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In a certain sense, the philosophical work of Martin Heidegger already belongs to history. That is, for a long time now it has gone beyond the first and second wave of its effect and has taken a firm place among the classics of philosophical thought. This fact implies that each present age has to determine anew its position in relation to, or its attitude towards, his work. Someone who has himself participated as a contemporary in the development and dissemination of Heidegger’s philosophical questioning will not only have to redetermine the place of Heidegger’s thinking in recent philosophy, but also his own standpoint in relation to it. Also, he will not claim to judge the historical significance of Martin Heidegger, but, on the contrary, will strive to continue to participate in the movement of thought initiated by Heidegger’s questions.

After all, it is safe to say that the position developed by Heidegger has to be determined under two totally different aspects: (1) under the aspect of his role in the academic philosophy of this century (especially within the German scene) and (2) under the aspect of his impact on, and significance within, the general consciousness of our epoch. His rank is principally determined by the fact that these two aspects can no more be separated from each other in his case than in the case of other great classical thinkers such as Kant, Hegel or Nietzsche.

Within the academic philosophy of our century, Heidegger’s thinking may be classified, in terms of his own admission, as part of the phenomenological movement. And, whoever is familiar with the development of Husserl’s phenomenology to which Heidegger refers also knows that this means, at the same time, a kind of placement in relation to the then prevailing neo-Kantianism. These orientations must not be understood in a narrow sense of philosophical schools. For, in regard to both orientations, Heidegger’s thought presents itself in a decidedly critical profile.

For years Heidegger was assistant to, and later on a young colleague of, the founder of the phenomenological school. And, doubtlessly, he learned much from the masterful art of description in which Edmund Husserl excelled. His first great effort in the realm of thought, Sein und Zeit (Being and Time), introduced itself in theme and language (and even in the place of its publication) as a phenomenological work. The expression “phenomenology” — in the manner in which Husserl used it — contained a polemical allusion to all theoretical constructions of thought that originated from within the constraints of a philosophical system. Husserl’s power of phenomenological intuition had proven itself precisely in the rejection of, and criticism of, all of the constructivist prejudices of contemporary thought. This was especially the case in his famous criticisms of psychologism and naturalism. One will also have to admit that Husserl’s carefulness in description was coupled with a genuine methodological consciousness. The phenomena that he brought to recognition were not a naive set of “givens,” but correlates to his analysis of the intentionalities of consciousness. Only by going back to the intentional acts themselves could the concept of the intentional object — i.e., the phenomenon or that which was meant as such — be secured.

As Heidegger named and elucidated the concept of phenomenology in the
introduction of his own first work, it could almost be read as a simple variation on Husserl's methodological program. Yet, in spite of this, a new accent was heard by virtue of the fact that Heidegger, in paradoxical emphasis, did not introduce the concept of phenomenology from the direction of its "givenness," but rather, from its "un-givenness," its hiddenness.

Although Heidegger, in this first presentation of his thought, avoided an overt critique of Husserl's phenomenological program (something he had attempted to do for some time in his lectures), the critical distinction between his and Husserl's phenomenological point of departure could not be overlooked in the development of Being and Time. It proved not to have been in vain that Heidegger (in section seven of Being and Time) had understood the idea of phenomenology in terms of the hiddenness of the phenomenon and as a discovery that had to be wrested from hiddenness.

By means of his idea of phenomenology, Heidegger did not only intend to display the customary certainty of the descriptive method's victory in which the phenomenologist felt his superiority to the theoretical constructions of contemporary philosophy. Rather, the hiddenness that was dealt with here was, so to speak, more deeply rooted. Even the classic analysis of thing-perception that Husserl had developed as a gem of his phenomenological art of description to the finest possible subtlety could still be accused, taken as a whole, of containing a covert prejudice. That, indeed, was Heidegger's first accomplishment: that he turned the pragmatic or functional context in which perceptions and perceptual judgments meet against the descriptive structure of Husserl. What he elaborated in the conception of "things ready-to-hand" (Zuhandenheit) was not, in truth, a higher level dimension in the wide thematic field of Husserl's investigation of intentionality.

