

# How Are We to Interpret Heidegger's *Oeuvre*? A Methodological Manifesto

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One may have different objectives in interpreting texts. If a judge interprets a statute in order to obtain a satisfactory solution to a case, his aim may be called "applicative". But if a historian of science wants to reconstruct the meaning of obscure passages of Ptolemy's "Hypotheses planetarum", his objectives are purely historical and theoretical.

The paper argues that these different aims, applicative and historical ones, require different methodologies of interpretation, and imply different criteria of success. In particular, the "principle of charity" according to which an interpretation is better to the extent that we agree more with what the text as interpreted says, is fitting for applicative interpretations, but not without further qualifications for historical ones.

The paper argues further that we should apply the methodology of historical interpretation to the entire body of German texts now available, if we want to interpret Martin Heidegger's philosophical oeuvre, assess its philosophical value, and investigate its links to Nazism. These were the aims of Herman Philipse's book "Heidegger's Philosophy of Being. A Critical Interpretation" (Princeton University Press, 1998, 555 pp.). Criticisms of this book by Taylor Carman and others are often off target because they presuppose applicative interpretations that aim at making Heidegger say things the interpreter believes himself, instead of striving for historical adequacy, and that are based upon a small selection of translations instead of upon the entire corpus of extant German texts.

## I

In my book *Heidegger's Philosophy of Being: A Critical Interpretation*,<sup>1</sup> I attempted to develop a substantial historical interpretation of Heidegger's entire *oeuvre*. Focusing on the issue that Heidegger regarded as fundamental from the early 1920s until his death in 1976, the so-called 'question of being,' I tried to explain clearly the different meanings that this question acquired in the various phases of Heidegger's career, and, on the basis of my interpretation, to elucidate his enigmatic texts concerning special themes such as metaphysics, truth, logic, language, poetry, interpretation, art, the turn, death, and technology.

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<sup>1</sup> Herman Philipse, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Being: A Critical Interpretation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 555 pp. Unprefixed page references are to this book.

I argued that without a comprehensive historical interpretation one cannot even begin to resolve the vexing problem of the relation between Heidegger's philosophy and his entanglement with Nazism. Disputing Rockmore's extravagant claim that Heidegger's 'concern with "Being" is intrinsically political,'<sup>2</sup> I devoted a section (§ 14) to this issue in which I aimed at determining the logical strength of the relations between Heideggerian thought and Nazism without falling into the trap of partisanship. A comprehensive historical interpretation is also a prerequisite for assessing the philosophical value of Heidegger's works, and in the last chapter of my book I set out to evaluate the fundamental tenets of his thought.

While I was writing the book, I realised that for two reasons not all readers would be pleased with my results. First, my interpretation is often at odds with readings of Heidegger popular in the Anglo-American world, such as Dreyfus' Wittgensteinian construal of *Sein und Zeit*, or the pragmatist exegesis proposed by Mark Okrent. I regard these readings as stimulating attempts to make Heidegger *salonfähig* in the world of analytical philosophy by reconstructing his outlandish conceptions in terms of analytically legitimate philosophical positions. Although this is an indispensable first stage in the intellectual assimilation of his works, we should prefer a more historical interpretation if we want to make up our minds about what Heidegger really wanted to say. Second, in the philosophical evaluation of Heidegger's thought, I often tried to substantiate my criticisms by using arguments inspired by analytical philosophers. Readers who view Heidegger as a viable alternative to analytical philosophy will be annoyed by this type of argumentation and insist that only 'internal' criticisms are legitimate.<sup>3</sup>

## II

Thus, the intransigent attack on my views by Taylor Carman does not come as a surprise. Indeed, I welcome it, because a new interpretation of a philosopher as important as Heidegger should be subjected to the severest critical tests possible. Carman kindly observes with regard to my book that 'its

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<sup>2</sup> Tom Rockmore, *On Heidegger's Nazism and Philosophy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), p. 48.

