Article

## On the Limits of Transcendental Philosophy in Heidegger's Thinking: Thrown Projection, Metontology, and Emergence of Dasein

#### Masataka Furusho

**Abstract:** In *Being and Time*, Heidegger developed his ideas in accordance with transcendental philosophy. However, it is crucial to understand his concept of "thrown projection" precisely as an expression of distancing from the preceding theory of the transcendental constitution of the world. This paper aims to reexamine Heidegger's path of thinking, which leads to the problem of the ontical foundation of ontology and the consideration of metontology, which seeks to access the fundamental concealment behind the emergence of Dasein. Heidegger's metontological thinking about this concealment is a bold attempt to break through the limits of transcendental philosophy, but it also carries the risk of falling into the sphere of political violence. How can we protect philosophy from such violence?

**Keywords:** transcendental philosophy, thrown projection, metontology, emergence of Dasein

Therein lies the significance of Heidegger's departure from the idea of transcendental constitution and his repeated attempts to elaborate metaphysical thinking about the "entities as a whole [das Seiende im Ganzen]"? This paper attempts to reexamine this classic problem



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> In this paper, I translate Heidegger's term "das Seiende im Ganzen" as "entities as a whole" and not as "beings as a whole." Recent English translations of Heidegger writings have often adopted the latter, but I prefer the former because the former is better suited to emphasize phonetically the ontological difference between Being (*Sein*) and entity (*Seiendes*). The issue of the emergence of Dasein, which is closely related to this difference, will be an essential point in this paper.

of Heidegger studies. This problem is, of course, important in interpreting the internal connection between Heidegger's fundamental ontology of Dasein and the question about the meaning of Being in general. However, it should also be discussed to elucidate the meaning of his political failure. His ontological inquiries about the entities as a whole may share borders with his political call to the German people [Volk] to find their own leadership from the "power of a great and fundamentally concealed vocation.<sup>2</sup> This kind of political call, as well as the seemingly humble speculation about the "historical Beyng [Seyn] of the people"<sup>3</sup> could be subject to some biopolitical intervention, if we forget that this "Beyng" is "essentially and forever sealed in a mystery."<sup>4</sup> However, we can ask ourselves how it is also possible to resist such an intervention on the borderline of an attempted departure from transcendental philosophy. From this ambivalent perspective, we will conclude this paper with a brief look at Nishida's thought in 1932.

# Transcendental Constitution in Heidegger and Other Typical Theories

In Being and Time, Heidegger claims:

*All* the modes of Being of entities within-the-world are founded ontologically upon the worldhood of the world, and accordingly upon the phenomenon of Being-in-theworld.<sup>5</sup>

This is one of the most typical sentences in *Being and Time* expressing Heidegger's view of *transcendental constitution* in this period of his thinking. It would be fair to say that Heidegger is following the Kantian conception here and grasping "the phenomenon of Being-in-the-world" as the transcendental condition of possibility for entities to be understood as entities within the world. According to Heidegger, "the entity which is essentially constituted through Being-in-the-world *is* itself in every case its 'there [*da*]'"<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Wahrheit*, ed. by Hartmut Tietjen, in Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, Bd. 36/37 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2001), 3; Martin Heidegger, *Being and Truth*, trans. by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010), 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymns "Germania" and "The Rhine,"* trans. by William McNeill and Julia Ireland (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2014), 108.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1993), 211. This original page numbering is also printed in the English translation by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), on which my translation is based.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, 132.

and the Being its "there" in this emphatic sense signifies the phenomenon of disclosedness [Erschlossenheit]. The latter determines how the world opens itself and how each one of us understands one's own Being along with this opening of the world. As Kant explores the "transcendental truth, which precedes all empirical truth and makes it possible,"7 Heidegger refers to this "Dasein's disclosedness," which is at the same time the world's disclosedness, as "the most primordial phenomenon of truth", 8 in which "the uncoveredness of entities within-the-world is grounded."9

