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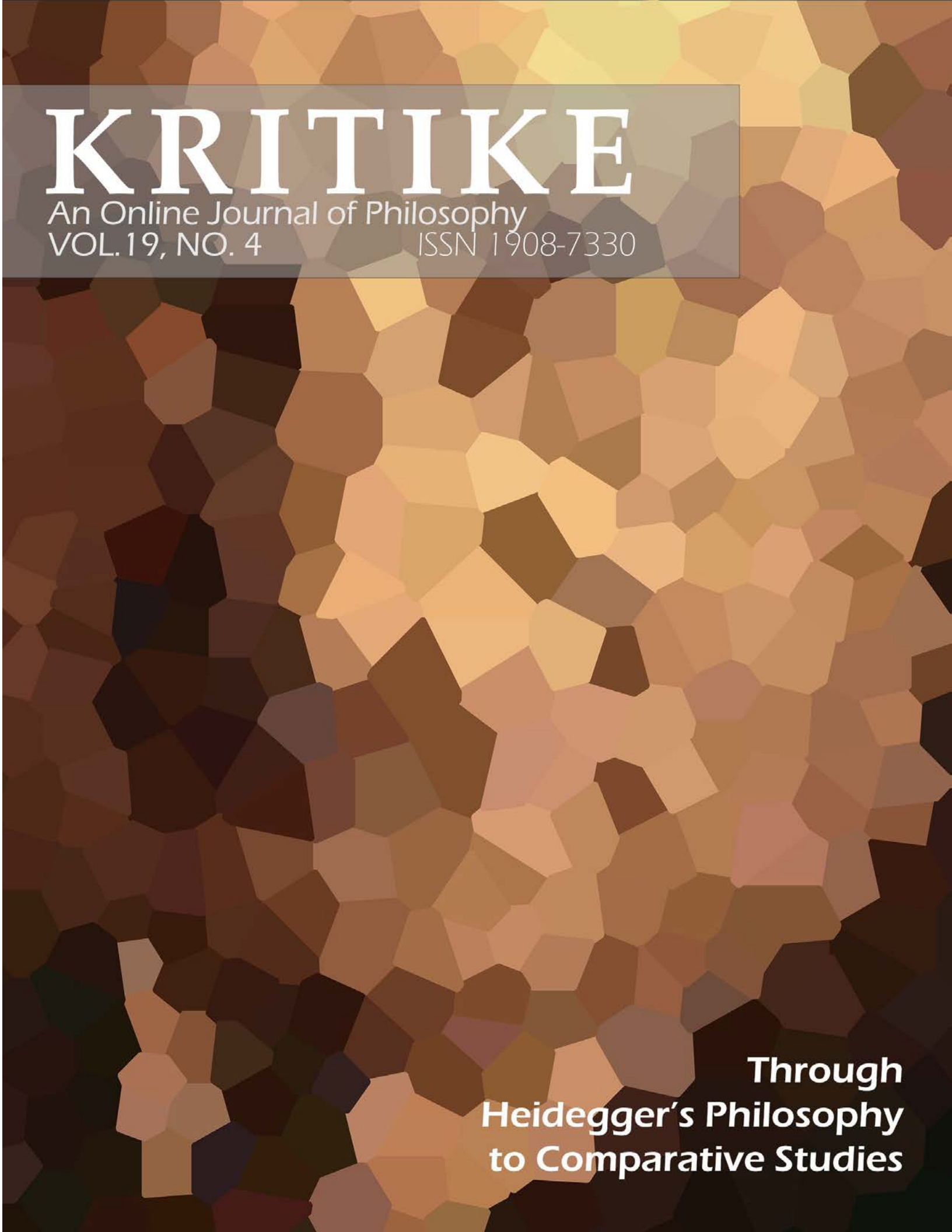

Through Heidegger's Philosophy to Comparative Studies

K R I T I K E

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ABOUT THE COVER

"Heidegger, a hub for comparative studies and a witness to the history of the HCIA"

This image depicts the face of Martin Heidegger in the form of a mosaic. Numerous small, colored fragments assemble the contour of his face. The image suggests that Heidegger's philosophy emerges from a constellation of diverse traditions, interpretations, and paths of thinking. In this sense, his thinking can serve as a hub for comparative studies. The image was first used on the poster of the international conference organized by the Heidegger Circle in Asia in 2019. Since then, it has appeared repeatedly on the posters of subsequent HCIA conferences and has thus become a living witness to the history of the HCIA.

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Photo designed by Ming Syuan Tan, 2019
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About the Journal

KRITIKE is the official open access (OA) journal of the Department of Philosophy of the University of Santo Tomas (UST), Manila, Philippines. It is a Filipino peer-reviewed, interdisciplinary, and international journal of philosophy founded by a group of UST alumni. The journal seeks to publish articles and book reviews by local and international authors across the whole range of philosophical topics, but with special emphasis on the following subject strands:

- **Filipino Philosophy**
- **Oriental Thought and East-West Comparative Philosophy**
- **Continental European Philosophy**
- **Anglo-American Philosophy**

The journal primarily caters to works by professional philosophers and graduate students of philosophy, but welcomes contributions from other fields (literature, cultural studies, gender studies, political science, sociology, history, anthropology, economics, inter alia) with strong philosophical content.

The word "kritike" is Greek from the verb "krinein," which means to discern. Hence, kritike means the art of discerning or the art of critical analysis. Any form of philosophizing is, in one way or another, a "critique" of something. Being critical, therefore, is an attitude common to all philosophical traditions. Indeed, the meaning of philosophy is critique and to be philosophical is to be critical.

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HEIDEGGER'S EARLIER PHILOSOPHY

HEIDEGGER'S LATER PHILOSOPHY

HEIDEGGER AND ETHICS

HEIDEGGER AND EUROPE

KRITIKE VOLUME NINETEEN NUMBER FOUR (FEBRUARY 2026) 1-7

Introduction | Special Issue

Through Heidegger's Philosophy to Comparative Studies

Choong-Su Han

It is well known that Heidegger chose as the motto for his collected works (*Gesamtausgabe*) the phrase "Ways, not Works (*Wege, nicht Werke*)."[1] This phrase precisely characterizes the nature of his writings. In fact, the largest portion of the collected works consists of Heidegger's university lecture courses, along with papers, lectures, and notes. Moreover, even his major work, *Being and Time*, is, as is well known, an unfinished work. Therefore, it is inappropriate to call the collected works "works."

In fact, in assembling his collected works, Heidegger did not intend to present all his writings merely in a philological or archival sense. Rather, he sought to disclose, in a philosophical manner, the unfolding path of his thinking as a whole. To this end, Heidegger provided explicit instructions concerning the editorial principles that should guide the publication of his works.[2] The expression "ways" does not indicate a collection of finished products but the trajectory of the journey of his thinking in movement. And on that journey, the way is not a mere passage to be traversed swiftly and left behind in order to arrive at a predetermined destination. On the contrary, as Heidegger emphasizes in several of his writings, thinking attends to the way itself.[3] This kind of walking does not mean hastening forward while looking solely ahead. It means walking slowly and deliberately while looking down at the path.

Yet sometimes one can also walk by lifting one's eyes from the path and looking around at one's surroundings. Then, one can look at the different landscapes on both sides of the path. For example, on the country path (*Feldweg*) of Heidegger's hometown of Meßkirch, one can see, to the right, the

[1] Martin Heidegger, *Frühe Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1978), 2.

[2] Franz Josef Wetz, "Wege: Nicht Werke. Zur Gesamtausgabe Martin Heidegger," in *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung*, 41 (1987), 444.

[3] Martin Heidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik," *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000), 7; Martin Heidegger, "Der Satz der Identität," in *Identität und Differenz* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2006), 33.

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wide fields stretching to the horizon, and, to the left, the mountain range of the Vogesen (Vosges). Thus, one can naturally walk while comparing two different landscapes. If so, the path of thinking that Heidegger, the thinker of the country path, walked may also be a path of comparison.

It is widely known that Heidegger showed deep interest in Daoist thought as well as Japanese philosophy. Therefore, when one searches for papers and monographs comparing Heidegger's philosophy with Daoism, one can confirm that a considerable amount of research results has already been accumulated.[4] Yet this research landscape reflects a certain Eurocentric presupposition. Europe, the United Kingdom, and the United States are taken to constitute one philosophical cultural sphere, while the rest of the regions are classified as another philosophical cultural sphere. Within such a framework, comparative philosophy is naturally understood as the comparison of Western philosophy with non-Western philosophy.

However, it would be preferable to understand the designation "comparative philosophy" not as limited to the dichotomous framework of Western and non-Western, but as a concept encompassing all research that deals together with two different traditions of thought or philosophical positions. From this broader perspective, Heidegger's writings of developing his own hermeneutic phenomenology through confrontation with Husserl's transcendental phenomenology also possesses a comparative philosophical character. The same applies to his critical interpretations of philosophies of Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche. His confrontations with French philosophers such as Descartes and Bergson can be understood as comparative research between German and French philosophies. Moreover, Heidegger's reinterpretations of the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle may also be seen as comparative studies between ancient Greek philosophy and German philosophy. Yet his comparative research does not end here. He also attempted intellectual dialogues with various poets and painters. Such dialogues, too, possess a comparative philosophical character, insofar as they constitute encounters between two different forms of thinking, namely philosophy and art. In this way, Heidegger's thinking always unfolded through philosophical confrontation and dialogue, and it can be said that the path of his thinking was itself a path of comparative philosophy. In fact,

[4] Rolf Elberfeld, "Laozi-Rezeption in der deutschen Philosophie. Von der Kenntnisnahme zur Wiederholung," in *Philosophieren im Dialog mit China*, ed. by Helmut Schneider (Köln: Ed. Chōra, 2000), 152–153; Bret W. Davis, "Heidegger and Daoism: A Dialogue on the Useless Way of Unnecessary Being," in *Daoist Encounters with Phenomenology. Thinking Interculturally about Human Existence*, ed. by David Chai (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 161–195.

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among Heidegger's collected works, most of them possess a dialogical philosophical character.[5]

Just as a human being walks upright by alternately stepping forward with two legs, thinking advances only through a reciprocal movement between two different intellectual positions. It would be difficult to go far on one leg, without the aid of the other leg or other walking aids. Similarly, a philosophy confined to a single tradition finds it difficult to extend or deepen itself. Thinking namely requires countermovement, resistance, and exchange. In this sense, Heidegger was able to walk a long path of thinking, because he placed one foot in his own philosophical questioning and the other foot in sustained engagement with thinkers and poets. His thinking moved forward not in isolation, but in dialogue.

Since Heidegger himself walked the path of comparative philosophy in this way, scholars who study his writings naturally become accustomed and open to comparative philosophical research. So, following Heidegger, they themselves come to carry out comparative philosophical research.

The first academic conference devoted to comparative philosophical research on Heidegger's philosophy was held in Hawaii from November 17 to 21, 1969. The organizers of the conference invited Heidegger, but due to his advanced age he was unable to attend and instead sent a letter to the organizers. In that letter, he emphasized the importance of comparison with Eastern philosophy as follows: "Again and again it has seemed urgent to me that a dialogue take place with the thinkers of what is to us the Eastern world."[6] Heidegger also pointed out that European and American researchers were not proficient in Eastern languages. The papers presented at this Hawaii conference were later published in an academic journal, and many of them compared Heidegger's philosophy with Indian philosophy and Buddhist philosophy.

Thereafter, comparative research on Heidegger's thought expanded to include engagements with the ancient Chinese thinkers of Laozi and Zhuangzi.[7] In this development, the center of comparison gradually shifted from West Asia to East Asia. In the German-speaking world, Heidegger scholars at the University of Hildesheim and the University of Vienna formed

[5] Marcel recalls Heidegger as a thinker who was "engaged in a perpetual dialogue with the philosophers that preceded him." See Gabriel Marcel, *Tragic Wisdom and Beyond* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 8.

[6] Winfield E. Nagley, "Introduction to the Symposium and Reading of a Letter from Martin Heidegger," in *Philosophy East and West*, 20 (1970), 221.

[7] Kah Kyung Cho, *Bewußtsein und Natursein: phänomenologischer West-Ost-Diwan* (Freiburg: Alber, 1987).

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a current of comparative philosophical research.[8] More recently, Western scholars who have conducted research activities in Japan and China have been leading comparative philosophical studies.[9] Having resided in Asia for a long period of time, they acquired the conditions necessary in order to overcome, at least in part, the linguistic barrier that Heidegger had pointed out. As a result, whereas the research of the previous generation tended to interpret Eastern thought from a Western perspective, it has now become possible to look more deeply at Eastern thought from an Eastern perspective. This change can be regarded as a sign that comparative research has taken a step further forward.

Parallel to this research trend, Eastern scholars and students also went to Germany to study Heidegger's philosophy systematically and deeply. After completing their studies, they returned to their home countries and attempted research comparing their own tradition of thought with Heidegger's philosophy.[10] In order to share the research achievements of such scholars, the Heidegger Circle in Asia (hereafter referred to as HCIA) was founded in 2018.

The idea of the HCIA was conceived along the country path in Meßkirch, during a Heidegger conference hosted there in 2014 by Professor Holger Zaborowski. During the conference, Wei-Ding Tsai and I first started dreaming of founding an Asian circle about Heidegger's philosophy. Four years later, in 2018, we organized a round table titled "Heidegger and Asia" at the 24th World Congress of Philosophy in Beijing. The lively discussions and shared enthusiasm of the round table made the dream come true. In 2019, Tsai hosted the 1st international conference of the HCIA at National Chengchi University in Taipei. The 2nd conference, delayed by the pandemic, was eventually held online in 2022, hosted by Ewha Womans University in Seoul. After the conference, several presentations were selected and later published in a special issue of the journal *Kritike*, edited by Remmon Barbaza and Federico José Lagdameo.[11] In 2023, Tsai once again hosted the 3rd conference. In the following year, another round table, "Heidegger Circle in Asia," was

[8] Rolf Elberfeld, *Philosophieren in einer globalisierten Welt: Wege zu einer transformativen Phänomenologie* (Freiburg and München: Alber, 2017); Georg Stenger, *Philosophie der Interkulturalität: Erfahrung und Welten* (Freiburg and München: Alber, 2006).

[9] Lin Ma, *Heidegger on East-West Dialogue: Anticipating the Event* (New York: Routledge, 2008); Mathias Obert, *Tanzende Bäume, sprechende Steine: zur Phänomenologie japanischer Gärten* (Freiburg and München: Alber, 2019); Fabian Heubel, *Gewundene Wege nach China. Heidegger-Daoismus-Adorno* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2020).

[10] Simon Ebersolt, Tae-hee Kim, Choong-su Han, Ni Liangkang, and Fang Xianghong, "PART V Phenomenology in the world: Eastern Asia," in *The Routledge Handbook of Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, ed. by Daniele De Santis, Burt C. Hopkins and Claudio Majolino (New York: Routledge, 2021), 768-775.

[11] See *Kritike*, 16:3 (April 2023), <https://doi.org/10.25138/16.3>.

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organized as the 4th conference of the HCIA at the 25th World Congress of Philosophy in Rome. There, many European and American scholars expressed genuine interest in the HCIA. In continuation of this, the 5th conference was held in Seoul in 2025. It was attended by 23 presenters from 11 countries (Japan, China, the Philippines, Taiwan, Iran, India, Germany, Spain, Poland, the United States, and Korea). Among those presentations, 16 papers were selected through a peer-reviewed process as well as deliberations by the scientific committee and are found in this special issue of the journal *Kritike*.

The papers are grouped according to five themes. The first group titled "Heidegger and Asia" includes seven papers in total and constitutes the largest portion of this issue. In this group, Remmon E. Barbaza examines the modern city of Manila in light of Heidegger's concept of oblivion. Choong-Su Han elucidates Heidegger's interpretation of Zhuangzi's notion "the necessity of the unnecessary." Four Japanese scholars—Yohei Kageyama, Yuta Okada, Hoko Nakagawa, and Motoki Saito—offer comparative studies that place Heidegger's philosophy in dialogue with various Japanese thinkers. This group concludes with Hongjian Wang's account of the reception of Heidegger's philosophy in China.

The second and third groups provide diverse interpretations of Heidegger's earlier and later thoughts. Peter Ha examines Heidegger's concept of the will within the framework of fundamental ontology. Ahmad Rajabi compares Heidegger's concept of Dasein with Plotinus' concept of nous, focusing on the theme of ecstatic self-determination. Mathias Obert elucidates the relationship between Heidegger's concepts of saying and showing, particularly in relation to art. Suh-Hyun Park explores the possibility of self-transformation in view of Heidegger's concept of releasement.

Falling under the group "Heidegger and Ethics," Chop Ig Ng reveals the possibility of a hermeneutic ethics grounded in Heidegger's thought, while Wei-Ding Tsai attempts to articulate a Heideggerian account of normative ethics. The final group "Heidegger and Europe" broadens the horizon of comparative studies. Matthias Ernst Bähr brings Heidegger into dialogue with Bergson, examining the themes of time, experience, and knowledge. Esmeralda Balaguer García places Ortega and Heidegger in conversation, in order to address the question of technology in the age of artificial intelligence. Finally, Hyun Jung Park defends Heidegger's ontology in the face of the contemporary speculative turn.

Now I would like to conclude this introduction with a few words of gratitude. Having majored in mechanical engineering as an undergraduate, I came to study philosophy relatively late. I therefore wish first to express my heartfelt thanks to my academic advisors in Korea and in Germany, namely

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Professor Chankook Park and Professor Hans-Helmuth Gander, who guided this late-blooming student on the path toward becoming a scholar of philosophy. I am very grateful to Professor Holger Zaborowski, who hosted the Heidegger conference in Meßkirch where I had the good fortune to meet Professor Wei-Ding Tsai and Professor Yohei Kageyama with whom I could share the dream of founding the HCIA. And our collaboration has continued ever since. In December of last year, we organized the first HCIA winter course for students.

I truly thank the students of Ewha Womans University who wholeheartedly assisted in preparing the 5th conference, which serves as the foundation of this issue. I also extend my deep gratitude to Ewha Womans University, the Thaumazein Foundation, and the Kim Hee-Kyung Scholarship Foundation for European Humanities for their financial support at that time. I would further like to thank my co-editors, Professor Mandel Cabrera, and the Ph.D. candidate Ka Young Do, who worked together with me in the process of producing this issue. My true gratitude also goes to the editorial team of *Kritike* for their invaluable assistance and support throughout the publication process.

At present, the HCIA is preparing for the 6th conference to be held in the Philippines in September 2026. And its 7th conference is scheduled to take place in Japan in March 2027. What began as a small conversation along the country path has grown into an ongoing international academic exchange. It is my sincere hope that this dialogue will continue to expand and deepen, fostering thoughtful encounters across nations and traditions and contributing to a more genuinely dialogical future for philosophy and perhaps for our shared world.

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Article

Heidegger and the Forgetting of Walking in Manila

Remmon E. Barbaza

Abstract: This essay seeks to show, mainly through Heideggerian phenomenology, that the forgetting of walking in Manila is not merely a problem that requires a practical or technical solution. Rather it is more radically and ontologically rooted in what Heidegger famously referred to as *Seinsvergessenheit*, or "the forgetfulness of being," particularly our way of being human. The forgetting of our being human in turn reveals itself in the way we design our cities, the spaces we inhabit, which yet again determines how we move about and navigate through such spaces. The acceptance of the way we are as humans, built as we are primarily to walk, is surely the first step in finding our way to retrieving this long lost habit. But there is also language to guide us. A brief consideration of the Filipino language itself shows that walking is so much part of who we are as human beings.

Keywords: Heidegger, Manila, forgetting, walking

Manila ranks among the world's least walkable cities. Streets are often unsafe for pedestrians, sidewalks—where they exist—are narrow or obstructed, and crossing the road can be an exercise in risk-taking. The dominance of private cars, coupled with an inefficient and often costly public transport system, has resulted in an urban environment that all but discourages walking. Long-time mobility advocate, Robert Siy notes: "Only 6 percent of Filipino households own a private car; in Greater Manila, the percentage of households with cars is 11.5 percent, only a small minority. And yet, road congestion in many cities is already at crisis levels."[1] For its part, the Asian Development Bank describes how, in Manila,

[1] Robert Siy, "Our worsening mobility – 1," in *The Manila Times* (22 November 2025), <https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/11/22/business/top-business/our-worsening-mobility-1/2229316>.

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"pedestrians are being corralled into very narrow spaces to ensure that vehicle flow is not affected."[2]

From a purely practical perspective, Manila's mobility crisis has familiar straightforward solutions: better sidewalks, protected crossings, efficient trains, rapid bus transit, traffic-calming measures, reduced car ownership. Similar proposals have been implemented in cities across the world, from Seoul to Bogotá, with varying degrees of success.

Yet if we stop at the practical level, might we not miss the depth of the problem? The same crisis manifests in cities with vastly different histories, cultures, and geographies. That it appears across such diverse contexts suggests that the roots go deeper than urban policy or cultural habit. What if the question is not merely how to make walking possible again, but how the forgetting of walking came to be? And what if the forgetting of walking is a mere symptom of our forgetting of being in general, and in particular the forgetting of our being as the human beings that we are, that is to say, our way of being as humans?

Heidegger is known to have brought to our awareness not only the forgottenness of being (*Seinsvergessenheit*), but also its retrieval (*Wiederholung*) as a question.[3] The forgottenness of being in general has profound consequences that also involve forgottenness of the being of particular beings, such as human beings, environment, nature, language, and technology. Viewed from this perspective, we can see that the forgetting of walking might indeed have something to do with the forgetting of being in general. That we now see nature as "one huge gas station," as Heidegger famously said in the "Memorial Address" as a kind of a foreboding of a tragedy waiting to happen—if indeed it hasn't happened yet—is only one glaring example of how the forgetting of being in general can alter the way we stand in relation to beings, in this case, nature.

Thus, in this essay, I approach the phenomenon of the forgetting of walking in Manila from a Heideggerian perspective in hopes that we might be able to go beyond mere practical or technological solutions to the problem, however admittedly necessary they are, and consider more meditatively its ontological roots. I would like in particular to touch on Heidegger's concepts of dwelling, nearness, and technology. As we shall see later, walking as an everyday human experience belongs, in general, to our dwelling as human beings; it also involves, in particular, our sense and experience of nearness as

[2] James Leather, Herbert Fabian, Sudhir Gota, and Alvin Mejia, "Walkability and Pedestrian Facilities in Asian Cities: State and Issues," in *ADB Sustainable Development Working Paper Series*, 17 (February 2011), <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/28679/adb-wp17-walkability-pedestrian-facilities-asian-cities.pdf>.

[3] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, rev. and with a foreword by Dennis J. Schmidt (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2010), 1ff.

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well as the kind of technology we choose to use in navigating both the near and the far.

These three concepts—dwelling, nearness, and technology—already appear in Heidegger's fundamental ontology found in *Being and Time*. In expounding on the concept of being-in-the-world as the "fundamental constitution" of Dasein, Heidegger tells us, via an etymological reflection, that "being-in" means "dwelling, staying near, being familiar with …" and so on.[4] This means that it is fundamental to our being human that our way of being is one of dwelling, and that such dwelling involves a staying near something or someone that belongs to our concrete world.

For example, fishermen in the Central Caroline Islands of Micronesia have long been known for their traditional navigation knowledge and techniques, relying only on their sensorial knowledge and experience of their surrounding world, which includes the stars in the sky. "Lacking writing, local navigators have had to commit to memory their knowledge of the stars, sailing directions, seamarks, and how to read the waves and clouds to determine currents and predict weather."[5] One can see, therefore, that for the Carolinian fisherman or voyager, the sky is near, nearer to them than some distant land in the Americas or Europe. They are at home in the sea and are familiar with it, even as at the end of each voyage or expedition they will return to their homes and families on land—all of these belong to their being-in-the-world, their being at home.[6]

Obviously, fishing and voyaging involves technology, which in the case of the traditional Carolinian fishermen and voyagers means the building of long-distance canoes.[7] The materials they use in building the long-distance canoes, their shape, dimensions, colors—all of these belong to the world of the Carolinian fishermen and voyagers. Over time, they have come to know and develop an "appropriate" and "human scale" technology long before they became buzzwords in contemporary environmental ethics and philosophy of technology.

What has the consideration of traditional voyagers in Micronesia got to do with our inquiry into the unfortunate situation of the pedestrian in a

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[4] *Ibid*., 54–55.

[5] Ward Goodenough and Stephen Warren, "Traditional Navigation in the Western Pacific: A Search for a Pattern," in *Expedition* (*Penn Museum)*, 29:3 (1987), 3-14, <https://www.penn.museum/documents/publications/expedition/29-3/Traditional.pdf>.

[6] I tried to describe, phenomenologically, how water is experienced as alluring, necessary, but at times also terrifying in "The Boat Will Rise, Too: On the Necessity, Allure, and Terror of Water," in *Coastal Urbanities: Mobilities, Meanings, Manoeuvrings*, ed. by Rapti Siriwardane-de Zoysa, Kelvin E.Y. Low, Noorman Abdullah, and Anna-Katharina Hornidge (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 50–62.

[7] UNESCO, "Carolinian Wayfinding and Canoe Making," <https://ich.unesco.org/en/USL/carolinian-wayfinding-and-canoe-making-01735>.

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city like Manila? The important thing to realize is how the structure of existence that Heidegger laid out in his fundamental ontology—dwelling, staying near, being familiar with, having useful things at hand—is as much true for the voyager or fisherman as it is for pedestrians navigating their way through the chaos of a megacity like Metro Manila. What stars are for the Carolinian voyagers could be neon lights for inhabitants of Metro Manila.

One of the greatest classic modern Filipino novels, in fact, is titled *Sa Mga Kuko ng Liwanag*, authored by Edgardo M. Reyes, which was translated into English for its movie version as *Manila in the Claws of Lights*.[8] Interestingly, the main protagonist, Julio Madiaga, is a fisherman from the province who decides to go the city of Manila to look for his lost love. The context may have changed as Julio moved as a fisherman from the province, then as a construction worker to the city, but the same fundamental structure of human existence, of being-in-the-world, remains even as, tragically, Julio's experience of staying near and being at home is negatively transformed as one of getting lost in the urban jungle and painfully experiencing the distance of his lost love.

We can see the continuity of Heidegger's understanding of nearness and distance from *Being and Time* all the way to his lectures in the 1950s, notably in "The Thing," "Building Dwelling Thinking," as well as "The Question Concerning Technology." Not only does Heidegger show in *Being and Time* that our fundamental way of being-in as the humans that we are is one of dwelling and staying near, but he also states that being-in itself is constituted by "de-distancing" (*Ent-fernung*) and "directionality" (*Ausrichtung*): "As constitutive characteristics of being-in, de-distancing and directionality determine the spatiality of Dasein, for its being heedfully and circumspectly in discovered innerworldly space."[9]

What Heidegger shows us here is the human being's tendency to bring-near by, as it were, removing the distance (the German word for "remove" is *entfernen*, literally, to remove the distance, or to bring near what is otherwise far). We are initially intrigued or terrified by what is alien, what is foreign, that is to say what is far from us, but once the distance is bridged and it is brought near, then they become familiar to us.[10]

In a series of lectures that he delivered in public in the 1950s, we see Heidegger returning to the question of nearness. In "The Thing," Heidegger raises what at first seem like mere questions, but at a deeper level are more

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[8] Edgardo M. Reyes, *Sa Mga Kuko ng Liwanag*, 2nd ed. (Manila: C&E Publishing); Lino Brocka, director, *Manila in the Claws of Light*, (Cinema Artists, 1975), 2hr., 3m.

[9] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 107.

[10] I reflected on this fundamental characteristic of our being human in a commentary of historian Vicente Rafael's book, *The Promise of the Foreign*. See Remmon E. Barbaza, "Commentary on *The Promise of the Foreign*," in *Kritika Kultura*, 9 (2007), 61–66.

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like a post-mortem for a catastrophe that has already happened, in the form of rhetorical questions:

> What is nearness if it fails to come about despite the reduction of the longest distances to the shortest intervals? What is nearness if it is even repelled by the restless abolition of distances? What is nearness if, along with its failure to appear, remoteness also remains absent?
>
> What is happening here when, as a result of the abolition of great distances, everything is equally far and equally near? What is this uniformity in which everything is neither far nor near—is, as it were, without distance?
>
> Everything gets lumped together into uniform distancelessness.[11]

One might wonder how far we have veered from our initial consideration of the forgetting of walking in Manila, and why we bothered at all to go through the torturous path of Heideggerian thinking. But the choice before us remains: whether to understand the forgetting of walking in Manila as solely a practical and technical problem requiring a practical and technical solution, or to heed the invitation to think meditatively (*Besinnung*) and situate walking as belonging to something fundamental to us human beings, the way we are and the way we were meant to be.

In our modern technological age, the predominant way of thinking is one of calculation coupled with the predominant approach of problem-solving. The environment, for instance, is primarily a problem to be solved, and the way to solve that is mainly by calculation. In many cities around the world, for example, local governments saw mobility as primarily a technical problem, and solutions to the perennial problem of traffic congestion often involve the widening of roads or streets to add more lanes, which also often involve the cementing of the ground and the cutting down of trees; the building of "skyways" or elevated roads, at times over rivers or streams; and so on.

Heidegger's lecture, "The Question Concerning Technology," delivered in 1955 at the Technische Hochschule in Munich, begins with a

[11] Martin Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry Language Thought*, trans. and with an introduction by Albert Hofstader (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 163–164.

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startling claim: the essence of technology is nothing technological.[12] To understand what he means, we can think of other domains. The essence of art is not a particular artwork or even the artist; the essence of a sport is not a specific game or this or that athlete.[13]

At the heart of this insight is of course the concept of the ontological difference that Heidegger first expounds in *Being and Time*. But the ontological difference, i.e., between *Sein* and *Seiende* (or being, thought more as a verb than a noun, and beings), must be thought along with the unity between the two. Two passages that appear in *Being and Time* express this relationship, as follows: "The being of beings is itself not a being," and "Being is always the being of beings." In a later work, Heidegger would refer to this as "the duality of being."[14]

We can see that in the history of philosophy, the ontological difference is not quite unique or original in Heidegger, as thinkers such as Plato already thought of the difference between the sensible and the intelligible worlds, all the way to the modern period when, for example, Kant distinguished between *das Ding an sich* and the thing as it appears. What is radical in Heidegger is not only that he insists on the unity of the two despite their difference, but more so that the two go together and that being and beings can only be understood when the two are taken together. One cannot overestimate the import of the thinking of the duality of being to the history of thought.

Only when we are able to grasp the duality of being are we in a position to understand Heidegger's thinking on technology and nearness, both of which are necessary in reflecting, from a Heideggerian perspective, on the experience of walking and its place in human existence, particularly in the urban setting. Thus, we now see that technology, too, has an essence that transcends devices and machines. This essence shapes how we encounter the world, often without our awareness.

If we confront the mobility crisis only at the level of traffic lights, road widths, and vehicle bans, we are still caught within the technological frame. Here we recall Ladelle McWhorter's thought-provoking essay, "Guilt as Management Technology: A Call to Heideggerian Reflection."[15] Whether we

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[12] Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. and with an introduction by William Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 3–35.

[13] See Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. and with an introduction by Albert Hofstader (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 17–79.

[14] Martin Heidegger, "Moira," in *Early Greek Thinking*, trans. by David Farrell Krell and Frank A. Capuzzi (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 87.

[15] Ladelle McWhorter, "Guilt as Management Technology: A Call to Heideggerian Reflection," in *Heidegger and the Earth: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*, 2nd expanded ed., ed. by Ladelle McWhorter and Gail Stenstad (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 5–16.

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pat ourselves on the back when we succeed in our projects, or feel guilty when we fail, it is us human beings who will have to manage the results or consequences. We take both credit and responsibility in everything that we do. In other words, we claim our human agency first and foremost, if not solely. Thus, human beings see their primary relationship with nature as one of management. Because the environmental crisis is perceived mainly as a case of mismanagement, the solution lies in simply managing it well.

As we near the conclusion to our present reflections, we might do well to hear another startling claim that we hear from Heidegger in his 1950s series of public lectures, which in the context of our present reflections deserves to be quoted *in extenso*:

> It is language that tells us about the nature of a thing, provided that we respect language's own nature. In the meantime, to be sure, there rages round the earth an unbridled yet clever talking, writing, and broadcasting of spoken words. Man acts as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact language remains the master of man. Perhaps it is before all else man's subversion of this relation of dominance that drives his nature into alienation. That we retain a concern for care in speaking is all to the good, but it is of no help to us as long as language still serves us even then only as a means of expression. Among all the appeals that we human beings, on our part, can help to be voiced, language is the highest and everywhere the first.[16]

Now, concerning walking, what do we learn when we listen to the Filipino language? For one, the word *lakad* literally means "to walk." Yet our everyday expressions show that it carries a much broader meaning. We say, *Saan ang lakad mo ngayon?* ("Where are you going today?") not only to ask about a stroll, but about any outing or engagement. To say, *May lalakarin lang ako* ("I just have something to take care of") might involve no walking at all. Even *kalakaran*—the customary way of doing things—contains *lakad*, suggesting that movement, passage, and the rhythm of walking are embedded in our language and thought.[17]

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[16] Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. and with an introduction by Albert Hofstader (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 144.

[17] I owe this insight into how walking is embedded in the Filipino language to my wife, Arlene Florendo Barbaza, who pointed this out to me in one of our occasional philosophical conversations.

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This linguistic richness hints at a cultural intuition: walking is not merely locomotion. It is a way of inhabiting the world. Yet in Manila today, this dimension of life is all but erased by the dominance of car-centric planning and the absence of pedestrian-friendly infrastructure. The forgetting of walking is not only the loss of a habit—it is the loss of a certain way of being.

Viewed within Heideggerian thinking, the forgetting of walking is not just an unfortunate byproduct of urban growth—it is but one of the many manifestations of how technology shapes our existence. The car is not merely a faster way to move; it restructures our sense of distance, speed, and even time itself. We begin to measure space not in steps but in minutes behind the wheel. We redesign cities around cars, not people, and in doing so, we forget other ways of moving through the world.

The irony is that automobility—literally, the ability to move on one's own, but portrayed in popular culture as "freedom of movement"—turns into *auto-immobility*. The more we depend on cars, the more we create traffic congestion, noise, and pollution that immobilize us. We widen roads, cut down trees, and pave over soil in the name of speed, only to move more slowly and less freely. Urban planners call this "induced demand": more road space attracts more cars, perpetuating the cycle. Federico Fellini captured this self-defeating logic in the opening scene of the movie, *8 ½*.[18] Trapped in a suffocating traffic jam, the characters are immobilized, enclosed, and seemingly unconcerned. The scene is a haunting image of our thoughtlessness—our capacity to choke ourselves with the very tools meant to set us free.

If our crisis is not only technical but ontological—*if it concerns our way of being*—then any solution must address not just infrastructure but thoughtlessness itself. Cities can be redesigned for walkability, but unless we also cultivate the capacity to dwell differently, in a way that is mindful, we risk repeating the same mistakes in another form. This is not a call to romanticize slowness or to reject technology outright. Walking is not inherently superior to driving. Rather, walking can disclose a different pace of life—one that is neither hurried nor idle but attuned to human scale and rhythm. It can remind us that we are beings who inhabit the earth with others, not merely operators of machines moving through a neutral grid of coordinates.

To make cities walkable again is, in part, a design challenge: safe, shaded sidewalks; connected pedestrian networks; transit-oriented development. But it is also an invitation to remember walking as a way of being. The spaces we create must allow for the possibility of awakening from

[18] *8 ½*, directed by Federico Fellini (Columbia Pictures, 1963).

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our thoughtlessness—spaces where the walker can feel the texture of the city, encounter its smells and sounds, and meet others face-to-face.

In walking, we may rediscover what the Filipino language has preserved in the word *lakad*: movement not as a mere means to an end, but as a way of being we may find again that human pace that belongs neither to the idleness of the couch nor the frenzy of the highway, but to the measured step of a being at home in the world. When the cry goes up for our cities to "slow down," the answer might not be in the traffic code but in our own feet—taking the first steps, literally, toward a way of life we have forgotten. In learning how to walk again, perhaps we may learn again how to dwell on earth, in keeping with our being human.

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Article

Heidegger's Interpretation of Zhuangzi's Notion "the Necessity of the Unnecessary (*die Notwendigkeit des Unnötigen*)"

Choong-Su Han

Abstract: This paper elucidates Heidegger's interpretation of Zhuangzi's notion of "the necessity of the unnecessary" (*die Notwendigkeit des Unnötigen*, 無用之用, *wuyongzhiyong*). This comparative analysis begins with two of Heidegger's letters in which he excerpts the same passage, titled "The Necessity of the Unnecessary," from Chapter 26 of the *Zhuangzi*. In these letters, Heidegger explicitly identifies the "unnecessary" (無用, *wuyong*) with his own concept of Being (*Sein*). The paper aims to clarify and critically examine this identification.

Keywords: Heidegger, Zhuangzi, 無用 (*wuyong*, the unnecessary, *das Unnötige*), 用 (*yong*, the necessary, *das Nötige*)

This paper undertakes an attempt to elucidate Heidegger's interpretation of Zhuangzi's notion "the necessity of the unnecessary (無用之用, *wuyongzhiyong*)."[1] This elucidation is based on two of Heidegger's letters, where he excerpted the same passage from Zhuangzi's work *Zhuangzi*. The German translation of this passage is titled "*Die Notwendigkeit des Unnötigen*" (the necessity of the unnecessary). This title was not devised by Heidegger himself but rather by the German translator of the *Zhuangzi*.[2]

[1] It is important to note that the "necessity of the unnecessary" is neither a standard nor a literal translation of "無用之用." Watson renders "無用之用" as "useless" and "用" as "use." See Zhuangzi, *The Complete Works of Zhuangzi*, trans. by Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 231. Nevertheless, I adopt the translation "the necessity of the unnecessary," since it is the formulation Heidegger himself employs in his text "Evening Conversation: In a Prisoner of War Camp in Russia, between a Younger and an Older Man," which will be examined later in this paper.

[2] Dschuang Dsi, *Das wahre Buch vom südlichen Blütenland*, trans. and ed. by Richard Wilhelm (Jena: Diederichs, 1912), 203.

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These two letters are particularly noteworthy insofar as they include the following comments: "which [=the unnecessary] is what I [=Heidegger] mean by 'Being [*Sein*]';"[3] "the distinction between beings and Beyng [*Seyn*] feels increasingly enigmatic."[4] These comments indicate that Zhuangzi's notion *wuyongzhiyong* is related to Heidegger's concepts of Being and ontological difference. The clarification of this relationship will offer a new perspective for understanding Heidegger's ontology.

My investigation proceeds as follows: first, I elucidate the passage cited in Heidegger's letters, written in March 1945. I then examine two of Heidegger's writings, namely "Evening Conversation: In a Prisoner of War Camp in Russia, between a Younger and an Older Man" (hereafter referred to as the "Evening Conversation") and "Poverty." The "Evening Conversation" was written in May 1945, and the "Poverty" was originally delivered as a lecture in June 1945. This examination shows how Heidegger interprets Zhuangzi's passage. Finally, I compare Zhuangzi's distinction between the unnecessary (*das Unnötige*) and the necessary (*das Nötige*) with Heidegger's differentiation between Being and beings.

Heidegger's March 1945 Letters and the Zhuangzi Passage

The first letter was sent by Heidegger to his wife on 2 March 1945. In this letter, Heidegger notes that the unnecessary "is what I mean by 'Being'." He also refers to a "short conversation between two Chinese thinkers," which was likely the source of the expression "the unnecessary." Unfortunately, the editor of Heidegger's correspondence with his wife omitted the "conversation." As a result, the identity of the two Chinese thinkers as well as the content of their exchange remain unknown. Nevertheless, Heidegger's fascination with the conversation is evident, as he had transcribed and shared it with his wife. Furthermore, the same conversation is quoted by Heidegger in another of his letters.

The second letter was sent to his brother, Fritz, on 5 March 1945. In this letter, Heidegger mentions the "enigmatic" character of "the distinction between beings and Beyng." At the end of the letter, he once again refers to a "short dialogue between two Chinese thinkers" and transcribes it. It can be translated into English as follows: "Huizi said to Zhuangzi: 'You speak of the

[3] Martin Heidegger, *Letters to his Wife, 1915-1970*, ed. by Gertrud Heidegger (Cambridge and Malden: Polity, 2008), 187; Martin Heidegger, *"Mein liebes Seelchen!" Briefe Martin Heideggers an seine Frau Elfride 1915-1970*, ed. by Gertrud Heidegger (München: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2005), 234.