Viewed from this standpoint, the simple perception that apprehends something as existing and makes it present proved to be an abstraction based upon a dogmatic prejudice. The prejudice that what is "present-to-hand" (Vorhandenheit) must receive its ultimate proof through pure presence to consciousness. Here the young Heidegger, as a student of Heinrich Rickert, already had dealt with the logic of impersonal judgments. He may have followed a dark impulse that was now raised to the level of theoretical clarity. The result of his dissertation, namely that the shout of "Fire!" resisted the logical transformation into a predicative judgment and could only be coerced into a logical scheme, may have been felt by the later Heidegger as a confirmation of his first intuition: that all logic was subject to an ontological confinement.

In the meantime, by reinterpreting the metaphysics and ethics of Aristotle in a new and ingenious way, Heidegger had acquired the intellectual tools that allowed him to expose the ontological prejudices that continued to permeate his own, as well as Husserl's, thinking and that of neo-Kantianism. These ontological principles were operative in the then current concept of consciousness and especially in the fundamental role of the concept of "transcendental subjectivity."

The recognition that subjectivity was a transformation of substantiality and a final ontological derivation of Aristotle's concepts of Being and essence gave such impact to Heidegger's pragmatically toned critique of Husserl's analysis of perception that it toppled all perspectives and especially the very foundations of Husserl's program. In speaking of Dasein Heidegger did not only replace the concepts of subjectivity, self-awareness and transcendental ego by a new word of striking force. By elevating the time-horizon of human existence, an existence that knows itself to be finite (i.e., is certain of its end), to the rank of a philosophical concept, he transcended the understanding of Being that was the basis of Greek metaphysics.
The leading concepts of the modern philosophy of consciousness, subject and object, as well as their identity in speculative thinking, proved themselves to be dogmatic constructions as well.

However, it was not the case that the phenomenological conscientiousness of Husserl did not endeavor to break the dogmatism of the traditional concept of consciousness. That was precisely the point of the concept of intentionality — that consciousness was always “consciousness of something.” Also, the evidence-postulate of complete apodicticity that could be met only by the ego cogito did not represent, for Husserl, a passport to freedom. Rather, he dissolved, in a life-long, continually refined analytical process, the basic Kantian conception of the transcendental unity of apperception into a constitution analysis of internal time-consciousness. And he worked out, more and more carefully, the process-character of self-constitution in the “I think.” With the same insistence, Husserl pursued, under the rubric “Intersubjectivity,” the aporia of the constitution of the alter ego, of the “we,” and of the monadic universe. This is especially the case in his unfolding of the problematic of the life-world (Lebenswelt) in his studies concerning the “crisis” (Krisis). For these showed that he wanted to meet every challenge that could be raised from the standpoint of the problematic of history. It should be noted, however, that Husserl’s analyses pertaining to the problem of the life-world were considered as countermoves to Heidegger’s critical insistence on the historicity of Dasein.

It remains a peculiar fact that Husserl’s critical defense in his Krisis-treatise was simultaneously directed against Heidegger and Scheler even though they did not belong together at this particular point. Scheler never questioned the eidetic dimension as such from the perspective of historicity, as Heidegger did in a fundamental ontology construed as a hermeneutics of facticity. Rather, Scheler tried to ground phenomenology in metaphysics. It is not “spirit” or Geist that experiences “reality.” Rather, it is “urge” or “drive” or, more precisely, Gefühlsdrang: the striving or impulse towards the satisfaction of felt needs. The unactualized essence-look of “spirit” itself must break forth from the reality of the striving itself. Phenomenology has no ground in itself. Indeed, for Husserl, this was a turning away from the assumption that philosophy ought to be an exact science insofar as the science of actuality cannot be exact by virtue of its very nature. The “crisis-treatise” is primarily concerned with the clarification of such “misunderstandings.” At any rate, Husserl considered it a fact that both Scheler and Heidegger simply had not understood the inevitability of the transcendental reduction and of the ultimate foundation for the apodictic certainty of the cogito.