Readers of Being and Time know how far Heidegger goes in radicalizing this transcendentalist conception on the one hand. He argues that since the above-mentioned disclosedness is "a kind of Being which is essential to Dasein," "'there is' truth only in so far as Dasein is and so long as Dasein is."10 According to Heidegger, we can say that "before there was any Dasein, there was no truth; nor will there be any truth after Dasein is no more." 11 Not only the laws of natural science such as Newton's laws of motion and gravitation, but also logical laws such as the principle of contradiction, usually regarded as "eternal truth," are true "only as long as Dasein is."12 To put it more ontologically, "only if the understanding of Being is, do entities as entities become accessible," in other words, "only as long as Dasein is... 'is there' Being." 13 The "understanding of Being" is not merely a natural event that occurs inside the world, but the singular place of the transcendental which discloses the world itself. The Being of Dasein makes it possible that "there is" Being, based on which an entity can be understood as an entity and everything within the world can be conceived as what it is.

The ontological status of this Dasein seems to be quite analogous to the status of transcendental subjectivity based on which the world is constituted. Husserl argues that "the original motif" which "through Descartes confers meaning upon all modern philosophies" is the transcendental motif of "inquiring back into the ultimate source of all the formations of knowledge," 14 and he called this ultimate source "transcendental subjectivity." Husserl's philosophy as transcendental was an



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, trans. by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A146/B185.

<sup>8</sup> Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, 220-221.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 226.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 212.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Edmund Husserl, The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy, trans. by David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 97.

endless striving to inquire back into the primal subjective functioning from which "everything that is of the world derives its meaning." <sup>15</sup>

However, in response to these philosophical efforts, the following awkward question must be posed: What kind of entity is subjectivity itself that constitutes entities as entities in the first place? As is well known, a straightforward answer to this question is that the constituting subject is *not* something that exists inside the world. One typical answer of this kind can be found in Wittgenstein's argument in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, which reads as follows:

5.631 The thinking, presenting subject; there is no such thing.

If I wrote a book "The world as I found it," I should also have therein to report on my body and say which members obey my will and which do not, etc. This then would be a method of isolating the subject or rather of showing that in an important sense there is no subject: that is to say, of it alone in this book mention could *not* be made.<sup>16</sup>

As we can see, if I were to report on myself in order to complete the description of the book "The world as I found it," I would have to report on myself reporting on myself, which would, in principle, entail an even more complicated task of reporting on myself reporting on myself reporting on myself, and so on ad infinitum. The act of presenting a world picture in which my own image must be depicted generates additional images of my *self-forgotten* self, which are yet to be depicted in this world picture. This is why Wittgenstein writes: "5.632 The subject does not belong to the world, but it is a limit of the world," and further "6.4311 Death is not an event of life," and he "who lives in the present ... lives eternally." It is essentially based on the same logic that Husserl argues: "it is 'unthinkable' that I cease transcendentally;" and "it is evident, that the concrete cessation, natural

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 82

 $<sup>^{16}</sup>$  Ludwig Wittgenstein,  $\it Tractatus$  Logico-Philosophicus, trans. by C. K. Ogden (New York: Dover Publications, 1999), 85.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 104

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Späte Texte über Zeitkonstitution* (1929-1934): *Die C-Manuskripte* (Dordrecht; Springer, 2006), 97.

cessation of the living flowing presence, is not conceivable as a fact, not as a being, as an experienceable."<sup>20</sup>

This type of idea of transcendental subjectivity that does not belong to the world is, in fact, not unique to modern Western philosophy, but an ancient idea that has been with us since we first discovered ourselves as beings who perceive and think. The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, estimated to have been composed around the 7th-6th century BC, describes the following insights.

