HEIDEGGER ON THE UNITY OF METAPHYSICS

AND THE METHOD OF *BEING AND TIME*

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Abstract

The fundamental error of the metaphysical tradition, according to Heidegger, is the subordination of general ontology to the ontology of a special, exemplary entity (God, the soul, etc.). But *Being and Time* itself treats one kind of entity as exemplary, namely Dasein. Does this mean that Heidegger fails to free himself from the kind of metaphysics that he sought to criticize? To show how he avoids this charge I propose to examine the parallels between the methodology of *Being and Time* and the methodology Heidegger ascribes to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Heidegger takes the virtue of Aristotle's inquiry to reside in the way he resists the subordination of general to special ontology: Aristotle was guided by a "double concept" of metaphysics, pursued two irreducibly distinct methods of inquiry, and avoided the temptation to unite them. In proposing to similarly pursue a "double task" in *Being and Time* Heidegger seeks to apply this insight to his own work. Alongside the task of *fundamental ontology*, Heidegger spells out the shape of a second task, *Destruktion*, understood as a historical critique that traces ontological concepts back to their ontic roots. But Destruktion is not a mere addendum to fundamental ontology; the two tasks are meant to counterbalance one another and thereby prevent the collapse of the ontological difference between being and beings. Indeed, Heidegger proposes to apply Destruktion to the results of his own fundamental ontology. He hopes to thereby achieve a transformation of the philosophical attitude which underpins the metaphysical tradition.

Heidegger's *Being and Time* inquires into the existential structures of a being which is deeply rooted in its historical situation and is capable of reflecting on its own being, namely human Dasein. This inquiry, which Heidegger terms "fundamental ontology," is meant to facilitate the rediscovery of the more general "question of being." But a worry immediately arises: how can the ontological study of one specific sort of being (and of its specific way of being) result in a general ontology, an account of being as such? This worry has not gone unnoticed by Heidegger; even before he completed *Being and Time,* his discussions of Aristotelian metaphysics led him to recognize it as a fundamental question:

> The fundamental question is how the problem of being gets necessarily driven toward a *genuine* entity [eigentlich *Seiendes*]; and whether there is any ontology which somehow constructs itself purely without orienting itself to a distinguished entity [*ausgezeichneten Seienden*]…[1]

Aristotelian metaphysics gives pride of place to a genuine entity, divine substance, but it is not quite clear why this is so, and whether it always has to be so, in ontology. These questions seem to apply with equal force to *Being and Time* itself, where Heidegger seems to pursue the ontology of a specific entity as a means for exposing the general sense of being. The entity which is genuine (*eigentlich*), distinguished (*ausgezeichnet*) and exemplary (*exemplarisch*) for Heidegger's inquiry is *Dasein*.[2] Admittedly, Heidegger's privileged entity is quite different from

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[1] Martin Heidegger, *Die Grundbegriffe der antiken Philosophie* (hereafter, GA22), ed. Franz-Karl Blust, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 22: Marburg lecture of summer semester 1926 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1993), 329; compare Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (hereafter, *SZ*) (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2001 [1927]), 46.
All translations from Heidegger's work are my own. The *Gesamtausgabe* is hereafter cited as GA followed by the volume number and by the year of its publication in parentheses; all volumes of the GA are published by Vittorio Klostermann in Frankfurt am Main.

[2] The term "*eigentlich*" is used to characterize the role of Dasein in the ontological inquiry in *SZ* 26; "*ausgezeichnet*" is used in *SZ* 14; "*exemplarisch*" is used in in *SZ* 8. These are also the terms Heidegger uses to describe Aristotle's treatment of divine substance, for example in the passage cited above.

Aristotle's: Dasein's preeminence is not due to its being the self-thinking, self-moving, first cause of all other beings. Rather, Dasein is distinguished as the being which has the capacity to inquire into being.[3] But is this enough to allay the worry about the distorting, reductive potential of privileging specific entities? In other words, doesn't Heidegger fall prey to the very same problem against which he warns in his critique of the metaphysical tradition?

Indeed, several prominent readers of *Being and Time* have complained that in this work, Heidegger confuses the question of being with the question of Dasein's being.[4] My response, on Heidegger's behalf, is that *Being and Time* already contains an answer to this charge, and this answer is developed through Heidegger's confrontation with Aristotle. It is not only the emergence of traditional metaphysics that Heidegger finds in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, but also the last signs of resistance to the collapse of the ontological difference between being and beings. The traditional reading of the *Metaphysics* against which Heidegger rebels takes Aristotle to subordinate *metaphysica generalis*—the study of being qua being—to *metaphysica specialis*—the study of the foremost being, divine substance. Heidegger, by contrast, argues that Aristotle saw that both directions of metaphysical inquiry are equally crucial, and therefore attempted to avoid their mutual subordination. Heidegger calls this attempt the "*double* characteristic" (*Doppelcharakter*), the "*double* concept" (*Doppelbegriff*), the "double questioning" (*doppeltes Fragen*), or simply the "doubling" (*Doppelung*) of Aristotle's

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[3] *SZ*, 12.

[4] Objections along these lines can be found in Jean-Luc Marion, "Question of Being or Ontological Difference," in *Reduction and Givenness: Investigations of Husserl, Heidegger, and Phenomenology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 108–44; and Paul Ricœur, "Existence and Hermeneutics," in *The Conflict of Interpretations,* trans. Kathleen McLaughlin, ed. Don Ihde (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 3–25. More recently, the suggestion has been made that in *Being and Time* Heidegger propounds an "onto-theological structure of the metaphysics of Dasein"; only later did Heidegger supposedly realize that this was a mistaken path. See François Jaran, "Toward a Metaphysical Freedom: Heidegger's Project of a Metaphysics of Dasein," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 18, no. 2 (2010): 205–27.
The charge that *Being and Time* restricts itself to an overly narrow anthropological perspective goes back to Husserl. On this see Steven G. Crowell, "Does the Husserl/Heidegger Feud Rest on a Mistake? An Essay on Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology," *Husserl Studies* 18 (2002): 123–40.

metaphysics.[5]

My main aim in this paper is to show that Heidegger applies this insight by proposing to pursue a "double task" (*Doppelaufgabe*) in *Being and Time*; to properly pose the question of being, he holds, there is need for both *fundamental ontology*—the inquiry into the constitutive features of the being that is capable of asking the question of being—and *Destruktion*—a historically oriented critique of Dasein's failures to respond to this question.[6] It is through this doubling of the method of inquiry that Heidegger seeks to overcome the reductive tendencies of metaphysics.

The double methodology of *Being and Time* has very seldom been acknowledged by Heidegger's readers.[7] This is perhaps due to the fact that Heidegger never published the second part of *Being and Time*, which was supposed to be entirely devoted to Destruktion; all we have

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[5] "*Doppelcharakter*" appears in Martin Heidegger, *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik im Ausgang von Leibniz* (hereafter, GA26), ed. Klaus Held, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 26: Marburg lecture of summer semester 1928 (1978), 13 and 17; "*Doppelbegriff*" appears in GA22, 149, 179 and 286, as well as in GA26, 202 and 229; "*dieses doppelte Fragen*" appears in Martin Heidegger, *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik: Welt–Endlichkeit–Einsamkeit* (hereafter, GA29/30), ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 29/30: Freiburg lecture of winter semester 1929/30 (1983), 52; "*Doppelung*" appears in Martin Heidegger, *Platon: Sophistes* (hereafter, GA19), ed. Ingeborg Schüßler, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 19: Marburg lecture of winter semester 1924/25 (1992), 221.

[6] The second chapter of the Introduction to *Being and Time* is titled "The *Double Task* in the Development of the Question of Being" (*SZ*, 15); in describing the structure of the book, Heidegger says that the inquiry "forks" (*gabelt sich*) into these two tasks (*SZ*, 39).

[7] A few notable exceptions to the neglect of Heidegger's double methodology include Charles Guignon, "The Twofold Task," *Tulane Studies in Philosophy* 32 (1984): 53–59; Robert Bernasconi, "Repetition and Tradition: Heidegger's Destructuring of the Distinction Between Essence and Existence in *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*," in Theodore Kisiel and John van Buren (eds.), *Reading Heidegger from the Start: Essays in His Earliest Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 123–36; and Otto Pöggeler, "Destruction and Moment" in Kisiel and van Buren, *Reading Heidegger from the Start,* 137–56.

are two-thirds of the first part of the project, which are devoted to fundamental ontology.[8] As a result, Heidegger's interpreters have tended to treat fundamental ontology in isolation from Destruktion, as if the latter were a mere addendum to the former, and as if the twofold task were a mere composite of two completely independent methods, rather than a unified organic whole, which transforms the properties that each of its components would have, were they to be pursued independently.[9] My aim, by contrast, is not merely to draw attention to the role assigned to Destruktion in *Being and Time*, but also to argue that taking Destruktion into account transforms our understanding of fundamental ontology. On the reading I propose, the *entire* project of *Being and Time* essentially depends on the role that Destruktion plays in the context of the double methodology, such that even the published part of Heidegger's book cannot be properly understood in isolation from it. It is this double methodology that allows Heidegger to give Dasein an exemplary role in his inquiry without thereby collapsing the crucial ontological difference between being and beings.