We may illustrate the disparity in regard to this emerging problematic by pointing out that Heidegger considered Husserl’s mode of inquiry into the ontological prejudices upon which the metaphysical tradition rested hopelessly entangled. When, towards the end of the fifties, Heidegger got together with some of my own students in Heidelberg and participated in a seminar which I was giving on the subject of Husserl’s analysis of time-consciousness, he asked us what Husserl’s analysis had to do with Being and Time. Every answer that was given to him was rejected: it had “nothing to do with it!”

That was certainly said on the basis of the decisiveness by which the later Heidegger had freed himself from the transcendental mode of questioning; a freedom that had not yet been truly achieved even in Being and Time. After all, one will have to admit, when looking back with Heidegger on his own development, that his starting-point with “Being-in-the-world” and the explication of the question of Being along the lines of this allegedly “transcendental” analysis of Dasein truly pointed in a com-
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pletely different direction. An analysis of time-consciousness such as Husserl's no longer satisfied Heidegger even though Husserl's progress beyond Brentano consisted precisely in the fact that he recognized the temporality (Zeitlichkeit) of time-consciousness itself. In addition, Husserl turned against a theory of time-consciousness that conceived of the past and the becoming past only under the perspective of memory and, in so doing, conceived of it as something brought back to the present.

This step leading beyond Brentano is expressed in the concept of "retention": a holding fast that is an original function of the presently perceiving consciousness. However, Heidegger's problem was much more radical. Being and Time was not at all, as Oskar Becker interpreted it at the time, a mere elaboration of a higher level problem within Husserl's phenomenological program. This 'piece of philosophical anthropology' that was contained in Being and Time (SZ 17) was subordinated to a much farther reaching question concerning the nature of Being. This 'Being' Heidegger oriented along something he called 'Being as a whole' and, later on, he always insisted that this 'Being' could not be clearly read from Dasein. Rather, 'Being' came to the fore in Dasein as the "place of understanding of Being" (p. 11b, Collected Works).

In the Marburg lecture of the summer of 1928 (volume 26, Collected Works) the following presupposition is asserted: that "a possible totality of all beings (Seiendem) is already there." Only then can there be Being in understanding (p. 199). Dasein is admittedly exemplary, however, not as a case of Being that has been marked by our thinking but, rather, as the being (das Seiende) "that is in the manner of being its 'there' (da)." Even the later term, Lichtung or "clearing," already appears here. However, it is still characterized by an anthropological turn towards the characteristics of the elucidated disclosedness of Dasein, but with the ontological sense of "protruding into the openness of the 'there': 'existence' (Existenz)"(133c). Even the term die Kehre or "the turn" (which later became a key word) can be found already in 1928. It is used to refer to "ontology itself expressly turned back into the metaphysical ontic in which it is always standing." Here, too, Heidegger is still thinking in terms of human existence or Dasein insofar as the latent change that the fundamental ontology undergoes as the analytic of Dasein (when considered as "temporal analysis") is called "the turn."

Heidegger's later marginal notes in the Huttenexemplar give a totally new interpretation to the exemplary function of human existence. Human existence is exemplary in the sense of the "happening" of Being that accompanies it. That, naturally, is a clear change in interpretation. But even such altered interpretations (for that is surely what they are) have their truth. They bring to light Heidegger's unclear Intention. For the rekindling of the question of Being it was the "there" of human existence, the Da of Dasein, that essentially mattered and not so much the priority of the Being of Dasein.

There are similar questions of interpretation in regard to other critical points in Husserl's program. Thus, in Heidegger's chapter concerning Mitsein or "being with" (section 26) this analysis is completely defined in terms of the critical delimitation against Husserl's problematic of intersubjectivity. Indeed, the dominant ontological prejudice governing his thought is no less recognizable in Husserl's treatment of the problem of intersubjectivity than it is in his description of the allegedly "pure" perception. There, only a higher level "transcendental intuition" is supposed to animate the pure thing-perception in the alter ego! Obviously, Heidegger adopts a polemical orientation towards Husserl when he talks, in contrast to such an account, about "being with" or Mitsein as an a priori condition of all being-with
other Dasein (Mitdasein) and when he claims the same originality in regard to a
notion with which he frequently counters Husserl's idea of "last foundation"
(Cp. p. 131) The Mit-sein is not added afterwards to Da-sein. Rather, Dasein is
always at the same time Mitsein regardless of whether others join in it or not,
regardless of whether I miss them or whether I do not 'need' anybody.

