Introduction

"Unconcealment," "*Unverborgenheit*," was a term that first entered Heidegger's philosophy as a translation for the ancient Greek word *alêtheia*. The more standard translation of *alêtheia* is "truth" (*Wahrheit* in German), but Heidegger elected to go with a literal translation: *a-lêtheia* means literally "not-concealed." He did this because he believed the early Greeks thought of "truth" as primarily a matter of "making available as unconcealed, as there out in the open, what was previously concealed or covered up" (see GA 63: 12).

Heidegger eventually came to believe that the Greeks themselves had failed to grasp what was essential to the notion of unconcealment, what he had initially thought was hinted at in their word *alêtheia*. He thus set to the task of thinking the original notion more originally than anyone had before (see GA 9: 237–8). Heidegger's thought can profitably be seen as working out the implications of the original understanding of unconcealment. To think unconcealment as such is to reject the idea that there are entities, we know not what, existing as they are independently of the conditions under which they can manifest themselves. Unconcealment is an event – it happens, and it only happens "with human beings" through "the creative projection of essence and the law of essence" (GA 36/37: 175). The thought of unconcealment also rejects the idea that there are uniquely right answers to questions like what entities are and what is being. Instead, it holds that we encounter entities as being what they are only in virtue of the world within which they can be disclosed and encountered. But these worlds are themselves subject to unconcealment – they emerge historically and are susceptible to dissolution and destruction. Thus being itself must be understood not as something determinate and stable, but in terms of the conditions for the emergence of entities and worlds out of concealment into unconcealment.

Unconcealment is a privative notion – it consists in removing concealment. Consequently, concealment is in some sense to be given priority

in understanding entities and worlds. But "concealment has," Heidegger observes, "a dual sense: 1. having no awareness of, and 2. no possible context" (GA 36/37: 188). Sense (1) describes a superficial form of concealment, where something is, but we lack a sense for it. Sense (2) points to the more profound and fundamental form of concealment. According to Heidegger, for an entity to be is for it to stand in a context of constitutive relations. The lack of any possible context is thus an ontological concealment – the absence of the conditions under which the entity in question could manifest itself in being. Thus there is a duality or productive ambiguity built into the core notion of unconcealment: unconcealment consists in bringing things to awareness, but also creating the context within which things can be what they are.

The core notion of unconcealment functions as a methodological principle throughout Heidegger's work. By methodological principle, I mean that unconcealment was in Heidegger's approach to philosophy the guideline for discerning the role and constitutive structure of the elements of ontology. One can see this by considering how it is that Heidegger defined the ontological features of his thought – for instance, the existentialia of *Being and Time* (Heidegger's ontological categories for the human mode of being), *Ereignis*, earth and world, language and the fourfold. All of these notions were understood in terms of the role they played in opening up a world, and disclosing us and uncovering entities on the basis of the possibilities opened up by a particular world projection. Heidegger's ontology was grounded in this way in the notion of unconcealment. The question in individuating and understanding ontological structures was always "what does *this* contribute to opening up a world and letting entities show up as the things they are?" Put differently, "what disclosive function does it perform?"

The same methodological principle is crucial to Heidegger's understanding of the main themes of study in this book: truth, language, and history. What is essential about each is the way it contributes to unconcealment. His focus on ontological structures and functions leads Heidegger to a rather idiosyncratic use of terminology. Heidegger uses words like language, truth, and history in what he sometimes calls an "ontologically broad" sense. Indeed, the very first rule of thumb for interpreting Heidegger is to remind oneself constantly that Heidegger tends to use his terms in a way quite distinct from the ordinary, everyday sense in which they are used. Indeed, this practice is so common that he typically alerts the reader when, for a change, he is using the word "in the usual sense" (*im gewöhnlichen Sinne*; *im üblichen Sinne*) or in the contemporary sense (*im heutigen Sinne*). Heidegger sees words in their familiar or everyday sense as an ontic and thus derivative (*abgeleitet*) use of words, which are properly understood in their more authentic, ontological sense.