[4] The correspondence between the Heidegger brothers is included in the following book: Martin Heidegger and Fritz Heidegger, *Heidegger und der Antisemitismus: Positionen im Widerstreit. Mit Briefen von Martin und Fritz Heidegger*, ed. by Walter Homolka and Arnulf Heidegger (Freiburg: Herder, 2016), 123.

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unnecessary (*das Unnötige*, 無用).' Zhuangzi said: 'First, a person must recognize the unnecessary, and only then can one speak with that person about the necessary (*das Nötige*, 用). The earth is indeed vast and wide. But a human being uses only a place (*Platz*) of the size of his feet in order to stand upright. Now, if a crack were to open right next to those feet and to reach all the way to the underworld, would the place where he is standing still be of use (*nütze*) to him?' Huizi said: 'The place would no longer be of use to him.' Zhuangzi said: 'From this, the necessity of the unnecessary becomes clearly manifest.'"[5]

It can now be determined that the two Chinese thinkers in question are Huizi and Zhuangzi. This short dialogue will hereafter be referred to as the "Huizi-Zhuangzi-Conversation." It should be noted that the expressions "the unnecessary" and "the necessary" do not adequately capture the semantic nuances of Zhuangzi's concepts "無用" and "用." Moreover, the German translation on which Heidegger relied contains additional problems. My aim, however, here is not to identify or correct those mistranslations. Instead, I will try to explain Heidegger's understanding of the "Huizi-Zhuangzi-Conversation" and his interpretation of the necessity of the unnecessary. For this reason, I will follow the German translation.

In the dialogue, Zhuangzi illustrates the necessity of the unnecessary through a compelling analogy. In the analogy, the "necessary" refers to the place directly beneath the person's feet, which allows him to stand upright, while the "unnecessary" denotes all the surrounding land that is not in immediate use. Zhuangzi then asks Huizi to imagine a situation in which all the surrounding land disappears. In such a situation, the person would find himself confined to a narrow strip of land. No one would want to stand on such a small piece of land as it would leave him trapped. Thus, what had once seemed necessary becomes no longer necessary for any purpose. In this way, Zhuangzi's analogy demonstrates that the unnecessary (無用) must exist for the necessary (用) to remain necessary. Therefore, the unnecessary is the foundation of the necessary.

Heidegger's interpretation of the "Huizi-Zhuangzi-Conversation" in the "Evening Conversation" and "Poverty"

About two months after writing the letters mentioned above, Heidegger wrote the "Evening Conversation." In this conversation, the older and the younger individuals discuss the "devastation (*Verwüstung*)" occurring throughout the world and acknowledge that they are not free from this devastation. They assert that the ability to think is necessary to become

[5] Heidegger and Heidegger, *Heidegger und der Antisemitismus*, 124.

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free. In the age of devastation, everything is calculated solely in terms of necessity. "The single law of the devastation is that the necessary is the most necessary and the only necessary thing [*Das einzige Gesetz der Verwüstung ist, daß das Nötige das Nötigste und das allein Nötige sei*]."[6] The older and the younger man suffer in such an age, because they have been "wholly expelled from the open expanse of the unnecessary thinking."[7] Those people who are overly expectant and greedy are always obsessed with what merely appears to be necessary, while neglecting what seems unnecessary. Such people become the "pacesetters of the devastation."[8]

In contrast, the older and the younger man recognize that the unnecessary is "the most necessary of all," and they are aware of "the necessity of the unnecessary." What they identify as the unnecessary is "thinking [*das Denken*]."[9] The original essence of thinking is described as pure waiting. When human beings wait and think, they come into their own proper essence. In this mode of thinking, they do not transform things into mere objects for human subjects. In other words, they do not reduce them to the means for fulfilling human desires. Rather, the waiting-thinking "lets things return to themselves."[10] As the evening conversation comes to an end, the older man expresses his gratitude for the profound and meaningful exchange with the younger man. He recites a brief conversation between two Chinese thinkers, namely the "Huizi-Zhuangzi-Conversation."[11]

Although the "Huizi-Zhuangzi-Conversation" appears only at the very end, the expression "the necessity of the unnecessary" recurs from the middle of the "Evening Conversation" and onward.[12] Moreover, the concept of thinking in the "Evening Conversation" is metaphorically described as the "open expanse [*freie Weite*]" and the "distant land [*fernes Land*]," which resembles the way in which the unnecessary is analogically described as "earth [*Erde*]" in the "Huizi-Zhuangzi-Conversation." From this, it becomes clear that Zhuangzi's notion of the necessity of the unnecessary plays a significant role in the "Evening Conversation." Heidegger clearly understood

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[6] Martin Heidegger, "Abendgespräch in einem Kriegsgefangenenlager in Rußland zwischen einem Jüngeren und einem Älteren," in *Feldweg-Gespräche (1944/45)*, ed. by Ingrid Schüßler (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1995), 236. This quotation is omitted in the English translation. See Martin Heidegger, "Evening Conversation: In a Prisoner of War Camp in Russia, between a Younger and an Older Man," in *Country Path Conversations*, trans. by Bret W. Davis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 154.

[7] Heidegger, "Abendgespräch," 219; Heidegger, "Evening Conversation," 142.

[8] Heidegger, "Abendgespräch," 229; Heidegger, "Evening Conversation," 149.

[9] Heidegger, "Abendgespräch," 221; Heidegger, "Evening Conversation," 143.

[10] Heidegger, "Abendgespräch," 229; Heidegger, "Evening Conversation," 149.

[11] Heidegger, "Abendgespräch," 239; Heidegger, "Evening Conversation," 156.

[12] Heidegger, "Abendgespräch," 220, 234, 237–239; Heidegger, "Evening Conversation," 143, 153, 155–156.

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the "Huizi-Zhuangzi-Conversation" and drew upon it in a deliberate manner in order to address his own philosophical concerns.

However, the concept of necessity is not explicitly explained in the "Evening Conversation." Thus, the reason why unnecessary thinking is nevertheless necessary remains unclear. It can be surmised as follows: without waiting-thinking, all beings in the age of devastation would be calculated and reduced exclusively to necessity and utility. In order to prevent such calculative reduction, unnecessary thinking must necessarily exist so that all beings can remain as they are. However, in order to justify this necessity, Heidegger would have had to explain why all beings should remain as they are. It is likely that he could not fully emphasize this necessity through the "Evening Conversation" alone. Hence Heidegger turned to the powerful analogy of the "Huizi-Zhuangzi-Conversation." Another problem is that, in the "Evening Conversation," the connection between the unnecessary and Being remains unelucidated, since the unnecessary is identified there solely with thinking. For these reasons, the "Evening Conversation" by itself does not suffice to clarify Heidegger's remarks in the above-mentioned letters.

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of them, I shall examine the text, "Poverty." Here, Heidegger elaborates on the concepts of unnecessary as well as necessity. He first distinguishes between general "poverty" and "true [*wahrhaft*] poverty." General poverty denotes "not having and being specifically deprived of what is needed [*das Nötige*]," whereas "to be truly poor means to be so that one is deprived of nothing except what is not needed [*das Unnötige*]."[13] Unlike what is needed, namely the necessary, which arises from "need [*Not*]," the unnecessary emerges from "what is free and open [*das Freie*]."[14] What is free and open cannot be used; rather, it allows each being "unto its ownmost and protected essence from the compulsion of the need." That which frees "in freedom averts or circumvents [*wendet*] in advance all need."[15] This overturning of the need is what Heidegger calls necessity (*Not-wendigkeit*). In this sense, freedom is necessity. When a human being is truly poor, he is deprived of the unnecessary. Therefore, he is concerned with possessing it and, in turn, is possessed by it. His essence depends on and belongs to it. In this way, he relates to the unnecessary, namely, to Being, "which lets each and every being be what it is

[13] Martin Heidegger, "Die Armut," in *Heidegger Studies*, 10, (1994), 8. The English translation of this text is found in the following book: Martin Heidegger, "Poverty," trans. by Thomas Kalary and Frank Schalow, in *Heidegger, Translation, and the Task of Thinking. Essays in Honor of Parvis Emad*, ed. by Frank Schalow (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), 6.

[14] Heidegger, "Die Armut," 8; Heidegger, "Poverty," 7.

[15] Heidegger, "Die Armut," 8; Heidegger, "Poverty," 7.

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and how it is."[16] In this way, Heidegger identifies the unnecessary with Being. This identification clarifies his comment in the aforementioned letter to his wife.

Zhuangzi's the unnecessary and the necessary and Heidegger's Being and beings

The examination of the "Evening Conversation" and the "Poverty" showed that the unnecessary corresponds to Being, while the necessary corresponds to beings. Accordingly, the distinction and relation between the unnecessary and the necessary can be compared to Heidegger's ontological difference.

In the "Huizi-Zhuangzi-Conversation," the place where a person is standing is something necessary, like a tool for use. In contrast, the surrounding land is unnecessary at that moment. However, without unnecessary land, the necessary place would lose its necessity. In this way, the unnecessary must first exist for the necessary to be able to be of necessity. Since the necessary cannot be without the unnecessary, the latter resembles Being, which allows necessary beings to be as they are. This resemblance explains why Heidegger refers to the distinction between beings and Beyng in the aforementioned letter to his brother.

Nevertheless, there are dissimilarities between the distinction of the unnecessary and the necessary and that of Being and beings. The most significant dissimilarity is that, in Zhuangzi's thinking, both the unnecessary and the necessary are beings. The unnecessary being is simply much larger in size than the necessary being. This becomes evident in other examples from the *Zhuangzi*, where he speaks of an unnecessary tree or an unnecessary gourd, both of which remain a tree and a gourd, albeit unusually large in size.[17] Consequently, there is no ontological difference between the two beings, namely the unnecessary and the necessary.

Another important dissimilarity lies in the nature of the distinction itself: Heidegger's ontological difference is, so to speak, absolute, whereas the "Huizi-Zhuangzi-Conversation" presents a relative distinction between the unnecessary and the necessary. In Zhuangzi's analogy, the currently necessary place may become unnecessary if the surrounding land disappears. Conversely, the currently unnecessary surrounding land becomes necessary once the person walks over to it. Hence, the unnecessary and the necessary do not remain fixed in these states. Each can become the other. Thus, the distinction between unnecessary and necessary is not absolute and

[16] Heidegger, "Die Armut," 9; Heidegger, "Poverty," 8.
[17] Zhuangzi, *The Complete Works of Zhuangzi*, 6–7.

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immutable, but rather relative and fluid. Probably Heidegger was deeply impressed by this relativity of the distinction. This may explain why, in the aforementioned letter to his brother, he described the ontological difference as an "enigma" and questioned the adequacy of his terminology.

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Article

Mobility as a Category for a Transnational Reception of Heidegger[1]

Yohei Kageyama

Abstract: This paper proposes "mobility" as an existential category for studying Heidegger's transnational reception beyond the limits of national contexts. Drawing on Tetsuro Watsuji's climatic theory, the concept expands from voluntary travel to encompass forced displacement, enabling recognition of plural historicities, universal orders, and the coexistence of diverse concepts of being. "Mobility" reinterprets Heidegger's notions of resoluteness and people (*Volk*) through encounters across nations, highlighting plurality as an ontological condition. It also reframes *Schicksal* in terms of homelessness, where the "house of being" remains undecided in-between cultures, offering a phenomenological framework for a plural, transnational understanding of being.

Keywords: Heidegger, Watsuji, mobility, transnationality

In this paper, I propose the concept of "mobility" as an existential category for studying Heidegger's *transnational* reception. Today, research on the national reception of Heidegger has reached a highly advanced stage of development. However, the development of this research has also elucidated the limitations of national reception studies.

First, it is of course valuable to interpret Heidegger against the background of Taoism, Christianity, Islam, or Buddhism, etc. However, unless we consider *the overall relationship between these different understandings*, we cannot truly consider being in general. This is because being in general is the most fundamental phenomenon related to "entities as a whole." For example, if we would focus *only* on Buddhist or Taoist interpretations while knowing that there is an Islamic interpretation of being, we could not claim that we are truly aiming at the fundamental question of being.

Second, since the human subject is constituted within a certain "power" in terms of Foucault, the people in which the singular subject is

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rooted must be examined in the context of the social constellation of an era, *including its relations with other peoples*. Therefore, while the reception of Heidegger by a specific nation, such as "Japan," may offer preliminary insights, it should not be considered an end in itself. Instead, we must acknowledge the plurality of the national reception of Heidegger and reexamine being in general from the perspective of human beings who "move" between nations, that is, from a transnational perspective shared by all of humankind. This paper will consider "mobility" in this sense.

The phenomenological ontological concept of "mobility" and three transnational factors

"Mobility" could be regarded as a transnational extension of Heidegger's concept of "resoluteness" and the works of art. The resolute Dasein reappropriates its historical situation through a practice of its *Geschick* as artworks manifest the historical situation in its conflict between the world and the earth. Through these, "mobility" reappropriates Dasein's historical situation in its transnationality. In this essay, I will develop this concept from the Book *Fudo* [*Climate*] (1935) by Tetsuro Watsuji, one of the leading Japanese interpreters and critics of Heidegger. Watsuji traveled by ship to Marseille via Singapore and Aden in the 1920s to study in Berlin. Based on this experience, he distinguished the world's "climate" into three types: monsoon, desert, and meadow.

This "climate" is not a geographical concept, but rather a phenomenological, ontological concept based on Watsuji's critique of Heidegger. In *Being and Time*, encounters with intraworldly entities, including nature, are founded upon the understanding of being of Dasein,[2] and the meaning of Dasein's own being interpreted as *Zeitlichkeit*.[3] Consequently, *Zeitichkeit* should also form the basis of the spatiality of intraworldly entities.[4] Watsuji criticizes this entire argument. According to Watsuji, being-in-the-world must have body.[5] This body must maintain material continuity with its environment in order to interact with tools and natural objects. Being-in-the-world must understand its own being in nature, which is not itself, through the medium of the body.[6] "Climate" refers to this

[2] Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1927), 211.

[3] *Ibid*., 17.

[4] *Ibid*., 369.

[5] Tetsurō Watsuji, "Climate," in *Complete Works of Tetsurō Watsuji*, vol. 8 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1962), 15.

[6] *Ibid*., 11.

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nature as a constitutive condition of being-in-the-world, and Watsuji regards it as the embodiment of "historicity."[7]

However, if you always remain in Japan, you cannot consider "Japanese climate" as such. Therefore, based on his own experience, Watsuji proposed the concept of the "traveler (*Ryokou-sha*)." He says that travelers, for example, by physically moving from Singapore to Aden, experience differences in climate and discover for the first time the plurality of climates—monsoon, desert, meadow.[8] Since a change in place is an *a priori* possibility of the physical body, both human existence as a traveler and the plurality of climate as the natural foundation of human existence are *a priori* possibilities of being-in-the-world. Of course, a traveler can ignore or be unaware of differences and plurality of climate, as if he always remained in his homeland. Still, his actual body embodies, at root of such *mauvaise foi*, the possibility of traveling and experiencing plural climates.

However, only those with leisure and income like Watsuji can enjoy travelling. So "travel" is a narrow concept for exploring human existence. Therefore, I propose "mobility" as a formal concept that can encompass even the "displaced person" in totalitarianism as described by Arendt. This concept should encompass both the "wandering (流浪)" discussed by Chong-hong Pak, a critical interpreter of Heidegger, in relation to his fundamental concept of "we (**우리**/*uri*),"[9] and the "infinite escape (無限に走り続ける/*Mugen ni hashiri tsuzukeru*)" from the homeland depicted by Kobo Abe, a representative postwar Japanese writer.[10]

Mobility offers a phenomenological basis for analyzing the three factors of transnational reception of Heidegger. First, mobility is a phenomenological condition for discovering the *plurality* of Heideggerian historicity as the ontological foundation of a *nation*. As Benhabib cited a German district court ruling on foreigner voting rights, a nation is constituted by a sense of "*Schicksalsgemeinschaft*" (community of destiny) more than by language or religion.[11] Its ontological foundation is Heidegger's "people (Volk)" as a historical community constituted by free decision-makers who

[7] *Ibid*., 16.

[8] *Ibid*., 46.

[9] Chong-hong Pak, "Our Reality and Philosophy: The Limit Situation at This Historic Moment," in *Complete Works of Chong-hong Pak*, vol. 1 (Seoul: Hyŏngsŏl Ch'ulp'ansa, 1982), 376; See Minseok Kwak, "Colonial Korea and Hajime Tanabe: A Comparison with Chong-Hong Pak," in Liao Chin-bin and Kawai Kazuki eds., *The Era of Crisis and Tanabe's Philosophy* (Tokyo: Hōsei University Press, 2022).

[10] Kōbō Abe, "At the Guidepost of the End of the Road," in *Complete Works of Kōbō Abe*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1972), 14f.

[11] See Seyla Benhabib, *The Rights of Others: Aliens, Residents, and Citizens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 201.

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stake their own existence.[12] However, while Heidegger was aware that there are plural peoples on earth, he did not provide an existential interpretation of the plurality of peoples in *Being and Time*. His argument is insufficient because "my people" cannot exist without a relationship with other peoples. In contrast, the plurality of peoples is a synchronic and spatial plurality of historicity, which should be discovered through the "mobility" of human existence. "Mobility" itself is of transnational nature and does not belong to any nation. It is, however, through "mobility" of human bodies that the plurality of historicity is phenomenologically disclosed. Furthermore, mobility serves as a means of reappropriating a nation as "my people," and it should thus be a premise for the process by which pre-national community (such as families, clans, tribes, and local communities) is integrated into the nation as a "*Schicksalsgemeinschaft*", or for the process by which they are excluded or marginalized by the nation.[13]

Second, by understanding plurality in this way, mobility is also a phenomenological condition for discovering a universal order that is formed by plural peoples. In my opinion, the universality asserted by Western modernity, as in Hegel, should be reappropriated more universally based on the phenomenological origin of the experience of plurality. In other words, as argued by Watsuji, Jilin Xu (1957-) of China, and Shariati Ali (1933-1977) of Iran, "modernity" must be understood not as a Western narrative, but as a plural phenomenon rooted in the history of each nation, and on that basis, we must consider the order shared by all nations.[14] After World War II, Watsuji applied the concept of "traveler" to the ethnic consciousness of Jews, Chinese, and Greeks (such as Odysseus), and then stated that the travels of Europeans in Asia during the Mongol Empire foreshadowed "one world," that is, a universal world common to plural peoples.[15] Ultimately, a "world state" that unites the wills of all nations beyond the nation-states becomes the fundamental ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) that encompasses all of humanity.[16] In this "world state," individuality is supposed to be preserved in a tension with universal order of ethical life. Still, individuality is here not equated with

[12] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 384.

[13] See Miguel de Unamuno, "En torno al casticismo," in *Obras completas*: *nueva edición integral* (Barcelona: Wisehouse Publishing, 2012), 3626f.

[14] See Watsuji, "Climate," 218f.; Jilin Xu, *In Search of Universal Values: New Trends in Contemporary Chinese Thought*, trans. by Takahiro Nakajima and Qian Wang (Tokyo: Hōsei University Press, 2020), 221ff.; Ali Shariati, "Tamadon va Tajadod (Civilization and Modernization)," in *The Complete Collection of Works* (Tehran: Shariati Cultural Foundation, CD-ROM, 2010). See also Siavash Saffari, *Beyond Shariati: Modernity, Cosmopolitanism, and Islam in Iranian Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), chap. 5.

[15] Tetsurō Watsuji, "Ethics II," in *Complete Works of Tetsurō Watsuji*, vol. 11 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1962), 337.

[16] Tetsurō Watsuji, "Ethics I," in *Complete Works of Tetsurō Watsuji*, vol. 10 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1962), 616.

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"mobility." Rather, the mutually negating relationship between "world state" and individuality ontologically presupposes "mobility," since "mobility" both makes a "world state" open to higher universality and makes room for individual deviating positioning and exile. Further, I do think his argument should be complemented by the international liberative practice of working Dasein, which was advocated by Kiyoshi Miki (1897-1945), a representative of Left Heideggerian in Japan.[17] Anyway, a universal world order that encompasses plural nations in their individuality must become an issue in the transnational reception of Heidegger, and "mobility" becomes the phenomenological starting point for addressing this issue.

Third, mobility is a concept of human being that "corresponds (*entspricht*)" to the fundamental fact that plural historicity emerges as a whole. This fundamental fact is *being in general* that is questioned in the transnational reception of Heidegger. This is a very difficult subject matter because this fact manifests a paradoxical situation where the "being in general" of a certain people is bracketed and placed alongside the "being in general" of other peoples. In his dialogue with a Japanese man, Heidegger carefully noted with the subjunctive that a single source (*Quelle*) of the different "houses of being" in the West and East Asia *might* be revealed through dialogue between the two.[18] On this theme, Watsuji, based on his interpretation of early Buddhism and the Kyoto School, defined the concept of "emptiness (*Śūnyatā*)" as the fact that historical communities with plural concepts of being coexist. "Emptiness" can encompass plural concepts of being because it is absolute negativity that nullifies even the metaphysical absolute.[19] At the same time, "emptiness" negates its own negativity and reverses itself into "dependent origination (*pratītya-samutpāda*/縁起/연기)" as concrete historical communities.[20] Watsuji's "emptiness" and the Kyoto School's "nothingness" are not pure Asian spirituality but hybrid concepts born from the collision between this spirituality and Western philosophy. Through this concept, Watsuji sought to grasp the very fact of the dialogical situation depicted by Heidegger.

I have explained the concept of mobility and its three factors. However, we are of course still bound by a perspective of Watsuji, a Japanese philosopher from the early 20th century. Plurality, universality, and

[17] Cf. Kiyoshi Miki, "Fields of Philosophy and Thought," in *Complete Works of Kiyoshi Miki*, vol. 19 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1968), 619.

[18] Martin Heidegger, *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, GA 12 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1985), 89.

[19] Tetsurō Watsuji, "The Concept of 'Dharma' in Buddhist Philosophy and the Dialectics of Emptiness," in *Complete Works of Tetsurō Watsuji*, vol. 9 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1962), 473–475.

[20] *Ibid*.

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fundamental facts vary according to historical context. For instance, Wei Xiong (熊偉 1911-1994), who studied in Freiburg, translated *Geschick* in *Being and Time* as "mandate of heaven (天命)" and linked it to the Chinese concept of "heaven (天/*tian*)."[21] I assume that even within Chinese civilization, which encompasses various ethnic groups, "heaven" would lack spatial plurality, despite changing over time. In contrast, for Watsuji, *Geschick* is spatially plural. Both Xiong and Watsuji are correct because the boundaries between the various *Geschick* "peoples" are accidental historical facts and that plurality can be minimized or maximized. Accordingly, the concept of "being" is also diverse. "Heaven," which encompasses both the natural sky and the order of the cosmos, should include both Heideggerian "being" and ontic nature. In this case, a single people is *materially specified* by its interaction (相関) with "heaven." In contrast, the Kyoto School's "emptiness" and "nothingness" are negativity that does not contain ontic materiality. The plurality of people is endlessly recognized in "emptiness," but neither the self nor the other exists in "emptiness" itself.[22]

Homelessness as *Schicksal* of Mobility

"Mobility" is an existential category that captures the transnational reception of Heidegger, that is, humans who truly reappropriate the question of being. Now, can we think about *Schicksal* in Heidegger's sense in relation to these humans? In our mobility, we leave or are deprived of our homeland, encounter foreigners, experience the coexistence of plural peoples, and sometimes settle down again somewhere. Therefore, the issue at hand should not be the collective *Geschick* but the singular *Schicksal*.

Schicksal in mobility exists in a *bracketed* state, departing from one's original *Geschick* and open to becoming rooted in another "*Geschick*." Taking the Kyoto School as an example, a Japanese man who travels to the West leaves his *Geschick* of absolute nothingness and becomes open to the Western *Geschick* of being in general. He may then return to absolute nothingness (*Heimkehr*) or immigrate to Western being.[23] The same can be said of Westerners and other peoples. This is not cosmopolitanism because mobility allows for returning home to one's nation or naturalizing elsewhere. Rather,

[21] Xiong Wei, *Xiong's Translation of Heidegger* (Beijing: 2004), 75f.; instructed by a presentation of Yoshinobu Shino, "Freedom in China and Heidegger: How Xiong Wei (1911–1994) Read Heidegger," paper presented at the Heidegger Forum Japan 2024 at Takachiho University (21–22 September 2024).

[22] See Keiji Nishitani, "Lectures on Shōbōgenzō," in *Selected Writings of Keiji Nishitani*, vol. 22 (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1987), 77.

[23] See Yohei Kageyama, "Eschatologie des Nichts: Geschichtsphilosophie der Kyoto-Schule zwischen Nishida und Heidegger," in *Heidegger und die Kyoto-Schule: Philosophie im interkulturellen Gespräch*, ed. by Neugebauer and Schirmer (Freiburg/München: Alber, 2025).

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it is a more fundamental "homelessness (*Heimatlosigkeit*)" than that described by Heidegger. This is because the "house of being" to which one belongs gets undecided in the in-between of the diverse manifestations of the cosmos. This is the *Schicksal* that transnational Heideggerian must "undertake (*übernehmen*)" to reappropriate the indefinite plurality of "home," including its violence.

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Article

Kuki Shūzō's Critical Reception of Heidegger: From the Horizontal Plane of Time to the Vertical Plane, and to Returning Time

Yuta Okada

Abstract: This paper focuses on Kuki Shūzō's "metaphysical time" and attempts to depict the intersection of Kuki's and Heidegger's thoughts. The aim is to clarify the significance of "metaphysical time" as "returning." The significance of "returning time" seems not to be sufficiently explained without considering the question of "the Other" based on Kuki's critique of Heidegger. In my opinion, "returning time" is a kind of *conceptual apparatus* for depicting the process of accepting the contingent reality at the very moment by imagining the infinite repetition of the same. Through this process, reality and the Other emerge as irreplaceable and profound.

Keywords: Heidegger, Kuki Shūzō, metaphysical time, returning time

Kuki Shūzō is one of the Japanese philosophers greatly influenced by Heidegger's philosophy for during his stay in Europe, he met the philosopher and attended his lectures. This paper attempts to trace the intersection between Heidegger's and Kuki's thoughts, focusing on the issue of temporality.

When describing the intersection between them, the issue of the Other is vital. As pointed out by other thinkers, such as Emmanuel Levinas and Watsuji Tetsurō, Heidegger's discussion of the Other in *Being and Time* is inadequate. This paper interprets Kuki's theory of returning metaphysical time as a response to the inadequate discussion of the Other in *Being and Time*, which allows us to elucidate one aspect of Kuki's critical reception of

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Heidegger while also examining why metaphysical time must be "returning."[1]

Kuki's Metaphysical Time

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger attempted to clarify temporality as the horizon of "the sense of Being" through an analysis of the understanding of Being of Dasein. He reduces the structure of Dasein's understanding of Being to the structure of "care" (*Sorge*)[2] and presents this structure as the unity of three "ecstasies" (*Ekstasen*): "present" (*Gegenwart*), "having-been" (*Gewesenheit*), and "future" (*Zukunft*).[3]

The unity of the three ecstasies, which is clarified from the structure of care as Being of Dasein, was named by Kuki as an "ontological-phenomenological ecstasy" and was considered as the horizontal plane of temporality.[4] In addition to the horizontal ecstasy, which prioritizes the future, Kuki identifies the vertical plane of temporality that emerges in the understanding of time in samsara as the "metaphysical-mystic ecstasy."[5] In this vertical plane, the temporality of the present is emphasized as an "infinitely profound moment."[6] At this moment, we are not concerned with the reality of our finite temporal horizon, but rather with the infinite that transcends phenomena imaginarily, which is why it is called "ecstasy" in the original sense of the word, i.e., in the religious and mystic sense. Therefore, Kuki positions each of these as the real and imaginary planes of time.

In addition, Kuki distinguishes between two forms of ecstasy as follows. The ontological-phenomenological ecstasy is continuous in that the constituent moments of temporality—past, present, and future—are arranged linearly, and each constituent moment is absolutely heterogeneous from the others, thus presupposing the irreversibility of time. In contrast, in the metaphysical-mystic ecstasy, whether it be the past or the future, everything is composed of an infinite number of "moments." Therefore, the temporal components are discontinuous, yet since all these moments constitute the same moment, they are homogeneous and replaceable. In other words, in the latter case, the reversibility of time is presupposed.

However, these two planes of ecstasy are not simply opposed to each other, nor does Kuki argue, as Obama Yoshinobu points out, that returning

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[1] The following discussion in this paper is a reconstruction from the perspective of the reception of Heidegger of my forthcoming article "Temporality, Contingency, and the Other: The Intersection of Kūki Shūzō and Heidegger," planned for publication in *Kyūshin*, 30.

[2] Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 19. Aufl. (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2006), §41.

[3] *Ibid*., 329.

[4] Kuki Shūzō, *Collected Works of Kuki Shūzō*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1980-82), 404.

[5] *Ibid*., 405.

[6] *Ibid*., 404.

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time is the genuine form of time in contrast to linear time.[7] Instead, the core of Kuki's theory of time lies in the assertion that the intersection of the horizontal and vertical plane, the real and the imaginary plane, between the ontological-phenomenological ecstasy and the metaphysical-mystic ecstasy constitutes the unique structure of time.[8]

Kuki's Critical Reception of Heidegger

Kuki does not so much present a vertical ecstasy as an alternative to Heidegger's horizontal understanding of time, but rather seems to attempt to consider a vertical plane of time, building and expanding upon Heidegger's understanding of time. What did Kuki recognise as the inadequacy of Heidegger's theory of time, then?

The main points of Kuki's critique of Heidegger can be summarized as follows. First, in *Being and Time*, space is reduced to temporality.[9] According to Kuki, in order for us to encounter beings in the world, a spatial moment is necessary. In Kuki's opinion, however, because space does not occupy as important a position as time in *Being and Time*, the Other could not play a positive role in Heidegger's theory of time.[10] Another important point in Kuki's critique of Heidegger is that Heidegger treats the temporality of the present lightly. Heidegger had identified the temporality of relating to other beings as the present linked to "falling" (*Verfallen*), which leads Dasein to be inauthentic,[11] and thus did not play a positive role. For Kuki, Heidegger's thought underestimates the significance of the contingency of encountering the Other by failing to thematize the moment sufficiently.[12]

While Kuki's critique of Heidegger is certainly based on his concern with contingency, it touches on the fundamental problems inherent in the theory of time in *Being and Time*. This is because the focus of Heidegger's discussion of the temporality of Dasein in *Being and Time* is primarily on the problem of the self rather than the Other, which leads to distortions in his argument. In *Being and Time*, the status of the Other and the present is problematic. This is because, while the future and the past are ecstasies toward self, the present is an ecstasy toward the Other.[13] This is also clear from the three constitutive moments of the disclosure of Dasein: "understanding" (*Verstehen*), "affective self-finding" (*Befindlichkeit*), and

[7] Yoshinobu Obama, *Kuki Shūzō no Tetsugaku: Hyohaku no Tamashii* (Tokyo: Showado, 2006), 33.

[8] Kuki Shūzō, *Collected Works,* 1:405.

[9] *Ibid*., 3:330.

[10] *Ibid*., 269.

[11] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 346.

[12] Kuki Shūzō, *Collected Works,* 2:210.

[13] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 326.

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"discourse" (*Rede*).[14] Each of these constitutive elements corresponds to each ecstasy: "future," "having-been," and "present." According to Heidegger, "discourse" includes the moment of other Daseins.[15] Furthermore, since discourse leads to falling, it is inevitably linked to the inauthentic mode of being of Dasein, which understands its own Being within the world.

Corresponding to the authentic and inauthentic modes of Dasein, Heidegger suggests the authentic and inauthentic modes of "future," "having-been," and "present." Concerning the temporality of the present, its authentic mode is "moment" (*Augenblick*) and its inauthentic mode is "making present" (*Gegenwärtigen*).[16] However, as Heidegger states, "Formally understood, every present is making present, but not every present is 'momentary'[.]"[17] This shows that the present is always accompanied by an inauthentic mode, namely making present, and always prevents an authentic understanding of Dasein. In other words, the temporality of the present is mainly related to inauthenticity, and conversely, the content of its authentic mode is not entirely explicit. As a result, Heidegger's determination of "moment" can only be described as "empty."[18]

Therefore, Kuki's critique of Heidegger accurately identifies the fundamental problem concerning the theory of temporality in *Being and Time*. Based on this critique, Kuki attempts to enrich the concept of "moment," which remains an empty definition in Heidegger, by reinterpreting it as the temporality of contingent encounters with the Other. Kuki's conception of vertical ecstasy, which intersects horizontal ecstasy, can be understood as an attempt to achieve this.[19]

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[14] *Ibid*., 133.

[15] *Ibid*., 162.

[16] *Ibid*., 338.

[17] *Ibid*.

[18] Otto Pöggeler, *Der Denkweg Martin Heideggers,* 3., erw. Aufl. (Pfullingen: Günther Neske, 1990), 210.

[19] Here, it must be noted that the meaning of "the Other" differs in scope between Heidegger and Kuki. This is because, for Heidegger, the beings encountered in the temporality of the present are "beings in general," including not only people but also instrumental beings, whereas Kuki particularly thematises encounters with "other people." Consequently, what is actually signified by the term "the Other" is, strictly speaking, different between them. Nevertheless, it is certain that Kuki was dissatisfied with Heidegger's argument precisely because it did not thematise "the Other" (in the sense of "other people"). In the following discussion, I will fundamentally follow Kuki in employing "the Other" to signify "other people." However, this term ought to possess a scope extending beyond encounters with other humans to encompass encounters with other beings in general.

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Why Returning?

The main point of Kuki's critique of Heidegger is that Heidegger failed to adequately address the moment as the authentic mode of the present and therefore failed to thematize "encounters with the Other" sufficiently. In light of this, we can say that the motivation behind Kuki's concept of the metaphysical-mystic ecstasy as the vertical plane of temporality is to thematize the contingent encounter with the Other by pursuing the temporality of the moment. However, it remains unclear why this vertical plane of temporality must be suggested as "returning time." In the case of Heidegger, after the publication of *Being and Time*, he continued his attempt to elucidate the "sense of Being in general," which remained an unresolved issue in the published part of *Being and Time*, from the perspective of "Temporality" (*Temporalität*), and reached to the conception of "enowning" (*Ereignis*) as being itself that appears to us. However, Heidegger does not describe this enowning as returning, as Kuki does. Why, then, does Kuki insist on the idea of "returning"?

In my opinion, Kuki does not provide clear grounds for considering vertical planes as returning time. The rest of this paper, based on the previous discussion, attempts to consider the significance of Kuki's concept of returning time.

A possible interpretation is that Kuki thematizes "self-identity" through returning time.[20] However, the motivation of ensuring self-identity alone does not sufficiently explain the necessity of the vertical plane of temporality being "returning." In other words, assuming the eternal return of the same thing in order to ensure self-identity pays too high a speculative cost. Instead, this paper attempts to explain Kuki's motivation by focusing on the issues of contingency and the Other, which he did not address in his theory of time.

When linking returning time to the issues of contingency and the Other, the following two problems arise. According to Kuki, returning time is the infinite repetition of the same thing, so it is related to necessity and therefore opposed to contingency, which is the possibility that things could have been something else. Furthermore, by assuming the infinite repetition of returning time, the irreplaceability of the moment of encounter with the Other becomes diminished.

Regarding the relationship between necessity and contingency in returning time, it is significant that returning time is imaginary. What is important here is the definition that "contingency is the negation of

[20] See, as an example, Tanaka Kyubun, *Kuki Shūzō* (Tokyo: Kodansya Gakujutsu Bunko, 2022), 121.

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necessity."[21] This "negation" does not imply an exclusive opposition but rather a relationship of mutual belonging, like the two sides of a coin, as Obama points out.[22] With this in mind, I consider the relationship between returning time and contingency as follows. The reality we are living in or the facts we are facing are always contingent events that could have been something else. However, we must accept this contingent reality as something actually happening. To do so, we must deliberately imagine the necessity, or destiny, that lies behind the contingent that could have been something else. Returning time, as the infinite repetition of the same, is involved in this process of imagining the necessity that lies behind the contingent. In other words, returning time is a kind of *conceptual apparatus* for depicting the process of accepting contingent reality as something contingent and still significant for our existence by thoroughly imagining the necessary as "the same thing in infinite repetition."

In this process, we confront the contingent reality that could have been something else – that is often the harsh reality, such as a disaster or a disease – by ruminating to ourselves that "it could not have been anything else." However, this concept is not a quick solution for dealing with reality, nor is it a moral imperative. If it were, it would diminish the urgency of the reality we are facing. Returning time is not future-oriented but is concerned with the very moment. In other words, the essence of returning time lies in the distress of being unable to accept the contingent reality that we actually face at this moment without imagining necessity, rather than moving forward toward the future. Then, contingency is not easily reduced to necessity but appears as profound contingency.

Given this concept of returning time, how can we describe the irreplaceable encounter with the Other in a moment? In other words, how is the profound reality that we have encountered this Other, and not any other being else, revealed? Merely conceiving encounters with the Other as something that could have been someone else would reduce contingent encounters to merely one of possibilities and would not be profound as such. However, by deliberately imagining the inevitability that it could not have been anyone else behind the contingency of it could have been anyone else, contingent encounters become profound. In particular, when this imagination is carried out thoroughly, as if the same thing has been repeated

[21] Kuki Shūzō, *Collected Works,* 2:9.

[22] Obama Yoshinobu, *Hyohaku no Tamashii Kuki Shūzō no Tetsugaku* (Showado, 2006), 4–5. In fact, the relationship between contingency and necessity in Kuki's discussion, according to *The Problem of Contingency*, would be more complicated than I describe here because he discusses contingency in three levels: "Categorial Contingency," "Hypothetical Contingency," "Disjunctive Contingency." This paper, however, does not delve into this topic in detail. In this paper, in order to make the existential significance of the concept of the "metaphysical returning time," I focus on the more empirical (i.e., hypothetical) dimension of contingency than the others.

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infinitely in the returning time, contingent encounters with the Other come to seem fateful. Through the extreme imagination of the necessity of returning time, the profoundness of the already occurred contingent encounter is revealed as the irreplaceability of destiny.[23]

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[23] My conclusion appears to understand "contingency" psychologically, seemingly at odds with Kuki's intention to grasp it metaphysically and logically. Yet in my view, this conclusion remains compatible with the "metaphysics" Kuki conceives. Kuki appears to maintain a preoccupation with "metaphysics" throughout his work, from his early theory of time, through *The Problem of Contingency*, to his later literary theory. Yet this "metaphysics" is not simply metaphysics in the traditional sense – that is, metaphysics concerning matters transcending our experience. As in his theory of time, where he problematized the intersection of the ontological-phenomenological ecstasy and the metaphysical-mystic ecstasy, and as in "The Problem of Contingency," where transcending beyond Being into nothingness was posited as metaphysics, Kuki's metaphysics is grounded in the real or phenomenal plane while being imaginarily or hypothetically enacted upon that foundation. Mine also focuses on the hypotheticality of Kuki's metaphysics (See Hideki Mine, "Kuki and The Problem of Metaphysics," in *Risō*, 698 (2017), 40–41.). Furthermore, Ebersolt noted that while "phenomenological ecstasy" and "metaphysical ecstasy" appear at first glance to be incompatible, he argued that Kuki's "metaphysical ecstasy" possesses an experiential aspect akin to the religious experience of mystics, thereby enabling the two to "intersect." (See Simon Ebersolt, "The Problem of Intersection between Phenomenology and Metaphysics in Kuki Shūzō," in *Studies in Japanese Philosophy*, 10 (2013), 110–131.).

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Article

Transitional Identity: Becoming, Nothingness, and Event in Heidegger and Ueda

Hoko Nakagawa

Abstract: Referring to Martin Heidegger's thought, this paper argues that identity should be understood not as self-preservation or formal self-coincidence (A = A), but as a dynamic process constituted through becoming, transition, wandering, and distress. Rather than confining identity to Heidegger's later conceptual-historical discussions, the paper reconstructs it through an experiential structure running across his work—an "inability to fully identify." Methodologically, the paper reconstructs Heidegger's account of identity along three interrelated dimensions: the provisional and ongoing identity of becoming Dasein; a differential identity articulated within the difference between entities and Being; and the eventual identity of thinking and Being as mutual belonging (*Ereignis*). On this basis, the paper examines Shizuteru Ueda's interpretation of the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures as a phenomenology of self-existence culminating in absolute nothingness. Through a comparative analysis centered on becoming, nothingness/bottomlessness, and event, the paper clarifies both affinities and differences between Heidegger's and Ueda's accounts, proposing a framework for rethinking identity beyond self-coincidence and for advancing East–West dialogue.