The structure of my argument is as follows. In Section I I look at Heidegger's reading of Aristotle. I consider both what Heidegger takes to be the shape of the subordination of the concept of being to the concept of an exemplary being in the traditional reception of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, as well as the evidence he presents for the claim that Aristotle himself resisted this subordination by opting for a "double concept" of metaphysics. In Section II I turn to Heidegger's presentation of his own double methodology. I show that Heidegger conceives of Destruktion as an integral part of the phenomenological method. Indeed, he argues that the results of his own fundamental ontology stand in need of this form of critique. This is so since

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[8] See the table of contents for the projected two volumes of the work in *SZ*, 39–40. Although the second part of the work was never published, it was not the only place in which Heidegger executed the task of Destruktion. We find traces of it not only in the seminars and publications surrounding *Being and Time*, but also within the published parts of *Being and Time* itself. The texts on which I rely in this paper (except for a handful of exceptions) all belong to the period beginning in the 1919 and concluding in 1931.

[9] Over twenty years ago Robert Bernasconi admonished Heidegger scholars who ignore the crucial importance of Destruktion to the project pursued in *Being and Time*, but the situation has not improved much since, and even today it is not uncommon to see fundamental ontology treated in complete independence from the methodological context in which it is paired with Destruktion. See Bernasconi, "Repetition and Tradition," 123—28.

all positive inquiry concerning being is in danger of being distorted by the very language in which its results are framed.

The nature of this danger is elaborated in Section III. According to Heidegger's Destruktion of ancient metaphysics, the collapse of the ontological difference has been facilitated by the fact that metaphysical inquiry gives precedence to the particular mode of discourse of theoretical assertions, which he calls "logos" (λόγος). Theoretical logos presupposes a specific temporal understanding of being, namely as constant presence; as a result, metaphysics is barred from properly attending to kinds of being that are different from the present-at-hand (*Vorhandensein*), and moreover, it is prevented from properly addressing being as such.

Heidegger's claim that theoretical logos is unfit for ontology might seem problematic, for if this claim is true, shouldn't Heidegger's own theoretical project be hopelessly undermined? In Section IV I respond to this objection by arguing that Heidegger's project need not be construed in a way that makes it depend on the kind of theoretical logos which he repudiates. The true nature of Heidegger's project emerges in his discussions of the priority of ontological questioning over theoretical answers, as well as in his discussions of the mode of philosophical communication he calls "formal indication" (*formale Anzeige*). But most importantly, it emerges from considering how the double methodology of *Being and Time* serves as a countermeasure to the metaphysical prioritization of logos. Heidegger's aim is neither to fulfill the metaphysical fantasy of providing a theoretical account of being, nor to refute it, but to completely dissolve this fantasy, and thereby to transform our relation to being. His ultimate goal, in other words, is not theoretical but practical.

One might wonder what role the specifically *historical* character of Destruktion might have in the context of transforming our manner of ontological questioning. In Section V I propose an answer to this question, which aims to avoid two extremes: Destruktion is neither meant to reveal some ahistorical content (since that would render the attention to history superfluous), nor is it to be construed in a way that implies some form of historical relativism. Rather than setting us apart from our historical tradition, the role of Destruktion is to allow us to recognize ourselves in this history, to bring ourselves and our relation to being into question, and ultimately to transform us.

The privileging of a specific kind of entity in Heidegger's own inquiry, I argue in the concluding Section VI, ultimately avoids the pitfalls of metaphysics. For rather than serving as an exemplary being from which the concept of being may be gleaned, the privileging of the historical being whose own attempts to inquire into being have invariably failed places in question the very manner in which metaphysics addresses being. The metaphysical project of gleaning a general concept of being from a privileged realm of entities is not vindicated by Heidegger, but rather overcome.

I

My first goal is to establish the claim that Heidegger models the double methodology of *Being and Time* on the basis of insights he gains through his confrontation with Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. This Section focuses on Heidegger's reading of Aristotle; in the next Section I turn to Heidegger's discussion of his own methodology.

Heidegger's highly original interpretation of Aristotle seeks to respond to an interpretive dilemma that was spelled out by one of Heidegger's mentors, Paul Natorp. According to Natorp, the text of the *Metaphysics* contains an "unbearable contradiction" (*unleidlicher Widerspruch*) between two directions of inquiry, which compete for the title of first philosophy.[10] On the one hand, there is the study of the highest being, namely theology, or *metaphysica specialis*.[11] On the other hand, there is the study of being qua being, namely general ontology, or *metaphysica generalis*.[12] Natorp holds that Aristotle is forced to choose between the two; and contrary to the traditional interpretation, Natorp argues that Aristotle's aim is to prioritize general ontology over

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[10] Paul Natorp, "Thema und Disposition der aristotelischen Metaphysik," *Philosophische Monatshefte*, 24 (1888): 37–65 and 540–74, especially 49; and see Heidegger, GA26, 17.

[11] Pursued in Books 6 and 12 of Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. W.D. Ross, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, vol. 2 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 1552–1728. Citations of Aristotle's work are made by reference to the Becker page and line number.

[12] Culminating in the inquiries of *Metaphysics* Books 7–9.

theology.[13]

Heidegger's response to the dilemma does not consist in choosing one of its sides. According to Heidegger, Aristotle's text reflects an attempt to withstand Natorp's unbearable contradiction, rather than an attempt to resolve it.[14] Only by resisting the urge to efface the traces of methodological indecision that remain visible on the surface of the text can the true greatness of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* be revealed, for this indecision conveys the necessity of a deep, underlying disunity:

> This double characteristic [*doppelte Charakteristik*] of the πρώτη φιλοσοφία does not contain two fundamentally different and independent ways of thinking, nor may one of them be weakened or eliminated in favor of the other, nor is it even possible to hastily reconcile the apparent disunity [*Zwiespältigkeit*] into a unity. It is rather the task to explain the grounds for the apparent disunity and the way in which the two determinations belong together in light of the guiding problem of a "first philosophy" of beings.[15]

Heidegger here takes the disunity of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* to give voice to the radical kind of questioning that guides his own work. However, in Heidegger's view Aristotle did not do

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[13] In fact, Natorp proposes to excise parts of the text that seem to favor the alternative reading, on which the general study of being is subordinate to the special inquiry of theology (Natorp, "Thema und Disposition," 58). For criticisms of Natorp's proposal, see William D. Ross, *Aristotle's Metaphysics: A revised text with introduction and commentary*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948), 355; Werner Jaeger, *Aristotle: Fundamentals of the History of his Development*, 2nd ed., trans. Richard Robinson (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), 194 and 339; and Joseph Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics*. 3rd ed. (Toronto, Canada: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1978), 1–68.

[14] Jean-François Courtine takes this to be the most original aspect of Heidegger's reading of Aristotle. See his *Inventio analogiae: métaphysique et ontothéologie* (Paris: Vrin, 2005), 60.

[15] Martin Heidegger, *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* (hereafter, GA3), ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 3 (1991 [1928]), 7–8; and see also GA3, 221; GA22, 330; GA29/30, 52; and Martin Heidegger, *Aristoteles, Metaphysik Θ 1–3: Von Wesen und Wirklichkeit der Kraft* (hereafter, GA33) ed. Heinrich Hueni, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 33: Freiburg Lecture of summer semester 1931 (1981), 45–47.

enough to prevent the eventual systematization of metaphysics via the subordination of general to special metaphysics. Heidegger takes the transmitted text of the *Metaphysics* to reflect a change in view—either by Aristotle or by the editors of his texts, who failed to hold on to this original insight.[16] Thus, for Heidegger, Aristotle is a Janus-faced figure. He sometimes says that Aristotle himself failed to understand the radicality of the question he unearthed,[17] but in other places he blames the tradition for having failed to maintain the radical attitude of questioning that guided Aristotle and Plato:

> Post-Aristotelian western metaphysics does not owe its form to the reception and development of a supposedly preexisting Aristotelian system, but rather to the misunderstanding of the questionability and openness in which Plato and Aristotle let the central problems appear.[18]

Heidegger's aim is therefore to read the *Metaphysics* against the traditional grain, so as to uncover the original "questionability," that is, the kind of questioning that forms Aristotle's most authentic concern.[19]

To see how Heidegger does this we must take a closer look at his critique of the traditional reading of Aristotle. It is quite uncontroversial that the central task of the *Metaphysics* is to identify the nature of first philosophy and establish its possibility, which boils down to determining whether there can be a single unified study of being qua being. For Aristotle holds, contra Plato, that the concept of being does not have the unity of a genus, and hence that "being" is not univocally predicated of everything that falls under it. Indeed, "'being' is said in many

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[16] GA22, 299; GA33, 13.

[17] GA22, 180; GA26, 17; GA33, 31.

[18] GA3, 8.

[19] On the importance of questioning and its priority over answering in Heidegger's conception of philosophy, see Section IV, below.

ways," and its senses are irreducibly manifold.[20] How, then, can there be a single, unified study of the first principles of all being that does not undermine this ontological pluralism? According to standard readings of Aristotle, the answer is that the various senses of "being" are not *merely* homonymous; they do enjoy some unity, which Aristotle calls a unity "in relation to one" (πρὸς ἕν). This is the unity that various uses of a single term have when each of them relates, in its own particular way, to a single "focal" meaning.[21] One example is the unity of term "healthy." The term is used differently when it is said of the heart rate, of the activity of walking, of a piece of fruit, and of the living body. It is the latter use of the term "healthy," in which a state of a living substance is at issue, from which all its other uses get their meaning. Such a weak form of unity, Aristotle holds, is still strong enough to guarantee the possibility of a unified science of being, but it is loose enough to ensure that the various meanings of "being" remain independent and mutually irreducible.[22] In the central books of the *Metaphysics* Aristotle seems to argue that the primary sense of the term "being" is the one in which we say *what* a thing is, namely its substance. The other senses of "being" are those which show up in categorical assertions about *how* the thing *is* (its quality), how much it *is* (its quantity), and so forth.   Each of these determinations of being receives its meaning from the way in which it relates to substancehood.