A complete analysis of Heidegger's use of terms would address his dizzying array of different kinds of sense or meaning for a term. These include

(and this is a nonexhaustive list): the formal sense (*der formale Sinn*), the original sense (*der ursprünglichen Sinn*), the authentic sense (*der eigentlichen Sinn*), the essential sense (*der wesentlichen Sinn*), and the ontological sense (*der ontologische Sinn*). It would be worthwhile to tease out the subtle distinctions between each of these different senses, but for present purposes we must summarize.

Heidegger defines sense in general in the following way:

> Sense is that within which the intelligibility of something holds itself, without itself expressly and thematically coming into view. "Sense" means the "onto which" of the primary projection, from out of which something can be grasped as that which it is in its possibility. Projecting opens up possibilities, which is to say that it makes possible. (GA 2: H. 151)

Projecting is Heidegger's term for the way that we understand something by seeing how it relates to other things and activities. I understand a knife, for instance, by knowing in advance what a knife will do when brought into contact with all manner of things – butter and meat and onions and granite and so on. Or by understanding what place the knife plays in tying together a whole network of activities in, say, a kitchen. In understanding the knife, I project, that is, I am led or directed to other entities and activities, and grasp a certain pattern the knife makes in the world. The sense of the knife is the pattern of those activities or possibilities for use toward which I am oriented when I understand what the knife is and into which I am led when I use the knife. It is thus from out of or on the basis of some set of projected relations that I understand what anything is.

There are, of course, different kinds of things that we can project onto. We can project the perceptual properties of an entity onto sensorimotor contingencies. We can project an entity onto its possibilities of use, as with our knife example. Or we can project something onto the ontological structures that allow it to be the kind of entity it is – for instance, projecting a knife onto the structures of equipmentality and the equipmental functions that allow it to be equipment, or projecting a human life onto the care structure that allows it to be a human form of life. This last form of projection shows us the being-sense (*Seinssinn*, often translated as "meaning of being"). One arrives at the being-sense of something, then, by discovering what ontological structure most fundamentally shapes the possibilities that constitute that something as the thing it is. The "broad sense" (*weiten Sinne*) of a term applies it to everything that shares the same being-sense.

The way Heidegger usually proceeds is to examine the ontological structure and function of whatever is picked out by a term in its normal, narrow sense. That is, he asks what the thing to which we normally refer contributes to unconcealment, and what structural elements allow it to make that contribution. He then uses the term in such a way that it includes in its extension everything that shares the same ontological structure or function.

For example, we normally predicate truth of propositional entities like assertions or beliefs. But we can grasp a proposition as potentially true or false only to the extent that we can understand how to use it to uncover or make salient a fact or state of affairs. So we could say that the being of truth resides in uncovering. Thus Heidegger takes uncovering in a broad sense – lifting into salience – to be the ontological function of truth. He then applies the term in a broad sense to anything that uncovers. So, for instance, if I drive a nail into a board, I am uncovering the way a hammer is used. In this broad sense, my action, for Heidegger, is true – in hammering, I lift into salience what a hammer is and how it is used. Or if a building like a medieval cathedral supports the faithful in their efforts to inhabit a world opened up by God's grace, the cathedral is also true in the ontologically broad sense – it works by lifting into salience what is essential or most important about such a world, and supporting the disclosive practices of that world's inhabitants.

Now, if one does not keep firmly in mind that Heidegger is using his terms in a sense that is ontologically broad, it leads to terrible errors in interpreting what he has to say. For example, it makes a complete mess of things if (a) one thinks that truth is propositional truth (full stop), (b) one reads Heidegger discussing how swinging a hammer shows the truth about a hammer, and then (c) one concludes from this that Heidegger thinks swinging a hammer is true in the same way that a proposition is true, that it somehow must be cashed out in terms of a series of propositions the hammer-swinger knows about hammer-swinging.

So when Heidegger uses terms like truth, language, and history in a broad sense or a being sense (and he almost always does use them in these ways), the terms do not have the sense they do in ordinary discourse. And if they *do* refer to what we ordinarily refer to with these terms (along with a broader range of phenomena), they only do so insofar as they are picking them out as having a particular ontological structure or function, as playing a particularly important role in unconcealment. One might say Heidegger's terms function to pick out what is ordinarily referred to by those terms "under an ontological description," and, consequently, they also pick out other things that are not ordinarily referred to by those terms.