<sup>3</sup> In 'Hoe moeten we ons tot Heidegger verhouden?' (*Algemeen Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Wijsbegeerte* 90 (1998): 283–300), I argue that the preference for internal criticism, common in Continental philosophy, is both incoherent and an instance of the informal fallacy called *argumentum ad Verecundiam* (appeal to authority). It is incoherent because purely internal criticisms at best show that there are inconsistencies in an author, whereas the only reason for avoiding inconsistencies is that mutually inconsistent claims cannot all be true. Yet internal criticisms can never demonstrate which philosophical tenets are true or false. Hence the very point of internal criticisms, that is, the concern for truth, is frustrated if one restricts legitimate criticisms by fiat to internal ones. And the preference for internal criticism is an *argumentum ad Verecundiam* because it attaches importance to the identity of the author of criticisms instead of focusing on their validity.

comprehensive coverage of Heidegger's principal texts is unmatched in the secondary literature.' But he also sees serious shortcomings, which he classifies under the two headings of (a) 'Philipse's frequently uncharitable interpretations of Heidegger' and (b) 'the anti-religious prejudice that, ironically, renders much of Philipse's own argument dogmatic and unconvincing.'

More particularly, Carman advances eight points of criticism. I shall discuss these points below (§ III) in the order in which he presents them, with one exception. In my book, I draw a global distinction between two types of interpretation, which I call 'historical' (or 'critical' or 'theoretical') and 'applicative' interpretations. Under his third point, Carman denies that this distinction makes sense. He dismisses it as 'crude' and speaks of an 'underlying confusion' which vitiates my evaluation of Heidegger's own doctrine of interpretation. In agreement with Heidegger and Gadamer, Carman holds that 'no philosophically interesting interpretation of historical texts can avoid application of some sort to the contemporary conceptual interests and inclinations of the interpreter,' because 'such ongoing interests and inclinations are what breathe life into philosophical texts.' The reason is that 'for a text to mean something, as far as our own interpretive efforts are concerned, is for it to mean something *to us*.'

As we shall see, either Carman's argument for rejecting my distinction between historical and applicative interpretations is a tautology or it involves a fallacy of equivocation. The consequences of his rejection run deep. In my view, the criteria for deciding whether an interpretation is justified or 'charitable' are different in the cases of historical and applicative interpretations. I shall argue that where Carman accuses me of putting forward 'frequently uncharitable interpretations,' he uses the criteria for charitable *applicative* interpretations, in particular the criterion of whether we ourselves accept what the interpreted text says according to the proposed interpretation. But this criterion has a restricted role in the methodology of what I call historical interpretations. For such interpretations, the main criterion of adequacy is whether the proposed reading is the most probable reconstruction of what the author meant to say, given all relevant texts and in view of the historical circumstances in which he was writing. It seems, then, that Carman and I are playing the game of interpretation according to different rules or methodologies. If I am playing chess, so to speak, Carman is playing draughts. Since different methodologies yield different results, the methodological issue is fundamental and should be discussed first.

According to my book, we may have various objectives in interpreting texts, and different objectives require different methodologies. Which objective we pursue is a matter of choice, but given our objective, the methodology is not optional. The example with which I illustrated this point (§ 5) was taken from Dutch criminal law. The Dutch penal code dates back to

1838. In article 310 of this code, the criminal act of theft is defined in terms of 'taking away goods' that belong to someone else. At the beginning of the twentieth century the question arose whether tapping electricity should be regarded as theft in the sense of article 310. More particularly, is tapping a form of 'taking away' and is electricity a 'good'?

We might distinguish between two very different objectives in answering this question. The historian of law will want to establish whether the Dutch legislature in 1838 intended to subsume electricity tapping under the formula 'taking away goods.' He might discover, by reading the parliamentary reports, that the term 'goods' was taken to include tangible material goods only, and the legislature of 1838 could not foresee that in the future electricity would become available as a commodity. If our objective were a purely historical interpretation, then, we would come to the conclusion that the 1838 definition of 'theft' did not include electricity tapping. However, the judges who have to decide a case of electricity tapping will pursue a different objective. They want to apply the law in a situation that is temporally far removed from the circumstances in which the code was written, and they aim at reaching a verdict that is acceptable within the framework of present-day society. The Dutch high court (Hoge Raad) ruled in its decision of 23 May 1921 that electricity tapping is a form of theft. Clearly, the objectives of a historical interpretation and of an applicative interpretation are different, and in my example these two types of interpretation yield incompatible results.<sup>4</sup>