Keywords: Heidegger, Shizuteru Ueda, nothingness/absolute nothingness, event (*Ereignis*)

Heidegger rejects the assumption that identity and non-identity form a fixed opposition; instead, he views them as mutually interrelated. His distinctive idiom arises from the use of metaphysical terms while displacing their meanings, thereby reshaping the very framework of thought and language.

This paper reconsiders Heideggerian identity not by confining it to the later conceptual-historical discussions, but by reading it through an

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experiential structure that runs across his work: an *"inability to fully identify."* [1] Identity, in this view, is constituted not as preservation but within becoming—transition, wandering, and distress. It is not the achievement of identification ("I am I") but a movement, a *transition*, that generates itself with questioning while bearing non-identity and resisting fixation. This differs both from (1) the logical law A = A and from (2) the modern subject centered on self-identity: identity in Heidegger's thinking appears rather as resistance against forces that stabilize the self and the world. This perspective provides a basis for comparison with Japanese philosophy, including the Kyoto School. It also invites a reconfiguration of identity through terms such as nothingness (無), emptiness (空), and place. Shizuteru Ueda (上田閑照: 1926-2019)[2] —both a Heidegger scholar and an interpreter of Kitarō Nishida—offers a particularly promising site where Eastern and Western approaches intersect, allowing the contrast in their grasp of identity to come into view.[3]

Methodologically, this paper reconstructs Heidegger's account of identity as its guiding axis—namely, (3) the provisional and ongoing identity of Dasein, (4) the differential identity within the difference between entity and Being, and (5) the eventual identity of thinking and Being. It then analyzes Shizuteru Ueda's interpretation of the *Ten Ox-Herding Pictures* (十牛図)[4] and compares their respective conceptions of identity, focusing on becoming, nothingness/bottomlessness, and event, to clarify their commonalities and differences as a potential foothold for East–West dialogue.

Heidegger: Identity beyond A = A[5]

A Map of the Polysemy of Identity

In the conventional register, identity is expressed logically as A = A, or psychologically as the continuity of the self. Heidegger, by contrast, asks

[1] For detailed discussions on Heidegger's interpretation of identity, see Hoko Nakagawa, "Grounding and Identification—The Reciprocal Spiral Movement of Dasein/Da-sein," in *Heidegger Forum*, 20 (2026), forthcoming.

[2] Shizuteru Ueda was Professor Emeritus, Kyoto University, and primarily researched the philosophies of Meister Eckhart, Heidegger, and the Kyoto School, Zen. He was often classified as part of the Kyoto School.

[3] A limitation of this paper is that while Heidegger's works are treated comprehensively across all periods, only a limited selection of Ueda's works is addressed.

[4] The Ten Ox-Herding Pictures were created by Zen Master Shiyuan Kuoan (廓庵師遠) around the end of the Northern Song Dynasty. They liken the Buddha-nature/authentic self inherent in all humans to the ox. The process of seeking this Buddha-nature is likened to a herdsman taming an ox, expressed through ten paintings.

[5] For further details, see also the *Heidegger Forum* manuscript.

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about identity as it is constituted in the human relation to Being. At a minimum, we can distinguish:

＜Conventional＞
(1) Logical identity (A = A)
(2) Psychological self-identity: maintaining a consistent self-image

＜Heidegger＞
(3) provisional-continuing identity of becoming Dasein (Existential identity)
(4) differential identity with the difference between the entity (*das Seiende*) and Being (*das Sein*) (Ontological identity)
(5) eventual identity: co-belonging of thinking and being

The following focuses on (3) to (5), which mutually overlap rather than forming separate domains.

Provisional-Continuing Identity of Becoming Dasein (3)

Although *Being and Time* does not explicitly thematize identity, identity is operative throughout its analyses. Dasein is thrown into an already-given situation while projecting itself toward possibilities. This internal tension resists the self's fixation as a single, stable entity. The imperative "become what you are!,"[6] linked to projection (*Entwurf*), also points to a process of (non-)identification.

In anxiety, the impersonal "it" (*es*),[7] excluded from ordinary meaningful relations, breaks automatic continuity; the self appears as discontinuous and unfamiliar—"from (*aus*) me, yet beyond (*über*) me." Identity is thus not given but constituted through a movement of calling and response: the self called "now" is already a possible self, oriented toward the future. "It calls us back in calling us forth (*vorrufender Rückruf*)"[8] that calls us back from the everyday self to the authentic possibility of accepting facticity (*Faktizität*).

Accordingly, identity is not a completed unity but *Ständigkeit*— the ongoing trying to re-choose one's own existence while attempting to resist the pull of falling. Authentic selfhood is "questioning being," continually

[6] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 19th ed. (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2006), 145.
[7] *Ibid*., 275.
[8] *Ibid*., 287.

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renewing its groundlessness; identity of Dasein must be understood not as fixing an essence, but as repeatedly re-questioning it.

Dasein's identity is therefore the persistence of becoming—a "resistance to identity," that is, resistance to the fixation of "identification" in "das Man" (conformity to self-images, customs, institutions). Whereas traditional self-identity privileges continuity from the past, early Heidegger emphasizes discontinuity with the past and orientation toward the future. Yet insofar as this dynamic persistence maintains a form of continuity, it remains intelligible as identity. As Heidegger's thinking develops, this identity of the self as "being able to question Being" is rethought through the ontological difference and through Being's transition into entities. [9]

The Identity of Entity and Being: Differential Identity (4)

Being is not an entity. Yet Being appears as a transition into entities and lets entities be; entities, in turn, indicate Being and provoke thinking. Identity here is not the coincidence of two terms but a reciprocal transition and demand that preserves difference.

In the space of "difference as difference," [10] through their distinctive movement—"play" (*Spiel*)—Being and entities appear each time in singular modes. [11] The substance-identity emphasized by A = A (1) is only one constituent moment within this movement. Within this horizon, Dasein's identity increasingly takes the form of understanding of Being, especially "being able to question Being," considering differential identity. This connects to the gradation that arises as Dasein becomes itself as both Being and entity [identity (3), (5)]: the Being of the entity (Being grasped from the entity), Being as Being, the entity of Being (the entity grasped from Being), and the entity as entity. This gradation tracks Dasein's being-on-the-way—wandering → distress → questioning and transition → provisional persistence → renewed fluctuation. The issue is not an either/or choice between Being and entities, but where the center of gravity lies within "their" relational identity.

*The Identity of Thinking and Being: Mutual Belonging (*Ereignis*) (5)*

Late Heidegger traces identity to Parmenides' saying that "thinking and being are the same." This does not mean that thinking determines Being;

[9] The following content in the main text responds to how the discussion of self-identity in the early period and the law of identity in Heidegger's later period can be connected as matters.

[10] Martin Heidegger, *Identität und Differenz*, ed. by Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, GA 11 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2006), 54.

[11] *Ibid*., 70.

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rather, thinking is entrusted to Being and responds to its appearing—*Ereignis*. Thinking can thus become the "place" that holds the duality of Being and entities.

Already in the middle period, Heidegger suggests that the essential occurrence (*Wesung*, *Wesen*) of Being—"Being first becoming itself"[12]—is the same event as the human being's becoming itself: relating to Being, questioning it, and becoming what one is in that relation.[13] This is not a rupture with early Heidegger but a continuing shift of emphasis within the same relation between Being and the human being. The continuity of provisional identity requires that Being's essential presenting be sheltered within entities—"things, tools, works"—through "art, thinking, poetry, action."[14] In this way, a restoration of entities becomes possible, a transformation that can also prepare contemporaries and future generations.

Reducing the duality of Being and entities (4) to one side impoverishes thought. Only by respecting duality and remaining within the space of difference can thinking essentially occur (5). *Ereignis* names the event in which this mutual belonging occurs and in which both the human being and Being are brought "to themselves." Yet for Heidegger, this is not a final answer. The Parmenides' enigma of "thinking and being are the same" must be preserved. Dialogue with originally thinking is infinite; under the constraints of our age—and amid wandering—we must seek, each time anew, words that protect the enigma.

Comparative Chapter: Heidegger × Ueda

Ueda on Self-Existence and Absolute Nothingness— Through Shizuteru Ueda's Interpretation of the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures (十牛図)

Ueda reads the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures as a ten-stage deepening of the self's relation to itself (existence) through the changing relation between the ox (the true self) and the herdsman (the self that seeks it).[15] In my view, this progression resonates with Heidegger's deepening from early to late thought.

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[12] Martin Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*, ed. by Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, GA 65 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2003), 470–475.

[13] *Ereignis* refers to the realm where the difference between substance and being essentially oscillates. This fluctuation invalidates the essence of humanity (substance) and being as defined by metaphysics, enabling them to regain their essence.

[14] Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*, 389 and 308.

[15] Shizuteru Ueda, *The Ten Ox-Herding Pictures: A Phenomenology of the Self* (Tokyo: Chikuma Gakugei Bunko, 2015), 31.

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Figure 1: In Search of the Ox (尋牛) —The herdsman awakes of losing the heart-ox and becomes questioning, "What is the self?"

Figure 2: Discovery of the Footprints (見跡)— He finds traces rather than the ox itself.

Figure 3: Perceiving the Ox (見牛)— The ox is seen but not yet caught: the question is enacted concretely, and the answer is anticipated; in the practice of continuing to question, a concrete self "as answer" becomes present.[16]

Figure 4: Catching the Ox (得牛)— Rope-tension for restraining the ox visualizes division and unity: while the person seems to restrain the ox, the ox more fundamentally restrains the person. Seeking reverses into being sought.[17]

Figure 5: Taming the Ox (牧牛)— The rope holding the ox loosens; the duality of the ox and the herdsman harmonizes through mutual interpenetration.[18]

Figure 6: Riding the Ox Home (騎牛帰家)— The herdsman riding the ox home while playing the flute, the unity of them deepens; the flute here is "played" by the unity itself.[19] Stages 1–6 rise as a sustained movement in which each insufficiency demands the next.[20]

Figure 7: The Ox Transcended (忘牛存人)— Forgetting the ox, the person preserves at home. The Completion of the practice brings danger: if movement stops at "I am I!," it can reverse into static self-identity.[21] Only the succession of practice sustains ascent;[22] to move further is to cast oneself into bottomless nothingness.[23]

Figure 8: Both Ox and Self Transcended (人牛俱忘)— Forget both the person and the ox. The empty[24] circle nullifies the entire path at once: the process thus far, seeking/being sought/obtaining/forgetting, becomes as though they never were. The eighth is "nothing",[25] the place of "no-self," "absolute nothingness（絶対無）,"[26] which becomes the absolute origin. This nothingness is active: oppositions return to extinction in the pre-subject/object nothingness "before" division.[27]

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[16] *Ibid*., 39–40.
[17] *Ibid*., 43.
[18] *Ibid*., 42–44.
[19] *Ibid*., 44.
[20] *Ibid*., 47.
[21] *Ibid*., 50–51.
[22] *Ibid*., 51.
[23] *Ibid*., 54.
[24] The emptiness in Buddhism means the absence or lack of (fixed) substance.
[25] Ueda, *The Ten Ox-Herding Pictures: A Phenomenology of the Self*, 57.
[26] *Ibid*., 59.
[27] *Ibid*., 62.

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Figure 9: Reaching to the Source (返本還源)—As the form of the true self, only a river and a flowering tree are depicted.[28] Nature appears as a simple, fulfilled event in the empty circle. "Absolute nothingness" (**Figure 8**) and nature as absolute affirmation (**Figure 9**) mutually penetrate and essentially influence.[29]

Figure 10: Return to Society (入鄽垂手)— This figure depicts the encounter between an old man and a young man on a city street. The true self appears not as the old man but as "him + a young man", the encounter itself:[30] the self arises as the interval between self and other, enabling a genuine meeting with the other as itself.[31] The tenth stage remains in mutual interpenetration with the eighth.[32] Everyday questions—"Where did you come from?" "What is your name?"—strike Being with infinite range,[33] awaken self-questioning, and open the other's path to becoming themselves.[34] The tenth of the self thus becomes the first for others, containing an infinite history.[35]

Comparison Centered on "Becoming," "Nothingness / Bottomlessness," and "Event"— Resistance to the fixation of "I am I"

On this basis, we can clarify the situation of identity that includes non-identity by comparing Heidegger and Ueda. As commonalities: (i) both think the human being as the occurrence of a place (opened-ness) (For Ueda, the empty circle); (ii) both stress the need to recognize everyday falling (Figure 1) and to return to transformed everydayness (Figure 10); and (iii) both articulate a spiral model in which the self arises as a question and can "rise" as a sustained movement within the dynamics of authenticity/inauthenticity (ascent always includes the possibility of falling; only succession of practice sustains it).[36] This is a critique of fixed identity—echoed in Heidegger's "not a work but a path," and in Ueda's warning that stopping at "I am I!" risks reversal into ontic self-identity.[37] In other words, being oneself is not a simple straight path or line, but always a winding path or tangled line accompanied by forks.

[28] *Ibid*., 61.
[29] *Ibid*., 62.
[30] *Ibid*., 66.
[31] *Ibid*., 68.
[32] *Ibid*., 66.
[33] *Ibid*., 69.
[34] *Ibid*., 66–67.
[35] *Ibid*., 70.
[36] *Ibid*., 47 and 51.
[37] *Ibid*., 50–51.

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Further similarities appear within the stages themselves: the turning movement (*Kehre*) is continuous with thrown projection (*der geworfene Entwurf*) in Heidegger's thought[38] and in Ueda's interpretation of Figure 4's reversal of seeking into being sought. The continuity with history as an infinite heritage succession[39] in Heidegger's philosophy is also like the encounter of others in Figure 10.

Concerning differences, a provisional contrast is evident between Heidegger's question of Being and Ueda's question of the self. From my standpoint, however, Heidegger's whole thought can also be read as a self-theory that consistently includes ontology,[40] and Ueda's self-theory—because it includes absolute nothingness—can also be read as one that includes the dimension of the question of Being (*Ab-grund*).

Still, whereas Heidegger's project includes a strongly scholarly ontological aim—discerning the essence of Western metaphysics and distancing himself from it—Ueda, perhaps under Nishida and Zen, seems to locate authenticity in remaining within religious awakening as practice/existence (if one may say so, a perspective of being-in-the-world) rather than in scholarship as such.[41] Heidegger's identity-in-difference of Being and entities, and the Parmenidean identity of thinking and Being as co-belonging (*Ereignis*), do not appear in Ueda in that form. Heidegger must philosophize as ontology under the pressure of Western metaphysics; Ueda is at least relatively freer from that inheritance.

A major unavoidable question concerns the positioning of nothingness (無): Heidegger's nothingness, groundlessness/abyss *(Ab-grund*), concealment (*Verborgenheit*), and Ueda's "absolute nothingness" (Figure 8). As I see it, Heidegger's nothingness begins from the future-oriented groundlessness of the meaningless self in the early period, proceeds as the

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[38] See Hoko Nakagawa, *Ab-grund(脱-底): der geworfene Entwurf in Heideggers Denken* (Kyoto: Showa-do, 2018), 175–190.

[39] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 382-387; *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, 260.

[40] See also the point on Ueda, *The Ten Ox-Herding Pictures: A Phenomenology of the Self*, 40, emphasizing "Zazen when not sitting in Zazen," or "effort in motion."

[41] Regarding the problem of self, what is the intention behind including not only early Heidegger, who explicitly discusses selfhood, but also late Heidegger in the examination? In discussing absolute nothingness in the eighth stage of the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures, Ueda contrasts it with late Heidegger's interpretation of Silesius' "The rose blooms because it blooms" as a form of "Ab-grund." While Heidegger's "Ab-grund" is close to his own and Zen thought, Ueda states that his (Nishida's) state of "absolute nothingness without any reason or cause whatsoever" is more in tune with the matter than "blooming without why." Therefore, comparing Ueda's interpretation of the Ten Ox Pictures with Heidegger's entire philosophy is not unreasonable. To the extent of my limited understanding, Ueda's ontology is fundamentally a theory of the self. Furthermore, in my view, the thought of Heidegger from his early to late periods can be seen as a single, consistent path that deepens. That is, Heidegger's reflections on identity and the self are only complete when understood as encompassing the dimensions of his later thought.

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non-being (*Nichtsein*) of Being, and connects to groundlessness and late concealment.[42]

Early Heideggerian nothingness as a meaningless self corresponds to Ueda's "the whole history of the self is extinguished at once"[43] and the "place of no-self." [44] However, Ueda also depicts not only such as the above nothingness "before" division that returns all relative oppositions to the pre-subject / object,[45] but also active nothingness as absolute origin.[46] Similarly, the nothingness in Leibniz's question—central for Heidegger from early to late—"Why is there something rather than nothing?" can be understood as primordial nothingness as possibility: the possibility that entities might not have existed before the birth of the universe.

If Ueda's absolute nothingness is an active, mutually interpenetrative nothingness capable of unfolding into nature and the human being, then an adequate comparison requires attention not only to early Heidegger but also to his middle and late thinking. For, as mentioned earlier, Ueda's thought extends beyond self-theory to encompass ontology, and Heidegger's later thought is not only a contemplation of Being but also, indeed, a theory of the self. A comparison between Heidegger's de-grounding through the "physis (nature)" in the sense of "it plays because it plays," the historical movement of unconcealing and concealing, and the return "from Being to entities," that is, entities becoming more existential[47]— and Ueda's interpretation of the Ten Ox Pictures' Eighth to Tenth Pictures concerning nothingness, nature, and society would be meaningful. However, a detailed elaboration of this argument will be reserved for a separate paper that also incorporates interpretations of Nishida Kitaro's thought.

Finally, another major question concerns time. In broad strokes, one may contrast Heidegger's shift from the primacy of the future in the early period to the primacy of historicity (past) in the later period, with Ueda's—and Zen's—primacy of the present. Yet Heidegger ultimately emphasizes the present moment, and further discussion is needed regarding how this differs from Ueda's understanding. Owing to the limits of space, this remains a task for subsequent work. [48]

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[42] See Nakagawa, *Ab-grund (脱-底)*, 135–160.

[43] Ueda, *The Ten Ox-Herding Pictures: A Phenomenology of the Self*, 59–60.

[44] *Ibid*., 59.

[45] Ueda, *The Ten Ox-Herding Pictures: A Phenomenology of the Self*, 62.

[46] *Ibid*., 59–60.

[47] Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*, 300 and 317.

[48] I believe the same applies when contrasting it with Nishida's interpretation of time.

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Conclusion

In Heidegger, the identity/non-identity of being-in-the-world designates a self that is held together through tension: between possibility and actuality, and through the ongoing possibility of transformation. On this reading, the injunction "Become what you are!" does not affirm self-preservation but possesses multi-layered-ness as a provisional, persistent identity (3), and in essence, it points to a *differential identity* (4)—an identity constituted through the movement from entity to Being and back again toward entity. When such a differential identity is undergone as a play of history, as a process of becoming bottomless, thinking is entrusted to Being, and a becoming-based identity of thinking and Being (5) may occur. This spiral reciprocity, sustained by nothingness and groundlessness, condenses Heidegger's account of identity; it could be called *transitional identity*, all things considered.

Ueda's conception of identity can likewise be summarized as "I am not I (other, world, nothingness), and yet I am I."[49] It foregrounds an original equality of self, others, and nature within the opening of nothingness. Despite differences of emphasis—existential, ontological, or everyday—the two accounts are structurally close. Their divergences can be traced, in part, to the distinct historical and cultural background of nothingness, nature, and humanity. For Heidegger, being-in-the-world can disclose that "we are not yet sufficiently present where we already are," thereby reopening the question of identity: "Where are we?" and "Who are we?" Persisting in such questioning allows one to see through one's historical situation and to become present where one stands. Ueda radicalizes this insight by locating it not only in philosophical reflection but in ordinary encounters. In everyday questions—"Where are you from?" "What is your name?"—the wandering toward/from oneself quietly begins anew.

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[49] Shizuteru Ueda, *What am I?* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2000), 36–40.

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Article

Phenomenological Transcendence and Dialectical Transcendence: Heidegger and Miki

Motoki Saito

Abstract: This paper focuses on the concept of transcendence in order to investigate the relationship between Heidegger's phenomenology and Miki Kiyoshi's dialectic. Miki studied under Heidegger at the University of Marburg from 1923 to 1924. During this time, Heidegger transitioned from his hermeneutics of facticity to the transcendental problem of temporality. Miki's works, such as "The Study of the Human in Pascal," "The Marxian Form of Anthropology," and "The Logic of Imagination" reflect Heidegger's thoughts in hermeneutics, rhetoric, and transcendentalism. Miki developed his own dialectical transcendentalism, incorporating Heidegger's ideas into his logic of imagination in rhetoric.

Keywords: dialectic, imagination, phenomenology, transcendence

Miki Kiyoshi studied under Heidegger at the University of Marburg from mid-October 1923 to 20 August 1924, for approximately ten months.[1] During this period, Heidegger was transitioning from the "hermeneutics of facticity" to the transcendental problem of "temporality," following his move from the University of Freiburg to the University of Marburg. The lectures Miki attended were the winter semester lecture

[1] Miki went to Heidelberg as a student in May 1922 and returned from Paris in October 1925. In a letter to Löwith dated 18 June 1923, Heidegger mentioned that the "Japanese man" in Heidelberg was expected to come to Marburg in the winter. While in Heidelberg, Miki wrote to Ken Ishihara on 20 September 1923, stating, "I will remain here until mid-next month and then move to Marburg." Heidegger had assumed the position of Extraordinary Professor at the University of Marburg on October 1 of that same year, meaning Miki arrived in Marburg about half a month later. On the other hand, in a letter to Mori Gorō dated 31 July 1924, Miki wrote, "In twenty days I will leave here for Paris." Heidegger's letter to Löwith dated 21 August 1924, also states, "Miki departed yesterday. He will not return." Letters 46 and 58, in Martin Heidegger / Karl Löwith, *Briefwechsel 1919-1973*, ed. by Alfred Denker (Freiburg/München: Karl Alber, 2017), 94, 113; Miki Kiyoshi, Letters 2 and 36, in *Miki Kiyoshi Collected Works*, vol. 19 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1966-1968), 219–220, 291 (in Japanese).

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"Introduction to Phenomenological Research" in 1923/24 and the summer semester lecture "Fundamental Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy" in 1924.[2] The former sought to elucidate the meaning of phenomenology by tracing it back to Aristotle, then to Husserl, and finally to Descartes, while the latter sought to elucidate Aristotle's "Rhetoric" as what is known as the "hermeneutics of everydayness." Following the publication of *Dilthey-Yorck Correspondence* at the end of 1923, Heidegger began to clarify the transcendental connection between the concepts of temporality and historicity in his 1924 July lecture "The Concept of Time" and thereafter.[3] As the background of the importance of Greek philosophy and Christian philosophy he had studied in Japan, and in experience of the transition from the Neo-Kantian school to phenomenology in German philosophy, Miki witnessed the emergence of Heidegger's hermeneutic and transcendental phenomenology.

As a result, the dialectical transcendental thinking of Miki is significantly influenced by the process of the emergence of Heidegger's hermeneutic and transcendental phenomenology. In "The Study of the Human in Pascal" (1926), "The Marxian Form of Anthropology" (1927), and "The Logic of the Imagination" (1937–1943), Heidegger's interpretation of rhetoric and the ideas of transcendental phenomenology are still clearly evident. Miki develops his own dialectical transcendentalism by deconstructing and incorporating motifs from Heidegger's phenomenological transcendentalism, including hermeneutics and rhetoric.

In this paper, I will focus on the concept of transcendence to investigate the relationship between Heidegger's phenomenological and hermeneutical ontology and Miki's dialectic. What Miki discovered at the intersection of Heidegger's phenomenological and hermeneutical transcendence and his own dialectical transcendence is the transcendental logic of the imagination in rhetoric.

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[2] Martin Heidegger, *Einführung in die phänomenologische Forschung*, *GA* 17 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1994); Martin Heidegger, *Grundbegriffe der Aristotelischen Philosophie*, *GA* 18 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2002). Furthermore, in a letter dated 1 August 1925, addressed to Mori Gorō, Miki reported that he had also reviewed the winter semester 1924/25 lecture notes, 'Plato—The Sophist' (*GA* 19). "A friend in Marburg sent me a typewritten copy of Heidegger's lecture notes on Plato, so I've been studying them in my free time. There doesn't seem to be anything particularly new beyond what I expected, but it's still quite interesting." Miki Kiyoshi, letter no. 45, in *Miki Kiyoshi Collected Works*, vol. 19 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1966-1968), 308–309.

[3] Martin Heidegger, "Begriff der Zeit (Vortrag 1924)," in *Der Begriff der Zeit*, *GA* 64 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2004), 105–125. About the influence of the "Dilthey-Yorck Correspondence" on Heidegger's concept of historicity, see my article below; Motoki Saito, "Our Common Interest in Understanding Historicity: Reading Heidegger's '*Dilthey-Yorck Correspondence*,'" in *Dilthey-Studies*, 35 (2024), 29–50 (in Japanese).

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The Ontology of Life as Anthropology

In a letter dated 9 December 1923, addressed to Mori Gorō, Miki reported that Heidegger criticized the naturalism remaining in Husserl's phenomenology and was attempting to phenomenologize Dilthey's human sciences.[4] This reflects Heidegger's criticism of Husserl and his evaluation of Dilthey in his lectures of 1923/24. According to Heidegger, consciousness must "exclude" (*Ausschaltung*) all natural positings (*Natursetzung*) and be "free" from them. Husserl calls this "freedom" as "transcendental." This explicitly reveals Husserl's intention to ensure "absolute academic rigor" to the "transcendentally pure consciousness" in *Ideas I*. However, despite this "transcendental exclusion of all nature," Heidegger asserts that the "Being" of this consciousness itself is the "individual singularity of the stream of experience." It is precisely this oversight of the individual singularity of the stream of experience that leaves a naive naturalism of abstraction in transcendental phenomenology.[5] Heidegger's criticism here forms the basis of the later controversy surrounding the "Britannica Article."

On the other hand, as can be seen in expressions such as "stream of experience" and "singularity," Heidegger discerns in the Being of consciousness the "possibility of existence" that Dilthey experienced as "life in history."[6] Husserl criticizes Dilthey's "historicism" as "extreme skeptical subjectivism" in his 1911 article "Philosophy as a Rigorous Science," but according to Heidegger, Dilthey is not a relativist.[7] Rather, Heidegger highly evaluates Dilthey's understanding of history and states that "psychology," which serves as the foundational science of the human sciences, is "anthropology" as the "science of human existence."[8] This statement appears at the end of the lecture 1923/24, which discusses Heidegger's unique connections between "uncanniness (*Unheimlichkeit*)," "care (*Sorge*)," "time,"

[4] "Heidegger is attempting to establish a phenomenology of the human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaft*) that departs from the Naturalism tendencies still present in Husserl's phenomenology. Regardless of how deeply he has advanced in this direction, the endeavor itself is interesting. His view that Husserl's *Logical Investigation* carries more weight than his *Ideas* is also interesting. Heidegger respects Dilthey and has also advised me to study Dilthey fundamentally." Miki Kiyoshi, letter no. 5, in *Miki Kiyoshi Collected Works*, vol. 19 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1966-1968), 224–25.

[5] "This purified problem setting is nevertheless still naturalistic." Heidegger, *GA* 17, 80–81.

[6] Heidegger, *GA* 17, 92.

[7] Edmund Husserl, "Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaf" (1911), in *Aufsätze und Vortäge (1911- 1921), Husserliana XXV* (Dordrecht / Boston / Lancaster: Martinus Nijihoff Publishers, 1987), 43.

[8] According to Helene Weiss' notes, it was stated that "Psychology as the originary science of the human sciences is the science of life, that is, the science of human existence (anthropology)." Heidegger, *GA* 17, 321.

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and "historical philosophy," and it must have made a particularly strong impression on Miki, who was advised to "study Dilthey fundamentally" by Heidegger.

At the beginning of "Pascal," Miki states that "*Pensées*" is "anthropology" as the "science of human existence."[9] Of course, this differs from Heidegger's position in *Being and Time*, which excludes "anthropology" including psychology and Christian theology from the analysis of Dasein.[10] What Miki is concerned with is the "ontology of life" as Dilthey's "anthropology."

The Hermeneutics of Fundamental Experience as Destruction

But Miki still emphasizes Heidegger's ontology of being. In his 1923/24 lectures, Heidegger also seeks to investigate the categorical interrelationships in human existence that go beyond Dilthey's "historical narrative."[11] To investigate the origin of these categories in human existence, Heidegger introduces the concept of "fundamental experience (*Grunderfahrung*)" in his 1924 lecture.[12] Beneath categories and concepts lies the fundamental experience, and it is through language that categories and concepts are produced from this fundamental experience.

In a letter dated 14 May 1924 to Mori Gorō, Miki states that the purpose of interpretation is to investigate the "fundamental experience" that gave rise to concepts and that it is to understand the internal relationship between fundamental experience and language through expression.[13] This

[9] "What we encounter in *Pensées* is not the study of consciousness or the mind, but rather the study of the concrete human being, that is, anthropology in the literal sense. Anthropology is the science of human existence. It studies this existence in its 'mode of being'. We generally call such a discipline ontology; therefore, anthropology is an ontology. My main intention was to treat *Pensées* as a living ontology." Miki Kiyoshi, "The Study of the Human in Pascal," in *Miki Kiyoshi Collected Works*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1966-1968), 4.

[10] Heidegger, *GA* 2, 61–67.

[11] Heidegger, *GA* 17, 279.

[12] "The conceptuality considered in the fundamental concepts is the fundamental experience that gives things, not the theoretical grasping of things. What is experienced within fundamental experience is expressed toward something. What is thus experienced and what is established from this perspective is articulated and becomes alive within expression." *GA* 18, 18.

[13] "I believe the purpose of Interpretation generally lies in clarifying the '*Grunderfahrung*' that gave birth to the concept. The goal of interpretation is to determine 'what he encountered.' His concept must surely have arisen from the fundamental experience of something fundamental. I must deconstruct the concept to grasp this *Grunderfahrung*. Thus, one might also say that Interpretation is Destruction. When one grasps this fundamental experience oneself, one can determine the *Möglichkeiten* for expressing this fundamental experience in words. And by clarifying which one of these *Möglichkeiten* he followed in constructing his concept, one can understand the inner relationship between the fundamental experience and its expression—this,

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faithfully follows Heidegger's "fundamental experience" as presented in the 1924 summer semester lecture.[14] Additionally, Miki states that the "interpretation" that grasps the "fundamental experience" is the "destruction (*Destruktion*)" of the "concept," which reflects the discussion on "destruction as the method of interpreting Dasein" in the 1923/24 lecture. While phenomenology aims for transcendental freedom through the "execution" of "natural positing," the ontology of Dasein aims for "freedom from inherited possibilities and traditional forms."[15] However, since Dasein possesses the unique tendency of "obstruction-itself (*Sich-selbst-verbauen*)," the "interpretation of Dasein" must carry out "deconstruction (*Abbauen*), destruction (*Destruktion*)" of the traditional categories formed under this tendency.[16] This destruction exposes traditional categories and concepts as inappropriate, rooted in the narrowed-down experience of Dasein, and enables a return to the fundamental experience of existence free from other academic disciplines. It is this "hermeneutics of the fundamental experience as destruction" that Miki introduces into his own "ontology of life."

This point is clear in his description of methodological consciousness in "Pascal."[17] Miki does not allow himself to be constrained by disciplines such as psychology or geometry but instead traces Pascal's concepts back to the fundamental experiences underlying them, interpreting the internal connection between concepts and fundamental experiences. Miki's analysis, extending from "fallenness," "self-escape," "anxiety," and "death" to "boredom," which evokes not only Heidegger's *Being and Time* but also his later theory of boredom, can be regarded as Miki's unique hermeneutic achievement grounded in Heidegger's methodology. In his 1923/24 lectures, Heidegger criticizes Descartes' fundamental experience as "I am a thinking thing (*sum res cogitans*)."[18] In contrast, Miki finds positive significance in Pascal's "fundamental experience," because Pascal criticized Descartes as "useless and uncertain."[19]

I believe, is the purpose of interpretation." Miki Kiyoshi, letter no. 26, in *Miki Kiyoshi Collected Works*, vol. 19 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1966-1968), 269.

[14] Mori Ichiro, "Grundexperience als Work: Heidegger and Miki," in *Gendaishiso*, 46:3 (2018), 295–314, esp. 296–299 (in Japanese).

[15] Heidegger, *GA* 17, 112.

[16] *Ibid*., 117–118; cf. 113.

[17] "In interpreting Pascal, I consciously employed a single method … Where a concept is given, the task of interpretation is to clarify its fundamental experience; where fundamental experience is given, it is to clarify its concept." Miki, "The Study of the Human in Pascal," 4.

[18] Heidegger, *GA* 17, 312.

[19] Miki, "The Study of the Human in Pascal," 45. Miki later reflected, "While contemplating Pensées, I felt the scholarship I had learned from Professor Heidegger come alive." Miki Kiyoshi, "Wanderings through the World of Books," in *Miki Kiyoshi Collected Works*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1966-1968), 429. Moreover, since his Freiburg days, a photograph of Pascal's death mask had been placed on Heidegger's desk alongside one of Dostoevsky. Karl

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However, Miki further finds "dialectic" in Pascal's own method of interpreting human existence.[20] This dialectic is not a formal, superficial, or abstract logical operation. The contradictions in human beings have "rich content" that goes beyond abstract categories, and therefore their "concrete existence" can be specifically recognized through dialectical synthesis.[21] But, according to Miki, what is synthesized in Pascal's dialectic is "supernatural fact." [22] For Miki, the hermeneutic and dialectical synthesis of the transcendental fact of life is the truth of the ontology of life. It is noteworthy that Heidegger had already asserted "fundamental dialectic (*Urdialektik*)" in his 1923 lecture.[23] Fundamental dialectic is, so to speak, a return to the undifferentiated origin of life and an examination of the mutual mediation and emergence of the historical world and the transcendental dimension. Of course, Heidegger later shifted entirely to hermeneutics and never revisited dialectic. But Miki, who engages with the dialectical tradition of the Kyoto School, can be said to return to Heidegger's earliest ideas by deepening hermeneutics in his own way.

Rhetoric as Post-Hermeneutics: The Transcendental Logic of Imagination

Following "Pascal," the articles "The Structure of Questions" (1926–27) and "The Basic Concepts of Hermeneutic Phenomenology" (1927) also contain abundant content from Heidegger's two lectures given in 1923–24.[24]

Löwith, "Der europäische Nihilismus" (1938/1940/1948/1953/1957), in *Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschehen: Sämtliche Schriften, Band 2: Zur Kritik der Geschichtsphilosophie*, (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlersehe Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1983), 517; Paul Hühnerfeld, *In Sachen Heidegger. Versuch über ein deutsches Genie* (München: Paul List Verlag, 1961), 55; Heinrich Wiegand Petzet, *Auf einen Stern zugehen. Begegnungen mit Martin Heidegger. 1929–1976* (Frankfurt am Main: Frankfurter Societäts-Druckerei, 1983), 90–91. This death mask of Pascal is also impressively described in the 1925/26 winter semester lecture "Logic: The Question Concerning Truth," which discussed Kant's "Schematization of the Pure Concepts of Understanding." Heidegger, *GA* 21, 361–362.

[20] "The interpretation of human existence must possess a special structure. This is what some call the dialectic in Pascal … Even in Pascal, dialectic is nothing other than the method for correctly identifying human existence." Miki, "The Study of the Human in Pascal," 149–150.

[21] "Life can only be fully interpreted from the standpoint of unifying and synthesizing contradictions." *Ibid*., 153–154.

[22] "What synthesizes and unifies the contradictions of reality is still fact, but above all, it is *supernatural* fact … The understanding of life can only be complete when it is interpreted in relation to the transcendent. Therein lies the deepest mystery of life." *Ibid*., 189–190.

[23] "Fundamental Dialectic" is "the process of thinking, in its active state," the "transformative relationship of constitutive interconnection in the mutual relationship between the objective and the subjective"—that is, the "constitutive interconnection, categories, and principles" of both—prior to all theoretical and logical premises. Heidegger, *GA* 59, 136.

[24] Mori, "Grundexperience als Work: Heidegger and Miki," 299–306; Mine Hideki, "Heidegger and young Miki," in *Kwansei Gakuin Jimbun Ronkyu (Humanities Review)*, 68:3 (2018), 1–21 (in Japanese).

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However, Miki also introduces Heidegger's hermeneutic structure into his own interpretation of Marxism. In "The Marxian Form of Anthropology," three stages are outlined: "fundamental experience," "anthropology," and "ideology." [25] The first stage determines the second, and the second determines the third. However, the dual relationship between "logos" and "experience" from the second to the third stage develops dialectically through a "mediation" similar to Kant's "schema." Although Miki's unique dialectic is incorporated into the transition from the second stage to the third stage, the "anthropology" of the second stage corresponds to what is known as the "hermeneutics of everydayness" based on Heidegger's 1924 lecture on Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, and the third stage generally corresponds to "historical science" based on the historicity of Dasein.[26] Therefore, Miki's interpretation of Marxism can be said to be grounded in Heidegger's hermeneutics of facticity, everydayness, and historicity.[27]

However, the scope of the hermeneutics of everydayness extends through dialectical transcendentalization to the "logic of imagination." In "Philosophical Anthropology" (1933–37), Miki depicts the structure of dialectical thinking, maintaining the duality of subjectivity and objectivity.[28]

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[25] The first stage, "fundamental experience," is the "experience that produces the Logos"; the second stage, "anthropology," is "human self-interpretation (*Selbstauslegung*)"; and the third stage, "ideology," is "human self-understanding (*Selbstverständigung*)." Miki Kiyoshi, "The Marxian Form of Anthropology," in *Miki Kiyoshi Collected Works*, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1966-1968), 5, 9, 11–12, 17–18.

[26] In his 1924 lectures, Heidegger defined rhetoric as the hermeneutics of Dasein. "Rhetoric is nothing other than the domain in which the self-interpretation of Dasein is performed explicitly," and "*rhetoric is nothing other than the interpretation of concrete Dasein*, *the hermeneutics of Dasein itself*." Heidegger, *GA* 18, 110. Subsequently, in *Being and Time*, Aristotle's rhetoric is termed "the first systematic hermeneutics of the everydayness of mutual being." Heidegger, *GA* 2, 184. In his August 1927 article "Marxism and Materialism," Miki translates '*Jeweiligkeit*' as 'banality.' This should be understood not as the existential category of '*Jemeinigkeit*' (individuality) in *Being and Time*, but rather as a conceptual definition of everyday things derived through the interpretation of Aristotle's '*to kat hekasta*' in the 1924 lectures. Miki's insight that *hekaston*—present despite separation yet vanishing from everyday life precisely because it is too familiar—can be described as the 'commodity' in modernity is indeed prescient. Miki Kiyoshi, "Marxism and Materialism," in *Miki Kiyoshi Collected Works*, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1966-1968), 59-60.

[27] Tosaka Jun harshly critiques Miki's "human studies as almost a direct import from Heidegger's ontology," yet accurately points out that "Miki's philosophy, as a modern historical philosophy, was not Marxist from the outset." Tosaka Jun, "Mr. Miki Kiyoshi and Miki's Philosophy," in *Tosaka Jun Collected Works*, vol. 5 (Tokyo: Keiso Shobo, 1967), 106–107.

[28] "Yet since the ground of being is conceived as nothingness in relation to being, the consciousness of such a ground is the consciousness of nothingness. Thus, human subjectivity manifests itself in the consciousness of nothingness. The transcendence from object to subject in man does not mean that we are consciousness and the world lies outside this consciousness. A mere transcendence over consciousness cannot be called true transcendence. Rather, as subjects, we transcend the object, the world, in its very being; and the world is transcendent for us precisely because there is already a transcendence to the subject within us. The transcendence

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The subject transcends the world as the object by transcending "Nothingness," which is the basis of the subject. As stated in "Hermeneutics and Rhetoric"(1938), this dialectical thinking is "active self-awareness" or "active intuition" that aims to unify logos and pathos, and possesses the technical ability to express and create the "world," including "society."[29] Miki's "The Logic of Imagination" focuses mainly on technology from chapter one "Myth" and chapter two "Institution" to chapter three "technology." But it is recognized for its originality that in chapter four "Experience," Miki is, depending on Heidegger's Kant-Book, extends it to Kant's third critique. Here what is more noteworthy is the logic of "rhetoric." Because the logic of rhetoric is assumed to be unfinished part of "language" in "The Logic of Imagination."