This book consists of ten essays that try to trace out the pattern that the logic of unconcealment makes in Heidegger's thought about truth, language, and history. Although some chapters are more focused on Heidegger's earlier writings, and some are more focused on his later essays, they cover the entire span of Heidegger's work. In my view, Heidegger's thought develops less in starts and stops and dramatic turnings, and more as a gradual recognition of the implications of pursuing an ontology of unconcealment. This gradual recognition unfolds as Heidegger explores different ways or paths of thought (*Denkwege*). His appreciation of unconcealment expands and deepens over time. But Heidegger's ways of describing unconcealment are constantly changing too. The deepening and enriching of his

thought of unconcealment cannot be separated from the expanding and shifting vocabularies he has for talking about unconcealment. Indeed, a central feature of Heidegger's approach to philosophy is his experimentalism – that fact that his philosophy is always under way.

"Everything lies on the way," Heidegger said. By that, he meant a couple of things. First, that there was no final goal or destination to his thought, that it was not possible to arrive at a point where everything was clear, where all problems were solved, where we have definitive answers to philosophical problems. The reason for this lies in the nature of unconcealment itself – there is no right way to be human, no uniquely right way to be an entity, no right way for the world to be organized, no single way that world disclosure works. As a result, all we can hope for in philosophy is an ever renewed and refined insight into the workings of unconcealment.

On this view of philosophy, progress consists in seeing and describing the phenomena of unconcealment more perspicuously, and communicating these insights more successfully. A philosopher's task is to keep his or her thought constantly under way, trying out new ways to explore productively the philosophical domain, remaining on them as long as profitable, but also abandoning them and setting off in a different way when the former way is exhausted. The aim is to participate in unconcealment, bringing it to our awareness, heightening our sensitivity and responsiveness to it. In his dialogue "From a Conversation on Language," Heidegger penned the following exchange:

JAPANESE: One says: you have changed your standpoint.
INQUIRER: I left an earlier standpoint, not in order to exchange it for another, but rather because even the prior position was merely a stopover while underway. What is enduring in thinking is the way. (GA 12: 94)

Or elsewhere:

> The ways of reflection constantly are changing, according to the station along the way at which the journey begins, according to the distance along the way that it traverses, according to the vision that opens up while underway into what is question worthy. (GA 7: 65)

What matters most in reading Heidegger is travelling at his side along his ways, letting him guide us through the philosophical landscape until we begin to discern the phenomena and understand the philosophical issues posed by the phenomena. His philosophy is meant to afford us an apprenticeship in seeing and describing unconcealment.

Heidegger's account of unconcealment emerged from his efforts to think through the essence of truth, as well as the conditions that make truth possible. The essays in the first section explore Heidegger's account of propositional truth and his argument that propositional truth necessarily depends on unconcealment. Chapter 1 looks at the various facets of

unconcealment that emerge as Heidegger works his way from propositional truth to the ontological sense of truth that is unconcealment. This culminates in his thought of a clearing, understood as something distinct from the unconcealment of entities and even of being.

The notion of unconcealment had, for much of Heidegger's career, an intimate connection with truth. This is not because Heidegger thought truth as typically conceived in contemporary philosophy – that is, the success of assertions or beliefs or other such propositional entities in agreeing with the way things are – had a special role to play in unconcealment. Rather, it is because he thought that unconcealment was an essential condition of there being truth in this narrower contemporary philosophical sense:

> *Alêtheia* means, translated literally: unconcealment. Yet little is gained with literalness .... Alêtheia does not mean "truth," if by that one means the validity of assertions in the form of propositions. It is possible that what is to be thought in *alêtheia*, speaking strictly for itself, does not yet have anything to do with "truth," whereas it has everything to do with unconcealment, which is presupposed in every determination of "truth." (GA 15: 403)

