



RE-INTRODUCING HEIDEGGER

FR. RANHILIO CALLANGAN AQUINO

CAGAYAN STATE UNIVERSITY

SAN BEDA UNIVERSITY

RESEARCH FELLOW, CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF LOUVAIN (BELGIUM, WINTER 1993)

FELLOW, COMMONWEALTH JUDICIAL EDUCATION INSTITUTION (HALIFAX)

rannie_aquino@yahoo.com

Heidegger is so well known that another introduction might seem to be superfluous. The author has dared it nonetheless because approaching Heidegger from his work on language offers us a different perspective – and, what the writer believes, is a more nuanced appreciation of this landmark in contemporary philosophy.

The kebre has been exaggerated, to the author's mind, and while the author does acknowledge that there is room for distinguishing between an earlier and a later Heidegger, he has been more keen about the continuity in Heidegger's thought.

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It is the book *Being and Time* with which Heidegger is most associated. I prefer however to introduce his thought through a volume his editors entitle *On the Way to Language* which is actually four things: a dialogue on language, followed by three essays on the nature of language, the way to language and words, and finally a discussion on Georg Trakl's poetic work.

ON THE WAY TO LANGUAGE

From different sciences and disciplines – linguistics, sociology, etc. – we have facts about language. It is not this to which Heidegger wishes to add but to the experience of language. But is it not strange to search for an experience of language considering that all speech and writing seem to be experiences of language? When one speaks language does not bring itself to language. Language does not express its essence. It is used, or better put to use and so it holds back, as it were, the giving of its essence. The very use of language is already its engagement. It is however when there is something we would like to say but cannot quite find the word for it that we experience language. This is the experience of the poet.

Recalling a poem by Stefan George, Heidegger ruminates on its last line: “Where word breaks off no thing may be.” Is it then that no thing *is* where the word is lacking, so that it is word that confers being? While it does seem that things exist independently of their names (or whether named or not) they *are* to us and the *way they are* in the name of their name. Something *is* only when we have the appropriate word – even if that appropriate word be merely “that” or “something” or “thing”. There does seem to be a futility and an emptiness about affirming “thing” of that which we do not even name “thing”! Heidegger then reiterates a basic thesis: *The being*

of anything that is resides in the word. Language is the house of Being.

The word – particularly the poetic word – makes a thing appear as it is and lets it be present. What would Mary be without “Mary”? What would marvelous be without “marvelous”? The word then sustains a thing in being. To get into the groove of Heidegger's reflections one will have to distance oneself from that kind of ‘objectivism’ that imagines a world independent of consciousness and of word: the world of the Kantian *ding-an-sich* which Kant was wise enough to insist nothing could be spoken about. One understands then not be looking for that which is hidden “behind” the word, nor “wrapped by” the word, but for that which is delivered by the word. Being is in the word. It makes no sense to look for the world behind the poetry; the poetry delivers the world.

The poetic calling is then a call to the word, and by through the varied affects of the poetic vocation enters into the realm of the relation of *word to thing*, not in the sense that the *word* is on the other side of *thing* (and therefore not in the sense that the word “encodes” the thing or represents it) but in the sense that the word is the relation that retains the thing in itself. In a way it is the thing. So then the experience of the word is the experience of the thing.

Is it that one is first enthralled by experience, captivated by the romance, and then bring them to words – or look for the right words for them? For a long time the legend was that the poet had the dreams, and all he had to do was craft the words with which to clasp, grasp those dreams and visions. We are then returned to the original problem of the experience of language. Heidegger announces: True experience with language can only be thinking experience, all the more so because the lofty poetry of all great





poetic work always vibrates within the realm of thinking. So why then the attention to poetry and to poems? Heidegger gives a characteristic response: Because thinking takes place in the neighborhood of poetry. Heidegger deliberately takes a stand against the tradition that found thought in ratiocination, in treatises and that has been suspicious about finding thought in poetry. “Thinking cuts furrows into the soil of Being”.

But how can we even ask about the nature of language – aware as we are that what “nature” and “language” are still befuddle us? The response Heidegger gives is in a sense expected, but truly Heideggerian: “Inquiry and investigation here and everywhere require the prior grant of whatever it is they approach and pursue with their queries. Every positing of every question takes place within the very grant of what is put in question.” Nature and Being have then be granted to us and so has language and it is within the milieu of that givenness that we raise our question and conduct our investigation. From this particularly Heideggerian conviction – the givenness of what is inquired into – we are taught that the authentic attitude of thinking is not putting questions but listening to the grant.

By what have we had the relentlessness of inquiry? Why have we always put questions? Because questions aim at *ground* and ground is *presence*. Here we come then to Heidegger’s confronting a hermeneutic concern. Do we search for grounds? Thinking that is directed at nature is thinking directed at grounds, and such thinking always takes the form of inquiry and questioning. “Questioning is the piety of thinking.”

For all our questioning Heidegger believes that the nature of language must in fact be given (*vouschafed*) to us. When it does the nature of language becomes the grant of its essential being.

Somehow then language – obviously within language itself – grants its nature to us with the result that “the being of language becomes the language of being”. We perhaps already have a clue about how language grants us a clue of its nature in the workings of the poet. Heidegger seems to be appealing for a change of approach: for the inquisitorial assault of questioning to the mature openness and thoughtful passivity that allows us to receive the concessions of language.

Heidegger, returning to the last line of the poem he has been mining, develops the theme of the relation of word and thing: The word is itself the relation because the word holds everything forth into being and upholds it there. “If the word did not have this bearing, the whole of things, the ‘world’ would sink into obscurity, including the ‘I’ of the poem, him who brings to his country’s strand, to the source of names, all the wonders and dreams he encounters.” What this says to a hermeneutic investigation is important: Being is borne by the word. One relies on the word and not what is in the mind of him who utters or writes it.

Heidegger remarks about method in the development of science – a theme that Gadamer makes his own. Quoting Nietzsche he asserts that it is science that has become a captive of method, and method has driven science in directions that science itself has not been able to foretell, plan or predict. Thinking – and one remembers here that Heidegger calls his metaphysics the “thinking of Being” – such as the thinking of language is not method-bound. Thinking opens up a region because it gives free reign to what thinking thinks about.

Speaking about language will always be inadequate because language always outstrips us. The talking of language lags behind language. But this does not make thinking about language impossible. Once more Heidegger offers us the way of poetry.





Thinking abides in poetry. In the neighborhood where thinking abides, the country is open to poetry. Returning to his postulate that whatever is asked about is somehow already given – that the question always arises within the ambience of that which is asked about – Heidegger insists that the proper posture is listening. But it is purposive listening: It is “listening to the grant for what we are to think always develops into our asking for the answer”. Language persists in its promise to give itself to us, and if it did not give itself to us we would not be able to use a single word of language.

It should be obvious that for Heidegger, there is not only an alliance between “thinking” and “poetry”. Poetry and thinking belong to one neighborhood. (This same neighborhood he finds alluded to in the combination of “poetry and philosophy”.) The justification for finding this neighborhood: “Where word breaks off no thing may be.” And poetry is words! The relation between thing and word is a relation that has concerned Western philosophy that has asked itself about the relation between “being” and “saying”. Ultimately then the hermeneutic occupation of philosophy finds its roots in the questions ancient philosophers already asked about the intelligibility of Being. In the powerful word LOGOS, Heidegger finds that whole concern of philosophy – that relation between being and saying. Logos is the name for both Being and Saying.

But the poetic word or the thinking experience with Saying does not give voice to language in its essential being. The being of language nowhere brings itself to word as the language of being. But that language in its being does not yield itself – or holds itself back – is in the very nature of language itself. And therefore we must return to the neighborhood of poetry and thinking, a neighborhood which means that poetry and thinking face each other. But is this

“facing” merely figurative or literal? The problem with this problem is that we neither know what is literal and what is figurative, reminding us of Nietzsche that the distinction between “literal” and “metaphorical” is a distinction not of meaning but of power. The powerful establish their speech as literal and side-line the speech of the powerless as metaphorical.

The paradox is that while we abide in the neighborhood of speech and thinking, we cannot articulate that neighborhood – as no one, in fact, can say with ease what his neighborhood consists in. It is easy for us to identify the poles of relation, the beings or things related, but it is very difficult to say what the relation itself is. We have a lot of questions: Is poetry a way of thinking? Or is thinking a kind of poetry? They constitute a neighborhood, but whether poetry or thinking, “saying” is involved, and so the neighborhood consists of “poetry”, “thinking” and “saying”. Why this neighborhood, however, is becoming less familiar to us, we can attribute in part of the concentration of our energy and ‘interests’ in calculating our conquest of cosmic space of which weapons of mass destruction are only the final dispatch. We must then take a step back – a step into where we already are: *into the sphere of human being*.

While it looks like we are asking *about* language – and thus taking a step back in relation to language – we are in fact letting language from within language take hold of us, speak to us, saying its nature. Heidegger therefore ventures a theorem, inspired by the last line of the poem: No thing is where the word is lacking. A thing *is* not until, and is only where, the word is not lacking but *is* there. The *there* of the word is the *there* of the thing.

Heidegger then introduces a very intriguing distinction. A dictionary is full of *things*, but no word. A dictionary cannot grasp nor keep the





word by which the terms become words and speak as words. *Is* is not a thing. It is not something added to a thing. So it is with the word. It is the word whose task it is to give an 'is' in each instant, and so, *is* should itself give us a hint: It shows what is there and yet 'is' not. (By *is*, what is, *is*, but the *is* is itself not there as thing.) The word then **gives** not in the sense that it gives words, but that the word itself 'gives'. Heidegger says of Being: *Es gibt*. This givenness of Being is both epochal and revelatory. Heidegger now applies this characterization to the word, not by way of derivation but, as he says, "first of all, and even in such a way such that the word, the nature of the word, conceals within itself that which gives being."

Returning to the question of the neighborhood of thinking and poetry, Heidegger does not make the naïve claim that one is the other, or that the two are substitutable. Rather, he asserts that they run parallel to each other, held in nearness by the "occurrence of appropriation by which poetry and thinking are directed into their proper nature". This nearness is Saying, the Saying by which language grants its essential nature to us. And the target of Saying is always man. Man alone is granted the promise of language "because he is needful to language, that he may speak it." Heidegger becomes a little less veiled when he advises that we be guided not by the common or usual understanding of meanings but by the hidden riches that language holds in store for us, "so that these riches may summon us for the saying of language". These riches summon us for the saying of language.

Heidegger borrows from Lao-tzu, and finds his *Tao* most useful: the Way. It is the Way that gives all ways, the very source of the power to think. "Perhaps the mystery of mysteries of thoughtful Saying conceals itself in the word 'way'". The success of method – its conquest in our day –

is itself a tapping into the great streams which moves all things along: the way. We seek the way to that which transforms our relation to language. The way leads us – disappointingly, at first it might seem, but actually quite usefully – **to where we already are**. We are led to the domain where we already are. So why look for a way? The answer is typical of Heidegger: But that which in which we already are we have neither adequately nor properly inquired about. *Forgetfulness of Being; forgetfulness of Saying; forgetfulness of the Way*. Poetry and thinking dwell within the neighborhood or, better, occupy the neighborhood of Saying. Saying both causes to appear and conceals. It is the essential being of Saying to "light" and to "hide". For Heidegger, the guide-word is: "**The being of language: the language of being**".

How is this combination to be understood? "The being of language" brings us to the question of the being of language, the nature of language. The essence of language then is to be understood when we enter into that which the phrase after the colon – 'the language of being' – opens up before us. If "to be" or "being" means persistence, language belongs to this persisting being, "is proper to what moves all things because that is its most distinctive property". But this does not eliminate the obscurity. It is obscure how we are to think of essential being, wholly obscure 'how' it speaks, supremely obscure about what 'to speak' means.

The guide-word then receives a re-statement: **To approach language we must deal with SAYING as that which moves all things**. It is important that the ground movement does not go unnoticed: not language as fixed – structure and form – but language as SAYING. Heidegger turns to Holderlin for whom language is the "flower of the mouth". In one poem, one of his lines goes: "Now for it words like flowers leaping





alive he must find.” *Like* – is this a “break in vision”, an interruption owing to metaphor? It is rather the awakening of the largest view. “We thus hear the sound of language rising like the earth” from SAYING in which it comes to pass that Word is made to appear. The sound of speaking, the tune of the Saying is in harmony with the sound of heaven and earth. (Remember: the Heideggerian four-fold.)

