly abandoned *phenomenology* to Husserl. Even though he stopped using the phenomenological vocabulary for a while, the rupture with Husserl was now complete. As Heidegger said, 'we would do better in the future to give the name of phenomenology only to that which Husserl himself has created and continues to produce' (Heidegger, 1980: p. 40/29). Heidegger also abandoned the use of *ontological* vocabulary to characterize his thinking and tried to reinterpret it in terms of an '*ontochrony*,' in which, as he writes, '*chronos* stands in the place of

logos' (Heidegger, 1980: p. 144/100; see also Heidegger, 1999: 95). This *ontochronical* undertaking did not prosper, but surely indicates that Heidegger was already seeking something new.

We also have to take into account the coining in this lecture course of the expression 'onto-theology,' a term not to be confused with the one appearing in Kant or in Schopenhauer. From this lecture course on, metaphysics would be thought of as achieved once and for all in Hegel, with no possibility of retrieval. And this achievement lets us finally see the structure it had had all along: the onto-theological structure that, from Aristotle's *prōte philosophia* to Hegel's identification of ontology with a 'theo-logic' (*Theo-Logik*) (Heidegger, 1997: p. 32; 2001b: p. 70), prevented metaphysics from interrogating being in relation with time. Metaphysics suddenly appeared as the impossibility of philosophy's *Grundfrage*. The concept of metaphysics would no longer be identical with the concept of philosophy in general. And in the next lecture course on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, the vocabulary of the overcoming or the surpassing (*überholen*) of metaphysics would then substitute that of the retrieval (*wiederholen*) (Heidegger, 1981: pp. 81-2/68-9). In the introductory part of this course, Heidegger ironically referred to his past attempt, saying: 'Do we really know what this thing is that we so commonly call "metaphysics"? We do not. Nowadays the word bewitches us like a magical incantation, with its suggestion of profundity and its promise of salvation' (Heidegger, 1981: p. 3/1).

If this coining of the onto-theological vocabulary is so important, it is because Heidegger, in his metaphysical period, did not use metaphysical vocabulary in a merely rhetorical fashion, but really tried to give a specific solution to the problematical unity of metaphysics as it first explicitly appeared in Aristotle's concept of *prōte philosophia*. Although the concept of 'onto-theology' only appeared at the beginning of the 1930s, the 'idea' behind it was already present in the mid-1920s.^x Thus, when Heidegger planned a retrieval of metaphysical questioning, he was already perfectly aware of this dual structure.

II The onto-theological constitution of the metaphysics of Dasein

In fact, Heidegger always thought of his metaphysics of Dasein as the retrieval (*Wiederholung*) of an unsolved problem in Aristotle: that of the unity of the ontological and theological questionings. But Heidegger did not try to solve first philosophy's 'remarkable doubling' or even to reconcile it into a unity. Heidegger's task was rather to 'illuminate the grounds for the

apparent disunity and the manner in which both determinations belong together as the leading problem of a “first philosophy” of beings’ (Heidegger, 1998: p. 8/5). This obscure relationship between the question of beings (*to on*) and the question of the divine (*to theion*)—unquestioned since the death of Aristotle (Heidegger, 1983: pp. 51-3/32-5; 1997: p. 34)—has to be interrogated as to its unity and its origin.

The metaphysics of Dasein tried to investigate more *radically* the traditional metaphysical problems. Besides the ontological problems, Heidegger opened a realm of questioning where beings are no longer questioned in their being or their beingness, but rather *as a whole* (*im Ganzen*). In some texts, Heidegger explicitly presented his metaphysics of Dasein following the onto-theological structure. These texts show that Heidegger did not then conceive the onto-theological problem as a faulty path for philosophical questioning, but as a possible access to philosophy’s basic questions.

The first two texts that I will discuss are taken from the *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik im Ausgang von Leibniz*, in which Heidegger traces explicit parallels between the Aristotelian division of Metaphysics (*prōte philosophia/theologike episteme*) and divisions that exist inside his own thought. The first text, often commented on, is taken from the famous appendix inserted in the middle of the second part and entitled ‘Describing the Idea and Function of a Fundamental Ontology’ (Heidegger, 1978: pp. 196-202/154-9). The initial plan of the systematic part of *Sein und Zeit*’s fundamental ontology consisted of two essential sections: an ‘interpretation of Dasein in terms of temporality’ and an ‘explication of time as the transcendental horizon of the question of being’ (Heidegger, 2001a: p. 41/37). In the summer semester 1928, Heidegger added a third section to this fundamental ontology. As he then wrote, this third section should not be understood as a step further, but as a ‘turning-around’ (*Kehre*) of this analysis, an ‘overturning’ (*Umschlag*) that enables the fully developed fundamental ontology to return to its ontical point of departure: ‘The temporal analysis is at the same time the *turning-around*, where ontology itself expressly runs back into the metaphysical ontic (*in die metaphysische Ontik*) in which it implicitly always remains’ (Heidegger, 1978: p. 201/158). Heidegger simply calls this ontical horizon of the ontological investigation ‘metontology’—what comes after (*meta*) ontology.^{xi}