Rhetoric is not only logic, grammar, and philology, but also transcends hermeneutics, which deals with "written language." Rhetoric is an active thought that concretely and ethically constructs the world and society through "spoken language."[30] Because the "language" of rhetoric "transcends the hermeneutic position of internalism," which aims at the "totality" of "ego or experience, "and has a transcendental character that leads to the "idea (form)" of "society" through its expressive acts.[31] Miki regards this de-hermeneutic transcendental logic of rhetoric as a "transcendental" "imagination" that forms the "idea" of "the event 'between' me and you."[32] Miki writes: "The logic of rhetoric must fundamentally be the logic of imagination."[33]

At a glance, it may seem that Miki is simply dialectically synthesizing opposites such as logos and pathos, understanding and experience, ethics and technology, action and intuition, and Being and Nothingness. However, while Heidegger reduces the hermeneutics of everydayness to the negative concept of "idle talk (*Gerede*)," Miki discovers in rhetoric the power to continually create new forms through speech in response to an unstable world that is threatened by Nothingness. Heidegger certainly saw logos in its function of world-disclosure as "letting-be-seen," but his opposition to

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inherent in human existence itself is the very source of the world's transcendence, its worldliness, and the source of the object's objectness. Human self-conscious existence is impossible apart from such transcendence. One might say that the world opens and reveals itself to us in the consciousness of nothingness. As one who has transcended into nothingness, man is the subject." Miki Kiyoshi, "Philosophical Anthropology," in *Miki Kiyoshi Collected Works*, vol. 18 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1966-1968), 266–267.

[29] *Ibid*., 147, 161, 303.

[30] *Ibid*., 320, 329–330; Miki Kiyoshi, "Hermeneutics and Rhetoric," in *Miki Kiyoshi Collected Works*, vol. 5 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1966-1968), 140–143.

[31] Miki, "Hermeneutics and Rhetoric," 154–155.

[32] *Ibid*., 155–156.

[33] *Ibid*., 151.

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propositional logic there narrowed the scope of ethos in the hermeneutics of everydayness and, in turn, distracted from the transcendental character latent in ethos. Indeed, in Heidegger's later thought, including the concept of "*Geviert*," we can find an extension of ethos as re-dwelling in the world with others. Miki, however, had already planned to transcendentalize ethos, which early Heidegger had overlooked. And this idea is in line with Gadamer's transcendental philosophical hermeneutics. We create the world together with others according to ethos we can share in a transcendental sense, and through this, we continue to re-dwell in the world by repeatedly achieving fusion of horizons. The dialectical thinking of Miki opens up the logic of this transcendental creative power latent in rhetoric, that both discloses and mediates everything in the world.

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Article

Interpreting Heidegger in China: Between Modernity and Tradition[1]

Hongjian Wang and Zhaonong Wang

Abstract: Over the past four decades, Heidegger's philosophy has exerted a profound influence on Chinese intellectual thought. Within Mainland Chinese academia, two primary approaches to interpreting Heidegger's work can be identified. The "contemporary" approach, championed by Sun Zhouxing, is rooted in the concerns of modernity, particularly nihilism and the dominance of technology, using these issues as a foundation for proposing a philosophy of the future (未來哲學). In contrast, the "Chinese" approach, represented by Zhang Xianglong, emphasizes cross-cultural comparisons between Heidegger's philosophy and Chinese traditional thought, seeking to develop a phenomenology of kinship affection (親親現象學) and a "philosophy of family/home" (家哲學). Both approaches constitute concrete practices of phenomenological interpretation, and through their respective explorations, they demonstrate the universal validity and methodological robustness of Heidegger's phenomenology, showing its applicability across different cultural and conceptual contexts.

Keywords: Heidegger, China, philosophy of the future, philosophy of family/home

Heidegger's thought has exerted a broad and profound influence on academic circles in Mainland China for over four decades. Among the many scholars working in this field, two figures stand out as particularly representative: Sun Zhouxing (孫周興) and Zhang Xianglong (張祥龍). As members of the first generation of Heidegger scholars in China—

[1] This paper is a phased result of the Major Project *"A Study on the Transformation from Subjectivity to Ontology in German Philosophy"* (2025JDKT10Z), funded by the Zhejiang Provincial High-Quality Key Research Base in Philosophy and Social Sciences. We are grateful to Professor Wang Zhihong and Dr. Zhu Jinliang for their valuable suggestions on the sections of this paper concerning Professor Zhang Xianglong.

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those who began their work in the 1980s and 1990s—they have made enduring and influential contributions to Heidegger studies.[2]

This paper investigates the distinct yet convergent ways in which Sun Zhouxing and Zhang Xianglong engage with Heidegger's philosophy. It first outlines their respective research approaches, followed by a comparative analysis that brings to light the major points of intersection between them. Finally, the reception of Heidegger in China demonstrates the universality of phenomenology itself and its potential for cross-cultural engagement.

From Philosophy of Existence to Philosophy of the Future: Sun Zhouxing's Interpretation of Heidegger

Sun Zhouxing is known in the academic community for his translations of Heidegger's works. However, beyond his translation work, Sun has also developed a distinctive perspective in Heidegger studies. Drawing on his research on the early thought of the philosopher, he positions him as a representative figure of the philosophy of existence. This conceptual positioning is also shaped by his translation of Heidegger's two-volume *Nietzsche.* As is well known, in this work Heidegger outlines two principal trajectories in Western metaphysics: one centered on essence, the other on existence. Although he asserts that he has moved beyond both, his thought clearly aligns more closely with the latter. Of course, the philosophy of existence carries the risk of being narrowed down, potentially becoming an extreme form of subjectivism.[3] Nevertheless, the anti-essentialist tendencies it embodies are undeniably of profound significance for twentieth-century philosophy.[4]

It is worth noting that Sun's engagement with Heidegger is motivated by a profound concern with contemporary problems, particularly the question of how to address the crisis of modernity. This crisis, in his view, consists of two interrelated elements: nihilism and the dominance of technology. In recent years, he has argued that human civilization has shifted into a technological age, necessitating the establishment of a philosophy of the future, or a philosophy of the Anthropocene. Around this theme, he has published works such as *The Prelude to Philosophy of the Future*, *The Philosophy*

[2] This article primarily focuses on the reception of Heidegger since the 1980s. For the situation prior to that period, see Xiping Jin and Qinghua Zhu, "Heidegger Study in China (till 2021)," in *The Heidegger Encyclopedia*, ed. by Heidegger Forum in Japan (Tokyo: Showado, 2021), 224-225.

[3] See Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche II,* GA 6.2 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997).

[4] See Zhouxing Sun, "本質與實存——西方形而上學的實存哲學路線 [*Essence and Existence—The Existential Route in Western Metaphysics*]," in *Chinese Social Sciences*, 6 (2004), 72–81.

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of the Anthropocene, and *The Reasons for an Active Life* (referred to as the "Trilogy of the Philosophy of the Future"). In these works, he engages in profound and detailed reflections on topics such as technological domination, the new world experience, and the future of humanity.

The Philosophy of the Anthropocene is composed of twelve lectures on "Technology and the Future," exploring the current state of human civilization and its future possibilities.[5] Sun argues that the philosophy of the future originates from the transformation of human spatiotemporal experience. Since the mid-19th century, the traditional linear experience of time, along with the associated awareness of scientific progress, has been dissolved. In its place, a non-linear experience of time and a non-abstract experience of space have emerged. He refers to these as "circular time" (圓性時間) and "concrete space" (實性空間). Of course, these new concepts also have their intellectual sources. For instance, the new experience of time stems from Nietzsche's doctrine of the "eternal recurrence" and Heidegger's early concept of "future" as well as his later thinking on "time-space" (*Zeit-Raum*).[6]

In his study, Sun situates Heidegger within the broader trajectory of Western philosophy, while simultaneously employing Heidegger's perspective to reassess the development of Western intellectual history. Furthermore, it is evident that Sun's interpretation captures the core issues that Heidegger's philosophy seeks to address. Guided by these concerns, his reflections on the philosophy of the future gradually evolved, generating a novel conceptual framework. The problems he engages with are both universal and distinctly Chinese. In this way, he extends Heidegger's post-philosophical, or post-metaphysical, thought into a philosophy of the future, thereby imbuing it with renewed and enduring vitality.

From the Chinese *Tian Dao* (天道) to the "Philosophy of Family/Home": Zhang Xianglong's Interpretation of Heidegger

In contrast to Sun Zhouxing's Nietzsche-Heidegger approach, Zhang Xianglong is more focused on bridging the philosophies of Husserl and Heidegger in order to unveil the fundamental spirit of phenomenology, and, from this, to construct his own understanding of philosophy. He believes that philosophy is always a contemplation and study of horizon (*Horizont*, 邊緣),[7]

[5] See also the review of this book in Zhaonong Wang, "Technological Domination and the Twofold of Human Existence: A Review of Sun Zhouxing's *Philosophy of the Anthropocene*," in *Eksistenz*, 3 (2024), 139–149.

[6] See Zhouxing Sun, *人類世的哲學* [*The Philosophy of the Anthropocene*] (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2020).

[7] Zhang Xianglong's attention to the concept of "邊緣" (horizon) is related to his translation and understanding of Heidegger's *Dasein*, which he rendered as "緣在." See Qingjie

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characterized by non-objectivity and non-readiness, deriving from the fundamental spirit of both Husserl's and Heidegger's thought.

Another key aspect of Zhang's work is his comparative perspective between Chinese and Western thought. His study of Western philosophy was ultimately aimed at returning to the academic roots of China itself. This is clearly evident in his earliest major work, *Heidegger and Chinese Tian Dao*, where he does not treat *Tian Dao* as a conventional notion of ultimate reality, but, in the spirit of phenomenology, interprets it as event (*Ereignis*, 構成境域).[8] Through his phenomenological interpretation, the vitality of Chinese thought is revived, with its generative, dynamic, constitutive, and situative features brought to the fore.

Due to the affinity between Heidegger and Daoist thought (and Heidegger's own engagement with Laozi's philosophy[9]), Zhang Xianglong initially focused on comparing Daoist philosophy with Heidegger. However, he soon redirected his focus toward Confucianism, with his main theme centering on the comparison between phenomenology and Confucianism, while employing phenomenological methods to illuminate Confucian thought. On one hand, he uncovered the Confucian emphasis on factical life experience, which leads toward *Tian Dao* and transcendence in everyday human relationships. On the other hand, he found specific carriers for Confucian theory, namely, the family and filial piety relations (孝親關係).

To this end, he proposed a "phenomenology of kinship affection" as a phenomenological Confucianism. It is noteworthy that this phenomenology of kinship affection has its unique temporality. We know that the relationship of filial piety is generational, occurring between parents (who show natural love) and children (who show filial love). The two occupy different positions in the flow of time, "but more importantly, they exist within the same temporal structure, mutually requiring and complementing each other, together forming human consciousness of kinship affection."[10] Zhang calls

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Wang, "On Chinese Receptions and Translations of Heidegger's Dasein," in *Contemporary Philosophy Review*, 53 (2020), 449–463.

[8] See Xianglong Zhang, *海德格爾與中國天道：終極視域的開啟與交融* [*Heidegger and the Chinese Tian Dao: The Opening and Fusion of Ultimate Horizons*] (Beijing: Renmin University of China Press, 2010), 276ff.

[9] Scholarly attention to Heidegger's reception of Daoism has been extensive. The earliest discussion can be found in Otto Pöggeler's essay "West-östliches Gespräch. Heidegger und Lao Tse," in *Neue Wege mit Heidegger* (Freiburg and München: Alber, 1992), 387–425. More recent studies that focus on its intercultural significance include Fabian Heubel's *Gewundene Wege nach China: Heidegger – Daoismus – Adorno* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2020) and Thomas Michael's "Heidegger's Legacy for Comparative Philosophy and the *Laozi*," in *International Journal of China Studies*, 11:2 (2020), 299–318.

[10] Xianglong Zhang, *家與孝：從現象學視野看* [*Family and Filial Piety: From a Phenomenological Perspective*] (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2022), 43. During this period, the English translation of the book has been published, as follows: Xianglong Zhang**,** *Family and*

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this temporality "wholly cyclical," [11] which differs from the linear, conventional notion of time. This, he argues, is something that Western phenomenologists rarely recognize (except for Levinas, who touches on it to some extent), yet it constitutes the true foundation of time. Clearly, the phenomenology of kinship affection forms the foundation of the philosophy of family/home.[12]

It is important to note that, although Western philosophy is generally considered to have forgotten the philosophy of the family/home, it has not contributed nothing in this regard; Zhang Xianglong also sought to find philosophical resources for the philosophy of the family/home in Western philosophers, including Heidegger. While early Heidegger regarded "home" as a possibility of being-with and thus classified it as inauthentic, in his later work, he began to emphasize the concept of home, even using the hearth (*Herd*)—a symbol of the home—as a metaphor for Being itself. [13] This undoubtedly opens up the possibility of dialogue between Chinese and Western thought. However, Zhang observes that Heidegger's notion of "home" refers primarily to the *home of Being* rather than to one grounded in kinship or the parent–child relationship—precisely the point at which the significance and future potential of Confucianism can be demonstrated.[14]

In summary, within the framework of phenomenology, Zhang Xianglong engaged deeply with traditional Chinese thought, particularly Confucian philosophy, and developed an approach that foregrounds the lived experience of Confucianism. Moreover, he drew upon its distinctive understandings of life and temporality to critically reflect on the limitations of Western philosophy, thereby fostering a dialogue between Chinese and Western thought and creating a foundation for meaningful intellectual exchange.

Between Modernity and Tradition

In general, Sun's focus has been on the issues of modernity, while Zhang has approached the subject from the perspective of Chinese traditional thought. This creates a dual paradigm in Chinese Heidegger studies, guided by the key terms "contemporaneity" and "China." Superficially,

Filiality: An Intercultural Perspective, trans. by Kevin J. Turner (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2025).

[11] Zhang, *Family and Filial Piety*, 2.

[12] More extensive discussions on the philosophy of the family/home can be found in Xiangchen Sun, *論家：個體與親親* [*On the Family: Individual and Kinship Affection*] (Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 2019).

[13] See Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlins Hymne "Der Ister*," GA 53 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1993).

[14] See Zhang, *Family and Filial Piety*, 325–326.

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contemporaneity corresponds to "temporality," while China aligns with "spatiality," each drawing from Heidegger's thought to enhance its own perspective. However, these two approaches are not completely distinct or unrelated. It must be recognized that Zhang Xianglong's focus on Chinese traditional thought is not an attempt to return to the past, but rather to activate the contemporary significance of traditional thought in order to address the challenges of the present day. He saw the various dilemmas facing us in the globalized modern world and thus sought to find original life experiences and solutions from traditional Chinese philosophies, especially Confucianism. If phenomenology is the result of Western culture's self-reflection, then the "philosophy of family/home" based on the phenomenology of kinship affection is the solution Zhang Xianglong discovered through his exploration between East and West. In his view, Confucianism must be activated through phenomenological methods, so that it can continue to play a role in the contemporary world.[15]

On the other hand, although Sun Zhouxing's focus is on contemporaneity, he also places significant emphasis on its integration with the Chinese context. As previously noted, in the view of Sun, the reflection on the dilemmas of modernity is particularly urgent in contemporary China. Heidegger's broad reflections in this regard clearly resonate in China, which lies outside the European cultural sphere. This is particularly so because Heidegger is not merely a European thinker; his philosophy carries a universal relevance, encompassing perspectives that transcend Western or Eurocentric frameworks. Sun argues that Heidegger's thought aligns closely with Chinese traditional philosophy: both express resistance to the mainstream philosophical traditions of the West, which emphasize logic, argumentation, and formalization as dominant modes of thought.[16]

From the analysis above, it is evident that the two representative approaches to Heidegger research in China over the past four decades are not clearly distinct; rather, they are complementary. They arise from different starting points but are unified by a common concern. Below, I will attempt to

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[15] See Xianglong Zhang, *思想避難：全球化中的中國古代哲理* [*Philosophical Refuge: Ancient Chinese Philosophy in Globalization*] (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2007), 6–10. In addition, Zhang Xianglong also sought to put Confucianism into practice. For example, he advocated the establishment of a "Confucianism protection zone." See Monika Gänßbauer, "'A Special Zone for Confucianism'? Theses of the Academician Zhang Xianglong on Traditional Chinese Culture," in *Asian Studies*, 2:1 (2014), 115–126. Zhang likewise underscores the significance of Confucian thought for understanding and responding to the technological age. See Xianglong Zhang, "Technology, Dao-Technē and Home: The Significances and Limits of Heidegger's Critique of Modern Technology's Essence," in *Yearbook for Eastern and Western Philosophy*, 2 (2017), 372–392.

[16] See Zhouxing Sun, *存在與超越：海德格爾與漢語哲學* [*Being and Transcendence: Heidegger and Philosophy in Chinese*] (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2019), 152.

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further reveal three key commonalities in the research approaches of Zhang and Sun.

Firstly, there is a common emphasis on factical life experience. Interestingly, Sun, in his comprehensive portrayal of Heidegger, contends that the early and late approaches are not contradictory but run in parallel, both oriented toward the same philosophical task: the possibility of a non-theoretical philosophy. Therefore, in engaging with Heidegger's philosophy of existence, Sun not only offers critique but also seeks to extend and develop it. In his conception of a new world experience, he asserts that the philosophy of existence is a precondition for the philosophy of the future, as its inherent individualization, worldliness, and creativity provide the necessary conditions for establishing a future-oriented philosophy.[17]

In contrast to Sun's emphasis on the individual, Zhang Xianglong seeks to find an alternative space for meaning in modern life through the "family," the most fundamental community. According to Zhang, modern society contains three entities: the individual, the family, and the collective. Within this three-part structure, the "family" occupies a more primordial position, situated between the other two.[18] Through this structure, Sun's individualism is indirectly critiqued. For Zhang, when he posits the phenomenon of filial piety as the foundational life experience and even the basis for phenomenology, he demonstrates that without concrete everyday life, we cannot comprehend *Tian Dao*. It is precisely this conviction that supports his turn toward a phenomenological study of Confucianism, thus opening a new path for revitalizing Confucianism in contemporary China. It is important to note that both the familial experience of filial piety and the individual's creative experience signify a resistance against the technologized social reality, while at the same time opposing the dominant tradition of metaphysics.

Secondly, there is a shared exploration of new temporal experience. Both Sun and Zhang have pointed out that the reconstruction of life experience must be grounded in temporal experience. Unlike Zhang, who particularly emphasizes the significance of temporality, Sun not only discusses circular time but also addresses concrete space. Furthermore, while it remains somewhat ambiguous in Zhang's work whether it is life experience or temporal experience that constitutes the foundation, Sun considers temporal experience as a component of the entirety of life experience. However, what they share in common is the recognition of the cyclical nature of temporal experience, which involves a reflection on and critique of the linear concept of time (the progressive view of time).

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[17] See Sun, *Philosophy of the Anthropocene*, 252.

[18] See Zhang, *Family and Filial Piety*, 48.

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Finally, there is a shared emphasis on method. Although Heideggerian phenomenology may appear to be a critique of methodology, its primary target is the scientific method, or the approach that treats the scientific method as the only valid one. Therefore, the search for an alternative method constitutes the core demand of phenomenology. For Zhang, method is similarly at the core. His research and extension of early Heidegger's concept of formal indication, along with his emphasis on its contextuality and non-readiness, all reflect this focus. A key feature of his approach is the incorporation of "time" (or timing) into the method, thus forming a primordial, vivid experience. Zhang Xianglong's insistence on a cross-cultural intellectual path between China and the West is significantly grounded in the unity of method; that is, the phenomenological method and Confucian thinking methods can mutually support each other.[19] This implies that method serves a foundational role in his overall philosophy.

In his research on Heidegger, Sun Zhouxing summarizes the issue of method as the search for a form of thought and expression that is non-inferential and non-argumentative. He contends that Heidegger's work is characterized by three primary approaches: existential reflection, poetic thinking, and divine thinking.[20] The hidden foundation of these methods lies in Heidegger's dualistic thought. Sun's focus on duality stems from his doctoral dissertation, and this methodological concept is also reflected in his philosophy of the future, where duality is considered a form of "non-identical thinking" or a "differentiated thought strategy," which is precisely the indispensable method for our time.[21]

Conclusion

As we have seen from the previous discussion, while differences can be discerned in the specific ways they address issues of life, temporality, and methodological approach, it remains undeniable that both thinkers converge in their fundamental emphasis on these themes and demonstrate parallel orientations in their philosophical outlooks.

When Sun Zhouxing proposed the philosophy of the future and Zhang Xianglong the philosophy of family/home—approaching these

[19] See Xianglong Zhang, "現象學如何進行儒學研究？論雙方方法論的親和性 [*How Does Phenomenology Conduct Confucian Research? On the Methodological Affinity Between the Two*]," in *Zhejiang Academic Journal*, 6 (2020), 68–74.

[20] See Zhouxing Sun, "非推論的思想還能叫哲學嗎？海德格爾與後哲學的思想前景 [Can Non-Inferential Thought Be Called Philosophy? Heidegger and the Intellectual Prospects of Post-Philosophy]," in *Social Sciences Frontline*, 9 (2010).

[21] See Zhouxing Sun, *積極生活的理由* [*The Reasons for an Active Life*] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Education Press, 2024), 141.

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respectively through the lenses of "contemporaneity" and "China"—their ideas resonated with Heidegger and together constituted a phenomenological interpretation of his thought. At the same time, the success of such practice serves as a concrete demonstration of the universal validity of Heidegger's phenomenological methodology—showing that when phenomenology is employed not merely as a philosophical inquiry but as a method of interpretation, it proves both applicable and illuminating across different cultural and temporal contexts.

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Article

The Concept of Willing in Heidegger's Fundamental Ontology

Peter Ha

Abstract: The objective of this paper is to clarify the meaning of Dasein with respect to the concept of willing that is revealed in the 'for-the-sake-of (*Um-willen*).' Yet it should be noted that in fundamental ontology willing has a peculiar meaning. In contrast to the general concept of willing founded in practical reason, the willing of Dasein is based on the pre-thematic dimension.

Keywords: care, mood, *Um-willen*, willing

Although in fundamental ontology Heidegger speaks of the destruction of traditional ontology, his elaboration of the question of Being still belongs to the tradition of transcendental philosophy. This is demonstrated by the fact that he seeks to clarify the meaning of Being on the basis of the transcendental concept of Being. "We can also call," he remarks, "the science of being, as critical science, *transcendental science*."[1] Transcendental science, however, is first elaborated not by Heidegger but by Kant.[2] According to Kant, the transcendental way of thinking concerns neither an ontical structure of beings nor of their totality but a condition of possibility of beings based on our mode of *a priori* knowledge of beings. Heidegger, who takes over the tradition of transcendental method, also stresses that the analysis of things in the environment essentially presupposes our mode of *a priori* knowledge. "This '*a priori*' letting-something-be-involved is the condition for the possibility of encountering anything ready-to-hand."[3] Yet, what is important here is that in fundamental ontology, our mode of apriority is not concerned with the condition for the possibility of experiencing the thematic objects in nature. On the contrary, it deals with *a*

[1] Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problem of Phenomenology*, trans. and ed. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 17.

[2] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by Werner S. Pluhar (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1996), B25.

[3] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1962), 117.

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priori condition for encountering pre-thematic things,[4] namely equipment (*Zeug*) in the environment. Moreover, Heidegger insists that the *a priori* condition of equipment is sought not in the *domain of consciousness* as in the case of Kant's critical philosophy, but in the *domain of Dasein*. But what is the primordial ground of man (Dasein) that undermines knowing of consciousness?

We want to argue here that the primordial ground of man defined as Dasein consists in existential willing.[5] So in addition to the temporal structure, the essential characteristic of Dasein must be sought in the phenomenon of willing. Yet at first sight, our attempt to identify willing with the primordial ground of human Dasein seems misleading. As Heidegger explicitly states, it is not willing but an affective mood (*Stimmung*) that precedes the domain of conceptual knowing in the existential analytic of Dasein. "Only we must not be misled by this into denying that ontologically mood is a primordial kind of Being for Dasein, in which Dasein is disclosed to itself *prior to* all cognition and volition, and *beyond* their range of disclosure."[6] As indicated here, an affective mood is the primordial ground of Dasein. However, when it is closely examined, the willing of Dasein is not inconsistent with Heidegger's thoughts that emphasize affective mood.

According to Heidegger, willing and an affective mood are not two separate states of man. In regard to this point, he states as follows: "This suggests that willing is itself a kind of state, that it is open in and to itself. Willing is feeling (a state of attunement)."[7] Here willing is equated with feeling. By the willing of Dasein, Heidegger, however, does not mean the intellectual and naturalistic volition in the traditional sense. In contrast to this, the willing of Dasein has an existential meaning. Our task is to clarify an existential meaning of willing of Dasein, on which the transcendental science

[4] Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, trans. by William McNeill (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 343–344.

[5] However, there are already several attempts to expose the primacy of doing over knowing in Heidegger's philosophy. Cf., Gerold Prauss, *Knowing and doing in Heidegger's "Being and Time*," trans. by Gary Steiner and Jeffrey S. Turner (New York: Humanity Books, 1999); Mark Okrent, *Heidegger's Pragmatism* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1988); Franco Volpi, "Dasein as praxis: Heidegger and Aristotle," in *Critical Heidegger*, ed. by Christopher Macann (London: Routledge, 1996). These attempts, however, remain unsatisfactory, because the existential meaning of willing is not explicitly discussed. Consequently, without having a clear understanding of willing, it is difficult to grasp what Heidegger means by doing over knowing in fundamental ontology.

[6] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 175. Cf. Michel Haar, "Attunement and Thinking," in *Heidegger: A Critical Reader*, ed. by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Harrison Hall (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992), 159–171.

[7] Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche I*, trans by. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991), 52.

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of Being is founded. The existential meaning of willing can be first clarified in its relation to equipment in the world.

Being-in-the-world: The Correlation of Dasein and Equipment (*pragmata*) in Practical Activity

In order to elucidate the existential willing of Dasein, it is important to begin with the analysis of the world in fundamental ontology. When Heidegger explains Dasein, he never mentions the term consciousness separated from the world. Instead, he emphasizes 'Being-in-the-world.' What he understands by the world is a place "that 'wherein' a factical Dasein as such can be said to 'live.'"[8] Heidegger calls the world of a factical Dasein the environment (*Um-welt*). In the environment, human Dasein primarily *lives* (exists) before he *thinks*.

As a living entity, Dasein primarily forms its world as the environment (*Umwelt*). The peculiar feature of environment, according to Heidegger, lies in the fact that in it, something first gets encountered not as a 'thing-*realia*' but as a 'thing-equipment (*Zeug*).' In regard to this point, Heidegger states: "Equipment—in accordance with its equipmentality—always is in terms of its belonging to other equipment; ink-stand, pen, ink, paper, blotting pad, table, lamp, furniture, windows, door, rooms. These 'things' never show themselves proximally as they are for themselves, so as to add up a sum of *realia* and fill up a room."[9] Hence, in order to understand the meaning of environment, the distinction between 'thing-*realia*' and 'thing-equipment' must be clarified.

By the term 'thing-*realia*,' Heidegger means the categorial determination of things in traditional ontology. From the standpoint of traditional ontology, the 'thing-*realia*' as the Being of things (*res*)[10] denotes the universal determination of a thing. Since 'thing-*realia*' is mediately given in the understanding, it is regarded as a thematic object. Yet this way of determining things in traditional ontology is not applicable to the 'thing-equipment.'

In contrast to 'thing-*realia*,' a 'thing-equipment' is encountered in the world where Dasein lives. In other words, the 'thing-equipment' is what is *immediately pre-given* to Dasein before the abstract theoretical construction. Hence, it is regarded as a pre-thematic thing. Moreover, Heidegger insists that unlike a 'thing-*realia*,' the pre-thematic equipment is never given to Dasein as a singular piece of equipment unrelated to other equipment: "Taken strictly, there 'is' no such thing as an equipment. To the Being of any

[8] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 93.
[9] *Ibid*., 97–98.
[10] Cf. *Ibid*., 245.

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equipment there always belong a totality of equipment, in which it can be this equipment that it is." [11] A piece of equipment is always given in the equipmental whole, because the use of equipment essentially presupposes its relation to other equipment.

According to Heidegger, the reference to other pieces of equipment is possible by the fact that the function of equipment is constituted in the 'in-order-to (*Um-zu*)' structure: "Equipment is essentially 'something-in-order-to."[12] Since a totality of equipment is constituted by various ways of the 'in-order-to,' equipment is defined such as "serviceability, conduciveness, usability, manipulability." [13] It should be noted here that instead of the traditional ontological determination of things in terms of substantiality or materiality, Heidegger uses the term 'serviceability' and 'usability' for determining the essence of equipment. However, a piece of equipment is never given in intuition. Consequently, one cannot discover the 'serviceability' of equipment by just looking at it. For Heidegger, the 'serviceability' of equipment, for instance, a hammer, is immediately disclosed in the practical activities of Dasein. "The hammering itself uncovers the specific 'manipulability' of the hammer.'"[14] Hence, it is in the hammering rather than the 'intuition of essence (*Wesensanschau*)' that we can grasp the essence of a hammer. The use of equipment certainly indicates that in dealing with things in the environment, the practical comportment towards a thing precedes its theoretical comportment.

The analysis of equipment in the environment leads to Dasein's practical comportment, necessarily presupposing the phenomenon of 'willing.' The practical activity of Dasein, however, should not be understood as the action of man that is guided by the rational principle derived from 'I think.' In contrast to this the primordial action is manifested in the practical activity of Dasein, which is only possible on the basis of conative 'willing' founded in the pre-thematic dimension. This existential willing defined as the pre-thematic willing is further clarified in connection with the phenomenon of care.

The Willing of Dasein and Care (*Sorge*)

The analysis of equipment has shown that there is primacy of the practical comportment over the theoretical comportment in Dasein's relation with things. For Heidegger, the ontological ground for these practical activities is based on care (*Sorge*), which is "the ground of the Being of

[11] *Ibid*., 97.
[12] *Ibid*., 163.
[13] *Ibid*., 97.
[14] *Ibid*., 98.

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Dasein."[15] Since care is the ground of Dasein, it is also characterized in terms of willing. In regard to this point, Heidegger states: "Dasein's projection of itself understandingly upon a potentiality-for-Being towards a possibility of the entity 'willed.' In the phenomenon of willing, the underlying totality of care shows through."[16] For the complete understanding of existential willing, it is necessary to explicate what Heidegger means by the phenomenon of care.

From the perspective of existential willing, human Dasein is defined primordially as *ens cura* that precedes *ens cogitans* and *ens volens*. By care, Heidegger means Dasein's concern for its Being. This meaning of care, however, must be distinguished from the ontical sense of care in the everyday world. Care, in the ontical sense, signifies the inner state of 'melancholy,' 'worry,' or the 'care of life.' When care is interpreted in this ontical sense, the assertion "the structure of the Being of Dasein is care" seems to be equated with a pre-philosophical statement like "life is essentially care and toil."[17] Understood in this way, the meaning of care seems to suggest Dasein is an entity that constantly worries about its living condition.

In dealing with care, Heidegger, however, does not intend to portray such an ontical state of Dasein, which represents the gloomy rather than the bright aspect of life.[18] Instead, he wants to develop an ontological structure of Dasein. As the ontological structure, care provides the condition of possibility for such an ontical state like 'melancholy' or 'tribulation.' "It has nothing to do with 'tribulation,' 'melancholy,' or the 'care of life,' though ontically one can come across these in every Dasein. These—like their opposite, 'gaiety' and 'freedom from care'—are ontically possible only because Dasein, when understood as *ontologically*, is care." [19] The ontological meaning of care precedes the ontical state of 'melancholy.' In contrast to 'melancholy' or 'tribulation,' Heidegger insists that the ontological meaning of care is closely bound up with 'propensity (*Hang*)' and 'urge (*Drang*).'

In dealing with Heidegger's philosophy, the phenomenon of care is difficult to understand, because it is an unprecedented concept. We can hardly find the corresponding concept of care in modern philosophy. Yet, in *History of the Concept of Time*, Heidegger explicates care with the familiar concepts such as 'propensity' or 'urge': "Before we proceed toward the understanding of one of these ways of being, namely, the interpretation of this character of the 'before,' we shall clarify the two phenomena which are

[15] Martin Heidegger, *Logik: Die Frage nach der Wahrheit* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976), 220.

[16] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 239.

[17] Martin Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*, trans. by Theodore Kisiel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 301.

[18] Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Einleitung in die Philosophie* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1996), 327.

[19] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 84.

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closely associated with care--*urge* and *propensity*."[20] It is in the analysis of 'urge' that we can find a clue to understand the ontological meaning of care in the context of modern philosophy.

For Heidegger, as a living entity the fundamental characteristic of Dasein consists in the 'need (*chreia*)' of something. If their needs are not fulfilled, all living entities whether they are human beings, animals, or plants cannot exist. Thus, since man is in need of something in order to exist, he is regarded as a living entity. In contrast to human Dasein, a stone, for instance, is a non-living entity, because it can exist without needing anything from elements around itself. That is, a stone does not have to endeavor to exist. In its state of existence, a stone can be what it is and can remain in a given immutable condition without seeking elements. As such, it is considered as a being-in-itself in a state of complacency. But unlike a stone, human Dasein does not have such a complacent state in relation to surrounding things. In order to exist (live), man must constantly seek elements from the outer world. Moreover, man can meet the needs of life, because he is capable of striving for something in the world. For Heidegger, urge represents this power of going towards something: "Urge has the character of 'towards' something. In particular, this 'towards something' points to an element of compulsion which comes from the 'towards' itself."[21] This 'towards something' of urge characterizes an essential aspect of care.

Urge, however, is not the only ontical modality of care. The phenomenon of urge presupposes a state in which human Dasein is dependent on the things in the world. Human Dasein's dependence on the surrounding things indicates its 'propensity' "to becoming 'lived' by whatever world it is in."[22] In this sense, by the term 'propensity,' Heidegger wants to show the fundamental structure of Dasein that Dasein is "already-being-involved-in-something."[23] Thus, the propensity of Dasein reveals the other moment of care, which shows Dasein is a thrown entity in the world.

In Heidegger's view, urge and propensity are essentially tied together and form a unity in care. This unity characterizes the fundamental structure of care. In this unity of care defined as 'willing,' one can ascertain the peculiar characteristic of the pre-thematic willing distinguished from the intellectual will in the traditional philosophy. According to the traditional conception, the ground of intellectual will is always thought to be a simple ground. In contrast to this, Heidegger argues that the ground of care consists in the various structural moments such as urge and propensity that are equiprimordially constituted.

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[20] Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*, 295–296.

[21] *Ibid*., 296.

[22] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 240.

[23] Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*, 296.

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As shown in the preceding section, the existential willing of Dasen is grounded in the pre-thematic willing of care. Yet, it is important to clarify here that although care, in an ontical sense, is constituted in the unity of urge and propensity, it should not be thought as a blind willing circumscribed by the natural instinct. As Heidegger argues, the willing of Dasein is manifested in the midst of beings in the world, whereas an instinct is found in nature. Furthermore, the practical activities based on the willing (care) of Dasein have the correlative relation with equipment, whereas an instinct has only a correlative relation with natural things. For Heidegger, only human Dasein can have the practical comportment toward equipment, because the pre-thematic willing of care is grounded in the 'for-the-sake-of (*Um-willen*)' of Dasein, which indicates that Dasein is self-determined. Hence, the '*Um-willen'* of Dasein indicates that although the pre-thematic willing precedes the intellectual will, it is not reduced to the naturalistic will. On the contrary, the pre-thematic willing also transcends naturalism.

The *Um-willen* of Dasein as Free-willing

In the preceding section, I have indicated that things are proximally encountered as equipment, and the defining characteristic of equipment lies in its 'usability.' The 'usability' of equipment that is in the contextual whole, however, should not be conceived as a jumbled heap of things. Rather, they are ordered in a specific purposeful function. In other words, they are based on the teleological principle of 'toward-which.' But the teleological principle of equipment does not lead into the endless 'toward-which' of equipment. The 'toward-which' of equipment ultimately reaches the end. For Heidegger, the ultimate purpose of equipment is based on the "for-the-sake-of (*Um-willen*)' of Dasein. He illustrates this point with respect to using a hammer: "… there is an involvement of hammering; with hammering, there is an involvement in making something fast; with making something fast, there is an involvement in protection against bad weather; and this protection 'is' for the sake of [um-willen] providing shelter for Dasein."[24] Thus, as the ultimate 'toward-which' of equipment, the '*Um-willen'* of Dasein is a foundation for the interconnective relation of equipment.

In fundamental ontology, Heidegger is concerned with establishing the *a priori* condition for encountering the pre-thematic equipment, by which he tries to overcome all void constructivist philosophies of neo-Kantianism. The *a priori* condition for equipment is sought in the willing of Dasein. With the phenomenon of *Um-willen*, one can finally ascertain why the willing represents an essential characteristic of Dasein. For Heidegger, the *Um-willen*

[24] *Ibid*., 116.

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of Dasein consists in the 'willing': "But a for-the-sake-of-which, a purposiveness [*Um-willen*], is only possible where there is willing [*Willen*]."[25] Here one can see an etymological relation between *Um-willen* and 'willing,' which is lost in English translation. However, it should be noted that when Heidegger speaks of willing, he does not mean the 'act of willing' in the traditional sense. Concerning this matter, he remarks as follows: "This will cannot be a specific 'wanting' an 'act of willing' [*Willensakt*]' as opposed to other kinds of behavior (e.g., representing, judging, rejoicing)."[26] In other words, the willing of Dasein is not to be equated with the traditional view of a free-floating will that proceeds from an isolated and autonomous consciousness of an autarkic subject. In contrast to the traditional understanding, the willing of Dasein is situated outside of an autarkic subject.

In the preceding section, I argued that the pre-thematic willing of Dasein is founded on 'urge' and 'propensity.' However, although the willing of Dasein is defined in respect to 'urge,' it is not reduced to the naturalistic will. For Heidegger, the *Um-willen* of Dasein indicates the freedom of Dasein, insofar as Dasein gives its own end independent from the external cause. The free act of *Um-willen*, however, is not to be understood as self-initiating spontaneity. In the self-initiating spontaneity, there is presupposed the underlying self-centered substance (*subjectum*), which is thought to be the ultimate ground of possibility. In such a view, possibility is considered as a property (*Eigenschaft*) of the self-centered subject; consequently, it is not absolutely detached from the realm of actuality. On the contrary, possibility is simply regarded as a dormant power, which is not yet actual right now but can be actualized in the future.

In contrast to the traditional view, Heidegger argues in fundamental ontology that "higher than actuality stands *possibility*."[27] According to him, possibility is higher than actuality, because the possibility of *Um-willen* does not presuppose the self-centered subject. Instead, it is founded on ecstatic temporalization. "This for-the-sake-of is," Heidegger remarks, "in each case, the for-the-sake-of of willing, of freedom, i.e., of the transcending being-toward-oneself. But this for-the-sake-of has the intrinsic possibility of such a coming-toward-oneself in the mode of binding only in the ecstatic temporality."[28] The ecstatic temporality essentially breaks away from the self-same subject by virtue of being outside of itself. Consequently, the possibility of Dasein derived from ecstatic temporality also breaks away from the realm

[25] Martin Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, trans. by Michael Heim (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 185.

[26] Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Reasons*, trans. by Terrence Malick (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 101–103.

[27] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 63.

[28] Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 211.

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of actuality and remains a constant possibility. It should be noted that since Dasein essentially finds itself in constant possibility, Heidegger uses the verbal meaning of 'willing' rather than the nominal meaning of 'will.'

With the discovery of the constant possibility of Dasein, which is only revealed in the future, we can finally understand the peculiar meaning of willing in Heidegger's thoughts. The willing of Dasein originated neither from the self-centered subject of the intelligible nor the self-center subject of the sensible. It is situated between the intelligible and the sensible. "Dasein is the Being of the 'between.'"[29] And in corresponding to the willing of Dasein, equipment is not in the intelligible realm or in nature; rather, it is found in the world. Thus, with the existential meaning of willing, which is unveiled in the *Um-willen* of Dasein, he discovers the third term between the intellectual and naturalistic will.

Conclusion

I have tried to explain Heidegger's transcendental science of Being in respect to the willing of Dasein. And in this attempt, we also have a better understanding of Heidegger's thoughts. In other words, by emphasizing the willing of Dasein, we can discover the coherent structure of seemingly unrelated concepts like 'equipment,' 'care,' and 'for-the-sake-of,' by which the essence of Dasein is constituted. Furthermore, with the existential willing of Dasein, we can ascertain the distinctive characteristic of the practical activity of Dasein as it is distinguished from the practical activity of modern man.

In the modern age, in which rationality is incorporated in autonomy, rational man discovers that he has a new power by which he becomes the legislator of nature. With this new power, namely, rationality combined with an unlimited Promethean will, the practical activity of modern man begins a total domination of nature culminating in the contemporary technological world. In contrast to the practical activity of modern man, the practical activity of Dasein deals not with the present actuality but with what is 'coming,' namely, what is 'not yet.' In the engagement with such an open possibility, man can finally escape from the closure of the Promethean will, which shows its mastery over things by seizing all things for itself.

