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HEIDEGGER AND THE MYSTERY OF BEING

A thesis submitted in fulfillment
of the requirements for the award of the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

from

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

Marion Reddan MA

School of English Literatures, Philosophy and Language

2009

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CERTIFICATION

I, Marion Reddan, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Department of English Literatures, Philosophy and Language, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for a degree at any other academic institution.

Marion Reddan

2 March 2009

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Without my supervisor, Dr. Kim Atkins, this work would not have been possible. Kim taught me the skills of writing, but whatever ability I may have acquired is inadequate when it comes to expressing the debt of gratitude I owe her. With insight into my needs, Kim encouraged me and inspired me, and despite the heavy demands on her time, she was always available for me. Kim had an innate awareness of how to balance critique and praise. Her diligence and meticulous attention to detail were matched by her vision of what I could accomplish. It has been a privilege to learn from her and to work with her.

The excellent reputation of the University of Wollongong is enhanced by the outstanding contribution of the supporting staff. From librarians, administrators, and the people involved in everyday practical matters, I have found a willingness to go beyond the formal requirements of their duties, and to do everything possible to meet the needs of students.

Of great value to me were the encouraging and helpful comments of my two examiners, Dr. Tom Rockmore, Professor of Philosophy and McAnulty College Distinguished Professor, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, USA, and Dr. Jocelyn Dunphy-Blomfield, Senior Lecturer, Department of Psychological Medicine, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia.

I would also like to thank my family and friends for patiently enduring my seemingly endless periods of withdrawal from the world. They helped me to believe that I would eventually receive the due reward for years of struggle with the puzzles and complexities of Heidegger's thought.

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS STUDY

The following is a list of abbreviations used for Heidegger's works:

- BPP *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982.
- BQP *Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected "Problems" of "Logic"*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.
- BT *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Oxford: Blackwell, 1962. (In the citations from this text, the English pagination precedes the German.)
- CP *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.
- DS *Die Kategorien und Bedeutungslehre des Duns Scotus*, Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1916.
- DT *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund, New York: Harper & Row, 1959.
- EG "On the Essence of Ground," in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- EGT *Early Greek Thinking*, trans. David F. Krell and F. A. Capuzzi, New York: Harper & Row, 1975.
- EHF *The Essence of Human Freedom: An Introduction to Philosophy*, trans. Ted Sadler, London: Continuum Books, 2005.
- EHP *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, trans. Keith Hoeller, New York: Humanity Books, 2000.
- EP "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking," in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. David F. Krell, New York: Harper & Row, 1977.
- HCT *History of the Concept of Time*, trans. Theodore Kisiel, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.
- ID *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, New York: Harper & Row, 1969.

- ITM *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973.
- KPM *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. Richard Taft, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997.
- KTB “Kant’s Thesis about Being,” trans. Ted E. Klein and William E. Pohl, *Southwestern Journal of Philosophy* 4, no. 3, 1973: 7-33.
- LH “Letter on Humanism,” in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. David F. Krell, New York: Harper & Row, 1977.
- MFL *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, trans. Michael Heim, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.
- N3 *Nietzsche*, Vol. 3, *The Will to Power as Knowledge and as Metaphysics*, trans. Joan Stambaugh et al., San Francisco: Harper, 1987.
- N4 *Nietzsche*, Vol. 4, *Nihilism*, ed. David Krell, trans. Frank Capuzzi, New York: Harper & Row, 1982.
- OWL *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz, New York: Harper & Row, 1971.
- PDT “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth,” trans. Thomas Sheehan, in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- PIK *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997.
- PLT *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter, New York: Harper & Row, 1971.
- QB *The Question of Being*, Bilingual edition, trans. William Kluback and Jean Wilde, New York: Twayne Publishers, 1958.
- QCT *The Question Concerning Technology and other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt, New York: Harper and Row, 1977.
- TB *On Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, New York: Harper & Row, 1972.
- TDP *Towards the Definition of Philosophy*, trans. Ted Sadler, London: The Athlone Press, 2002.
- WCT “What calls for thinking,” in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. David Krell, New York: Harper & Row, 1977.

- WT *What is a Thing?* trans. William B. Barton, Jr. and Vera Deutsch, Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1967.
- WIM “What is Metaphysics?” tr. Walter Kaufmann, in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- ZS *Zollikon Seminars: Protocols, Conversations, Letters*, trans. Franz Mayr and Richard Askay, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001.

ABSTRACT

Martin Heidegger has been described as the philosopher of being. His work is a critique of the dualistic thinking of the metaphysical tradition, where being is regarded as a fundamental ground, and indubitable knowledge is prioritised over sensuous experience. Heidegger's own view is that being is an absence of ground, and a dynamic process in which things emerge into presence from concealment. Whereas the tradition interprets being as a concept, Heidegger focuses on what he describes as "the experience of being." His inquiry draws upon the medieval mystics' relationship to God, and the Presocratic philosophers' experience of wonder at the mystery of existence.

In an attempt to understand being itself, Heidegger analyses the being of the human, "Dasein." He argues that because we find ourselves thrown into the world and having to face the imminent possibility of death, we engage in a process of self-creation by projecting ourselves into possibilities. In his later work, Heidegger presents the idea that being and Dasein belong to each other, and can only be understood on the basis of an originary form of difference that is both a union and a separation.

My theory is that the dualities structuring thought and language are a consequence of our existence as embodied, spatio-temporal beings, and that metaphysics is one of the ways in which that duality is expressed. I compare Heidegger's notion of originary difference with the concepts of *chōra* in Plato, and the *apeiron* in

Anaximander. The two Greek philosophers describe a dynamic, non-dual state of potential from which everything that exists is generated and sustained. Such a state is reflected in the interpretations of mystical experience, where subjects in various traditions throughout history have reported a sense of oneness in the apparent dissolution of the temporal and the spatial. In contrast to Heidegger's later view that mysticism is an expression of metaphysics, I propose that mystical experience is a pathway to the experience of being.

INTRODUCTION

The central issue for Martin Heidegger is the question of being. His work is set against the background of the Western metaphysical tradition beginning with Plato, and he examines the ways in which traditional thought diverges from the ideas of the Presocratics. Heidegger opposes the view presented in the Platonic dialogues that the changing world of the senses is an imperfect reflection of the eternal world of forms or ideas.¹ The historical consequence of this approach, he argues, is the dualistic thinking of metaphysics, where absolutely certain knowledge is prioritised over sensuous experience. Heidegger contrasts the tradition's understanding of being as a concept, with what he describes as "that most mysterious of all possibilities: the experience of Being."² He explores the medieval mystics' relationship to God, and the Presocratic philosophers' experience of wonder at the mystery of existence, together with their interpretation of being as the emergence of things into presence from concealment. In Heidegger's view, the tradition overlooks the process of unconcealment by interpreting being as an ultimate ground, or as a substance needing nothing else in order to exist.³ He also claims that on the basis of its self-withdrawal at the time of Plato, being "sends" itself in different forms throughout the successive epochs of Western history, thereby determining the various ways in which being has been understood.

In his major work, *Being and Time*, Heidegger inquires into being itself by analysing the being of the human. His theory of "the ontological difference" draws a distinction between the ontological, which concerns being, and the ontic – a term he uses to describe both the human in terms of its characteristics such as body and consciousness,

and entities as objects with properties such as hardness, weight, and colour (*BT*, 124/91). For Heidegger, the ontological is the *a priori* condition of access to the ontic. He explains that although we can be understood ontically as rational, embodied subjects, our being is the experience of finding ourselves always already involved in a world of meaning. The being of the human is therefore defined as “Dasein” or “Being-in-the-world” (149/114). Subsequently Heidegger moves away from the attempt to understand the meaning of being through analysing the being of Dasein, in favour of the idea that Dasein and being are not self-contained concepts, but can only be understood on the basis of an originary form of difference that is both a separation and a union.⁴

The position I will be defending is that although Heidegger categorises the ontological as *a priori* in *Being and Time* and other works of his early period, the various ways in which he expounds the idea of being are inseparable from what he would regard as ontic considerations. For example, I argue that although he regards the body as merely ontic, the being of the human cannot be understood as exclusive of the body. In his theory of that which is “always already given,” Heidegger seeks to draw out the ontological implications of the *a priori* as formulated originally in Kant, but such an attempt, in my view, is undermined by the manner in which he explains this “prior” condition in terms of Dasein’s ongoing experience in the world.

My basic argument is that the dualities structuring thought and language are a consequence of our existence as embodied, spatio-temporal beings, and that metaphysics is one of the ways in which that duality is expressed. Whereas in our ordinary states of consciousness, we lack the ability to overcome dualistic thinking, throughout the course of history, mystics in various traditions have experienced a transcendence of the spatio-temporal, and of the multiplicity characterising the world of phenomenal experience.⁵ I

hold that the ways in which mystical states are interpreted contain parallels with Heidegger's theory of originary difference, and that this notion is presaged in the concepts of the *apeiron* in Anaximander, and *chōra* in Plato's dialogue, "Timaeus." These various ideas depict a mystery underlying the differentiation of sameness and difference on which our awareness of duality is based. I propose that since it overcomes the metaphysical understanding of being as critiqued by Heidegger, the experience of mysticism can be regarded as an experience of being.

The structure of the thesis is as follows:

Chapter One analyses Heidegger's rejection of Plato's thought and the metaphysical tradition as a whole, where reason is prioritised over sensuous experience. I argue that although the work of Plato contains the origins of metaphysical dualism, he adopts a different approach in his dialogue, "Timaeus,"⁶ which outlines a story about the creation of the universe. The central concept of this work is "*chōra*," a principle that is prior to the original distinction outlined in the dialogue between the intelligible and the sensible. I hold that *chōra* in Plato and originary difference in Heidegger each describe an ultimate mystery that gives rise to our experience of things as being the same or different.

In Chapter Two, I examine Heidegger's analysis of the way the concept of being has been interpreted in the tradition by thinkers including Descartes, Hegel and Nietzsche. Heidegger claims that since non-being is integral to being, the metaphysical idea of being as a ground should be replaced by an understanding of being as the absence of ground.

Chapter Three discusses Heidegger's exploration of medieval mysticism, his ontological reformulation of the Kantian *a priori*, and his claim that the phenomenology

of Husserl overlooks the being of consciousness. Heidegger defines the being of the human, Dasein, on the basis of our everyday involvement in practical activities. Our being also includes the fact that we find ourselves thrown into the world, where we engage in a process of self-creation by projecting ourselves into possibilities; we experience ourselves in terms of a futural orientation, and in our awareness of the imminent possibility of death.

Chapters Four to Nine present some of the difficulties Heidegger faces in his exposition of the ontological difference. I argue that although he gives the ontological a transcendental function, there is an absence of clear boundaries in his work between the ontological and the ontic, and there are also places where the ontic seems to require, or to be given, a fundamental role.

In Chapter Four, I outline the way Heidegger defines the being of Dasein as exclusive of the body, and his problematic attempt to separate Dasein from the question of “life.” I contrast Heidegger’s position with the holistic view of Merleau-Ponty, who interprets the being of the human as its bodily engagement with the world.