When Heidegger designates Dasein and Mitsein as modi of "being-in-the-
world" and denotes Care (Sorge) as the basic constitution of "being-in-the-world,"
he still follows, in the structure of his argument, the mode of thinking in terms of
transcendental proof that Husserl shared with the neo-Kantians. In reality, however,
he was not merely aiming, in his transcendental analytic of human existence, at a
concretization of transcendental consciousness. That is, substituting factual, human
Dasein for the fantastically stylized transcendental ego. Indirectly, that is already
apparent in the fact that he gives the question of the "who?" of Dasein in the
"dailyness" (Alltägichtigkeit) of existence a phenomenological orientation. This mode
of being is bound to a "circumspective concern" for the world, for what is "ready-
to-hand" and "together" (Miteinander). In this "falleness" the true phenomenon
of the "there" is constantly hidden, as is the "I myself." It is the impersonal,
anonymous das Man that nobody is or has been that is encountered first and fore-
most as Dasein. This is not only to be understood polemically in the sense of a
cultural criticism of the century of anonymous responsibility. Behind it was the
critical motive that questioned the concept of consciousness itself. But this
required a unique preparation that in itself was peculiar enough: to make visible,
behind this falleness in the world of circumspective concern and "caring-for"
others (Fürsorge), the authenticity (Eigentlichkeit) of Dasein, the "there" veiled
by "the nothing" (das Nichts), and to accomplish this through the anticipation of
deat.

It is true that Heidegger always emphasized that the "dailyness" of worldly
being that understands itself as circumspective concern and "caring-for" belongs as
much to human existence as the highest peak of the moment in which the "I-ness"
of human existence reveals itself through the jemeinigkeit of dying and in which
the original character of temporality (in contrast to the inauthenticity of the vulgar
understanding of time and of eternity as well) reveals itself as finite temporality.
However, even at this level in the development of his thinking Heidegger reflected
on the question whether a mere reversal of fundamental relationships might be
sufficient or whether there was not an erroneous interpretation of Dasein hidden
in the temporal interpretation of human existence itself, "Already the basic act of
constitution of ontology, that is, of philosophy, the objectification of Being, that
is, the projection of Being to the horizon of its comprehensibility, is given to un-
certainty...." (24459)

Here the entire problematic of the objectification of Being can be felt, the
problematic that led him to "the turn" (Kehre). In the same place from which the
above quotation was taken Heidegger says that the horizon of comprehensibility
could be reduced insofar as objectification — which is connected with such themat-
ization — "is contrary to the everyday relations to beings (Seienden)." "The proj-
et itself necessarily becomes an ontic one...." These statements from the lecture in
1927 give a new dramatic accent to an assertion found in Being and Time (233) that
sounds more like a rhetorical question there: "...it even becomes questionable...
whether a genuine ontological interpretation of Dasein is not bound to fail because
of the kind of being of the thematic being itself."

That was then more of a rhetorical question. But, in retrospect, there is a
question that has been occupying me since the appearance of Being and Time, a
question that assumes greater urgency for me: was the introduction of the problem of death into the train of thought of Being and Time truly cogent and commensurate with the actual subject-matter? In his formal argument Heidegger claims that the ontological interpretation of “Being-in-the-world” as “Care” (and, consequently, as temporality) would have to show explicitly “the potentiality-for-Being-whole” of Dasein if it wants to attain self-certainty. But this Dasein becomes problematic because of its finitude, its Being-towards-an-end, that happens in death. Thus, reflection on death is called for. Is this really convincing? Is it not much more convincing that it is in the structure of Sorge or “Care” as such and in its temporal interpretation that finiteness is already contained? Does not Dasein, in projecting itself towards the future, continuously experience “the past” in the passage of time itself? Insofar as Dasein is continuously involved in the anticipation of death (for this is what Heidegger really means and not that with this anticipation the ‘whole’ or totality of Dasein comes into view), it is the experience of time as such that confronts us with the essential finiteness that governs us as a whole.

