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Introduction

As the twenty-first century begins, it is increasingly clear that Heidegger will stand out as one of the greatest philosophers of all times. His writings have had an immense impact not only in Europe and the English-speaking world but in Asia as well.[1] And his influence has been felt in areas as diverse as literary theory, psychoanalysis, rhetoric, ecology, and theology. The continuing explosion of interest in Heidegger has come as a surprise to even his most ardent admirers. In the fifties and sixties it was still possible to consign Heidegger to the "Phenomenology and Existentialism" bin of the philosophy curriculum, treating him as the student of Husserl and precursor of Sartre. His talk about angst, guilt, death, and the need to be authentic seemed to place his work well outside the range of topics making up the mainstream Anglo-American curriculum. Though he was read in France, he was largely ignored in the English-speaking world.

In the past decades, however, a number of events have brought about a wider appreciation of the achievement of this fertile and complex thinker. First, in North America, the writings of such influential figures as Richard Rorty, Charles Taylor, and H. L. Dreyfus have helped us to see Heidegger as the seminal figure in what David Hoy calls a "hermeneutic turn," a new orientation with profound repercussions for such issues as the nature of the human sciences, the possibility of artificial intelligence, and the prospects for a postfoundationalist culture. As such respected theorists as Clifford Geertz, Thomas Kuhn, Michael Walzer, and Roy Schafer come to describe their approaches as "hermeneutic," there is a greater tendency to go back to the seminal texts that shaped contemporary hermeneutics. Second, the growing interest in Continental philosophers who start

out from Heidegger – including Gadamer in his debates with Habermas, and "postmodern" thinkers like Derrida, Foucault, Irigaray, and Bourdieu – has provoked curiosity about the figure who is a constant presence in all their work.[2] Third, and most recently, the recent revelations concerning the extent of Heidegger's involvement with the Nazis has led to a flurry of reflections on the relation of his thought – and of philosophy in general – to politics and culture.[3]

Heidegger's lofty ambition was to rejuvenate philosophy (and, at the same time, Western culture) by clearing away the conceptual rubbish that has collected over our history in order to recover a clearer, richer understanding of what things are all about. Since this calls for appropriating the underlying ideas that have formed our culture, his thought weaves together many different historical strands. The essays written for this volume reveal the complex range of sources of Heidegger's thought. He draws on St. Paul, the pre-Socratics, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Duns Scotus, Meister Eckhart, Kant, Hegel, Schelling, Schleiermacher, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Dilthey, Bergson, Husserl, and Scheler, and he does so in order to formulate an alternative to the assumptions that make up the tradition extending from Plato to Descartes to contemporary scientific naturalism. What is most striking about Heidegger's appropriation of historical sources is the way he blends together points of view generally regarded as irreconcilably opposed. Thus, we find Kierkegaardian passion combined with a commitment to systematic rigor, a Romantic concern with individual fulfillment together with a Hegelian communitarianism, a deep respect for German Idealism along with a hard-headed realism, and an awareness of the historicity and finitude of life together with the search for a stable "ground."

These overlapping themes steadily evolve during a philosophical career spanning nearly seventy years. Considering the diversity and scope of Heidegger's writings, it is hardly surprising that his influence has been so extensive. His thought has contributed to phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty, Levinas), existentialism (Sartre, Ortega y Gasset), hermeneutics (Gadamer, Ricoeur), political theory (Hannah Arendt, the early Marcuse), psychotherapy theory (Medard Boss, Ludwig Binswanger, Rollo May), theology (Rudolph Bultmann, Paul Tillich), as well as postmodern and "new pragmatist" trends.