I will not try to give an interpretation of this metontology here.^{xii} My aim is simply to highlight the fact that Heidegger traces a parallel between this new structure of fundamental ontology—or of the metaphysics of Dasein—and that of Aristotle’s metaphysics:

In their unity, fundamental ontology and metontology constitute the concept of metaphysics. But herein is expressed the transformation of the one basic problem of philosophy itself, the one touched upon above in the introduction under the dual concept of philosophy as *prōte philosophia* and *theologia*. (Heidegger, 1978: p. 202/158)

Heidegger thus characterized this ‘modified version’ of fundamental ontology as a new answer to the ‘basic problem of philosophy’ that sustained the avid metaphysical research of Aristotle. Even though the nature of this metontology is problematical, we have to recognize that Heidegger indicated here that, *following the example of Aristotle*, his own metaphysics presents a twofold structure: fundamental ontology and metontology.

But this is not the only passage in this lecture course to recognize such a link between the traditional division of metaphysics and the metaphysics of Dasein. Analyzing the definition of philosophy that Aristotle gives in his *Metaphysics* (books 4 and 5), Heidegger established some parallel with his own thought in the introduction, referring to what was developed in *Sein und Zeit*.

Let us keep in mind that philosophy, as first philosophy, has a twofold character: knowledge of being [*sc.* ontology] and knowledge of the overwhelming [*sc.* theology]. (This twofold character corresponds to the twofold (*dem Zweifachen*) in *Being and Time* of existence and thrownness). (Heidegger, 1978: p. 13/11)

Heidegger recognized once more that this twofold character of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* found a certain response in *Sein und Zeit*. But what did this mentioned ‘twofold’ mean in *Sein und Zeit*, and how could it *correspond* to the Aristotelian division of metaphysics?

Existence (*Existenz*) and thrownness (*Geworfenheit*) are presented in *Sein und Zeit* as two of the three basic characters of Dasein’s being, of care (*Sorge*). According to §§ 41 and 58, care encompasses the unity of three ontological determinations: ‘facticity (thrownness), existence (project) and falling prey (*Verfallen*)’ (Heidegger, 2001a: p. 284/262). This twofold of existence and thrownness of which the passage speaks is a subject that Heidegger often mentioned with this unique formula: ‘thrown project’ (Heidegger, 2001a: p. 285/263; 1998: p. 235/165). According to this characterization, Dasein would stand between the power to project the possibilities of a world (project) and a complete helplessness as to the withdrawal of some of these possibilities (thrownness). Only a complete analysis of this notion would give us an

understanding of the parallel Heidegger traces with the Aristotelian division of metaphysics. However, what matters here is to recognize the existence of such parallels.

We should also mention Heidegger's characterization of the 'authentic concept of metaphysics,' in the winter semester 1928/29. In this *Einleitung in die Philosophie*, Heidegger described the tasks of his philosophical investigations not with the twofold of fundamental ontology and metontology, but with a dichotomy between the problem of being and the problem of the world. Once again, Heidegger seems to acknowledge the limits of his ontological approach and tries to give a more complete idea of philosophy. Even though Heidegger did not mention Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, the many interpretations he then gave of Aristotelian theology in terms of a worldly or 'pagan' problematic suggest that this problem of the world has to be understood as the problem of the *theion*, the problem of beings as a whole.^{xiii}

In the winter semester 1928/29, the problem of the world was presented as a complementary problem to that of being, in such a way that their unity is then said to form philosophy's complete problematic: 'The problem of the world is primordially united with the problem of being; in their unity, the problem of being and the problem of the world first determine the unity of the authentic concept of metaphysics' (Heidegger, 1996: pp. 323-4). But the connection between both problems was outlined without being fully developed: 'The problem of being—in its originality—unfolds necessarily in what we call the problem of the world' (Heidegger, 1996: p. 391). And further:

On his side, the problem of the world, once unfolded, does not allow itself to be isolated, but bursts again and bounces on the construction of the problem of being. The problem of being unfolds as the problem of the world, the problem of the world sinks into the problem of being—this means: both problems form philosophy's one problematic. (Heidegger, 1996: p. 394)

The onto-theological structure of the metaphysics of Dasein was thus presented in various ways at the end of the 1920s. But as already mentioned, the concept of 'onto-theology' only appeared in the winter semester 1930/31 on Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, and with a negative connotation. From then on, this metaphysical structure would represent a characteristic peculiar to this traditional interrogation on beings (as such and as a whole) which the fundamental philosophical question concerning being has to overcome. The emergence of this distinction between philosophy's *Leitfrage* and *Grundfrage* coincides with the abandonment of this attempt to

explicitly retrieve Aristotle's dual conception of philosophy. When Heidegger identified the onto-theological structure with the incapacity of metaphysics to ask correctly the question of being, it should be seen as a direct critique of the metaphysical attempt that he had made in the preceding years—an attempt that was *onto-theological* in a 'positive' way.

The *Brief über den 'Humanismus'* of November 1946 would later confirm that the achievement of *Sein und Zeit* 'did not succeed with the help of the language of metaphysics' (Heidegger, 1976: p. 328/250). Even clearer is the letter Heidegger wrote to Max Müller in November 1947, in which he said that the very title *Sein und Zeit* was a catastrophe, as was the whole effort of that time, as it never succeeded in overcoming 'the onto-theological basis of metaphysics' (Heidegger, 2003: p. 15). If, for a few years, Heidegger took up the onto-theological challenge—which was then intended to try to solve, in a 'retrieval manner,' the problematic unity of metaphysics—, he later considered it an attempt fully embedded in that 'incurable' metaphysical structure, and tried to overcome it. The mere idea of 'authentic metaphysics' is thus contradictory. Of course, this does not mean that Heidegger would ever purely 'reject' the ontological or metaphysical attempts he made in the 1920s. It was, it might be said, a necessary step towards a transition (*Übergang*) to a new beginning.

III *Vom Wesen des Grundes* and the achievement of the metaphysics of Dasein

It is thus possible to describe Heidegger's metaphysics of Dasein in terms of three different moments: the fundamental ontological moment, which corresponds to the years 1926 and 1927; the transcendental moment, which first emerged in the summer of 1927 and disappeared after the summer of 1929; and, finally, the moment of freedom, which appeared in 1928 and became the 'ground of ground' (*Grund des Grundes*) until the end of the metaphysical enterprise.

The project of a metaphysics of Dasein thus reached its peak with the exposition of a metaphysical concept of freedom that Heidegger considered the origin and condition of possibility of all ontical freedom (like, for example, the Kantian concept of spontaneity), as well as all possible relation with beings, whether it be practical, theoretical or aesthetic. But why does the project end with these observations on freedom? Is this new concept the cause of the 'abandonment' of this metaphysical project, or should we consider it its achievement, its success? Should we speak here, as it is often the case with *Sein und Zeit's* fundamental ontology, of the

‘failure’ of the metaphysics of Dasein? In other words, did this project promise more than it really delivered?

In the case of *Sein und Zeit*, it was quite simple to establish not only from a philosophical point of view, but also at a purely material level, that the fundamental ontology did not give the ‘expected results’. The incompleteness of the book is a testimony to the fact that the solution to the problem initially posed could not be given. But in the case of the project of the metaphysics of Dasein, we have no textual or material reasons to consider it a failure. Nonetheless, we have to wonder why the project came to an end.

We can at the outset note that the critique the older Heidegger made of the fundamental ontology does not seem to spare the metaphysics of Dasein. Insofar as both the fundamental ontology and the metaphysics of Dasein try to think of being by bringing to light the essence of Dasein, both projects have to be considered, from the perspective of the *Brief über den Humanismus*, as still not achieving the abandonment of subjectivity (Heidegger, 1976: p. 328/250). Yet, a commentary taken from the *Beiträge zur Philosophie* from the years 1936-38 speaks precisely of the treatise *Vom Wesen des Grundes* not as a mere continuation of the fundamental ontology, but as a new attempt to remedy the ‘crisis’ that the question of being was going through after the partial publication of *Sein und Zeit*:

Thus at the deciding juncture it was necessary to overcome the crisis of the question of being (...), and above all to avoid an objectification of being (*eine Vergegenständlichung des Seyns*)—on the one hand by *holding back* the ‘temporal’ interpretation of being and at the same time by attempting besides (*unabhängig davon*) to make the truth of being ‘visible’ (freedom toward ground in *Vom Wesen des Grundes*, and yet in the first part of this treatise the ontic-ontological schema is still thoroughly maintained). (Heidegger, 1989: p. 451/317)