Neighborhood is nearness, and its parameters are not determined by space and time (for two people whose houses are within arms’ reach of each other could be farthest from neighbors). The origin of nearness is, quite paradoxically, the distance of earth and sky, god and man that reach out to each other. Nearness is then the openness of things to one another in their self-concealment; one thing extends itself to the other. But our calculative thinking – the dominance of the categories of space and time -- encroach upon our recognition and appreciation of nearness and make us think of nearness in terms of the measurable. This itself of course is a problem of speaking. Nearness is basically – perhaps we can even say metaphysically – the “nighness” of the regions of the world. It is interesting that for Heidegger, the ultimate well-spring of language – SAYING – has as its bedrock the nighness of the four-fold: heaven and earth, gods and men that reach out to each other. But our times are marked with varying attempts at dominion over the earth, and the battle for this position of dominion makes a desert of the encounter of the four-fold. It is the refusal of nearness. **Nearness is then the motion in which the world’s regions face each other.**

Our itinerary has then taken us through the following route: From a desire for an experience of language to Saying, and to say means the interplay of lighting-concealing-releasing that is itself the offer of the world, to the nearness

which is the nighness of the regions of the world. “Language, Saying of the world’s four-fold, is no longer only such that we speaking human beings are related to it in the sense of a nexus existing between man and language. Language is, a world-moving Saying, the relation of all relations. It relates, maintains, proffers, and enriches the face-to-face encounter of the worlds’ regions, holds and keeps them, in that it holds itself- Saying – in reserve.” Language as reserving concerns us mortals who belong to this fourfold world, so that our SPEAKING is only our responding to LANGUAGE.

The mover which holds the world’s regions in their face-to-face encounter rests in Saying, and so Saying releases the ‘is’ into freedom and with ‘is’ comes the security of the thinkable. Saying is the way-making movement of the world’s fourfold. It is that which gathers things into the nearness of the face-to-face encounter. This soundless gathering is the language of Being. Therefore the sounding word returns into soundless from whence it was granted – the soundlessness of the language of Being.

RUMINATION

In an experience with language, Heidegger writes, language brings itself to language. In the measure that we write and think about it, discuss it – obviously in language – language brings itself to language. Language though that is used, as when I tell the grocer the supplies I need for the week, is language that holds back. It is language in use, not language that tells us about itself. But the reality of language makes itself felt when I hesitate over a word or don’t quite find the word for something I want to say. Throughout Heidegger’s philosophical career, he will have constant recourse to poetry, mostly the poetry of Holderlin. But the poetry in the fragments of





the pre-Socratics are for him fecund source, and in “The Nature of Language”, he goes back time and again to Stefan George’s “The Word”, which to him is an example of a poem that puts into words the poet’s experience with language.

One of the lines for which Heidegger is famous is “language is the house of Being”. It will first be important to be reminded of Being that concerns Heidegger and that he believes should be the true concern of metaphysics that has not forgotten its purpose: not entities or things, no matter how supreme or noble, omnipotent or omniscient, but that by which things are – and he is not referring to efficient causality when he refers to that “by which things are”. One commentator puts it well, to my mind, when he chooses to formulate the metaphysical problem as that of the “meaning of what it is To Be”. The trouble with Being however is that it is present only in beings (things, entities), and to keep at it, one has to be able to make, at all times, the ontological difference: the difference between “that” which is, and the Being by which it is. The word, Heidegger observes, makes a thing appear as the thing is, and thus lets it be present. By saying “ice cream”, for example, we talk “ice cream” and so ice cream comes to be, at least as something we talk about, yearn to have or try to avoid when we watch calories! In a sense, what Genesis says so dramatically about the creation of the world – “Let there be dry earth, and so it was” – is true of all who utter the word, except of course in the very important respect that we cannot make things materialize that are not there. But Heidegger’s point rather is that the word is what allows that which is word-ed to make its appearance, to be uttered, to be thematized.

What the poet or the wordsmith therefore attains is entrance into the relation of word to thing which cannot be so simplistically reduced

to the relation between “signifier” and “signified” (or if one chooses these terms, one must append to that a lengthy explanation). The word in some way carries the thing in itself. Write “choir of angels” in your essay, and you bring a choir of angels in! But while it is common to think of using words as encoding, that is finding the write words for a whole set of experiences enjoyed, then Heidegger asks us to think again. “Only a word from such source could keep the prize secure in the richness and frailty of its simple being.” That of course which keeps what it is in its simple being is the word, and that, one already has.

True experience with language can only be a thinking experience. While many would think of thinking as a way of acquiring knowledge, for Heidegger, thinking “cuts furrows into the soil of Being.” In the vastness, immensity and ubiquity of Being, thinking makes our way into it. We only go so far as our thinking takes us, like forest trails will only go so far as the trail-blazer or the wood-cutter ventures. But to ask about language is already to be familiar with language, just as to ask about Being is to be familiar with it. It need not be the taxonomic familiarity of an analyst. One cannot ask about that of which one knows absolutely nothing!

Then there comes what to me is a very important line in Heidegger’s essay. “What do we discover when we give sufficient thought to the matter? This, that the authentic attitude of thinking is not a putting of questions – rather, it is a listening to the grant, the promise of what is to be put in question.” Thinking then is some kind of a response to what is given. *Es gibt*. Being is given, although given also in the mode of concealment. Of course in this essay, Heidegger refers to the fact that language has given itself to us, and again, he arrives at a metaphysical conclusion: “No matter how we put our





questions to language about its nature, first of all it is needful that language concede itself to us. If it does, the nature of language becomes the grant of is essential being, that is, the being of language becomes the language of being.” Thinking is not scientific representation. Thinking is riding on the waves of what thinking is given to think.

In very lyrical language, Heidegger writes: “The song is sung, not after it has come to be, but rather: in the singing the song begins to be a song.” On this score, Heidegger invokes the powerfully evocative Greek word *logos* – which is both Being and Saying. In a manner then that allows us to return to the “language as the house of Being”, there is every reason to say that Being begins to be when it is spoken, as long as “spoken” does not refer to the speaking of any single person but to the *ur-sprach* – the fundamental speech that underlies all speech.

The word, Heidegger reflects, gives and what it gives is Being. What may have appeared at first blush as an inquiry into language shows itself as arising from a metaphysical motive. And lest it be thought that what is given is given by an It – or a God – Heidegger writes: “Our thinking, then, would have to seek the word, the giver which itself is never given, in this ‘there is what which gives.’”

The ‘four-fold’ of earth, sky, god and man (or woman) constitute the regions of the world and such a mundane thing as a vase is an example of the gathering of the four-fold, a gathering made possible by their distance. The vase is molded from earth by man, into which is poured the wine that the vine produces having been nurtured by the sky’s rain, the same wine offered in libation to the gods. The heavens are infinitely high from earth, as god is infinitely distant from man, but this space disappears when distances can be calculated. Our epoch then that is given to calculation and measurement is one that does away with spaces,

an era of overcoming of distance. That is all very good when you want a plane ride to go as fast as it can to enable you to catch a conference, or when you want 500 kilometers reduced to five hours of travel time. But when distance is overcome thus, everything is equal, what Heidegger calls “the calculated availability of the whole earth”. There will be no more bowing to the gods on high, because high can still be measured, and is then within reach. And Babel repeats itself: “Let us build ourselves a tower that shall reach to the heavens!”. Paradoxically, the overcoming of distance is the refusal of nearness because nearness demands distance. What there is when everything is surveyed, measured, calculated is what is within a square foot, or a square mile – or within one’s property, not a neighbor!

Heidegger forges on to his powerful conclusion. Language is essentially Saying, and Saying is no mere faculty, power of the human person. It is what happens when the four-fold meet. Language is not a mere human phenomenon, not something we decide to engage in when we have opted against clamming up. Language is the *ur*-relation, the quintessential relation of the regions of the world. It then is world-moving Saying. “It relates, maintains, proffers and enriches the face-to-face encounter of the world’s regions, holds and keeps them, in that it holds itself – Saying – in reserve.”

That Heidegger’s keen interest in language is metaphysical in trajectory is explicit in the extensive treatment language receives in *Being and Time*. *Dasein* is in-the-world, constantly engaged in the world of his concerns and therefore ex-istent, and this takes the form of understanding, not that it is understanding *alone*. *Dasein* therefore, Heidegger explains, maintains itself in a certain understanding. And because this understanding is appropriated, it is interpreted and, as interpreted, it is asserted. Now, that seems indeed to put assertion – the insinuation of language – at some





distance from being-in-the-world, but it is not sequencing here that Heidegger accounts for. He is not ‘telling a story’: first there is being-in-the-world, then understanding, then interpretation then assertion. Rather he is grounding assertion in the being of Dasein – as being-there! In fact, that it is not sequencing he explains, he makes clear himself: “Discourse (which he earlier asserts as the existential-ontological foundation of language) is existentially equiprimordial with state-of-mind and understanding. The intelligibility of something has always been articulated, even before there is any appropriate interpretation of it. Discourse is the articulation of intelligibility. Therefore it underlies both interpretation and assertion.” (*Being and Time*, 203 – 204) And if we have used ‘meaning’ antecedently with some degree of abandon, now it receives express mention by Heidegger: “That which can be articulated in interpretation, and thus even more primordially in discourse, is what we have called ‘meaning’.”

Meaning then is not the same thing as “thing”, what is out there, nor is it something emanating from the meaning-giving subject who exercises sovereignty over being by conferring meaning on things. Meaning is what results (provided, once more, a temporization is avoided) from Being-in-the-world that is always understanding-appropriating-articulating being. There can be meaning only for Dasein, not because Dasein arbitrarily confers meaning on what would otherwise have no meaning, but because there can be no world without Dasein, no-thing without Dasein to be understood, appropriated and asserted without Dasein. And, of course, at this point, it becomes clear how distant we are from those disciplines that go by the labels of linguistics and philology, which is not in any way to denigrate from their importance.

Insightfully, we are asked to pay attention to the tool-character of language, a feature Wittgenstein exploits for purposes of clarifying his theory of language-games. Because of the words of language, language is a fact; it is also an entity, which is the reason, quite clearly, that it can be studied as entities are studied. But on the connection between the worldly entity called “language” and the disclosedness of Being-in-the-world, Heidegger makes the pronouncement: “Discourse is existentially language, because that entity whose disclosedness it articulates according to significations, has, as its kind of Being, Being-in-the-world – a Being which has been thrown and submitted to the world.” This is the metaphysical significance of language – as discourse it is the articulation of not only things that are disclosed to Dasein, but the disclosure itself by which Dasein exists. It is, in Heidegger’s own words, the articulation ‘of the intelligibility of Being-in-the-world’.

The existentiality of Dasein is in the very same measure his Being-with, and Being-with means precisely that sometimes I get nods of approval or a vigorous shaking of the head in reproof or rejection. At times I will pose questions and wait for answers, or advance propositions and wait for assent, or deal with refutation. It can be as simple as a baby uttering his first “mama” at the comforting and assuring approach of his mother. In all cases, it is Dasein as Being-with and therefore as talking or discoursing. And at every turn, talk is disclosure: A command discloses what is commanded; an intercession discloses one’s need, and a report discloses what is reported. Very importantly, however, Heidegger adds, almost as a side-comment but, to me, truly of moment: “What is talked about in talk is always ‘talked to’ in a definite regard and within certain limits. In any talk or discourse, there is ‘something said-in-the-talk’ as such – something said as such whenever one wishes, asks, or expresses oneself about





something. In this ‘something said’, discourse communicates.” Talk discloses as much as it limits and to say that whatever is said can be said only within the limits of the saying is not to arrive at a conclusion, really, but to define!

Existence, that is reserved only for that being that is always outside itself, engaged and immersed in the world, lays down the metaphysical structure for language. Better yet, language is the necessary concomitant of existence. Existence is linguistic. Language expresses the Being-outside that Dasein is. But ever sensitive to the workings of poetry for which Heidegger had particular regard (quoting as he frequently did Greek poets as well as Holderlin), Heidegger grants that the communication of one’s moods can be an aim in itself – but this is no cloying on emotions here, for emotions are revelatory of the Being of Dasein. So it is that poetry can in fact be a disclosing of existence.

Equally constitutive of discourse as talking is hearing. Listening is Dasein’s fundamental openness, not only auditory listening, to be sure, but definitely auditory listening also and, maybe, primordially. And while, uncritically, we say we hear so that we can understand – with the causal line flowing from ‘hear’ to ‘understand’, now familiar with Heidegger’s hermeneutics, we should be prepared for his statement: “Dasein hears, because it understands.” My Being-with consists in my availability for what the other has to say to me, and ‘hearing’ will include even resisting, defying and pretending not to hear!

Dasein has language. This is not meant to be a statement of fact but of metaphysics. Dasein is Being-in-the-world and discourse is constitutive of Dasein’s Being-there. Discovering his world and himself or, better, being uncovered in himself and uncovering the world, he is the utterance of what is.

BEING AND APPEARANCE

In *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger devotes an entire section to “appearance” and in the context of a subsequent discussion on truth, to “logos”. The thing appears – and so a letter appears on this monitor. But so does Being, except that Being appears in things, in entities, but it appears nevertheless. With good reason then does Heidegger make the point that it belongs to the essence of Being to appear. But there is a paradox here – and an important one, one in fact from which much of post-modernism will pick its cue. Every appearance is the availability of an “aspect”, a “perspective”. What a gifted pianist! Marvelous view! Lovely woman! For all we know, all this may be sincere and well-meant, but for every appearance there comes concealment, the concealment of that which is not presented by the aspect or perspective. There is still much wisdom in that tale of the blind men each proclaiming some part of the elephant as the elephant itself! He who treads the path of unconcealment must also reckon with the concealment that comes with that which is unconcealed.