You could not see the seer of seeing. You could not hear the hearer of hearing. You could not think the thinker of thinking. You could not understand the understander of understanding. He is your soul, which is in all things. Aught else than Him [or, than this] is wretched.<sup>21</sup>

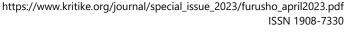
That Soul ( $\bar{A}tman$ ) is not this, it is not that (neti, neti). It is unseizable, for it is not seized. It is indestructible, for it is not destroyed. It is unattached, for it does not attach itself. It is unbound. It does not tremble. It is not injured.<sup>22</sup>

This soul, or Ātman, which can only be indicated by the endless series of negations, "neti, neti (not this, not that)," is said to be Brahman, the ultimate reality of the universe. Kitarō Nishida, a modern Japanese thinker, arrived at the thought of absolute nothingness as a result of his search for the true self or true ego based on a similar idea of negation. Although these ideas may seem mysterious at first glance, it is safe to say that they are fundamentally straightforward as they remain loyal to the fact that each of us cannot step outside of our own first-person perspective.

## Heidegger's Departure from the Transcendentalist Theory, and the Meaning of His Metontology

However, it must be said that Heidegger has already carefully distanced himself from this one-sided thinking of the transcendental constitution in the period of Being and Time. In an appendix to his famous

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Ibid., 125.



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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 96. Certainly, Husserl also pointed out a "paradox of human subjectivity" which is "a subject for the world and at the same time [...] an object in the world". Yet, he insisted on finally, that this paradox can be resolved through transcendental reduction and turns out to be merely a misunderstanding derived from self-objectification. See Husserl, Crisis of European Sciences, 178.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> The Thirteen Principal Upanishads, trans. by Robert Ernest Hume (London: Oxford University Press, 1921), 112.

letter to Husserl, dated October 22, 1927, he writes that "entities in the sense of what you call 'world' cannot be explained in their transcendental constitution by returning to an entity of the same mode of being . . . [but] that does *not* mean that what makes up the place of the transcendental is *not* an entity at all." <sup>23</sup> According to Heidegger, "that which constitutes is not nothing; hence it is something, and it is in being [seiend] – although not in the sense of positive." The question about this "mode of being of the entity in which 'world' is constituted" is "Being and Time's central problem – namely, a fundamental ontology of Dasein." As is well known, "thrown projection [geworfener Entwurf]" is the term Heidegger coined to describe this singular mode of Being of Dasein, an extraordinary entity, who always finds itself as something already thrown into the midst of entities, and yet is the very condition of possibility for an entity to be constituted as an entity at all.

What does this puzzling nature of Heidegger's idea of "thrown projection" truly mean? Can we say, for example, that it is decisive that Heidegger, unlike Husserl, approves that Dasein, as a constituting subject, also dies? This answer would not be sufficient yet, because Heidegger's concept of "dying" in *Being and Time* does *not* mean the actual cessation of the transcendental subjective itself, which Husserl would consider unthinkable, but only the certain *possibility* of impossibility of existence, which Dasein understands as its own possibility. What is decisive is probably that the concept of "thrown projection" refers to the problem of *ontical emergence* of the understanding of Being. To support this interpretation, we would like to follow the path of Heidegger's thought that reaches through the idea of "ontical foundation of ontology" to the idea of "metontology."

As we have seen, Heidegger asserts in *Being and Time* that "only if the understanding of Being *is*, do entities as entities become accessible," that is, "only as long as Dasein *is*, 'is there' Being."<sup>24</sup> What Heidegger will claim here, is not merely another version of transcendental idealism, but that the disclosedness of Being presupposes the factical thrown existence of the "ontical possibility of an understanding of Being."<sup>25</sup> As Heidegger states in the lecture of the summer semester in 1927, "ontology *cannot* be established in a *purely ontological* manner."<sup>26</sup> Ontology needs to be "referred back to

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Martin Heidegger, "APPENDIX I: Difficulties With Issues," in Edmund Husserl Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology and the Confrontation with Heidegger (1927-1931), ed. and trans. by Thomas Sheehan and Richard E. Palmer (Dordrecht: Springer, 1997), 138 (emphasis added).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, 212.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Martin Heidegger, Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie, ed. by Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, in Martin Heidegger, Gesamtausgabe, Bd. 24 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1989, 26; Martin Heidegger, The Basic Problems of Phenomenology, trans. by Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), 19. Emphasis added.