The distinction between historical and applicative interpretations might also be illustrated by biblical exegesis. There is a consensus among historical Bible scholars that early Christian authors such as Mark and Paul expected the 'coming of the Son of man at the youngest day' within the lifetime of their generation.<sup>5</sup> But the expected *Parousia* did not take place within that time. As a consequence, Christians of later generations were confronted with the 'problem of the delay of the Parousia', since they believed that the writings of Paul and Mark, being inspired by God, cannot contain false predictions. Biblical authors of the next generation, such as John, the pseudo-Paul, and Peter, interpreted the relevant passages in such a way that there is no false

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<sup>4</sup> The case of criminal law is special, though, because in view of the maxim 'nulla poena, nullum crimen, sine previa lege poenali,' applicative interpretations cannot deviate too much from the correct historical interpretation of the penal code. In civil law, the deviations may be much greater. This is why the German and the Swiss high courts came to the conclusion that tapping electricity should not be regarded as theft, so that the legislature had to introduce a new article for this case in the penal code. Cf. J. Rimmelink, *Mr. D. Hazewinkel-Suringa's Inleiding tot de studie van het Nederlands Strafrecht*, 15th ed. (Deventer: Gouda Quint bv, 1996), pp. 76-77.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Mark 13: 30: 'Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away before all these things take place;' and Mark 1: 15. For Paul, cf. 1 Thessalonians 4: 15: 'For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord,' etc.

prediction, either by arguing that the Parousia in fact had already taken place (John 5: 24–27), or that the prediction was a conditional one and that the required conditions had not been met (2 Thessalonians 2: 1–7), or, lastly, that ‘with the Lord one day is as a thousand years,’ so that the prediction should be read with a divine time-scale in mind (2 Peter 3: 8). In the later Christian tradition, other interpretations were added, such as the theory of sustained future eschatology which claims that the Parousia will occur in some distant future, or Bultmann’s existential interpretation (inspired by Heidegger), according to which the statement of Mark and Paul is not a prediction at all but an expression of the existential urgency with which man longs for the second coming.

In this example of biblical exegesis, we find again that the results of applicative interpretations contradict the outcome of a purely historical interpretation. We also find that the legal and the biblical illustrations of applicative interpretations have three features in common which may be regarded as defining characteristics of applicative interpretations as ideal types: (1) the text to be interpreted supposedly has some kind of authority (as a formally valid law, or the word of God), (2) it is interpreted in order to apply it to a situation which is somehow relevant to the interpreter (as a judge, or a believing Christian), and (3) the interpretation has to be such that the interpreter agrees with what the text says. Clearly, the aims and characteristics of a purely historical or scholarly interpretation are different: (a) the text to be interpreted is not regarded as having authority, (b) there is no need to apply it to some present situation, and (c) the interpreter is merely interested in discovering what the text means, that is, what its author wanted to say in the historical circumstances in which he was writing. For a historical interpretation, the question as to whether the interpreter endorses what a specific text says is entirely immaterial.<sup>6</sup>

I agree with Carman that my distinction between applicative and historical interpretations as ideal types is ‘crude,’ in the sense that one might construct a more fine-grained typology of interpretations. For instance, I would call some philosophical construals of Heidegger by Dreyfus and Carman ‘applicative’ because they have characteristics (1) (Heidegger has the authority of a ‘great philosopher’) and (3), even though the presence of characteristic (2) is somewhat dubious. However, Carman’s arguments for claiming that the

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<sup>6</sup> This is different if the interpreter has to interpret all the utterances of a foreign language. In that case, Davidson’s principle of charity applies, which says that we have to maximize agreement in the sense of making the native speakers right *as often as possible*. Cf. Donald Davidson, *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 27, 136–137, 152–153 and *passim*. But this principle is a holistic one and does not give a clear rule concerning specific problems of interpretation. Indeed, it does not imply that speakers never have false beliefs. As Davidson says, ‘Error is what gives belief its point’ (p. 168).

distinction between applicative and historical interpretations is a 'confusion' are utterly unconvincing.