Aristotle's construal of the unity of the science of being depends on a further unifying move, according to the traditional reading. Having discovered the focal unity of the scheme of substance and categories (first unifying move), the further move consists in subordinating the study of substance in general to the study of an exemplary kind of substance, namely the

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[20] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 3.3.998b22–28, 4.2.1003a33 and 5.28.1024b10–17.   Heidegger discusses Aristotle's argument against the univocal unity of being in *SZ*, 3 and GA33, 43; and see the useful discussion in Dennis McManus, "Ontological Pluralism and the *Being and Time* Project," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 51, no. 4 (2013): 651–73.

[21] The translation of πρὸς ἕν as "focal unity" is due to G.E.L. Owen, "Logic and Metaphysics in Some Earlier Works of Aristotle," in *Logic, Science and Dialectic. Collected papers in ancient Greek philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 180–200.

[22] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 4.2.1003b6.

divine.[23]   Aristotle suggests that all substances can be rendered intelligible in terms of their various relations to the primary substance.   The being of divine substance thus becomes the "one" in relation to which being as such is understood. Ontology is subordinated to theology.

According to Heidegger, however, Aristotle's aims are fatally misunderstood by this traditional interpretation. Aristotle could not be taken to advocate this second unifying move, since he did not even fully endorse the initial unifying move, in which the various meanings of "being" are determined in terms of their relation to the being of substance. Heidegger thus aims to undercut the idea that *metaphysica specialis* takes precedence over *metaphysica generalis* by showing that Aristotle himself conceived of the latter in a much more disunified way:

> … the widespread opinion that Aristotle's doctrine of being is a "doctrine of
> substance" … is a mistake, partly stemming from the insufficient interpretation of
> the πολλαχῶς [`of the manifold ways in which being is said]. More precisely: one
> has missed the point that here there is only a preparation of a question.[24]

In support of this claim Heidegger points out that Aristotle's various discussions of the homonymy of "being" involve not one but two separate lists of manifold senses. The tradition has focused on the first, more restricted list, which specifies the ways in which being is expressed in categorical assertions—substance, quality, quantity, and so forth.[25]   But this restricted list is nested within a second list, which consists of four broader distinctions between

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[23] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 6.1.1026a30 and 11.8.1064b6–14. Gunther Patzig defends this traditional reading in describing Aristotle's inquiry as "a double paronymical science," by which he means that two focal unities of meaning allow the unification of the categories in their relation of substance, and the unification of all substances in relation to divine substance. See "Theologie und Ontologie in der „Metaphysik" des Aristoteles," *Kant-Studien* 52 (1961): 185–205.

[24] GA33, 45.

[25] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 7.1.1028a10 and 14.2.1089a7

different senses in which the term "being" can be used.[26]   Here Aristotle distinguishes the way "being" is employed in categorical predications from the ascription of being in potency and being in act, from the use of "being" in saying of something that it *is* true or false, as well as from the sense in which things are said to be *pre se* or *per accidence*. For example, an ascription of a quality such as the color green to a a leaf may be meant to apply either potentially or actually; such an assertion may be made either truly or falsely; and it may be intended as an accidental or as a *per se* predication. Heidegger admits that focal unity might allow Aristotle to demonstrate the unity of the first, more restricted list of substance and categories, but insists that it does not provide unity to the second, broader list.

By contrast, the traditional interpretation of Aristotle is supported by the fact that at certain places Aristotle dismisses the importance of the items that belong to the second list by arguing that they lack ontological significance or that they merely supervene on the primary use of "being" in categorical assertions.[27]   Heidegger, for his part, emphasizes other moments in the text in which Aristotle explicitly treats members of the second list as candidates for serving as the *primary* sense of "being." For example, at one point Aristotle says that being in act is the primary sense of "being," presumably because the activity displayed by living substances is exemplary of being as such.[28]

But the most important evidence for Aristotle's resistance to the subordination of general to special metaphysics, in Heidegger's eyes, is his suggestion that the sense of "being true" (a

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[26] The second list is given in Aristotle, *Metaphysics* VI.2.1026a33, and with minor changes also in 5.7.1017a7–b9 and 9.10.1051a34.   Aristotle presents the first list as embedded within the second one in 4.2.1003a33 and 9.1.1045b32. And see Heidegger's discussion in GA33, 17.

[27] Aristotle dismisses the ontological import of the distinction between being said *simpliciter* and *per accidens* in *Metaphysics* 6.2.1026b2f; he rejects the relevance of "being true" and "being false" in 6.4.1027b17, and he minimizes the import of modal qualification in 12.2.1069b14.

[28] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 9.8.1050b2.   For an interpretation of Aristotle according to which activity is the fundamental feature of being, see Aryeh Kosman, *The Activity of Being: An Essay on Aristotle's Ontology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

member of the second, broader list) is the "most proper" (κυριώτατα) sense of being.[29] Aristotle distinguishes here between the notion of truth that only applies to assertions and a different notion of truth to which he ascribes ontological primacy. This ontologically primary notion of truth is the manifestation of simple, incomposite beings, of essences as well as of simple notions such as incommensurability and diagonality. Here there is no question of falsity, but only of ignorance: one either has access to certain realms of beings or not.[30]

Aristotle's distinction is of enormous significance for Heidegger, and he picks up on it in drawing his own distinction between the truth of assertions and ontological truth, where the latter is understood as a precondition for the discovery of entities and thus for making senseful, true or false assertions about them.[31] Indeed, the priority of the ontological notion of truth is part of what is ultimately supposed to justify the treatment of Dasein as the distinguished entity in the inquiry into being. For Dasein is the being in whom and for whom beings are revealed as beings; it is thus a being which is defined in terms of its capacity for ontological truth.[32]

But the traditional metaphysical reading of Aristotle which dismisses the second list of the diverse senses of being, to which this ontologically primary notion of truth belongs, makes it difficult to properly appreciate the importance of this ontological notion of truth. Moreover, as I will argue in Section III, the situation of metaphysics is exacerbated by the fact that metaphysics itself is carried out by means of a discourse of assertions, and is therefore, according to

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[29] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 9.10.1051b1. For a (non-Heideggerian) discussion of the primacy of the veridical sense of being, see also Charles Kahn, *Essays on Being* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)*.*

[30] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 9.10.1052a1. The notion of non-assertoric truth is also discussed in Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W.D. Ross, revised by J. O. Urmson, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, vol. 2, 1729–1867, 6.2.1139a21 and Aristotle, *On the Soul*, trans. J.A. Smith, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, vol. 1, 641–92, 3.6.430a26.

[31] *SZ*, 33 and 225, as well as the discussion in Martin Heidegger, *Logik: Die Frage nach der Wahrheit* (hereafter, GA21)*,* ed. Walter Biemel, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 21: Marburg lecture of wintersemester 1925/26 (1976), 170–97. The entire discussion of logos in part B of Section 7 of the Introduction to *Being and Time* (*SZ*, 32–34) can be read as a commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Book 9, Chapter 10, even though Aristotle's text is not mentioned there at all.

[32] *SZ*, 222–30.

Heidegger, only capable of attaining ontic truth. Thus the very language of metaphysics bars it from acknowledging ontological truth and hence also from preserving the ontological difference.

Let me summarize my argument so far. Aristotle's indecision concerning the proper topic of the science of being is taken by Heidegger to indicate the possibility of a radical alternative reading of the *Metaphysics*. By not imposing unity on the diverse senses of being, and by not seeking a solution to Natorp's dilemma, Aristotle gives voice to the force of a fundamental *question*—which is quite different, in Heidegger's eyes, from attempting to offer an *answer* to it. In particular, Aristotle's nonreductive doubling of the science of being reflects an awareness of the great need to maintain, and of the great difficulty of maintaining, the ontological difference between being and beings.[33] Had Aristotle tried to pursue metaphysics as a pure general ontology, his inquiry would have effaced important differences between distinct ontological regions; and had he subordinated *general metaphysics* to *special metaphysics*, his inquiry would have failed to maintain the ontological difference between being and beings. Instead, Heidegger suggests, Aristotle maintains the irreducibility of the ontological difference by means of drawing an irreducible *methodological* difference, resulting in a "double concept" of metaphysics. And this points the way for Heidegger's own double methodology.

It is only when Aristotle's indecision between the two directions of inquiry disappears, and his radical questioning concerning the unity in diversity of the senses of "being" is forgotten, that metaphysics, in the pejorative sense of the term, begins. Metaphysicians, in the wake of Aristotle, privilege a certain realm of entities over all others, glean some concept of being from it, and then apply this concept across the board, thereby collapsing the ontological difference between being and beings. For example, Heidegger argues that in scholastic philosophy, "questioning concerning beings is not oriented toward being, but rather toward that which is a being in a distinguished (*ausgezeichnete*) sense," namely the divine.[34] This is what Heidegger

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[33] GA21, 410n; GA26, 202; GA33, 31.

[34] Martin Heidegger, *Geschichte der Philosophie von Thomas von Aquin bis Kant* (hereafter, GA23), ed. Helmuth Vetter, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 23: Marburg lecture of winter semester 1926/27 (2006), 95. And see also Heidegger's critique of the scholastic theory of the analogy of being in *SZ*, 3 and GA33, 42–48.

slightly later comes to call "ontotheology."[35]

To be clear, the collapse of the ontological difference and the emergence of ontotheology need not involve a complete confusion between being and some specific being, such as God. The failure may occur even when philosophers purport to distinguish being from beings, but their concept of being is one which has been acquired by abstraction from some particular region of beings. Thus in his analysis of the emergence of the metaphysical concept of reality, Heidegger argues that the tendency of modern philosophers to orient themselves towards a specific sort of worldly entity (res) distorted their general capacity for ontological understanding; as a result of their focusing on the present-at-hand, they were neither able to properly account for beings that do not belong to that realm, nor for being as such.[36] Descartes's account of the ego is a case in point; Heidegger accuses Descartes for conceiving the being of the ego in terms of the substancehood of spatially extended beings.[37] Such a collapse of the distinctions between different kinds of beings (such as the present-at-hand, ready-to-hand, and *Dasein*) is treated by Heidegger as a symptom of the underlying problem of ontotheology, namely the collapse of the distinction between beings and being.