Heidegger explicitly rejected epigonism and pedantic scholarship, calling on thinkers to travel along the paths he traversed instead

of pondering his words. As a result, the finest scholarly work done on his writings tends to reflect widely divergent readings of what he has to offer. In addition, his claim that what is most important in any thinker is what remains "unsaid," together with his belief that authentic interpretation always requires doing "violence" to the texts, further fans the flames of the conflict of interpretations surrounding his works today. The contributions to this volume, written by philosophers whose primary goal is enriching our understanding of ourselves and our world, show the very different ways of understanding what Heidegger has to say.

My aim in this introduction is to sketch out a broad picture of Heidegger's lifework in order to provide a background for the essays that follow. The first section deals with the account of "Dasein" (human existence) and of the worldhood of the world in *Being and Time*. The following two sections deal with the "turn" to the so-called later Heidegger and with his involvement in National Socialism in the thirties. I should say here that my account of Heidegger's complicity with the Nazis represents my own personal perspective concerning this issue and that its meliorative tone is at odds with the brilliant and insightful work of Sheehan and Caputo, as well as with the majority of other commentators on this topic.[4] My goal, however, is not to justify Heidegger's actions (I find them disgraceful and contemptible), but to try to understand how a bookish academic from the backwoods of Germany – a person admired throughout his life by decent people who regarded him as a friend – could have become involved in such horrors. In presenting one more take on this hotly debated affair, of course, I do not pretend to have said the last word on it.

FUNDAMENTAL ONTOLOGY IN *BEING AND TIME*

Being and Time (1927) remains Heidegger's best-known and most influential work. Despite its heavy Teutonic tone and tortuous style (especially in the English translation), it can seem to bring a breath of fresh air to traditional philosophical puzzles. Heidegger's insight is that many of the knots in thinking that characterize philosophy are due to a particular way of understanding the nature of reality, an outlook that arose at the dawn of Western history and dominates our thought to this day. This outlook is what Dorothea

Frede in her essay calls the "substance ontology": the view that what is ultimately real is that which underlies properties – what "stands under" (*sub-stantia*) and remains continuously present throughout all change. Because of its emphasis on enduring presence, this traditional ontology is also called the "metaphysics of presence." It is found, for example, in Plato's notion of the Forms, Aristotle's primary substances, the Creator of Christian belief, Descartes's *res extensa* and *res cogitans*, Kant's noumena, and the physical stuff presupposed by scientific naturalism. Ever since Descartes, this substance ontology has bred a covey of either/ors that generate the so-called problems of philosophy: either there is mind or everything is just matter; either our ideas do represent objects or nothing exists outside the mind; either something in me remains constant through change or there is no personal identity; either values have objective existence or everything is permitted. These either/ors lay out a grid of possible moves and countermoves in a philosophical game that eventually can begin to feel as predictable and tiresome as tic-tac-toe.

Heidegger's goal is to undercut the entire game by challenging the idea that reality must be thought of in terms of the idea of substance at all. His claim is not that mind and matter do not exist, but that they are derivative, regional ways of being for things, the detritus of some fairly high-level theorizing that is remote from concrete, lived existence. As Thomas Sheehan notes, Heidegger in 1919 already regarded the objectifying outlook as originating not so much from natural science as from the theoretical attitude itself: "It is not just naturalism, as [Husserl] thought, . . . but the general domination of the *theoretical* that is messing up the real problematic" (GA 56/57 87). It is therefore possible to see the history of philosophy from Plato to contemporary naturalism – and including Husserlian phenomenology itself – as one extended misinterpretation of the nature of reality. This misinterpretation is inevitable once one adopts the detached standpoint of theoretical reflection, for when we step back and try to get an impartial, objective view of things, the world, so to speak, goes dead for us – things lose the meaningfulness definitive of their being in the everyday life-world. Following the lead of the influential turn-of-the-century movement called "life philosophy" (then seen as including Nietzsche, Bergson, and Dilthey), Heidegger hoped to recover a more original sense of things by setting aside the view of reality we get from theorizing and focusing

instead on the way things show up in the flux of our everyday, prereflective activities.

