

Introduction to the *Kritike* Special Issue: Asian Perspectives on Heidegger

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On November 22, 2018, a round table discussion on the theme, “Heidegger and Asia,” was held at the 24th World Congress of Philosophy in Beijing. Right after the discussion, some of the participants, led by Wei-Ding Tsai (National Chengchi University, Taiwan) and Choong-Su Han (Ewha Womans University, South Korea), gathered for a meeting to organize a Heidegger association in Asia. Thus was born the Heidegger Circle in Asia. Also present at the meeting were Ka-wing Leung (Tongji University, China), Asuka Suehisa (Seijo University, Japan), Chon-Ip Ng (National Tsing Hua University, Taiwan), and myself (Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines).

A year after its founding, in 2019, the Heidegger Circle in Asia (HCIA) held its first international conference at National Chengchi University, Taiwan, organized by Wei-Ding Tsai. For two days, on November 22-23, Heidegger scholars from different parts of Asia presented papers and exchanged ideas in a lively and collegial atmosphere.

In the wake of the pandemic that broke out in early 2020, the HCIA, just like much of the rest of the world, ground to a halt. After two years, however, on December 2-4, 2022, the HCIA sprang back to life and managed to hold its 2nd international conference, albeit online, organized by Choong-Su Han from Seoul. The present special issue of *Kritike* features fourteen essays from that conference, selected from a total of twenty-three through a peer-reviewed process as well as deliberations by the scientific committee.

The essays are grouped according to five themes. First, under the theme “The Self and the Individual,” Hyun Jung Park (South Korea), Asuka Suehisa and Masataka Furusho (both Japan) examine the being of human beings from the perspective of the individual not only as a self, but also as the individual Dasein that confronts other Daseins. Hyun Jung Park maintains

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that “[o]nly by adequately considering the spontaneous self can we establish an ontology of the individual that has hitherto been disregarded for universality.” Complementing Heidegger’s thought with Tellenbach’s, Suehisa opens up a new perspective of the self’s “world-with-others” through the experience of hearing and smelling that makes up an “atmospheric integral,” and thus “contributes to a more precise understanding of the phenomenon of the ‘world-with others’ and allows us to uncover its more fundamental or more instinctive layer.” For his part, in examining Heidegger’s “metontological thinking” and in dialogue mainly with Nishida, Furusho tackles the “irrationality” of the being of Dasein, showing us that while “[t]he emergence of Dasein is always the emergence of a plurality of Daseins” ... “[w]e should remain on this borderline [of transcendental philosophy] and preserve the mystery of plurality inherent in the concealed nature of Dasein’s emergence in order to protect philosophy from any political interventions.”

With the theme, “Between the Human and the Animal,” Peter Ha (South Korea) and I (Philippines) reflect on that seemingly intractable question of the place of animality in our being human. Ha examines the opposition between the age-old definition of the human being as *homo animalis* (on which the *homo rationalis* is based) to Heidegger’s concept of the *homo humanus*. Such an opposition is inextricably linked to the “strife between earth and world” that Heidegger presented in “The Origin of the Work of Art” and deserves further inquiry. For my part, I posit a forgetting of the animal in Heidegger, and, through Derrida and Kierkegaard, point a direction towards a phenomenology of the animal in human beings that at once transcends Heidegger and leads phenomenology forward to further possibilities.

Falling under the theme of “Modernity and Technology,” Federico José Lagdameo and Marc Oliver Pasco (both Philippines) and Yohei Kageyama (Japan) take up the challenges of modernity and its technologies, and strive to uncover new possibilities of being human. Lagdameo challenges the predominantly instrumentalist approach of much of contemporary philosophy of technology, and invites us to an “affordance construal” of technology that allows us to confront the dangers that are “immune from technological design modifications.” For his part, Pasco “explores the possibility of re-imagining the relationship between death and authenticity in the age of information technologies,” as he draws insights from Heidegger and Baudrillard. Kageyama looks into the young Heidegger’s confrontation with modern secular world and identity, focusing on the writer Oscar Wilde and the poet Johannes Jørgensen, and sees an “opportunity for the subjection of the Question of Being in the context of secularization.”

The next essays by Mathias Obert and Wei-Ding Tsai (both Taiwan), and Ahmad Rajabi (Iran), are grouped under the theme, "Ontology, Phenomenology and Ethics." We remember that Heidegger himself said in *Being and Time* that "ontology is possible only as phenomenology." Obert shows us that "the inconspicuous is at work within appearing itself, thus leaving behind the metaphysical opposition between manifestation and concealment." He proposes that this opposition "should be seen as a kind of tension which is indispensable for something to appear at all. This tension makes any phenomenal appearance turn from a simple aspect viewed into an 'ad-spect' (*An-blick*), which requests the genuine 'passibility' of our gaze and engages our responsiveness." Rajabi undertakes a fascinating attempt to "bridge between Heidegger's criticism of metaphysics as Ontotheology, his search for overcoming it in his later thinking about the hiddenness of Being itself, and Ibn 'Arabi's mystical doctrine of unity of Being," and thus paves the way for a fruitful intercultural dialogue between Heidegger and the long tradition of Islamic philosophy and mysticism. For his part, Tsai was not deterred by the fact that Heidegger did not write anything that belonged to the discipline of ethics, and argued nonetheless that Heidegger's early ontological work "contains some axiological element, upon which a possible ethics can be founded."

In the final essays, the authors carry out textual interpretations, beginning with Motoki Saito (Japan), who examines the *Black Notebooks* and shows us how, "[i]n his transformation from hermeneutics of self-criticism to hermeneutics of mask and to hermeneutics of transition, Heidegger finds in the question of Being hermeneutical insights that respond to the event of Being," and thereby "opens various possibilities of a future time-space in which we will re-live." Meditating on a line from Hölderlin's poem, "The Journey," in Heidegger's essay, "The Origin of the Work of Art," Choong-Su Han (South Korea) shows us "why it is difficult to leave art as an origin." As the origin of truth itself, art is that than which nothing better can stand as the site of dwelling. And who indeed could abandon such a place? Finally, in revisiting Heidegger's own meditation on Hölderlin's poem, "The Rhine," Suh-Hyun Park (South Korea) invites us to hear the language of the ineffable, which gives rise to poetry and sustains its saying, at once finite and yet remaining endless in its possibilities.

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With these essays, it is our hope in the Heidegger Circle of Asia that the “conversation that we have been” (to borrow from Hölderlin) can keep us attuned to the many possibilities of being that lie before us, and those that are yet to come.

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