I can now more clearly restate the question with which I opened the paper: is a mark of ontotheology, and since this privileging is paralleled by Heidegger's own privileging of Dasein (and its way of being), isn't his account equally problematic? In the rest of the paper I will argue that the answer to this question is negative; by virtue of Heidegger's double methodology, the privileging of Dasein does not amount to the collapse of the ontological difference. What, then, is Heidegger's intention in bringing this parallel to our attention? The answer I offer is that Heidegger does that in order to give us a sense of the precise shape of the challenge that his

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[35] This term first appears in Heidegger's seminar in the winter of 1930–1931, in the context of criticizing Hegel and modern metaphysics. But it clearly informs Heidegger's earlier critique of the traditional readings of Aristotle *Metaphysics*. I cite the passage where the term makes its first appearance in Section III. See Martin Heidegger, *Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes* (hereafter, GA32), ed. by Ingtraud Görman, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 32: Freiburg lecture of winter semester 1930/31 (1988), 142. For a detailed account of the emergence of Heidegger's notion of ontotheology, see Courtine, *Inventio Analogiae*.

[36] See *SZ*, 201.

[37] *SZ*, 22 and 93–97.

methodology is designed to overcome.

II

The lesson Heidegger learns from Aristotle informs the project of *Being and Time* in the following way. The overarching goal of the book is to disclose being while avoiding the metaphysical, ontotheological collapse of the difference between being and beings. In particular, Heidegger is guided by Aristotle's methodological insight that to keep the fundamental ontological question open one must employ an irreducibly double mode of inquiry. Heidegger therefore proposes to reanimate the question of being by pursuing a "double task" (*Doppelaufgabe*), that is, by pursuing fundamental ontology alongside Destruktion.[38]

There are obvious and important differences between Aristotle's and Heidegger's methods and their motivations, to which I will return below. These differences notwithstanding, let us see how Heidegger draws our attention to the parallels and similarities. For example, he often speaks of fundamental ontology in terms that assign to it the traditional role of *metaphysica specialis,* the study of the exemplary entity:

> Fundamental ontology: a being is necessarily exemplary and thus becomes the theme, but it is for the sake of the understanding of being, in the sense of the concept of being.[39]

Dasein is the exemplary entity in Heidegger's inquiry since its essential feature is its openness to other beings qua beings and its capacity for an authentic attainment of ontological truth. It is the

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[38] *SZ*, 15. Heidegger's reading of Aristotle might not be the sole origin of his idea of the double methodology. Thus already in 1919 Heidegger proposes to combine systematic philosophy (that is, phenomenology) with historical hermeneutics; he there speaks of "two spheres of tasks" (*zwei Aufgabensphären*). See Martin Heidegger, *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie* (hereafter, GA56/57) ed. Bernd Heimbuechel, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 56/57: Early Freiburg lectures of summer semester 1919 (1987), 106–7.

[39] GA22, 180. See also GA3, 229–30, where Heidegger treats fundamental ontology as special metaphysics.

being for whom being is an issue; hence its "ontic-ontological priority" for the inquiry.[40]

But Fundamental ontology brings this specific entity into view not by studying ontic and empirical facts about it, but by revealing the structures which inform Dasein's understanding of being.[41] In light of this, Heidegger sometimes reverses the analogy and correlates the historical inquiry of Destruktion with special metaphysics, by contrast to the generality of fundamental ontology:

> The universality of the concept of being does not contradict the "speciality" of the investigation – namely the advancement toward it by way of a special interpretation of a distinct entity, Dasein, where the horizon for understanding and possible interpretation of being should be won.   But this entity is in itself "historical" [*geschichtlich*], and so the ontological clarification of this entity must turn into a "historical" [*historischen*] interpretation.
>
> The elaboration of the question of being thus divides [*gabelt*] into *two tasks*, to which the division of the treatise into two parts corresponds:
>
> First Part: The interpretation of Dasein in terms of temporality and the explication of time as the transcendental horizon of the question of being.
>
> Second Part: Elements of a phenomenological Destruktion of the history of ontology along the guiding thread of the problematics of temporality.[42]

The fluctuations in the way Heidegger draws the analogy between his own and Aristotle's double methodology need not be taken to mean that Heidegger is undecided about the status of each of his tasks. As I see it, different aims are served by each of these various ways of deploying the

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[40] *SZ*, 13.

[41] *SZ*, 226.

[42] *SZ*, 39; my emphasis. See also GA3, 232, where Heidegger speaks of the need for a further inquiry (beyond Fundamental Ontology) which would root Fundamental Ontology in the historical facticity of Dasein. Another place where fundamental ontology seems to be correlated with the general side of the contrast between general and special metaphysics is GA26, 202, which I discuss in more detail below.

analogy, but one common goal they all serve is to bring out the *contrast* between the two tasks he pursues and hence the *doubling* that both he and Aristotle promote. Against this background, Heidegger sometimes applies the analogy in order to draw a contrast between his fundamental ontology and traditional general ontology, whereas at other times he draws it in order to show that within the context of his own inquiry, in which Dasein plays a privileged role, the *general* task of specifying the existential structures that enable the understanding of being (fundamental ontology) contrasts with the *special* task of inquiring into the historically factical features of our understanding of being (Destruktion).

Indeed, Heidegger's attempt to circumvent ontotheology in *Being and Time* involves a sophisticated transformation of the double structure of Aristotelian metaphysics. He abandons the contrast between the general and the highest which produces the Aristotelian pair of *metaphysica generalis* and *metaphysica specialis*, and replaces it with a contrast of his own, between the transcendental mode of inquiry (concerning the conditions of possibility of posing the question of being) and the historically oriented inquiry (concerning the concrete historical facticity of ontological questioning).[43] Both of Heidegger's tasks involve the specific, distinguished entity, Dasein, though each of them concern it in a different way. For Dasein is both the being who inquires into being and the being who lives out the answers that it discloses. So the doubling of tasks reflects the constitutive, double characteristic of this distinguished entity: fundamental ontology correlates with existentiality (*Existenz*), understood as Dasein's capacity to raise the question of its own being; Destruktion, for its part, is correlated with Dasein's thrownness (*Geworfenheit*), understood as the historical situatedness of Dasein within traditions in which an answer to this question is already implicitly given, and informs the understanding of being of its members.[44]

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[43] Heidegger often describes the contrast between his approach and Aristotle's in terms of the difference between the guiding question (*Leitfrage*) of the Aristotelian tradition, which dictates the double structure of metaphysics, with the fundamental question (*Grundfrage*) which guides his own work. See for example Martin Heidegger, *Über das Wesen der Menschlichen Freiheit* (hereafter, GA 31), ed. *Hartmut Tietjen*. *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 31: Freiburg lecture of summer semester 1930 (1994), 113–38.

[44] GA26, 13.

In the Introduction to *Being and Time* the methodological importance of Destruktion is somewhat obscured by the fact that Heidegger separates the discussion of the two tasks through which the question of being is to be prepared (Sections 5 and 6 of *Being and Time*) from the discussion of the phenomenological *method* of investigation (Section 7 of *Being and Time*). But these topics belong together, as I will now argue; Destruktion and fundamental ontology are complementary and essential parts of one method, and cannot be treated independently of one another. While this is merely implicit in the Introduction, it is evident both in earlier seminars as well as in the 1927 seminar, *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, in which Heidegger reworks materials he planned to include in the third division of *Being and Time*.[45] He there explicitly divides the phenomenological method into the following three basic elements: reduction, construction and Destruktion.[46] As I see it, the differences between this articulation of the methodology and the one which is found in *Being and Time* are mostly a matter of emphasis, not of substance. In the 1927 seminar, Heidegger defines reduction as the turning of the gaze from beings to being, that is, as drawing the ontological difference. This idea is already present in the discussion of the phenomenological method in *Being and Time*, even though the Husserlian term "reduction" does not appear there, or anywhere else in the book (a significant absence). Nonetheless, Section 7 of *Being and Time* makes clear that drawing the distinction between beings and being is the preliminary step which opens up the field of inquiry and gives ontology its topic in the first place.[47] The second element of the method which the 1927 seminar calls "construction" is defined as the explication of the structures of the being of a certain being, and

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[45] For an earlier discussion of Destruktion as a phenomenological method, see Martin Heidegger, *Phänomenologische Untersuchungen zu Aristoteles: Einführung in die phänomenologische Forschung* (hereafter GA61), eds. Walter Bröcker and Käte Bröcker-Oltmanns, 2nd ed., *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 61: Early Freiburg lecture of winter semester 1921/22 (1994), 141.

[46] Martin Heidegger, *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* (hereafter, GA24), ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 24: Marburg lecture of summer semester 1927 (1975), 31. I return to this issue in Section V.