Dasein," which is something ontical. Therefore, "ontology has an ontical foundation."<sup>27</sup> According to Heidegger, such formulated problem indicates the metontology as a "turnover" of ontology. After reemphasizing the insight into the dependence of Being on the factical existence of Dasein in the next year's summer semester, he adds as follows:

... and this [the factical existence of Dasein], in turn, presupposes the factual occurrentness of nature [das faktische Vorhandensein der Natur] ... As a result, we need a special problematic which has for its proper theme entities as a whole [das Seiende im Ganzen]. This new investigation resides in the essence of ontology itself and is the result of its turnover [Umschlag], its 'μεταβολή'. I designate this set of questions metontology.<sup>28</sup>

Why does the factical existence of Dasein presuppose the factual occurrentness of nature or the entities as a whole? Because the factical existence of Dasein must imply its thrownness into the midst of entities. This thrown facticity motivates us to a new investigation on the ontical-ontological connection between thrownness of Dasein and the entities as a whole. However, as existing, even as an ontological inquirer, "Dasein never comes back behind its thrownness." We can only say that in the midst of entities as a whole *emerges* our understanding of Being. However, we should not undermine the self-concealing nature of this emergence by coming around behind it, let alone giving it a causal explanation.

Then, what could we still talk about this ontical emergence in the entities as a whole? In the winter-semester's lecture of 1929/30, Heidegger speaks of " $\phi\dot{\nu}\sigma\iota\zeta$ " as "the self-forming prevailing of entities as a whole."<sup>30</sup> There, he seems to enumerate from every side what we may assume in terms of the totality of entities that factical existence of Dasein presupposes: This "whole prevailing ... [of]  $\phi\dot{\nu}\sigma\iota\zeta$  ... prevails through and around man." Man,



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Heidegger, Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie, 26; Heidegger, The Basic Problems of Phenomenology, 19.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Martin Heidegger, Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik im Ausgang von Leibniz, ed. by Klaus Held, in Martin Heidegger, Gesamtausgabe, Bd. 26 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1978), 199; Martin Heidegger, The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic, trans. by Michael Heim (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), 156-157.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, 284.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik: Welt – Endlichkeit – Einsamkeit*, ed. by Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, in Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, Bd. 29/30 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1983), 38; Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. by William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 25.

"who has always already spoken out about this ... does not have power over" this prevailing of  $\varphi \acute{v} \sigma \iota \varsigma$ . Specifically, nature as  $\varphi \acute{v} \sigma \iota \varsigma$  signifies the "growth" of plants and animals "in the midst of, and permeated by, the changing of the seasons, in the midst of the alternation of day and night, in the midst of wandering of the stars, of storms and weather and the raging of the elements." And lastly "the events which man experiences in himself" such as "procreation, birth, childhood, maturing, aging, death" belong to this general prevailing of entities, "which comprehends within itself human fate and its history."  $^{33}$ 

The "entities as a whole" mean such a primordial place from which we are born and into which we die. But of course, no matter how much detail is accumulated in such descriptions, the crucial question of why our understanding of Being has emerged amid entities as a whole will remain a mystery. All the above descriptions of the "entities as a whole" are merely our retrospective descriptions from a post-emergence perspective. Everything that is older than this emergence hides itself. In his essay "On the Essence of Truth," originally derived from a 1930 lecture, Heidegger calls the "concealment of entities as a whole" "un-truth proper [eigentliche Unwahrheit]" and claims that this un-truth is "older than every openedness of this or that entity. It is older even than letting-be itself." "A Since we may interpret this "letting-be" as what was called "understanding of Being" in Being and Time, 55 this "un-truth proper" can signify the essence of the place where our understanding of Being has emerged.