To pave the way to a new understanding of ourselves and the world, *Being and Time* begins by asking the question posed by traditional ontology: What is the being of entities? But Heidegger quickly notes that ontology as such, the question of being, "remains itself naive and opaque" if it fails to inquire first into the *meaning* of being (BT 31). In other words, since what things *are* (their being) is accessible only insofar as they become intelligible to us (insofar as they show up for us as relevant or as counting in some determinate way), we need a "fundamental ontology" that clarifies the meaning (i.e., conditions of intelligibility) of things in general. And since *our* existence or "being-there" (Dasein) is "the horizon in which something like being in general becomes intelligible," fundamental ontology must begin by "clarifying the possibility of having any understanding of being at all – an understanding which itself belongs to the constitution of the entity called Dasein" (BT 274). This inquiry into the conditions for the possibility of having any understanding whatsoever, the analytic of Dasein, makes up the published portion of *Being and Time*. The investigation starts, then, with an inquiry into our own being, insofar as we are the entities who have some understanding of being, and it does so in order to lay a basis for inquiring into the being of entities in general (rocks, hammers, squirrels, numbers, constellations, symphonies).[5]

The question of being is therefore reformulated as a question about the conditions for the accessibility or intelligibility of things. The constant references to Kant in the essays that follow (especially in those by Blattner, Hoy, Dostal, and Frede) show how this project can be seen as a continuation of Kant's "Copernican revolution," the shift from seeing the mind as trying to hook up with an antecedently given world to seeing the world as being made over in order to fit the demands of the mind. But Heidegger's analytic of Dasein also marks an important break from Kant and from German Idealism generally. For Heidegger brackets the assumption that there is such a thing as a mind or consciousness, something immediately presented to itself in introspection, which must be taken as the self-evident starting point for any account of reality. Instead, though it is true that the first-person standpoint is basic (as Carman and Hoffman clearly show), it is not the mental that is basic but rather what Taylor calls "engaged

agency." We start out from a description of ourselves as we are in the midst of our day-to-day practical affairs, prior to any split between mind and matter. Our inquiry must begin from the "existentiell" (concrete, specific, local) sense we have of ourselves as caught up in the midst of a practical world (in the "life-world" sense of this term found in such expressions as "the world of academia" or the "business world").

In Heidegger's view, there is no pure, external vantage point to which we can retreat in order to get a disinterested, presuppositionless angle on things. So fundamental ontology begins with a description of the "phenomena" where this means what "shows itself," what "becomes manifest" or "shows forth" *for us*, in relation to our purposes as they are shaped by our forms of life.[6] But this need to start from an insider's perspective is not a restriction in any sense. On the contrary, as Taylor shows, it is only because we are "always already" in on a way of life, engaged in everyday dealings with things in a familiar life-world, that we have some "pre-understanding" of what things are all about. It is our being as participants in a shared practical world that first gives us a window onto ourselves and reality.

The existential analytic therefore starts out from a description of our average everydayness as agents in practical contexts. Heidegger's early writings are filled with descriptions of such mundane activities as hammering in a workshop, turning a doorknob, hearing motorcycles, and operating the turn signal on a car. But the goal of the inquiry is to identify the "essential structures" that make up the "formal scaffolding (*Gerüst*)" of any Dasein whatsoever. For this reason the phenomenology of everydayness is coupled with a hermeneutic or interpretation designed to bring to light the hidden basis for the unity and intelligibility of the practical life-world. Because interpretation reveals that in virtue of which (*woraufhin*) everything hangs together, Heidegger says that it formulates "transcendental generalizations" concerning the conditions for any interpretations or worldviews whatsoever (BT 244). It is, as Hoy points out, *Interpretierung* aimed at revealing the "primary understanding of world" that underlies and makes possible our day-to-day existentiell interpretations (*Auslegungen*). Since the goal of the inquiry is not to give an account of entities but rather to grasp the being of entities (what lets things be what they are, what "determines entities as entities" in their various

ways of being), phenomenology seeks what generally "does not show itself at all," the hidden "meaning and ground" of what does show up (BT 25, 59). In the course of this investigation, it becomes clear that the entities taken as basic by certain regional sciences – for example, the material objects in causal interactions of classical mechanics – are theoretical constructs with no privileged status in helping us grasp the nature of reality.