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[29] *Ibid*., 132.

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Article

Ecstatic Self-Determination. A Reflection on the Possibility of an Ontological Correspondence between Heidegger's Dasein and Plotinus' Nous

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Abstract: With reference to previous research on the relation between Heidegger's thought and Neoplatonism, this investigation seeks to show concisely how—despite the profound distance between the finitude of Dasein and Plotinus' doctrine of the divine Nous—there exists a fundamental correspondence regarding their ontological structure. This correspondence may be described as a phenomenological principle of the necessary precedence of the pre-determinate and pre-present horizon over the ecstatic openness. That is to say, there must already be a primordial horizon through which openness to beings as presence becomes possible at all. By examining this structure in both the early and later Heidegger, and through a phenomenological approach to Plotinus's doctrine of the Nous' self-determination in its turning toward the One, the paper argues that a common fundamental paradigm of rationality can be discerned, i.e. a mode of thinking that is no longer metaphysical in the onto-theological sense, yet capable of unifying within itself the two essential moments of ecstatic openness and self-determination.

Keywords: clearing, horizon, openness, self-determination

Over the past several decades, both affirmative and critical studies have been devoted to exploring the possibility of a structural connection between Heidegger's thought and Neoplatonism, particularly that of Plotinus. The central claim of such research is that in the conception of the history of metaphysics as Ontotheology, Heidegger prominently ignores Neoplatonic philosophy and that, had he taken it seriously, he might have recognized that, contrary to his own critique of metaphysics, there exists a form of thinking whose grounding of Being and beings is not established in the constant presence of a first substance, supreme

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being, subjectivity and absolute spirit as absolute self-presence or as the totality of presence. Rather, in a manner strikingly close to Heidegger's own later thought, the Neoplatonic model conceives the origin of Being as lying in the One (ἕν)—prior to and beyond any determination and appearance, any substantiality, reflection, presence or self-presence, and indeed beyond any possible attribution of the copula "is," i.e., an origin that withdraws from all presence. From this standpoint, the Clearing (*Lichtung*) of Being in Heidegger's later thought has been interpreted as corresponding to Plotinus's One, forming the basis for a critique of Heidegger's own critique of the whole history of metaphysics as Ontotheology. [1] In this light, scholars have emphasized that Heidegger's concept of the ontological difference can clearly be traced within Neoplatonic thinking of the One, since the origin of beings is not reduced to a first being or to the totality of beings conceived as the absolute presence of a self-thinking spirit or subjectivity. Rather, like Heidegger, Plotinus understands the origin of the appearance and presence of Being of beings as nothingness, calling the One "nothing of all" (οὐδὲν τῶν πάντων).[2]

On this basis, recent studies have further argued that, for both Heidegger and the Neoplatonists, the possibility of knowing or approaching the origin of Being must necessarily take the form of a pre-predicative or pre-propositional mode of thinking, since the origin in question is the pre-determinate and pre-present horizon that cannot be grasped within the structure of predicative assertion. Consequently, for both, thought concerning the pre-determinate origin takes on a poetic structure, and ultimately, all saying is rooted in the richness of silence. [3] For the Neoplatonists, the essential criterion of such pre-propositional thinking lies in the duality and multiplicity inherent in every predication and determination, and in the necessary priority of the One over both. For Heidegger, this takes the form of the priority of the Clearing over any

[1] For example, see Klaus Kremer, "Zur ontologischen Differenz. Plotin und Heidegger," in *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung*, 43 (1989), 673–694. Also see Werner Beierwaltes, *Das wahre Selbst* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2001), 120–122; and Beierwaltes' detailed essay on Heidegger and Neoplatonism: "EPEKEINA, Eine Anmerkung zu Heideggers Platon-Rezeption," in *Fussnoten zu Plato* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2011), 371–388. Regarding the critique of Heidegger's conception of the history of metaphysics as Ontotheology and the history of the forgetfulness of Being in light of Neoplatonism and the role of the One therein, see Wayne J. Hankey, "Why Heidegger's 'History' of Metaphysics is Dead," in *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, 78:3 (2004), 425–443. Also see Reiner Schürmann, "Neoplatonic Henology as an Overcoming of Metaphysics," in *Research in Phenomenology*, 13:1 (1983), 25–41.

[2] "Nothing of all" (οὐδὲν τῶν πάντων), in the sense that it "precedes the totality" (πρὸ τῶν πάντων). Plotinus, *The Enneads*, ed. by Lloyd P. Gerson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), III. 8. 9.

[3] See chap. 7 of Emile Alexandrow, *The Other Platonist Beginning: Heidegger and Neoplatonism* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2024), 288–306.

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appearing or mode of Being that can be expressed under the copula "is." Recent scholarship has also emphasized the shared foundation between Heidegger and Neoplatonism in their critique of the metaphysics of substance, since, for the Neoplatonists, every idea or being is constituted only through relational participation within the total horizon of Being as the unity of the whole (ἕν πάντα). The Aristotelian notion of οὐσία as an independent, self-subsistent individual thus is overcome and gives way to a dialectical conception of relationality within the totality of Being, where relation itself takes precedence over the relata[4].

On the basis of these studies—and seeking to take them a step further—this paper proposes that Heidegger's interpretation of the relation of sameness (αὐτό, *Selbigkeit*) between thinking (νοεῖν) and Being (εἶναι), as presented in *Identity and Difference*[5] and in "Moira,"[6] can be brought into proximity with Plotinus's theory of the relatedness of Nous towards the One. Both can thus be reinterpreted within a common fundamental structural correspondence.

The evident difficulty in pursuing this comparison is that Heidegger's understanding of νοεῖν and thinking in Parmenides refers to the human being, Dasein, whereas Plotinus in speaking of νοῦς and νοεῖν, does not refer primarily to human being but rather to divine intellect, i.e. to the intelligible structure of Being itself, the intelligible cosmos as the world of ideas. Yet despite this apparent distance, I shall argue that the ontological structure of intellect (νοῦς) and thinking (νόησις) in Plotinus and of Dasein's existential structure in Heidegger both follow a common fundamental insight, which I call *ecstatic self-determination*. At first glance, this expression seems paradoxical: self-determination suggests a reflexive, circular, and self-enclosed activity, whereas ἔκστασις (*Ekstase*) signifies precisely the overcoming of reflexivity—the movement of going beyond oneself and being opened to what transcends oneself.

I will seek to show, in three steps, how such a structure first takes shape in Heidegger's account of the ontological constitution of Dasein; second, how it finds its analogue in Plotinus's doctrine of the Nous; and finally, how, by interpreting Plotinus phenomenologically through Heidegger, one can articulate a new conception of rationality—one that is no longer metaphysical in the onto-theological sense, but grounded in the unity of ecstatic openness and self-determination.

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[4] See chaps. 3 and 5 of James Filler, *Heidegger, Neoplatonism, and the History of Being: Relation as Ontological Ground* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023).

[5] Martin Heidegger, "Der Satz der Identität (1957)," in *Identität und Differenz, GA* 11 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2006).

[6] Martin Heidegger, "Miora (Parmenides, Fragment VIII, 34–41) (1952)," in *Vorträge und Aufsätze, GA* 7 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000).

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Self-Projection and Ecstatic Openness in Dasein

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger conceives the ontological structure of Dasein as temporality, as the meaning of Dasein's Being which is thought within the "ecstatic-horizonal unitiy."[7] The two constitutive elements of temporality—ecstasis and horizon—are, each in its own sense, modes of openness. Dasein, in its very Being, is the structure of being-directed-toward-encounter—that is, openness as being-toward-the-presence-of-beings. For encounter to occur, Dasein's temporality must, in its ecstasies (*Ekstasen*), be an act of transcending—an ἔκστασις—toward the horizon of encounter. Ekstasis is the very act of transcending toward the horizon, and the horizon is the destination of this transcending, the field within which encounter becomes possible. Dasein must thus transcend beings toward the horizon of the appearing of beings—that is, toward the horizon of the world, within which the connection between the two aspects of being-in-the-world and intra-worldly being is made possible.

However, the horizon is not a third entity; rather, it is the horizon of appearance itself, which is opened only through Dasein's own transcendence. Heidegger emphasizes in *Being and Time* that it is the very ecstatic movement of Dasein that brings forth and opens its own horizon as the direction of its transcendence.[8] Thus, when the openness and ecstatic movement of Dasein are directed toward the horizon of the world—which is itself opened through that same ecstatic openness—this movement of openness turns back upon itself. The ecstatic openness coincides with the horizonal openness, such that Dasein, within the ecstatic-horizonal unity of temporality, returns to itself in a circular form. Heidegger calls this ecstatic self-reflexivity the "existential sameness" (*existenziale Selbigkeit*) or even "existential solipsism."[9] At this point, the structure of reflexivity seems to have been transposed onto an existential level, since Heidegger explicitly states in *Being and Time* that the "Lichtung"—the Clearing—is none other than the *da* of Dasein itself, and that the traditional notion of "natural light of reason" (*lumen naturale*) is an "ontic" image of the same openness of Dasein.[10] Thus, in Heidegger's early understanding of the ontological structure of Dasein, Dasein is, at once, open and ecstatic toward the horizon and yet, in its existential-reflexive identity with itself, self-determining. Heidegger calls temporality "self-projection in

[7] Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit, GA* 2 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977), 365.

[8] *Ibid*.

[9] *Ibid*., 188.

[10] *Ibid*., 133.

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the absolute sense" (*Selbstentwurf schlechthin*),[11] for one can no longer ask for a ground beyond the chain of projection—from beings to Being, and from Being to temporality.

After the turn, however, Heidegger no longer identifies the Clearing with the Da of Dasein or with its "existential sameness." He now insists that ecstatic being (*Ek-sistenz*) of Dasein is grounded within and belongs to the Clearing itself. In this sense, Dasein's standing-out is an in-standing (*Inständigkeit*) within the Clearing.[12] Ecstatic openness is thus understood as necessarily conditioned on the prior horizon of the Clearing as the Beyng itself. In other words, "natural light" is no longer the possession of Dasein's Da, leading, in the Aristotelian sense, to the reflexive identity of intellect and the intelligible. Instead, in a Platonic manner—by recalling the Allegory of the Sun in *Republic* 507d–508b—lighting is now understood as the enabling condition for both seeing (νοεῖν) and the visibility (εἶναι) of beings. It transcends both poles of the relation, making them possible as related. This understanding corresponds precisely to Heidegger's interpretation of the "sameness" (αὐτό) between νοεῖν and εἶναι in Parmenides. The event of sameness must be understood as a belonging-together (*Zusammengehören*), through which both intellect—as ecstatic revealing (ἀποφαίνεσθαι)—and Being of beings—as self-showing (φαίνεσθαι)—can become possible in their reciprocal relation.[13] As Heidegger writes in "Letter on Humanism," it is only through the Clearing that the "light" and the "outlook" arise for the seeing of intellect and the visibility of Being of beings in their sameness.[14]

Yet this should not lead us to think that Dasein, in Heidegger's later thought, no longer projects Being of beings, only passively receiving Being from the prior giving of the Clearing. Rather, Dasein finds its in-standing (*Inständigkeit*) ecstatically within the Clearing so that it may project Being of beings. The Clearing is, therefore, no longer identical to the *da* of Dasein, nor even with Being of beings. The Clearing, as the event of sameness, is Beyng itself, prior to both Dasein and Beingness of beings, and this priority makes possible the reciprocal relation between Dasein and Being of beings. After the *Kehre*, Heidegger explicitly distinguishes between Beyng itself (*Seyn selbst*) and Being of beings or Beingness (*Seiendheit*), stating that Beyng itself is the "ground" which "grants" the very possibility of Being of beings.[15]

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[11] Martin Heidegger, *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, *GA* 24 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989), 437.

[12] Martin Heidegger, "Einleitung zu Was ist Metaphysik (1949)," in *Wegmarken*, *GA* 9 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2004), 374.

[13] See Heidegger, *GA* 11, 45–48.

[14] Martin Heidegger, "Brief über den Humanismus (1946)," in *Wegmarken, GA* 9 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2004), 332.

[15] Martin Heidegger, *Hegel, GA* 68 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1993), 51.

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The necessity of the priority of the horizon as Clearing over the ecstatic character of Dasein lies in this: without the prior horizon, ecstatic openness would collapse into a self-enclosed reflexive circle, rendering the very movement of transcendence impossible. The reflexive model of total self-presence abolishes openness, namely, the essential character of φαίνεσθαι in Being and ἀποφαίνεσθαι of intellect and logos.[16] In such a case, the sameness of intellect and Being degenerates into the closed self-referentiality. As Heidegger notes in his Letter to Jünger, ecstatic transcendence (*Transzendenz*, *Überstieg*), which belongs essentially to openness, inverts into its opposite: a descending regression (*Reszendenz*, *Rückstieg*). [17] Thus, an unopened, self-referential and reflectively closed intellect in itself conceived as absolute self-presence falls away from ἀποφαίνεσθαι and becomes instead non-intellect or irrationality.

The priority of the horizon over Ekstasis is precisely what makes possible the directedness and transcending movement through which projection and determination occur. The reciprocal interweaving between the active aspect of ecstatic projection and disclosure on the part of Dasein, and the receptive aspect of in-standing and thrownness under the precedence of the horizon, is what makes the structure of openness intelligible as the act of letting-be (*das Lassen* as *Seinlassen*).

The Self-Determination of Nous through its Turning toward the One

Plotinus, following the Aristotelian notion, conceives Nous as thinking of thinking (νόησις νοήσεως), or self-intuition. Yet, unlike Aristotle, he understands the reflective and self-directed movement of Nous in a dialectical manner, as containing an inner relationality as duality and multiplicity. The unity of Nous in its self-thinking is therefore not a simple unity but a composite one, composed of three constitutive aspects: the active determining aspect, the passive determined aspect, and the mediating movement that unifies them, namely the act of thinking itself. Intellect, in its triadic structure, is the unity of the whole (ἕν πάντα), that is, totality itself.[18] In the self-directed and self-unfolding movement of Nous, Being comes to actuality as intelligibility, and intellect comes to actuality as Being. Thus, in

[16] Heidegger, *GA* 2, 34.

[17] Martin Heidegger, "Zur Seinsfrage (1955)," in *Wegmarken, GA* 9 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2004), 398.

[18] See Plotinus, *The Enneads*, V.3.5.43. For a critique of Plotinus on the claim that the divine Nous cannot be simple, see V.1. 9. 15–23. See also Jens Halfwassen, "Metaphysics of the One and the Theology of Nous: Plotinus' Critique of Aristotle" in *Der Aufstieg zum Einen: Untersuchungen zu Platon und Plotin* (München: K. G. Saur, 2006), 210–214.

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its ontological structure, Nous is the unity of sameness between thinking and Being.[19] In this sense, Nous is self-determining, because it turns toward itself and, in this reflective self-relatedness, finds itself as its own intelligible content. In this inward mediation, Nous first introduces an internal distinction within itself as the distinction between intellect and the intelligible, and then returns to itself, bringing itself into unity through its own mediation. Hence, Nous, as the intelligible structure of Being, is a unity-in-multiplicity as totality, and its structural unity of self-relationality consists simultaneously in two correlative acts: self-differentiation and self-mediation, whose result is self-determination. [20] Accordingly, Nous, in Plotinus's thought, is a movement of self-projection in the sense of self-determination.

Yet if we see the unity of Nous only within this inner dialectical mediation—as Hegel interpreted it[21]—as the unity of totality and as absolute self-presence, it will entirely constitute its ontological – that is to say, onto-theological – structure. Nous would then have no prior horizon toward which it is ecstatic; it would form a closed, circular totality in itself, and in its self-sameness it would itself be its own horizon. However, Plotinus, unlike Aristotle and also unlike Hegel,[22] does not regard Nous as the ultimate or primordial principle, nor does he understand the unity of totality within it as self-sufficient. Rather, for Plotinus, Nous is, prior to all self-determining movement and prior even to its self-presence and actuality, ecstatic toward the One as absolute transcendence and priority.

To elucidate this structure, Plotinus employs a vivid image: Nous looks toward the One and intends its unity, yet never reaches the One itself beyond all determination; rather, by gazing toward the One, it attains unity within itself as its own determination.[23] Conceptually expressed, Intellect, as the act of seeking the unity as self-unification, self-determination and self-relation, must already stand in an ecstatic relation to the prior horizon of the pure, pre-determinate and pre-presential unity in order to project and realize itself as self-relational reflective unity-with-itself. Nous must already stand in

[19] For a detailed exposition, see Jens Halfwassen, *Plotin und der Neuplatonismus* (München: C.H. Beck, 2004), 66–68.

[20] See Plotinus, *The Enneads*, V.4.2.3–7.

[21] See Jens Halfwassen, "Nous as Subjectivity in Hegel's Interpretation of Plotinus" in *Hegel und der spätantike Neuplatonismus* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2016), 365–373.

[22] In the essay "Hegel und die Griechen (1958)", Heidegger criticizes Hegel's position by stating that prior to the absolute self-presence of the spirit, the concealment of "the Clearing" must prevail, and that presence itself emerges into unconcealment from concealment. See Heidegger, "Hegel und die Griechen (1958)", in *Wegmarken*, *GA* 9 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2004), 440–444.

[23] See Plotinus, *The Enneads*, V.2.1.9–13.

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and stand ecstatic toward the prior horizon of unity, so that its movement of seeking unity may be rendered possible.

Thus, from a phenomenological standpoint, the One occupies the position of the prior horizon for the ecstatic intentionality of Nous. The horizon gives the possibility and scope of vision, yet it never itself becomes an object of sight, i.e. idea as intelligibility. The horizon is what makes the ἔκστασις of Nous possible by opening the horizon of unity before Nous, so that Nous may enter its unifying movement and realize itself. Hence, although Nous actively determines itself, such activity always already takes place under the precedence of the prior horizon of unity that is in no way a unity of reflexive identity or of determination, but one that precedes every determination. This unity precedes all appearance, presentation and presence; it is prior to every manner of Being, being-something, substance (οὐσία) and Idea. This prior horizon—what Heidegger would call the Clearing—withdraws itself from appearance and presence precisely in order to preserve within itself the very possibility of appearance and presence.

The Possibility of an Ontological Correspondence

Beyond the clear distance between the finite Dasein in Heidegger and the divine Intellect in Plotinus, there is a shared criterion operative in both, one that prevents Plotinus's doctrine of Nous from being easily subsumed under the heading of metaphysical Onto-theology. This common criterion can be expressed phenomenologically as the necessity of the priority of the pre-determinate horizon over ecstatic movement of determining and projecting. The horizon must be pre-present so that presence itself can become possible within the ecstatic movement, thus, the ecstatic openness of intellect must ground—regarding its ἔκστασις—toward the prior pre-presential horizon.

Under this criterion, the meaning of the fundamental concept of finitude (*Endlichkeit*) in Heidegger's thought also becomes clearer. Finitude, in the sense Heidegger applies it first to Dasein and later even to Being itself, has no ontic meaning, i.e., being limited by other beings. Rather, as Heidegger emphasizes in his later thought concerning the finitude of Being, finitude stands opposed to the infinite as the idea of "totality" or as a closed reflexive circle: "If Being is posited as the infinite, then it is precisely thereby determined." [24] As Heidegger puts it, finitude here means something "altogether different": it is "the abyssal groundlessness (*Ab-grund*) of that

[24] Martin Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie, GA* 65 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989), 268–269.

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which lies in the midst."[25] If we ask what stands opposed to the closed and reflexive circle of totality, we encounter, on the basis of Heidegger's later phenomenological thought, the following answer: the priority of the horizon as the condition of possibility for ecstatic openness; this very precedence over all determination is precisely what means groundlessness.[26]

The horizon must already be at work so that, on the one hand, the intellect as intentional directedness toward beings may be openness as disclosure (ἀποφαίνεσθαι), and, on the other hand, the Being of beings may be openness toward intellect as appearance (φαίνεσθαι). According to Heidegger's phenomenological interpretation of Parmenides, the priority of the horizon as correlation, as belonging-together (αὐτό) must already be at work for both Nous and Being, as the two relata of this correlation, to become possible at all. Dasein as νοεῖν is in its ontological structure for Heidegger ἔκστασις (Ek-sistenz), standing-out and being-outside-itself, which projects itself in its encounter with beings. Yet for such self-projection to occur at all, it must already stand-in within the precedence of the horizon of the Clearing. From this perspective, Plotinus's insistence that the divine Nous is not the primordial origin, and that it must remain open and ecstatically related to the One as the prior horizon beyond itself, founds the structure of Nous not in the onto-theological criterion of pure self-presence, but rather in its ecstatic openness. This structure, in turn, becomes the paradigm for human intellect as well. Within this paradigm, intellect is not reflective self-consciousness as absolute self-presence—which would ultimately negate the very possibility of openness and disclosure—but is, prior to any reflection, ecstatic. Within itself, intellect already shows the structure of transcendence toward the horizon.

Conclusion

In a phenomenological understanding of the ontological structure of Nous, we arrive at a model of rationality that is neither, on the one hand, completely self-founded in an onto-theological absolute self-presence, such that it loses its dimension of ecstatic openness, nor, on the other hand, deprived of the activity of disclosure, unification, determination and projection, so as to collapse into a mere passivity and fall outside the scope of the act of νοεῖν. Rather, νοεῖν, in its very relation to εἶναι, is always the act of disclosure. Yet νοεῖν can truly be intellect and thinking only insofar as it already stands within the priority of the horizon of the Event of Sameness (αὐτό). This condition is precisely the act of letting-be and the stance of

[25] Martin Heidegger, *Besinnung, GA* 66 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989), 88.

[26] See Heidegger, *GA* 11, 41.

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Gelassenheit that defines Dasein as νοεῖν. This same condition can likewise be rediscovered within the ontological structure of Nous in Plotinus.

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Article

Heidegger on "Saying" and the Inconspicuousness of Showing in the Arts

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Abstract: The later Heidegger endeavors to elucidate human existence in its relying on language and the connection between "saying" and "showing." I try to clarify the philosophical significance of showing, beyond a common semiotic understanding of "sign," "signifying," and "appearing." For this I take advantage of a phenomenological inquiry about how showing is constituted by the inconspicuous effectiveness which is set free in pictorial showing.

Keywords: Heidegger, art, inconspicuousness, saying

The paradoxical movement of thought

For Martin Heidegger metaphysics and the whole body of European philosophy has come to an end. At this critical turn in history, "movement" and the "way" became two of his major concerns, as is highlighted by titles such as *Off the Beaten Track*, *Country Path Conversations*, or *On the Way to Language*. Systematic philosophizing, on the ground of undoubted principles and progressing towards truth by means of rational methods, should be replaced by an open move of "thinking" in the "proximity" of Being. Instead of mental processes, such as reflection or conceptualization, thinking means "doing." Thinking should be practiced like an "exercise" (*Übung*)−even, perhaps, as the exercise of "looking in thinking" (*Sehen im Denken*).[1] Instead of pursuing any linear progression towards a fixed goal, the thinking exercise should be more like rambling in the fields. By means of moving along on not well-trodden or even not yet blazed paths, thinking only strives to always hold itself within the circle of Being. There will be paths to move on, just due to moving, as thinking has

[1] Martin Heidegger, "Aus Gesprächen mit einem buddhistischen Mönch," in *Reden und andere Zeugnisse eines Lebensweges*, *GA* 16 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000), 589.

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become the "way-making movement" (*Be-wëgung*).[2] Crucial for this is "*Gelassenheit*"—"letting" and "being let."[3] Paradoxically enough, the thinking one is requested to learn to "wait." Waiting without expectation guides the "way-making" movement of thinking, as it is the only way to open up to Being.[4]

The later Heidegger's thought is often considered to hinge on the linguistic dimension of the history of Being.[5] Yet it is only within the broader horizon of the "waiting" exercise of thinking—and certainly not on the grounds of some "philosophy of language"—that his reflections on language obtain an adequate understanding. For only by means of a "waiting" disposition will the thinking person eventually become able to "witness and receive" (*vernehmen*) the call of Being, so as to "respond" (*antworten*),[6] that is "to speak in accordance with and from" (*ent-sprechen*)[7] Being.

Thinking between speech and intuition

As is well known, Heidegger claims that it's not we humans who speak; rather, "language speaks."[8] For language is "the house of Being."[9] The "propriative event" (*Ereignis*) actually condensates into the poet's speech. "The Saying" (*die Sage*) properly unleashes the event of sense-giving, as it genuinely narrates, and discloses, the truth of Being.[10] However, touching a crucial point here, Heidegger's elucidation of the intimate relation between language and Being repeatedly resorts to a paradigm shift. Not only are there said to be two equally "fundamental ways of appearing" (*Grundweisen des Erscheinens*), namely "looking and saying" (*das Blicken und das Sagen*). Yet more astonishing is his claim that the very essence of "saying" itself does not consist in "enunciation" (*Verlautbarung*) but in a "soundlessly attuning,

[2] Martin Heidegger, "Das Wesen der Sprache," in *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, *GA* 12 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1985), 186–187.

[3] Martin Heidegger, "Zur Erörterung der Gelassenheit," in *Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens*, 2nd rev. ed., *GA* 13 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2002), 37–74; Martin Heidegger, "Ἀγχιβασίη. Ein Gepräch selbstdritt auf einem Feldweg zwischen einem Gelehrten, einem Forscher und einem Weisen" and "Abendgespräch in einem Kriegsgefangenenlager in Rußland zwischen einem Jüngeren und einem Älteren," in *Feldweg-Gespräche (1944/45)*, 2nd rev. ed., *GA* 77 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2007), 1–159 and 203–245.

[4] *GA* 77, 110, 115–116, 120, 122, 216–217, 227, 229.

[5] Gianni Vattimo, "Essere, storia e linguaggio in Heidegger,"*in Scritti filosofici e politici* (Milano: La nave di Teseo, 2021), 164–168.

[6] Heidegger, "Der Weg zur Sprache," *GA* 12, 249, 256.

[7] Heidegger, "Die Sprache," *GA* 12, 29.

[8] Heidegger, *GA* 12, 10.

[9] Martin Heidegger, "Brief über den Humanismus," in *Wegmarken*, 2nd rev. ed., *GA* 9 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1996), 313, 333, 358; see also *GA* 12, 156.

[10] Heidegger, *GA* 9, 315; Martin Heidegger, "Aus einem Gespräch von der Sprache," *GA* 12, 137–138, 143, 188, 195.

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beckoning pattern" (*das lautlos Stimmende, Winkende*).[11] As a matter of fact, "saying" is considered to essentially rely on "showing" (*zeigen*)[12] which, in turn, is conceived of as "beckoning": showing invites someone to look. Thus, what makes linguistic signification understandable is neither the "sign" itself nor the signifying function termed "reference" (Verweisung)[13] but the *event* of showing. This event consists in a "hint" which "lets appear"[14] *to* someone.

In this way poetic speech, "witnessing and receiving" the truth of Being, becomes the original incarnation of the "Saying." Beyond meaningful linguistic expression, the "Saying" clearly is presumed by Heidegger to be rooted in a sense-giving core of nonverbal showing. To think means "to behold the insight of the inconspicuous, out of the interstice of its shining. To seeing-ly hear the invisible stilling of the propriative event—showing."[15] As showing indeed goes on in silence, and under the premise that "beckoning" is foundational for speech, Heidegger's famous statement about the "chimes of stillness" (*Geläut der Stille*)[16] operating at the core of language becomes very plausible. Yet what about "inconspicuousness" (*Unscheinbarkeit*) which is said to genuinely characterize showing? Was the latter not interpreted as "to let appear," that is as to make something *conspicuous*? Obviously Heidegger's idea of an original showing is not equivalent to "plainly indicating or illuminating something."

Remarks concerning both of these problems, that is of how saying relates to showing, and that of how showing itself relies on inconspicuousness, are not abundant in Heidegger's writings. The issue apparently has been left off partway but urgently needs to be explored in depth. At stake are central philosophical questions such as: Should Heidegger's "it gives—there is" (*es gibt*) ultimately be conceived of as "it shows up"—"*es zeigt (sich)*"? In this case what are the implications of the original "Show" or "*Zeige*" that inaugurates a sense of being? Furthermore, can the "waiting" of *Gelassenheit*, within the movement of thinking, come about through our immediately being touched by what shows up and appears—yet before we understand anything, as "signified" by the show? Is there a crucial connection between the intuitional experience of showing, and

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[11] Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides*, *GA* 54 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1982), 169.

[12] Heidegger, *GA* 12, 158, 188; "Das Wort," *GA* 12, 210; "Der Weg zur Sprache," *GA* 12, 241.

[13] Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 16th ed. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1986), §17, 76–83.

[14] Heidegger, *GA* 12, 188, 202.

[15] Martin Heidegger, *Winke I und II (Schwarze Hefte 1957-1959), GA* 101 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2020), 166: "Denken heißt: den Einblick des Unscheinbaren aus der Fuge seines Scheinens er-blicken. Sehend-hören das [sic] unsichtbare Stille des Ereignisses - zeigen."

[16] Heidegger, *GA* 12, 27–29, 204.

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thinking, as the latter may learn to "wait without expectation," when witnessing the event of showing?

With respect to our understanding of texts, at the core of our perceptional "institution of meaning" (*Sinnstiftung*) Edmund Husserl has disclosed what he termed "affectivity" (*Affektivität*), "affection" (*Affektion*), or "affective mood" (*Anmutung*). According to him, there is always a certain "pull" (*Zug*), "tendency" (*Tendenz*), or "inclination" (*Neigung*), emanating from signs or meaningful objects. It is affection that first "motivates" our capture of sense and meaning—yet before we effectively have begun to understand.[17] Even more than the spoken or written word in the case of linguistic signifying, something which shows up, just through its appearance *to* us, indeed seems to "motivate" our capture, on a pre-linguistic level. The very event of appearing immediately attracts our attention, urging us to attribute sense and meaning to the show.

Regarding this problem, it proves helpful to critically inquire into the structure of artistic showing. For, contrary to popular opinion, artistic phenomena are not reducible to the referential function of a meaningful sign, nor should they be reduced to a mere matter of sense perception. Heidegger himself famously expounded how truth as the event of "unconcealment" is staged by art, transcending any simple logic of appearance versus concealment.[18] Beyond this twofold pattern artistic showing effectuates a peculiar mode of *inconspicuousness*. It is for the sake of this intrinsic inconspicuousness that showing in the arts cannot be adequately grasped within the framework of hermeneutical interpretation, focusing on the disclosure of some determinable signification. Art subverts the common scheme according to which our aesthetic experience is believed to be tantamount to our subjective awareness or capture of meaning, as delivered by the bias of "conspicuous" indication or symbolic reference. Instead, artistic showing should rather be called "inconspicuous showing." Hermeneutics cannot attain showing *as* showing. Semiotic interpretation necessarily remains blind with respect to the *event* of showing as such, which operates besides or even prior to any content being shown, also besides or prior to any signification we may attribute to an appearance. Due to its *affectively touching dimension*, the show of art essentially exceeds the domain of hermeneutical disclosure of meaning. Instead, affection through artistic showing requires–and fosters–a sort of "letting and being let," on part of the aesthetic beholder. There is an elucidating similarity between the aesthetic attitude and

[17] Edmund Husserl, *Analysen zur passiven Synthesis. Aus Vorlesungs- und Forschungsmanuskripten, 1918-1926,* ed. by Margot Fleischer, in *Husserliana XI* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), §12, 43–44; §32, 148–149.

[18] Martin Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," in *Holzwege*, *GA* 5 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977), esp. 40–43.

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Heidegger's remarks on a *gelassen* disposition of thinking. It is this affinity that commands the following critical reassessment of our conception of artistic showing.

Affective motivation through showing, yet before instituting sense and meaning—since ever this has been considered a core feature of art. In an Aristotelian tradition, this phenomenon tends to be reduced to a "pathos" or "(e)motion" of the soul, being generally regarded as a surplus effect added on to the signifying dimension of artworks. However, contrary to this common opinion, aesthetic thinkers such as Friedrich Schiller, Berthold Brecht, or Theodor W. Adorno, prominently claimed that our being affected by art exceeds such secondary psychic effects. For them it is unquestionable that, during our experience of art, *aesthetic affection* itself and as such becomes responsible for our disclosure of meaning and truth. Art has to be considered as a means to affectively induce our *movement towards signification*, which is the very movement of thinking. It is for this reason, too, that art is essentially in quest for critical thought, in order to become art in the full sense of this term. If such is in fact the purport of the *intensity of showing* proper to art, then can Heidegger's *gelassen* move of thinking, too, become initiated or guided by way of aesthetic practice and aesthetic experience? Can our being touched by inconspicuous showing in the arts actually teach us how to "wait"?

The paradigm of speech and showing in the arts

In general art is believed to deliver sense and meaning. Art is regarded as *indirect and unconcise* signification, in close analogy with the paradigm of language and speech that, however, are considered to be more or less *direct and concise* means of signifying. According to an ancient scheme of signification, what appears in a work of art and presents itself to sense perception may be interpreted as a sign which symbolically refers to some meaning. As the author of *Being and Time* explains, signs are things that exceed their own presence-at-hand as each of them "shows," that is "refers" to something that is designated,[19] and eventually each sign necessarily relies on a general horizon of "meaningfulness," that is a "totality of relevance" (*Bewandtnisganzheit*).[20] From this stance, artistic signs may be considered as disclosing to sense perception a spiritual dimension which, itself, cannot appear.

In accordance with common belief Heidegger presumes that only when a thing turns into a "sign" it may become art. Negatively speaking, artworks exhibit an "ontological privation," in comparison with ordinary

[19] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, §17, 76–83.

[20] *Ibid*., §18, 83–87, esp. 84.

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things that exist as they appear. Artworks are *not* what appears, their essence does *not* consist in their being present. When understood *as* signs artworks only exist in the mode of "as if." Yet, positively speaking, artworks are *more* than just things or "equipment" (*Zeug*). For their appearing always covers a *surplus of referential co-appearing*. At stake is not what is perceived but something that exceeds presence-at-hand. Something absent becomes manifest within or through symbolic appearance. Thus, art means enhanced appearance: its showing *lets* appear. This general feature is not limited to mimetic art; it even encompasses non-denotative artworks and contemporary performance art, as such phenomena only function as "art" when the beholder experiences more than what is accessible to sense perception. However, contrary to the commonsense logic of sign and signification it may as well be claimed that the power of artistic showing actually consists in *explicitly not showing*, or showing something that, as the pretended object of the show, remains "unapparent." Beyond, or even contrary to, Heidegger's semiotic prejudice it may be claimed that artworks actually perform *inconspicuous showing*.

Of course, Heidegger contested the instrumental view of language and art, which draws on an Aristotelian concept of signification. Is it for this reason that Heidegger endeavors to understand the "Saying" according to the paradigm of showing? However, as long as even Heidegger's conception of the inaugurating speech of poetry still owes to the classical notion of the "sign," simply understood as "referential indication of meaning,"[21] it will be hard for the event of showing to leave the prison of semiotics. At least, one precondition for art to deliver insight into an original "Show" that may be more fundamental than saying, is that the concepts of sign and signification be banished from any inquiry concerned with artistic showing and aesthetic experience. If there is meaningfulness at stake in an artwork, yet there is no abstract sense which "shows itself" *through* the artistic configuration. The effectiveness of art does *not* rely on "showing something," i.e. on meaningful representation.

The artistic show commences where the act of showing paradoxically withdraws from *what* is shown. Art subverts the logic of signifying, as it unfolds a dimension of non-appearance and inconspicuousness which crucially induces *responsiveness*, not interpretation of meaning. During the aesthetic experience we are *pulled towards* a horizon of existentially relevant meaningfulness. At this point the external, neutral spectator or onlooker becomes transformed into the *involved beholder* who does not just receive a

[21] Just in this reductionist concept of a "sign," confounding it with a mere "signal" and thus depriving it of the essential event of "signi-fying," i.e. of "showing," Bernard Stiegler sees the crucial shortcoming of Heidegger's existential analysis: Bernard Stiegler, *La technique et le temps* (Paris: Fayard, 2018), 279, 282, 776.

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message, as manifested or transmitted through artistic symbolization. The beholder is transported into another condition of existence. Due to affection by art, the beholder is *not able to not respond to* an inconspicuous appeal towards meaning. By beholding the show of art we expose and hold ourselves amidst meaning. This "pathos"—Bernhard Waldenfels' "*Widerfahrnis*"—represents the core of inconspicuous showing in the arts. Here may lie the clue to the question why showing in fact is more basic than saying, and why Heidegger eventually resorts to a "*Zeige*."

In order to obtain an adequate understanding of the genuine modes of appearance and showing engaged by art, we have to perform phenomenological, or rather aesthetic, reduction. Looking at artworks has to be envisaged as an encounter with "aesthetic objects." What are the implications of this reduction?

First, while signs refer to a *closed* "totality of relevance" whence they obtain their signification, the artistic horizon of signifying is an *open* one: any accomplishment of sense and meaning is always deferred to other interpretative acts. That is the reason why hermeneutics as well as history of art, when fixing historical significations in the manner of iconography, tend to reduce the validity of artistic configurations to some face value, that is to some topic or concept that remains external to the particular artistic phenomenon. What is neglected by this sort of historicist hermeneutics of art is the specific *mode of appearance* of artistic phenomena. Yet meaningfulness, as being *immanent* in a perceptible configuration, inevitably relates to an *open* horizon of signifying, opening up to ever to be renewed perceptional experiences in the future.

Second, accounts given by art history, with respect to a particular artwork, mostly do not reflect the beholder's aesthetic experience. These accounts often are void of aesthetic empathy, omitting the fervor we become involved in when we experience art. Yet this fervor is exactly what artistic showing is concerned with. Art takes advantage of an inconspicuousness which is inherent in the act of showing. Its peculiar intensity results from its *implicitly* affecting us, not from explicitly delivered signification. Any hermeneutical approach to artworks, focusing on "conspicuous" meaning, must necessarily miss the inconspicuous dimension of *affection through showing*. Affection *as* such cannot be accounted for by referring to the symbolic content or stylistic features of an artwork. The affective event remains inconspicuous throughout in what conspicuously appears. Yet it is precisely in response to the inconspicuous affection by the show of art that the beholder *engages with meaning*—instead of just capturing, understanding some signification. When confronted with the motivating pull towards meaning, the aesthetic beholder surrenders to an *inconspicuous obligation to engage* with artistic meaningfulness. As the beholder's whole person and

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existence is being *disposed of*, during an aesthetic experience, the classical "cognitive subject" imperatively turns into a "bodily Self."

In his account of artworks such as the Greek temple or Vincent van Gogh's painting *Une paire de chaussures* (1886, Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum), Heidegger himself obviously remains within the narrow semiotic frame of symbolical expression which allows for a hermeneutics of art. Yet besides functioning like a sign, artistic showing exhibits a much richer and more complicated structure. As Michel Foucault shows in *The Order of Things*, for instance Diego Velázquez' painting *Las meninas* (1656, Madrid: Museo del Prado) obliges the inconspicuous beholder of the picture to become entangled with the presentation of an interior scene. Jan Vermeer's *Het meisje met de parel* (1665, Den Haag: Mauritshuis) forces us to engage in a dialogue with the image. We feel like being disposed of by a subtle, "inconspicuous" effectiveness, set free by the astonished and inviting expression of the girl who is depicted as looking towards us. From a spectator at a distance, we involuntarily turn into engaged beholders, due to inconspicuous implications inherent in what is shown. Just the same affection beyond signification is also illustrated by Gerhard Richter's *Betty* (1988, Saint Louis: Art Museum). Here it is the absence of the depicted person's gaze, as she turns her back on us, that feels like a personal insult. We cannot resist, we must engage with this pictorial show, due to our frustrated expectations. Finally, Edouard Manet's *Olympia* (1863, Paris: Musée d'Orsay), as well as his *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe* (1863, Paris: Musée d'Orsay) succeeded in provoking a harsh shock, by means of a refined play with the frivolous exhibition of bland nudity. Due to the glances striking the beholder from inside the image, the exposed naked body causes the beholder's own denudation, as we may feel very uncomfortable in the position of an impartial and distanced spectator, outside the picture. Manet's display of the classical nude maliciously transgresses the borderline between pictorial representation and violently taking possession of the beholder's person. Our being affected by the show is put into effect by the "innocent" gaze depicted as reaching us from inside the image. This striking power of the show may be considered as an inconspicuous surplus, exceeding the mere content of depiction. We are "let in" by such showing, and only can "wait" in a *gelassen* disposition, as we ourselves become exposed to what we already are participating in. Aesthetic openness, through "showing," results in our getting involved in the world looked at.