Heidegger did not just hold back the conclusion of the fundamental ontology; he also tried, as he says, to ‘overcome the crisis of the question of being’ by means of a presentation of the concept of ‘freedom toward ground’ (*Freiheit zum Grunde*)^{xiv}, which was explained in the third part of *Vom Wesen des Grundes*. According to what is said in this passage, these developments constituted a new way of approaching the problem of being, one independent (*unabhängig*) of the temporal interpretation of being. Thus, Heidegger recognized in the *Beiträge* that the treatise of

1929 was *already* an attempt to avoid the objectification process deployed in *Sein und Zeit*, even though the first section was still embedded in the 1927 ‘ontic-ontological schema’.

As we have seen earlier, in the first section of the treatise Heidegger exposes the most central theses of *Sein und Zeit*, while discussing Leibniz’s concept of *ratio*. After presenting the ‘transcendence of Dasein’ in the second part, the treatise deals, in its third and last part, with the concept of ‘freedom toward ground’ that the *Beiträge* identified with an attempt to overcome the crisis of the question of being. Thus, it is as though the 1929 essay exemplified, from its first to its third part, the *transition, der Übergang*, that leads from the fundamental ontology to a new approach to the question of being, one that distances itself from the objectification of being that was part of the project elaborated in *Sein und Zeit*.^{xv}

The treatise *Vom Wesen des Grundes* thus describes the whole journey of what Heidegger called the metaphysics of *Dasein*, from being-in-the-world to transcendence to freedom. Some of the marginal notes we find in Heidegger’s first edition of the treatise confirm that something happened between the first and the third part of the essay. On the threshold of the first part, Heidegger notes: ‘The approach in terms of the truth of being (*Sein*) is undertaken here [that is: in the first part] still entirely within the framework of traditional metaphysics’. And Heidegger adds: ‘Here *one* path toward overcoming “ontology” as such is broached (cf. Part III)’ (Heidegger, 1976: p. 126, Anm. a/100, note a). According to this, the 1929 essay would do no more than retrieve a traditional and metaphysical approach to doing philosophy. But it would nonetheless open, in its third part, a path toward the overcoming of this same metaphysics.

A note added to the first page of the third part in the same edition follows the same idea:

In [the] IIIrd part], an approach to the destructuring (*Destruktion*) of [the] Ist part], that is, of the ontological difference, [of the] ontic-ontological truth. In [the] IIIrd part], the step into a realm that compels the demolition (*Zerstörung*) of what has gone before and makes a complete overturning (*Umkipfung*) necessary’. (Heidegger, 1976: p. 163, Anm. a/125 note a)

Heidegger recognizes here that the third part constitutes the overcoming of the first one; that is to say that *the exposition of freedom toward ground in the third part undertakes the destructuring of the basic notions of the fundamental ontology exposed in the first part and that this destructuring makes a complete overturning necessary*. As such, the treatise *Vom Wesen des Grundes* has one foot in the fundamental

ontology and another one in the *overcoming* of this same fundamental ontology—a process that we surely associate with what Heidegger called the *Kehre*, the turning. Between a ‘classical’ development of the question of being in the first part—centered on the preontological understanding of being, on the conceptualization of being, on the ontological truth and on the ontological difference—and this new unfolding, in the third part, of a concept of freedom defined as *freedom toward ground*, an overturning took place.

All these observations are not contemporary with the writing of *Vom Wesen des Grundes*. It is an older Heidegger that, retrospectively, discovers that the germ of the overcoming of the fundamental ontology was already to be found in this important treatise of 1929. In the last moments of the metaphysics of Dasein, the concept of freedom gained an increasing importance, as in the 1930 text *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit*. Why then should we speak of the ‘failure’ of the metaphysics of Dasein? In what way was the metaphysics of Dasein an unsuccessful attempt? According to the commentaries Heidegger made, starting from the mid-1930s, it seems that the metaphysics of Dasein would rather present itself as a path toward the overcoming of the ‘crisis of the question of being’ and thus permit the transition from *Sein und Zeit* towards new attempts to deal with the problem of being. The ‘step’ into metaphysics would accomplish what the *Beiträge* call the ‘transition’ (*der Übergang*), the conversion of fundamental ontology into the thinking that unfolds after the turning and aims toward a new beginning. If this were correct, the metaphysics of Dasein would then be nothing other than *the turning itself*.