[47] Compare GA24, 29 and *SZ*, 35. The mysterious absence of the term "reduction" parallels the absence of any explicit thematization of the ontological difference in *Being and Time*, for which, too, a correction is provided in the 1927 seminar.

this is precisely what fundamental ontology is tasked with in *Being and Time*, Section 7.[48] Finally, in the 1927 seminar Destruktion is treated as an integral part of the phenomenological method, and it is construed as an internal self-critique which one must apply to the results of the constructive step of the investigation. In other words, Destruktion allows the phenomenologist to come to terms with the historical situatedness of her own investigation.[49] The need for this critical third step is not entirely absent from Section 7 of *Being and Time*, although it is rather implicit:

> Every originally created phenomenological concept [*Begriff*] and sentence, once communicated in an assertion, gives rise to the possibility of corruption (*Entartung*). It is passed on without understanding, loses its native soil, and turns into a floating thesis. The possibility of becoming hardened [*Verhärtung*] and unhandy [*Ungriffigkeit*] of that which was originally "easily grasped" ["*Griffigen*"] arises from the concrete work of phenomenology itself. And the difficulty of this investigation is precisely this, to make it apply to itself critically in a positive way.[50]

Earlier in the Introduction Heidegger explicitly stated that the task of Destruktion is to counteract the process through which our concepts become "hardened" (*Verhärtet*) once they enter a historical situation.[51] He here makes clear that phenomenology is prone to the same distortions, the same kind of hardening, that traditional metaphysics falls victim to. The manner in which phenomenology might overcome this predicament by being applied to itself is not named here, in Section 7 of the Introduction, but given his consistent choice of words, it is clear that Heidegger has Destruktion in mind. There is much more to unpack here, in particular with respect to the

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[48] Compare GA24, 30 and *SZ*, 37.

[49] GA24, 31.

[50] *SZ*, 36. This passage plays on the cognate relation between the term "*Begriff*" (concept, that which is grasped), "*ungriffig*" (unhandy) and "*griffig*" (easy to hold).

[51] *SZ*, 22.

idea of the positive role of Destruktion, to which I return in the next sections. For the moment it is only crucial to see that Destruktion forms part and parcel of the phenomenological method of *Being and Time*.

Both texts envisage a tripartite methodology consisting of reduction, construction and Destruktion. And yet, as we have already seen, Heidegger sets apart two of the elements of his methodology and treats them as a "double task," in parallel with Aristotle's "double concept of metaphysics." The reason why construction (fundamental ontology) and Destruktion stand apart from the first element (reduction) seems to be that the drawing of the ontological difference, in which the reduction consists, is not so much a separate task, but a precondition of any ontological inquiry. Reduction is that by virtue of which each of the the other two tasks can even begin to address being, rather than beings.

There is one important methodological reflection, dating from 1928, which might seem to be difficult to square with my reading. In it Heidegger again compares his own methodology with the double structure of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, but instead of contrasting fundamental ontology with Destruktion, he pairs it with a method he calls "metontology":

Fundamental ontology and metontology in their unity make up the concept of metaphysics. But this is only another expression for the transformation [*Verwandlung*] of the one fundamental problem of philosophy which was already touched on above … in speaking of the double concept of philosophy as πρώτη φιλοσοφία and as θεολογία. And this is just the particular concretion of the ontological difference, that is, the concretion of the enactment of the understanding of being.[52]

This passage summarizes an elaborate argument that culminates in the claim that Heidegger's own project (which is here given the honorific title of "metaphysics") must undergo a

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[52] GA26, 202. As I noted above, Heidegger does not always liken fundamental ontology to *metaphysica specialis*; this 1928 text is a case in point, since here it is metontology which is likened to Aristotelian theology, by contrast to fundamental ontology, which is likened to general metaphysics.

"turn" (*Umschlag, Kehre*) or a transformation (*Verwandlung*).[53] Through this turn, the inquiry into *general* ontological topics, handled in *Being and Time* by fundamental ontology, would be complemented by an inquiry which is analogous to Aristotle's special metaphysics (theology) inasmuch as it will concern itself with the totality of beings and their various ontic realms.

Several commentators have taken the introduction of metontology in this text as a significant departure from the methodology of *Being and Time*, putatively motivated by Heidegger's realization of the one-sidedness of fundamental ontology. Its one-sided focus on Dasein as a quasi-transcendental subject, it is claimed, resulted in the neglect of the ways in which Dasein's ability to develop an understanding of being depends on Dasein's relations to others, on its history, or on other ontic factors.[54] Indeed, only at the conclusion of *Being and Time* does Heidegger raise the question whether ontology might in fact require an ontic foundation, and in another seminar from 1927 he asserts that it does.[55] The introduction of metontology in the 1928 seminar thus seems to address a lack or a defect in Heidegger's methodology — which is assumed to consist in just one task, namely fundamental ontology. But on my reading, it is already in *Being and Time* that Heidegger deploys a double methodology designed to balance the transcendental form of inquiry with a historical form of inquiry.[56] To defend this reading, I would no like to show that the introduction of metontology in 1928 is not a radical break with the overarching methodology pursued in *Being and Time*, but rather, at most, a further articulation of that methodology.

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[53] "Kehre" and "Umschlag" appear on the previous page, GA26, 201. The transformation which is at issue here is further discussed at the end of this section and in Section IV.

[54] Robert Bernasconi "'The Double Concept of Philosophy' and the Place of Ethics in *Being and Time*," *Research in Phenomenology* 18 (1988): 41–57; Steven G. Crowell "Metaphysics, Metontology, and the End of *Being and Time*," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 60, no. 2 (2000): 307–331; François Jaran "Heidegger's Kantian Reading of Aristotle's *Theologike Episteme*," *The Review of Metaphysics* 63, no. 3 (March 2010): 567–91.

[55] Compare *SZ*, 436 and GA24, p.26.

[56] Charles Guignon ("The Twofold Task") conceives of the methodological role of Destruktion in a similar way. Defending Heidegger against the critique leveled by Paul Ricœur ("Existence and Hermeneutics"), Guignon argues that Destruktion counterbalances the one-sidedness of fundamental ontology. But my understanding of Destruktion differs from Guignon in important ways. I discuss this in Section V, below.

Note first that Heidegger does not lose sight of Destruktion in the 1928 seminar, and in fact the passages surrounding the introduction of metontology make the importance of Destruktion more explicit than ever before.[57] The methodological turn that Heidegger envisages in 1928 is said to occur within the scope of a limited sphere of inquiry that Heidegger here calls "the analytic" (*die Analytik*), to which both fundamental ontology and metontology belong.[58] But this limited sphere is not construed as the entirety of his project. In fact, he says that the turn undergone within the analytic sphere of inquiry cannot be motivated internally, by the analytic inquiries themselves (that is, neither by fundamental ontology nor by metontology).

It is the nature of any analytic inquiry, Heidegger claims, that it gives the deceptive appearance (*Täuschung*) of providing us with a complete grasp of the entire ontological problem and purports to be able able to provide a definitive answer to it.[59] The origin of the turn from one mode of analytic inquiry to another must therefore lie entirely outside the analytic sphere, and indeed, it is to Destruktion that Heidegger assigns this task: Destruktion is said to keep in check the tendency of analytic inquiries to "absolutize" (*verabsolutieren*) their own manner of addressing problems. It is the crucial role of Destruktion to trigger the transformation of the analytic inquiry.[60]

I conclude therefore that all three methodological discussions—the Introduction to *Being and Time*, the 1927 seminar, and the 1928 seminar—assign Destruktion a single fundamental role. Destruktion is the means through which the phenomenologist turns critically against her own method of analytic inquiry and thereby brings about its transformation.[61] It remains to be seen what such a transformation consists in, and how Destruktion, as a specifically historical

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[57] The three interpretations of this passage that I cited above—Bernasconi's, Crowell's and Jaran's—seem to ignore the role assigned to Destruktion in this seminar and its relation to the methodology of *Being and Time*. This might explain why they take the 1928 passage as evidence for a breakthrough that leads Heidegger beyond the framework of *Being and Time*.

[58] In *Being and Time*, the "Analytic of Dasein" is a term Heidegger uses to refer to fundamental ontology.

[59] GA26, 201.

[60] GA26, 197.

[61] Recall *SZ*, 36 and GA24, 30, both quoted above.

inquiry, may be said to achieve it.

<div align="center">III</div>

Taking its cue from the analyses of fundamental ontology, which show that Dasein's understanding of being may take various temporal forms, Destruktion inquires into the concrete historical moments in which specific aspects of temporality became the exclusive measure for the philosophical engagement with being. Such "original experiences" (*Ursprüngliche Erfahrungen*) determined the direction that ontological inquiry took by making specific ways of approaching beings prominent.[62] For example, according to Heidegger's Destruktion of the ancient Greek concept of being, the Greek understanding of being emerged from the "fundamental experience" (*Grunderfahrung*) of skillful production (τέχνη, *Herstellen*).[63] In production, the aim of the craftsman's activity is the finished product, that which is to become an independent being that retains a constant form; in this fundamental experience the understanding of beings by reference to what is constantly present in them gains prominence. This, Heidegger suggests, is a historical root of the ontological privileging of the present-at-hand (*Vorhandensein*).[64]

The privileging of the constantly present in ontology is facilitated, according to

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[62] *SZ*, 22–23; GA24, 30.

[63] See Martin Heidegger, "Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles (Anzeige der Hermeneutischen Situation). Ausarbeitung für die Marburger und die Göttinger Philosophische Fakultät (1922)," in *Phänomenologische Interpretationen Ausgewählter Abhandlungen des Aristoteles zur Ontologie und Logik* (hereafter, GA62) ed. Günther Neumann. *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 62: Early Freiburg lecture of summer semester 1922 (2005), 341–399, 367. Similar analyses are found in Martin Heidegger, *Grundbegriffe der aristotelischen Philosophie* (hereafter, GA18), ed. Mark Michalski, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 18: Marburg lecture of summer semester 1924 (2002), 327; as well as in GA22, 172; GA24, 152 and 164 and following.
Heidegger similarly observes that the fundamental experience for medieval philosophy is the experience of beings as created; see GA24, 168.