Being, Heidegger says, manifests itself in the manifold things-that-are. In fact, what the average (perhaps intelligent) person encounters each day and concerns himself with are the things-that-are (simply: things; technically: beings, or essents, or entities). But here we come face-to-face with an original concealment, a concealment in the appearance. If Being appears in the multiplicity of things, then it is concealed as Being and appears as things! This is not play on words. The fact is that most, most of the time, are preoccupied with things, seldom with Being. It belongs to Being to appear. Being appears, and of course, it takes on an appearance. In this, quite paradoxically, it is concealed. It is much the same thing with a person who necessarily





projects an image without having to try to. By that image, he is present to others; unfortunately that same image conceals him, insofar as no one can be identified with his image, or at least with his image only! The importance of this point cannot be overstated. Heidegger is enunciating the bases of what would be a common persuasion at the turn of the century: the suspicion towards meta-narratives. A meta-narrative necessarily rests on appearances, but if an appearance is at the same time concealment, then a continuing unease or suspicion towards narratives is a healthy, though vexatious, stance. Heidegger, turning once more to his beloved pre-Socratics, approvingly quotes Heraclitus (who may have meant the lines for some other purpose): “Being inclines intrinsically to self-concealment.”

Dasein is the being that each of us is and most of us will be found, each day, in an “everyday” mode: the mode of going about our chores, worrying over our worries, occupied with myriad things. In *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, a work later than *Being and Time*, Heidegger takes us through Dasein-analysis by asking at the same time about the “ego”. “Dasein, as existing, is there for itself, even when the ego does not direct itself to itself.” Of course, we will have to remember the peculiar use (or reservation) Heidegger makes of “to exist”. It would serve our purposes well to heed Heidegger’s lead in considering Dasein in his “everydayness”. At the moment, for example, I am occupied with writing these lines and explicating my reflections. These are what occupy. These are the matters “outside me” or “beyond me” with which I am presently concerned. But it is precisely in being directed at the work I am presently engaging that I am given to myself. There is no question of self-reflection here in the sense of an explicit turning-towards-self that happens, for example, in that process that some psychologists call “introspection”. My very preoccupation with getting my thoughts on

Heidegger’s phenomenology clear shows me to myself as engaging in or struggling with this philosophical point (or as anticipating the bitter resentment of the unfortunate student who will be compelled by his professor to read this text!) *Nagtatatanim, nagluluto, nagtatapon ng basura, nangongopya sa classmate...* it is in these – and patently other ways – that Dasein is given to itself. Dasein is given to itself primarily then as indulged in the world, engaged in the world, immersed in it. When Heidegger characterizes this mode by which Dasein is given to itself as “inauthentic”, he does not do so disparagingly, for the inauthentic is as fundamental to the human phenomenon as is the authentic. Rather, it suggests that I am given to myself in the things with which I am occupied – and therefore, as we are not our own but “lost” in the things that preoccupy us.

When a hypnotist commands: Pay attention to my voice – it is not because we have not been hearing his voice, because we have, but because it is not single things that we grasp or perceive. Rather what is experienced is “an environment” – consisting, of course, of many things: the walls of the room I am in, the humming air-conditioning unit, the books scattered on my table, the light from the reading lamp just above me, etc. This “envirning world” is what the German term *umwelt* very well captures. Precisely because it “environs”, surrounds, or envelops, the world is taken for granted. It is the context of all paying attention to, focusing on, heeding, etc. It then is the case that the world is not something I become aware of only eventually. It is already there in my awareness of anything at all.

In this sense, Heidegger would consider as proceeding from a counter-factual the traditional problem of how a “subject” can ever know anything beyond itself or other than itself. I am given to myself in the things with which I





am concerned, and the things with which I am concerned are part of the world that at every moment environs me! This is what is captured by that intriguing Heideggerian formulation being-in-the-world. That is, however, not some clever discovery of Heidegger. It is how I am given to myself. There is no way then to think Dasein apart from world, and the world is always Dasein's world. To say that I am in-the-world is not to announce my location or to state a geographical fact. It is to assert existence!

Heidegger, in *The Essence of Reasons*, himself puts it best:

“To ascribe Being-in-the-world to Dasein as the basic feature of its constitution is to make a statement about its essence – about its unique inner possibility as Dasein. Now we cannot determine anything about the essence of Dasein by asking what sort of Dasein exists factually, or whether Dasein exists factually at all. Our talk of Being-in-the-world does not tell for the practical presence of Dasein in the world; ontically it says nothing. Such talk concerns an essential condition of Dasein, one which defines Dasein at an ontological level, and therefore has the character of an ontological proposition.”

Situated in the midst of Being, Dasein, in its everydayness, is engrossed in particular things. Everyday Dasein does not stand on some sort of ontological pedestal – “outside Being” (itself unthinkable!) – as the “consciousness of all that it surveys!”. But the totality is always manifest to Dasein, though not explicitly. The understanding that anticipates and encompasses the totality receives from Heidegger a designation befitting its reach: “surpassing to the world”. (I am not too sure whether or not he ever uses this term again after *The Essence of Reasons* but the point he makes will be found throughout his philosophical corpus.)

That I can be preoccupied with my cellphone, that the news of the outbreak of swine-flu disturbs me, that mention of *estofado de lengua* makes my mouth water – all this is because as Dasein, I am in-the-world. Being-in-the-world then is the presupposition for getting focused on, or “thematizing” anything at all. The most elementary meaning of transcendence therefore cannot be anything other than Dasein's Being-in-the-world.

Remember that Being is given in beings, albeit in concealment, but given, nonetheless, then Dasein as Being-in-the-world is Dasein not only in the midst of Being but also behaving towards Being. Every time Dasein raises the question “Why?”, he does so from within Being, and from within an understanding of Being, because he could not behave towards that which he did not understand at all – and this, we have already seen. This transcendence – being in the midst of Being – is the foundation of all inquiry; it is transcendence as “founding”, and to it, Heidegger applies a term used by Scholastic philosophers to refer to something else: “ontological truth”.

ONLY A GOD CAN SAVE US!

I would like to give the element of “the given” more attention. And to do this, I turn to an interview that Heidegger granted *Der Spiegel*. In 1966, not too long before his demise, Heidegger granted the German magazine, *Der Spiegel*, an interview, and while much of it had to do with the dark chapter in German history – and in Heidegger's own life, the National Socialist regime, it also dealt with how Heidegger read the times: his interpretation of our present epoch. It is interesting to listen to Heidegger express himself about our times.





“Everything functions. That is exactly what is uncanny. Everything functions and the functioning drives us further and further to more functioning, and technology tears people away and uproots them from the earth more and more. I don’t know if you are scared; I was certainly scared when I recently saw the photographs of the earth taken from the moon. We don’t need an atom bomb at all; the uprooting of human beings is already taking place. We only have purely technological conditions left. It is no longer an earth on which human beings live today. I recently had a long conversation with René Char in Provence – as you know, the poet and Resistance fighter. Rocket bases are being built in Provence, and the country is being devastated in an incredible way. The poet, who certainly cannot be suspected of sentimentality or a glorification of the idyllic, said to me that the uprooting of human beings which is going on now is the end if thinking and poetry do not acquire nonviolent power once again.”

It is a dire but by no means unjustified reading of our times. This is our epoch. And when Heidegger is asked what then can be done about this state of things in which everything is “instrumentalized”, in which everything can be substituted with some other that does the same job with the same if not greater efficiency, and the human person finding himself in the same instrumentalized situation? Will philosophy give us our bearings once more? In answer to Der Spiegel’s question, Heidegger makes his fateful remark:

“Those questions bring us back to the beginning of our conversation. If I may answer quickly and perhaps somewhat vehemently, but from long reflection: Philosophy will not be able to bring about a direct change of the present state of the world. This is true not only of philosophy but of all merely human meditations and endeavors.

Only a god can still save us. I think the only possibility of salvation left to us is to prepare readiness, through thinking and poetry, for the appearance of the god or for the absence of the god during the decline; so that we do not, simply put, die meaningless deaths, but that when we decline, we decline in the face of the absent god.”

Only a god can save us – thus says Heidegger who is convinced that God is the reason that metaphysics lost its bearings. Is then Heidegger calling on the return of that piety that acknowledges God’s sovereignty, or is he heralding the arrival of a new god and announcing the institution of a new religion to heal the fissures that the fragmentation of instrumentalizing everything and everyone brings about? Most certainly not! This is not Heidegger’s apologia for religion. We are caught in the web of technology, sons and daughters of a technological age who achieve technologically, glory in our technology and measure our worth by our technology. But for this we have had to pay a heavy price because technology knows only tools. Technology in this sense is a “construct” – a term frequently used in post-modern philosophy and misused by those who have made of PoMo a fad, but hardly understand what its icons write about!

But here is an important line from Heidegger: Being is not Being without humans being needed for its revelation, protection, and structuring. I see the essence of technology in what I call the con-struct. This is what I referred to by the “revelatory” power of Being that does not allow us to attribute to Being hypostasized existence, that does not entitle us to deal with it like it is some Being, because then we would once more lose the metaphysical groove. And the trouble with this is that sometimes the revelation results in a construct like technology and the whole epoch that it spawns.





Heidegger makes one more announcement in this rather provocative interview that should not go unnoticed. He announces the death of philosophy! And when asked by *Der Spiegel* exactly what that shocking obituary means, Heidegger says that for one thing, getting people to think philosophically will not do the trick and save us from the instrumentalization that the epoch of technology has brought about. That is not to say that philosophy can do nothing. It can: It can prepare for the return of the absent god, or it can call attention to his absence so that what we do, we do in the face of the 'absence of God'. This is all very mysterious talk, but one thing it clearly suggests is that one of philosophy's tasks is to chasen us into realizing that whatever meanings we attach to what we do, or to the things that occupy us, we do so "on our own" – earlier philosophers said *utsi Deus non daretur*...as if God did not exist – except in our case the "as if" has no place in a stance of utmost seriousness and gravity.

But why should philosophy be dead? Because it has dissolved into the sciences, says Heidegger, and cybernetics or the science of information transfer in particular. A little later, however, he gives us a more accurate idea of the philosophy that he has just announced to have gone caput. It is the traditional metaphysics that does not allow us to experience the fundamental characteristics of the technological age. And the pious posture of one who waits, Heidegger refuses to accept this as philosophy. He characterizes this as "other thinking" – which should not be pejorative if we remember that when asked what his particular method is, he confounds his interlocutors even more by answering "the Thinking of Being" – which of course seems to suggest that others before him have not been doing as well! Heidegger cannot announce that a god is forthcoming, but he urges Thinking, not philosophy, not metaphysics. And

what about Thinking, Heidegger says: "I do not think the situation of human beings in the world of planetary technology is an inextricable and inescapable disastrous fate; rather I think that the task of thinking is precisely to help, within its bounds, human beings to attain an adequate relationship to the essence of technology at all." That is of course another way of putting the monumental project: not the thinking of how to make things work – of which we have an abundance – nor or things as things, but of being human in relation to the essence of Technology, and that will not be a question of being human, but of Being!

And now to return to our original concern: What is it To Be? To be is to be concerned, to be occupied with, to bother about my own ability to be. I can of course immerse myself in the *things* that apparently call for my attention: this book that has to be written, the Beethoven sonata I must learn, the plans that must be drawn up for the university, in which case the preoccupation with what is To Be will assume the guise of preoccupation with things. To be the author of this book, to be one who can play the demanding passages of a Beethoven sonata, to be an efficient university leader – at rock bottom, it is all about possibilities. Dasein is then being free for these possibilities, and is in fact these possibilities themselves. If one draws the conclusion from all this that Dasein is no *fait accompli*, then one will be right. There is never for Dasein perfect self-coincidence, precisely because To be is possibility. And Dasein understands himself as such. To understand is to project oneself upon a possibility. I understand water when I project the possibility of sating my thirst with it or dissolving something in it. But surely understanding goes beyond "the practical", a thing's usefulness for me! That may be so, but for Heidegger, the world is principally a system of *tools* – a network of things I employ and subordinate to the projection of my





possibilities. The possibility of not wanting for water of necessity involves an understanding of water as it is a manifestation of myself as needful of water in the possibility of quenching thirst. And obviously, before water is that interesting compound of two parts hydrogen for every part of oxygen, it is something that I understand in relation to the possibility of quenching thirst. It is also important to note, Heidegger expressly points out in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* it is not an isolated, self-reflecting ego of which I become aware but of myself but of myself engaged in the world and in possibilities. Projection is therefore basic to the being of Dasein. Dasein exists by projecting possibilities: a pen is understood as that with which I may write down my thoughts, for whatever my thoughts may be worth! In every act of understanding therefore, I am presented to myself as being able-to-be... in this case, someone who writes my thoughts down. Understanding is always concomitantly an understanding of Being although not an explicit account of it, as metaphysics is capable of articulating one.