Insofar as our commonsense outlook is pervaded by past theorizing, and especially by the Cartesian ontology of modernity, fundamental ontology will involve "*doing violence*" to the complacent assumptions of common sense. Nowhere is this challenge to common sense more evident than in Heidegger's description of being human, or Dasein.[7] This description is sharply opposed to the picture of humans we have inherited from Descartes. According to the Cartesian view, we are at the most basic level minds located in bodies. And this is indeed the way we tend to think of ourselves when we step back and reflect on our being. The binary opposition between mind and matter colors all our thinking in the modern world, and it leads to a kind of Cartesian extortion which tells us that if we ever question the existence of mental substance, we will sink to the level of being crude materialists who can never account for human experience and agency.

Heidegger's way of dealing with this extortion is to subvert the binary opposition that sets up the narrow range of options in the first place. In my own essay (Chapter 10), I try to show that instead of defining Dasein as a thing or object of any sort, Heidegger describes human existence as a "happening," a life story unfolding "between birth and death" (BT 427). This conception of existence as the "historicity" or "temporalizing" of a life course arises quite naturally when we reflect on the nature of human agency. For what a person is *doing* at any moment can be regarded as action (and not just as inadvertent movement) only because of the way it is nested in the wider context of a life story. For instance, what I am doing now can be seen as writing a philosophy essay only because of the relation of my current activity to my background (my training, my academic career) and to my future-directedness (the outcome of this activity in relation to my undertakings in general). In fact, it seems that what is most important to an event being an action is not just the beliefs and desires going on in a mental substance, since all sorts of things

might be going through my mind as I type away here. Rather, what is crucial to this movement being *action* is its rootedness in meaningful contexts of the past and its directedness toward some future end state (despite the fact that this is all probably far from my "mind" when I am busily engaged in everyday activities).

When we think of a human being as the temporal unfolding of a life course, we can identify three structural elements that make up human existence. First, Dasein always finds itself "thrown" into a concrete situation and attuned to a cultural and historical context where things already count in determinate ways in relation to a community's practices. This prior thrownness into the medium of shared intelligibility, disclosed in our moods, makes up Dasein's "facticity." Second, agency is "discursive" in the sense that in our activities we are articulating the world and interacting with situations along the guidelines of interpretations embodied in our public language. Third, Dasein is "understanding" in Heidegger's special use of this term: it has always taken some stand on its life insofar as it has undertaken (or drifted into) the vocations, roles, lifestyles, personal relationships, and so on that give content to its life. Because our familiar skilled activities embody a generally tacit "knowhow," a sense of what things are all about in relation to our practical concerns, taking a stand is said to be a "projection" of possibilities of meaningfulness for things and ourselves.

As having taken a stand, Dasein's existence is "futural" in the sense that it is under way toward realizing some outcome (though this goal-directedness might never expressly come into one's mind). Thus, agency is characterized as "coming-toward" (*zu-kommend*) the realization of one's undertakings, that is, as being-toward the future (*Zu-kunft*). I attend a parent-teacher conference, for example, as part of my "project" of being a concerned parent, and I do so even though this way of doing things is so deeply ingrained in me, so "automatic," that I never think about *why* I am doing it. According to Heidegger, the future has priority over both the past and the present in defining the being of the self. This is so, first of all, because what a person is shooting for in life determines both how the past can be encountered as providing assets for the present and how the present can show up as a situation demanding action. But the future also has priority because, insofar as my actions commit me to a range of possible ways of being in the future, their future-directedness defines

what my life – that is, my "being" – is adding up to as a totality, "right up to the end."