At last, the insight concerning artistic inconspicuousness becomes even more convincing when non-representational, non-mimetic art is at stake. Here there is no illusion of something to be recognized, of any message and meaning exhibited, preventing the distanced spectator from actively participating in the show. For instance, in *White Center (Yellow, Pink and Lavender on Rose)* by Mark Rothko (1950, private collection) obviously no gaze

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reaches us from inside the image, as nothing recognizable is depicted. The picture evidently does not function in the *c*onspicuously indicating way a "sign" is supposed to. Yet the pictorial show, the intensely vibrating incandescence of luminous fields and strips could not be more "conspicuous." The crucial point is that this "abstract" painting breaks open at its surface, by inconspicuous showing. Beyond its presenting itself in front of us, it attracts us, making us feel like being absorbed by its glowing density and entering the iconic object. We may experience a "being let in," although there is nothing—no place or situation—to participate in. An inconspicuous surplus of affective effectiveness exceeds the perceptible content—fields and strips of color. We mutate into "waiting ones"—until we are "let in." With the pulsating image we share an unfathomable inner space that opens up towards us, at this "iconic site." Eventually the glow of the image coalesces with the surrounding world we pertain to, on the level of our existence.

This coalescence with the world, as effectuated by inconspicuous showing, maybe has been pushed to its extreme in "light installations" or "light spaces" created by James Turrell. Here only colored light shows itself, without conspicuously showing anything. Where the gloomy luminosity dispersed in a closed interior space slowly fades away, regains intensity, or changes its hue, the we are unconsciously pervaded by the mood we find ourselves immersed in. Yet this affection takes place at an "inconspicuous" pace; we are "let in" by a site that appears to be replete with intensified meaningfulness, yet utterly lacking specification. The inconspicuous show that does not show anything condenses into our "waiting" and our being "let in."

Experiencing non-representational artworks may increase evidence for the structure and functioning of inconspicuous showing. However, as "meaningfulness" here becomes an extremely vague and debatable category, the relation between showing and saying ventures to dissolve into mere elusiveness. What remains is no more than the event of "waiting" and being "let in." With these and similar artistic practices it seems as if the sphere of "the Saying" were left behind altogether. In contemporary art the "Show" may finally have obtained its independence from semiotics in the most general sense.

Concluding remarks

A decisive connection between "saying" and "showing" surfaces in Heidegger's valorization of language. With respect to this problem, art demonstrates how showing exceeds semantically articulated speech. While verbal signifying relies on the *mediation* of understanding, an *immediate* pull is exerted on the witness of showing. The silent voice of art thus accomplishes

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the "chimes of stillness." Whereas even Heidegger's original "Sage" still needs interpretation, the genuine "*Zeige*" invites the "waiting one" to immediately participate—to truly "receive" and "stand inside" (Heidegger's "*Inständigkeit*"). Only in this way do we become "propriated" by and to sense and meaning. Therefore, Heidegger's "Saying" may indeed imply an even more original "Show."

Furthermore, where showing "is let" to occur, by our aesthetic attitude, artistic behavior and aesthetic practice may be understood as an exercise in "waiting without expectation." Artistic showing is far from reducible to the linguistic paradigm of signification or symbolical denotation. The show of art does not pertain to the domain of hermeneutics. It rather partakes in our fundamental relation with Being, to be lived-through by way of responsive *Gelassenheit*. The claim that "truth sets itself into the artwork" ought *not* to be understood in terms of a disclosure of sense and meaning, but as the *event of showing*. Showing, yet *before* poetic speech, lets us truly become "waiting ones," in the face of Being. The experience of showing lets us become responsively *gelassen*: in a "waiting" mode relating ourselves to Being.

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Article

On Self-Transformation in Heidegger's Later Philosophy[1]

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Abstract: The objective of this paper is to elucidate the notion of self-transformation in Martin Heidegger's later philosophy. It characterizes his later understanding of self-transformation as a "releasement" (*Gelassenheit*) into the truth of being—an experience that cannot be achieved through willing or intentional effort, but only when even the trace of willing has disappeared. In this sense, self-transformation does not result from an individual's attempt to adopt a different relation to oneself. What is crucial, rather, is preparing for self-transformation. Such transformation becomes possible only through silent waiting and attentive listening to what has already been near to us in concealment—beyond willing—so that it may eventually speak, or rather, show itself. Focusing on the becoming of a human being into a poet, this paper highlights the singular character of human self-transformation in Heidegger's later philosophy.

Keywords: Heidegger, releasement, self-transformation, the truth of being

It is not difficult to find the idea of human self-transformation in Martin Heidegger's philosophy. First, in *Being and Time*, he states that the specific human mode of being is Dasein, describing its two modes as authenticity and inauthenticity. The transition from inauthenticity to authenticity occurs in anxiety because, therein, Dasein raises the question about its ownmost possibility, and thus lays the foundation for its being. Freed from taking care

[1] An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 5th Heidegger Circle in Asia (HCIA) conference under the title "Differences in Self-Transformation between the Later Heidegger and Foucault." In response to length constraints and the reviewers' recommendations, the present version has been substantially revised to focus more closely on self-transformation in Heidegger's later philosophy. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to my colleagues in the HCIA and to reviewers for their valuable comments and suggestions. This work was supported by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF-2021S1A5C2A03089203).

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of innerworldly beings, Dasein lays the foundation for its existence. It is not difficult to find Heidegger's thinking around the self-transformation of a human being in *Being and Time*.

It is, however, a well-known fact that *Being and Time* is Heidegger's major work in his early period. Given this, was the self-transformation of a human being crucial after the so-called turn (*Kehre*)? In Heidegger's later philosophy, of course, such self-transformation is an essential theme. However, it differs from the transition from inauthenticity to authenticity. The self-transformation in Heidegger's later thought means, as to be reviewed below, becoming a poet. Of course, unlike the transition from inauthenticity to authenticity, anxiety and death do not play essential roles in the self-transformation of becoming a poet. Instead, it is critical to listen to the language of being, become attuned to it, and correspond with it. Such correspondence is not achieved through an act of will, but through a self-transformation in which even the trace of willing is extinguished. The objective of this paper is to shed light on the self-transformation of becoming a poet.

Self-transformation in Heidegger's later philosophy: becoming a poet

Regarding poetizing, Heidegger says in *What is Called Thinking?*, "Thinking (*Denken*) and poetizing (*Dichten*) are in themselves the originary, the essential, and therefore also the final speaking (*Sprechen*) that language speaks through the mouth of man."[2] He also says, "Between these two [i.e., thinking and poetizing] there exists a secret kinship because in the service of language both intercede on behalf of language and give lavishly of themselves."[3] Of course, this language is the language that lets something be said to us or the correspondence corresponding to the appeal of being.[4]

Human beings can assert sentences such as "the hammer is heavy" based on their a priori understanding of the being of the object of the

[2] Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?,* trans. by Fred. D. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 128, translation modified; see Martin Heidegger, *Was Heißt Denken?*, *GA* 8, ed. by Paola-Ludovika Coriando (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2002), 132–133, for the original German.

[3] Martin Heidegger, *What is Philosophy?,* trans. by Jean T. Wilde and William Kluback (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 95.

[4] *Ibid*., 91. In *What is Philosophy?*, Heidegger says this correspondence is philosophy. However, as already noted, between philosophy as thinking and poetizing, there exists a secret kinship.

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assertion. However, this being is "what-being"[5] (*Wassein*) or the beingness (*Seiendheit*) of beings, i.e., the traditional metaphysical concept of being. What needs to be considered is that the truth as unconcealment is concealed as beingness. The unconcealment cannot be expressed in such assertions[6]. Then, is there any language in which the interplay of concealment and unconcealment is expressed? The answer is poetry; as Heidegger says, "Art […] is the creative preservation of truth in the work. Art happens as poetry."[7]

Of course, poetizing is possible only when a poet has first experienced the interplay of concealment and unconcealment. In "Letter on 'Humanism,'" Heidegger says:

> [B]efore he [i.e., the human being] speaks the human being must first let himself be claimed again by being, taking the risk that under this claim he will seldom have much to say. Only thus will the pricelessness of its essence be once more bestowed upon the word, and upon humans a home for dwelling in the truth of being.[8]

The word upon which the pricelessness of its essence is bestowed is poetry, and poetry is a home for humans who dwell in the truth of being. However, before the human being speaks or poetizes, he must first let himself be claimed by being, taking the risk that he seldom has much to say under this claim. What does this phenomenon mean?

In "A Dialogue on Language: between a Japanese and an Inquirer," Heidegger, as the inquirer, says that "saying" (*sagen*) is the same as "showing" (*zeigen*) in the sense of letting appear (*erscheinenlassen*) and letting shine (*scheinlassen*).[9] What then is the meaning of letting appear and letting shine? In *Hölderlin's Hymns "Germania" and "The Rhine*," Heidegger says that "nothing can 'speak' more insistently to us than the prevailing of nature in its greater and in its smallest aspects."[10] Moreover, Heidegger continues, "That

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[5] Martin Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, trans. by Wanda Torres Gregory and Yvonne Unna (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009), 31.

[6] For a detailed discussion of this point, see Suh-Hyun Park, "The Language of the Ineffable: Poetry and Imageless Thought in Heidegger's Later Philosophy," *Kritike,* 16:3 (April 2023), 182–184.

[7] Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. and trans. by Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 48.

[8] Martin Heidegger, "Letter on 'Humanism,'" in *Pathmarks*, ed. by William McNeill, trans. by Frank A. Capuzzi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 243.

[9] Martin Heidegger, "A Dialogue on Language," in *On the Way to Language*, trans. by Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 47.

[10] Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymns "Germania" and "The Rhine,"* trans. by William McNeill and Julia Ireland (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 68.

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is to say, we will not succeed simply by placing nature with its absence of language and human beings who speak alongside one another as different kinds of things."[11] Saying is the same as showing; what appears and shines in showing or saying is nature. The prevailing of nature speaks and, in the Heideggerian perspective on language, one should not place nature without language and human beings who speak alongside one another as different kinds of things. But then, why does Heidegger say that nature speaks? What is the language of nature?

In "The Fieldpath," Heidegger says that "the message of the Fieldpath speaks only as long as there are human beings who, born in its air, are able to hear it."[12] The language of nature, including the message of the Fieldpath, speaks only if there are human beings who can hear it. In other words, the language of nature needs human beings; furthermore, it is expressed in and through the human saying as the saying of the poets. "[B]ecause […] 'nature' as beyng founds itself in saying, the saying of the poets as the self-saying of nature is of the same essence as the latter."[13] Here, nature as beyng is not the object of study in natural sciences. Instead, it appears and shows itself in and through the saying of the poets. Then, how does nature as beyng show itself in and through the saying of the poets?

First, it is noteworthy that beyng is the term that Heidegger used in his later period to differentiate his concept of being from beingness. What does Heidegger mean by beyng, and how does it appear in poetry? There is a clue about what is poetized in "Hegel and the Greeks." Elucidating the phenomenon of unconcealment, thought in a Greek manner, Heidegger says:

> [T]he human being is the sayer (*Sagende*). Saying (*Sagen*), in Old High German *sagan*, means showing, letting appear and letting be seen. The human being is a being that, in saying, lets what is present (*Anwesende*) lie before us in its presence (*Anwesenheit*), apprehending what lies before. Human beings can speak (*sprechen*) only insofar as they are sayers.[14]

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[11] *Ibid*., Also, in *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, Heidegger says that "the loveliness of the valley and the menace of the mountain and of the raging sea, the sublimity of the stars, the absorption of the plant and the ensnarement of the animal […] all that *is* language" (emphasis in original). See Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, 140.

[12] Martin Heidegger, "The Fieldpath," trans. by Berit Mexia, in *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 13:4 (1986), 456.

[13] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymns "Germania" and "The Rhine,"* 233.

[14] Martin Heidegger, "Hegel and the Greeks," in *Pathmarks*, ed. by William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 334, translation modified; see Martin Heidegger,

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Letting what is present be seen in its presence is to unconceal the presence in the appearing of what is present. In other words, it is to unconceal both the presence and what is present simultaneously. This is the reason that what is poetical, as Heidegger says in "Dialogue on Language," is "the welling-up (*Quellen*) of the message of the two-fold's unconcealment."[15] This two-fold unconcealment is inconspicuous, and poetry makes it shine. "True and high poetry only ever accomplishes one thing: it makes the inconspicuous shine."[16]

This shining is none other than what Heidegger calls the language of nature, which the poet poetizes. However, it is first required for poetizing to be silent to listen to the language of nature. This is why Heidegger says in his *Hölderlin's Hymns "Germania" and "The Rhine"* that "language itself has its origin in silence,"[17] and in *Being and Truth* that "*the ability to keep silent is therefore the origin and ground of language.*"[18] The poet can poetize the language of nature, or, as Heidegger says in "What is Philosophy?," "the appeal of being"[19] (*das Zuspruch des Seins)* or "the voice of being"[20] (*die Stimme des Seins*) only through the poet's correspondence with the voice of being. "The correspondence listens to the voice of the appeal. What appeals to us as the voice of being evokes our correspondence. 'Correspondence' then means: being de-termined, *être disposé* by that which comes from the being of beings."[21]

From the Heideggerian perspective, poetizing, which results from the correspondence, is only possible through "[t]he transition from willing into releasement (*Gelassenheit*)."[22] As said in the "Conversation on a Country Path about Thinking," one cannot let oneself into releasement by willing:

"Hegel und die Griechen," in *Wegmarken, GA* 9, ed. by Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976), 442–443, for the original German.

[15] Heidegger, "A Dialogue on Language," 46.

[16] Martin Heidegger, "The Language of Johann Peter Hebel," in *The Heidegger Reader*, ed. by Günter Figal, trans. Jerome Veith (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 295.

[17] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymns "Germania" and "The Rhine"*, 199.

[18] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Truth*, trans. by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 84, emphasis in original.

[19] Heidegger, *What is Philosophy?*, 75, translation modified; see Martin Heidegger, "Was ist das – die Philosophie?," in *Identität und Differenz, GA* 11, ed. by Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2006), 21, for the original German.

[20] Heidegger, *What is Philosophy?*, 77, translation modified; see Heidegger, "Was ist das – die Philosophie?," 21, for the original German.

[21] *Ibid*.

[22] Martin Heidegger, "Conversation on a Country Path about Thinking," in *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. by John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1966), 61.

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> Such relinquishing no longer stems from a willing, except that the occasion for releasing oneself to belonging to that-which-regions (*Gegnet*) requires a trace of willing. This trace, however, vanishes while releasing oneself and is completely extinguished in releasement.[23]

Relinquishing the willing still requires a willing at first; however, even the trace of willing is completely extinguished in releasement.[24] It is impossible to poetize without transforming human existence from willing into releasement. This transformation is what might be called becoming a poet.[25]

The singularity of self-transformation in Heidegger's later philosophy

One thing to note is that the transformation of human existence centers on preparing for a correspondence that listens to the voice of being. In "Letter on 'Humanism,'" Heidegger says that "… in the claim [by being] upon human beings, in the attempt to make humans ready for this claim, is there not implied a concern about human beings?"[26] The focus of the preparation, therefore, is readiness for the claim of being. In other words, it is

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[23] *Ibid.*, 80. That-which-regions (*Gegnet*), as the older form of the "region" (*Gegend*) (*Ibid.*, 66), is different from the horizon in which beings lie. Human beings represent their a priori understanding of the beingness of beings in the horizon as the "field of vision" (*Ibid.*, 63). However, "[t]he region gathers, just as nothing were happening, each to each and each to all into an abiding, while resting in itself" (*Ibid.*, 66). Gathering each to each and each to all into an abiding is different from representing human beings' a priori understanding of the beingness of beings in the horizon. Gathering means that a human being abiding in the region and letting herself into releasement experience the appearing of what is presented gathered with its presence, or "the presence of the two-fold, being and beings." Heidegger, "A Dialogue on Language," translation modified; see Heidegger, "Aus einem Gespräch von der Sprache (1953/54): Zwischen einem Japaner und einem Fragenden," in *Unterwegs zur Sprache, GA* 12, ed. by Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1985), 112, for the original German. This two-fold (*Zwiefalt*) is different from "the being of beings represented metaphysically." Heidegger, "A Dialogue on Language," 26, translation modified; see Heidegger, "Aus einem Gespräch von der Sprache (1953/54)," 112, for the original German.

[24] This is the reason that, as paradoxically said in the "Conversation on a Country Path about Thinking," "[W]hen we let ourselves into releasement to that-which-regions, we will non-willing," in Heidegger, "Conversation on a Country Path about Thinking," 79.

[25] Of course, the poet most emphasized in Heidegger's later philosophy is Friedrich Hölderlin—the poet whose work, for Heidegger, marks the second inception of Western thinking. Yet such poetry would have been impossible for Hölderlin to write without undergoing a profound self-transformation. While it is evident that such a transformation is nearly impossible for us, as ordinary people, it is not entirely beyond reach. From the perspective of Heidegger's later philosophy, then, self-transformation remains a vital task demanded of human beings.

[26] Heidegger, "Letter on 'Humanism,'" 243.

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the transformation of human existence so that one becomes attuned to the voice of being and thus corresponds to what appeals to one through it. This correspondence ultimately brings about a change in the human mode of being; however, such self-transformation does not result from an individual's effort to relate to themselves differently.

Becoming attuned to the voice of being is not merely a passive mode of self-transformation, for such attunement is possible only when one is able to correspond to it. Nevertheless, in the active-passive distinction, this transformation may be described as passive rather than active, since attunement to the voice of being is not simply the product of one's own effort. What is essential, in this regard, is the preparation for attunement—or correspondence—to the voice of being. Yet this preparation, by itself, cannot bring about attunement, for, as we have seen, attunement is never the outcome of one's own striving. All one can do, therefore, is prepare and wait. In this light, striving to relate to oneself differently, or engaging in self-care with the aim of transforming oneself from what one is, is of comparatively less importance.

Using the term "outside" to describe what a human being experiences when becoming attuned to the voice of being, the preparation for human self-transformation consists in letting oneself be released into the outside. This preparation is closely connected to Heidegger's overcoming of the modern notion of the subject or atomized self. In *Being and Time*, being-in-the-world is an existential determination of Dasein; the world, therefore, belongs to the very constitution of Dasein.[27] "It [i.e., Dasein] is always already 'outside' together with some being encountered in the world already discovered."[28] And "even in this 'being outside' together with its object, Dasein is 'inside', correctly understood."[29] In both early Heidegger and later Heidegger, Dasein is always already outside in its being-together with innerworldly beings. What changes between the two periods is the manner in which Dasein's self-transformation takes place.

In *Being and Time*, self-transformation centers on listening to the silent call of conscience in the mood of anxiety. Through this listening, Dasein transforms itself by resolutely choosing its ownmost potentiality-of-being. In Heidegger's later philosophy, however, Dasein is no longer called to resolve itself in this way but must instead allow itself to become attuned to the voice of being. That is, it must let itself be released into the outside. Such release indeed requires preparation, yet this preparation is not oriented toward the achievement of any determinate resolve. Rather, it is a preparation for

[27] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, trans. by Joan Stambaugh (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), 60.

[28] *Ibid*., 58.

[29] *Ibid*.

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waiting for "the ones that come toward us" (*die Zu-künftigen*) as "the future ones" (*die Zukünftigen*). What, then, are the implications of such preparation?

Conclusion

As shown above, in Heidegger's later philosophy, human self-transformation can only be prepared for through listening to the voice of being and through letting oneself be released into the outside. For Heidegger, the self-transformation of Dasein is to let itself be released to experience the interplay of concealment and unconcealment or the truth of being as the outside. Therefore, Dasein must be prepared to experience the outside or be released into it. However, this experience is not the result of Dasein's own willing to be released, even though it requires a willing first. In other words, the self-transformation of Dasein is not possible through only humanist practices but only when the trace of willing is completely extinguished.

Concerning the self-transformation of Dasein, however, there is an aspect of "resistance." As already noted, relinquishing the willing still requires, at first, a willing. This initial willing could be interpreted as a form of resistance, since it involves releasing oneself from everydayness into belonging to that-which-regions (*Gegnet*), a release that initially demands a trace of willing. However, even though relinquishing the willing requires a willing at first, the self-transformation is possible only through the transition from willing into releasement and thus requires relinquishing of the willing itself.

What, then, are the implications of this self-transformation achieved through the relinquishment of willing itself? Above all, they lie in the fact that the newness born of such transformation consists in "the future ones" understood as "the ones that come toward us." As Heidegger states in *Contributions to Philosophy*, the task is to prepare for the future ones, which ground the essence of truth.[30] Yet, the future ones are not something entirely new; rather, they are to be understood as the retrieval of what has long been concealed. Only by attentively listening to what has been concealed can genuine transformation occur. This suggests that transformation is possible only through silent waiting and attentive listening to what has already been near to us in concealment—beyond willing—so that it may eventually speak, or rather, show itself. And yet, are not such silent waiting and attentive listening precisely what modern human beings, living in the technological age, find themselves least capable of?

[30] See Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (of the Event)*, trans. by Richard Rojcewicz and Daniela Vallega-Neu (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2012), 313.

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Article

Heidegger and the Possibility of a Hermeneutic Ethics

Chon Ip Ng

Abstract: This paper explores the possibility of hermeneutic ethics through critical engagement with Gadamer and Heidegger. While Gadamer emphasizes the ethical significance of interpretation, application, and tradition, his hermeneutics has often been criticized for its alleged conservatism and limited critical force. The paper argues that this limitation can be addressed by supplementing Gadamer's account with Heidegger's analysis of authenticity. By reconstructing moral action as a hermeneutic and expressive practice, the paper shows how Heidegger's concepts of being-toward-death, conscience, guilt, and resoluteness disclose an existential structure of responsibility in which ethical norms may be appropriated and transformed through singular commitment. Authenticity is not treated as a moral norm, but as an enabling condition under which ethical bindingness becomes intelligible for an agent. The resulting hermeneutic ethics accounts for moral creativity as a bifurcation within tradition rather than a rejection of it.

Keywords: Gadamer, Heidegger, Heideggerian ethics, hermeneutic ethics

The idea of hermeneutic ethics is hardly alien to philosophical hermeneutics. Hans-Georg Gadamer's corpus repeatedly affirms the profound linkage between hermeneutics and practical philosophy. Early in his career, he immersed himself in the ethics of Plato and Aristotle, and numerous texts explicitly probe the ramifications of philosophical hermeneutics for ethics and practical philosophy.[1] Yet Gadamer never forged

[1] The pivotal text is Hans-Georg Gadamer's 1931 Habilitation thesis, *Platos dialektische Ethik: Phänomenologische Interpretationen zum "Philebos"*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 5 (hereinafter *GW*) (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985), 3–163, which emphasizes the practical and dialogic nature of Platonic ethics, in contrast to Neo-Kantian readings of Plato as a purely theorical metaphysician. Representative later discussions include "Hermeneutics als praktische Philosophie," in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 10 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 285–297, and "Über die Möglichkeit einer philosophischen Ethik," in *GW* 4 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987), 175–188;

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a systematic ethics or practical philosophy. In his magnum opus, *Truth and Method* (*Wahrheit und Methode*), the three main sections examine the experience of truth in art, social sciences, and language; practice surfaces only obliquely as the dimension of "application" (*Anwendung*), an indissociable aspect of understanding.[2]

Gadamer's scattered writings on practical philosophy and ethics yield precious insights but fall short of a fully elaborated hermeneutic ethics. His insistence for the affinity between philosophical hermeneutics and practical philosophy thus remains more programmatic than realized. Critics, nonetheless, impugn the practical implications of his hermeneutics, particularly its ability to transcend the conservation of conventional morality and function as a critical tool for contesting traditional values and norms. The primacy accorded to interpretation, they argue, may hinder transformative action in the world.[3]

The most prominent critique of Gadamer's hermeneutics comes from Jürgen Habermas. In their 1967 exchange—later anthologized in "The Hermeneutic Claim to Universality"—Habermas impugns its ethical deficits, arguing that Gadamer's ontological prioritization of linguistic tradition precludes transcendence of potentially distorted consensus.[4] Scholars such as John Caputo and Georgia Warnke further probe whether Gadamer's repudiation of Enlightenment subjectivism overcorrects into an uncritical deference of authority, restricting critique to the bounds of tradition.[5]

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see also his mature synthesis from the late 1970s in "Die Idee des Guten zwischen Plato und Aristoteles," in *GW* 7 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991), 128–227, which further clarifies how the classical conception of the good underlies the hermeneutic structure of practical reason. For Gadamer's own retrospective summary of this early ethical orientation, see also "Die Idee der praktischen Philosophie" (1983), in *GW* 10 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 238–246.

[2] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hermeneutik I: Wahrheit und Methode. Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik*, *GW* 1 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1986).

[3] It is a prominent strand of criticism to frame Gadamer's hermeneutics as politically conservative, rooted in his historical context and reluctance to confront the Nazi-regime. Richard Wolin, for instance, in *Heidegger's Children: Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas, and Herbert Marcuse* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), accuses Gadamer of ideological accommodation during the 1930s-1940s and argues that his rehabilitation of "prejudice" (*Vorurteil*) as a condition of understanding risks legitimizing inherited authority. A related, though differently motivated, concern arises in Hans Blumenberg's reflections on hermeneutics' preference for metaphors of hearing and listening. Cf. Hans Blumenberg, *Ästhetische und metaphorologische Schriften*, ed. by Anselm Haverkamp (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001), 138–176, esp. 164.

[4] See especially Jürgen Habermas, "Der Universalitätsanspruch der Hermeneutik," in *Hermeneutik und Dialektik I. Hans-Georg Gadamer zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. by Rüdiger Bubner, Konrad Cramer, and Reiner Wiehl (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1970), 131–132 and 134–135.

[5] Cf. John D. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), 111ff. Georgia Warnke, "Hermeneutics, Ethics, and Politics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, ed. by Robert J. Dostal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 79–101.

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This lineage of critique stems from an aporia at the heart of Gadamerian hermeneutics: the tension between contextualizing the subjectivity and retaining its power of reflection and criticism. For Gadamer, the hermeneutic alternative to the Enlightenment subject is an interpreter fully immersed in effective history (*Wirkungsgeschichte*), who tacitly assumes the fundamental soundness and completeness of tradition.[6] Understanding, on this view, unfolds itself mainly in an enrichment of tradition when facing a new historical moment, rather than a radical break or revolutionary critique—thereby posing a persistent obstacle to critical engagement with tradition and the emergence of transformative ethical perspectives.

We argue that conservatism is not an inevitable consequence of philosophical hermeneutics and its core insights are compatible with an ethics able to critique and to reconfigure inherited norms and values. To demonstrate this, we propose to amend and fortify philosophical hermeneutics, drawing in particular on Martin Heidegger. We will proceed in three stages. First, we outline a hermeneutic ethics based on Gadamer's key insights, privileging theoretical potential rather than strict exegesis. Then we will pinpoint elements in Gadamer's model that tilt toward conservatism. Finally, we enlist Heidegger's notion of authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*) to sharpen a hermeneutic ethics capable of breaking with convention and generating ethical innovation.[7]

Outline of a Hermeneutic Ethics

The very core step of a robust hermeneutic ethics lies obviously in extending the hermeneutic situation beyond textual interpretation to encompass action and practical experience—an extension that echoes

[6] The crux of the aporia we address is perhaps nowhere more explicit than in Gadamer's reply to Habermas's critique, "Rhetorik, Hermeneutik und Ideologiekritik" (1967) in *Hermeneutik II: Wahrheit und Methode. Ergänzung. Register*, 5th ed., *GW* 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993), 232–250. There, Gadamer explicitly asserts the ontological priority of effective-historical consciousness over reflective subjectivity, claiming that it possesses "more Being than consciousness" (*mehr Sein als Bewußtsein*). See Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Rhetorik, Hermeneutik und Ideologiekritik," 247.

[7] For a more sympathetic yet still critical reading that anticipates our own turn to Heideggerian resoluteness as a corrective, see Lawrence J. Hatab, *Ethics and Finitude: Heideggerian Contributions to Moral Philosophy* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000). Hatab explores how Heidegger's notions of guilt, conscience, and resoluteness—though ontological—have clear "ethical registers" and provide a background structure for ethical existence, see esp. ch. 3. He also recognizes the conservative tilt in Gadamer's dialogical model but does not pursue the systematic grafting of Heideggerian singularity that we undertake here.

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Gadamer's own claim of the "universality of hermeneutics."[8] However, action is hermeneutic just because it expresses meaning and significance. In regard to the ethical, the agent articulates and exhibits values, norms, moral ideals, and ultimately himself through what he does.

In *Truth and Method*, this ethical expressivism runs parallel to the aesthetic concept of "presentation" (*Darstellung*). Ethical action gains moral weight not only from its ends or from its conformity to universal norms but also from the ethical significance it expresses and how effectively it does so. Like finding the right word for a situation, ethical action consists in appropriately articulating moral values, norms, and ideals in concrete contexts. Here Gadamer's emphasis on "application" becomes clear. Drawing on Aristotelian ethics, he casts ethical action as the *applicative link between universal and particular*. The agent encounters the good in specific situations, and practical rationality (*phronēsis*) discerns "what the concrete situation asks of" him. And it is significant that Gadamer equates this demand with viewing the situation "in light of what is asked of him [i.e. the agent] in general."[9] To discern the implicit moral demand of a particular situation, application involves *interpreting* the particular in light of universal values, subsuming it under the fitting moral category—e.g., identifying it as a situation requiring courage, justice, or integrity.

Conversely, Gadamer also insists that the universal itself *transforms* through application or *Darstellung* (presentation). The universal is not static but evolves through its particular enactments; it earns as Gadamer characterizes an "increase in being" (*Zuwachs an Sein*)[10] and to a certain extent, a different sense.[11] Hence, this dynamic suggests a circular relation between universal and particular in the hermeneutic situation, which can be articulated as *a structure of double interpretation*. Not only is the particular situation interpreted in light of inherited moral ideals and virtues, but, conversely, those ethical heritages are also articulated and interpreted in and through the specific situation in question. This double-sided integration—particularizing the universal and universalizing the particular—lies at the heart of Gadamer's concept of the "fusion of horizons," in which understanding arises precisely through the interplay between tradition and the present circumstances.[12]

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[8] Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Die Universalität des hermeneutischen Problems," in *Hermeneutik II: Wahrheit und Methode. Ergänzung. Register*, 5th ed., *GW* 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993), 219–231.

[9] Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 318.

[10] *Ibid.*, 145, 156.

[11] *Ibid.*, 302.

[12] *Ibid.*, 311.

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To sum up, in order to construct a viable hermeneutic ethics, we propose three interrelated premises, which build partially on Gadamer's insights:

(1) Moral action is inherently hermeneutic.
(2) It is bound to sense and significance.
(3) It is expressive in nature.

Among these three premises, Gadamer clearly endorses the first two premises: he recognizes the hermeneutic character of action and the constitutive role of sense and significance in moral life, and his repeated critiques of instrumental reason reinforce the interpretive constitution of morality. The expressive dimension of moral action, in contrast, appears to be a systematic lacuna within Gadamer's framework. It is precisely here that Heidegger's thinking—especially his account of authenticity—proves particularly illuminating.

The Turn to Heideggerian Ethics of Authenticity

Heidegger famously refuses to write an "ethics" in the traditional sense. Yet, as the *Letter on Humanism* and countless marginal notes make clear, he never stops asking what must be true of human existence for anything like moral life to be possible at all.[13] From being-in-the-world and care (*Sorge*) to thrownness (*Geworfenheit*) and projection (*Entwurf*), he relocates normativity within our finite, factual, and irreducibly interpretive existence. Ethical life, on this account, is rooted less in universal rules than in the ways we understand and disclose the world in which we dwell.

Within this horizon, indirect but significant ethical insights abound. For instance: Heidegger's analyses of equipment, concernful circumspection (*Umsicht*), and worldhood sketch a practical intelligence that amounts to an existentialized *phronēsis*: situated, skillful, and responsive. This offers a salutary corrective to moral formalism and decisionism. His distinction between forms of solicitude (*Fürsorge*)—"leaping-in" (*Einspringen*) and "leaping ahead" (*Vorausspringen*)—furnishes critical resources for thinking paternalism and empowerment in an ethics of care. Finally, his later re-thinking of *ethos* as a manner of inhabiting—dwelling in the releasement

[13] Cf. Martin Heidegger, "Brief über den Humanismus (1976)," in *Wegmarken*, *GW* 9, ed. by Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 1976), 313–364, here 354–356. Heidegger's attitude in *Being and Time* is a clear deferral and ontological re-grounding of ethics. He does not refuse to engage with the ethical straightforwardly, but he insists that it is only possible after fundamental ontology has clarified the structure of Dasein. See Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, §4, 17th ed. (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1993), 286.

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(*Gelassenheit*)—together with the critique of enframing (*Gestell*), has inspired environmental and technological ethics oriented less toward prohibition than toward practices that let beings be disclosed in their own manner.[14]

We do not intend to diminish the significance of these indirect ethical insights. Yet it is theoretically more fruitful to situate them within a systematic account of hermeneutic ethics.[15] Doing so enables us to discern Heidegger's distinctive contribution—namely, a phenomenology of responsibility and authenticity that both *enriches* and *corrects* the existing hermeneutic framework.

In brief, the proto-ethical situation is simultaneously hermeneutic and existential. It is *hermeneutic* in the sense that, as Gadamer emphasizes, moral action integrates the universal and the particular. The agent receives the ethical claim of a situation in light of an inherited ideal and interprets that ideal through the demands of the concrete case. This yields the double interpretive structure of moral action outlined earlier. It is *existential*, however, in the sense that the circular movement of interpretation is at times *broken open* by the expressivity of singularity, where what is called forth appears to challenge the purported universality of the inherited ideal. In such situations, the inherited universal has to be suspended in the projection of one's *ownmost* possibility. At times, Dasein is uneasy with the past and is compelled to "break its ground" in order to create and appropriate his own "whereto" (*Wohin*) within the open field of practical possibilities.

Authenticity, in this respect, emerges as a breach in the traditional lineage. Yet it does not simply negate the hermeneutic circle of the event of meaning; rather, it intersects it and displaces its center of gravity by requiring that the agent *own* and *give form* to the ideal in action—such that moral life becomes the *self-expression* of a finite, historically situated singularity.[16]

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[14] For a comprehensive reconstruction of an implicit "originary ethics" running through the whole of Heidegger's path of thinking, see Joanna Hodge, *Heidegger and Ethics* (London/New York: Routledge, 1995), esp. chs. 3–4.

[15] Secondary literature on Heideggerian ethics is extensive; seminal book-length studies include Joanna Hodge, *Heidegger and Ethics* (London/New York: Routledge, 1995); Frederick A. Olafson, *Heidegger and the Ground of Ethics: A Study of Mitsein* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Lawrence J. Hatab, *Ethics and Finitude: Heideggerian Contributions to Moral Philosophy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000); and David Webb, *Heidegger, Ethics and the Practice of Ontology* (London: Continuum, 2009). For a concise recent overview see Sacha Golob, "Heidegger's Ethics," in *The Cambridge History of Moral Philosophy*, ed. by Jens Timmermann and Sacha Golob (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 623–635. The present essay differs from these approaches by pursuing a systematic grafting of the existential analytic of authenticity onto Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, with the explicit aim of overcoming the conservative drift diagnosed in Gadamerian practical philosophy.

[16] The appeal to authenticity in this context should not be understood as introducing a moral norm or obligation in the conventional sense. Authenticity names, rather, the existential condition under which any norm can become binding *for an agent at all*; and without singular ownership, normativity risks collapsing into mere social regularity (*das Man*). The ethical force

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The point is not to pit Heidegger against Gadamer, but to thicken hermeneutic ethics with an existential counter-movement. I would like to call it the *expressivity of singularity*: In the call of conscience and resolute projection (*Entschlossenheit*), Dasein does not "answer" by harmonizing all inherited claims into a completed sense. Instead, it owns a possibility as irreducibly *mine* and, in doing so, projects and institutes a "whereto" that did not previously exist within the publicly available nexus of meanings. Such projection is presented by Heidegger as awakening Dasein from its absorption in the tranquilizing norms of the "they" (*das Man*). The authentic projection does not abolish the hermeneutic circle; it breaks it open from within, re-anchoring it in a first-person act of world-disclosure—a grasping of ownmost possibility in the mode of "self-having". In ethical terms, responsibility includes—not only the apt integration of universal and particular—but also the creative self-commitment that *gives* the universal its shape here and now.

The significance of expressivity and authenticity in ethics can be illustrated through the famous moral dilemma in Sophocles' tragedy *Antigone*, one of the earliest explorations of irreconcilable moral demands in Western literature. The dilemma is well-known: Creon issues an edict forbidding the burial of Polyneices, citing the needs of the city and the inviolability of its laws, while Antigone chooses to follow what she calls the "unfailing, unwritten laws" of the gods and the claims of blood-kinship, which demand burial rites for the dead.[17]

The tragedy, however, is not merely a collision of two abstract normative orders—the legal versus the ethical, or the positive law versus the divine or familial duty. It is, more profoundly, a clash of two singular existences who express and bind themselves through their deeds. Creon's conviction is that the stability of the city depends on the unflinching execution of *his* word, and Antigone, to commit to piety despite death. She interprets the situation in light of a higher, *for her* more intimate obligation and commits herself radically to it.

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of authenticity is therefore not prescriptive but enabling, a kind necessity before normativity. It is well known that Heidegger explicitly resists construing *Eigentlichkeit* and *Uneigentlichkeit* as normative opposites, while at the same time insisting that the existential analytic of Dasein is prior to any philosophical ethics. The present argument takes up this suggestion by identifying the existential conditions under which ethical bindingness becomes intelligible for an agent. The "call of conscience," despite its silence with respect to determinate norms, exposes Dasein to an ineluctable responsibility for its own possibilities and thereby discloses a proto-ethical dimension of existence. In this limited, enabling sense, authenticity bears ethical significance without being elevated to a substantive moral principle.

[17] Sophocles, *Antigone*, trans. by Paul Woodruff (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett, 2001), ll. 454–457.

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As Heidegger reads her in 1942, Antigone becomes the very figure of the human "unhomeliness"; she is the most "unhomely," (*unheimischst*), and thereby "the most uncanny of all the uncanny" (*das Unheimlichste alles Unheimlichsten*): [18] she is torn from everyday being-at-home in the polis precisely by committing to her ownmost possibility. Her action does not mediate or reconcile the conflicting claims; it interrupts the public horizon and discloses a new, uncanny "whereto" that the inherited order could not foresee.

This classical drama highlights the fault line between an ethics of values and norms that preserves the given order and a creative, interpretive ethics that risks transgressing it for the sake of what the situation demands. It is along this fault line that hermeneutics—especially in the wake of Gadamer and Heidegger—becomes ethically salient. Gadamer insists that understanding is always application, a fusion of horizons in which the universal finds its truth only in the particular case. Heidegger presses further, disclosing how such understanding is rooted in the structures of being-in-the-world, being-with-others, historicity, and the existential stance of resoluteness. A "hermeneutic ethics," if possible at all, would neither legislate from nowhere nor capitulate to the "they"; it would interpret from within our shared world, sometimes continuing what has been handed down, sometimes breaking with it for the sake of authenticity.

From integrative understanding to expressive projection of singularity

While Gadamer's hermeneutics excels at describing the integrative mediation of universal and particular, it marginalizes the moment when an agent does not merely apply an inherited ideal but disrupts and re-originates it through resolute action. Heidegger's existential analyses—of anticipatory running-ahead to death, the call of conscience, being-guilty, and resoluteness—fill this gap. These analyses reveal the authentic transformation of Dasein's fundamental existentials (projection, discourse, thrownness, disclosure) and illuminate what we have called the *expressivity of singularity*: the ethical phenomenon in which the agent institutes a hitherto unforeseen "whereto" by owning a possibility as irreducibly his own and committing himself to it in action.

The four moments of authentic existence can further be reread as the fundamental moments of moral life: (1) Anticipatory running-ahead to death *singularizes the future.* (2) The call of conscience summons Dasein from the

[18] Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlins Hymne »Der Ister«* (Summer 1942), *GA* 53 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1984), 129.

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anonymity of the "they" and awakens it to *self-responsible present*. (3) In Being-guilty, Dasein *bears its past* as its own and assume its own accountability. (4) Finally, resoluteness integrates these insights into a *committed* stance in which Dasein resolutely owns and enacts its clarified possibilities. Taken together, these four moments outline an existential phenomenology of moral agency in a proto-ethical situation. They show how responsibility, value, and commitment emerge from the structures of human existence itself. Let us now turn to a closer explication.