If we can easily speak of *Sein und Zeit* as a failure because the promised ‘concrete answer to the question of the meaning of being’ (Heidegger, 2001a: p. 19/17) was never given, it seems impossible to do so for the metaphysics of Dasein. As such, it didn’t make any promises apart from these two: ‘to develop metaphysics from the ground up’ (Heidegger, 1978: 165/132) and ‘to present a new laying of its grounds’ (Heidegger, 1998: p. 1/1). As we have just seen, this developing of metaphysics allowed a transition toward something else and opened the way to a reconsideration of the fundamental ontology. It accomplished its task by discovering an ontological or metaphysical concept of freedom that grounds the preontological understanding of being on which *Sein und Zeit* established itself.

IV Freedom and the overcoming of metaphysics

In the post-*Kehre* perspective of the *Beiträge*, we could thus argue that by accomplishing the *demolition* (*Zerstörung*) of the fundamental ontology—that is, by accomplishing the turning—, the metaphysics of Dasein should not be considered a failure. The ‘more original elaboration of the idea of metaphysics’ of which *Vom Wesen des Grundes* speaks thus represents, in this later perspective, the first draft of an *overcoming of metaphysics*. We could then speak of the metaphysics of Dasein as an accomplishment, and not as a failure.

As we saw at the end of the first section, Heidegger began to mention this surpassing (*Überholung*) of metaphysics as early as in the summer semester 1932. Heidegger then indirectly recognized he had been somewhat ‘bewitched’ by the idea of a new metaphysics. Should we conclude from this that the development of the concept of freedom toward ground not only accomplished the demolition of the fundamental ontology, but also set Heidegger free from his metaphysical path of thinking? It looks as though the concept of freedom toward ground gives us the answer to why Heidegger abandoned metaphysics.

As Jean-Luc Nancy argued in his 1988 book *L'expérience de la pensée*, we can identify various steps in Heidegger’s reflections on freedom (Nancy, 1988: pp. 54-5/35-6). Even if *Sein und Zeit* could legitimately be characterized as a philosophy of freedom,^{xvi} the concept as such only became a basic notion during the years of the metaphysics of Dasein, in the essay *Vom Wesen des Grundes*, in the text *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit* and in the summer semester 1930 lecture course *Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit*. At the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s, Heidegger openly tried to ground his whole metaphysical endeavour on the concept of freedom. We have already seen fundamental ontology’s basic concepts substituted by that of freedom in *Vom Wesen des Grundes*, but we could also mention that a year later, in *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit*, Heidegger showed that the very concept of truth depends, according to its essence, on the concept of freedom. And in his long commentary on Kant’s ethics in the summer of 1930, Heidegger took one last step and wrote that “*The question concerning the essence of human freedom is the fundamental question of philosophy, in which is rooted even the question of being.*” (Heidegger, 1982: 300/203).

Once he had abandoned his project of a metaphysics of Dasein, Heidegger nonetheless continued his investigations into freedom, turning his attention toward a new interlocutor. In the mid-1930s, Schelling’s 1809 treatise *Über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit* replaced Kant’s 1785 *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik des Sittens*.^{xvii} According to Nancy, we have to understand this reading

of Schelling as still governed by the methodological principles of retrieval or repetition (*Wiederholung*) (Nancy 1988: 58/39). In this lecture course, the dialogue with Schelling—as was the case with Plato and Aristotle in *Sein und Zeit* or with Kant in the *Kantbuch*—still constituted an attempt to ask anew the traditional philosophical questions from a ‘destructuring’ perspective, that is, a reading that frees untapped possibilities hidden in the traditional texts with the aim of transforming the basic philosophical questions.^{xviii}

If the dialogue with Schelling in 1936 can still be interpreted as some sort of a destructuring attempt, such is not the case with the *erneute Auslegung* of Schelling’s treatise in the years 1941-43. In the second reading, the gesture of retrieval was replaced by the ‘gesture of separation’ (Nancy, 1988: p. 59/39). The *Anseinandersetzung* with tradition is still thought of as an attempt to free oneself from tradition, but a certain resolution to free tradition from our traditional interpretations has been lost. We can talk about two ways of freeing oneself from tradition in Heidegger’s oeuvre. With the project of a ‘phenomenological destructuring’ of the history of philosophy, Heidegger always envisaged his relationship with the past as an attempt to free both the historical thinkers and ourselves from mere tradition (*Tradition, Weitergabe*). The task was to open an access to forgotten questions and to transform them in such a way that they would become problematic once again. As an example, *Sein und Zeit* is presented as a reawakening of an understanding for the meaning of the question of being—a question that Plato and Aristotle tried to solve and that tradition thereafter eclipsed. Destructuring is thus a way to make us free *from* a superficial and traditional understanding of the past, a way that also makes us free *for* a new formulation of philosophy’s fundamental problems.^{xix}