It may be noted, after all, that Heidegger proceeded precisely along this path and never again placed the problematic of death at the center of his thought. In his “cottage-copy” (Huttenexemplar) Heidegger leaves these passages intact and the path of his thinking led him from the ecstatic horizon of Dasein and ‘the moment’ into the structural analysis of the dimensionality of time. (Cp. Being and Time) The later marginal notes of Being and Time point in the same direction. There, the expression “the place of the understanding of Being” (Stätte des Seinsverständnisses) is especially instructive. With this expression Heidegger obviously wants to mediate between the older point of departure from Dasein (in which its being is at stake) and the new movement of thought of the “there” (Da) in which das Sein or Being ‘clears itself.’ In the word Stätte this latter emphasis comes to the fore. The “place of the understanding of Being” is a ‘regioning’ and not primarily the place or situation of an activity of Dasein.

The entire structure of the argument in Being and Time seems to be dominated by a two-fold motivation that is not completely balanced. On the one hand, there is the ontological denotation of the “disclosedness” of Dasein that is the basis and premise of all other ontic phenomena in relation to the activity of Dasein and of the inner tension between the inauthenticity and authenticity of Dasein. On the other hand, the exposure of the authenticity of Dasein in contrast to its inherent inauthenticity is at stake in Heidegger’s thinking. However, not in the sense of the existential appeal along the lines of Jaspers, but with the purpose of delineating true temporality and the time-horizon of Being in its universal range. Both of these motives combine in the aprioristic fundamental thought with which Heidegger equipped the transcendental question of Being at that time.

At any rate, there can be no doubt that by sacrificing the transcendental understanding of the self and by sacrificing the horizon of understanding Heidegger’s thinking lost the sense of urgency that made it appear similar to the so-called ‘Existence-philosophy’ of his contemporaries. Certainly, Heidegger had already emphasized in Being and Time that the ‘tendency to fallenness’ (Verfallenstendenz) of Dasein, its absorption in the circumspective concern of the world, is not a mere error or lack, but that it is equally as real as the authenticity of Dasein and is an essential part of it. Certainly, the magic phrase, “the ontological difference,” with which Heidegger worked in his Marburg period, did not only have the momentary meaning of providing that differentiation between Being and ‘beings’ that constitutes the essence of metaphysics. Rather, it also aimed at something that could be called the difference in Being itself that simply finds its reflective expression in the differ-
entiation within metaphysics.

During his Marburg years, even before the publication of Being and Time, Heidegger did not intend that the ontologische Differenz (a formula he constantly used) be understood as if this differentiation between Being and beings was one made by ourselves in our thinking. And certainly Heidegger, from the very beginning, was aware of the fact that the aprioristic scheme of neo-Kantianism and Husserl's separation of essence and fact were not satisfactory in order to delineate, in a convincing way, the scientific-theoretical specificity of philosophy against the aprioristic basic concepts of the positive sciences. The paradoxical formula of a 'hermeneutics of facticity' (Hermeneutik der Wirklichkeit) is an eloquent expression of this, as is the reversion of an existential analytic in existence (Existenz).

Heidegger was fully justified in opposing the understanding of Being and Time as a “dead-end street.” By recognizing the problem of Being in general, it led into the open. And yet it was like an opening into a new realm when Heidegger used the surprising phrase, “the there-being in man” (Da-Sein im Menschen), in his next publication, Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics. Where this was to lead could not yet be seen in the Kant-book. Even before 1940, in marginal notes in a copy of his Kant-book that he had sent to me as a replacement for the one I had lost, Heidegger criticized himself in the following way: “relapsed totally into the standpoint of the transcendental question.” The idea of a finite metaphysics that he developed there (and which he tried to support by means of Kant) ultimately held onto the transcendental thought-foundation that was the same as that presented in his Freiburg inaugural lecture. That is certainly neither coincidental nor a mere half-heartedness in Heidegger’s thinking. On the contrary, it reflects the serious problem concerning the means by which the radical impulse of thought that was directed towards the destruction of the conceptions of metaphysics could be reconciled with the idea of philosophy as a strict science. At that time, Heidegger still accepted that idea — to the growing disappointment of Jaspers as the latter’s recently published Notes on Heidegger indicate. That is the reason for his ‘transcendental’ self-interpretation in Being and Time. The transcendental philosophy could still understand itself as a science even if it rejected all hitherto existing metaphysics as dogmatic. In doing so, it was able to offer the sciences as such an argument by which it could see itself confirmed as the true heir of metaphysics. This was still completely true for Husserl’s program; for Heidegger, it becomes problematic.