The problem is, however, whether Heidegger could properly preserve the essence of the "un-truth proper" as "concealment"? As suggested above, this "un-truth proper" shares borders with various narratives of "procreation, birth, childhood, maturing, aging, death" or

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Heidegger, Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik, 39; Heidegger, The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics, 26.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Heidegger, *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik*, 38; Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 25.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Heidegger, Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik, 39; Heidegger, The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics, 26.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Wegmarken*, ed. by Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, in Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, Bd. 9 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1976), 193-194; Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, trans. and ed. by William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 148.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> In "On the Essence of truth," Heidegger defines "letting-be" or "letting entities be (*Sein-lassen des Seienden*)" as the "freedom" that determines human beings and is "the fulfillment and consummation of the essence of truth in the sense of the disclosure of entities" (GA9, 190; ENG146). This concept is related to the same dimension of the "understanding of Being" in *Being and Time* that discloses the world. Careful readers of *Being and Time* will recognize that Heidegger discusses this "letting be" as "letting something be involved (*Bewendenlassen*)" (SZ 85-86), which is necessary for something ready-to-hand to be encountered in the environment.

"human fate and its history." <sup>36</sup> Forgetting the fundamental concealing nature of these phenomena can easily invite diverse self-deceptive narratives or various biopolitical interventions. Heidegger, albeit in the storm of his time, gradually began to misapprehend the problem of emergence of our understanding of Being through the romantic notion of the rise of the German people [Volk], calling his students to the "power of a great and fundamentally concealed vocation" of the people.

#### **Conclusion**

In order to find a way to resist this misconception, we would like to conclude with a passing reference to another possible departure from transcendental philosophy in Nishida's thought in 1932. In the following passages, the counterpart of the Heideggerian concealment is expressed as "Thou," as something fundamentally irrational.

When one truly sees the world within oneself, when the world is considered to be absorbed within oneself, then what is against oneself is no longer a thing but must be Thou. ... The opposition between place and place must be Thou and I.<sup>37</sup>

What is opposed to me as merely objective, is still in me, and what is opposed to reason as merely irrational is still rational. It is something that is to be rationalized, otherwise it cannot be said to stand against reason. That which truly stands outside of me, that which is truly irrational to reason, must be Thou to me. When the objective is considered to be totally absorbed in me, it must be Thou who stands against me.<sup>38</sup>

These two simple quotes emanate from Nishida, who occupies a position on the borderline of transcendental philosophy. Nishida views the purely predicative place of "absolute nothingness" as transcendental, rather than a subjective act of thinking, but this is of lost importance at present. The crux of the matter is that encountering the Thou is a fact that can never be rationally reduced to a transcendental constitution. In Nishida's philosophy,



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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Heidegger, Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik, 39; Heidegger, The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics, 26.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Nishida Kitarō, *Mu no Jikaku-teki Gentei, Complete Works of Nishida Kitarō, Vol.6* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1979), 210.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 235-36.

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the problem of Heideggerian thrownness does not merely involve the emergence of transcendental place, but also concerns the mystery of the multiple emergences of transcendental place in the I-Thou relationship. It is well known that a number of philosophers, such as Karl Löwith, Emmanuel Levinas in Europe, or Shūzō Kuki, Tetsurō Watsuji in Asia, have confronted Heidegger's philosophy and criticized his neglect of the problem of "others." However, these criticisms do not necessarily strike at the heart of Heidegger's thinking, which recognizes that "the world of Dasein is a with-world [Mitwelt]" and that Being-in-the-world is always already "Being-with Others."39 It is necessary to see the truly irrational aspect of this factical Beingwith Others, as Nishida has done. What is irrational is that Dasein, as an understanding entity, always already has emerged in plurality. The emergence of Dasein is always the emergence of a plurality of Daseins, which indeed establishes the people as a "Volk," but this is always already one of the peoples. The world of Dasein is always one of the worlds, and the language of Dasein is always one of the languages. Such irrationality appears as irrational because the attitude of transcendental philosophy is not easily abandoned, but rather a thorough execution of its thinking is attempted. The irrational in Nishida and the un-truth proper in Heidegger appear on the borderline of transcendental philosophy, rather than beyond it. We should remain on this borderline and preserve the mystery of plurality inherent in the concealed nature of Dasein's emergence in order to protect philosophy from any political interventions.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, 118.

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