[64] For the claim that a specific ontic *Grunderfahrung* may affect the shape of our ontological understanding see also *SZ,* 232, as well as Heidegger's analysis of the manner in which the natural, practical attitudes of Dasein transform into the theoretical, scientific attitudes, in which entities are approached in terms of their pure presence, in *SZ*, 356–364.

Heidegger's Destruktion, by the privileging of a specific manner of representation through language, a specific "logos," which is best suited for the representation of beings that are present-at-hand. Thus in the Introduction to *Being and Time* Heidegger writes:

> λέγειν [namely the activity that correlates to logos]… is the guiding thread [*Leitfaden*] for eliciting the structures of the being of a being that is encountered in addressing and speaking.   … λέγειν itself, as well as νοεῖν – the simple apprehension of something given in its pure presence-at-hand… has the temporal structure of the pure "being present" [*Gegenwärtigens*]. The being, which shows itself for it and which is understood as the genuine [*eigentliche*] entity, thereby receives its interpretation with a view to its being present [*Gegen-wart*], that is, it is understood as presence [*Anwesenheit*] (οὐσία).[65]

To be clear, in criticizing logos Heidegger is not advocating the rejection of logic (whatever that might mean). Rather, he merely objects to the privileging of a restricted fragment of language, the "logic of a specific mode of address" (*die Logik eines bestimmten Ansprechens*), namely that of predicative, categorical assertions.[66] An immediate outcome of the privileging of logos is the failure to attend to other modes of discourse, such as requesting, praying, commanding and, most importantly, questioning, as well as the different manners in which each of these modes of discourse reveals beings.[67]   When the logos of predicative assertion is taken to exhaust the entirety of our meaningful engagement with being, the metaphysician's gaze becomes fixed on a

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[65] *SZ*, 25–6.

[66] GA62, 397. In other places (for example, *SZ*, 10 and 160, and GA32, 142, which I cite below) Heidegger puts the terms "logic" and "logical" in scare quotes, to signal that his target is a particular interpretation of logic, not logic as such. The need to overcome the privileging of this narrow logos is also the central topic of Heidegger, "Was ist Metaphysik?" in *Wegmarken*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 9 1976 [1929].   For a critical assessment of Heidegger's critique of logic see Ed Witherspoon, "Logic and the Inexpressible in Frege and Heidegger," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 40, no. 1 (2002): 89–113.

[67] *SZ*, 32 and 154. On the singular importance of the attitude of questioning in Heidegger's *Being and Time*, see Section IV, below.

narrow range of phenomena, namely the being of those beings which this mode of representation is best suited to articulate: beings that are present-at-hand, substances and their categories.[68]

The prioritization of this narrow, "logical" fragment of language is crucial for understanding how it became possible to subordinate *metaphysica generalis* to *metaphysica specialis*, resulting in the ontotheological structure of metaphysics:

> With the expression "ontotheology" we say that the problem of the ὄν [being] as a logical problem is from first to last oriented toward the θεός, which is itself already conceived of "logically."[69]

Heidegger's critique of the traditional reading of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, I have argued in Section I, is focused on the process through which this ontotheological structure emerges. Heidegger points out that in subordinating general metaphysics to special metaphysics, the tradition dismissed key ontological distinctions, particularly Aristotle's distinction between the ontologically fundamental notion of truth and the less fundamental notion of the truth of assertions. Ignoring this distinction, metaphysics itself came to privilege the logos of assertions, whose success is measured by the less fundamental notion of truth. The result is a distorted picture of what ontological inquiry may hope for. Given that the logos of assertions is particularly apt for representing the present-at-hand, the language of metaphysics prevents itself from properly appreciating the being and temporal features of other kinds of entities. One example for this is the distorted understanding of the being of Dasein through reification, that is,

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[68] Further discussions of logos as a mode of representation that fits a narrow temporal understanding of being, namely the constant presence of the present-at-hand, are found in Martin Heidegger, *Einführung in die phänomenologische Forschung* (hereafter GA17), ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, 2nd. ed., *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 17: Marburg lecture of winter semester 1923/24 (2006), 20; as well as GA19, 224–25, GA22, 155 and GA29/30, 424. In *SZ*, 157 Heidegger contrasts the discourse of predicative assertions with the discourse employed in the context of the non-theoretical, practical engagement with tools.

[69] GA32, 142.

through the attempt to apply the categories of worldly entities (present-at-hand) to it.[70] Another central example is the inability of traditional ontology to account for the mode of being encountered in practical engagements with equipment (*Zuhandensein*).[71]

But most importantly, Heidegger holds that by privileging this restricted logos, by making it into the exclusive mode of the theoretical discourse of philosophy, metaphysics blocks the possibility of appreciating being as such:

> A mundane assertion [*weltliche Aussage*] about the present-at-hand, even when it takes the form of a mere naming, can refer to its object directly, while an assertion about Dasein and moreover every assertion about being… requires for its intelligibility a turn [*Umstellung*] of the understanding, a turn to the matter indicated, which is essentially not a present-at-hand. Because for the Greeks, for Plato as well as for Aristotle… all assertions are understood as mundane

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[70] *SZ*, 46; Heidegger suggests that Dasein's constitutive tendency to misinterpret itself (*Verfallenheit*) is the origin of metaphysical confusions; see GA 29/30, 426.   Recall also Heidegger's critique of Descartes, discussed at the end of Section I. And see Section IV, below.

[71] *SZ*, 71. Recently, objections have been made to the validity of the claim that theoretical logos can be taken to restrict ontology in this way; I discuss these in the next section.

assertions, it transpired that being itself, insofar as it came into view, was conceived of as a being.[72]

Metaphysics emerges when "being itself" is "conceived of as a being," that is, when the ontological difference collapses. As Heidegger argues in this passage, this collapse is guaranteed to take place when one prioritizes the logos of "mundane" assertion. The very "logic" of logos, he argues, is biased with respect to the ontology of the present-at-hand.[73]

Logos is only apt to capture ontic truth, and so any attempt to capture ontological truth by its means, that is, to construct a theoretical account of being, is guaranteed to fail.[74] This is another reason why the double methodology is crucial to Heidegger's project. For Destruktion is meant to apply not only to historical views but also to Heidegger's own (and to our own) constructive investigations, and thereby to counterbalance the corrupting influence of theoretical logos; it is meant to help us resist the temptation to take the results of these investigations at face value.[75]

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[72] GA21, 410n. In the clauses which I left out of the quote Heidegger contrasts "mundane assertion" (*weltliche Aussage*) with "categorial assertions" (*kategoriale Aussage*) to distinguish two modes of discourse: that through which we describe worldly entities, and that through which we describe *ways of being* of such entities (the term "categorial" as it is used here is probably derived from Husserl's notion of categorial intuition). The complaint Heidegger makes is that the tradition fails to secure the independence of the latter, phenomenological mode of discourse from the former, with the result that ontological insights are distorted by the mode of expression in which they are framed.
The terminology Heidegger chooses to use here is particularly confusing because in *Being and Time*, ontological determinations of Dasein are termed "existential" statements (for example, SZ, 123) and they are contrasted with determinations of other beings, which are termed "categorial" (for example, SZ, 44). To avoid confusion, I exclusively use the term "categori*cal*" to mean what Heidegger here calls "mundane assertions." And see the discussion in Daniel O. Dahlstrom, "Heidegger's Method: Philosophical Concepts as Formal Indications," *The Review of Metaphysics* 47, no. 4 (June 1994): 775–95, 787n.

[73] *SZ*, 165.

[74] *SZ*, 33; compare *SZ*, 225.

[75] Recall Heidegger's discussion of the need to avoid the "hardening" of ontological insights and the "absolutizing" tendencies of "analytic" inquiries, examined in Section II above.

IV

Recent commentators have objected to the claim that metaphysics is restricted to the use of the logos of assertion, as well as to the claim that the logos of assertion is incapable of revealing beings other than the present-at-hand, let alone to reveal ontological truths, and to the claim that there is no such thing as theoretical discourse concerning being.[76]   I believe the evidence presented thus far leaves little room for doubt that Heidegger himself did hold these convictions. But whether Heidegger held them or not, the question remains whether they are ultimately justifiable.   The most pressing problem seems to be that the conviction that there can be no theoretical discourse concerning being seems to imply that Heidegger's own inquiry cannot succeed in doing what it purports to do—as long as that inquiry is construed in terms of giving a theoretical answer to the question of being.   The decisive objection, in other words, is that by repudiating theoretical logos, Heidegger's project (so construed) comes to seem inconsistent and self-undermining.[77]

In the limited context of the present paper I do not attempt to offer a positive argument of my own for Heidegger's claim that there can be no theoretical account of certain kinds of being (and of being as such).   Rather, I will offer an indirect argument for it by showing that it does not render Heidegger's project inconsistent.   The first step in my argument consists in showing that Heidegger's project is not aimed at providing a theoretical account of being.   Instead, I construe his ultimate goal in practical, not theoretical terms: his aim is to transform us and our relation to being.   In order to achieve this goal what is needed is not to convince us of any claims by means of the logos of assertion, but to get us to recognize the underlying failure of our philosophical

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[76] In "Heidegger's Method" Daniel Dahlstrom attributes such views to Heidegger and takes them to form a predicament from which Heidegger sought to extricate himself by means of thee method of formal indication (which I further discuss below).   Joseph Schear, "Judgment and Ontology in Heidegger's Phenomenology," *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Research* 7 (2007): 127–58; and Sacha Golob, "Heidegger on Assertion, Method and Metaphysics," *European Journal of Philosophy* 23, no. 4 (2015): 878–908 both maintain that it is wrong to attribute to Heidegger the claim that logos is restricted to the present at hand; they also argue that this claim is false.