Being and Time fused, in a remarkably magnificent simplification, the understanding of Being in metaphysics (i.e., in Greek thought) with the conception of scientific objectivity that is the foundation of the self-understanding of the positive sciences in modern times. Both were construed as ‘present-to-hand’ (Vorbannenheit). And it was the claim of Being and Time to demonstrate the derivative character of this understanding of Being. That is, to show that the Being of Dasein, not in spite of, but because of, its finiteness and historicity is the authentic being from which such derivative modes of being as ‘being-present-to-hand’ or ‘objectivity’ could primarily be understood. Such an enterprise was destructive for the configuration of thought in classical metaphysics. When Heidegger, on the basis of Being and Time, asked the question “what is metaphysics?” this question, too, was more a case of a questioning of metaphysics itself than a revival of it or an establishment of metaphysics on a new ground.

It is well-known that Heidegger’s way of thinking during the thirties and the early forties was not manifested by means of publications, but more in the form of academic teaching or by means of special lectures. The literary public first
learned, in a comprehensive way, about what Heidegger called "the turn" (die Kehre) when the Letter on Humanism was published in 1946. Only in the following years were the steps Heidegger had taken during the thirties delineated more clearly by the publication of Holzwege. Everyone immediately noticed that here the framework of scientific institutions and the self-understanding of philosophy as scientific philosophy was transgressed. The addition of the vocabulary of the poet Hölderlin as well as Heidegger's strangely powerful reflections were not necessary in order to see a rekindling of the question of Being. The question that Being and Time had aimed at had burst open, as a result of the original impulse, the frameworks of science (Wissenschaft) and metaphysics.

Certainly, there were also new themes that Heidegger's thinking began to focus upon: the work of art, the thing and language. And, obviously, these were issues for thought for which the metaphysical tradition had no commensurate concepts available. The essay on "The Origin of the Work of Art" developed, with the greatest urgency, the conceptual inadequacy of so-called aesthetics. And, with the problem of 'the thing,' a new challenge was set for the process of thinking for which neither philosophy nor science had any means available for dealing with it. For, the experience of 'the thing' had lost its legitimacy a long time ago for the scientific thinking of the modern age.

What are 'things' in an age of industrial production and general mobility? In reality, the concept of 'the thing' had lost its philosophical birthright a long time ago. That is, since the beginning of modern natural science and the paradigmatic function of mechanics for this science. Within the realm of philosophy, too, the concept of 'thing' had been replaced, characteristically, by the concepts of objects and the 'objective.' But, in the meantime, it was not only a change in the form of science and in the conceptual understanding of the world, but a change in the 'appearance' of the world itself that no longer had any place for 'the thing.' Even if one allowed the work of art a continued existence in a kind of protective area of cultural awareness, in a kind of imaginary museum, the disappearance of things was an irresistible process that no regressive and no progressive thinking could ignore.

Thus, it was by no means an expansion into new areas (nor even a resounding of the old tones of cultural criticism) that forced Heidegger to direct the question of Being precisely and primarily towards the form of life (Lebensform) that today we call the age of technology. In doing so, he had no intention of confusing romantic conjurations of a fading and palling past with the task of thinking "what is." Heidegger was quite serious when, in Being and Time, he granted the inauthenticity of Dasein its essential right in relation to the authenticity of Dasein. Now, in contrast to that, the "thinking-to-the-end" (das Zu-Ende-Denken) of the modern age, the escalation of the technical world-project to an all-determining fate of mankind formed the one, uniform level of experience from which Heidegger's question of Being received its orientation. The oft-quoted "forgetfulness of Being" (Seinsvergessenheit) with which Heidegger had originally characterized metaphysics proved to be the fate of the entire age. Under the sign of positive science and its translation into technology the "forgetfulness of Being" is carried towards its radical completion. For, Technik allows nothing else beyond itself to be noticed that might have a more authentic Being in the reservation of 'the sacred.' Thus, a new pointedness is found in Heidegger's thinking insofar as he undertook the thinking, in the total hiddenness and absence of Being, the 'presence' of this absence: that is, Being itself. However, this in itself was not a mode of calculating thinking. It would be misunderstood if one endeavored to calculate, from Heidegger's point of departure,
the possibilities that may or may not be realized in the future of mankind.