Carman's first argument, that 'surely no philosophically interesting interpretation of historical texts can avoid application of some sort to the contemporary conceptual interests and inclinations of the interpreter,' suffers from excessive vagueness. What is 'philosophically interesting' and what is 'application of some sort'? Clearly, the historical interpreter will *select* the texts which he interprets and the interpretative problems which he wants to solve from the vantage point of his contemporary research *interests* and the state of the art. But if he prefers a specific interpretation because it coheres with his own philosophical or scientific *inclinations*, he is using a criterion that should have no role in the methodology of historical interpretation. For instance, if a historian of astronomy interprets Ptolemy's *Hypotheses planetarum*, he will have to admit that according to Ptolemy there is an unmovable center of the world, even though he will not be able to endorse this conception in view of his knowledge of present-day cosmology.

Carman's second argument, that 'for a text to mean something, as far as our own interpretive efforts are concerned, is for it to mean something *to us*,' either is trivial or contains a fallacy of ambiguity. It is a trivial tautology if by 'mean something to us' Carman intends to say merely that when an interpreter interprets a text, it is that interpreter (and not someone else, such as Napoleon) who attributes a specific meaning to the text. And it is a fallacy of equivocation if Carman claims that the meaning which the interpreter attributes to a text should always 'mean' something to him in the sense that what the text is interpreted to say is philosophically or otherwise acceptable or *significant* to him. We might very well discover that a specific text written by a philosopher such as Heidegger, if interpreted in a historically adequate manner, makes claims that we find utterly boring, false, or absurd. Indeed, this is sometimes the case, as I argue in my book. Textual meaning ('mean something') simply is not the same as significance ('mean something *to us*').

Finally, Carman says that although I pretend to be advancing a purely historical interpretation, Philipse's 'arguments are so plainly driven by his own philosophical and theological preoccupations that the pretense can hardly be taken seriously.' Here Carman is confusing two different endeavours which, in my book, I try painstakingly to keep separate, namely on the one hand the attempt to give a historical *interpretation* of Heidegger's works and on the other hand the *assessment* by *argument* of their philosophical value. In the assessment, I am driven by my own philosophical 'preoccupations,' but in choosing the optimally adequate historical interpretation of Heidegger's works, these preoccupations should play no role whatsoever, and Carman does not show that they play a role.

We may conclude that the distinction between historical and applicative interpretations is not at all 'confused.' If there are confusions here, they are to be found in Carman's flimsy arguments to the effect that there is no interesting distinction.

Someone might object that a survey of the *soi-disant* historical interpretations of specific texts, such as particular passages of the Bible, will show that even when interpreters were aiming at establishing a purely historical or scholarly interpretation, what they came up with reflected the preoccupations of their own historically situated cultural epoch. This objection may be valid in many cases. However, it does not establish that there is no distinction between the different aims of historical and applicative interpretations. It shows instead that in many cases it is not easy to attain the objective of an optimally adequate historical interpretation, because it may be difficult to get a feeling for, and sufficient knowledge of, the historical circumstances in which an author was writing. For this very reason, it is crucial to use a sophisticated methodology. First, one has to formulate with care the interpretative problems that one wants to solve and make a survey of all relevant textual passages. Second, attempts by other commentators to solve these problems have to be compared in order to assess their strengths and weaknesses, and one has to invent an interpretative hypothesis of one's own. Finally, one has to select the best hypothesis, using criteria that may be compared with, but are somewhat different from, the criteria for theory choice in the sciences. For instance, which hypothesis explains most texts? Which hypothesis is the most probable, given the historical circumstances in which the author was writing and given the knowledge that the author had at that time?<sup>7</sup> And which hypothesis fits best with an overall interpretation of the relevant corpus of texts? As is usual in science, there may be a trade-off between various criteria.

In order to refute my historical interpretation of Heidegger, one might do two things. One might argue that the problems of interpretation which I set out to solve are bogus problems, or one might come up with another interpretation that is superior to mine in terms of the relevant criteria for theory choice. Furthermore, in order to dispute my philosophical criticisms of Heidegger, one has to discuss the arguments which I put forward, rather than merely commenting on my conclusions. Carman does none of these things.

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<sup>7</sup> In my book, I often relegated discussion with other authors to the notes, or omitted it altogether for the sake of brevity of exposition. But I employed the methodology of historical interpretation everywhere. Cf. for an explicit application of this methodology: Herman Philipse, 'Heidegger's Grand (Pascalian) Strategy: On the Problem of Reinterpreting the Existentialia' (in: *Metaphysics. The Proceedings of the XXth World Congress of Philosophy*, Vol. 2. Bowling Green, OH: Philosophical Documentation Center, 1999, pp. 49–64). Using the criteria of historical interpretation, I rejected Dreyfus' and Carman's interpretation of Heidegger's notion of *das Man*. Cf. Herman Philipse, 'Heidegger and Ethics,' *Inquiry* 42 (1999), 439–474, and *Heidegger's Philosophy of Being*, pp. 346–352.