Chapter Five analyses the contrast drawn by Heidegger between the metaphysical view of ordinary or sequential time, and the being of Dasein as “temporality.” He defines this term as a primordial unity of past, present, and future, and as the condition that makes possible the experience of ordinary time. Whereas Heidegger gives ontological priority to temporality over sequential time, I adopt Ricoeur’s view that the way we understand ourselves as temporal beings is a function of the mutual presupposition of cosmological time and phenomenological time in lived experience.

In Chapter Six, I examine the claim by Heidegger that when we adopt an authentic attitude to death, we understand it as the state where we are no longer able to

create ourselves through the projection of possibilities. I challenge the separation he makes between such an attitude and the “inauthentic” view of death as a mere cessation of bodily existence. Heidegger provides no ontological interpretation of birth, and his position is ambiguous as to when the state of Dasein actually begins. I propose that a holistic view of the human would include an understanding of birth and death as physical events, and also as factors of significance in the interpretation of being.

In Chapter Seven, I discuss Heidegger’s view of the being of entities as primordially “ready-to-hand” – a phrase describing the way objects are used in accomplishing tasks. The other mode of being, “presence-at-hand,” occurs when there is a breakdown in readiness-to-hand and entities are viewed theoretically. Readiness-to-hand is an element in the definition of Dasein’s being, whereas presence-at-hand denotes the ontic. I point out that since Heidegger cannot clearly distinguish the two forms of being, his interpretation of Dasein is called into question.

Ready-to-hand items are situated in particular contexts of involvement, and these are said to be given *a priori*. I contest this view on the grounds that the understanding of contexts arises from our accumulated experience of the world. In Heidegger’s theory, the ontic interpretation of Dasein concerns the individual, and includes the situation into which it has been thrown. Dasein chooses among the available ontic possibilities, which can then become ontological because of Dasein’s being as projection. I argue that because of its dependence on an existing ontical state, the projection of possibilities cannot legitimately be regarded as ontological and *a priori*. The merging of the ontic and the ontological in Heidegger’s early work effectively collapses the fundamental separation essential to his theory – that between the prior disclosure of meaning and the empirical experience of the world.

Chapter Eight examines the claim by Heidegger that ontological truth, which is Dasein's disclosedness of the being or the "essence" of entities, is the ground of ontic truth, or the correctness of propositions.⁷ To provide a link between the two forms of truth, Heidegger introduces the concept of "uncoveredness" (*BT*, 264/221). However, in certain passages, uncoveredness is simply equated with both ontic and ontological truth. Elsewhere, uncoveredness is either equated with disclosedness, or is used merely to indicate ontic truth, ontological truth being the condition on which propositions can be assessed as either true or false. The ambiguity surrounding uncoveredness creates further problems for Heidegger's attempt to establish the ontological as the *a priori* ground of the ontic. He uses science as an example of ontic truth, and attempts to explain the historical origins of the various ways scientists have conceptualised the natural world. In his view, these approaches arise from differing projections of being, for example, the mathematical projection of nature. I argue that new projections can arise as a result of anomalous findings in experimental outputs, so that they could not be regarded as being given *a priori*.

Heidegger eventually recognises that his ontological analysis of Dasein cannot explain the meaning of being itself, since Dasein can still be understood metaphysically as a self-contained subject. In a new approach defined as "metontology," he uses a fundamental form of questioning to investigate the ontological ground of metaphysics. This inquiry is abandoned when Heidegger concludes that there can be no form of ultimate ground. I propose that the acknowledged limitations in Heidegger's thinking up to this point, together with his problems in reformulating the *a priori*, led him to develop the idea of an "originary" form of difference, where being and Dasein can only be understood on the basis of their interdependence.

In Chapter Nine, I examine the background to Heidegger's theory of originary difference. He claims that the human and being itself belong to each other in what he calls "*Ereignis*" or the "event of appropriation" (*ID*, 39). In the *Beiträge*, Heidegger describes the understanding of this event as a new beginning in thinking, which he contrasts with the first beginning inaugurating the metaphysical era.⁸ The traditional idea of being as the ground of beings is to be replaced by the notion of being as an absence of ground (53). In order to move from the first to the second or the "other" beginning, we are required to take a daring "leap," where everything familiar is thrown aside (157).

A difficulty in the interpretation of the *Beiträge* is that on the one hand, the idea of the mutual belonging of being and "Da-sein" implies that *Ereignis* is a fundamental reality of existence. On the other hand, the state of Da-sein, which is achieved upon taking the leap and entering into the "truth" of *Ereignis*, has been interpreted as merely a present possibility.⁹ A further description is that of an uncertain future event. Because of human weakness, according to Heidegger, being may ultimately "refuse" *Ereignis* (*CP*, 6). These differing presentations and their association with the question of temporality, are addressed in Heidegger's discussion of an "essential," non-successive form of history, which he distinguishes from sequential history as understood by the tradition (345). Because of Heidegger's view that the new beginning may never occur, I argue that this aspect of the discussion is set within the context of chronological time. Drawing on Ricoeur's theory that cosmological and phenomenological time are mutually dependent, I hold that Heidegger is unsuccessful in attempting to explain an essential history that would resolve the problem of whether *Ereignis* is a basic reality, a present possibility, or an indeterminate future event.

In Chapter Ten, I explore Heidegger's theory that being sends itself in different ways throughout the epochs of Western history, together with his view that from the beginning of the metaphysical era, there has been a progressive deterioration in the way being has been understood.¹⁰ The result, he claims, is that we are now in an epoch defined as *Gestell* or "enframing,"¹¹ where humans and entities are reduced to the status of a stockpile for technological purposes. Heidegger's solution to this problem is that we should engage in the process of *Gelassenheit* or releasement, where we focus on the mystery of how everything emerges from concealment. In addition, we are exhorted to wait upon the arrival of a new unveiling of being.¹² In challenging the idea of a continuing decline in our understanding of being, I claim that the beliefs and practices of societies at any given time are not a consequence of being's self-manifestation in a particular epoch, but are influenced by empirical factors such as discoveries in the human and physical sciences.

Heidegger's theory that being withdraws and sends itself have led certain commentators to claim that he tends to hypostasise or reify being.¹³ This problem, in my view, can be resolved by dissociating the question of epochs from that of *Ereignis*. In *Identity and Difference*, *Ereignis* is interpreted on the basis of originary difference, where Da-sein and being are held apart at the same time as they are held together (29). Such an approach problematises the earlier idea of an independent functioning of being that would have consequences for the human, and where being and the human could thereby be understood as having individual identities.

Chapter Eleven examines originary difference as it is applied by Heidegger to an originary form of language that has certain similarities to Derrida's concept of *différance*. Derrida describes his theory as a play of differences where words or signs are

constantly being substituted for each other, resulting in a continual deferral of meaning.¹⁴

Heidegger associates originary language with being, determined on the basis of *logos* as a gathering and presencing, and *physis* as emergence from concealment. He also links originary language to a form of poetry understood in the original Greek sense as *poiesis*, a process whereby the being of things is manifest. In the theories of both Heidegger and Derrida, there can be no ultimate origin of meaning.

I compare *Ereignis* as an expression of originary difference with the concepts of the *apeiron* in Anaximander, and *chōra* in Plato, each of which is portrayed as a dynamic state of potential from which everything that exists is generated and sustained. Just as the two Greek concepts have no being of their own, but permeate everything that emerges from them, in the theory of *Ereignis*, it is being as an absence of ground from which all possibilities arise. I hold that since we belong to a mystery described by concepts such as *Ereignis*, *chōra*, and the *apeiron*, in order for us to enter into a state that could be described as “belonging to being,” we need the kind of experience that will involve the apparent breakdown of the spatial and the temporal, taking us beyond discursive thought and the dualities inherent in the structure of language. I propose that mysticism is a description of such an experience.

Chapter Twelve explores the commonality among reported experiences of mysticism in various religious and philosophical traditions, as well as in nature mysticism. These experiences are typically described as a melding into “the unifying source of what-is.”¹⁵ They can also include the experience of a cosmic emptiness that is at the same time a fullness comprising all of existence in a potential form.¹⁶ Although Heidegger initially endorses the mysticism and rationality of Meister Eckhart and the medievals, he subsequently categorises such an approach as metaphysical on the grounds

that theology is a “positive science.”¹⁷ Heidegger rejects all other forms of mysticism in the West, dismissing them as the irrational counterpart to metaphysics.¹⁸

When associated with theism, mystical experience often has as its theoretical basis a form of apophatic thinking known as “negative theology,” and is exemplified in the work of Eckhart. This approach to Western religious belief represents an attempt to transcend the idea of the God of revelation and faith, who can be defined by means of certain qualities and characteristics. Derrida critiques negative theology on the grounds that the history of a word’s usage in its difference from other words constitutes its meaning as an endless connection of “traces,” thereby precluding the possibility of an origin. In Derrida’s view, the statement “God is neither this nor that” includes the necessary positing of the entity itself.¹⁹ Similarly he contests Heidegger’s theory that “being is not” (68), claiming that both “God” in Eckhart and “being” in Heidegger represent the description of an ultimate form of meaning, so that the work of both thinkers is situated within metaphysics. I hold that there are two conflicting positions in Heidegger’s thought. In some passages he seems to attribute a form of agency to being, such as the possibility that being may refuse *Ereignis*. However, in his concept of originary difference as a mutual belonging, it would not be possible for either being or the human to act apart from the other.

I propose that Heidegger’s account of originary difference is convincing as an attempt to explore the mystery of being, but that he is unable to connect this theory to the kind of experience by which the theory could be confirmed. Although Heidegger ultimately rejects all forms of mysticism, he continues to affirm the practices of releasement and meditative thinking outlined in Eckhart. Heidegger claims that the

thinking he espouses must be centred in “reality,” defined as that which lies closest to us. He gives, as an example, a celebration of a work of art, and proposes that meditative thinking on the event would show how the work of artists and thinkers depends on the roots they have in their native land (*DT*, 47). This example has no connection to the concept of originary difference, nor is there any mystery to be entered into. I describe two “movements” within mysticism: one is a sense of union with the ultimate mystery; the other is a movement “outwards,” interpreted by some commentators as a separation into individuality (Grof, 77-78). Because these movements have no temporal dimension, they can be linked to Heidegger’s concept of originary difference, interpreted as both unification and differentiation.

In the Conclusion, I hold that although Heidegger seeks to portray being as beyond the level of concepts and propositions, the way he situates being in the everyday world of objects and events, limits his claim to the realm of the conceptual and the explanatory. His descriptions of the experience of belonging to being involve an acceptance of the idea that being itself is groundless, so that this cognitive act would be an essential element of the experience itself. I argue that Heidegger’s acknowledged inability to transcend language as dualistic, can be addressed through an understanding of mystical experience involving the breakdown of the dualities on which language is based. Heidegger describes originary language as “the peal of stillness,”²⁰ where its essence is unnameable and unsayable. In a similar manner, mystical experiences are sensed as a stillness beyond language.

The thesis concludes by referring to the contemporary influence of Heidegger’s thought across a range of disciplines, and proposes that his struggle to integrate the

experience of being with the language of concepts, represents an ongoing challenge to thinkers of today who are concerned with exploring being as the ultimate mystery of existence.