[77] Denis McManus construes the difficulty along these lines in "Ontological Pluralism".

employment of logos.   The doubling of methods in *Being and Time*, I will go on to argue, is designed to fulfill this goal, and to achieve it without any self-undermining use of theoretical logos.

Heidegger's Destruktion of ancient metaphysics, I have argued, purports to expose a predicament of all ontological theorizing: representation by means of logos imposes a specific temporal structure that prevents us from appreciating the variety of modes of being, apart from the present-at-hand; any attempt to form such a theoretical account of being thus ends up reducing being to beings.   By employing the logos of theoretical inquiry we objectify (*vergegenständlichen*) being, and thereby collapse the ontological difference.   Ontological theory, Heidegger concludes, is always a mix of truth and untruth.[78]   This is the sense in which the recurring failure of metaphysics to properly address the question of being is not a mere historical coincidence.   Recall the quote with which I opened this paper, where Heidegger says: "The fundamental question is how the problem of being gets *necessarily* driven toward a genuine entity."[79]   The necessity of which Heidegger speaks is a mark of our finitude; an absolute conception of being is not available to us.[80]

But Heidegger is well aware that this predicament applies to his own temporal analyses of being as well.[81] As we have seen in Section II, he is wary of the "absolutizing" tendency of all "analytic" inquiries.   But he seems to think that there is no other way to address this problem, let alone overcome it, except by letting the constructive part of the phenomenological inquiry run its course, and then allow the destructive part turn critically against the results it achieves.

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[78] GA24, 459.

[79] GA22, 329, my emphasis.

[80] GA3, 245 and see also Martin Heidegger, "Vom Wesen der Wahrheit," in GA9, 177–202, 197. Thomas Sheehan argues that this ontological sense of finitude—the intractable concealment of being—is a discovery that Heidegger first makes in this text from the year 1930, and that this leads him beyond the confines of the *Being and Time* project.   By contrast, I take this to be anticipated in Heidegger's discussions of Destruktion and ontotheology in earlier seminars. See Sheehan, *Making Sense of Heidegger: A Paradigm Shift* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), 226–7.

[81] *SZ*, 36.

Heidegger's manner of responding to this predicament is prominently brought into view from the very beginning of *Being and Time*, with the citation from Plato's *Sophist* and the ensuing discussion of the forgetfulness of the question of being.[82] Metaphysical forgetfulness is not contrasted there with the possession of an *answer*, but rather with reanimating the *question* of being. Indeed, given the shape of the predicament—that the very logos of a metaphysical answer effaces the ontological difference—awakening the attitude of questioning seems like the only achievable goal. For any attempt to answer the question of being, to the extent that it involves theorizing by means of logos, is bound to distort our relation to being. This is why in stating his aims for *Being and Time*, Heidegger takes pains to avoid the implication that what the book achieves is an answer, understood as a positive, self-standing thesis that we can hold on to. Even when he says that *an* answer to the question of the meaning of being is to be given in the "exposition of the problematics of temporality," he immediately goes on to clarify that this "answer" is only a new manner of framing the problematic, and thereby indicating the direction of further questioning.[83]

The priority of the ontological question over its putative answer goes back to Heidegger's earliest discussions of the phenomenology of questioning, in the summer of 1919.[84] Heidegger there warns against the reification of the subject of inquiry that occurs in the process of framing an answer to fundamental ontological questions. To draw the ontological difference radically enough, and thus to avoid the objectification of being, what is required is not merely to mark out a difference between two distinct subject matters that theoretical discourse may address. What is required is that we uphold a distinction between two forms of address, two modes of discourse. The logos of assertion that we employ in *answering* cannot address being without distorting it; the mode of access which is most proper to being is rather that of *questioning*. That this line of thought continues to inform the project of *Being and Time* is evident from the fact that Heidegger

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[82] *SZ*, 1–2.

[83] *SZ*, 19. Admittedly, Heidegger does not always resolutely avoid implying the possibility of positive theoretical results. See for example, GA24, 459.

[84] GA56/57, 59–69.

concludes the book by saying that the value of the inquiry does not lie in the correctness of its results, but in the extent to which it sparks the attitude of fundamental questioning.[85]

The need to avoid theoretical logos in order to prevent the collapse of the ontological difference is addressed in *Being and Time* in terms of the need to resist Dasein's "fallenness" (*Verfallenheit*)—its tendency to misinterpret itself in terms of the being of the present-at-hand that surrounds it.[86] This is the background against which Heidegger deploys the manner of communication he calls "formal indication" (*formale Anzeige*). Thus we are constantly reminded that the constitutive ontological features of Dasein are not given in terms of theoretical descriptions, but by means of such indications.[87] Heidegger goes as far as to suggest that "all philosophical concepts are formal indications."[88] The feature of formal indication which is the most important for our purposes and which connects it to the idea of awakening the attitude of questioning is that rather than being a means for communicating theoretical knowledge, formal indications are construed as a manner of setting up *tasks* for the reader.[89] The aim of such tasks is not to provide information, but to to effect a transformation (*Verwandlung*).[90]

Rather than attempting to replace an erroneous metaphysical account of being with a theoretical account of his own, Heidegger rejects the very idea of a theoretical account of being.

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[85] *SZ*, 437. Recall my discussion in Section I of the radical form of questioning Heidegger ascribes to Aristotle. Importantly, Aristotle is there said to have preserved this attitude of questioning by means of his double concept of metaphysics.

[86] *SZ*, 15, 21, 175–84, and 346–50 as well as GA29/30, 426.

[87] *SZ*, 114, 115, 313 and 315. The notion of formal indication is discussed extensively in the lectures of 1921/1922 (GA61, 32–35 and 140–155), as well as in the 1929/1930 Seminar (GA29/30, 421–31). Heidegger there explains that all the claims he makes in *Being and Time* about Dasein, about death, and about nothingness would be misunderstood if one took them as descriptive statements, rather than as formal indications (GA29/30, 428–9). See also Dahlstrom, "Heidegger's Method" and Matthew I. Burch, "The Existential Sources of Phenomenology: Heidegger on Formal Indication," *European Journal of Philosophy* 21, no. 2 (2011): 258–78.

[88] GA29/30, 430.

[89] GA29/30, 425. And see GA33, 13, where Heidegger says that Aristotle's distinction between the manifold senses of being is not an answer, but a manner of setting up a task.

[90] As Heidegger puts it, formal indications pose a "demand for transformation." See GA29/30, 428–429.

Instead, he undertakes to transform our metaphysical relation to being from the ground up. This is the goal that the double methodology of *Being and Time* serves: by subjecting all philosophically constructive theories, including fundamental ontology, to Destruktion we learn to treat the results of such analytic inquiries as (at best) mere formal indications, and resist the tendency to confuse acts of questioning for the provision of answers. We thereby learn to engage in the attitude of authentic questioning ourselves.[91] Since this is the shape of his project, there is no inconsistency in his rejection of theoretical logos as a means for engaging with the question of being. But it is not yet clear why Heidegger thinks that in order to achieve the transformation of the analytic mode of inquiry, what is needed is a specifically *historical* mode of critique. I now turn to treat this question.

V

It comes as no surprise that the inquiry into the being of beings such as Dasein belongs to ontology, even though one might certainly wonder whether any inquiry which focuses on one specific region of entities should count as *fundamental*. With Destruktion, however, things are quite different: it is not at all obvious how Destruktion fits into the ontological inquiry, and the claim that it forms an *essential* part of ontology might seem mysterious. Indeed, Heidegger claims that *only* through Destruktion could the ultimate goal of *Being and Time* be achieved:

> It is through the execution of the Destruktion of the ontological tradition that the
> question of being gains its true concretion for the first time.[92]

And yet, despite Heidegger's own indications, it is not uncommon to think that the role of Destruktion in *Being and Time* is merely negative: Destruktion, on this construal, is a critique of concepts that were delivered to us by tradition; its aim is to peel off the outer layers which cover

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[91] GA29/30, 495; and see GA24, 31 and GA26, 197–8.

[92] *SZ,* 26.

over the original insights from which these concepts sprung.[93] This negative construal of Destruktion does not exclude, but rather presupposes that there is some *positive* content which underlies our traditional concepts. But since this positive content is taken to be out there, independently of whether we discover it by means of Destruktion or by any other means, the negative construal ultimately fails to establish the indispensability of a specifically *historical* mode of inquiry.

Charles Guignon's interpretation is a case in point. Although Guignon is one of the very few interpreters who acknowledge the crucial importance of the double methodological context in which Destruktion is coupled with fundamental ontology, the manner in which he attempts to explain why Destruktion is essential to the inquiry gives it this merely negative role. He holds that by eliminating the inessential and misleading aspects of traditional concepts, Heidegger aims to expose "*trans*historical meaning" and "primordial ways of understanding Being which course through history."[94] But the worry immediately arises: if our concepts do contain such a positive core, why can't the content be grasped on its own, without the detour of considering its historical origin? In other words, if Destruktion is carried out from a privileged point of view which transcends the limitations of the tradition which it criticizes, it does not seem to be necessary for us to engage with that tradition in the first place, since we can focus instead on the putatively correct, "transhistorical meaning" which is available to us from our privileged point of view. The "transhistorical" collapses into the "ahistorical"; far from being essential to ontology, Destruktion, on this construal, would come to seem superfluous.