Being-to-Death and Personalization of the Future

Everyday projection disperses itself into the endless, interchangeable possibilities offered by the "they." Anticipatory running-ahead to death radically *individualizes* projection by confronting Dasein with its so-called ownmost, non-relational, and not-to-be-outstripped possibility.[19] Death is not an event among others; it is the possibility of the absolute impossibility of any further possibility, as articulated by Heidegger. In running-ahead, Dasein does not contemplate death abstractly; it experiences itself as finite through and through.

Ethically, this is the moment in which value ceases to be average and public and becomes irreducibly *personal*. Under the horizon of mortality, possibilities lose their indefinite postponability. What formerly appeared as "one can always do it later" or "others will take care of it" now reveals its true weight. The universal—courage, justice, piety, love—is stripped of its comfortable interpretability within the "they" and forced to show what it can possibly mean when only this one life, and no other, is available to answer for it.

The expressive achievement of "*Vorlaufen*" is therefore the birth of genuine mattering. A possibility is no longer something one "takes over" from tradition; it becomes something for which I must stake my singular existence. The universal is not abandoned—it is *personalised*, wrenched into the mode of "this matters ultimately for me," and thereby prepared for a projection that can truly bind me.

Conscience and Self-Responsibility

Heidegger's conscience is not a faculty that issues maxims but a phenomenon of call (*Ruf*) that "comes from me and yet over me," summoning Dasein out of absorption in the anonymous "they."[20] Its summon is however

[19] Cf. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, §§50–53.
[20] Cf. *Ibid.*, §§57–58.

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strikingly reticent (*verschwiegen*). It says nothing determinate, offers no prescription, withholds every concrete "about-what." [21] Precisely this uncanny reticence is what individualizes: by refusing all ready-made justifications furnished by the chatter of the "they," the call leaves Dasein naked before itself.

Read ethically, the call is the moment of *existential critique* within hermeneutic life. It interrupts the seamless fusion of horizons by suspending the tacit equation of moral success with social congruence. The power of conscience lies in exposing the singular agent and placing the entire burden of justification on her: whatever ideal I now invoke, whatever course I choose, I can no longer hide behind the anonymous "one does," "one must," or "tradition demands." The call clears the space in which an inherited value ceases to be received sense and becomes a possibility I must *personally answer for*—and, in answering, singularly shape.

The practical counterpart of the call's silence is the reticence of resolute action itself.[22] The authentic agent does not proclaim an inner creed; he shows his answer in the deed. The call thus inaugurates the expressivity of singularity: the moment in which the agent is summoned to give the universal a form that only he, here and now, can bear.

Being-Guilty and the Personalization of the Past

Heidegger's analysis of guilt is expressly *non-juridical*. To "be guilty" (*schuldig sein*) does not first mean "to have violated a rule," but to be indebted—*answerable*—for one's thrown-projective existence.[23] If the call of conscience commits Dasein to his ownmost whereto, the "being-guilty" is its deliverance into its *wherefrom* (*Woher*). Dasein always already finds itself delivered over to possibilities, and yet it must project itself among them.

This is the decisive moment that suggests in the ethical realm a non-derivative, non-transferable responsibility. Even the most justified norm, the most hallowed tradition, cannot relieve me of the necessity to take it up as mine and answer for how I let it shape my action. Roles, institutions, collective values—none can substitute for singular ownership. I cannot start a real ethical life if I do not bear my concrete standpoint pregiven in the ethical world—someone's son, brother, relatives, friend and enemy. My ethical standing is irreducibly mine; I am delivered over to it, and yet I must project it. The ethical haunts us already from where we are and not what we have done.

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[21] Cf. *Ibid*., §§56–57.

[22] Cf. *Ibid*., §60.

[23] Cf. *Ibid*., §58.

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Resoluteness as Singular Commitment

Lastly, resoluteness is the full enactment of the expressivity of singularity—the situated unity of disclosedness of existence in which anticipation of death, the reticent call, and existential guilt are held together in action.[24] Resoluteness is identified as the "most original, because authentic truth of Dasein";[25] it is hence primarily not a rigid willfulness but an *openness* that remains responsive to the concrete situation while refusing to surrender its singular "whereto."

The agent binds himself to a possibility he has made irreducibly his own and, in doing so, institutes a direction that did not previously exist within the public web of meanings. The universal is neither dissolved nor mechanically applied—it is performatively re-originated, given new historical flesh through the committed deed. Resolute action is reticent yet publicly disclosive: it shows itself in what is done rather than in proclamations, inviting recognition or contestation from others without ever surrendering its singular character.[26] In resoluteness, the moral agent finally becomes what Heidegger, in a rare direct formulation, calls "the conscience of others" (*Gewissen der Anderen*)[27]– not by preaching, but by the sheer fact that his singular commitment discloses a possibility of the good that the tradition itself did not yet foresee.

These four existential moments, taken together, constitute the ontological architecture of authentic moral agency. They do not deliver a catalogue of norms, but they do something more fundamental: they reveal the existential conditions under which an agent becomes capable of genuinely binding himself to a value, interrupting inherited meanings when necessary, and giving the universal a singular, transformative enactment that only this one life can achieve.

Final Remark: Authenticity as Bifurcation Within Tradition

Heidegger himself addresses the relation of authentic existence to its tradition in §74 of *Being and Time*, where the problem of "historicity"

[24] Cf. *Ibid*., §§60, 62.

[25] *Ibid*., 297.

[26] This public dimension of resoluteness is often underemphasized in existential readings. See Olafson, *Heidegger and the Ground of Ethics: A Study of Mitsein*. Olafson sets out to work out a concept of *Mitsein* that provides the foundational understanding necessary for inquiry into the ground of ethics.

[27] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 298: "Das entschlossene Dasein kann zum »Gewissen« der Anderen werden. Aus dem eigentlichen Selbstsein der Entschlossenheit entspringt allererst das eigentliche Miteinander ...."

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(*Geschichtlichkeit*) is at issue. He insists that authentic Dasein does not simply receive tradition passively; it retrieves (*Wiederholung*) a possibility handed down in the heritage (Erbe) by explicitly choosing it.[28] Hence his striking formulation that resolute Dasein "chooses its hero" (*wählt sich seinen Helden*).[29] This is not a call for idolatry but for exemplarity: in selecting an exemplary possibility and "repeating" it, Dasein frees that possibility for today and binds itself to it in action.

Authenticity, therefore, is not a disguised form of pure subjectivity that abandons tradition for a self grounded in itself. On the contrary, it is a mode of belonging that *bifurcates* tradition from within. It interrupts the seamless continuity of the tradition by singling out a line of exemplarity. In this sense, it simultaneously disrupts and preserves, continues and re-originates. The ethical upshot is decisive. Moral creativity is not the spontaneous invention of values; it is selective fidelity that re-originates the universal in the singular act of resolute retrieval. In doing so, the moral agent sets a measure for himself and, potentially for his generation, by choosing a hero he can answer for—a possibility he is prepared to hand down in turn as a renewed heritage.

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[28] *Ibid.*, 385–386.

[29] *Ibid.*, 385.

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Article

Rethinking a Heideggerian Normative Ethics

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Abstract: The latter Heidegger pointed out in his "Letter on 'Humanism'" that prevailing ethical theories are all products of Western metaphysics, but there is in fact an "original ethics" before them. He claimed that the "original ethics" is better than the former but offered no further explanation. After previously attempting to establish a Heideggerian normative ethics based on authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*) as virtue, and discovering its inherent difficulties of voluntarism, I try to ponder in this article another kind of normative ethics based on his concept of releasement (*Gelassenheit*) as a virtue in order to interpret a Heideggerian "original ethics." The virtue of releasement doesn't force Being as such to present itself and is able to make Dasein open to Being of the Other and let it be itself. To highlight the characteristics of this virtue ethics, this article will attempt to explore its possible content by comparing it with the previous version of ethics, namely the virtue ethics based on Heidegger's early concept of authenticity.

Keywords: Heidegger, authenticity, normative ethics, releasement

Building on the concept of authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit)* in *Being and Time*, Heidegger proposed an existential "solipsism" in order to grasp the most primordial Being of Dasein ontologically. Starting from this conception, I have sought to explore the possibility of developing a normative ethics that could be compatible with the early Heidegger's philosophy. In an earlier study,[1] I argued that Heidegger's notion of authenticity possesses an ontological value and suggested that the own most potentiality-for-Being (*eigenstes Seinkönnen*)—as articulated within this existential "solipsism"—can be reinterpreted as an ought-to-be (*Seinsollen*). On this basis, I proposed that an ethical framework could be constructed from this ontological grounding.

[1] W.-D. Tsai, "The Ownmost Potentiality-for-Being as Ought-to-Be," in *Kritike*, 16:3 (2023), 142–155.

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In a subsequent paper,[2] I further argued that such an ethical theory cannot be deontological or utilitarian in nature, since Heidegger explicitly criticizes both as products of Western metaphysics. If we are to develop a viable ethical theory rooted in the early Heidegger's thought, the most promising candidate may be a form of virtue ethics. This Heideggerian virtue ethics would treat the own most potentiality-for-Being as the virtue of human Dasein, and thus as a good worthy of pursuit. However, because this ethics is grounded in existential "solipsism", it fundamentally differs from Aristotle's virtue ethics. In this context, authenticity is pursued as a personal good, and it does not necessarily aim toward the realization of the common good or the good of the polis, as in Aristotelian ethics.

However, since the later Heidegger no longer emphasizes the concept of authenticity, it becomes clear that the virtue ethics based on existential "solipsism" outlined earlier is no longer applicable in this revised philosophical context.[3] While he still maintains that Dasein should pursue the most primordial mode of Being, he no longer foregrounds existential "solipsism," presumably due to its voluntaristic implications. If we are to follow Heidegger's own revision of his early thought, then the existential virtue ethics developed from authenticity must likewise be reconsidered and reformulated. This raises a crucial question: can we identify any alternative elements in his later philosophy that might serve as criteria to guide human action — to help actors make appropriate choices and comport themselves appropriately in praxis? Undoubtedly, the notion of primordiality continues to play a significant role here. For the later Heidegger, the primordial state of Being remains ontologically superior to its derivative states. However, he no longer equates the primordiality of Dasein with the authentic selfhood that requires resoluteness (*Entschlossenheit*). In contrast to his earlier position, Dasein no longer needs to willfully achieve authenticity in order to disclose the Being of entities and Being as such. Heidegger now discerns that

[2] W.-D. Tsai, "試論一種有可能從早期海德格思想推演出的倫理學 (On a kind of ethics which could be developed from early Heidegger's thought)," in *NCCU Philosophical Journal*, 50 (2023), 49–87.

[3] There is a fundamental continuity between Heidegger's early and later thought, rather than a radical rupture. The present article does not seek to offer a systematic account of the similarities and differences between these two periods; for a detailed argument in this regard, see W.-D. Tsai, *Die ontologische Wende der Hermeneutik: Heidegger und Gadamer* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2013), especially Chapters 3 and 4. Instead, this article aims merely to highlight **differing emphases** in Heidegger's early and later philosophy mainly through a comparative discussion on the concepts of authenticity and releasement. Therefore, even though these two concepts (and other related concepts) may be used in both of Heidegger's periods, this does not prevent us from observing that there was indeed a shift in emphasis in the later period of Heidegger. Such a comparison should thus not be understood as suggesting that these two concepts are **mutually exclusive**, nor as implying that the complex development of Heidegger's thought across these periods can be **exhaustively captured** by this conceptual pair.

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voluntaristic self-determination could force entities to manifest themselves according to human will and thus harm their Being itself. Therefore, the later Heidegger particularly emphasized the concept of releasement (*Gelassenheit*), which is to let entities show themselves as they are, rather than to reveal them by force. If we are to conceive of a virtue ethics that is compatible with the thought of the later Heidegger, it must now exclude voluntaristic self-determination. In other words, we must seek a form of virtue ethics that does not center on the "will to power"—to use Nietzsche's term.

In order to construct such ethics, our current task is to outline some possible constituent conditions for it. First and foremost, it is important to clarify that conceiving normative ethics without emphasizing self-determination does not entail the exclusion of all acts of will. As a practical framework concerned with Dasein as a moral agent, any type of normative ethics must propose a set of guiding values that help agents determine how to act appropriately. It requires the moral agent to make his own judgements, to select from among various possible actions in light of those values, and to apply them to concrete situations. In doing so, the moral agent inevitably engages in a process of self-identification—that is, he must reflect on and decide what kind of person he wishes to become. This decision-making process is of course impossible to separate from the activity of will; otherwise, it would construct an extreme version of ethical theory, similar to the virtue theory of existential solipsism—but in a different direction—namely, a kind of quietism. Therefore, we must introduce a further specification or limitation to our ethical project. What is to be excluded here is not volition as such in the moral agent, but his self-determination in the mode of "enframing" (*Gestell*)—that is, the technological domination and manipulation of his nature. In short, acts of will remain involved, but they must be exercised in a manner that does not override the principle of releasement. Thus, in such a Heideggerian ethical theory, the agent's will is to perform an action of letting-be, rather than an action of forcing-into-Being. Under these conditions, an action possessing primordial morality does not derive from a domination or command over an entity, for that would harm the entity's primordial Being.

However, while the appeal to releasement means not forcibly determining the Being of an entity, it also doesn't mean allowing the entity to be however it wants, otherwise this would lead to the conclusion that whatever is is ethically justifiable. If this were true, then we would no longer need ethics, and could simply be satisfied with discussing ontology. Thus, the primary concern here is to let the entity manifest itself as it primordially is, i.e., to allow the entity to reveal its most primordial mode of Being and to regard the latter as a primordial good. To let be is, therefore, to be willing to "achieve" a certain primordial good in some way.

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It is also important to clarify that in his later writings, Heidegger refers to this self-manifestation of an entity as "appropriation" (*Ereignen*), and the most primordial state of Being that emerges from this process as "the Event" (*Ereignis*). However, the process of appropriation is for Heidegger never a purely unilateral unfolding of the entity itself; it always simultaneously involves a kind of withdrawing, which Heidegger calls "expropriation" (*Enteignen*). In other words, the primordial Being of the entity is a unity of revealing and concealing. Viewed from the perspective of revealing, the Event highlights the self-manifestation (*Er-eignis*) of the entity; from the perspective of concealing, it highlights its self-withdrawal (*Ent-eignis*). They are originally unified and ontologically inseparable. However, the unity of these two is not static, but a dynamic whole formed in the process of their mutual conflict. Based on the above explanation, we can conclude that: If releasement is to mean allowing an entity to manifest itself in its most primordial way, then a letting-be needs to include both self-manifestation and self-withdrawal of the entity. This is a core claim in Heidegger's later thought, and therefore an essential point that any ethics attempting to incorporate Heidegger's later philosophy cannot avoid.

Since the later Heidegger regards releasement as a more appropriate way to approach Being as such ontologically, our task is to ponder what a normative ethics developed from the concept of releasement would look like, and why it would be more persuasive than the existential-solipsistic virtue ethics—even though both may be considered non-mainstream ethical theories in academia. This article only attempts to provide some preliminary clues for pondering this question, rather than offering a complete answer. One of these clues comes from our brief examination of existential-solipsistic virtue ethics. We treat it as an object of theoretical comparison and will briefly explain its core content in order to more clearly highlight the possible content of the upgraded version of Heideggerian normative ethics based on releasement.

The early Heidegger's existential "solipsism" attempted to reveal the meaning of Being through Dasein's pursuit of its personal excellence (authenticity), which methodologically focused on the relationship between Dasein and itself. However, this deliberate pursuit of authenticity tended to neglect Dasein's relationship with other people ontically. [4] From this primordial existential dimension of Dasein, we can develop a normative ethics of private virtue at most. Anyone who advocates this kind of virtue ethics in the name of pursuing the meaning of Being will—as long as her or

[4] To avoid hasty misunderstandings by readers, it is important to emphasize here that in *Being and Time*, the early Heidegger explicitly stated that Dasein necessarily coexists with other people in the world. Therefore, when he mentioned existential "solipsism," he never referred to solipsism in the metaphysical sense, but rather to an ontic state of solitude.

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his theoretical position is consistent – adopt an attitude similar to Nietzsche's, that is: to promote "master morality" and to show little concern for "slave morality" or any kind of public virtue. Yet, once this form of authenticity is recognized as inadequate for letting Being reveal itself as it truly is, the justification for persisting in such a virtue theory will collapse. Consequently, it is no longer necessary for us to restrict the ethical dimension of Dasein to its self-relation alone; rather, its ethical dimension can now reopen toward the Other. In this context, abandoning authenticity as the primary virtue for Dasein means no longer aiming at self-interest, but instead prioritizing the interests of the Other. However, it is important to mention that this shift does not equate to a shift to the slave morality of Nietzsche; it simply means prioritizing the primordial Being of the Other. After all, the Other is an ontologically necessary element for Dasein to be Being-in-the-world, and therefore the ontic state of the other should also be included in Dasein's ethical considerations. In this regard, the virtue ethics of releasement is clearly more convincing, since it at least does not ignore the Other and is willing to "help" the Other achieve its Being – although it is not so proactive as the existential-solipsistic virtue ethics. Another point to note is that when the later Heidegger abandoned the idea of authentic resoluteness, his philosophy also leaned towards a kind of non-anthropocentrism. Therefore, the Other here refers not only to human beings, but also to all natural things—in the terms of *Being and Time*, not only to Dasein-with (*Mit-Dasein*), but also to the entity within-the-world (*das innerweltliche Seiende*).

In order for the primordial Being of the Other to manifest itself as it is, Dasein undoubtedly needs to impose a certain degree of restriction on its own will. Now, Dasein no longer makes arbitrary self-determination, and thus limits its previous voluntaristic tendency. In releasement, Dasein will not actively interfere with the Being of the Other. More precisely, Dasein will not force entities to reveal themselves according to its own will and regulations. The entities can thus come forth and withdraw more freely, which further enables Dasein to access their most primordial state of Being better. In short, it is Dasein that sets this restriction on itself, allowing the Other to freely manifest its primordial Being to Dasein. I hereby refer to this self-imposed restriction as self-restraint. For ethics that takes releasement as its core virtue, its constituent elements must include the self-restraint of Dasein and the letting-be of the Other. In contrast, the existential-solipsistic ethics, which emphasizes authenticity, is constituted by the self-determination of Dasein and the forcing-into-Being of the Other. Through this comparison, we can more clearly distinguish the core difference between these two versions of ethics: other-centrism versus egocentrism.

The concept of letting-be has been briefly explained above, namely: to make the true Being of the Other, which is both revealing and concealing,

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accessible to Dasein. As for the more precise meaning of self-restraint and the extent to which this act can be performed, that remains to be examined. Undoubtedly, self-restraint involves withdrawing from all active intervention in the Other ontically. In this respect, it is a relatively passive type of behavior, just like letting-be. However, it should be emphasized that neither of these is entirely inactive. Self-restraint is understood as a self-imposed restriction on the Being of Dasein, undertaken for the sake of letting the Other be accessible as what it truly is. In the later Heidegger's view, constantly forcing the Other to reveal itself would actually harm its Being, making it impossible to maintain its true Being. Therefore, the self-restraint of Dasein is not only about allowing the other to manifest itself, but also to withdraw itself. However, self-restraint should not be undertaken too far, otherwise it will harm the Being of Dasein and may even lead it into a state of self-denial. The self-restraint of Dasein must be merely a voluntary and limited restriction of its self, and should not develop to the point of self-harm or self-denial, because that would in turn cause Dasein to cease to be what it truly is. In short, self-restraint in releasement must be moderate. We can say that this is a passive intervention of Dasein in its self ontically.

The two aforementioned characteristics of releasement—self-restraint of Dasein and letting-be of the Other – offer a preliminary account of how Dasein can access the primordial Being of the Other ontologically. If we are to develop a normative ethics compatible with the later Heidegger's philosophy, it seems feasible to consider releasement as a normative guideline for such an ethical framework. Accordingly, Dasein can develop releasement as its virtue, and under the other-centered spirit, it no longer indulges its own will to dominate the Other ontically but allows the Other to achieve its true Being.

But are these two characteristics of releasement sufficient to ground a persuasive normative ethics? We know that any persuasive ethics must at least be practical and able to explain how a moral agent can actually achieve a better and desirable goal. So, the question we face next is: if Dasein can passively intervene in itself (self-restraint of Dasein) and at the same time not actively intervene in others (letting-be of the Other) ontically, will the Other spontaneously reach its most primordial Being ontologically? If not, what conditions do we need to add to the virtue ethics of releasement?

Let us consider an ethical scenario to look for possible clues: As a moral agent committed to cultivating the virtue of releasement, I encounter a person who is dying nearby. Should I simply allow him/her to die? If left unaided, this person will soon cease to exist. If the releasement of a moral agent is understood merely as a behavior that passively intervenes in oneself but completely refrains from interfering in others, then it might appear reasonable for me here not to intervene. After all, as mortal beings, humans

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are destined to die by nature, so it seems theoretically possible that I can just stand by and watch others die. But can it truly be considered virtuous to stand by and watch someone die without offering any help? Can such inaction genuinely count as an ethical manifestation of virtue? This scenario makes us reflect more deeply on the extent to which a person who embraces releasement as a virtue may, or even ought to, engage in some kind of intervention. The main issue here is whether it is theoretically permissible for Dasein to passively intervene in others. It invites a reconsideration of what kind of action is ethically justified or even demanded under the name of releasement.

In reflecting on this ethical scenario, it is necessary to introduce a more nuanced distinction, since the moral quality of "allowing someone to die" appears to vary depending on the specific circumstances. For example, to let a thoroughly wicked criminal—who has mistakenly ingested poison—die from the poisoning, and to let an innocent child—who has been shot by the criminal—bleed to death, are clearly not morally equivalent. In the former case, we might feel a sense of satisfaction, whereas in the latter, we are likely to feel compassion and sorrow. As long as we experience different emotional responses to these two cases, it suggests that these two persons carry different meanings for us. We may think the former "deserves to die," while the latter "does not deserve to die"—even though both are beings-toward-death (*Sein-zum-Tode*). What is at stake here, then, is not merely the fact that their time of death has arrived. More fundamentally, it concerns the overall quality of their Being, namely: whether their whole Being is beautiful—or to put it in modern way, meaningful — and thus worthy of continued life.

Now, since the virtue ethics of releasement aims to allow the Other to be what it truly is, this ethical thought experiment invites us to consider two further situations: whether the true Being of a person we are promoting through self-restraint is any possible contingent state he/she currently finds itself in, or whether it also includes some outstanding state he/she could potentially achieve or maintain in the future. If our case concerns the former situation, then we do not need to intervene in the Being of that person at all and letting he/she die out on his/her own would be a moral action. But this is obviously an odd result, because any fatalist could easily do this without being considered virtuous. If an action that can be performed without resorting to any virtues is nevertheless considered as the achievement of a particular virtue, then "virtue" in this sense is too trivial to be considered as a genuine excellence (*aretē*) of the moral agent. Therefore, normative ethics that takes releasement as its central virtue should not be satisfied with merely taking the current state of the person as his/her true Being. If our case is concerning the latter situation, some kinds of intervention in the person seem to become necessary—for it would be difficult for the person in question to

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transcend his/her present near-death condition on his/her own, thus leaving no opportunity for him/her to actualize other better possibilities of Being. However, as the concept of releasement suggests, it implies deliberately refraining from active intervention. So, it is clearly neither reasonable nor in line with the spirit of releasement to intervene without considering the differences in someone's current state of Being simply because he/she has the potential to achieve a better state. What we need to further consider is the timing and conditions for intervention—if passive intervention is permissible.

In this thought experiment, our different emotional responses to a deserving criminal and an innocent child victim are partly due to whether their tragic state of Being (i.e., near-death) is self-inflicted. Therefore, when someone's unfortunate situation is consistent with his/her voluntary wrongdoing, we tend to stand idly by; while when someone is involuntarily trapped in an unfortunate situation caused by others, we tend to offer help. Within the framework of the virtue ethics of releasement, the innocent child in our case is most likely to receive help from a moral agent. However, when we decide to intervene, our goal is at most passively to allow the child to return to one's original state, that is, to restore them to a relatively better state of being. Furthermore, this intervention in others should not be excessive. When the child's condition does not improve, we should let go in time, allowing that individual to return to the ultimate possibility—death. The moral agents can only do their best and leave the rest to fate.

From the analysis above, we arrive at the third characteristic of releasement as a supplementary condition: passive promotion of the Other. This third characteristic implies that the virtue of releasement demands something more. Releasement does not entail total inaction. It requires not only a passive action of self-restraint, but also an active action to a certain degree concerning an other-centric goal: the true and beautiful Being of the Other. In conclusion, the virtue ethics of releasement is an ethics that passively desires others to become outstanding, rather than an ethics that actively pursues one's own excellence – like the virtue ethics of authenticity. But does this action toward an other-centric goal introduce a self-contradiction into a virtue ethics grounded in releasement? This is a question I intend to explore further in future work.

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Article

Heidegger and Bergson between Time, Experience, and Knowledge as an End in Itself

Matthias Ernst Bähr

Abstract: When Heidegger and Bergson are compared (which is not often), it is through their concepts of time. These are, however, more dissimilar than one might initially think—in Bergson, time gradually advances to the processual principle of the cosmos; for Heidegger, it is profoundly hermeneutic, the structure of understanding of being. Bergson remains partly stuck in a linear conception of time, while Heidegger, following Husserl's tradition, shifts to a horizontal model that nevertheless struggles to explain the intrinsic movement of time and its tense character. A fruitful alternative could be the conception of a bidirectional model, which understands time as the incessant collision of two movements of time in the present, one coming from the past, the other from the future. Similarities between both thinkers can rather be found in unusual places: In their historical break with Aristotle, both suggest that knowledge of its own end, as the highest, ontological, knowledge, is to be sought not in the abstract, but in the meaning-saturated, temporal context of experience.

Keywords: Bergson, Heidegger, bidirectional time, linear vs. horizontal time

Why compare Heidegger and Bergson?

The simplest and at the same time most obvious reason may be that both thinkers accord time a special significance. Time, which could certainly be called a 'box office hit of philosophy,' since its paradoxical nature has always offered philosophers both preoccupation and despair,[1] made it into the title of Heidegger's epochal work, *Being and Time*; for

[1] Just think of Augustine's famous quote in his *Confessions*, trans. by Maria Boulding (New York: New City Press, 1997), 295: "What, then, is time? If no one asks me, I know; if I want to explain it to someone who asks me, I do not know."

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Bergson, it forms the pivotal point of his entire thought. Both thinkers can be considered, for good reason, the central thinkers of time in 20th-century Europe. This is supported not only by the depth of their engagement with time, but also and above all by the fact that Heidegger and Bergson, with their philosophies of time, offer innovative responses to the specific intellectual-historical situation we find in the 20th, or more precisely, in the transition from the 19th to the 20th century. Both thinkers find themselves in an intellectual climate that is at odds with the systematic philosophy of German Idealism—above all, Hegel's system in its holistic and historicist claim to provide a seamless, speculative explanation of reality in its entirety and its historical fulfillment. Perhaps this overload of speculative concepts of reality, for which coherence is more important than correspondence with empirical experience, has led to a kind of longing for the empirical, for experience, which perhaps can serve us as something like the slogan or leitmotif of European philosophy during the transition from the 19th to the 20th century.

Bergson's and Heidegger's philosophies of time as reactions to the intellectual situation of 20th-century Europe

The reactions to this intellectual mood are, in turn, as diverse as one can imagine—with Auguste Comte as the founding father of positivism, measurable, indeed abstract experience moves to the forefront of consideration; the philosophical-historical tendency of *Lebensphilosophie*, in turn, opposes systems philosophy and positivism equally. Both would fail to grasp the quality of experience, the former in its speculative metaphysical categories, the latter in the application of quantitative logics to the quality of the experiential context. Bergson's 'French' response to this problem primarily concerns so-called physiological psychology, which was in its infancy at the end of the 19th century and, especially in the person of Théodule Ribot, sought to reduce the psyche to physiological-material processes and began to dominate discussions about the psyche in this way.[2] Bergson attempted to rehabilitate subjective experience in its autonomy and temporality and defend it against this reductionism. He did this by declaring time, in *Time and Free Will*, to be the category of the subjective per se—as duration, it signifies the succession or transition of our experiential qualities. In the course of his work, this principle of temporality as duration undergoes a gradual process of 'ontologization.' Thus, in his middle work *Matter and Memory*, duration becomes a process of remembering that carries the past into the present. In *Creative Evolution* it becomes, as the so-called *élan vital*, the

[2] Especially in his main work *Diseases of Memory: An Essay in the Positive Psychology*, trans. by William Huntington Smith (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, 1885).

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processual principle of the cosmos and the energetic motive force behind every differentiation of form. Heidegger's 'German' reaction in *Being and Time* aims less at a rehabilitation of the subjective. It applies the question of time to a systematic investigation of existence and the way in which fundamental horizons of understanding of being are exposed in its interpretation of self and world—thus, the hermeneutic aspect of temporality is emphasized here in the context of a fundamentally ontological investigation of existence. The transcendental also resonates more strongly here, as Heidegger replaces Kant's project of spelling out the rational enabling conditions of knowledge with a spelling out of the existential enabling conditions of disclosing being which are rooted in what Heidegger calls *Stimmung* or *Befindlichkeit*.[3]

And herein perhaps lies the core of Heidegger's critique of Bergson, whom Heidegger read and absorbed intensively. Heidegger does not mention Bergson often, and when he does, it is usually only marginally, for example in a brief mention at the beginning of *Being and Time*, which, however, is quite significant in content:

> We have already intimated that Dasein has a pre-ontological Being as its ontically constitutive state. Dasein is in such a way as to be something which understands something like Being. Keeping this interconnection firmly in mind, we shall show that whenever Dasein tacitly understands and interprets something like Being, it does so with time as its standpoint. Time must be brought to light–and genuinely conceived–as the horizon for all understanding of Being and for any way of interpreting it. In order for us to discern this, time needs to be explicated primordially as the horizon for the understanding of Being, and in terms of temporality as the Being of Dasein, which understands Being. This task as a whole requires that the conception of time thus obtained shall be distinguished from the way in which it is ordinarily understood. This ordinary way of understanding it has become explicit in an interpretation precipitated in the traditional concept of time, which has persisted from Aristotle to Bergson and even later. Here we must make clear that this conception of time and, in

[3] See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1962), §29.

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> general, the ordinary way of understanding it, have sprung from temporality, and we must show how this has come about. We shall thereby restore to the ordinary conception the autonomy which is its rightful due, as against Bergson's thesis that the time one has in mind in this conception is space.[4]

One of the central insights of Bergson's early philosophy in *Time and Free Will* is that measurable time is not time, but merely space. This idea is roughly developed as follows: Every counting process already contains the notion of a simultaneity or contemporaneity of elements. This notion of contemporaneity abstracts from the essentially successive nature of time, i.e., when time is measured or counted, it is treated as a simultaneous constellation or juxtaposition of points in time, thereby dissolving its temporality. Here, time is opposed to spacetime, which is ultimately only space.[5] However, the dualism between time and space that becomes apparent here gradually dissolves as Bergson's thinking progresses. As we have seen, in *Matter and Memory*[6] it enters into physical actions and thus into space as the principle of the process of memory; in *Creative Evolution*[7] it becomes the principle of the cosmos. At this point, at the latest, Heidegger's criticism of the duality in Bergson's thinking can no longer be upheld. Here, space and time have long since merged into a universal process that permeates the cosmos.

Nevertheless, a fundamental difference between Bergson's and Heidegger's notions of time remains: For Heidegger spacetime has its roots in time itself. He encounters temporality as the existential per se, meaning: as the fundamental horizon of understanding within which Dasein interprets being and from which spacetime or what he calls vulgar time emanates.[8] In this existential interpretation of time lies the most central difference between Bergson's and Heidegger's philosophies of time: While both view time ontologically, for Bergson as *élan vital* in the sense of a universal process of reality that continually produces contrasts and qualitative differentiations, for Heidegger it is a horizon in which being is active and expresses itself in Dasein, i.e., the existence of the individual, in its various interpretations, references, and reactions. Thus, for Heidegger, Dasein is hermeneutic in an

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[4] *Ibid*., 39.

[5] See Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. by F. L. Pogson (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1910), 75–91.

[6] See Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. by Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 1991).

[7] See Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. by Arthur Mitchell (New York: Routledge, 2023).

[8] See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §81.

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ontological sense, or rather, a compulsion to interpret oneself and the world. Being is meaningful, significant and a context of interpretation. Interpretation here is integrated into the deep structure of being and thus not something that must first be 'performed' in dealing with being. In this sense, being is always already inscribed with an existential semantics, indeed what Heidegger calls *Vorerschlossenheit*, or the fact that Dasein has always already understood its being in terms of its possibilities of participation (which means *Seinkönnen*).[9] For Heidegger, all specific modes of expression of time can be derived from this ontological horizon of understanding: the historicity of Dasein and also world-time (including its radicalization as measurable time or vulgar time), which is determined by merely existing things. Future-orientation has also repeatedly been prominently cited (by Ernst Tugendhat, among others)[10] as a difference between Bergson's and Heidegger's thinking about time—Bergson, he says, is a past-oriented thinker of time who specifically emphasizes the influence of past experience on the qualitative coloring of the present and the perceptions of possibility interwoven with it; Heidegger, with his being-toward-death,[11] directs his gaze toward the project of the future. This criticism is not particularly valid, because it fails to take into account that, as written above, the ontological status of duration fluctuates in Bergson's thought: in *Time and Free Will*, it is merely subjective; in *Matter and Memory*, it actually extends the past into the present as a process of remembering; in *Creative Evolution*, however, it is future-oriented, creating novelty and unpredictability. Tugendhat, in a sense, merely compares *Matter and Memory* with Heidegger's thinking about time and is making an arbitrary cut in Bergson's work.

Linear vs. horizontal time

Another difference between the two thinkers lies in their relationship to linear time. What Bergson lacks in awareness is that, in one way or another, he adheres, at least implicitly, to a traditional view of the phenomenon of time, namely one in which time moves in one direction. Although he distances himself from the idea of measurable time as a sequence of points in time and replaces it with the idea of time as a succession of moments of experience, thus attempting to understand it as a pure process, his concept of time still remains linear or at least unidirectional in this respect, insofar as time remains a succession running into the future, with present experience at its forefront. But time, it seems to me, is not merely *one* movement, but

[9] See *Ibid*., §§62–64 and 68.

[10] See Ernst Tugendhat, "Heidegger and Bergson on Time," in *Das Argument*, 194 (1992), 578.

[11] See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §§46–53.

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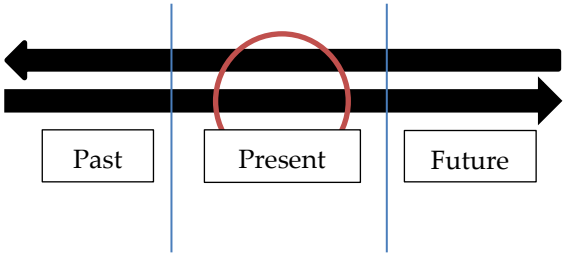
precisely consists of *two* opposed movements, confronted with each other. It is not linear, but rather the continuous and infinite convergence of two opposing temporal movements in the present: the one that, in form of opportunities, comes from the future into the present and becomes the past, and the one that, in form of memories, actualizes itself from the past into the present and, through physical action, already has one foot in the future. The present is thus the continuous clash of two opposing timelines, from the future and from the past, and the friction of both movements in the present is what creates the individual quality and coloring of the present through the continually new constellations that result from the tension of the opposing temporal movements.



This proposal is similar to Husserl's conception of time, or what might be called a horizontal structure of time. For Husserl, time is not a directional, linear succession of moments or events in the narrow sense of the word, but rather a constitutive structure of our consciousness. As such, it allows us to continuously experience objects and focus on them intentionally by integrating what has just been (*retention*) and anticipating what is about to come (*protention*) into the unity of living present experience.[12]

Heidegger also conceives of time as a horizontal structure in terms of the temporal ecstasies of *having-been*, *presence*, and *future*. The three ecstasies of time are not to be understood as distinct, successive stages, but as meaningful contexts in which Dasein interprets itself in relation to itself and the world.[13] As the etymology of the term *ecstasis* suggests, it denotes a standing out into a context rather than a linear sequence of events. Heidegger identifies the future as the privileged horizon of temporality, since Dasein is a being-toward-death that is always read in the horizon of its finitude and mortality. Günter Figal also points this out: "[E]kstatikós means to be able to separate oneself from something, to be able to go beyond oneself, and this can indeed be said of the forms of time—each of them is such only inasmuch as it

[12] See Edmund Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, trans. by John B. Brough (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991), 379–396.

[13] See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §§65–71.

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simultaneously goes beyond itself, 'overflowing' into the other forms of time."[14]

However, Husserl's and Heidegger's concepts of time face problems. Both Husserl and Heidegger attempt to sharply distinguish themselves from a linear model of time by locating time beyond the linear, in the horizontal, and thus rightly elevating it into the sphere of meaning and continuity, but also into that of indeterminable directionality. For Heidegger, the ecstasies of time are rather spaces of meaning for the interpretation of the self and the world, in which being reveals itself, and as such they constitute themselves as equiprimordial[15] and transcendent in a multilateral way. This does not allow you to describe the contradictory, tense character of time, especially the present, because for this we must remain within the conceptual framework of the linear, but not the unidirectional linear, rather the bidirectional linear, which makes time understandable as a collision of two movements (following on from the illustration above). In this way, the past and future do not remain passive moments, as they do in Husserl, but are given their own right to movement, coming from their own direction and thus becoming active, which allows for a more phenomenologically accurate description of the fragile character of the present, its torn nature.

The present can thus be understood as the tension between past experiences, which are actualized in the present as memories, either spontaneously or when they become useful, and influence my future actions, and an open, unexpected future of possibilities that lies ahead of me and befalls me. One movement comes from the past, the other from the future, and these two lines continue to run into each other infinitely. Husserl and Heidegger do not recognize this independent activity and movement of the past *and* the future, whereby the present ultimately remains the spearhead of time or exists in a privileged position and thus remains implicitly linear. Once you completely leave the linear horizon behind, the movement of time, its dynamics and processuality become difficult to explain.

Knowledge as an experience for its own sake in Bergson's and Heidegger's thought

So much for the problems with Bergson's and Heidegger's approaches. We can therefore conclude that Bergson remains attached to the idea of linear or at least unidirectional time, even though he processes time, and that Heidegger, with his horizontal conception of time, (supposedly)

[14] Günter Figal, *Heidegger zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius Verlag, 1992), 87. My translation.

[15] For a further investigation of this aspect, see Heath Massey, *The Origin of Time: Heidegger and Bergson* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2015).

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shifts time to a place beyond linearity, but finds it difficult to explain the intrinsic dynamics and activity of time, as well as its tension. So far, the differences between the two thinkers have become clear. However, there is a fundamental dimension of temporality that connects both thinkers. Both assume that the experience of time has a kind of ontological valence, that time is the place where being manifests itself under certain conditions. This happens when the experience of time becomes an end in itself. Not only thinking, but the experience of time itself is subject to practical constraints—as soon as it frees itself from these and becomes a non-instrumental experience of time, being reveals itself. I will suggest another attempt to bring Bergson's and Heidegger's concepts of time together on quite unfamiliar ground—namely, in their emphasis on the possibility of knowledge as an end in itself in experience, which represents a significant break with Western intellectual history: The root of end-in-itself thinking can be explicitly found in Aristotle. He already writes in the first book of his *Metaphysics* about metaphysics as the highest of all sciences:

> So if it was by fleeing ignorance that they philosophized, it is clear that by means of knowing they were in pursuit of knowing, and not for the sake of any kind of use. And the following testifies to the same thing: for it was when just about all the necessities were present, as well as things directed toward the greatest ease and recreation, that this kind of understanding began to be sought. It is clear then that we seek it for no other use at all, but just as that human being is free, we say, who has his being for his own sake and not for the sake of someone else, so also do we seek it as being the only one of the kinds of knowledge that is free, since it alone is for its own sake.[16]

In this, Bergson and Heidegger certainly agree with Aristotle: Being reveals itself in its own end, but they take a different, yet essentially different, branch in their thought process: While Aristotle locates knowledge of its own end in abstract thinking, at the highest level of knowledge, which stands at the greatest distance from empirical knowledge or the knowledge of the useful, Bergson and Heidegger repeatedly suggest that being alienates itself not only in the abstract, but already in the experiential context of being. Knowledge of its own end is not to be found here outside of experience and living, but precisely within the meaning-saturated context of living. This has

[16] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. by Joe Sachs (Santa Fe, NM: Green Lion Press, 1999), 982b20–28.