In the phenomenological years, Heidegger never read historical writings with the aim of ‘getting over’ or ‘surmounting’ (*überwinden*) philosophy and leaving it on its own. As opposed to the ‘destructuring path,’ the ‘overcoming path’ can be described as an attempt to free thinking *from* traditional philosophy. The whole Western philosophical tradition is then thought of as *the* metaphysics, which then means as a ‘homogeneous’ attempt to determine being as *physis*. The prolific dialogue with the history of philosophy that was the hallmark of Heidegger’s texts in the 1920s led the way to an attempt to surmount traditional thinking towards a new beginning that would be completely free from metaphysics. From this moment on, Heidegger did not try to radicalize what had already been done, but to overcome it. We can illustrate this fundamental difference by referring to what Heidegger says about the relation between the ‘leading question’ and the ‘fundamental question’ mentioned earlier. At the end of the 1920s, Heidegger tried to show how it is possible to ask the leading question so as to convert it into the fundamental

question—an elaboration thought of as a radicalization, a ‘working-through’ (*Ausarbeitung*) or a progression that can be described with a series of questions:

The following series of question arose: *ti to on*, what are beings? What are beings as such? What are beings in respect to their being? What is being? What is being understood as? We have, so to speak, *dug more and more into* the content of the leading question, and thereby *dug out* more primordial questions. (Heidegger 1982: 111/78)

But this slow development of the fundamental question that would take its point of departure in the traditional way of questioning beings was replaced, in the *Beiträge*, by the idea of a ‘leap’ (*Sprung*) that disclosed the necessity of a new beginning:

Going from the leading question to the fundamental question, there is never an immediate, equi-directional and continual process that once again applies the leading question (to be-ing); rather, there is only a leap, i.e., the necessity of an *other* beginning. (Heidegger 1989: 76/53; slightly modified translation)

Between the summer semester 1930 lecture course on human freedom and the writing of the *Beiträge* between 1936 and 1938, Heidegger augmented the distance that separated traditional metaphysics and his own attempt to question being. This coincided with the abandonment of any consideration of ‘human freedom’ at the end of the 1930s, in the name of what Nancy calls the ‘freedom of being’ (Nancy, 1988: p. 59/40). The metaphysical freedom (freedom toward ground) and its corresponding metaphysics of freedom that Heidegger developed at the end of the 1920s vanished with this necessity of a new beginning. Freedom no longer represented the possibility of freeing oneself from mere tradition and could only be understood as the mark of subjectivity. This distance taken from freedom can be regarded, as Nancy argues, as the final separation from metaphysical thinking. In fact, the 1936 lecture course on Schelling was probably the last occurrence of a positive notion of metaphysics in Heidegger’s works (Heidegger, 1971: p. 79)^{xx}. The second lecture courses on Schelling left no doubt as to the necessity of abandoning metaphysics and freedom altogether:

Freedom: metaphysically as the name for the capacity to begin something by itself (spontaneity, cause). As soon as it moves metaphysically into the centre (into true metaphysics) it intrinsically unifies the determination of cause and selfhood . . . that is, of

subjectivity. In the perspective of a more initial thought, a thought of the history of being, freedom forfeited its role. (Heidegger, 1971: p. 330)

Freedom set Heidegger free from his fundamental-ontological path and the ‘crisis of the question of being’ that this metaphysical framework had to bring about. For some years, Heidegger still considered human freedom from a positively metaphysical perspective. But the attempt to free his thinking from subjectivity finally forced him to free it from any reference to freedom, understood as the modern concepts of autonomy and self-regulation.