Projection however is, quite obviously, *futural* in the sense that it always has to do with what one is able-to. To project the possibility of completing this chapter and so to bring that completion about by conscientiously articulating these reflections is bringing the future to pass. Quite in contrast to a stone for which things can really only *happen* but that is never *able to* or even a plant or even an animal, Dasein as the being who projects is the being with a future or, we might say, whose existence is *futural*. Here, quite clearly, we have the basis for any notion of time. Temporality is therefore not only the measure of motion, nor the measure of a being's activities. Temporality as projection is the very being of Dasein. Temporality, Heidegger concludes, is the condition of the possibility of the understanding of Being. There can be metaphysics – and

variants of metaphysical accounts, accounts of Being – only because there is a pre-conceptual understanding of Being. This then is the result at which we have arrived: “One essential moment of understanding is projection: understanding itself belongs to the basic constitution of the Dasein... Understanding belongs to the basic constitution of the Dasein, but the Dasein is rooted in temporality.”

For now, we shall keep focused on *authentic* Dasein, the Dasein that is not merely swept along, carried by public opinion, propelled into a future by others. We will set our sights rather on Dasein who understands himself as a being of possibilities and seizes upon these possibilities. As I explained earlier, seizing upon a possibility is essentially *futural*, making the future come to pass. But there is another movement involved here, for to project the possibility of being the author of this book, I must return to myself as having been trained at the universities I have attended and the prepared by the people with whom I have exchanged views to make some sense of philosophical questions. This is *repetition* – the aspect of the has-been that is as constitutive of Dasein as is the *can be*. I bring back into my moving towards writing this book the insights of the past, the exchanges with fellow-students and professors I have had, the books I read, but this retrieval, this bringing back, this appropriation of what has been is carried by the movement of projecting a possibility. “In the ecstatic (from *ek-stases*, as extensions or dimensions) unity of repetitive self-precedence, in this past and future, there lies a specific present.” There is a difference between the authentic present and the inauthentic present. The latter is lost in things, entangled as it were, in the things of concern, so that the past is forgotten and the future, merely an expecting of the next meal, the next “gimmick”, the next exciting event. In resoluteness however, the present is held





in the specific future of projecting and in the repetition of the past. *Instant* is the authentic present discloses the possibility that one has resolved to bring to pass by returning to what has been, or appropriating what is. And there is an ontological relation between the “present” and the interchangeable *I am* that philosophers call “individuation”. Insofar as I am free for my possibilities in the equally free appropriation of my past, then I am who I am, the individual that I am, who encounters other Daseins.

In her everydayness, we have likewise seen, Dasein is inauthentic, irresolute, which is no reason to deny its existence. The tricycle driver *expects* to bring home four hundred pesos at the end of the day. He understands himself through things – the money that will be the returns of a day’s work. The inauthentic – or better, everyday – Dasein grasps its *can be* in terms of the feasibility or non-feasibility of the things of its concern. No matter that the tricycle driver’s disposition is here characterized as inauthentic – a characterization, I must repeat, that is descriptive rather than pejorative – it is clear that the “present” figures prominently, centrally in fact: the job of driving the tricycle through sweltering heat or chilling rain is present, so is his anticipation of the pay he will bring home to his family. But this only means that whatever understanding the tricycle driver has – or the philosopher might have – of Being is temporal, not only with temporality as a necessary backdrop, but with temporality as condition or basis of this understanding. The understanding of Being takes place from within the horizon of time. All self-projection that is the stuff of which Dasein is made is temporal. To set oneself to the task of understanding the stars or the meandering ways of one’s own thoughts is to be determined about bringing something to pass, and thus reaching out (transcending) into what I may not yet be but can very well become. To project is therefore to be temporal, to make

time happen. There is no time for a stone. It is what it is, not because it is eternal but because it does not transcend its fixity. And if projection is the way of Dasein, then understanding, as I explained above, is also projection, in fact, is projection *par excellence*. Dasein is therefore not only in time. The being of Dasein is temporal. In being, Dasein “temporalizes”. Temporality then is the possibility of understanding Being, not merely in the rather petty sense that once understanding will always be in time, but because Being manifests itself in temporality, or “as” temporality. This takes us some distance from Aristotle for whom time was the measure of motion. For Heidegger, time makes possible the understanding of Being because Being is temporal.

WORLD AND WORLDEDNESS: BEING AND TIME

We will track *Being and Time* more closely in this section. Epistemologies have been laboring under self-made problems. Usual epistemologies for example assume that knowing is something that happens in the subject. If so, how can it leap out then into the sphere of the object? Knowing is a mode of Being of Dasein as Being-in-the-world. Knowing is grounded in Being-alongside the world, which is constitutive of Dasein’s Being. Being-alongside is not a fixed staring at what is there but it is concern (*Sorge*) which takes the form of fascination with the world. Note that fascination is lively engagement.

The primary kind of Being of Dasein then is Being “outside” itself and alongside things. It is not first encapsulated in itself and only later does it extricate itself from its immanence. By its very Being, it is already alongside things. Perception is not returning to the recesses of consciousness what one has seized outside. Dasein by its existence is “outside” with the things known.





Worldhood is an existential. To talk about the world is to talk about the person and about his Being. Because “world” implies Dasein, Being-worldly is a prerogative of Dasein and never of entities that are merely present-at-hand. Our mode of examining worldhood will take us through an analytic of every-Dasein because this is the mode closest to Dasein. Manipulating things and using them is our everyday mode of Being. Entities are primarily not things theoretically described and studied, viewed in a detached manner, but what gets or produced. What are therefore primarily encountered within the world are $\pi\rho\alpha\gamma\mu\alpha\tau\alpha$ tools or equipment. Since a piece of equipment or a tool is always something “in order to”, what we ultimately have is a network of equipment joined together for the purposes of Dasein. Our primarily dealing with things does not consist in a theoretical inquiry into what a thing is. It consists rather putting a thing to use. It is then not with “things” that we are primarily involved, but with “tools”. The more we use a thing the more primordial is our relation to; the more it is encountered and unveiled as equipment. The equipment is “Zuhanden” that which is ready-to-hand. The knowing that accompanies the manipulation of the equipment is what Aquinas called the use of the “practical intellect”. It is called by Heidegger “circumspection”. What this kind of analysis also does is put science in its place, as it were. The success of the sciences in the form of technology led at some not too distant time to some kind of a “dictatorship” of science. It was science that drew the boundary between real and unreal, that laid down the criteria for truth, that set apart the meaningful from the meaningless. What *Being and Time* leads us to see is the pre-scientific, pre-theoretic involvement of Dasein with the world, an involvement that is nevertheless meaningful and meaning-giving.

Because our being-in-the-world is work, i.e., involvement with tools work then sets us in:

the domestic world: the workshop which is the immediate setting of the work; the public world; e.g., I work on leather which was cured by the leather-smiths and make shoes out of them that will be bought by customers for the public functions they will attend; and the environing nature, e.g., in using a covered walk, we encounter the variability of weather. The “Zuhanden” (ready-to-hand) is, in its structure, determined by references and assignments. The assignments (the “what-for”) are usually not observed but when the equipment is damaged or unusable the assignment becomes explicit. We thus catch sight of the “towards-which” and with it everything interconnected with the work, i.e., the work-shop.

We are then ready to give some kind of a definition or a description of what Being-in-the-world is: the non-thematic circumspective absorption in references or assignments constitutive for the readiness-to-hand of a totality of equipment. It is important to repeat – like some kind of liturgical antiphon – the underlying project: not anthropology, but metaphysics. In sum then, To Be is to be involved with the world.

While we have distinguished “world” from “nature”, the fact is that “nature” is part of the world, and this kind of metaphysics may just provide the intellectual impetus for greater concern with our world. A balanced ecology is not an issue about something “outside” us. It has to do with our very Being. A ruined planet is inhospitable and we may just take our recklessness to the point that our Being becomes impossible. The entity as it is originally dealt with is a tool and the world is an ensemble of tools. This means that an entity has involvement. Involvement includes the “toward-which” of serviceability and the “for-which” of usability. To speak of “involvement” is to describe an entity ontologically, not ontically. Things-in-the-





world are therefore primarily “involved” things “engaged” in the projects of Dasein. This already says very much about the world. The world is a system of involvements. This also means that the destiny of the world is our destiny.

Around Dasein is a workshop. Dasein is “in” a workshop. This totality of involvements is a network of serviceability and usability and this comes before any single item of equipment. In other words it is from the network that the single item derives its functionality sense and purpose. This totality of involvements goes back however to an entity in which there is no further involvement. This being to which all involvements refer and from which all purposiveness arises is an entity that is defined as Being-in-the-world. If the network radiates from this being, this is because this being – Dasein – is that to whose state of Being worldhood belongs. This ultimate “towards-which” is a “for-the-sake-of-which”, and this always pertains to Dasein. It is only for Dasein that there can be “towards-which” or “for-the-sake-of-which” because it is this being for whom Being is an issue. It is this being that is concerned with its Being.

Dasein, we have seen, has an understanding of Being, but since this Being is Being-in-the-world, then Being-in-the-world is part of its understanding of Being. For Dasein to let something be involved (e.g., applying a wrench to the bolts of a tire “in order to “change the tire “in order to “ be able to continue driving “in order to “ be able to arrive at one’s destination etc.,) means that there is some previous intelligibility of such things as “for the sake of which” towards which”. All this is ordered to an “in order to” which ultimately and fundamentally corresponds to a potentiality of Dasein which may be authentic or inauthentic. We have already referred to Dasein’s existence as possibility.

But, what of other Daseins?

The description of the environment of work calls our attention to Others for whom the work is destined. In the thing is an essential assignment or reference to possible wearers or users. The Other is not however mentally or imaginarily added. The things we encounter rather from out of the world are *zuhanden* for others. Dasein’s world manifests other Daseins that are neither *Zuhanden* *Vorhanden*. The Others are those who, for the most part, I do not distinguish myself from. I am with other Daseins in a manner different from handling or manipulating things. The Other is encountered environmentally, i.e., within the environment of work. There is therefore no transition from the “I” to the “Other”. The Other is encountered in his Dasein-with-the-world. Dasein is essentially Being-with. Thus it can be said that Dasein is the being by whose Being-in-the-world other Daseins are discovered or encountered.

Being-with is an existential even if no one else is factually around. Being-alone is a mode of Being-with for only for Dasein can be one missing in or for or separated from. Neither is being alone obviated by the factual occurrence of one subject with other subjects. “Beside” is not necessarily “Being-with”. The absence of others is possible only because Dasein allows the Dasein of others is possible only because Dasein allows the Dasein of others to be encountered in its world. What should be clear is that Being-with is not a matter of being factually in the company of others or of being in touch with them. The ubiquity of the “cell phone” these days however just points to this dimension of Being. It is amazing though that when one casually asks an average high-schooler or even a college student why it is that we live in communities or societies, the rather primitive answer will still be given that “we need others”! That of course is





not the point. We live with others because it is our being to be with them!

EXCURSUS: GABRIEL MARCEL ON BEING-WITH

I have sub-titled this part “excursus” for no other reason than that we pay heed to Marcel and so break with our present study of Heidegger, and for no other reason. We are still on the same theme: Being-with, an issue that is to me of supreme importance at a time when we all marvel at the world having shrunk and the means of communication as handy as “cell-phones” but also rue about fragmentation and marginalized members of society.

“With” is, for Marcel in *The Mystery of Being*, a key preposition in the investigation of intersubjectivity. A table may be beside a chair, a wide-screen TV set beside a bed, but these things are never really ‘with’ each other, although English grammar allows such usage. It is to intersubjectivity that “with” properly applies: I calling out to, or calling on you. “Invocation” and intersubjectivity imply each other. The ‘you’ of intersubjective being is not just some appellation of convenience. ‘You’ are a kindred spirit, with the unique power of wrenching me out of my self-consciousness, understood broadly as preoccupation with myself. But Marcel is sensitive enough to the variegations of human togetherness that he does not take one situation – say the idyllic togetherness of spouses in love – and make it paradigmatic. He recognizes that intersubjectivity traverses gradations: there are heights of intersubjectivity such as will be found in truly intimate friendship (and it is utterly nonsensical to decide *a priori* that this must be only of the heterosexual kind) and barely appreciable degrees such as will be found in passengers who find themselves together on board the same plane!

Intersubjectivity commences and mere spatial contiguity ends when my companionship with you, my being-with-you makes a difference to me (as it does, I presume, to you), and when the interruption of such a relation makes a difference. Our egalitarian airs notwithstanding, there is always something “aristocratic” about intersubjective relations. When two high school friends meet after a long period of separation and they while hours away reminiscing, laughing as well as mourning the loss of others in their company, even their own spouses will be in fact “outsiders” in respect to this relationship, and they will know they are. They will be unable to share the jokes or share in the reminiscences. In fact, it would be best for them to keep out! Thus does Marcel refer to a “shared secret” as a striking metaphor for the intersubjective bond.