According to this description, Dasein's "being" or personal identity is defined by the stands it takes in acting in day-to-day situations over the course of its lifetime. Heidegger expresses this by saying that Dasein is an "ability-to-be," which comes to realization only through the ways it is channeled into concrete "possibilities," that is, into specific roles, relationships, personality traits, lifestyles, and so on, as these have been made accessible in its cultural context.[8] Thus, when I hold a door open for a friend or get on line at the theater, I am constituting myself as a fairly well-behaved person as this is understood in my culture. Here I just *am* what I make of myself by slipping into familiar patterns of action and reaction throughout my life.

The conception of human existence as an emergence-into-presence provides an insight into the understanding of being that Heidegger is trying to work out, a conception Zimmerman calls "ontological phenomenalism." My being – who I am – is nothing other than what unfolds in the course of my interactions with the world over the course of my life. In saying that "the 'essence' of Dasein lies in its existence" (BT 67), Heidegger suggests that there is no role to be played by the notion of an underlying substance or a hidden essence allegedly needed to explain the outward phenomena. What makes agency possible is not some underlying substrate, not some mental substance, but is rather the way our life stories unfold against the backdrop of practices of a shared, meaningful world. From Heidegger's standpoint, then, the ability to think of ourselves as minds located in physical bodies is a highly specialized self-interpretation rooted in detached theorizing, an interpretation lacking any broader implications for understanding human existence.

The power of the Cartesian extortion lies in its ability to keep us in line by telling us that doubts about the mind lead inevitably to crude materialism. Heidegger sidesteps this move by suggesting that not only mind but matter as well is a theoretical construct with no indispensable role to play in making sense of the everyday life-world. To get this point across, he undertakes a description of how things show up for us most "primordially" in the course of our everyday dealings with the world. In his now well-known example of hammering in a workshop, he suggests that what we encounter when we are absorbed in such an activity is not a "hammer-thing" with

properties to which we then assign a use value. On the contrary, what shows up for us initially is the hammering, which is "in order to" nail boards together, which is "for" building a bookcase, which is ultimately "for the sake of" being, say, a person with a neat study. In our everyday dealings with things, the work-world as a whole – the light in the room, the workbench, the saw, the glue – shows up in its interconnected functionality in relation to our projects.

It follows, then, that what is "given" in average everyday dealings with the world is a holistic "equipmental totality," a web of functional relationships in which things are encountered in their interdependent functions and in terms of their relevance to what we are doing. The hammer is what it is by virtue of its reference to these nails and boards in hammering on this workbench under this lighting for this purpose. In Heidegger's vocabulary, the world of average everydayness is not an aggregate of "present-at-hand" objects, things that just occur, but is a holistic contexture of relations, the "ready-to-hand," where what something *is* – its "ontological definition" – is determined by its role within the projects under way within the workshop.[9] The totality of these functional relations – the general structure of "in order tos," "by doing whichs," "for whichs," and "for the sakes of" as laid out in our culture's practices – Heidegger calls the "worldhood" of the world. His claim, as I understand it, is that the present-at-hand items taken as basic by traditional theorizing (for instance, physical objects and their causal relations) are derivative from and parasitic on the world understood as a context of involvements directed toward accomplishing things. To think that there are "at first" mere present-at-hand things "in a space in general," which then get concatenated into equipmental relations, is an "illusion" (BT 421), according to Heidegger (though it may be useful to assume that such things exist for the purposes of certain regional inquiries).[10]

The description of average everydayness leads us to see that what is most basic is a world of "significance" in which things show up as *counting* or *mattering* in relation to our practical affairs. This meaningful life-world is inseparable from Dasein's future-directedness, its being "for the sake of itself" in the various self-interpretations and roles it picks up from the public "we-world" into which it is thrown. Dasein is said to be a "clearing" or a "lighting" through which entities can stand forth *as* such and such. In other words, it is because