He mentions neither the problems that I wished to solve nor the crux of my arguments.

In my critical discussion of Heidegger's own doctrine of interpretation, for example, I argued that this doctrine shows an applicative bias because Heidegger attributes to all interpretations a feature that is typical of applicative interpretations only, and he cannot do so without paradox or inconsistency. Carman complains that 'there is no paradox in sight,' but this is because he scrupulously avoids mentioning the feature to which I was referring, namely Heidegger's claim that all interpretations are *gewaltsam* (violent).<sup>8</sup> As we have seen, applicative interpretations may be 'violent' in the sense that their content is incompatible with the meaning of the text as intended by its author. But it is contradictory to claim that all interpretations are violent in this sense, because an interpretation that captures the meaning of the text as intended by its author cannot be incompatible with the meaning of the text as intended by its author.

Furthermore, I argued that Heidegger's general theory of interpretation, which according to Heidegger is itself an interpretation of a human activity, destroys the distinction between correct and incorrect interpretations. Hence, if the theory were correct, it could not be correct, and we would not be able to have good reasons for accepting it, since good reasons are by definition reasons for thinking that the correctness of the theory is probable or plausible.<sup>9</sup> Again, Carman does not summarise my argument but observes instead, quite irrelevantly, that 'Philipse changes the subject when he asks why we should *accept* such claims, for a lack of evidence or argument in support of a theory is not the same as an internal inconsistency rendering it reflectively incoherent...' Of course this is generally true. But my point was that if a theory implies that there can be no distinction between correct and incorrect theories, the theory itself destroys the very notion of possible good reasons for endorsing it. Instead of diverting the attention of the reader by spilling ink on the parallelisms with Marx and Nietzsche, Carman might have attempted to understand my argument in the first place.

### III

After these methodological preliminaries, I may be brief concerning Carman's seven remaining points of criticism.

1. In *Heidegger's Philosophy of Being: A Critical Interpretation*, I argued that the 'question of being' in Heidegger has five different meanings, which, on the model of Wagner's music, I call 'leitmotifs.' With regard to the first leitmotif, labelled the 'meta-Aristotelian theme,' Carman claims that since there is not much 'substantive connection' with Aristotle's first philosophy,

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<sup>8</sup> *Sein und Zeit*, § 63, pp. 311–312 and my book, p. 58.

<sup>9</sup> *Heidegger's Philosophy of Being*, pp. 56, 58.



it 'is a bit of an interpretive dead-end.' In this, Carman is mistaken, and it seems to me that he has not read my book completely. For in Chapter 3, I argue that the bipolar formal structure of Aristotle's question of being, which consists in an opposition between a pole of differentiation ('being' is used in many ways) and a pole of unity (the attempt to reduce these many ways to one), runs through all the stages of Heidegger's thought and determines the very structure of his question of being. Hence one cannot infer from the premise that Heidegger's question of being has not much *substantive* connection with Aristotle's doctrine of being, that there is not an interpretatively crucial *formal* connection.

2. At the end of section 8C of my book, I argued that there is a 'tension' within the phenomenologico-hermeneutical method of *Sein und Zeit*. Carman does not agree. He writes: 'Philipse can claim to find a contradiction between the phenomenological and the hermeneutical aspects of Heidegger's approach only by misconstruing his phenomenology in Husserlian terms.' Intimating that I never studied what Heidegger says on method, Carman continues: 'even a cursory reading of § 7 of *Being and Time* reveals just how profoundly Heidegger's notions of *phenomena* and *phenomenology* differ from Husserl's.' He then treats us to a summary of § 7, dwelling especially upon Heidegger's notion of a phenomenon.