NOTES

¹ Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 106.

² Heidegger, Postscript to “What is Metaphysics?” tr. R. F. C. Hull and Alan Crick, in *Existence and Being* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1949), 386.

³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, tr. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 125/92 (hereafter cited in text as *BT*).

⁴ Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 65 (hereafter cited in text as *ID*).

⁵ Robert Zaehner, *Mysticism, Sacred and Profane: An Inquiry into Some Varieties of Praeternatural Experience* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 199.

⁶ Plato, “Timaeus.” *Selections from Timaeus*, tr. Benjamin Jowett.
<http://ls.poly.edu/~jbain/mms/texts/B02.Plato.pdf>.

⁷ Heidegger, *The Essence of Reasons*, tr. Terrence Malick (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 27.

⁸ Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, tr. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 43 (hereafter cited in text as *CP*).

⁹ Richard Polt, “Metaphysical Liberalism in Heidegger’s *Beiträge zur Philosophie*,” *Political Theory* 25, no. 5 (October, 1997): 658.

¹⁰ Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, tr. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 52.

¹¹ Heidegger, *The Question concerning Technology and other Essays*, tr. William Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 19.

¹² Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, tr. Hans Freund and John Anderson (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 68 (hereafter cited in text as *DT*).

¹³ Thomas Sheehan, “On Movement and the Destruction of Ontology,” *The Monist* 64, no. 4 (October, 1981), 534. The author summarises such views as descriptions of being as “an autonomous ‘other’ that seems to function on its own apart from entities and from man.”

¹⁴ Jacques Derrida, “*Différance*,” in *Margins of Philosophy*, tr. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 11.

¹⁵ Leon Rosenstein, “Mysticism as Preontology: A Note on the Heideggerian Connection,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 39, no. 1 (September 1978): 64.

¹⁶ Stanislav Grof, *The Cosmic Game: Explorations in the Frontiers of Human Consciousness* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998), 30.

¹⁷ Heidegger, “Phenomenology and Theology,” in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 48.

¹⁸ John Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger’s Thought* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1990), 141.

¹⁹ Jacques Derrida, “*Sauf le nom (Post-Scriptum)*,” ed. Thomas Dutoit, tr. David Wood, John Leavey, Jr., and Ian McLeod (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 80.

²⁰ Heidegger, “Poetically Man Dwells,” in *Poetry Language, Thought*, tr. Albert Hofstadter, (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 207.

Chapter One

HEIDEGGER AND PLATO

Martin Heidegger is regarded as the philosopher of being, a subject to which the whole of his life's work is directed.¹ His thought is a critique of the metaphysical tradition, which in his view originates with the separation made by Plato between the true and eternal world of forms or ideas, and the merely apparent, changing world of the senses.² The historical consequence of this approach, according to Heidegger, is the prioritisation of absolutely certain knowledge over sense experience. His theory is that being is not an unchanging essence belonging to an intelligible realm, but a process of self-disclosure in which things can exist and be open to our understanding.³ Whereas the tradition regards being as a concept, Heidegger describes the experience of being as the most mysterious of all possibilities.⁴

In *Being and Time* and other works of the late 1920s, Heidegger develops his inquiry into being through his theory of "the ontological difference."⁵ He draws a distinction between an entity or an object in terms of its properties and functions, and the "being" of such an entity, determined by the way it is understood in the context of human interests. The being of the human concerns its involvement in a world of meaning, together with the way it creates itself through the projection of possibilities. In Heidegger's later work, the ontological difference is replaced with an originary form of difference, where being itself and the human are no longer regarded as metaphysically distinct entities, but are understood on the basis of their mutual belonging together.

Although Plato's thought contains the origins of metaphysical dualism, his dialogue, "Timaeus," charts a different course in presenting a story about the creation of the universe. The central concept of this work is *chōra*, a principle that enables the differentiation of sameness and difference, and underlies the original distinction between the intelligible and the sensible. I propose that Plato's description of this mysterious state can be used as a background to Heidegger's theory of originary difference.

1.1 *Metaphysics and the Presocratics*

Heidegger situates his thought in opposition to what he describes as the metaphysical tradition. The word "metaphysics" is originally associated with Aristotle's "first philosophy" as the determination of the most general and necessary characteristics a thing must have in order to count as an entity.⁶ It is basically a form of inquiry that addresses the nature and origin of all reality, both visible and invisible, and it seeks to discover what is ultimately real, in contrast to what we take to be reality in our everyday experience of the world. The human power of reason is prioritised in the quest for an indubitable form of knowledge. An example is the *ego cogito* of Descartes, for whom certainty is based in the thinking subject.⁷ The metaphysical tradition in recent times has been interpreted as involving a series of oppositions such as that between presence and absence, mind and matter, the universal and the particular, where the first concept is described as original and as that from which the second concept is derived.⁸ Heidegger claims that the dualistic thinking of the tradition has its origins in the work of Plato,⁹ whose dialogues describe the temporal world as an unreliable, sensory reflection of the true and eternal world of "forms," also known as essences or ideas.

The metaphysical approach is contrasted by Heidegger with what he regards as the pinnacle of Western philosophy – the thought of the Greeks prior to Plato. In Heidegger’s view, the ultimate philosophical question is that posed by Gottfried Leibniz, “Why is there anything at all rather than nothing?” (*ITM*, 1). Heidegger associates this query with the Presocratics’ understanding of the world as the mysterious self-disclosure of being,¹⁰ together with their experience of wonder “that there are things and we ourselves are in their midst.”¹¹ The early Greeks were concerned with the *on he on* – beings insofar as they are, or beings as beings. Heidegger proposes that this understanding was subsequently lost when the Greek participle for being, “*on*,” was interpreted as the noun “being,” and the original meaning of “presencing” – the process of coming into presence – was overlooked. The result, according to Heidegger, is that “presencing as such is not distinguished from what is present: it is taken merely as the most universal or the highest of present beings, thereby becoming one among such beings” (*EGT*, 50).

To explain his own understanding of being, Heidegger refers to the Presocratic thinkers, Heraclitus and Parmenides, who describe being as an emergence from concealment. Heraclitus seeks to put the experience of being into words through his use of two concepts, *physis* and *logos*.¹² The meaning of *physis* is the process of coming into being, where things both emerge and endure. Heidegger defines the term as “self-blossoming emergence,...opening up, unfolding, that which manifests itself in such unfolding and perseveres and endures in it” (*ITM*, 14). He also uses the translation *Anwesen* – “there is presencing,” in order to reveal the dynamic aspect of *physis*.¹³ The interpretation of *logos* is based on the verb *legein* – a gathering that “assembles

everything in the totality of simple presencing” (*EGT*, 70). Things are both brought together and allowed to be what they are, for example, as objects or as parts of nature.

Heidegger also examines the Greek concept, *aletheia* (unconcealment or unhiddenness) as a primordial process of revelation: “The power that manifests itself stands in unconcealment. In showing itself, the unconcealed as such comes to stand. Truth as unconcealment is not an appendage to Being. Truth is inherent in the essence of Being” (*ITM*, 102). *Aletheia* is a central concept in the work of Parmenides, and signifies both the negation of concealment and the preserving of what is unconcealed. The term also indicates the opening or clearing “which first grants Being and thinking and their presencing to and for each other.”¹⁴ For the early Greeks, “thinking” is an experience of the union of being and thought. Heidegger claims that thinking occurs when being presents itself as a gift to be thought about: “Everything thought-provoking *gives us* to think...We will call ‘most thought-provoking’ what remains to be thought about always, because it is so at the beginning and before all else.”¹⁵ In this context, thought does not refer to an individual’s experience of thinking, which would indicate something separate from being, nor does it represent thinking as understood in a logical or scientific context, where being is divided between subjects who see and objects that are seen.

Parmenides holds that whatever does not exist cannot be thought about: “That which is there to be spoken and thought of must be. For it is possible for it to be, but not possible for nothing to be.”¹⁶ The original unity of thinking and being in Parmenides is expressed in the idea that in order for beings to appear, they must be apprehended.¹⁷ A reciprocal relation therefore exists between the unconcealment or manifestation of entities, and *noein*, which is the apprehension of what has been made manifest. For Parmenides, *noein* is a receptive attitude, but it is not simply passive. As apprehension,

the term includes, for example, interrogating a witness with a view to determining how things stand.¹⁸ *Noein* both absorbs and guards what it receives. There is thus a dynamic reciprocity between the gathering of the manifestation of presencing, and the apprehension and guarding of what has been made manifest. Since thought belongs to being, it is being that directs thought into its true nature. The separation of being and thinking in the tradition is described by Heidegger as “the fundamental position of the Western spirit, against which our central attack is directed” (*ITM*, 17).

Heidegger attributes the rise of metaphysics to the changes that occur in the meaning of *aletheia* and *physis*. He refers to the allegory of the cave in Plato’s dialogue, “The Republic,” where the shadows produced by the fire inside the cave are contrasted with true knowledge of the things outside the cave that are seen in their “visible form” or “*idea*.”¹⁹ Plato describes various degrees of unhiddenness as the prisoners in the cave gradually move towards the light, but Heidegger claims that *aletheia* in the dialogue “is considered simply in terms of how it makes whatever appears be accessible in its visible form” (*PDT*, 172). Rather than being that which allows something else to appear, the *idea* is concerned only with “the shining of itself” (173). Heidegger explains that when unconcealment is separated from being, thought is “torn away from its life-giving element.”²⁰ Similarly, he contrasts the Presocratic meaning of *physis* as emergence from concealment, with another meaning of the Greek concept indicating an appearance that attains a greater or lesser degree of reality through its accordance or discordance with being.²¹ Heidegger argues that Plato’s use of this second sense means that *physis* is reduced to a particular mode of self-presentation, with ideas being regarded as more fundamental than disclosure: “What appears – the phenomenon – is no longer *physis*, the emerging power, nor is it the self-manifestation of the appearance; no, appearing is now

the emergence of the copy. Since the copy never equals its prototype, what appears is mere appearance, actually an illusion, a deficiency...The truth of *physis*...becomes a correctness of vision, of apprehension as representation” (*ITM*, 184-185). Taylor Carman writes that from Heidegger’s perspective, Plato’s work represents the beginning of “a long history of metaphysical distortions.”²² Through the influence of Plato, according to Heidegger, *physis* comes to be understood as the “physical,” leading to the idea in modern physics that the motion of the atoms and electrons is the fundamental manifestation of nature (*ITM*, 15).

1.2 *Plato and the cosmos*

Although Plato’s thought is generally regarded as the origin of metaphysics,²³ he adopts a different approach in his dialogue, “Timaeus,”²⁴ which recounts a story about the creation of the universe.²⁵ The significance of this work in a discussion of Heidegger is that the dialogue can be read as providing a background to Heidegger’s theory of an originary form of difference underlying the dualistic thinking of the tradition. Such an interpretation would not have been endorsed by Heidegger, since most of his work is situated in opposition to Plato. Some scholars consider that “Timaeus” is purely metaphorical, since it describes the cosmos as having a “soul” and “consciousness.”²⁶ Others interpret the work literally on the grounds that Aristotle regards Plato’s thought as containing the idea of a physical universe.²⁷ In adopting the second position, I argue that the dialogue is an attempt to portray the origins of the cosmos in the form of a mysterious state, *chōra*, from which arises the advent of time and space.