Because unconcealment was an ontological presupposition of truth, but not the other way around, it is a mistake to take Heidegger as transferring to unconcealment the properties possessed by truth as it is ordinarily understood. A failure to realize that Heidegger was using the word truth in a broad or ontological sense proved for many in Heidegger's day (and many still) an insuperable obstacle to understanding what Heidegger meant with his account of unconcealment. As the appendix to Chapter 1 explores, Heidegger used truth as a name for unconcealment, despite the risk of misunderstanding, because he believed that the German word for truth, *Wahrheit*, still bore the traces of an insight into what is at the core of unconcealment. Heidegger calls unconcealment *Wahrheit*, truth, because he hears in the German word for truth, *Wahrheit*, the verb *wahren*, to preserve, to safeguard, to maintain and protect and look after. The truth of an entity, what the entity really or truly is, is its essence. And, Heidegger argues, "'essence' (*Wesen*) is the same word as 'enduring' (*währen*), remaining" (GA 7: 44). The true entity is what, having been brought into unconcealment, can be stabilized and maintained so that it endures in presence: "we think presence as the enduring of that which, having arrived in unconcealment, remains there" (GA 7: 44). Preserving and holding things in unconcealment, Heidegger argues, forms the ontological sense of truth as we ordinarily think of it. The German word for truth still contains an echo or resonance of this connection between the truth of entities and maintaining or preserving things in unconcealment.

Chapter 2 compares Heidegger's approach to truth to Donald Davidson's, and helps to clarify the sense in which Heidegger believes that unconcealment is "presupposed in every determination of 'truth'." The

third chapter explores how a phenomenology of unconcealment thinks through deception as a counterconcept to unconcealment. The final chapter in this section explores Heidegger's 1931–2 lecture course on *The Essence of Truth*. It argues that Heidegger read Platonic ideas, not only as stage setting for the Western philosophical tradition's privileging of conceptualization over practice, and its correlative treatment of truth as correctness, but also as an early attempt to work through the fundamental experience of unconcealment. Several of Heidegger's more famous claims about truth, for example that propositional truth is grounded in truth as world disclosure, or his critique of the self-evidence of truth as correspondence, are first revealed in his powerful (if iconoclastic) reading of Plato.

In the second section, the focus is on the relationship between language, unconcealment, and disclosure. Heidegger argues that the ordinary use of language needs to be understood as based on unconcealment: "unconcealment is not 'dependent' on saying, but rather every saying already needs the domain of unconcealment." He elaborates:

> Only where unconcealment already prevails can something become sayable, visible, showable, perceivable. If we keep in view the enigmatic prevailing of *Alêtheia*, the disclosing, then we come to the suspicion that even the whole essence of language is based in dis-closing, in the prevailing of *Alêtheia*. (GA 9: 443)

The first chapter in the second section, Chapter 5, explores the sense in which, in *Being and Time*, Heidegger thinks of linguistic meaning as dependent on a socially disclosed world. The next essay explores the meaning of one of Heidegger's most famous assertions – "language is the house of being" – as a way of understanding how Heidegger's account of language develops but always remains closely tied to a notion of unconcealment. This chapter chronicles how Heidegger moved from using the word language in the ordinary sense to an ontologically broad use of the term in his later works to name the structure of gathering significations that characterizes any particular world disclosure. The final essay in the section can be thought of as a particular application of this account of originary language, drawing on both Heidegger and Pascal to explore a phenomenological account of the role the Bible plays in opening up the Christian world. By focusing on the Christian world, this essay also serves as a transition to the final section of the book, which looks at Heidegger's understanding of history as a series of epochs of unconcealment.

The first essay in the history section of the book offers an overview of the idea that history should be thought of in terms of unconcealment and thus as a sequence of different world disclosures. The history that interests Heidegger is a history of different ways in which entities are able to show themselves. The "essence of history," Heidegger explains, shows itself in the "separation of the truth of entities from possibilities of essence that are kept in store and permitted but in each case not now implemented"

(GA 69: 162). From the perspective of unconcealment, then, historical ages are understood as the establishment of a "truth of entities" – a truth about what entities really are – which is secured in its truth by separating off one set of possibilities from other admissible sets of possibilities, sets of ways to understand and use and relate the entities.