Indeed, Heidegger rejects the idea that there are absolute, transhistorical constants to be discovered by us through historical inquiry.[95] This is not because he is assuming some form of

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[93] The negative construal finds support in *SZ*, 22. William McNeill, for example, argues that in *Being and Time* Heidegger employs only this negative understanding of Destruktion, and that it is only in Heidegger's later work that Destruktion becomes an essential ontological task, directed at uncovering the "history of being." See McNeill, "From Destruktion to the History of Being," *Gatherings: The Heidegger Circle Annual* 2 (2012): 24–40. Pace McNeill, I argue that Destruktion plays a more robust and essential role in the early work as well.

[94] Guignon, "The Twofold Task," 57.

[95] *SZ,* 395.

historical relativism; in fact he explicitly warns against thinking that the essential role he gives to history in shaping Dasein's understanding of being leaves his project open to a charge of relativism.[96] Relativism, too, would fail to give history an indispensable role in Heidegger's ontological inquiry: insofar as relativism sets the historical other at an unbridgeable distance from us, it renders the past irrelevant for our present ontology. The positivity of Destruktion and its essential role for Heidegger's inquiry must therefore be construed neither in terms that relativize ontological content to incommensurable historical standpoints nor in terms that assign Destruktion the role of delivering ahistorical content. The key is to reject the idea that the turn to history is supposed to deliver any theoretical content whatsoever.

With this task in mind, let us look more closely at the way in which Heidegger specifies the *positive* role of Destruktion. Destruktion is not supposed merely to lead us to mistrust the answers that the metaphysical tradition delivers, but also to recognize *in ourselves*, as essentially historical beings, the source of the metaphysical tendency to distort being:

> Antiquity is not to be overcome… but its bad champions must be fought. That can only happen if we strive to provide an occasion for the transformation [*Verwandlung*] of these fundamental problems, that is, of the *metaphysica naturalis* that belongs to Dasein itself.   This is what I understand as the Destruktion of the tradition. The point is not to eliminate these two Millenia and place oneself in the place they occupied.[97]

To see the history of metaphysics as our own—to see this history as the result of our recurrent failure to address being—is to come to terms with what "belongs to Dasein itself," that is, with our own human nature. For metaphysics, as depicted by Destruktion, is not a mere mistake or accident that we can distance ourselves from. The history of metaphysics is the unfolding of a fateful "happening" that we ourselves, qua the beings that we are, are the vehicles of:

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[96] *SZ,* 22.

[97] GA26, 197.

Metaphysics is not something which is merely "created" by human beings in systems and doctrines. Rather, the understanding of being, its projection and its shift, *happens* in Dasein as such. "Metaphysics" is the fundamental happening [*Grundgeschehen*]…[98]

Destruktion thus allows us to see philosophy itself as a historical happening, an ongoing event or series of events in which our relation to being is determined (and distorted) by our metaphysical tendency.[99] Through Destruktion, we are meant to come to recognize that we ourselves belong to this event, that this is our own historical destiny—which may well be a destiny of *failure* to address being properly.[100]

But Heidegger adds that by negatively indicating the "limits" of our tradition, Destruktion also reveals "positive possibilities":

Nor does Destruktion have the merely *negative* sense of breaking free from the ontological tradition. On the contrary, it ought to mark out the positive possibilities of this tradition, and that means, to mark out its *limits*, which are given factically in the particular ways of questioning and in the delimitations of the possible field of inquiry that they dictate.[101]

By showing how each moment in the long series of metaphysical failures to address the question of being forms part of a single whole—a whole to which we ourselves belong—Destruktion

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[98] GA3, 242; compare "Was ist Metaphysik?," 122, and GA29/30, 512–32.

[99] See, in particular, GA3, 214, where Heidegger discusses Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* as a "happening" (*Geschehen*) not in the sense of its effects on its era, but in the sense that in the *Critique* itself something occurs—the ontological significance of time is momentarily revealed, only to be concealed again.

[100] For Heidegger's conception of historical destiny, see SZ, 386. Our metaphysical destiny is described as the "hidden and inner life of the fundamental movement of western philosophy" in GA26, 196–7; this is echoed in *SZ*, 19, where Heidegger speaks of the destiny of ontological questioning.

[101] *SZ*, 22.

allows us to resolutely address our own tendency to commit such failure. This engagement with history is what Heidegger calls the retrieval, through repetition (*Wiederholung*), of that which belongs to our own true self.[102] What genuinely belongs to us and to our ontological questioning is not something that history somehow conceals from us, but rather *is* this very history. For it is by means of appreciating the depth of our attachment to metaphysics—the way in which its dissimulations and distortions flow from our own finitude—that we may also hope to see our way beyond it.[103]

Destruktion leads us from the abstract, theoretical mode of thinking of metaphysics, which isolates the content to be thought from the historical situatedness of the thinker, to a concrete mode of thinking which is in each case mine, and always involves me in my historical situation.[104] Heidegger hopes that by acknowledging this historicity to be constitutive of our own self, we would become able to alter the way in which we take part in history:

> Since the mode of being of such questioning is itself historical, it directs the elaboration of the question of being to ask after its own history, that is, to become historical.[105]

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[102] *SZ*, 386; and for an application of this approach in the Destruktion of Kant's ontology, see GA3, 204.

[103] Another upshot of my argument here is that Heidegger's insistence on the indispensability of Destruktion in his early work anticipates a theme that becomes much more prominent in his later philosophy, namely the history of being. This claim might seem contentious, especially given that the later Heidegger himself lamented the "naïveté" of Destruktion in *Being and Time*. Nonetheless, the evidence I present here suggests that Heidegger's later and earlier work are closer than he might have been ready to admit. For Heidegger's self-critique see Martin Heidegger, *Seminare (1951–1973),* ed. Curd Ochwadt. 2nd ed. *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 15 (2005), 398. For an interpretation that draws a stark contrast between the early and later uses of history (and Destruktion) in Heidegger's work, see McNeill, "From Destruktion to the History of Being," 31. For a critique of the dichotomy between early and late in Heidegger, see Theodore Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

[104] GA29/30, 428–9.

[105] *SZ,* 20–21.

The positivity of Destruktion thus has little to do with the *content* it supposedly identifies and preserves, a content which stands apart from the activity of inquiry. Rather, what is positive in Destruktion is the transformative effect it can have on us, qua inquirers.[106] Since we do not occupy a privileged point of view in the history of metaphysics, realizing the historical situatedness of our own inquiries—where belonging to this history means sharing the tendency to misconstrue our relation to being—alters the way in which we understand the results that the analytic part of our inquiry delivers. Destruktion thereby helps reawaken the question of being, keep it an open question for us, and ultimately allow our very relation to being to transform. And this construal of Destruktion, as aimed to effect a transformation in the inquirer, rather than to deliver theoretical content, succeeds in giving history an essential role while escaping the dilemma between ahistoricism and relativism.

VI

Before I conclude I would like to return to the problem with which I opened this paper. The worry was that Heidegger's choice of Dasein as the privileged entity in ontology reflects his own failure to overcome the ontotheological tendency of metaphysics. Heidegger has putatively reintroduced the subordination of *metaphysica generalis* to *metaphysica specialis*, while replacing God with Dasein; in consequence, Heidegger's *Being and Time* allegedly ended up with a distorted account of being. Here is how I understand Heidegger's defense against this line of objection. Unlike scholastic metaphysics, in which the general ontological inquiry is subordinated to the study of a distinguished entity, in *Being and Time* neither of the two tasks take primacy over the other. Both of Heidegger's methods put Dasein in the center, though each does it in its own way, and they are both employed as means for reanimating the question of being, rather than as attempts to provide a direct answer to it. So Dasein does not come into the

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[106] Benjamin D. Crowe similarly understands Destruktion as a means for effecting a practical transformation of the thinker who engages in it. See *Heidegger's Religious Origins: Destruction and Authenticity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), especially 235 and following. For the related suggestion that Destruktion enables a form of ontological freedom see Jaran, "Towards a Metaphysical Freedom."

picture as an answer to the dogmatic question: what is the exemplary being from whose being the being of all beings is to be gleaned? Nor is the privileging Dasein meant to provide an answer to the transcendental question as to the conditions of possibility of an understanding of being. Rather, what is placed at the center with Dasein is its tendency to glean *a* concept of being from privileged entities, and therewith its tendency to conceal being by framing it in terms that are only appropriate to beings.   The focal point of Heidegger's inquiry, as it emerges from the interplay between fundamental ontology and Destruktion, is not that of the subject that constitutes its own ontology, but rather that of the historical being who is constituted by a mode of relating to being which is all but guaranteed to distort it. In other words, Dasein is exemplary as the being who is not merely concerned with being, but also obscures and forgets it.

All this applies with equal force to the beings who attempt to reanimate the question of being, namely to the author of *Being and Time* and to its readers. The inquiry must therefore be turned against itself, and fundamental ontology must itself be subjected to Destruktion.   As Heidegger puts it, ontology must be led back to where it springs from, namely back to the historically situated attitude of questioning.[107] This is miles away from the philosophical attitude that underlies the ontotheological subordination of general ontology to special ontology, for the goal for Heidegger is not to provide a theory of being by reference to any specific being, but to find in ourselves the roots of the tendency to provide such distorted theoretical accounts of being and to thereby learn to resist this tendency. Since this is the authorial point of view of *Being and Time*, it is no wonder that the book concludes by contemplating the value that the work might still have even if all that fundamental ontology achieves is to chart an *in*correct way to engage with the question of being.[108]

To conclude, the aim of *Being and Time* is to animate an attitude of radical questioning that would ultimately transform our relation to being. But the form of our relation to being is not something that a fundamental-ontological account of Dasein can fully determine, let alone alter, on its own. It is only when fundamental ontology is subjected to Destruktion, that is, only in the

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[107] *SZ*, 38.

[108] *SZ*, 437.

context of a double methodology, that Heidegger's inquiry can hope to achieve its goal.[109]