“Timaeus” is structured so that the first account is interrupted and replaced by a second, which is then replaced in the same manner by a third. These various beginnings

reflect the movement within the dialogue, where the question of origin is reformulated in light of the creation of time. A consequence of this movement is that each of the opposing concepts in the narrative is contextualised so that its difference from the other is revealed as intertwined with an essential belonging together. The origin of this blending is an imaginary scene describing a state prior to the differentiation of sameness and difference, where the concept of *chōra* is introduced.

In the early part of the dialogue, Critias and Socrates discuss the idea of presenting a true *logos* concerning the creation of the universe, rather than an invented *mythos* (26c-e). Critias then suggests that Timaeus, who has specialised in astronomy, should speak first, beginning with the generation of the world (35c). In his response, Timaeus invokes the aid of the gods so that his discourse will be acceptable to them. Despite the impossibility of giving a factual account, Timaeus regards his presentation as being situated within the realm of the possible. Having described his narrative as a “likely story” (29d), he later claims that what he says is “the truth” (49a), and that although it is necessarily incomplete, it can be accepted as reliable.

1.3 *The first discourse*

Plato’s dialogue contains three sections or discourses, corresponding to three versions of the beginning of the cosmos: the first is a creation through *nous* (intelligence or reason); the second is a creation through a primordial form of “necessity,”²⁸ and the third discourse discusses the interaction between necessity and the traces that ultimately become the four basic elements. In the first discourse, Timaeus describes the creative work of the artisan god, the demiurge, who is referred to as both the father and maker of the universe (28c). Looking to a paradigm, the god produces something with the same

look and function, so that the finished work is described as an image of that paradigm. The god as the anthropomorphic representation of *nous* can choose one of two paradigms or “kinds” in his act of creation. The first is the self-identical form or *eidos*,²⁹ which is non-generated and indestructible. It is apprehended through noetic *logos*,³⁰ and is the means by which everything that exists can be understood in its truth. The second kind is generated, divisible and self-differing (51e). It is understood through *doxa*, which concerns the way things are taken as being what they seem.³¹ If the first kind is chosen, the work will be beautiful, but this will not be the case if the second kind is used. Timaeus queries whether the cosmos has always been, or whether it had a beginning, and concludes that something visible and tangible, which has a body and is apprehended by the senses, must have been generated. He also decides that its maker must have looked to the paradigm of selfsame, perpetual being since the cosmos is an image that is “fair and perfect” (29a). Having “received” the visible material, which is moving “in an irregular and disorderly fashion” (29d), the creator god brings order to the whole visible sphere. Timaeus later refers to this primal matter as that which ultimately becomes the four basic elements (53b).

In the first discourse, intelligence is associated with the “fairest and best,” and it cannot be present in anything lacking in soul. For this reason, in his act of creation, the god “put intelligence in soul, and soul in body,” so that “the world became a living creature truly endowed with soul and intelligence by the providence of God” (30c). The insertion of “soul” into the “body” of the universe is discussed before any indication is given as to how the soul of the universe itself was made. This question of the order of events is reflected in the structure of the dialogue as a whole, where one discourse on the

creation, or one beginning, is replaced by another, each providing a more originary explanation.

Timaeus explains how the soul of the universe was made from two kinds of being: the indivisible and selfsame perpetual being, and the divisible, transient, generated being. Midway between the two, the god blended a third form of being compounded out of the other two. The three are further blended in order to form the mixture from which the soul is created, the process being described as “difficult,” owing to the fact that the first form concerns sameness, whereas the second concerns difference (32-35a). After the soul is made, the visible universe is formed within it, the two being joined at their respective centres. The soul, as “the best of things created,” is described as the external envelopment of the cosmos, being “interfused everywhere from the centre to the circumference of heaven” (37a). Although it is intertwined with the visible, the soul is also described as “invisible.” A similar complication occurs with selfsame being. Prior to the first blending, the selfsame is set in opposition to the visible, but in the second blending, selfsame being becomes part of the soul mixture and on that basis would no longer be regarded as separate from the visible.

The function of soul is then expanded to include a third component, “being,” which is similarly blended from the selfsame and the different, following which the three are blended into one, so that a new version of the soul emerges. Because the soul is composed of the same and the different, when the soul touches something, it is able to declare whether what is touched belongs to the selfsame or the changeable (36e-37c). Through the mutual touching of the soul and things, a discourse emerges that blends together sameness, difference, and being. The question then arises as to where “Timaeus” places the origin of sameness and difference. If the soul is already made of the same and

the different, the distinction between them would be prior to the soul's action. The idea of one concept occurring before another raises the issue of how a sequence can occur when the existence of time has not yet been established.

1.4 *The creation of time*

Within the dialogue, the idea of bringing time into being arises from the creator's desire to generate gods and to set them in the cosmos (47d-41a). The gods for Plato and the Greeks included the planets and the stars, as well as various invisible deities. However, the gods as a whole were regarded as everlasting. In "Timaeus," the creator desires certain of these gods to be visibly manifest – a plan that would have required the paradigm of the eternal and selfsame, in contrast to the heavenly bodies, which are generated. The narrative continues that in order to solve the problem, the creator made "a moving image of eternity, and when he set in order the heaven, he made this image eternal but moving according to number, while eternity itself rests in unity; and this image we call time" (37d). This passage has been interpreted, at least since Augustine, as indicating that time is the moving image of eternity. John Sallis points out that the word translated as "eternity" means "abiding in unity" or "remaining within oneness." Two activities have traditionally been attributed to the god – a setting in order and a making. The passage has therefore been regarded as containing two objects: what is set in order is the heaven, and what is made is time as the image of eternity. Recent research quoted by Sallis indicates that a better interpretation of the passage would be that "in ordering, he [the god] makes the heaven" (79). On this reading, what the god makes is the heaven itself, and not a separate image identifiable as time. In the one act, therefore, the god makes the heaven and sets it in order.

Although the dialogue states that the heaven was made at the same time as days, nights, months and years, Timaeus also reveals that in order to make these aspects of time, the god had to make the stars, whose orbital movements structure time: “Such was the mind and thought of God in the creation of time. The sun and moon and five other stars, which are called the planets, were created by him in order to distinguish and preserve the numbers of time; and when he had made their several bodies, he placed them in the orbits in which the circle of the other was revolving – in seven orbits seven stars” (37c-d). In commenting on the statement that time and the heaven “came into being at the same instant” (38b), Sallis explains that Timaeus is not describing a temporal simultaneity, since the generation of time is the event by means of which simultaneity first becomes possible (82). According to Plato, time is inseparable from planetary movement, but the fact that this movement is not eternal means that in one sense it is possible to speculate on what may have occurred before the planets came into being. The problem this creates is that the use of the word “before” requires that time be already in existence. We can, however, imagine a situation of possibility or potential in which arises everything that is, including time itself. (This state could reasonably be associated with the quantum vacuum, which gives birth to the universe of space-time.)³²

The idea of a state of potential underlying the emergence of time and space suggests that the world of ideas cannot ultimately be separated from the world of the senses. This breakdown of duality has already been revealed in the description of the making of the soul, involving the multiple blendings of the perpetual and invisible on the one hand, and the transient and visible on the other. Furthermore, the differing ways in which the blendings are carried out prevent a conclusion being drawn as to whether or not, in the end, the two categories can still be distinguished. In the next section of the

dialogue, Timaeus outlines the central concept of the work, which is posited as the origin of distinction itself.

1.5 *The second discourse*

The major change introduced in the second discourse is the replacement of the original twofold structure of paradigm and image, where the visible and self-differing cosmos is made as an image of the intelligible and perpetually selfsame *eidos*. Timaeus explains that a “third kind” is needed: “Two classes...sufficed for the former discussion: one, which we assumed, was a pattern intelligible and always the same; and the second was only the imitation of the pattern, generated and visible. There is also a third kind which we did not distinguish at the time, conceiving that the two would be enough” (49a). The need for the third kind is to address the nature of the original material used by the god in creating the universe: “We must consider the nature of fire, and water, and air, and earth, such as they were prior to the creation of the heaven, and what was happening to them in this previous state; for no one has as yet explained the manner of their generation” (48c). At this stage, these four cannot be defined as “elements” since they have not yet been distinguished in the creative process as individual things (47a). Timaeus explains that in the first account, it was inappropriate for the narrator (Timaeus himself) to assume in advance the nature of the material that the god used to form both time and the cosmos. What later became the elements “had only certain faint traces of themselves” (53b). The second discourse will mark a limit as to what can legitimately be said concerning both this basic material and the original distinction between the eternal and selfsame on the one hand, and the visible and generated on the other.

Timaeus then proposes a way of speaking about the precursors to the elements, but interrupts his narration to declare that these faint traces flee from discourse, not waiting to be referred to as “this” or “that,” or any other name that would indicate a fixed meaning. Since they are always moving in a cycle of transformations, they are described as being “of such a nature,” lacking the stability belonging to *logos* or discourse:

We see that what we just now called water, by condensation, I suppose, becomes stone and earth; and this same element, when melted and dispersed, passes into vapour and air. Air, again, when inflamed, becomes fire; and again fire, when condensed and extinguished, passes once more into the form of air; and once more, air, when collected and condensed, produces cloud and mist; and from these, when still more compressed, comes flowing water, and from water comes earth and stones once more; and thus generation appears to be transmitted from one to the other in a circle. Thus, then, as the several elements never present themselves in the same form, how can any one have the assurance to assert positively that any of them, whatever it may be, is one thing rather than another? (49d)

Timaeus explains that the traces could not be situated in the twofold structure of the first discourse, which was limited to describing that which can be made in the image of a paradigm. The problem of where to place the traces indicates the need for the “third kind,” which is beyond the intelligible and the sensible, and whose functions will include providing the traces with shelter. Timaeus also explains that the third kind is needed to explain how the forms are joined to the sensible, and to address the question of how one thing can occur before another “prior to” the creation of time. He has not yet named the third kind, and will not even speak about it because it is “difficult of explanation and dimly seen” (49a). It is that which allows being and becoming to occur, without thereby being placed within either. Timaeus describes the third kind in terms of its function: “What nature are we to attribute to this new kind of being? We reply, that it is the receptacle, and in a manner the nurse, of all generation” (49a). Whereas in the first

discourse, there is a blending of the selfsame and the different, the third kind has an alterity that cannot be categorised in terms of “being,” since it is that which enables being to occur. It is even beyond the notion of “kind,” which in Plato’s work refers to an intelligible *eidos*. Sallis describes the mysterious concept as a “kind outside of kind,” (99), while Jacques Derrida regards it as a “genre beyond genre,” beyond categories or categorical oppositions, involving a logic other than that of the *logos*.³³ Terms describing the third kind such as “receptacle” and “nurse” have been understood as metaphors, but Derrida explains that the metaphoric form of speech relies on a prior distinction between the intelligible and the sensible (92).