There is a very common model of communication that is popular because it is simple and, indeed, simplistic. The speaker thinks, encodes his thought in written or spoken form, the hearer or reader receives, decodes and thinks the thoughts of the speaker. Aside from the gross misunderstanding of the relation between thought and language on which this model rests, Marcel also has this to say: “And if one thinks it over, one will also perceive that all human intercourse worthy of the name takes place in an atmosphere of real intimacy that cannot be compared to an exchange of signals between an emission post and a reception post.” The whole point is that my relation with you is not some contingency that arises when the “need” for it does; it is constitutive of what I am. Subjectivity, even in a situation of solitude, is intersubjective! Some have complained that Heidegger introduces the other by way of the tool, and they think that this “demeans” the intersubjective dimension of personal existence. But that is not the point, I think, because Heidegger’s project is metaphysics and certainly one way I encounter





the other is by handling what has been produced by another for his own purposes, an other who is not subject to my own purposes in the same way that a stone-axe for example might be.

Marcel for his part invites attention to the following propositions:

“Jack belongs to me”: Anyone who says this will, in the very least, be charged with making an extravagant claim, at worse, will be thought of as some megalomaniac who has not gotten over the age of slavery.

“I belong to you”: This is not at all jarring to the ears, nor to the sensibilities. In an age of superficial relations like ours, this might sound cloying but to those with a sense of that intimacy that enriches, this is endearing. It is not, insists Marcel, a forfeiture of freedom but its supreme exercise: putting it in the hands of another. Is this not in fact the “obedience” to which religious are vowed (and of course, that can be abused by their superiors who then put on airs of divinity, identifying their whims with the will of God!).

The first is threatening – it should be threatening at least to Jack – because one who says it is poised to alienate his freedom. Of course, the moment you put on a different inflection: “Jack, will you belong to me?” then obviously you are appealing to his freedom, and that changes the equation altogether!

It is interesting though that Marcel’s analyses of my invocation of “you” find their context in his concern actually with being, the being of the self. This might not exactly be Heidegger’s concern, and there is really no point in pretending that both set out to do the same thing. Each must be appreciated for his preoccupation. But Marcel can make an equal claim at the metaphysical in his analysis. Particularly significant is what he

finds about my being: not the imperviousness and fixity of a substance; not the solitariness and self-sufficiency of a monad, but “invoking being”: being recognizing the other even as it invokes the other. The same thing is true of *Creative Fidelity*. His focus in the chapter “Belonging and disposability” is really the question of the “I” in relation to “self” and the coherence (or incoherence) of such declarations as: “I belong to myself!”. It is a discussion that leads to a most interesting distinction. Neither swept away nonchalantly nor accepted uncritically, “I belong to myself” is allowed to lead us to the examination of the difference between “idolatrous love” and a nurturing of self. And when the rising stars of “showbizlandia” preen onstage like self-assured, self-contended peacocks, one has a ready sample of idolatrous love. On the other hand, the self can be treated – as it ought to be – as “a ground which must be readied for the spiritual or even for the divine in this world. To love oneself in this second sense is not the same as self-complacency, but is rather an attitude towards the self which permits its maximum development.”

SOLICITUDE

Dasein is solicitous for other Daseins. This is not by any means a naïve declaration about our innate benevolence, nor even our disposition to be kind and compassionate towards all. In fact, it seems that John Rawls portrays matters more accurately when he writes about our altruism as ‘selective’. One might add – sporadic. But even when I pass by the other indifferently, even when I maintain spite for the other or harbor a grudge within me towards the other, even when the other is an object of curiosity and fascination, I still am solicitous. These are in fact different forms of solicitude. What is irreversible about Dasein is his solicitude – metaphysically, one more facet of ex-istence.





To want to make decisions for the other on the dubious claim that the decisions I make are for ‘his own good’ is what Heidegger quaintly describes as “leaping in for the other” – and, while common, it is neither authentic nor authenticating. The terms are suggestive: one endeavors to substitute for the other Dasein, in every case, a futile attempt. But one can also make it possible for the other to choose authentically – and the buzz word for this today is ‘empowerment’. Metaphysically, it is recognizing the other Dasein as Dasein who must, for and by himself, realize his possibilities and define his own future.

For all the criticism that Heidegger has received – in many ways deserved – for his treatment of the intersubjective encounter his position markedly contrasts itself to Descartes’s who we take here to be the icon of the modern period. The existence of the other was a matter of a conclusion, arrived at by reasoning from analogy. I see some other who talks like a talk, acts like I act, reacts like I react – therefore, he must be one like me. There is not much to distinguish this approach to the other from those versions of social contract theories for which human existence is principally solitary and, only because of the demands of expediency, subsequently social, through the medium of a contract. The point often missed is the very point Heidegger makes: not really an anthropological point, but part and parcel of his metaphysical exposition: If Dasein is at all times ‘outside in the world of his concerns’, this world includes other Daseins, so that at all times, Dasein is Dasein because of his engagement with other Daseins – even if this should take the form of disliking them!

I meet the other – the other Dasein – because I am in-the-world, a world that is also that of other Dasein’s. And it is important that the encounter with the other is not some fusion of spirits in

ethereal space. It is an encounter that is corollary to my immersion without, outside where my affairs are: with my teaching, with giving advise, with doing business, with disputing even. There will be privileged moments, those precious moments, where an other is singled out from the multitude of others and has a face that stands out from the blur of faces. But it would not be good phenomenology to make these moments, “so precious and few”, paradigmatic of my meeting you. The everyday rubric is mediocrity: “distantiality”, “averageness”, shadows of faces, really, and not faces, numbers – such as the numbers that hem in on us on board a crowded bus or the Metro Rail at rush hour! Thus is the reach of the dictatorship of “the They”. Even when the other is an antagonist, or a threat or a competitor – he may still remain just “he”...*yun siya*...indistinguishable in his namelessness!

MOODS AND WHY THEY MATTER:

Moods disturb the tranquility of the mirror of all things that the mind must be. That could have been Marcus Aurelius – but it is a persuasion that distinguishes no philosopher or philosophical school in particular. Heidegger makes metaphysical sense out of moods: they are revelatory – they reveal Dasein in its thrownness. A caveat is in order, however, for ‘mood’ as Heidegger uses the term is not exactly the mood of the moody, although not completely different either.

For a long time, how we find ourselves was a problem that went under such titles as “reflexivity”, “reflection”, or “Transcendental Ego”. We find ourselves through our moods, Heidegger believes. In my anxiety I am brutally faced with the fact of my having-been-thrown: being around, having to decide without ever having chosen to be here. Moods constitute the





experience of the burden of Being. But moods do not necessarily make us wiser, more thoughtful or more cognizant of reasons. Moods pass – and we are eager that they pass; we enjoy their passing and so lose the revelation that they bear. Indeed, in the inattentiveness and inauthenticity – the ‘taking-for-granted’ – that everyday Being is, I am just absorbed, taken up, submerged, subjugated by the They.

All understanding, Heidegger writes in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, is essentially related to an affective self-finding which belongs to understanding itself. A mood is fundamentally affective self-finding, and this is not an affair distinct from, much less detrimental to understanding. It is a moment of understanding. One reason moods were treated sparingly in earlier philosophies was because they were seen in the Stoic tradition as perturbations that muddled the capability of the otherwise placid soul to reflect reality. Heidegger exults in moods because they constitute our being-with beings. What exactly does Heidegger mean by ‘mood’? Would one’s listlessness on an idle, sunny afternoon be a mood? Or would the privileging of science and technology that modernity is said to have bestowed be a mood? In *Being and Time*, Heidegger uses the compound phrase ‘state-of-mind’ (and also of course, ‘mood’). Dasein, he insists, always has some mood, even if it be only the pallid expression of one who appears to be ‘moodless’. The warm glow on the face of man who has enjoyed a hearty meal, basking in the affection of his family and being grateful for life’s munificence is a mood and one that discloses his being-there and his having-to-be. It is not an objective grasp of anything, the elements of which can be analyzed. But the mood of such a man would deliver him over to the unthematized conviction: “Thus I am, and have-to-be.” This man, relishing his contentment, may be no student of metaphysics at all, and he may very

well find our verbalizing his sentiment – “Thus I am, and have-to-be” – altogether strange, but the disclosure a mood brings about is the groundwork for any metaphysical articulation. That I am and have-to-be – what my mood reveals to me – is what I build on when I render a more theoretical account of Being. This in itself constitutes one important dimension of Heidegger’s thought: before theoretical articulation, there is some ‘pre-ontological understanding’, an antecedent unveiling that makes possible all theory. Dasein always stands in the disclosure of what is and only following from this does he construct theories.

The openness of Dasein to the world is attuned by a “state of mind”. Dasein can be threatened or dismayed by what is resistant or unserviceable because it is in a state of mind that enables the world to matter to it. Things and what happen to things can “matter” for Dasein, that is, can affect Dasein not merely in the physical sense but more basically in the existential-affective sense because Dasein is in-the-world with a “state of mind”. The openness of Dasein then is never pure beholding. It implies a submission to the world that allows anything to matter at all. Theorizing for its part is not leaving behind the mood. It is the mood of letting things come to us in a tranquil, tarrying alongside manner.

THE WAY OF UNDERSTANDING

Quite expectedly, Heidegger deals with understanding as our ‘comportment towards beings’. To understand the workings of a computer sufficiently so as to be able to write this book with it is ‘comportment towards the computer’. Whether the understanding be theoretical or practical, it is comportment, and because he avows his principal interest to be the ‘thinking of Being’, Heidegger points





out that all comportment towards beings involves an understanding of Being. To deal with things – whether the dealing be through thought experiments or through muscle-power – presupposes that there is an understanding of that it is To Be, obscured quite possibly by what might be overriding quotidian and mundane concerns, but still there!

Understanding is primordially the disclosure of the “for-the-sake-of-which” and of “significance”. Understanding then pertains to the entirety of Being-in-the-world. To understand is, existentially to be competent with Being as existence. To put it in plain language: it is knowing “how” to Be as existence (the mode of Being proper to Dasein). Dasein’s Being is existence and this is Being-possible. Dasein’s existence is understanding existence. Note that the Being-possible of Dasein is something into which Dasein is thrown. It is then thrown possibility.

Understanding has the structure of projection. To understand is to project oneself upon a possibility. Projection does not have to do with plans. It has to do with Dasein. Dasein as Dasein always projects. It understands itself in terms of its possibilities. Projecting involves two things: first, I project myself upon a “can be” of myself; second, Dasein unveils itself as this “can-be”. I can work my way through the difficult passages of a Rachmaninoff concerto, and let the whole thing off in exasperation. (Of course, it is presupposed that I know more than rudimentary piano.) And the unveiling of this possibility is the unveiling of myself as playing, humming to myself or at least recognizing the melodic line of the passage. It does not, however, grasp that upon which it projects thematically. That is to say, possibilities are not the content of the mind. Dasein rather lets the possibility be. It is its possibilities. Being a professor, for

example is not a “plan” (although it may also be) but a towards-which of my existence which I let be. Because of projection, Dasein is more than it factually is. It is that which it is not yet! Dasein’s potentiality for Being is already always potentiality for understanding. Possibilities are understood. Dasein understands itself as projected towards its possibilities. As projective, understanding is sight. This sight is directed to existence, knowledge of Self. Knowledge of the Self is grasping the disclosedness of Being-in-the-world in its constitutive items and doing so with understanding. Clearly then what we have to deal with here is not ‘understanding’ in the sense that a teacher is concerned with whether or not her obtuse pupils have understood the lesson, but rather understanding as the first movement of Dasein. “Understanding as the Dasein’s self-projection is the Dasein’s fundamental mode of happening”. There is thus fired a phenomenological salvo against the Cartesian ghosts that have since *Meditations on the First Philosophy* haunted speculative thought. Heidegger leaves no room for the idealist question to arise: How does mind reach outside reality? Dasein is understanding, and the possibilities projected in the very moment of understanding are always ‘worldly’ (better: worlded) possibilities.

To understand a pen is to project the possibility of writing with it, a possibility that is in turn projected upon the possibility of my having To Be. And this latter, Heidegger announces, must itself be projected upon something. Are we not in for a *progressus ad infinitum*? Heidegger arrives at the conclusion that lies at the core of his philosophizing: “If Dasein harbors the understanding of Being within itself, and if temporality makes possible the Dasein in its ontological constitution, then temporality must also be the condition of the possibility of the understanding of Being and hence of





the projection of Being upon time.” In its ontological constitution, Dasein is the projection of possibility, and it is temporality that makes this constitution possible. Hence the understanding of Being – which, I must, as the risk of being repetitious, point out is not the equivalent of a theoretical account ‘understanding’ as we have just thought it through – must also be a temporal event!