There can be no calculative thinking at all that is thinking about thinking as if it were disposable or calculable. Here Heidegger is very close to Goethe when he said: "My son, I did it very cleverly, I never thought about the thinking." Heidegger's thinking is not thinking 'about' thinking either. What Heidegger thought 'about' technology and 'about' the "turn" is not actually thought about technology or the "turn," but it is a standing in thinking itself that follows out of its own inner necessity. He calls this 'essential' thinking and also talks about "thinking beyond" (Hinausdenken) or "thinking against" (Entgegendenken). He wants to say that it is not thinking in the sense of seizing or understanding something, but, rather, something like "a projection" of Being into our thinking, even if only in the radical form of the total absence of Being.

It is not necessary to stress that such thinking-endeavors cannot use terms and concepts with which one can size up, understand and overpower objects. Consequently, such a form of thinking gets entangled in an extreme lack of language insofar as the thinking and speaking that is being attempted here does not achieve anything. Even the utterances with which Heidegger attempts to oppose a calculating thinking that considers future possibilities retain something of the awkward prejudice that accompanies conceptions. Certainly, it is true that all fore-seeing that hopes for something new, different and saving does not include real calculation or even pre-calculation. And when Heidegger refers to the arrival of Being and then adds, "very suddenly, presumably!" (VuA, 180), or when he says, in that famous interview, "Only a god can save us," these phrases are more rejections designed to repudiate the calculating intent to know about and to dominate the future than real statements. Being cannot be ascertained or thought as something that can be grasped, as something accessible to us. This is why such utterances are in no way predictions. They are not at all real statements of his thinking nor of the thinking of "what is." For such statements it also holds true that, to use Heidegger's language, the 'project contained in them becomes itself necessarily an ontic one.

How, then, can such counterthinking come about? There is no need to speculate about this. On the contrary, the essays presented by Heidegger can be questioned. There is no doubt that in this sequence of more or less short papers that, in every case, acquired the angle of their questioning from the criticism of metaphysical conceptualization and theory-formulation, the direction of his thinking is maintained with an almost monomanchic insistence. However, the formation of a conceptual language commensurate with this angle of questioning and consistent with itself is hardly achieved.

When Heidegger, towards the end of his life, looked back upon what he had achieved, and when he planned a kind of introduction to the complete edition of his works that he prepared, he chose as its motto: "Paths, not works." Paths (Wege) are there to be walked upon, to be left behind and to bring you forward; they are not something static on which you can rest or to which you can refer. The language of the later Heidegger is a constant breaking up of habitual phrases, a charging of words with a new, elemental pressure that leads to explosive discharges. This language establishes nothing. Therefore, all of the almost ritualistic repetition in the diction of the later Heidegger, as it is also frequently found among his disciples, is entirely incommensurate. However, his language is not exchangeable at will. Ultimately, it is as completely untranslatable as the words of a lyric poem. And it shares with the lyric poem the evocative power that proceeds from the complete unity and inseparability of sound-form and meaning.

And yet, it is not the language of poetry. For, such language is always tuned
to the poetic “tone” in which a poem is embedded. Heidegger’s language, however, remains — even in the stammering search for the right word — the language of thought. A language that overtakes itself continuously: dialiktos or a “dialectics” answering something pre-thought and preconceived.