A further method Timaeus uses to describe the third kind is to take the example of gold, which can be made into various shapes and then remodeled into others. The resulting figures do not have an independent existence but are merely formed in the metal, which itself remains the same through the changes. In receiving the traces of the elements, the third kind “never departs at all from her own nature, and never in any way, or at any time, assumes a form like that of any of the things which enter into her” (50c). The third kind seems to have both intelligible and sensible characteristics, but it has to be formless and free of the incoming shapes, since if it resembled them, the impressions could not form. It merely appears different each time because of what it receives. As “the mother of all created, visible and sensible things,” the invisible third kind is affected in a visible way by the entering elements: “We may truly say that fire is that part of her nature which from time to time is inflamed, and water that which is moistened, and that the mother substance becomes earth and air, in so far as she receives the impressions of them” (51b). Timaeus also likens the third kind to a plastic or wax mold. In being able to receive and to erase marks, a mold holds together the properties of solidity and fluidity in

passing from solid to liquid form, and back again. It accepts imprints while remaining unchanged. Derrida explains that although the third kind receives properties, in another sense it (“she”) does not receive them because it is unaffected by the properties themselves. He states that the third kind “must not receive for her own sake, so she must not receive, merely let herself be lent the properties (of that) which she receives. She must not receive, she must receive not that which she receives” (98). The third kind is described by Emanuela Bianchi as “a reversal of movement, from that which receives, invites into interiority, and appropriates, to that which opens out into exteriority, spaces, and disperses.”³⁴ Similarly Maria Margaroni sees it as disturbing the borders between inside and outside, the intelligible and the sensible, self and other.³⁵ Because the third kind is “an invisible and formless being,” which in some mysterious way “partakes of the intelligible,” Timaeus describes it as “most incomprehensible” (51b). In outlining its unique kind of invisibility, Sallis writes: “Whereas the invisibility of the intelligible is, in the end, just the other side of another visibility – that is, its invisibility to the senses is just the other side of its visibility to *nous* – the invisibility of the third kind is a more insistent invisibility” (111). Being already “there” before creation according to *nous*, the third kind is prior to the distinction between the intelligible and the sensible, since that kind of distinction would require the presence of noetic *logos*.³⁶

A problem in defining the third kind is indicated by the fact that the term chosen, *chōra*, when it eventually appears late in the second discourse, does not have the kind of “reality” that for Plato is ultimately attributable only to the intelligible *eidos*: “And there is a third nature, which is *chōra* and is eternal, and admits not of destruction and provides a home for all created things, and is apprehended without the help of sense, by a kind of spurious reason, and is hardly real” (52a-d). *Chōra* involves a non-logical

logos where, on the one hand, it is referred to as a “home,” but on the other hand, it cannot be in any location since it has no being of itself: “We beholding as in a dream, say of all existence that it must of necessity be in some place and occupy some *chōra*, but that what is neither in heaven nor in earth has no existence.”³⁷ Whereas that which is perceived by the senses has less fullness of being than the intelligible and selfsame, *chōra* is described as a “being beyond being” (Sallis, 123). In contrast to the sensible as generated, *chōra* is eternal, and to that extent resembles the intelligible. However, because *chōra* has no relation to time, the form of “eternity” appropriate to the third kind is outside the traditional understanding of that term.

Towards the end of the second discourse, Timaeus refers to the earlier distinction drawn between perpetual being and that which is generated. He confirms the characteristics of the former as “always the same, uncreated and indestructible, never receiving anything into itself from without, nor itself going out to any other, but invisible and imperceptible by any sense, and of which the contemplation is granted to intelligence only” (52a). However, Timaeus then refers to the generated, the second kind, in relation to the first: “And there is another nature of the same name with it, and like to it, perceived by sense, created, always in motion, becoming in place and again vanishing out of place, which is apprehended by opinion and sense.” This passage indicates that there is no longer any absolute distinction between the two kinds of being, but rather an undermining of the nature of that distinction as it was introduced in the first discourse. The idea of the forms being immanent to the sensible, cannot account for either the existence of a multiplicity of the sensible, or the means by which the forms appear outside of themselves in the physical realm of becoming. It is only *chōra* that gives being to the images in allowing the forms to be manifest (52d). Although the image depends on

the intelligible *eidos*, the latter can never exist in the image or belong to it, nor can the intelligible *eidos* receive anything into itself. Without *chōra*, the image would have no being at all.

Chōra is presented as that which enables anything to come into existence, so that the intelligible and the sensible can no longer be regarded as distinct and self-contained realms of being. Sallis writes: “As soon as the third kind is introduced, the twofold will have been limited, its exclusive dominion disturbed, displaced; and, in a sense of being beyond being, one will no longer be able to say that there are only intelligible and sensible beings” (123). In the light of *chōra*, the two realms could be said to “belong” to each other, even though in our normal state, when we are no longer “in a dream,” the intelligible and the sensible are perceived as being independent. The idea of separateness and belonging together is basic to Heidegger’s concept of originary difference, though his own understanding of *chōra* (outlined below) is situated within his overall critique of Plato.

The interpretation of *chōra* has proved problematic for scholars. Aristotle equates the concept with space, which follows from his interpretation of matter in Plato as extension.³⁸ Similarly, Heidegger writes that the traditional view of *chōra* as a space defined by extension, “was initiated by the Platonic philosophy, i.e. in the interpretation of being as *idea*” (*ITM*, 66). Raphael Demos opposes such interpretations on the grounds that since *chōra* involves motion as well as space, it can only be understood as “potency.” He claims that “the receptacle is wholly indeterminate; therefore it can be identified neither with physical space, which is a definite pattern of positions, nor with motion, which is a measurable phenomenon. It must be rather construed as the potency of matter, and of space, and of physical motion.”³⁹ *Chōra* has certain elements in common

with place, but as Derrida notes, it is “more situating than situated” (92). It enables being and becoming to occur, but these two are not opposed to each other since they are yet to become distinct concepts. In Jeremy Weate’s view, *chōra* is not a “bridge” between two orders of being; it is rather their “primordial conjoint origin.”⁴⁰ Derrida asserts that *chōra* cannot even be called an origin, since that term has historically been associated with the foundational concepts of metaphysics. Furthermore, the idea of origin suggests something having a beginning in time, whereas for Derrida, *chōra* transcends both the temporal and any form of conceptualisation: “This strange mother who gives place without engendering can no longer be considered as an origin. She eludes all anthropo-theological schemes, all history, all revelation, and all truth. Preoriginary, before and outside of all generation, she no longer even has the meaning of a past, of a present that is past. *Before* signifies no temporal anteriority” (125).

1.6 *The third discourse*

Chōra in the third discourse introduces indeterminacy into what *nous* would otherwise render determinate. The beginnings of the four elements are again discussed as only having a trace of themselves (53b), but now Timaeus refers to the manner in which they are separated by *chōra*. In the first discourse, the soul separates the same and the different, but at that stage in the dialogue, the soul had not been created. It is only *chōra* that can originate the separating function.

The traces of the elements are described as being out of balance with one another, the result being that *chōra* is shaken by them, undergoing erratic motion and becoming perpetually unstable (52e). However, *chōra* also shakes the elements, so that when moved they are “separated and carried continually, some one way, some another”

(52d), the most unlike being separated and the most similar being brought together. This picture suggests that, whereas in the second discourse, the traces are already existing in some form, in the third discourse they represent merely potential in their interaction with *chōra*. The question then arises as to which of the two movements is prior: the shaking of *chōra* by the traces as potential, or *chōra*'s own actions on the traces. Any order of occurrence presupposes the existence of time, but it is only with the creation of the cosmos that time becomes operative. Although "Timaeus" describes time as being created, Aryeh Finkelberg claims that Plato does not conceive of time as having an actual "beginning."⁴¹ Such an interpretation can be supported on the grounds that a beginning can only occur "within" time. Sallis questions whether time can be said to have a "*what*," an *eidos*, rather than being the perpetual selfsameness that belongs to every *eidos* (84). Whatever time may be, the question of sequence is inapplicable when discussing *chōra* as that which enables something to exist.

At this point in the dialogue, the creator god reappears, shaping the traces formed in *chōra* into the elements themselves: fire, air, water and earth. The activity of the god in the first discourse had presupposed the existence of the elements as already formed. It is only within *chōra*, however, that any concept or entity can begin to emerge from its initial state as potential, and through a process of abstraction and separation into the same and the different, completed by the soul, arrive at a point where the action of the god enables it to be formulated as an individual existent.

1.7 "Timaeus" and being

The way in which "Timaeus" is interpreted is relevant to the question of whether a philosophical position on the question of being can be based on an imaginary

situation that makes possible the creation of the universe. According to Plato, absolutely true and abiding knowledge belongs only to the gods and those to whom they choose to reveal it (53d). The characters in the dialogue discuss the presentation of a true *logos* rather than an invented *mythos*, and to this end Timaeus invokes the aid of the gods (27c). Sallis comments that through its mythical dimension, the Platonic dialogue “has within itself a link to the earth, a bond to something intrinsically opaque, a bond to an element of darkness in contrast to that which is capable of being taken up into the light of *logos*.”⁴² He advances the view that for Plato, *mythos* is “a contrast within *logos* itself, or perhaps a contrast understood as determined from out of a prior domain in which *logos* and *mythos* are the same.” Similarly Demos proposes that the cosmology of “Timaeus” is a myth in the sense that it is “about the timeless through the symbolism of the temporal” (538).

Derrida’s essay on the dialogue presents two complementary interpretations. One is that the work is a mythic discourse that “plays with the probable image” (113). The sensory world is itself an image, and myth is “an image of this image.” The *logos* relating to images must therefore be merely probable, so we are obliged to accept the “probable myth.” Derrida’s other position is that the discourse on *chōra* proceeds from a “hybrid, bastard, or even corrupted reasoning,” and also that it comes “as in a dream,” suggesting an absence of lucidity. However, instead of calling the story a myth, or relying on the alternative of *logos* or *mythos*, Derrida opts to describe it as a third genus of discourse that would “trouble the very order of polarity” (92). In that case, he claims, *chōra* “would no longer belong to the horizon of sense, nor to that of meaning as the meaning of being” (93). In Sallis’s view, the concept has “a kind of meaning beyond meaning.” (1999, 111). He describes a certain unity of sense, which is nevertheless

“indeterminable by the usual procedures of conceptual determination.”⁴³ It is the kind of unity where the relation between the different values of *chōra* is not reducible to mere homonymy, nor can these values settle into a determinate, stable meaning.