I must confess that I am baffled by Carman's approach. First, I devoted four pages (115–119) to explaining the many transformations of the conception of phenomenology from Husserl's *Logische Untersuchungen* (1900/1901) to § 7 of *Sein und Zeit*. How can Carman honestly contend that I misconstrued Heidegger's phenomenology in Husserlian terms? Second, Heidegger's notion of a phenomenon is irrelevant to the two rather specific reasons which I adduced in the book for my claim that there is a tension within the phenomenological-hermeneutical method of *Sein und Zeit*. So why does Carman discuss this notion? Third, Carman does not refute these two reasons.

The first reason was that whereas Husserl claimed that phenomenology is a theory-free description of phenomena in terms of concepts derived from these phenomena, Heidegger holds that interpretation has a projective nature and that the concepts which it uses derive their meaning from the ultimate sense or direction of a project (see p. 120 and § 5 of my book). Yet Heidegger at many places uses Husserl's rhetoric of objectivity. He says, for example, that in order to obtain genuine knowledge, we have to work out our conceptual structure 'in terms of the things themselves' (SZ, p. 153, quoted on p. 57 of my book). But these passages seem to contradict his own hermeneutical doctrine, as I argued in § 5 and at the end of § 8C. Hence it is not Philipse who is 'misconstruing' Heidegger's phenomenology in Husserlian terms; rather it is Heidegger who uses a Husserlian rhetoric that is incompatible

with his own hermeneutical conception. Since I quote the relevant passages, it is a mystery why Carman writes that 'Philipse owes us something more by way of evidence or argument to make his objection plausible.'

The second reason that I adduced is that Husserl conceived of phenomenology as an eidetic discipline, which would yield descriptive truths concerning essences or essential structures that are valid independently of time and place. According to Heideggerian hermeneutics, however, the interpreter is inescapably time-bound. In 1922, Heidegger argued that for this reason a hermeneutical interpretation of human life can study only the facticity of one's own time and generation.<sup>10</sup> However, in *Sein und Zeit* Heidegger tried to reconcile this historicist conception of hermeneutics with a Husserlian rhetoric of essential truths. He claimed, for instance, that the ontology of Dasein analyses 'not just any accidental structures, but essential ones which, in every mode of being that factual Dasein may possess, persist as determinative for the character of its being.'<sup>11</sup> Again, Carman perversely accuses me of reconstruing Heideggerian phenomenology in Husserlian terms, whereas it is Heidegger who seems to endorse elements of Husserlian phenomenology that are incompatible with his own hermeneutical conception.

3. According to Carman, 'one of the most uncharitable steps in Philipse's reading of Heidegger is his claim that, in spite of their differences, Heidegger embraced Husserl's semantic theory, according to which linguistic terms—even 'is' and 'not'—are meaningful only in virtue of referring to something.' Whether Heidegger endorsed what I call Husserl's 'principle of referentiality' for logical constants is a pure issue of historical interpretation (my book, pp. 100–109), but in his discussion Carman mixes it with many unrelated points, such as whether my philosophical criticisms of this principle (pp. 332–335) are original, or whether Heidegger in *Was ist Metaphysik?* intended to reject the principle of non-contradiction. Let me try to settle the interpretative issue only.

According to my book, the interpretation that Heidegger endorsed Husserl's principle of referentiality is corroborated by three arguments. First, in *Sein und Zeit* Heidegger formulates his question of Being both as a question concerned with the meaning of the verb 'to be' and as a question concerned with a special kind of phenomenon, the phenomenon of being. Heidegger holds that both issues can be studied by a descriptive method called phenomenology. This raises a problem of interpretation: why did Heidegger regard the two formulations of his question as equivalent, and why did he think that phenomenology might answer questions concerning the meanings of the verb 'to be' (pp. 32–33)? My solution is that Heidegger endorsed

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<sup>10</sup> M. Heidegger, 'Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles,' in *Dilthey-Jahrbuch für Philosophie und Geschichte der Geisteswissenschaften* 6 (1989), p. 248.

<sup>11</sup> Heidegger's *Philosophy of Being*, pp. 120–121; *Sein und Zeit*, pp. 16–17.

Husserl's theory of categorial intuition, which is based upon Husserl's principle of referentiality (pp. 100–109).