Let us take an example. “Nur was aus Welt gering, wird einmal Ding.” (“Only what is small, from the world, will someday become thing.”) This sentence cannot even be translated into German! At the end of a long pathway of thought that opposed the undifferentiated equalizing of all near and far things with the true essence of the thing, the “smallness” of the thing is understood, for a moment, as a process, a happening, an “eventing” that is expressed in the verb geringen. Although this verb does not exist in the German language, it alludes to ringeln (“curl”), geringeln (“circle”), and the rich field of meaning surrounding “ring,” “circle,” “encircle,” and “around.” In addition, it alludes to the total roundness of the world — the globe — from which the insignificance of the thing is wrested and in which it “rounds itself.” This mode of thinking follows the furrows that it makes in language. Language, however, is like a field from which a variety of seeds can come forth.

Here we are reminded of Heidegger’s interpretation of the saying of Anaximander in which he finds the “Welle” (the “while” or “time”) that is given to beings when it experiences its genesis. Along these lines, the smallness of the thing is something that “aus Welt gering.” Certainly, das Geringe is used first as a noun derived from an adjective. But, by forming a noun from the adjective, gering, a collective totality of movement is evoked. Just as is done by Gemenge, Geschiebe, Getriebe. Thus, Heidegger finally dares to change it completely into the imperfect tense of a verb. This is similar to “Nichten,” “Dingen,” and the Sein or “Being” that he spells “Seyn.” The “einmal” or “someday” of the sentence in question underpins the past meaning of the artificial verb, “gering.” And so, too, does the rhyme answer, “Ding.” In the neologism “gering” you can hear allusions to the following: gerinnt (“coagulates”), gerann (“coagulated”), gelingt (“succeeds”), gelang (“succeeded”). But, in addition, geraten (“to come off,” “to turn out”) and geriet (“came off”) also belongs to the same semantic field. Thus, the final sentence of the essay on “the thing” summarizes the path that has been travelled and it means: only where world has curled itself around the round ring of a center, regardless of how small it might be, will a thing come to be in the end.

The question can be raised whether this coercion of language and this creation of words does what it is meant to do: that is, to communicate, to be communicative, to gather thinking into the word and to gather us in the word around something commonly thought. Neologisms (if that is what they can be called here — for, in actuality, they are additions of new semantic relations to already existing semantic units) require support or foundation. That is why poets who have the support of rhythm, melody and rhyme can get away with the most astonishing word creations. German examples, in this regard, are Rilke and Paul Celan. Heidegger dared to do something similar in his very early thinking. One of the earliest creations of this type that I encountered when I had not yet met Heidegger, and when he had not yet published, a creation that demonstrated his new and daring treatment of language, was the phrase: Es weitet, “It is wording.” That struck the target like a flash of lightning lighting a long yawning darkness; the darkness of the beginning, of the origin, of earliness. Even for this darkness he found a word (not a new one, but one from an entirely different area: the language used to describe the North-German weather). When he said, as early as 1922, that “Das Leben ist diesig” (“Life is misty.”), he meant that it surrounds itself with fog again and again and
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does not grant clarity and a clear view for a long time.

The supports that Heidegger is searching for in his thinking are not of the long-lasting quality that the word fused into a poem displays. Many of his props break down instantly. I may remind the reader here of "Ent-fernung" for "Nahe rung." However, within the ducts of his thought they provide their guiding epagogical service. Heidegger expresses it in the following way: "Thinking follows the furrows that it makes in language." And language, as I've said, is like a field from which the most diverse seeds can come forth.

Granted, these are images, metaphors, parables, means of speech that are props used in following a direction of thought, nothing that shall or can be kept forever, they are something that just come about as words come if you want to say something. And "saying" that means "showing," keeping and communicating. But only for he who looks at it himself. That is why the untranslatability of this language is not a loss or even an objection to the kind of thinking that articulates itself in this manner. Wherever translation or the illusion of a free and unrestricted transposition of thought fails, thinking strikes. We do not know where thinking will lead us. If we believe we know where, we only believe that we think. For, it would not then be a "standing" under the challenge that strikes us and which we do not choose. Thinking challenges us and we have to stand or fall. Standing, however, means "to stand fast," "to correspond," "to answer," and not to play, in a calculating manner, with possibilities.

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