Understanding does not commence only when I take a cognitive stance towards anything, such as setting out to make heads-and-tails of ‘Being and Time’, or understanding why Teflon is can be used for non-stick frying pans without altering the taste of what is cooked. Understanding is therefore fundamental to Dasein. Dasein does not ‘exist’ first and then ‘understand’ later, as some kind of subsequent movement. (Scholastics distinguished between primary act – the existence of the faculty or the power, and second act – the operation of the faculty. The existence of the intellect was first act, its operation in simple apprehension and judgment, second act.) Heidegger says: “understanding is an original determination of the Dasein’s existence regardless of whether the Dasein pursues science in the manner of explanation or of understanding.”

It will help, I think, to tarry on the point of temporality and understanding. It may well be asked what all that has been said so far about understanding might have anything to do with what is commonly understood by ‘to understand’, as when a corporate director says ‘he understands’ why the market crashed. When I understand anything at all, I am ‘conjointly’ understanding myself in my peculiar capacity to be. It is a possibility for me to be ruined by the market’s ruin, as it is for me to be perversely gleeful about the woe that has befallen others. Again, it is a possibility for me to be perfectly nonchalant about

the event and wave it off as something happening ‘in a far off land’ that need not concern me. I comport myself towards my possibility, towards what I am *not yet* and in this respect, I am *ahead of myself*. This is the basis for any concept of the future. The future is not primordially that ‘not yet’ or the not-yet-now’. Rather it is ‘what I can be but am not yet’. Understanding and future imply each other. Time, being what it is in Heidegger’s thought, is a sub-title we will return to a little later.

STANDING IN THE LIGHT

Returning to Plato, Heidegger calls attention to ‘illumination’ as the condition of knowledge. We know only because we stand in the light? Is Heidegger introducing some mystical element into thought here? Light illumines; light unveils. To understand Being, Being must be illuminated. Now, this is even more curious talk because it implies something ‘antecedent’ to Being, something ‘beyond Being’ that illuminates it. All the more reason to be clear about this whole business of illumination! In *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* he puts it thus: “The basic condition for the knowledge of beings as well as for the understanding of Being is standing in an illuminating light. Or, to express it without an image, something upon which, in understanding, we have projected that which is to be understood. Understanding must itself somehow see, as unveiled, that upon which it projects.” The understanding of actuality must be illuminating. As a commentator of Heidegger, I have deliberately chosen to be ambivalent: Is ‘illuminating’ the achievement of understanding or does understanding suppose it, benefit from it, come to pass because of it? Heidegger suggests a response: “The understanding of Being already moves in a horizon that is everywhere illuminated, giving luminous brightness.” Read in the straightforward manner in which Heidegger puts





it – which may not always be too good an idea when reading Heidegger – it does seem that I who understand stand in the light of an illumination for which I cannot account, which cannot be attributed to my powers to shed light!

In the 1935 Freiburg lectures, later on presented together as *An Introduction to Metaphysics* we hear Heidegger making the claim that “Being disclosed itself to the Greeks as *physis*.” Being then discloses itself, and there is plenty of justification for a point my esteemed seminary professor, Francis Gevers, made about the so-called ‘later Heidegger’: Dasein stands in the light of Being. After meditating on lines from Pindar, Heidegger draws the conclusion that for the Greeks, ‘appearing’ was not something that Being *did*; rather, To Be was To Appear. “Appearing is the very essence of Being”. Beings, or entities, do show themselves – and in this consists the dispersal of Being. Being, as we have seen, is nothing other than the Being of be-ings (or entities), and therefore the showing-forth of entities is the dispersal of Being’s manifestation. It should not be too hard to see that when you talk ‘dispersal’ you are also talking concealment – so that, in a sense, Being is concealed in the appearance of entities or be-ings. Pindar, says Heidegger, wrote poetry and stood in the appointed essence of Being. Pindar was beneficiary of Being’s light – the light that ‘created’ Greek philosophy, that made Greeks think *physis* when they thought Being. This of course is challenging because it seems to constitute a hypostasizing of Being, the very pitfall Heidegger announced he was going to avoid in his ‘rediscovery’ of metaphysics. But when he insists that it was the Greek’s constant struggle to wrest being from appearance, then that even as To Be is To Appear, the dispersal in entities is also a moment of un-concealment that elicits the wrestling of Being from appearance.

It is interesting to note to what use Heidegger puts the Oedipus myth. Oedipus is, for him, the

embodiment of the Greek being-there (Dasein), and therefore his story is the tale of the struggle to wrest being from appearance. First appearing (and not only ‘putting on the appearance’, but in fact being) the savior and lord of the state, Oedipus is cast out of this appearance and his hideousness as murderer of his father and defiler of his own mother are brought to un-concealment. Oedipus must let all in on this terrible secret, but he is overwhelmed by the ‘light’ of the un-concealment and can bear it only by gouging his eyes out (so that the overpowering light may be shut out), and then crying to the people to open their doors to the manifestation of the man that he is.

Heidegger decries the night that has fallen upon humanity in part (‘in large part’ would be more accurate) because of the sciences. Knowledge cannot degenerate into science, and the original connection between Being, appearance and truth that was a matter of passion for the Greeks must be rediscovered. The wise person is not one who pledges allegiance to the truth, but plunges himself into the struggle of being, non-being and appearance. “Light” is not *quietatio*; it is rather *polemos* – struggle. Once more deriving inspiration from an obscure passage of Heraclitus, Heidegger concludes: the basic movement of Being is towards un-concealment, disclosure, and this remains its fundamental inclination whether in mystery or in distortion!

FALLEN IN EVERYDAYNESS!

Dasein usually maintains itself as taken up by the “They”. In this section we shall deal with Dasein’s understanding and interpreting under the dominion of the “They”. “Idle talk” involves a preservation of an understanding of the disclosed world. The understanding is “deposited” in the way things have been expressed. There arises a common understanding coming from a common





awareness that follows from having the same in view. The Being-said is itself the surety of what is talked about. The route followed is gossiping and passing the word along. Things, in other words, are so because that is how everyone else is talking about them. Idle talk is the possibility of understanding everything without previously making the thing one's own. One is released from the genuine task of understanding. One deals with an undifferentiated kind of intelligibility. The result is that Being-in-the-world is closed off and entities within-the-world are covered up. What is left undone is an act of understanding. But "idle talk" presents itself as a understanding of what is talked about. This confidence in the obvious/commonplace/already-understood discourages new inquiry and disputation. When Dasein maintains itself in idle talk it becomes cut-off from its genuine relationships of Being towards the world.

A basic kind of being which belongs to everydayness is the "falling" of Dasein. Its "absorption" in the world takes place in the form of Being-lost in the publicness ("commonplaceness") of the "They". Dasein then in its everydayness is fallen from itself as authentic potentiality for Being itself. It has fallen into the world. Inauthenticity is a distinctive kind of Being-in-the-world. Dasein in his inauthenticity is completely fascinated by the world of the "They". For the most part, Dasein maintains itself in itself Being by not-being-itself.

Falling is not the result of some primordial sin. Being-in-the-world is itself Tempting. The way things have been publicly interpreted is a temptation in itself. These hold Dasein fast in fallenness. Falling is also tranquilizing because it keeps someone smug in the belief that he is leading and sustaining a full and genuine life.

Falling is alienating; it is drifting along; it's own-most potentiality-for-Being is hidden from it. In inauthenticity Dasein is deluded by the public interpretation of things. The downward movement of inauthenticity towards the groundlessness of "they" tears away understanding from an authentic projection of possibilities into the tranquilized position that it possesses everything and that everything is within its reach. The falling of Dasein is then not a "privative" condition of Dasein. It is rather an essential ontological structure of Dasein. And yet there can be falling only because of the existentiality of Dasein because Being-in-the-world is an issue for it.

TIME AND TEMPORALITY

In this section of our journey through Heidegger's 'thinking of Being', we shall take guidance from "The Basic Problems of Phenomenology".

As I write these lines, I am 'ahead of myself' – writing in order to complete this section, in order to complete the book, in anticipation of those who will read it, or perhaps in dread of those who will choose to leave to gather dust in some corner of a cellar. But I am not only dealing here with the book I am writing; I am dealing with what Heidegger loves to call 'my ownmost possibility for Being'. And while I will be lured into thinking of this possibility as the possibility of being an author, or a professor, or a renowned authority on Heidegger – that is, thinking of Being in terms of a specific some-being, some-one (allowing Being to be thus concealed in being an author, being a professor, being an authority), at rock-bottom, I have to do with a possibility for Being.

The moment of achievement is therefore always postponed and so it is that existence is also





always reaching out towards the future – futural. The future then is not some hidden, already existing realm into which I must yet find my way, whether it be real in ‘another dimension’ or in God. Rather, the future makes its original appearance as the being-ahead way Dasein is, its reaching towards what can be, its possibility for Being.

But that which comes-to-be, Dasein, must already have been. And whether it tries so hard to forget or tries as hard to remember, the past can no more be shrugged off than can the fact that *to bring about a possibility* is to *have been there* to bring it about. *Coming to be* and *having been* are not discrete activities or undertakings of Dasein. They are constitutive of existence. They are what existing is all about. So it is then that the more accurate realization is not that Dasein exists *in time*, but that its existence *is temporal*. While Aristotle did propose the useful idea of time as the measure of motion (a theory that rests on his recondite notions of act and potency), what Heidegger has led us to realize is that time is not something ELSE by which our being is measured. Rather the future and the past are fundamentally what “to exist” means for Dasein.

So, where is the present? As might be expected, following from his treatment of future and past, Heidegger does not think of the present as something we are “in”, some kind of a temporal zone in which we are. Present is ‘empresenting’ Dasein – by which Heidegger means: Dasein as always involved with, making use of things that are at hand and getting lost in them. A pianist who is furiously rehearsing for a concert is lost in his rehearsal, engaged with her piano and the score she must perfect, perhaps also with the orchestra that is to accompany her, and the conductor with his tantrums. The present is one’s being absorbed with things, and being absorbed by them.

Temporality then in its most original form is Dasein’s very existence, and therefore past, present and future are united in the unity that Dasein is, in the distention of that existence that *has been* and that *reaches out to what it can be* by being lost in what *is*. What calendars – whether they be those we find as added features to our mobile phones, or the more apocalyptic kinds like the Mayan calendar – announce future days, and old calendars as well as chronicles mark past days. But ‘future’ and ‘past’ in these cases will only be derivative, because they all involve an objectifying of what Dasein by existence is. The existence of Dasein is *towards, back to* and *with*: towards the possibility for being, back to what it has been, with things that it uses or examines or loses itself in. Heidegger uses the term “ecstatic”, but it is preferable to misspell it deliberately as *ekstatic* to bring it closer to *ekstatikov* which fundamentally is stepping-outside-self, in that movement that implies three actually: towards what it can become as having been, and presently absorbed in what it is doing and occupied with.

WHAT THEN OF THE RELATION BETWEEN BEING AND TIME?

There are many things I understand – or at least, I think I understand. I understand things around me, but each thing, each being discloses, in some way, Being. Every being is understood then insofar as it is projected on Being. There is then entailed, if one will, an understanding of Being. Be-ings (things, objects, entities) are understood only in the light of Being. This is not to say, of course, that only one who wends his way first through the deep waters of metaphysics can know things. This would be patently untrue; what is indisputably true however, is what we find in the very first pages of *Being and Time*:



“Inquiry, as a kind of seeking, must be guided beforehand by what is sought. So the meaning of Being must already be available to us in some way. As we have intimated, we always conduct our activities in an understanding of Being. Out of this understanding arise both the explicit question of the meaning of Being and the tendency that leads us towards its conception. We do not *know* what Being means. But even if we ask, ‘What is Being?’, we keep within an understanding of the ‘is’, though we are unable to fix conceptually (my preferred rendition to the original, clumsy: conceptionally) what that ‘is’ signifies.” (Int. 1)

For as long as we use the copula ‘is’ then we carry within us some pre-understanding of what it is To Be, a pre-understanding within which we understand beings.

The ‘brightness’ of Being within which beings are to be understood is no mere literary hyperbole on the part of Heidegger – nor is he the first to use this term in relation to what is. Scholastics poetically pointed to “*fulgor obiecti assensum mentis rapiens... the brightness of the object compelling assent of the mind*” as the ultimate motive of Truth – the irresistible brightness of what is. But in Heidegger, there is something more to this *fulgor*: there is an affective dimension to it. All understanding, Heidegger thinks, is affective self-finding. Moods disclose – and that is why we said that moods matter not as perturbations that ought to be suppressed but as the climate, in fact the condition, within which things are disclosed. *Estofada de lengua* whets my appetite; an android device excites me; a chattering woman bores me, a cloying love story annoys me, etc.!