Carman's reaction to this argument is symptomatic of his applicative approach. He dismisses my problem of interpretation by exorcising the textual passages in which Heidegger expresses the question of being as a question concerned with the meaning of the verb 'to be.' Since Carman is convinced that Heidegger *cannot* endorse a principle which he, Carman, rejects, he says that these passages are an 'occasional slide from talking about the question of being to talking about the meaning of the verb "to be".' Of course, Carman's tampering with the texts is strictly prohibited by the methodology of historical interpretation. Since there are quite a few such passages, it is unlikely that they are 'occasional slides' or slips of the pen. Hence, one should take seriously the problem of interpretation and either accept the interpretative hypothesis that I propose or produce a better one.

My second argument was that before Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* became widely known, first-rate logicians such as Frege and Russell endorsed the principle of referentiality with regard to logical constants (pp. 394–395, note 49), and there is no doubt that Husserl accepted it. In other words, the hypothesis that Heidegger endorsed it as well is plausible in view of his philosophical training and of the intellectual climate of the 1920s. Carman thinks, however, that 'when it comes to semantics Heidegger indeed has far more in common with Wittgenstein than with Husserl.' This is improbable given the historical circumstances. Heidegger had not read the *Tractatus* whereas he was a pupil of Husserl's. He explicitly endorsed Husserl's theory of categorial intuition, and this theory presupposes the principle of referentiality (pp. 103–108). Moreover, Heidegger nowhere expresses criticisms concerning Husserl's principle of referentiality.

Third, I adduced direct textual evidence for the hypothesis that Heidegger accepted the principle of referentiality (p. 420, note 124). Carman passes over this evidence in silence. He would probably regard it as another 'occasional slide'. His deepest reason for refusing to saddle 'Heidegger with the unwelcome baggage of Husserl's referential semantic theory' is that the theory allegedly is incompatible with what Heidegger calls 'the ontological difference' between being and entities. But in order to substantiate this alleged incompatibility, Carman needs a premise that both Husserl and Heidegger would have rejected, the premise that 'reference is reference to entities.' Indeed, Heidegger can express his ontological difference between being and entities only because he supposes that the word 'being' refers to being and not to entities. Hence, Carman's objection is internally incoherent.

Carman links his discussion of the principle of referentiality with a critique of section 2 of my book, in which I reviewed Heidegger's pronouncements on logic in *Was ist Metaphysik?* and the standard objections

to this text. This linkage is strongly misleading for the following reason. Section 2 was not intended as my final interpretation of *Was ist Metaphysik?* in my book. I concluded the section as follows:

At this point, I am only suggesting the possibility of an interpretation. We wondered whether Heidegger's liquidation of logic justifies a disqualification of Heidegger as a philosopher and whether it renders superfluous the attempt to interpret his question of being. We now see that we need an interpretation of the question of being in order to grasp the precise meaning of Heidegger's liquidation of logic. (p. 15)

As a consequence, Carman's accusations that what I say in this section is 'obviously wrong as an interpretation of the text' and so on are besides the point. In his zeal to protect Heidegger against my 'uncharitable' interpretations, he disregards all the rules of decent exegesis when he summarises my views.

4. With regard to Heidegger's transcendentalism in *Sein und Zeit*, Carman makes two observations that are correct in themselves but mistaken as criticisms of my book. First, arguing that transcendentalism may be possible without transcendental idealism, he reproaches me for 'criticising Heidegger's claim to be doing a kind of transcendental philosophy.' But in my interpretation I do not criticise Heidegger's claim. Rather, I take that claim seriously, and then, in discussion with Blattner and others, I try to answer the much-debated exegetical question: 'what does Heidegger's transcendentalism mean, if he rejects transcendental idealism?' (pp. 125, 139–144). Second, Carman observes that Heidegger can be interpreted as an incompatibilist with regard to the manifest image and the scientific image only 'if by "scientific image" one means not the content of scientific theories..., but the underlying substantialist ontology such theories have at times presupposed.' This was precisely what I meant on pp. 132–139, where I asserted that what Heidegger wanted to reject is the *Ontologie der Vorhandenheit* (p. 133).