The overcoming of metaphysics—and of freedom, as we have seen—would have major consequences on Heidegger’s relation to the history of philosophy. Leaving behind Western philosophy as constituting ‘only’ the first beginning, Heidegger also abandoned one of his most inventive and fertile projects: that of phenomenological deconstructing. Even if we can argue that deconstructing was never fully abandoned by Heidegger, the basic concept of retrieval that is essentially linked to it proved incompatible with the idea of a new beginning. Plato, Aristotle, Kant or Schelling are no longer regarded as ‘allies’ in his search for a ‘concrete answer to the question of the meaning of being,’ but only as halts on the route of a *Seynsgeschichte*. The dialogue with them still exists, but the very project of finding new questions hidden behind ‘concealments’ produced by tradition has lost its meaning. The peculiar yet productive relation that Heidegger’s thought had with history in the 1920s has been lost on the way. If Heidegger’s path can be followed with great interest up to the overcoming of metaphysics and this freeing from freedom, the loss of methodological tools such as deconstructing and retrieval may nevertheless seem too high a price to pay. These tools represent core concepts for what we call, for want of anything better, ‘continental’ philosophy and have inspired a whole generation of philosophers.^{xxi} The retrieval of philosophical questions is, in the end, the condition of possibility of any positive and productive dialogue with the philosophical tradition. And if we are to debate with our contemporaries on shared philosophical questions, it might also be the basic nature of any philosophical dialogue.

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Notes

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- i. Support for this research was provided by [...].
- ii. Our citations of Heidegger's texts first list the pagination of the German edition followed by the pagination of the English translation, should one be available.
- iii. Concerning the absence of the metaphysical terminology in *Sein und Zeit*, see Greisch, 1993: pp. 177-8, 196. In this study, the author argues that Heidegger's reluctance to use a metaphysical vocabulary up to *Sein und Zeit* not only has to do with the popular philosophers who declared the 'resurrection of metaphysics,' but also with the still vivid repercussions of Husserl's 1911 essay *Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft*. For his part, Jeffrey Andrew Barash considers that the preference Heidegger manifests for the *ontological*—rather than *metaphysical*— vocabulary represents a break with the theological motifs of his first lecture courses in Freiburg. The word 'metaphysics' had then a *theological* connotation that Heidegger tried to avoid (Barash, 2003: pp. 157-8). On the virtual absence of a metaphysical vocabulary prior to the publication of *Sein und Zeit*, see Grondin, 2003: pp. 42-6.
- iv. Cf. Grondin, 2003: p. 57.
- v. The writing of this treatise was finished on October 17th 1928, as Heidegger wrote to Elisabeth Blochmann (Heidegger and Blochmann, 1989: p. 27). The text was presented in the Festschrift for Husserl's 70th birthday on April 8th 1929. It was published on May 14th 1929 in the *Ergänzungsband zum Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* (Halle an der Saale: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1929, pp. 71-110; reprint: Bad Feilnbach: Schmidt Periodicals GmbH, 1989), simultaneously with the short address that Heidegger read on that occasion ("Edmund Husserl zum siebzigsten Geburtstag". Originally published in

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- Akademische Mitteilungen. Organ für die gesamten Interessen der Studentenschaft von der Albert-Ludwigs-Universität in Freiburg/Br.*, 4th series, 9th Semester, N°14, May 14th 1929, pp. 46-7; now in Heidegger, 2000: pp. 56-60; trans: Sheehan, T., in Husserl, 1997: pp. 475-7). Regarding this matter, cf. Sheehan, 1997: p. 28. There are two English translations of this text: *The Essence of Reason* (trans: Malick T., Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969) and *On the Essence of Ground* (trans: McNeill W., in *Pathmarks*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
- vi. To be exact, in 1928 Heidegger published a book review of Ernst Cassirer's 1925 *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen. 2. Teil: das mythische Denken* (*Deutsche Literaturzeitung*, 21. Heft; now in Heidegger 1998), as well as the Editor's preface to Husserl's *Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins* (*Husserliana*, vol. X).
- vii. In the § 69c of *Sein und Zeit* dedicated to the 'transcendence of the world,' Heidegger asks the following question: 'what makes it ontologically possible for beings to be encountered within the world and objectified as encountered beings?' (Heidegger, 2001: p. 366/335). The answer Heidegger then gives can be seen as an anticipation of the developments of the metaphysics of Dasein: 'If the thematization of what is objectively present (*des Vorhandenen*)—the scientific project of nature—is to become possible, *Da-sein* must transcend the beings thematized. Transcendence does not consist in objectivation, but is rather presupposed by it. But if the thematization of innerworldly beings objectively present is a change-over (*Umschlag*) from taking care which circumspectly discovers, then a transcendence of *Da-sein* must already underlie "practical" being together with things at hand (*beim Zuhandenen*)' (Heidegger, 2001: pp. 363-4/332). But Heidegger does not explicitly describe Dasein as a transcendental being before the *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* (summer semester 1927) where it is closely linked to the problem of the ontological difference (Heidegger, 1975: § 20e). Transcendence would be understood as Dasein's basic constitution up to the *Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik* (winter semester 1929/30) where it suddenly disappeared (one exception: Heidegger, 1983: p. 447/308). On Dasein's transcendence, see my [...].
- viii. In two letters to Jaspers (December 10th, 1925 and December 26th, 1926), Heidegger spoke of the 'love' he then felt for Kant (Heidegger and Jaspers, 1990: pp. 57, 71/61, 73).
- ix. It is nonetheless available in a German-French edition in France-Lanord & Midal 2001, pp. 16-62.
- x. Concerning the emergence of the concept of 'onto-theology,' see my [...].