Certain writers have addressed the problem of a lack of “reality” in *chōra*. David Schindler defines the concept as an “absolute nothing...that makes all relative nothings, i.e., the multiplicity of the sense world of becoming, possible.”⁴⁴ He maintains that if there is a principle for reality, there cannot be an additional principle for what is other than the real, but only the absence of a principle. There is no positive ground for the multiplicity of images, he argues, so they have no justification *as* images. Since *chōra* does not “come from” anywhere and does not exist, Schindler claims that Plato is “unable to affirm any *real* difference of images from forms” (8). The term “real” can refer only to the forms, but the structure of “Timaeus” shows that the discourse relating to *chōra* is necessary because of the inadequacy of the first discourse, which could not account for the presence of existing matter, or explain the possibility of sequence before the creation of time, nor could it describe the way the forms are joined to the sensible. Any kind of “positive” principle, as outlined by Schindler, would be inappropriate for describing a state that is merely potentiality. Nader El-Bizri holds that since Plato describes *chōra* as everlasting and indestructible, it must be a “necessary existent due to itself.”⁴⁵ The problem El-Bizri finds with Plato’s description is that there can only be one such existent, which for Plato is the *eidos*. El-Bizri’s argument fails to take into account that *chōra* is associated with a form of “necessity” that underlies the conventional understanding of that concept (Sallis, 1999, 120). In Plato’s thought, *chōra* lacks the kind of being attributable to the *eidos*.

One of the problems in formulating an interpretation of *chōra* is that it transcends our normal ways of conceptualising. However, the claim by Timaeus that what he is presenting, although incomplete, is reliable (29d), means that its philosophical implications are significant to the question of being. Plato seeks to explain how the intelligible and sensible, though seemingly distinct, are made possible by a common source that enables anything at all to exist. Sallis writes: “The very move that displaces or limits the twofold, namely the introduction of the third kind, is at the same time what establishes the very possibility of the twofold, of the doubling of being in image” (1999, 123). The introduction of *chōra* in the dialogue undermines the fundamental duality proposed in the thinking of the tradition. Sallis continues:

If one were to take metaphysics to be constituted precisely by the governance of the twofold, then the chorology [the discourse on *chōra*] could be said to bring both the founding of metaphysics and its displacement, both at once. Originating metaphysics would have been exposing it to the abyss, to the abysmal *chōra*, which is both origin and abyss, both at the same time. Then one could say – with the requisite reservations – that the beginning of metaphysics will have been already the end of metaphysics. (123)

The idea of an abyssal “origin” is fundamental to Heidegger’s understanding of being. Although he would not have accepted the interpretation of *chōra* proposed by Derrida and Sallis, on the grounds that he regards *chōra* as a space defined by extension (*ITM*, 66), in his later work, Heidegger writes of an originary form of difference, involving both the separation and the belonging together of being and the human.⁴⁶ Both Heidegger and Plato outline a principle in which what appears to be distinct has its origins in a mysterious state that gives rise to our experience of things as being the same or different. (I will return to this point in Chapter Eleven, where I associate *chōra* with Anaximander’s concept of the *apeiron*, described as the indefinable source of everything

that is, and the unity comprising all things. These two Greek concepts are then compared with the theory of originary difference.) The following chapter traces Heidegger's critique of the metaphysical tradition, together with the central theme of his earlier thought, "the ontological difference."

NOTES

¹ Jean Wahl, *A Short History of Existentialism*, trans. Forrest Williams and Stanley Maron, (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949), 11. “Heidegger has declared that he is not a philosopher of existence, but a philosopher of Being, and that his eventual aim is ontological.”

² Plato, “The Republic,” tr. Benjamin Jowett, 511b-e.
<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.htm>.

³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, tr. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 26/6.

⁴ Heidegger, Postscript to “What is Metaphysics?” tr. R. F. C. Hull and Alan Crick, in *Existence and Being* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1949), 386.

⁵ Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, tr. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 17.

⁶ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. Hugh Tredennick (Cambridge: MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), 1003a.

⁷ René Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, trans. John Veitch (Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 2004), 17.

⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (London: The Continuum Publishing Company, 2004), 4.

⁹ Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, (hereafter cited in text as ITM), trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 106.

¹⁰ Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 104 (hereafter cited in text as *EGT*).

¹¹ Heidegger, “Hölderlin’s Hymne, ‘Andenken’,” 64, cited in Julian Young, *Heidegger’s Later Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 60.

¹² William Harris, tr., *Heraclitus: The Complete Fragments* paras 27 and 28.
<http://community.middlebury.edu/~harris/Philosophy/heraclitus.pdf>.

¹³ Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 177.

¹⁴ Heidegger, “The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking,” in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. David Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 387.

¹⁵ Heidegger, “What calls for thinking,” in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. David Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 346.

¹⁶ A.H. Coxon, *The Fragments of Parmenides* (Assen: The Netherlands, Van Gorcum, 1986), fragment 6-B6.

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- ¹⁷ Ibid., fragment 8, lines 34-36.
- ¹⁸ Thomas Fay, "Heidegger: Thinking as Noein," *The Modern Schoolman* 51 (1973): 23.
- ¹⁹ Heidegger, "Plato's Doctrine of Truth," trans. Thomas Sheehan, in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 157 (hereafter cited in text as PDT).
- ²⁰ Heidegger, *Was ist Metaphysik?* 9th edn., Frankfurt, a.m. Klostermann, 1965, 8, as cited in Fay, 19.
- ²¹ Vincent Vycinas, *Earth and Gods: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Martin Heidegger* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961), 145.
- ²² Taylor Carman, "Heidegger's Concept of Presence," in *Heidegger Reexamined*, Vol. 2, ed. Hubert Dreyfus and Mark Wrathall (New York: Routledge, 2002), 89.
- ²³ Drew Hyland, Review of John Sallis, "Chorology: On Beginning in Plato's *Timaeus*," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 14, no. 4 (2001): 307. Hyland states that Plato is widely regarded as a metaphysical dualist both by continental and analytic philosophers.
- ²⁴ Plato, "Timaeus," *Selections from Timaeus*, tr. Benjamin Jowett <http://ls.poly.edu/~jbain/mms/texts/B02.Plato.pdf>.
- ²⁵ In addition to the term "universe," Plato uses "the all," "the whole heaven," and "the cosmos." "Timaeus," 28b.
- ²⁶ Tina Stiefel, "Twelfth-Century Matter for Metaphor: The Material View of Plato's 'Timaeus'," *The British Journal for the History of Science* 17, no. 2 (July, 1984): 174. Stiefel supports the "material" against the "metaphorical" view of the dialogue, and presents arguments from scholars on both sides of the debate.
- ²⁷ Aristotle, "On the Heavens," in *The Works of Aristotle*, ed. David Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 279b13.
- ²⁸ John Sallis, *Chorology: On Beginning in Plato's Timaeus* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 120. As used in the dialogue, "necessity" underlies the conventional understanding of that term.
- ²⁹ The word *eidos* is translated as "form" or "idea". It means the visible structure of a thing. "Visible" includes what can be perceived by the eyes or what can be apprehended by the mind.
- ³⁰ *Logos* can mean speech or discourse, but its other meaning is a bringing of things to lie together so that what they are can be manifest. Parmenides had earlier used the term to refer to the faculty of analysing the content of what is seen.
- ³¹ Sallis, 48. *Doxa* is often translated as opinion or belief, but Sallis explains that the combination of the two meanings of the term indicates that "one opines as things seem".

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- ³² Juan Garcia-Bellido, "The Origin of Matter and Structure in the Universe," *Philosophical Transactions: Mathematical, Physical and Engineering Sciences* 357, no. 1763 (December 1999): 3248.
- ³³ Jacques Derrida, "Khōra," in *On the Name*, ed. Thomas Dutoit, trans. David Wood, John Leavey Jr., and Ian McLeod (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 89-90.
- ³⁴ Emanuela Bianchi, "Receptacle/Chōra: Figuring the Errant Feminine in Plato's *Timaeus*," *Hypatia* 21, no. 4, (Fall, 2006): 137.
- ³⁵ Maria Margaroni, " 'The Lost Foundation': Kristeva's Semiotic *Chōra* and Its Ambiguous Legacy," *Hypatia* 20, no. 1 (Winter, 2005): 91.
- ³⁶ Daniela Vallega-Neu, *The Bodily Dimension in Thinking* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 8.
- ³⁷ *Timaeus*, 52a-d. I have modified the Jowett version by replacing "space" with the untranslated *chōra*.
- ³⁸ David Keyt, "Aristotle on Plato's Receptacle," *The American Journal of Philology* 82, no. 3, (July, 1961): 293.
- ³⁹ Raphael Demos, "The Receptacle," *The Philosophical Review* 45, no. 6 (1936): 540.
- ⁴⁰ Jeremy Weate, "Phenomenology and Difference: the body, architecture and race" (unpublished dissertation, University of Warwick, 1998), 228.
- ⁴¹ Aryeh Finkelberg, "Plato's Method in *Timaeus*," *The American Journal of Philology* 117, no. 3 (Autumn 1996): 407.
- ⁴² John Sallis, *Being and Logos* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996): 16.
- ⁴³ John Sallis, "Last Words: Generosity and Reserve," *Mosaic: a Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature* 39, no. 3 (2006): 21.
- ⁴⁴ David Schindler, "What's the Difference? On the Metaphysics of Participation in a Christian Context," *The Saint Anselm Journal* 3, no. 1 (2005): 8.
- ⁴⁵ Nader El-Bizri, "«Qui êtes-vous, Khōra?»: Receiving Plato's *Timaeus*," *Existentia Meletai-Sophias* 11 (2001): 485.
- ⁴⁶ Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 50.

Chapter Two

THE ORIGINS OF METAPHYSICS

Heidegger claims that by situating reality and truth in the ideas or forms, Plato elevates thought above sensuous experience, thereby reducing the terms of discourse about existence to those applicable to a discussion of objects. From Heidegger's viewpoint, the thinking of Plato and Aristotle inaugurates the metaphysical tradition, which seeks an ultimate ground to explain existence, and to provide a basis for certain and indubitable knowledge. He analyses some of the ways the concept of being has been interpreted in the tradition, and proposes that these approaches overlook both the Presocratics' experience of wonder at the mystery of existence, and their interpretation of being as *physis* – the emergence of things into presence from concealment. Heidegger's theory is that non-being is integral to being, and that the metaphysical idea of being as a ground should be replaced by an understanding of being as the absence of ground.