On this view, different entities show themselves in different historical ages, because each age is grounded in a different unconcealment of being, with correspondingly different possibilities showing up as definitive of entities. The transition from one age to another thus poses a danger that entities will be denied the context within which they can show what they once were (or could be). This happened, for instance, when God was drawn into a world that understands constitutive relations in terms of efficient causality:

> In whatever manner the destiny of disclosing may prevail, unconcealment, in which everything that is shows itself at any given time, holds the danger that human beings mistake themselves in the midst of what is unconcealed and misinterpret it. In this way, where everything presencing presents itself in the light of connections of cause and effect, in our representations of him even God can lose all that is high and holy, the mysteriousness of his distance. In the light of causality, God can be degraded to a cause, to the *causa efficiens*. He then even becomes the God of the philosophers, namely that which determines the unconcealed and concealed according to the causality of making, without ever considering the origin of the essence of this causality. (GA 7:30)

Heidegger was particular concerned that the technological age, our contemporary age, was closing off possibilities that allow us to realize the "highest dignity of our essence as human beings." Our highest dignity, and thus what we are engaged in when we are most fully realizing what it is to be human, is "to guard over the unconcealment of every essence on this earth" (GA 7: 36). Chapter 9 explores Heidegger's hope that we could escape from the technological age by means of a new disclosure of the world, one opened up by our relationship to the fourfold of gods, mortals, the earth, and the sky. Chapter 10 draws the book full circle by using Heidegger's critique of Nietzsche's account of truth to illuminate how Heidegger understands our current historical age, as it reviews Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche as the thinker of this technological epoch. It also outlines how Heidegger thinks of the history of philosophy as a history of metaphysics, and explores his account of metaphysics in terms of the truth of entities.

The chapters in this book span the last ten years of my own engagement with Heidegger's thought. Like Heidegger himself, I have experimented with different ways to approach the matter to be thought. These essays manifest a variety of approaches to understanding and expressing his views. For this collection, I have made some changes to these essays. But I also have tried to be tolerant of the fact that I would no longer express many of these ideas in the way I did when I first set out on the trail of unconcealment.

PART I

TRUTH AND DISCLOSURE

1

Unconcealment

TRUTH AND UNCONCEALMENT

During the two decades between 1925 and 1945, the essence of truth is a pervasive issue in Heidegger's work. He offers several essay courses devoted to the nature of truth, starting in 1925 with *Logik. Die Frage nach der Wahrheit*, (GA 21), and continuing with *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit. Zu Platons Höhlengleichnis and Theätet* (Winter Semester 1931–2, GA 34), *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit* (Winter Semester 1933–4, GA 36–7), and *Grundfragen der Philosophie. Ausgewählte "Probleme" der "Logik"* (Winter Semester 1937–8, GA 45). He also includes a significant discussion of the essence of truth in virtually every other lecture course taught during this period. Particularly notable in this regard are the *Parmenides* lecture course of 1942–3 (GA 54), *Einleitung in die Philosophie* (Winter Semester 1928–9, GA 27), and *Nietzsches Lehre vom Willen zur Macht als Erkenntnis* (Summer Semester 1939, GA 47).

Heidegger's writings during this period also reflect his preoccupation with truth. In addition to the essay "Vom Wesen der Wahrheit" (GA 9), many of his other works include extended discussions of the essence of truth. These include *Being and Time* (GA 2), essays like "Vom Wesen des Grundes" (GA 9), "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes" (GA 5), and "Was ist Metaphysik?" (GA 9), and unpublished works like the *Beiträge* (GA 65) and *Besinnung* (GA 66).

After 1946, by contrast, there are few extended discussions of truth in Heidegger's writings. Indeed, in the last few decades of his work, Heidegger rarely even mentions the essence of truth (*des Wesen der Wahrheit*) or the question of truth (*die Wahrheitsfrage*; although other locutions like the truth of being, *die Wahrheit des Seins*, persist, albeit infrequently, right to the end;

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