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- xi. The expression ‘metontology’ already appeared in the summer semester 1926: “The question of being transcends itself. The ontological problem goes into reverse! *Metontological; theologikè*; beings as a whole” (Heidegger, 1993: p. 106). This very schematic mention of ‘metontology’ could nonetheless be a remark added later to the manuscript.
- xii. Concerning metontology, see, among others, Greisch, 1994: pp. 481-3; Grondin, 2003: pp. 46-7; Kisiel, 2001: pp. 263-4.
- xiii. Among numerous mentions of the non-religious character of Aristotle’s concept of the divine (*theion*), we can include: Heidegger, 2005: pp. 99-101, 389; 1993: p. 179; 1992: pp. 222, 242/153, 167.
- xiv. This translation of *Freiheit zum Grunde* is taken from Michael Heim’s translation of *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, which we prefer to “freedom unto the ground” (William McNeill, *Pathmarks*).
- xv. This objectification of being was not yet considered a danger for philosophy at the end of the 1920s, as it was to be in the *Beiträge* and the upcoming texts (Heidegger, 1989: p. 451/317). Let us simply recall that the lecture course from the summer of 1927, *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, still referred to it as the basic task for philosophy, as ‘the basic act of the constitution of ontology, of philosophy’ (Heidegger, 1975: p. 459/322).
- xvi. In his 1988 book *Martin Heidegger. Phänomenologie der Freiheit*, Günther Figal described the whole path of Heidegger’s thought as a ‘philosophy of freedom,’ arguing that the analysis of Dasein is a way of understanding what it means for Dasein to be free (see also Ruin, 2008: 280). We can easily highlight the importance of freedom in *Sein und Zeit* by mentioning concepts such as ‘Freedom toward death’ (*Freiheit zum Tode*), ‘Dasein’s being free for its ownmost possibility’ or ‘Potentiality-of-Being’ (*Seinkönnen*). Nevertheless, the concept of freedom as such was *not yet* the fundamental concept in regard to the question of Dasein’s being.
- xvii. On the difference between Kant’s and Schelling’s concepts of freedom according to Heidegger, see Ruin, 2008: pp. 287-8.
- xviii. In the summer semester 1928, Heidegger described the method of retrieval in these words: ‘Fundamental ontology is always only a retrieval (*Wiederholung*) of what is ancient, of what happened earlier. But what is ancient gets transmitted to us by retrieval, only if we grant it the possibility of transformation. For by their nature these problems demand as much. All this has its basis, as we will show in detail, in the historicity of the understanding of being. And characteristically, the tradition (*Tradition*), i.e., the externalized transmission (*Weitergabe*), deprives the problem of this very transformation in a

retrieval. Tradition passes down definite propositions and opinions, fixed ways of questioning and discussing things. This external tradition of opinions and anonymous viewpoints is currently called ‘the history of problems’ (*Problemgeschichte*). The external tradition, and its employment in the history of philosophy, denies problems their life, and that means it seeks to stifle their transformation, and so we must fight against it.’ (Heidegger, 1978: p. 197/155; slightly modified translation)

xix. This relation between *Destruktion* and freedom is still stressed in the 1955 text *Was ist das—die Philosophie?*: ‘Destruction means: to open our ear, to make ourselves free (*freimachen*) for what speaks to us in tradition as the being of beings.’ (Heidegger, 1966: p. 22/73)

xx. See Heidegger, 1971: p. 79. On this, see the fifth section of my “L’onto-théologie dans l’oeuvre de Martin Heidegger. Récit d’une confrontation avec la pensée occidentale” (2006b).

xxi. Nancy writes: ‘Actually, an entire epoch was invented through repetition, and invented its difference as repetition, that is, difference as a secondary consequence of the ‘end of philosophy,’ as the re-demand (*repetitio*) for what is at stake in philosophy. But it is Heidegger himself who inaugurated thinking as repetition (and not as critique or sublation) of what had already been thought.’ (Nancy, 1988: p. 76/190)