5. In section 10 of my book (pp. 151–172), I developed the interpretation that there is an inverted Hegelian structure in Heidegger's later works, and I supplied numerous details of this neo-Hegelian variety of the question of being. In section 16B (pp. 302–310), I claimed on several grounds that this variety is philosophically untenable. Carman attacks one of my reasons only, which is a development of Davidson's argument against encompassing conceptual schemes. He writes: '... Davidson's argument assumes that the idea of a conceptual scheme makes sense only on the basis of a dualism of scheme and content, and there is no reason to suppose that Heidegger's notion of the "history of being" relies even tacitly on such a dualism.' Quite so. I share Davidson's assumption. That is why I argued in the text (pp. 303–305) that Heidegger's notion of global frameworks is either nonsensical or untenable. When Carman concludes triumphantly that 'here as elsewhere, Philipse seems indifferent to the details of Heidegger's position and thinks it sufficient

to trot out familiar arguments from contemporary analytic philosophy to refute him,' this merely testifies that Carman fails to grasp both the force of Davidson's argument and the suicidal import of his own rebuttal.

6. On pp. 327–330 of my book, I discussed several problems of relativism inherent in the transcendental theory of *Sein und Zeit*. Although I explained the nature of Heidegger's relativism, Carman deems it 'hard to see just what his relativism is supposed to amount to,' because I also claimed that Heidegger is a realist (pp. 431–432, note 251). As a consequence, the reader would be 'left with no reason to suppose that Philipse's discussion bears any relation to Heidegger's actual views.' Carman's eyesight will be restored if he takes into account what I am actually saying in the note to which he refers: that Heidegger is not an empirical realist but a transcendental realist. Transcendental realism is often accompanied by empirical relativism, as the history of nineteenth-century philosophy shows.

7. Carman's critical mudslinging comes to its climax at the end of his paper, where he discusses my interpretation and criticism of the religious leitmotif in Heidegger's question of being. Here, he finds in my book a wicked combination of the 'anti-religious prejudice' and the 'uncharitable interpretations' which he mentions in his introduction. According to Carman, 'Heidegger himself always vehemently rejected...as fundamentally mistaken' religious interpretations of his thought, and 'insisted instead on the religious neutrality of his thinking.' As a consequence, I would be 'strangely undeterred by the philosopher's own views on the subject' where I claim that 'Heidegger's entire *oeuvre* is guided by "a hidden religious agenda".'

I have only one explanation of Carman's foolish indignation at this point. Carman's knowledge of Heidegger's German texts must be limited, and he must have dozed off while reading the wealth of relevant quotes in my book. For instance, on p. 175, I cited Heidegger's well-known phrase of 1953–1954 that 'without this theological past, I would never have got on the road of thinking...but the past constantly remains future.' Carman could also have read on p. 180 a celebrated passage from Heidegger's letter to Löwith of 19 August 1921, where Heidegger says 'I am a "Christian theologian".' Most importantly, I quoted at length (p. 181) the revealing autobiographical sketch of 1937–1938, in which Heidegger says that 'it is not proper to talk about these most inner confrontations, which are...concerned...with the Unique Question, whether God is fleeing from us or not.... What is at stake is... the Unique Question regarding the Truth of Being.' Here, Heidegger affirms both that the question of being is concerned with 'God' and that he did not want to talk about these most inner confrontations. Should one not at least try out the hypothesis that there is a 'hidden religious agenda' in Heidegger's works? I argued that this hypothesis solves a host of interpretative problems.

In my book, I used these quotes merely as a warming up for a thorough historical exegesis of the religious theme in Heidegger's thought, and I warned against 'the temptation of a too facile religious interpretation' (p. 176). Here, as elsewhere, I painstakingly separated historical interpretation and philosophical criticism. Carman confuses these two enterprises where he writes: 'such an "interpretive hypothesis," it seems to me, is not only reductive and uncharitable; it also exhibits just the sort of closed, ideological thinking that Philippe himself claims to find so deplorable in Heidegger and his followers.' It may be that in my criticism of the religious theme in Heidegger I exhibit 'ideological thinking,' although Carman would have to show that this is the case by analysing my arguments. But as far as interpretation is concerned, I am pretty sure that there is no 'ideological thinking' in my book. On the contrary, there is only an analysis of the relevant texts and an attempt to explain the many obscurities in Heidegger by a substantial interpretative hypothesis.

My conclusion is that Carman can accuse me of 'frequently uncharitable interpretations' only because he wants to retain his private Heidegger idol, which he has fabricated on the basis of a slender selection of barely digested texts. I would advise Carman to spend a couple of years reading the wealth of German material that is now available, and to apply the method of historical interpretation, at least if he is genuinely interested in what Heidegger really intended to say.