2.1 *The rise of metaphysics*

As a school student, Heidegger read the thesis of Franz Brentano, *On the Manifold Meaning of Being according to Aristotle* (1862), subsequently describing it as “the chief help and guide of my first awkward attempts to penetrate into philosophy.”¹ In this work, Brentano seeks to understand the meaning of the Greek term, *to on*, or “being,” in the context of Aristotle's statement, “The question that was raised in earliest times, that we raise today, and that will always be raised and will always be a matter of perplexity [is]: *ti to on*, What is being?”² Brentano examines a passage from Aristotle's

Metaphysics (1026a 33ff.), where the various meanings of “being” are reduced to four, and he analyses these under four headings: “(1) being in its essential and inessential senses; (2) being in the sense of the true; (3) being in the sense of potentiality and actuality; and (4) being in the various senses derived from the schema of the categories.”³ For Aristotle, all of these meanings pointed to one essential sense, which was the focus of inquiry for what became known as ontology, but there was no consensus as to what being actually meant. In Heidegger’s view, the tradition conceives being as the most universal and self-evident concept, yet it is usually overlooked or taken for granted.⁴ Whereas for Aristotle, being is interpreted in various ways, Heidegger seeks “the unified determination of Being that permeates all of its multiple meanings.”⁵ Thomas Sheehan suggests that Heidegger’s question can be formulated as: “What is it that lets being come about at all in human experience?” or “What is it that *allows for the experience* of all modes of being?”⁶ This form of experience does not involve subjective feeling, but is illustrated in the Presocratics’ experience of wonder at the mystery of existence, based on their interpretation of being as *physis*, “*becoming*-present in the sense of coming forth into the unhidden, placing itself into the open,”⁷ and as *ousia*, the standing-forth of what is.⁸

In his discussion of Aristotle, Heidegger points out that *ousia* is characterised by *energeia* and *entelecheia*, both terms describing a kind of action: *energeia* means “being at work,” and *entelechia* shows how something exists in the process of actualising its potentiality.⁹ According to Heidegger, *ousia* in Aristotle refers to the way things are self-standing because they set the limits of their own movement. The placing of a limit is the way *physis* achieves form; a thing comes to stand and thereby to “be.” Heidegger

writes: “Being is [for Aristotle] *being-finished-and-ready* [*Fertigsein*], i.e., a kind of being in which movement has arrived at *its end*.”¹⁰

Although he attributes the rise of metaphysics primarily to Plato, Heidegger also proposes a connection between metaphysical thought and the interpretation of Aristotle’s works as a result of their translation into Latin. For the medieval scholars, Heidegger explains, there is a loss of the dynamic element in Aristotle’s thinking, *ousia* being understood as the *eidos* that determines the form of a thing. In the work of Thomas Aquinas, *esse* (being) is *actualitas*, the literal meaning of which is the “actuality” of every essence and every nature.¹¹ Being free from all imperfection and incompleteness, the *eidos* reveals what the thing is prior to its actualisation.¹² *Ousia* is therefore interpreted as that which “lies before” and remains constant and permanently present throughout all change. Its meaning as a substance needing nothing else in order to exist, formed part of traditional thinking until the seventeenth century.

A major development in the history of metaphysics examined by Heidegger, arose from a perceived need for certainty in the determination of truth. René Descartes came to reject the authority of Scholasticism, which had sought to reconcile ancient Greek thought in general with medieval Christian theology. His alternative approach is to determine a set of principles providing a firm foundation for knowledge. In the *ego cogito, ergo sum*, Descartes reasons that through the process of thinking, he can be certain of his own existence.¹³ He also claims that, unlike the mind, the body can be perceived only through the senses – a form of knowledge shown to be unreliable. Whereas in Greek and medieval thought, things are understood “as present in and of themselves,” for Descartes, the human being emerges as a subject or the seat of experience that is ontologically prior to the world around it (ZS, 99). This prioritisation of

thought over sensuous experience reflects Plato's theory of the "true" world of ideas contrasted with the merely apparent world of the sensible.¹⁴

In Heidegger's view, the above movements in philosophy led to the loss of its unique character. Rather than articulating an experience of being, it became "the empirical science of man,"¹⁵ reaching its culmination in the nineteenth century through the work of Georg Hegel. Heidegger writes: "With Descartes' *ego cogito*, says Hegel, philosophy steps on firm ground for the first time where it can be at home" (*TB*, 58). Hegel posits the idea of the Absolute as pure Thought, Spirit, or Mind. In manifesting itself in nature and in human history, the Absolute unfolds in a process of self-development through art, religion, and philosophy. The claim by Hegel that "the true...is to be understood and expressed not as substance, but just as much, as subject,"¹⁶ is interpreted by Heidegger as a humanization of being. He states that for Hegel, Absolute Spirit "grasps itself in grasping the totality of beings,"¹⁷ so that *existentia* in Hegel becomes "the self-knowing Idea of absolute subjectivity."¹⁸ The primacy of the intellect proposed in Descartes is replaced in Hegel by the primacy of Absolute Spirit's experience in history. Heidegger also points out the continuity between the later Greek understanding of being as constant presence, and Hegel's description of the eternal Spirit as "*absolute presence*."¹⁹ Ontology, in Heidegger's view, therefore remains subjectivist (*EHF*, 76). He claims that in continuing the dualistic thinking of Plato, the various traditional approaches fail to recognise the Presocratics' understanding of *physis* as a coming into being, and *aletheia* as the emergence from concealment.

On the basis of his theory that the metaphysical position has still to be overcome, Heidegger investigates the work of Friedrich Nietzsche, who seeks to overturn both the metaphysics of Plato and its later expression in Descartes. According to

Nietzsche, the malady from which humanity suffers is a form of nihilism, where what were previously regarded as the highest values, such as God or the supersensory world, have now lost their meaning. The remedy he proposes is a positive nihilism, defined as “the radical repudiation of value, meaning and desirability.”²⁰ Whereas Christianity prescribes a universal morality, Nietzsche claims that all living things seek to express their own “will to power.” In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, he introduces the concept of the “overman,”²¹ who epitomises the possibility of creating the self through a process of personal self-mastery. Heidegger’s critique of this theory is that the being of the human is more originary than the concept of the human depicted in the psychological approach of Nietzsche.²² Although this work claims to be the means whereby the constraints of metaphysical thinking are to be transcended, Heidegger asserts that Nietzsche remains within the framework of the tradition through his valorisation of self-willing subjectivity. According to Heidegger,

no matter how sharply Nietzsche pits himself time and again against Descartes, whose philosophy grounds modern metaphysics, he turns against Descartes only because the latter still does not posit man as subjectum in a way that is complete and decisive enough. The representation of the subjectum as ego, the I, thus the “egoistic” interpretation of the subjectum, is still not subjectivistic enough for Nietzsche. Modern metaphysics first comes to the full and final determination of its essence in the doctrine of the Overman, the doctrine of man’s absolute preeminence among beings. In that doctrine, Descartes celebrates his supreme triumph.²³

The ideas of Nietzsche, in Heidegger’s view, anticipate “the consummation of the modern age,” with its drive for power and mastery.²⁴ Contemporary metaphysical thinking for Heidegger is evidenced in the dominance of science and technology – not with regard to their benefits, but in the way their ostensible self-sufficiency obliterates

our openness to being. Joan Stambaugh writes that contrary to the nihilism portrayed in Nietzsche, “what Heidegger calls true [authentic] nihilism has two aspects or factors: (1) that Being remains absent; and (2) that thinking leaves out, omits, neglects to pay heed to this remaining absent.”²⁵ The nihilism described by Heidegger contrasts with the positive nihilism of Nietzsche with its emphasis on the exercise of the will. By remaining blind to being as emergence and unconcealment, Nietzsche becomes, for Heidegger, “the last metaphysician of the West” (*N3*, 8), whose thought represents the ultimate stage in the forgetting of being.

2.2 Ontotheology and the ontological difference

In a historical overview of the question of being, Heidegger defines what he regards as the two basic metaphysical positions: one is an understanding of beings as such; the other is an understanding of the totality of beings. When considering beings in terms of “the ground that is common to all beings,” the logic of metaphysics for Heidegger is “onto-logic.”²⁶ This ground has been interpreted variously as substantiality, subjectivity, and will.²⁷ The second aspect of the understanding of being concerns the totality of beings, and relates to a unifying first cause, interpreted as God or the divine – the supreme being as pure actuality and presence (*N3*, 209). For Heidegger, metaphysics adopts a theological perspective when it regards “the highest being which accounts for everything” as its own ground (*ID*, 71), and where the self-presence and self-certainty of the concept of God guarantee “the reality of what is real.” Heidegger describes the logic appropriate to such a position as “theo-logic.” He then unites the two approaches to the question of being under the title “ontotheology,”²⁸ stating that “metaphysics is theo-logic because it is onto-logic. It is onto-logic because it is theo-logic.” Iain Thomson interprets

Heidegger as claiming that “within the metaphysical tradition, this ontotheological ‘grounding ground’ grounds in *both* the ontological and theological senses. It is by simultaneously ‘giving the ground’ ontologically and ‘founding’ theologically that the ontotheologically conceived Being of beings accomplishes its distinctively *double* ‘grounding’.”²⁹ Heidegger challenges the definition of the being of beings as “the grounding ground” (*ID*, 57). He claims that “all metaphysics is at bottom, and from the ground up, what grounds, what gives account of the ground, what is called to account by the ground, and finally what calls the ground to account” (58). Elsewhere he defines metaphysics as “that from which beings as such are what they are in their becoming, perishing, and persisting as something that can be known, handled, and worked upon.”³⁰ The ground is seen as the causation of the real, and as “the transcendental making possible of the objectivity of objects.” In Heidegger’s view, metaphysical systems as a whole seek to explain both the ultimate source of everything that is, and the possibility of certain knowledge, though he claims that such an approach cannot explain “by what unity ontologic and theologic belong together, what the origin of this unity is, and what [is] the difference of the differentiated which this unity unifies” (*ID*, 59). The difficulty with the metaphysical position, as Heidegger interprets it, is that the concept of ground it proposes, including the double-grounding of ontotheology, has no explanation for what grounds being itself. He argues that either there is something beyond being that fulfills such a role, or else being is self-grounding. The latter position, in Heidegger’s view, is adopted by the tradition in its theory that the being of beings is “the ground that gives itself ground and accounts for itself” (56). He describes his own understanding of being – the process of unconcealment – as the *Abgrund* or an absence of ground. To be aware of

the *Abgrund* involves an experience of dread or *Angst*, in which we understand the groundlessness of being in the way entities are disclosed to us (see section 3 below).

According to Heidegger, the idea of being as a ground arises from the guiding question in the history of metaphysics, “What are beings?” (*KTB*, 10). The traditional answers given to this question in terms of either “beingness,” or another being “behind the known beings” (*BPP*, 17), include concepts such as spirit, life, force, becoming, will, and substance. As early as his doctoral dissertation of 1915, Heidegger had claimed that the distinction made by the Scholastics between essence and existence is dependent on a more fundamental distinction – that between an entity as an object with properties (the ontic), and the “mode of being” of the entity (18), or the context of meaning through which it is understood (the ontological). His lecture course of 1927 describes this distinction as “the ontological difference – the differentiation between being and beings” (17). Heidegger writes: “The possibility of ontology...stands and falls with the possibility of a sufficiently clear accomplishment of this differentiation between Being and beings, and accordingly with the possibility of negotiating the passage from the ontic consideration of beings to the ontological thematization of Being” (227). He also states that although the tradition has a certain conception of the difference between being and beings, it fails to understand being as the fundamental process whereby things emerge into presence from concealment.

2.3 *Experiencing the nothing*

The significance of the ontological difference for Heidegger’s overall theory is indicated in his claim that metaphysics “is by its very nature excluded from the experience of Being; for it always represents beings (*on*) only with an eye to what of

Being has already manifested itself as beings (*i on*).”³¹ The experience to which Heidegger refers will therefore include an understanding of the difference between being and beings, together with an awareness that being is not the kind of ground described by metaphysics, but is rather an absence of ground.