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a lot to do with Heidegger's, but also Bergson's, understanding of knowledge and, in particular, ontological knowledge. In his *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Bergson mentions that he wants to establish a metaphysics that does not rely on abstract symbols and grasps the absolute nature of an object in experience. This is achieved by resisting the tendency of the intellect to categorize objects, break them down, and ultimately dissociate them into relative points of view. Bergson also brings the artist into play here, who is a teacher in making the useless experiential when one develops an attitude of resistance to the urge to dissect, schematize, and analyze. Elsewhere, Bergson refers to these perceptions as pure perceptions.[17] The form of knowledge that Heidegger calls the *experience of thinking* fits in with this point of view. Thinking here does not mean theoretical contemplation, but rather the experience of being held in the truth of being, which occurs when I withdraw from the urge to technically define being in terms of what exists. Consequently, we are no longer dealing with traditional metaphysics, but with a new, performative type of insight into being.[18]

Conclusion: Unexpected common ground outside the traditional discussions about time

I can only hint at other evidence here: The central horizons of understanding of Dasein in *Being and Time* are moods that are always already situated in the state of being, and are characterized by their pre-reflexivity, their objectless-ness and their withdrawal from analysis.[19] They come closer to me as soon as I withdraw from specific reference to something. Perhaps it can also be described as a way to let the nothing nothing or in Heidegger's words to let the '*Nichts nichten*.'[20] For here, it is precisely the renunciation of specific references to something through technology, analysis and concentration (which Heidegger calls *Gelassenheit* or releasement)[21] that enables being to be revealed and experienced as itself. It enables being to be. It is not surprising that Heidegger later in his essay on art—in line with Bergson's characterization of the artist—would consider the artist predestined to experience being. He stands apart from technology and the

[17] See especially Henri Bergson, *L'intuition philosophique* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2011); and Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. by Mabelle L. Andison (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2007).

[18] See Martin Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, trans. by Fred D. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).

[19] See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §§29–31.

[20] See Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," in *Basic Writings*, trans. by David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 103.

[21] See Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. by John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 41–90.

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focus on the useful, exposing an enigmatic third, indeed aspects of being and connections in his creative processes: "Artist and work *are* each, in themselves and in their reciprocal relation, on account of a third thing, which is prior to both; on account, that is, of that from which both artist and artwork take their names, on account of art."[22] These issues call for further investigation.

It becomes clear that Heidegger and Bergson have many things in common, but perhaps not what one would expect. Both 'ontologize' time and grasp it in its genuine being as a process. For Heidegger, however, it is an horizon of understanding, and every reference to time that takes place within this horizon of understanding, including measurable time, is encountered as a derivative of it. For Bergson, however, spacetime is precisely the negation of time, because it imagines time within the framework of simultaneity and juxtaposition. But in their ontological claims, they share many things: knowledge as an end in itself is one of experience, not of pure abstraction—here, being is revealed.

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[22] Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Off the Beaten Track*, trans. by Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), I.

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Article

Ortega and Heidegger: The Question of Technology in Times of AI[1]

Esmeralda Balaguer García

Abstract: This paper offers a comparative reading of José Ortega y Gasset's and Martin Heidegger's philosophies of technology within the context of modernity's crisis and its impact on 20th-century thought. While Ortega views technology as a creative and existential extension of the human being, Heidegger problematizes it as a mode of revealing that, in modernity, reduces beings to mere utility. The study also connects their perspectives with Shoshana Zuboff's contemporary critique of surveillance capitalism, highlighting how today's digital technologies transform individuals into predictable data objects, marking a dangerous shift away from the humanistic ideals both philosophers sought to defend.

Keywords: Heidegger, Ortega, Zuboff, surveillance capitalism

The Context of Modernity

Reinhart Koselleck argues in *Futures Past. On the semantics of historical time* what characterizes Modernity is the experience of a new kind of time (*Neuzeit*).[2] The new time shortens the space of experience and expands the horizon of expectation through the introduction of the notion of the "future" as a time of "acceleration" driven by Progress.

The role of technology has become a topic of controversy in 20th-century thought as well as in our time. Certain philosophical schools, such as

[1] This article is part of the research project: "Proyecto interdisciplinar de innovación tecnológica aplicada a la investigación, difusión y transferencia del legado de José Ortega y Gasset (ORTEGA-CM)" (ref. PHS-2024/PH-HUM-57).

[2] Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 11.

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the Frankfurt School, approached technology in a negative light.[3] Modernity is realized in its own historical time, a time characterized by faith in the natural and progressive correlation between technology and morality. However, the end of World War II brought two failures to light: technology had become an instrument of social alienation, and technology without humanism was condemned to its own destruction. Technology and humanism had to work in harmony, since one was not a necessary consequence of the other.

The logic of acceleration and progress finds today its most radical expression in digital technologies and artificial intelligence. The hypothesis of this paper starts with two questions: Is the historical consistency of human beings rooted in technology? Does the human being interpret itself through technology? Numerous studies have addressed the nature of technology from a philosophical standpoint. However, one of the first philosophers to become consciously aware of the pressing need to articulate a "philosophy of technology" was the Spanish thinker José Ortega y Gasset,[4] who, in 1933, gave a course at the Summer University of Santander titled *Meditación de la técnica* (*Meditation on Technology*).

This paper seeks to explore Ortega's and Heidegger's perspectives on technology and to offer a comparative reading of their philosophies. Establishing a dialogue between these two thinkers may enrich the implications that technology holds for our lives in the 21st century, particularly at a time of full expansion of AI and lack of legitimacy in our current democracies.

Contemporary Technology and Surveillance Capitalism

Shoshana Zuboff, in *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, published in 2019, expands the problem by warning of a contemporary mutation in the use of technology. Zuboff explains in her book that today's digital economy creates a market where our personal experiences—everything we do when we use platforms like Google Maps, WhatsApp, and others—are sold as raw material capable of predicting future behavioral patterns. From the

[3] For a more in-depth analysis of the context of technology at the beginning of the 20th century based on the thinking of Hans Blumenberg and Ortega, see Esmeralda Balaguer García, "La técnica como forma de estar bien en el mundo: consideraciones en Ortega y Blumenberg," in *Isegoría. Revista de filosofía moral y política*, 68, (2023).

[4] In the introduction of *Meditación de la técnica*, the researcher Zamora and Diéguez agree with the idea Ortega was a pioneer in a philosophy of technology. They said that it is a philosophy of technology that is less disenchanted with the current world than that of Heidegger: Javier Zamora Bonilla and Antonio Diéguez, "Ortega, filósofo de la técnica", in José Ortega y Gasset, *Meditación de la técnica. Ensimismamiento y alteración*, (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2015),12–13.

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beginning, in the first chapter, Zuboff explains what she understands by "surveillance capitalism":

> Surveillance capitalism unilaterally claims human experience as free raw material for translation into behavioral data. Although some of these data are applied to product or service improvement, the rest are declared as a proprietary behavioral surplus, fed into advanced manufacturing processes known as "machine intelligence," and fabricated into prediction products that anticipate what you will do now, soon, and later. Finally, these prediction products are traded in a new kind of marketplace for behavioral predictions that I call behavioral futures markets. Surveillance capitalists have grown immensely wealthy from these trading operations, for many companies are eager to lay bets on our future behavior.[5]

In this new paradigm, artificial intelligence and algorithms are no longer tools in service of human well-being—as Ortega proposed with his idea of "supernature," nor devices of revealing being according to Heidegger's thought—but instead become mechanisms of extraction and control that turn the individual into a calculable and predictable object: "surveillance capitalism feeds on every aspect of every human's experience."[6]

According to Zuboff, big companies such as Google, the pioneer in surveillance capitalism, Facebook, Microsoft and Apple, use people's intimate knowledge in the digital market as a raw material for taking benefit. This new power in surveillance capitalism it is called by Zuboff as "instrumentarianism."

> Instrumentarian power knows and shapes human behavior toward others' ends. Instead of armaments and armies, it works its will through the automated medium of an increasingly ubiquitous computational architecture of "smart" networked devices, things, and spaces … Just as industrial capitalism was driven to the continuous intensification of the means of production, so surveillance capitalists and their market players are now locked into the continuous intensification of the means

[5] Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power* (New York, PublicAffairs, 2019), 14.

[6] *Ibid*.

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> of behavioral modification and the gathering might of instrumentarian power.[7]

Zuboff says that surveillance capitalism cannot be connected with a specific technology because it uses many, from platforms to algorithms. The application of algorithms in the predictive analysis of collected data serves to better understand and generalize in the creation of future products. Google's algorithms select and order search results and Facebook's select and order the content of its "News" section. Since the information is digital and its volume is enormous, it is difficult to discern its meaning. However, the "intelligent algorithm" can monitor parts of the body to gather more complex information, such as emotional information.

The most important question we should ask is: do algorithms have an ideology? Algorithms guide us toward consuming certain types of online content and targeted advertising. This data operates as an extra used to predict aspects such as personality, ideology, or sexual orientation, allowing the production of goods designed for individuals with specific character traits, beliefs, emotions, or orientations. Zuboff wonders: "What happens to my will to will myself into the first person when the surrounding market cosmos disguises itself as my mirror, shape-shifting according to what it has decided I feel or felt or will feel: ignoring, goading, chiding, cheering, or punishing me?"[8]

If digital systems commodify our inner life, the question of whether freedom of thought can survive in algorithmic environments is not merely ethical or political, but ontological. It concerns the very possibility of thinking as a human act in an age when thought itself has become a resource. For that reason, Zuboff argues that this extreme instrumental logic represents a dangerous drift from the Enlightenment project, where technology no longer saves effort or humanizes existence neither, but instead privatizes experience and reduces the human being to manipulable "behavior." To understand how such a technological configuration became possible, we must return to two decisive philosophical interpretations of technology: Ortega and Heidegger.

Comparative Perspective on Technology: Approximations in Ortega and Heidegger

Ortega and Heidegger understood the emergence of modern technology as a defining element of the human condition. Heidegger gave

[7] *Ibid*.

[8] *Ibid*., 185.

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technology ontological priority over science, but not historical priority; Ortega, on the other hand, thought about technology from an ontological and historical perspective. For that reason, he argued that the purpose of science was not knowledge, but rather to make technology possible.

In Darmstadt, Germany, a colloquium on architecture took place in 1951 to think about a new possible Europe configuration after World War II and also to reconstruct its values and *humanitas*. Ortega and Heidegger met there. They were invited to give a lecture on the same subject: technology. Heidegger gave the lecture *Bauen, Wohnen, Denken*, while Ortega, *Der Mythus des Menschen hinter der Technik*. Both philosophers wrote about this meeting: Ortega in some articles he published in 1952 in the newspaper *La Nación* of Buenos Aires and Heidegger in a text he wrote after the death of the Spanish philosopher in 1955 called "Begegnungen mit Ortega". The contact with the philosophy of Heidegger and also Dilthey's from 1930 stimulated him to insert his philosophy within a more academic tradition of thought.

In the course of 1933 Ortega conceived technology as a specific and constitutive feature of human beings, since it constantly opens up new possibilities for them to realize their life project. In the development of technology, human beings become more human, according to Ortega. Technology is rooted in each person's life. "Technology is the effort we make to save effort,"[9] Ortega states as a first definition in the 1933 course.

We save effort and life-time through technical creation, which allows us to have time to "enter within ourselves" and reconfigure future action. Ortega explains that this technical impulse in humans arises to "create" a new world. *Technik ist creatio ex aliquo*.[10] This aspiration to create another world arises because human beings live in an original world we agree to call "nature," but to which they do not belong. The natural environment is insufficient for human beings, according to Ortega, which is why they invent a "supernature" through technology—one capable of meeting their spiritual and intellectual needs. In this sense, Ortega understands technology as an existential necessity for adapting the environment to the individual and transforming the circumstance into a more habitable space for human development.

Ortega's main ideas about technology can be summarized in four fundamental characteristics:[11] (1) Technology is an orthopedic device. In "*Der*

[9] José Ortega y Gasset, "Meditación de la técnica", in *Obras Completas*, vol. V, (Madrid: Taurus/Fundación Ortega y Gasset, 2004-2010), 566.

[10] José Ortega y Gasset, "El mito del hombre allende la técnica", in *Obras Completas*, vol. VI, (Madrid: Taurus/Fundación Ortega y Gasset, 2004-2010), 812.

[11] It is possible to find a more detailed discussion of these ideas in Esmeralda Balaguer García, *Los límites de decir: Razón histórica y lenguaje en el último Ortega*, (Madrid: Tecnos, 2023), 87–94.

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Mythus des Menschen hinter der Technik," Ortega says that, from a natural point of view, human beings are sick animals that survive by chance, since nature is insufficient for them. Human beings want not just to be in the world but to be well. For this reason, they create a supernature with the help of technology. Technology is constituted as the reform that man imposes on nature to satisfy his spiritual needs. (2) However, since human beings are historical beings according to Ortega, technology is the result of man's *poietic* and creative impulse and consequently it is also a historical phenomenon. Human beings would not have survived without that orthopedic device that is technology (*Homo sapiens* as *Homo faber* in its earliest form). (3) He devotes effort to create and then execute a plan of action that allows him to ensure the satisfaction of basic and superfluous needs. Furthermore, technology allows him to achieve that satisfaction with minimal effort in the future and offers him new possibilities. Let us think, for example, not only of the need to make fire, but also of the need to create a device with which we can always make fire without having to return to the primitive stage, such as the manufacture of a lighter. Technification is shown to be the process by which human beings relieve themselves of tasks that now require their effort only once. The need to save effort is closely linked to man's fantastic ability to project himself into the future. Technical invention arises from the imaginative capacity that human beings have and find in moments of self-absorption. This is the "when" of technology. Human beings seek moments of inner reflection to form possible representations of the world and forge ideas about reality. These allow them to plan their future actions in the circumstances and continue building their supernatural nature. (4) Ortega says that if we are able to save time, we will have time to invent a life. However, the invention of life, its ideation, is pre-technical. Human beings invent it because, unlike animals that live in a state of constant agitation, they are capable of self-absorption as well as forming representations of the world around them and devising a different one. For Ortega, moments of self-absorption allow humans to imagine possible future life projects for the realization of their authentic selves.[12] This time saved by technology facilitates the invention of his own life. Technology is creation. That creation not only transforms the outside world, but also necessarily transforms human beings themselves through self-construction. Ultimately, the primary mission of technology is to give humans the freedom to be themselves, to invent and narrate their lives, according to Ortega.

According to this, Ortega would understand AI as the historical supernature of our time. For him, AI would be a creative impulse to imagine

[12] José Ortega y Gasset, "El mito del hombre allende la técnica", in *Obras Completas*, vol. VI, (Madrid: Taurus/Fundación Ortega y Gasset, 2004-2010), 815.

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ourselves at the height of our time. Now, it is worth asking whether we are faced with a technology that jeopardizes what Ortega considers its vital aspect, namely: does AI free up time for the invention of life?

Heidegger also engaged deeply with modern questions about technology in his major work *Die Frage nach der Technik* (1953). Although this paper draws primarily on Heidegger's later reflections on technology, it is important to acknowledge the continuity between his early and later thoughts. Heidegger's analysis of technology does not constitute a rupture with the fundamental ontology of *Being and Time*, but rather a deepening of its central insights. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger shows that the primary way in which *Dasein* encounters beings is not through detached theoretical contemplation but through practical involvement. Beings initially and for the most part appear as *Zuhandenes*—ready-at-hand—within a meaningful context of use. The later critique of modern technology must be understood as continuous with Heidegger's earlier phenomenology of everyday worldhood.

For Heidegger, technology is not only about means, instruments, or machines: the instrumental view is not the "true" one. Heidegger does not reject use or utility as such. On the contrary, in *Being and Time* he shows that Dasein's primary way of encountering beings is through practical involvement: beings appear as *ready-at-hand* (*zuhanden*) within a meaningful context of purposes. Human existence is essentially anticipatory and project-oriented, and therefore always involves making use of things. Based on the analysis of the Greek concept of *poiesis*, Heidegger considers that technology is a way of unveiling or revealing the real that was hidden.[13] For Heidegger, technology is the mechanism that enables the discovery of Dasein. In this sense, technology is, on the one hand, an art of unveiling or revealing, and on the other, an art of production and a form of knowledge that recognizes the skill of bringing a being into presence:

> Bringing-forth brings hither out of concealment forth into unconcealment. Bringing-forth comes to pass only insofar as something concealed comes into un concealment. This coming rests and moves freely within what we call revealing [*das Entbergen*]. The Greeks have the word *aletheia* for revealing. The Romans translate this with *veritas*. We say "truth" and usually understand it as the correctness of an idea. [14]

[13] Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1977), 11–12.

[14] *Ibid*., 13.

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The unveiling of modern technology consists of provoking nature so that everything in it appears ready for exploitation. In other words, for Heidegger, technology makes us see reality as a set of resources to be used at our convenience, as consumer goods.

What is interesting about Heidegger, in my opinion, is that he does not invite us to understand technology as an ontological problem, as a way of approaching the world and revealing the real that it has reserves. For Heidegger, the danger of technology was not in the technological products themselves, but in their very essence, in the way they unveil reality. For that, in Heidegger, technology represents a lower form of truth when compared with *Phrónesis* or *Sophia*. Although technology is a mode of revealing truth, Heidegger names the essence of modern technology *enframing* (*Ge-stell*), a mode of revealing in which beings appear as *standing-reserve* (*Bestand*) and believes that modern technology has reduced beings to terms of utility or market value. Modern technology leads us to establish a relationship of disposition and domination with the world around us and with nature in particular. In the age of artificial intelligence, this logic is intensified. Algorithmic systems transform human behavior into data, rendering individuals predictable and administrable.

Heidegger points out that the real danger of modern technology is that the technological understanding of Being becomes exclusive. Technology only reveals Being to us in a limited and exclusive way, that is, preventing us from seeing that the essence of technology is a specific way of unveiling reality as opposed to other possible, the non-provocative ways. Heidegger was able to warn that the great danger lay in understanding everything as a technical problem that pulled human beings away from the earth and uprooted him.

Despite this more negative or pessimistic conception of technology, Heidegger also points to the possibility of salvation in the essence of technology: we cannot limit ourselves to see technology in its instrumental aspect but must discover what it is that unfolds its essence in technology. The essence of technology belongs to the constellation of truth. If we understand this, we would have a free relationship with technology in which we use it without being completely dependent on it. Art, for example, could show us that the technical way of seeing reality is neither the only one possible, nor the most original or authentic. That way we could prevent the provocative mode of unveiling from dominating. In fact, at the core of his reflections, Heidegger considered World Wars to be a consequence of the state of abandonment of Being.

In 1952, a year after the Darmstadt conference, Ortega wrote a few pages based on that colloquium. Ortega claimed that in their respective

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lectures, both had said exactly the opposite:[15] Heidegger asserts that "to build" (*bauen*) is "to dwell" (*wohnen*); one builds in order to dwell as a means to an end, but this end—dwelling—precedes building. Because man already dwells he builds so that his dwelling may become a contemplation of universe, an opening up to it. All this work dedicated to the Universe is, ultimately, thinking, meditating, *dichten*. Hence the title of the lecture *Bauen, Wohnen, Denken*.

Ortega, on the other hand, explained that each animal species finds space to inhabit on Earth, what biologists call a habitat. The fact that humans live anywhere means that they lack a proper habitat, a space where they can simply live. Indeed, the Earth is originally uninhabitable for humans. That is why they build, "supernature". Since they can build anywhere on the planet—and in each place with a different type of construction—they are capable of inhabiting everywhere. Human beings are not attached to any particular space and are, strictly speaking, heterogeneous to all spaces. Only technology, only building—*bauen*—assimilates space to man and humanizes it.

It is worth pointing out the most notable difference between them. Heidegger emphasizes human beings' familiarity with the world and argues that modern technology separates their access to Being, from a deeper way of revealing reality. However, Ortega insists that circumstances are strange and hostile to us, we are thrown into it, and therefore technology opens up unlimited possibilities for us to rework our circumstances and have time to devote ourselves to the task of our self-creation. For the Spanish philosopher, technology humanizes us. For Heidegger, ultimately, Modernity would finally reveal itself under the mask of technological nihilism. Ortega's analysis is fundamentally anthropological and sociological, which is why technology is a constitutive part of human beings, but Heidegger avoids this approach. It is important to clarify this: Heidegger does not reject technology, nor does he propose eliminating it from human life; he simply wants human beings to have a free relationship with the essence of technology. For example, before asking ourselves what to do, we should ask ourselves how we should think, since thinking is already a genuine form of doing.

Considering the contemporary challenges posed by artificial intelligence and surveillance capitalism, this paper has shown how Ortega y Gasset's historical and vital understanding of technology and Heidegger's ontological critique of enframing offer complementary insights into the technological condition of our time. While Ortega highlights technology's

[15] José Ortega y Gasset, "En torno al 'Coloquio de Darmstadt', 1951," in *Obras Completas*, vol. VI, (Madrid: Taurus/Fundación Ortega y Gasset, 2004-2010), 805.

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role in shaping human life projects, Heidegger reveals the danger of reducing beings and, ultimately, ourselves to calculable standing-reserve.

From Zuboff's perspective, AI becomes the epitome of a kind of technology which, far from pointing to the Humanitas that both philosophers wanted to recover after the catastrophe of war, now points toward a political economy of power based on the capture of human behavior. In this sense, the digital economy embodies the culmination of instrumental reason that both philosophers sought to critique. Technology, instead of opening a horizon for being, becomes an opaque system of governance. Zuboff's work compels us to rethink the ethical and ontological dimensions of technology today: how can we reclaim a space for freedom, for genuine thought, for creating our life and for revealing reality within a technological order that constantly anticipates the shapes of our behavior?

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Article

Reconstructing Phenomenal Realism in Heidegger's Ontology: Beyond the Speculative Turn

Hyun Jung Park

Abstract: This paper challenges speculative realism's attempt to overcome correlationism by returning to Heidegger's ontology of the phenomenon. While speculative realism rejects representationalism, it nonetheless remains bound to the metaphysical opposition between presence and absence, treating what is real as that which lies beyond all access. Against this view, I argue that Heidegger articulates a form of phenomenal realism in which reality is not opposed to appearance; rather, it is encountered through phenomenality itself. Reality can appear insofar as Being is held open within the finite and historical site of thought—that is, within Dasein's way of being. Here, Being withdraws from fixation as determinate truth and remains as untruth, or as ceaseless becoming. Within this co-belonging of thought and Being, beings come to presence as beings, and phenomenality takes place as real. By clarifying this structure, the paper develops a non-metaphysical realism that preserves the reality of beings without abandoning the correlation, thus reopening the question of Being beyond the anti-correlationist horizon.

Keywords: Heidegger, phenomenon, speculative realism, thinking

Traditional philosophy has long constructed an understanding of Being that reduces it to an identical, immutable One—the most constant presence. Heidegger refers to this understanding of Being as the "metaphysics of presence."[1] Within this framework, beings are no longer encountered in their own right but are interpreted through this conception of Being, as if their reality could be exhausted by reference to a universal essence.

[1] See Martin Heidegger, *Wegmarken, GA* 9 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976), 218 and Timothy Morton, *Being Ecological* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2018), 104.

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This metaphysical edifice has reached its limit, turning its violence back upon the human itself. Contemporary philosophy increasingly seeks to move beyond anthropocentrism,[2] questioning the privilege accorded to human cognition in determining what counts as real. Under the heading of speculative realism, recent thought has attempted to access the reality of beings apart from human cognition, promising a realism no longer confined within the limits of correlation.

However, this attempt often proceeds by removing thought altogether, in the name of securing realism. Yet such a gesture risks blocking the very possibility of responding to the human crisis through concrete forms of action. More fundamentally, eliminating thought may not be the proper way to rescue the understanding of Being from the ontology of presence. If presence is overcome only by excluding thought, reality is merely displaced into absence, thereby remaining within the same metaphysical opposition that defines the metaphysics of presence, rather than being genuinely rethought.

It is in light of this problem that I turn to Heidegger and reinterpret Being not in terms of presence or absence but as an event that gives itself in and through the phenomenon. By doing this, this paper aims to secure both the reality of beings and the distinctiveness of human agency without reverting to anthropocentrism.

The Limits of Speculative Realism

Contemporary philosophy has increasingly sought to overcome the anthropocentric legacy of modern metaphysics through the rejection of correlationism—the claim that reality can only be accessed as a correlate of human thought. Speculative realism emerges from this ambition, aiming to think reality as existing independently of human representation. Yet while speculative realism is unified by this anti-correlationist impulse, it remains internally divided over the ontological standing of that reality.

Within speculative realism, two influential orientations stand in tension. On the one hand, New Materialism conceives reality as constituted by relational flows, treating beings as temporary condensations within pre-individual relations. Relations are ontologically primary, and agency is attributed to immanent material dynamics rather than to discrete entities. On

[2] Levi Bryant similarly criticizes Heidegger by situating him within a strong correlationist lineage. In *The Democracy of Objects*, Bryant characterizes the Kant–Heidegger–Lacan sequence as a "correlationist tradition" and argues that correlationism remains fundamentally anthropocentric insofar as being is thought only in relation to thought, thereby rendering all ontological claims implicitly claims about being-for-humans. See Levi R. Bryant, *The Democracy of Objects* (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2011), 38.

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the other hand, Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO) insists on the irreducibility of individual beings, maintaining that objects possess an intrinsic propriety that cannot be exhausted by their relations, effects, or uses.

Graham Harman articulates this opposition through his critique of two dominant modes of reduction. "Undermining" reduces beings to a more fundamental substratum, while "overmining" reduces them to their effects, functions, or relations. Harman argues that New Materialism performs both reductions simultaneously—a strategy he terms "duomining"—thereby collapsing beings into relationism.[3] From this perspective, if beings are nothing but momentary configurations within relational flux, change can only take the form of recombination. Genuine novelty, by contrast, requires rupture—change originating from within a being itself.[4]

To secure this possibility, Harman introduces the thesis of withdrawal. Objects enter into relations through their qualities, yet their real being is never fully present in any encounter. This withdrawal is ontological rather than merely epistemic: objects retain a surplus of reality beyond whatever they affect or produce.[5] Relations, accordingly, cannot be taken as ontologically primitive but require explanation.

At this point, OOO presents itself as a decisive alternative to New Materialism. Whereas New Materialism absolutizes relations, OOO subordinates relations to objects that withdraw from them. Yet it is precisely here that serious difficulties emerge. Despite Harman's anti-anthropocentric intentions, relations are implicitly modeled on modes of access, such that what an object does not present within a relation is treated as withdrawn in itself.

Shaviro criticizes Harman's notion of withdrawal for failing to sustain absolute non-relation, arguing that it ultimately reconfigures withdrawal as a problem of access and affect rather than ontological independence. In Harman's example of fire burning cotton, the emphasis falls on a selective engagement with certain qualities. Shaviro counters that in such interactions, multiple determinations are in fact altered or destroyed regardless of access or thematization. What is presented as ontological interaction thus collapses into a logic of selective encounter.[6]

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[3] Graham Harman, *The Quadruple Object* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2011), 63.

[4] Graham Harman, *Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects* (Chicago: Open Court, 2002), 166–171.

[5] See Graham Harman, *Immaterialism: Objects and Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016), 10. On the claim that change or motion requires a non-relational form of actuality and that objects exceed their effects, see Graham Harman, *Prince of Networks: Bruno Latour and Metaphysics* (Melbourne: re.press, 2009), 278.

[6] Steven Shaviro, "Consequences of Panpsychism," in *The Nonhuman Turn*, ed. by Richard Grusin (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 19–44.

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Robert Booth radicalizes this critique by targeting the conceptual structure of withdrawal itself. He argues that both relation and non-relation are defined with reference to perception: reality either appears partially or withholds itself entirely. As a result, non-relation is not articulated as a positive ontological mode, but only as the inverse of access.[7]

Magdalena Hoły-Łuczaj pushes the problem further by questioning the ontological cost of withdrawal. When withdrawal is generalized to all beings equally, material specificity is eroded: fragile, concrete entities are treated in the same terms as ideal or mathematical objects. The attempt to secure object autonomy thus risks an abstraction that undermines the very realism OOO seeks to defend.[8]

Taken together, these critiques reveal a paradox at the heart of speculative realism. In rejecting the metaphysics of presence, OOO relocates reality into what never appears, aligning reality with absence, while New Materialism situates reality in pre-present potentiality. In both cases, the opposition between presence and absence remains intact.

The failure of speculative realism, then, lies not in its anti-anthropocentric ambition, but in its inability to think individuality and relationality together. What is required is an ontology in which beings are real in and through their appearing, without being reduced to representation. The following section argues that such a framework can be found in Heidegger's concept of the phenomenon, understood not as mere appearance but as an event in which reality and thought are co-appropriated. This orientation may be provisionally named phenomenal realism.

Phenomenon and the Possibility of Realism beyond Presence and Absence

Speculative realism seeks to overcome the metaphysics of presence by excluding correlation and displacing reality beyond manifestation. Yet despite their opposed strategies, both new materialism and object-oriented ontology remain governed by the same oppositional schema: what is present is aligned with subjectivity and appearance, while what is real is secured only by being displaced elsewhere—either into relational flux or into a withdrawn interior. The difficulty, therefore, lies not in the critique of presence as such,

[7] Robert Booth, "Abject Withdrawal? On the Prospect of a Non-anthropocentric Object-Oriented Ontology," in *Angelaki*, 26:5 (2021), 20–37.

[8] Magdalena Hoły-Łuczaj, "Non-anthropocentric Philosophy Between Object-Oriented and Thing-Oriented Ontology, or on Some Repetition in the History of Philosophy," in *Studia z Historii Filozofii*, 9:3 (2018), 169–189. Hoły-Łuczaj situates the debate between object-oriented ontology and new materialism within a broader non-anthropocentric tradition, drawing on Twardowski and Kotarbiński, and argues that OOO's concept of the object risks excessive abstraction at the expense of material specificity.

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but in the persistence of the presence–absence dichotomy that continues to structure these ontological strategies.

From the perspective of speculative realism, phenomenology appears incapable of securing reality without reintroducing dependence on human access. However refined its analyses may be, phenomenology is taken to remain bound to the correlation between the human and the world, and thus to reduce reality to what is accessible within that relation. On this view, a genuine realism would require severing the bond between manifestation and reality, thereby allowing objects to exist in their own right, independently of any mode of access.[9]

Heidegger's concept of the phenomenon offers a different point of departure. The phenomenon does not name what is merely given to a subject, but what shows itself from itself. Appearance, in this sense, does not signify epistemic accessibility but an ontological occurrence. Heidegger explicitly states in *Being and Time* that although his analysis begins from Husserl's notion of intentionality, it radicalizes it by transforming intentionality into an ontological problem rather than an epistemological one.[10] Intentionality no longer designates an inner act of consciousness directed toward an object, but a standing within the openness in which beings come to show themselves. Showing and receiving are two inseparable moments of a single event of disclosure.

Because of this transformation, the phenomenon cannot be understood as a mere content of consciousness. Even when a being is apprehended in perception, it does not collapse into the manner in which it appears. Rather, it manifests itself as something that exceeds the meanings or functions through which it is grasped. Heidegger makes this point explicit in *What Is a Thing?* when he insists that "the thing does not merely appear, but shows itself," and that this showing-itself is precisely the manner in which the real is real.[11] What appears, therefore, is not a subjective projection, but the self-manifestation of a being that remains irreducible to its appearing.

From the standpoint of speculative realism, however, such an appeal to the phenomenon may appear suspect, insofar as correlation is understood

[9] Graham Harman understands much of modern philosophy as a "philosophy of access," insofar as reality is approached primarily through relations of appearance, manifestation, or correlation. Within this framework, phenomenology is treated as one variant of correlationist thought rather than as a genuine alternative to it. Harman's correlationist critique of phenomenology is developed most explicitly through his engagement with Tom Sparrow. See Graham Harman, *Skirmishes: With Friends, Enemies, and Neutrals* (Santa Barbara, CA: punctum books, 2020), 25ff.

[10] Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit, GA* 2 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977), 38.

[11] Martin Heidegger, *Was ist ein Ding?*, *GA* 8 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1984), 103.

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as an inescapable reduction of reality to human access, rendering any relation between being and thought a residual form of anthropocentrism. Heidegger's analysis, by contrast, operates with a fundamentally different understanding of correlation. Correlation does not name a relation between a subject and an object, but the belonging-together of Being and understanding within the event of disclosure.[12] Understanding (*Verstehen*) belongs to the disclosedness (*Erschlossenheit*) of Being itself and is therefore ontological rather than epistemological.[13]

To deny correlation in this sense would not liberate reality from human involvement but would render it mute. A reality entirely divorced from any mode of understanding might be posited in abstraction, but it could no longer be articulated as reality at all. What is lost in the rejection of correlation is not merely representation, but the very possibility of a world in which beings can appear as beings. Heidegger's position avoids this impasse by refusing to identify understanding with conceptual mastery.

The contrast with Kant clarifies what is at stake. By locating affection in the thing in itself, Kant situates reality beyond the phenomenon and thereby severs appearance from the real. Even if Kant avoids a strong form of correlationism, the consequence remains that concrete experience can never amount to an encounter with reality itself. Heidegger rejects this framework. Reality is not concealed behind appearance but encountered within it. Appearance is not the mode in which a being comes to full presence or complete availability. This non-fulfillment does not indicate a lack or deficiency, since no transcendental entity is presupposed as having to be completed through appearing. What must now be asked is what the truth of Being as it appears in this way is.

Being as the Giving of Reality in Withdrawal

If the phenomenon cannot be equated with full presence, this limitation cannot be explained in terms of epistemic access or cognitive finitude alone. Rather, it must be grounded in the structure of Being itself.[14] Heidegger articulates this structure through his rethinking of truth.

For Heidegger, truth is not correspondence between thought and object, but the original event in which beings come into their own. In this sense, truth is not simply revealing, but *aletheia*: an event in which revealing

[12] I assume that the question of how beings come to presence within phenomenality remains operative throughout Heidegger's work, even as its articulation undergoes significant transformation.

[13] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, §§31–33.

[14] I use "Being" to render both "Sein" and "Seyn." In citations of *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis*), "Being" refers to "Seyn" understood eventally (*Ereignis*).

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always takes place together with concealing. As Heidegger emphasizes, the truth of Being is at the same time untruth. This does not mean that truth fails, but that Being gives itself only finitely, in and through this simultaneous revealing and concealing.[15]

This finitude becomes explicit in Heidegger's account of the thing as the fourfold (*Geviert*). Sky opens the dimension of advent, while earth shelters and resists; divinities signify inexhaustibility, while mortals delimit finitude. In their gathering, these dimensions are brought to presentification (*Gegenwärtigen*). Presentification is not the full presence of Being, but the finite staging of its coming-forth. What appears does so only within this finite configuration.

Each time Dasein appropriates itself, it discloses beings within a determinate horizon. Such disclosed-ness is always particular and finite.[16] It is precisely through this finitude that Being can come to presence as beings. Yet because Being is different from beings, it cannot be reduced to or exhausted by the beings that are thus presented. Being grants itself only in and through such finite disclosure. In this sense, Being does not stand behind beings as an identical ground, but comes to presence only in a manner that resists complete identification.[17]

Because presentification does not exhaust Being, it cannot remain a singular occurrence. Rather, the finitude of disclosure makes possible the continual renewal of manifestation, through which Being gives itself anew, each time only as a finite event.[18] In this repetition, thinking bears the span of ontological difference (*Austrag des Seinsunterschieds*),[19] through which Being belongs together with time.[20] Finite thinking, far from obstructing this generative movement of Being, safeguards it by letting Being come to presence anew each time.

From this perspective, withdrawal does not exclude thought but demands it. Being is only insofar as it manifests itself as beings, and its withdrawal names not non-manifestation but manifestation in a finite mode.[21] Harman's claim that beings withdraw from one another, thereby

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[15] On the difference between Harman's notion of withdrawal and Heidegger's account of concealment, see Peter Gratton, *Speculative Realism: Problems and Prospects* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014).

[16] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 133.

[17] Martin Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis***)**, *GA* 65 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989), 327–330.

[18] *Ibid*., 410–412.

[19] Martin Heidegger, *Das Ereignis*, *GA* 71 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2009), 255.

[20] Martin Heidegger, *Zur Sache des Denkens*, *GA* 14 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2007), 20–22.

[21] Martin Heidegger, *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, *GA* 12 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1985), 310.

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relegating manifestation to the non-real, fails to distinguish between the withdrawal of Being from its finite disclosure and the withdrawal of beings from cognitive access. Heidegger's ontology, by contrast, affirms that reality gives itself only in and through finite manifestation. Thought, far from compromising realism, belongs to the very way in which Being grants itself—and thus calls for further clarification.

Thinking as the Historical Site of Truth

Any realism that reflects on the finite presencing of Being must account for thought. Yet this does not mean that any form of thinking is thereby capable of encountering reality as reality. If Being gives itself only in finite manifestation, then the question is not whether thought should be excluded, but what role thought plays within such finitude, and under what conditions it can receive what gives itself as real. Since beings can be experienced as themselves only insofar as thought remains finite in accord with the finitude of Being,[22] thought must endure its finitude as the site through which Being unfolds eventually, temporally, and historically.

In receiving Being's grant—which gives reality precisely through withdrawal—thought is bound to the destiny of Being. To appropriate beings is not merely to register what is present, but to unfold the joint co-presence of beings within an inherited, communal, and historical understanding of Being. Such an understanding carries a weight that cannot be arbitrarily dismissed. Yet to remember the mystery of Being is also to endure its finitude: for Being to arrive anew, what has already been given must be surpassed-and even a long history of oblivion can pass away. Thought thus receives its inheritance only by exceeding it.

Heidegger gives concrete form to this mode of thought through poetic saying and mortal dwelling.[23] Poetic saying responds to the call of Being without reducing beings to fixed meanings. It sets boundaries while allowing new possibilities to emerge.[24] Dwelling names the enactment of

[22] Martin Heidegger, *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik im Ausgang von Leibniz*, *GA* 26 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1978), 199.

[23] Heidegger continues, even in his later work, to understand the *da* of Dasein as the open site in which beings show themselves as a whole. The Event grants the *da* as the open for the self-showing of beings as a whole. In this sense, his account converges with what he calls the originary gathering (*Versammlung*) of beings as a whole: in *Logos* (*GA* 7), the logos is thought as the primordial gathering that first lets beings as a whole come to presence, while in *Heraklit* (*GA* 55) this gathering is articulated in terms of the *panta* as the *Seiende im Ganzen*. See Martin Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, *GA* 7 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000), 223, 226 and Martin Heidegger, *Heraklit*, *GA* 55 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1979), 264, 332.

[24] Heidegger, *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, 304, 312.

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world-formation: to let the world arrive as world,[25] woven from the interrelation of things. Such letting is possible only because Dasein is mortal.[26]

Mortality here does not signify a biological end but the capacity to bear finitude as one's own. To be mortal is to take up death as a constant possibility and thereby to bear the Da—not as an empty channel, but as a finite self enduring its own exposure.[27] This endurance is not mechanical persistence. If it were, destiny would collapse into an unchangeable fate, foreign to the essence of Being itself. Rather, in enduring its finitude, thought actively opens a path for the unfolding of Being.

Against object-oriented ontology, which removes thought and thereby erases the site of transformation, Heidegger shows that thought is neither anthropocentric mastery nor passive submission. Finite thought participates in the genesis of Being by sustaining the co-belonging of truth and time. In doing so, it assumes responsibility—not for dominating beings, but for keeping open the historical site in which Being can still arrive otherwise.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper has been to articulate the legitimacy of phenomenal realism. Against the widespread assumption that, because thought intervenes in the reception of beings, reality must lie outside appearance, I have argued that rejecting representationalism or anthropocentrism does not entail rejecting thought as such. To preserve the power to transform history, ontology must not exclude thought but acknowledge the factuality that we think, and that beings appear in thought.

Such acknowledgment begins in remembering the origination of beings—Being that gives itself and withdraws. Appropriation, as the sole way in which Being exists, unfolds not in infinity but within finitude, as ongoing generation. To see this is to accept a deeper humility, in which thought responds not by mastery but by attentiveness to the coming of Being.

This view does not place the human at a privileged center from the outset. The existential mode named Dasein—openness to Being through finitude—does not exhaust the ways in which beings encounter one another. Yet such decentering must not lead to the erasure of human distinctiveness. For while agency unfolds in varying modes and degrees, the human way of existing—world-forming, horizon-projecting, and marked by anxiety, hesitation, and regret—bears a distinctive responsibility for beings as a whole.

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[25] Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, 180.

[26] *Ibid*., 145.

[27] Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*, 211.

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In this way, thinking is no longer tasked with securing reality by excluding itself but is instead situated within the phenomenon as a responsive engagement with what shows itself while withdrawing. This responsibility of thought lies above all in questioning—pressing beyond established understandings—and in sustaining such questioning, the path of thinking beyond the metaphysics of presence remains open

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