Almost repeating what he wrote as he commenced *Being and Time*, Heidegger writes, as he brings *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* full circle:

“Being itself, if indeed we understand it, must somehow or other be projected upon something. This does not mean that in this projection being must be objectively apprehended or interpreted and defined, conceptually comprehended, as something objectively apprehended. Being is projected upon something from which it becomes understandable, but in an *unobjective* way. It is understood as yet pre-conceptually, without a logos; we therefore call it the *pre-ontological understanding of Being*. Pre-ontological understanding of Being is a kind of understanding of Being. It coincides so little with the ontical experience of beings that ontical experience necessarily presupposes a pre-ontological understanding of Being as an essential condition. The experience of beings does not have any explicit ontology as a constituent, but, on the other hand, the understanding of Being in general in the pre-conceptual sense is certainly the condition of the possibility that being should be objectified, thematized at all.”

What happens in this thematization – the objectification of Being, the transition from pre-ontological understanding to a philosophy of Being – is rendering explicit that which we already “somehow know” as well as that upon which this understanding is projected.

If, as we have seen, Dasein, by constitution, understands and if, as we have likewise seen, Dasein is thoroughly temporal – in fact is Dasein only AS temporal, then it remains for ask to ask how projection is grounded in temporality or, in less intimidating fashion, what the relation is between understanding and projecting.

In *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Heidegger develops this relation by unraveling resoluteness: the stance of authentic Dasein. Resoluteness is grounded in a specific mode of temporality: a specific present belongs to resoluteness. Dasein



is resolute insofar as it understands itself from its own own-most peculiar possibility-of-being. Understanding is *futural*: Dasein comes to be from its chosen possibility. The same futural movement – towards the coming to be of its possibility-for-being – there is *repetition*: Dasein takes itself in all that it has been and bringing itself to the realization of its possibility-for-being. Dasein's specific present lies precisely in this unity of its running ahead of itself into what it can be by bringing itself as it has been into such a fruition. But we will remember of course that Heidegger's analysis is that of resolute Dasein, authentic Dasein which is not the way Dasein is 'everyday'. Rather, everyday Dasein is present-with the things it busies itself with: the tools it uses, the tasks at which it is busy. Its present is its dissipation in the world of its concerns. Thus dissipated, the past is 'forgetting' and the future is a 'waiting' for what is to come upon it. "Instant" is the term Heidegger gives to the present that belongs to resoluteness and springs from it, and the 'now' is a derivation of the 'instant'. So, when people think of time as the succession of 'nows', they have not yet gotten to the bottom of it all!

It is in time then that Being is revealed, not in the paltry sense that we arrive at some understanding of Being at "some time", but in the sense that it is time is what we make use of to understand Being. Heidegger does not think it a curiosity of history that philosophers, ancient and medieval, though of be-ings either as temporal, aeviternal (as angels were supposed to be, changing not in substance but in activity) and eternal (unchanging in substance and in activity). Heidegger finds here at work an understanding of the profound link between Being and time. Dasein is constituted temporally, and if Dasein is the privileged access to Being, then the possibility of the understanding of Being must also rest on temporality. Before me is a computer, and with

it I am engaged, I am occupied. With it I put down my thoughts on Heidegger, my reading of his philosophizing. It is a tool, something handy. But its handiness manifests itself in the possibility I project of finishing this book, or at least this chapter. My present engagement with the computer, my being hooked-up at present to this computer is in realization of the possibility I bring about of writing this book. The tool then is unveiled in its handiness in my present because of the self-projection that temporality essentially consists in. I understand the Being of this kind of a be-ing (and of other be-ings like it, such as pens, cups of coffee, glasses of coke, etc.) is unveiled in self-projection.

DEATH AND BEING-UNTO-DEATH

Most of us think we would welcome the prospect of life unending. But would we? If we were to be assured that our lives would just go on indefinitely, would we not feel somehow condemned? So, is this self-projection, bringing possibilities to pass, something that stretches into that terrible void of the indefinite and the unending? Fortunately, it is that which most dread that spares us: death. Death is that possibility by which all possibilities become impossible.

Being-ahead-of-itself is the structure of Dasein. Hopelessness does not mean the absence of possibilities. It is the rather a mode of turning towards ones possibilities. Even in being "without illusions", or being ready for anything, Dasein is still being-ahead-of-itself although this being-ahead-of-itself is hidden. Lack of totality insofar as Dasein is concerned means that something is still out-standing (i.e., remaining to be realized). When absolutely nothing more is outstanding, Dasein is no longer Being-there. It is hence impossible to experience Dasein as complete as an ontic whole because of





the very nature of Dasein itself. It is therefore paradoxically, perhaps tragically so, that Dasein is whole only death.

The death of Dasein is never experienced by those left behind. The loss experienced is the loss of those who are bereaved. In the matter of dying, the Being of one Dasein cannot be substituted for another Dasein. Dying is something every Dasein must take upon itself at the time. Death is a possibility-for-Being. This in some way puts death on a positive note, not because of immortality or resurrection but because it is something Dasein realizes, actualizes. This has given rise to a thinking on Death as ACT. In death the very Being of one's own Dasein is an issue. Mine-ness and existence (the projecting of a possibility) are ontologically constitutive of Death.

Once more, it is good to remind ourselves that all this talk of death is not at the service of some 'thanatology' but constitutes part of Heidegger's "thinking of Being". To think of death is to think of the possibility of being that includes within itself the possibility of non-Being. This thrownness unto death reveals itself in anxiety. Anxiety in the face of death is not to be confused with fear in the face of one's demise. Anxiety is not an occasional mood, but a constitutive state of Dasein: anxiety in the face of one's thrownness – towards –the-end. This thrownness of Dasein is revealed in a state – of- mind. But there are many attitudes towards this possibility and, and one of them is feeling or evasion in the face of the possibility of death.

The everyday self, the self spell-bound by the "They", is constituted by the way things have been publicly interpreted and passed around in idle talk. Idle talk manifests the way every Dasein comports itself towards death. For idle talk. Death is a well-known event arising

within-the-world. "One dies" – and this suggests an indefinite event, though proximately not yet present-at-hand for oneself, and therefore not threatening. It is "They" who die. The event of death is leveled off: one dies = this one = nobody!

But there can and should be resoluteness in the face of Death. That way, Dasein projects itself without illusions. Here, it becomes very difficult to see how Heidegger can avoid the charge of proposing an ethics even as he professes to do metaphysics, an ethics of authenticity!

Death is not something at-hand, something you can put your finger on. It has to be understood as a possibility, cultivated as a possibility and put up with as a possibility. In short, we must comport ourselves towards it. To anticipate death is to pretend to have a foothold on it; it is the pretense of already – having it, of its being under one's control, and thus it is to miss it authentically. We are closest to Death as possibility the further we put it from anything actual. Death as possibility gives Dasein nothing to be actualized at all. It signifies the measureless impossibility of existence. Death holds out no prospects for Dasein. There is nothing to picture; there is nothing to become intent on. An existential projection of death consists in death as Dasein's ownmost possibility. Disclosed is Dasein's ownmost potentiality for Being since his Being is at issue.

RE-LEARNING FROM THE GREEKS

It is interesting that Heidegger brings *Being and Time* to an end – at least that part that he wrote (because we are told by several commentators that he had intended to write on!) – in the following manner:





“The existential-ontological constitution of Dasein’s totality is grounded in temporality. Hence the ecstatic projection of Being must be made possible by some primordial way in which ecstatic temporality temporalizes. How is this mode of the temporalizing of temporality to be interpreted? Is there a way which leads from primordial *time* to the meaning of *Being*? Does *time* manifest itself as the horizon of *Being*?”

When we read these lines, of course, we are aghast. We thought we had reached a conclusion in the realization that Being unveiled itself in Time, that Time was the very condition for the possibility of the understanding of Being. But these questions seem to throw us right back where we started!

Heidegger is known for his readings from pre-Socratic philosophers. He picks on fragments (because many times, it is all we have from this era of speculative thought) and then proffers a reading on which he builds his characteristic metaphysical reflections. This is what we get in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, a series of lectures he delivered at the University of Freiburg in 1935. It is a work that comes after *Being and Time* and that refers to it. Ralph Manheim, who translated this work, makes this note on Heidegger’s use of Greek texts:

“A word must be said about Heidegger’s translations from the Greek, which differ radically from other translations of the same texts. Heidegger’s translations are based on his investigations of Greek words and Greek thought. Since his interpretations of words and thought are very different from the traditional ones, it is only natural that his translations should be different from traditional translations. What I have rendered is Heidegger’s versions and not the Greek originals”. (*An Introduction to Metaphysics*, ix)

We are confronted with things (the translation renders them as ‘essents’), what “are”, and so we demonstrate a fundamental competence at recognizing being (that something IS) and differentiating it from non-being. This, despite the fact that ‘being’ – beyond any particular essent or entity – might at first seem like an empty word, a fatuous concept. If it is not something, what is it? But because we affirm that some things are, and maintain that some things are not, then we have some familiarity with BEING. Many will hardly bother for whatever is not a thing (a determinate something: this car, this wrench, this spark-plug, etc.), exactly the reason why, to many, the occupation of philosophers is staring at the sky! What however the thoughtful person arrives at is the realization that what belongs to every entity is being. The ears of a dog, you can compare with the ears of a rabbit, and the speech of humans, you can compare with the squawking of birds, but the being by which a person is, by which a dog is, by which water is – what is there to compare this with? In this sense the being that we find dispersed (or, with equal aptness, realized) in be-ings or things is unique!

Yet, it would be quite wrong to think of Being as one thinks of ‘tree’ in respect to mango trees, avocado trees, mahogany trees, teak trees, acacia trees, pine trees, etc. Here Heidegger rejoins Aristotle and rejects the identification of the universality of Being with the universality of genus. Scholastic philosophers, taking the clue from Aristotle, taught that ‘Being’ was not a genus but a ‘transcendental’, rising above all species and genera. So, while a genus makes sense only because of the particulars that bear it so that it is worthier our while to be concerned with the concrete members of the genus, not so with Being. It draws its own investigation; it calls for inquiry. What is vague must be made clear; what is indeterminate must be made determinate. In other words, Being must be





thematized. From the intuition of Being the move must be made to its conceptualization, or to an account of Being.

Heidegger then states a bold but not altogether unexpected thesis. Were we bereft of this preconception of Being, not only would there be one less word in our vocabulary. Rather, there would be no vocabulary at all, no language, for language is the thing bringing itself to expression or utterance. For that to happen, the thing must be understood, and to understand a thing is to understand it in its being. But there is a 'hermeneutic circle' at work here: we speak because we have some understanding of Being (although a formal account, a metaphysics, may follow much later, if it ever follows at all), but it is also because we speak that be-ings or things are open to us. It is not that the word has the magical power to cause things to unveil themselves; rather, it is that our essence as speakers is the very same essence by which Being is unveiled to us. You cannot have one without the other: speaking is principally uttering Being, and there is a disclosure of Being because we can utter Being.

From this the thrust of Heidegger's argument is relentless but not altogether implausible: the understanding of Being, though vague, is what in fact grounds the possibility of our being-there, in that we could not be as we are, the be-ing that brings about possibilities, that is engaged with the world and that is anxious about having-to-be without this 'vague' notion of Being that we have somehow depreciated. It is that, in other words, which we have taken to be marginal – the unarticulated understanding of being – that is in fact essential and crucial.

Actually, Being discloses itself, or better, insinuates itself very frequently in speech. "God is good", "The professor is in", "He is dead", "Red

is stop", "The music is great": obviously, 'is' has different uses in the different utterances, but somehow the different uses suggest Being. But this is being duplicitous, is it not: to say on the one hand that Being insinuates itself whenever we use 'is' in a sentence, and then to admit that it has different meanings. But it might just be this duplicity that is instructive: the senses will be as different as there are beings, things talked about. To talk about God is quite clearly to talk about someone or something other than man or thing (a point that may seem so evident but is so often forgotten in the passion of religious talk!) and to talk about a frog is quite other than to talk about the theory of curved space. But all these, we assert 'to be'; of them all, we say they are...and we understand of which we speak. We know therefore Being, because we know that one thing or the other, that things are!

Heidegger has doubts about the aptness of dealing with Being as genus, and with that concession to the "Schoolmen", Heidegger does not think it proper to look for what might be 'generic' to the different uses of 'is'. But that is not a surrender to the completely equivocal, for he spells out the horizon of Being. "Yet a single determinate trait rules through them all. It directs our contemplation of 'being' to a definite horizon, in which understanding is effected. The limitation of the meaning of 'being' remains within the sphere of actuality and presence, of permanence and duration, of abiding and occurrence." (*An Introduction to Metaphysics*, 92) And this determinateness is not a matter of historical accident; it is what has defined our 'being-there': our taking a stand, our being engaged, our being temporal, our asking of the question of the meaning of what it is To Be, and it is as ancient as the Greek pre-Socratics. We are historically defined by the question we ask.





Being, Heidegger notes, is often contrasted to Becoming. But, as we should by now have learned to expect from reading Heidegger, Parmenides – who wrote of Being: “how being, without genesis, is without destruction, complete, alone there, without tremor and not still requiring to be finished, nor was it before, nor will it be in the future...” in a fragment Heidegger appropriates and translates for his purposes – and Heraclitus of the proverbial *pantha rei* (Everything passes) actually say the same thing, but Heidegger does not, by deliberate choice, go any further.

In respect to the contrast between Being and Appearing, he writes more copiously. To Be is to appear. Appearance is not something added to or adventitious to Being. (*An Introduction to Metaphysics*, 100 et seq.) Appearing is the very essence of Being. But Heidegger is saying something very much more than just that beings appear. He says, for instance, that Being appeared to the Greeks as *physis*. If we are reading him rightly then, there is something ‘epochal’ (in the sense of epoch-making) in the appearing of Being. And then we must also ask: Is it Being, or beings that appear? Being appears in its dispersal in be-ings, Heidegger replies. But because all appearance is determined by standpoint, all appearance is view-point, in a sense, all appearance is a construct: the view-point of my choosing that is then imposed on that which appears. So it is that the un-concealment that is the very event of Being is also concealment. At all times, Heidegger admonishes, be Greek! And by this he refers to the understanding of un-concealment, unveiling, appearing as the very essence of Being and not some issue that requires correspondence, as when the Scholastics say of truth that it is *adequatio intellectus et rei*. But matters are never so simple – especially with Heidegger. The path of appearance that is traversed is one on which one finds and one loses Being. The superior man is not he who grasps

at the certain which he then transforms into the immutable, but one who braves the buoyant storm on the path of Being, who has known the dread of the path of non-being and who has kept to the third path: that of appearing. (*An Introduction to Metaphysics*, 113)

ON TIME AND BEING

In 1962, Heidegger delivered a lecture – “On Time and Being” – which has the same title, his commentators observe, as that of the third, never published, part of *Being and Time*. But it is more than just what should have been the last installment of *Sein und Zeit*, as Joan Stambaugh, the essay’s translator (and other readers of Heidegger) point to what they call an “obvious reversal” – the famous *kehre* – in his thought. “Reversals” are of course dramatic and it always makes things more interesting to say that a philosopher has reversed himself. What seems more reasonable and more probable, however, is that the beginnings of this later posture are to be found already in *Being and Time*.

Being must be thought apart from be-ings, otherwise, the metaphysical project never gets accomplished. But from ancient times, Being has always been thought of as present – ‘presencing’ – and, in this respect, temporal. So although not a be-ing, a consideration of Being is perforce a consideration of time.

Here, we encounter the famous *es gibt* that, in Heidegger, is almost a cry of exultation: It gives. He will not admit the expressions “Being is” and “Time is” because these are said of be-ings: “A fruit is on the table”. Rather we say: “There is Being” and “There is time”. “There is” translates into “It gives” (and of course, “it is given”). Crucial at this point is what Heidegger says himself of how we are to think Being:





“To think Being explicitly requires disregarding Being to the extent that it is only grounded and interpreted in terms of beings and for beings as their ground, as in all metaphysics. To think Being explicitly requires us to relinquish Being as the ground of beings in favor of the giving which prevails concealed in the unconcealment, that is, in favor of the It gives. As the gift of this It gives, Being belongs to giving. As a gift, Being is not expelled from giving. Being, presence, is transmuted.” (*On Time and Being*, p. 6)

From thinking of that by which be-ings are to that which gives, to the gift, to the given (where given is not a thing), that is the movement Heidegger would have us take, because to think of ‘ground of being’ is still to think of Being in terms of be-ings. In this sense, without contradiction, Being both IS and IS NOT. It is not in the sense that a be-ing is. In the array of things-in-the-world we will not, cannot and should not find Being. If we did, it would not be Being. It is, because ‘it gives’ and nothing gives nothing! What ‘it gives’ is the unconcealing of presencing.

But why must we even introduce ‘presencing’? The question answers itself, for the question asks about what is present (what is ‘presently discussed’, what is ‘present as an issue’, among so many other presences!) Unconcealed and available to thought, we deal with the inevitability of presence. But Heidegger says something very interesting at this point: The all-pervasiveness of technology (from the computer I now use to the robotic extensions of human vision into the outer reaches of space and the depths of the sea), we hear “that claim of Being which speaks from the innermost core of modern technology.” (*On Time and Being*, p. 7) Of course, they who remain fascinated by the workings of technology – like the appearance of a hologram – do not think Being, but, in its givenness, in its giving,

Being calls and speaks over and yes, through, the things that enamor and mesmerize.

Heidegger then speaks very powerfully of ‘presencing’, calling on all the key concepts in the history of philosophy – The One, *idea*, *substantia*, *actualitas*, *monad*, *objectivity*, *the will of reason*, *the will to will in the eternal recurrence of the same* as the manifestations of presencing. Are we to take these as the ways of presence, the manifestations of presence, or the very ‘present’ (that does not admit of contrast to past and future) itself? Heidegger provides the clue: Whatever can be noted historically is found within history. These in fact are the transformations of Being (and that Being and presencing are, in this respect identified should not surprise us any longer), not because Being is itself transformed but because ‘It gives Being’ engenders epochs that we sometimes periodize as “ancient”, “medieval”, “modern”, etc. The recognition that ‘it gives’, that “Being gives”, is also the recognition of the transformations by which we reckon periods and epochs. The giving of Being is why Parmenides and Heraclitus wrote as they did, the reason that Aristotle thought essence and the tertium quid of *potentia* – and of course, the reason that technology overwhelms and often shuts out the question of Being!

Es gibt...It gives. ‘It’ is not some stand-in for a be-ing, an entity that serves as a subject, the active pole that does the giving. *Being is given.* That would, to me, come close to workable rendition, except that we must at every turn reject the temptation to read ‘given’ as some kind of Biblical divine passive. Very interestingly, Heidegger then goes on to say: “In the beginning of Western thinking, Being is thought, but not the ‘It gives’ as such. The latter withdraws in favor of the gift which It gives. That gift is thought and conceptualized from them on exclusively as Being with regard





to beings.” (*On Time and Being*, 8) Obviously, Heidegger makes a profound reverential bow in the direction of Heraclitus, Parmenides and the whole lot of Pre-Socratics for whom he has tremendous respect. But while he credits them with having thought Being – a thinking which even now has to be recovered – they did not think the “It gives”. They reveled in the gift, but not in the “It gives”. The Being by which be-ings are is the Being we must direct thought to. And distinguishing between Being and be-ings is pointing out the ‘ontological difference’. But the “It gives”, is this some distinct issue? It is the giving of the gift, and in light of the discussion that has preceded we can, with good reason, think of it as the giving of Being that distinguishes the age of the pre-Socratics from that of Plato and Aristotle, and that of Aquinas, Scotus, and the High Scholastics, and that of the time of machines and engines, of space-flight and androids and tablets!

And here, the language of Heidegger becomes quasi-theological: he talks of ‘sending’ – by which he means ‘the giving that holds itself back and withdraws’. And because ‘holding back’, ‘withdrawing’ is *εποχή*, than we are here in the face of the ‘epochal’, the history of Being, which is not the history of our thinking of Being really but the history of the sending. For Heidegger then there are different epochs because of the different manifestations, sendings of Being, sendings of which we are recipients of the gift, neither senders nor agents!

Epochs are neither necessary (in which case there is nothing ‘fated’ about the particular manifestation of Being, the event of the sending – even if Fate figures prominently in Heidegger’s thought with a different intendment), nor are they contingent. What Heidegger does assert is that there is appropriateness in the overlapping of epochs, itself an obscure claim that we have

good reason to surmise means for Heidegger that in the overlapping of epochs are the giving – what one other commentator called the event of the ontological ‘differing’ – and the “It gives” to be thought for how else, indeed, are these to be approached? (*On Being and Time*, 9) Heidegger identifies these epochs using as markers the key concepts of key (or those whom he considers key) philosophers. So “It was given” as *idea* in Plato, *energeia* in Aristotle, position in Kant, absolute concept in Hegel, will to power in Nietzsche. While we usually deal with these as theoretical or systematic accounts of Being, they have to be – before they can be accounts – manifestations of Being. But if we are to take the key concepts of philosophers as the manifestations, the epochal sending, does this not make of the philosopher the prophet who announces the sending and conveys what was sent? And how, then, does one distinguish true prophets and frauds? But philosophers themselves are no better able to think out of the parameters of the sending than are all else who think within it. It is precisely when they articulate the provenance of the manifestation that they are bound, precisely, to the manifestation. Thus it was that Aristotle could not think Being other than as substance (and the accidents of substance), and Hegel, as Absolute Idea or Universal Spirit.

We then return to the original conjunction, and so we ask whether it is Time that sends Being. Being means ‘letting-be-present’ or presencing. But Being is two things at once: both present, and now. Being-present or letting-be-present (allowing-to-presence) is ‘unconcealing’. But ‘presence’ also means lasting, the lasting of that which endures (duration). We then arrive at the present as the ‘lasting that comes towards us, human beings.’ We have, as a result, one of the characteristic lines of what has been called ‘the later Heidegger’: “Man: standing within the approach of presence, but in such a way





that he receives as a gift the presencing that It gives by perceiving what appears in letting-presence.” It gives, and definitely “it” does not have “us” or “human beings” as its antecedent. We stand before the approach of the present, the recipients or – in another respect – the witnesses of what is given (*Of Time and Being*, 12) Here, the destining of Being is conjoined with the humanity of man. If man were not the recipient of the gift, if we did not stand in the light of that which approaches, the presence which comes to pass, then not only would Being forever be concealed, not only would the question of Being never be raised. “Man would not be man”.

But presencing – present-ing – is more than what is at hand, more than the present. What has been has a present as does what is to be. Even if only by memory or reminiscence, by tokens or traces, or even in that which could have been but never was, what has been is present. And so is that which is anticipated, that which insinuates its approach, or that which, by its remoteness, seems unattainable. Heidegger would not have us reach the implausible conclusion that past, present and future are now present before us, but he insists that they do belong together in offering themselves to each other in that presencing that marks what, by itself, is a reaching out.

Before space and time are cosmological subjects, they are metaphysical. Space-time is what opens up to us in the futural reaching out that involves present, past and future. “Time-space now is the name for the openness which opens up in the mutual self-extending of futural approach, past and present. This openness exclusively and primarily provides the space in which space as we usually know it can unfold.” (*On Time and Being*, 14) We do not open up the space; we stand in the space that is opened by the mutual reaching out of future, past and present: The present that retains within it the past and

portends the future. Original space is therefore not measurable space, as original time is not countable time. It is the space creating when that which is to come opens up what has been as that which has been connects with what is to be. But this means the ‘nearness’, the ‘nearhood’ holds future, present and past in that proximity that maintains the distance between them but allows genuine space to unfold.

Questions such as “What is the It that gives?” or “Where does the giving take place?” are not unexpected, but that is only because we think in terms of one thing that gives another, or of a thing lying around in some place. But when we recall that what we deal with is Being as how Being is present as epoch-defining and time, as the realm of the manifold being-present, then the questions become clearly misplaced, an extension of the habit formed in respect to things to the inquiry into Being.

It is NOT time that gives in the exultant declaration “It gives”, for time is itself given in the “It gives”. Setting our signs on the ‘giving’ shows that what we have in it is the sending of Being in an opening that extends. That is time. Time is implicated in the destining of Being; Being’s sending is time. But this is not merely some charming formula: The sending of Being is always an opening up that is extended – a presenting that allows what can be to be brought about and so to become ‘what has been’ brought about. It is the opening up both of human history and of existential space. Wishing to obviate any beguilement that presses to know what the “It” might be that gives – with a hint that It might be a be-ing, or, as unhelpfully, Being itself but hypostasized (thought of as some kind of subject), then Heidegger suggests an approach to the thinking of It: “Simply by thinking the ‘It’ in the light of the kind of giving that belongs to it: giving as destiny, giving as





an opening up which reaches out. Both belong together, inasmuch as the former, destiny, lies in the latter, extending opening up.” (*On Time and Being*, 19)

In discussing his elusive concept of *Ereigniss* – appropriation (which does not mean what we would suppose it to mean!) – Heidegger provides a summary of his intrepid “thinking of Being”, almost concealed within the verbiage of his long-winded ruminations: “Being proves to be destiny’s gift of presence, the gift granted by the giving of time.” (*On Time and Being*, 22) Thinking as I do, handling what I handle, considering things in one way rather than the other (what can be more sophisticatedly called “thought-frames”, “terrains and surfaces”, etc.), the possibilities that present themselves as possible in the recovery of what has been – all this is the gift of presence that is the giving of time and in this consists Being. But the giving is even more fundamental: that there can be any entertainment of possibility, that there can be any use of tools to bring about results, that there is that space that is vulgarly denominated as

past-present-future: this is the destiny by which the present is given.

Being, Heidegger clarifies, disappears in Appropriation (*Ereigniss*), and Appropriation is what is implicated in the destiny of presence. There is, in Appropriation, a hint of holding back, that which does not allow for total unconcealment, and indeed, total unconcealment of Being is very much like that limit concept of the *ding-an-sich* that it was in Kant, granted by unattainable. What is available is what is destined: the present space open to me, to us, to our time.

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