In his exposition of Presocratic thought, Heidegger points out that *aletheia* is a strife between concealing and unconcealing that occurs within being itself.³² Since things are concealed before they can be revealed, concealment is ontologically prior to disclosure. Heidegger addresses the Leibniz question, “Why is there anything at all rather than nothing?” (*ITM*, 1), and asks why it should be that an entity is “torn away from the possibility of non-being,” rather than continually falling back into that state (28). “Ancient metaphysics,” Heidegger writes, “conceives the nothing in the sense of nonbeing, that is, unformed matter...which cannot take form as an in-formed being that would offer an outward appearance or aspect (*eidōs*).”³³ He points out, however, that the origin of this notion was never investigated. Then with the Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, non-being or “the nothing” becomes the absence of beings other than God. Heidegger explains that metaphysics has held two positions concerning the nothing: one is nihilism – that there is nothing to being itself; the other is the affirmation of “the being as such,” so that the nothing is ignored in favour of what exists. “Nothingness” in that case is regarded as “the opposite of all being” (*N4*, 21). These interpretations of the nothing are described by Heidegger as “inauthentic nihilism,” and he identifies the problem they create for the understanding of being:

Nihilism – that there is nothing to Being itself...means precisely this for metaphysical thought: there is nothing to being as such...
The very path into the experience of the essence of nihilism is therefore barred to metaphysics. Insofar as metaphysics in every case decides for either the affirmation or the negation of

the being as such, and sees both its beginning and its end in the corresponding elucidation of the being from the existing ground, it has unwittingly failed to notice that Being itself stays away *in the very priority of the question about the being as such.* (N4, 220)

The definition of the nothing as “the negation of the totality of entities” leads to the idea that the nothing has a form of existence as something completely negative, or alternatively, it is regarded as an entity.³⁴ To ask the question, “What is the nothing?,” involves positing the nothing as something that “is” in a certain way, or taking it as a being, in which case the answer has tacitly been assumed in the question. The position advanced by Heidegger is that in order for something to be negated, it must appear as something “negate-able,” but for this to occur, its “not-ness” must already be evident.³⁵ He links this form of appearing to the early Greek concept of *physis* as emergence from concealment. Rather than the “not” being generated by a negating act, the nothing is the origin of negation (WIM, 94). A further consequence is that the nothing can no longer be regarded as the opposite of what-is, but belongs instead to its very being. The nothing “takes place in the very is-ness of what-is.” Heidegger describes the relation between being and nothing: “This totally different other to each being, that which is not being...This nothingness which is not being but ‘is’ just the same, is nothing negative...Being and nothingness are not side by side. One intercedes on behalf of the other.”³⁶ Non-being is inscribed within each entity, so that to ask about being is to ask about the nothing. It is in the being of beings that the “nihilation of the nothing” occurs (WIM, 91). The Not of nothingness is also associated with the Not of the ontological difference: “The nihilating Not of Nothingness and the nihilating Not of the difference are not, indeed, identical. But they are the same in the sense that both belong together insofar as the Being of being reveals its essence.”³⁷ Non-being for Heidegger is the Not

that is characteristic of being; non-being is the other of being itself. Being, incorporating non-being, is that from which everything arises; it is “full of that allotting ‘power’ whose steadfastness gives rise to all ‘creating’ ” (*CP*, 174).

In contrast to Plato’s claim that absolute reality exists only in the ideas or forms, and his positive conception of being that overlooks the fundamental aspect of non-being, Heidegger describes being as “the most profound mystery” (*CP*, 153), which can only be understood on the basis of its “withdrawal.” Furthermore, Plato describes the way knowledge is acquired by using the metaphor of moving towards the light,³⁸ whereas for Heidegger, the understanding of being involves an experience where all certainties disappear. The opening section of *An Introduction to Metaphysics* describes the “hidden power” of the Leibniz question, which can arise in times of existential crisis (*ITM*, 1). In the mood of dread or anxiety (*Angst*), we face “the slipping away of beings as a whole” and “the presence of the nothing” (*WIM*, 88-89). (Heidegger uses the phrase “beings as a whole” to indicate the way things are manifest to us, in contrast to the traditional concept of “the totality of beings,”³⁹ indicating merely a collection of things.) The experience of dread involves the awareness of the retreating of beings, where we are overwhelmed with the feeling that because we are in the midst of them, we, as beings also, are slipping away from ourselves; we are left hanging with nothing to hold on to. Rather than representing a nihilation of what-is, the nothing in such an experience is encountered in conjunction with beings. By disclosing beings as receding from us, the nothing reveals them in their radical otherness as beings and not nothing. For Heidegger, the nothing is not merely the counter-concept of beings, but belongs to their essential unfolding (*WIM*, 94). Such an approach contrasts with Plato’s conception of being, where things are always meaningful when they are seen in their “visible form” or

“*idea*” (*PDT*, 172). Heidegger proposes that through the experience of *Angst*, we become aware that being as groundless is the condition of possibility for everything that is. Being and nothing belong together because being is both concealment and unconcealment. The absence of ground is described as the “play” of being and ground. As an abyss, being is always open in that it seeks no answer: “The play is without ‘why’ ...It simply remains a play: the most elevated and the most profound.”⁴⁰

The following chapter discusses Heidegger’s work, *Being and Time*, where he develops his understanding of being by inquiring into the being of the human. His analysis includes a similar kind of experience to that outlined above, but it also addresses the ways in which we are always already involved in a meaningful world. Heidegger’s theory is that since being itself is groundless, our own being is ultimately a process of self-creation.

NOTES

¹ Heidegger, “My Way to Phenomenology,” in *The Phenomenology Reader*, ed. Dermot Moran and Timothy Mooney (New York: Routledge, 2006), 251.

² David Krell, “General Introduction,” *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. David Krell (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 1.

³ Krell, 1.

⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, tr. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 21/2.

⁵ Heidegger’s Preface to William J. Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought*, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967), x.

⁶ Thomas Sheehan, “Heidegger’s Philosophy of Mind,” *Contemporary Philosophy: A New Survey*, ed. G. Floistad, Vol. 4, Philosophy of Mind (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1984), 289.

⁷ “On the Essence and Concept of *physis* in Aristotle’s Physics B.1,” tr. Thomas Sheehan, *Man and World* 9, no. 3 (August, 1976): 247.

⁸ Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, tr. R. Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 61 (hereafter cited in text as *ITM*).

⁹ Alexei Chernyakov, *The Ontology of Time* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002), 45.

¹⁰ Heidegger, “Phenomenological Interpretations in Connection with Aristotle: An Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation,” in *Supplements: From the Earliest Essays to Being and Time and Beyond*, ed. and trans. John van Buren (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 136-137.

¹¹ Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, tr. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 87 (hereafter cited in text as *BPP*).

¹² Thomas Sheehan, “Time and Being 1925-27,” in *Martin Heidegger: Critical Assessments*, Vol. 1, ed. Christopher Macann (London: Routledge, 1992), 54.

¹³ René Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, tr. V. R. Miller and R. Miller (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1984), 5.

¹⁴ Plato, “The Republic,” tr. Benjamin Jowett, 511b-e.
<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.htm>.

¹⁵ Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, tr. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 57 (hereafter cited in text as *TB*).

¹⁶ G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, tr. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 10.

¹⁷ Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom: An Introduction to Philosophy*, tr. Ted Sadler (London: Continuum, 2005), 75 (hereafter cited in text as *EHF*).

¹⁸ Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. David Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 206.

¹⁹ G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, tr. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970) 36.

²⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will To Power: In Science, Nature, Society and Art*, tr. Walter Kaufman and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage, 1968), 7.

²¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, tr. Walter Kaufmann (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1978), 12.

²² Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, tr. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 59 (hereafter cited in text as *CP*).

²³ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, Vol. 4, *Nihilism*, ed. David Krell, tr. Frank Capuzzi (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 28 (hereafter cited in text as *N4*).

²⁴ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, Vol. 3, *The Will to Power as Knowledge and as Metaphysics*, tr. Joan Stambaugh et al (San Francisco: Harper, 1987), 6 (hereafter cited in text as *N3*).

²⁵ Joan Stambaugh, "Nihilism and the End of Philosophy," *Research in Phenomenology* 15 (1985): 85.

²⁶ Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, tr. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1969) 70 (hereafter cited in text as *ID*).

²⁷ Examples of these approaches would include, respectively, Thomas Aquinas and the medieval philosophers, Descartes, and Nietzsche.

²⁸ Heidegger, "Kant's Thesis about Being," tr. Ted Klein and William Pohl, *Southwestern Journal of Philosophy* 4, no. 3 (1973): 11 (hereafter cited in text as *KTB*).

²⁹ Iain Thomson, "Ontotheology? Understanding Heidegger's *Destruktion* of Metaphysics," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 8, no. 3 (2000): 303.

³⁰ Heidegger, "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking," in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. David Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 374.

³¹ Heidegger, "The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics," in *Existentialism from Dostoyevsky to Sartre*, ed. Walter Kaufman (New York: Penguin, 1975), 276.

³² John Caputo, "Being, Ground and Play in Heidegger," *Man and World* 3, no. 1 (1970): 37.

³³ Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?" tr. Walter Kaufmann, in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 94 (hereafter cited in text as *WIM*).

³⁴ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, Vol. 2, Pfullingen, Neske, 1961, 53, as cited in Stephan Kaufer, "The Nothing and the Ontological Difference in Heidegger's *What is Metaphysics?*" *Inquiry* 48, no. 6, (December, 2005): 495.

³⁵ Thomas Sheehan, "Reading Heidegger's 'What is Metaphysics?'," *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, Vol. 1 (2001): 20.
<http://www.stanford.edu/dept/relstud/faculty/sheehan/pdf/01-hd-wm.pdf>.

³⁶ Heidegger, *The Question of Being*, tr. William Kluback and Jean Wilde (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1958), 97.

³⁷ Heidegger, *The Essence of Reasons*, tr. Terrence Malick (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 3.

³⁸ Heidegger, "Plato's Doctrine of Truth," tr. Thomas Sheehan, in *Pathmarks* ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 165 (hereafter cited in text as *PDT*).

³⁹ Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, tr. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 284.

⁴⁰ Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason*, tr. Richard Lilly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 113.

Chapter Three

EXPLORING THE EXPERIENTIAL

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger investigates the question of being by analysing the being of the human in terms of its experience in the world. The background to his thinking is the Presocratics' experience of wonder at the mystery of existence,¹ and the medieval mystics' experience of the relationship of the soul to God. Heidegger's attention then turns to the question of the transcendental as it appears in the work of Immanuel Kant and Edmund Husserl.

A major theme in Kant's thought is the idea that knowledge of the world arises from the structures of our understanding. By contrast, Heidegger argues that knowledge of entities in the world presupposes an understanding of their being, or the way we are always already involved with them in our everyday experience. The being of the human, "Dasein," involves an *a priori* understanding of both its own being and the being of entities. Heidegger compares his theory of Dasein with Husserl's view of the conscious subject who has intentional relations towards objects in the world. According to Heidegger, the being of Dasein is ontologically prior to the intentionality of consciousness. He explains that we find ourselves thrown into a world of meaning, where we have to create ourselves through the projection of possibilities.² This state is accompanied by the experience of a primordial anxiety, where we become aware of the groundlessness of both our own being and that of entities. Because of our finitude, our being is defined as "Being-towards-death." These various descriptions form the being of Dasein as "temporality," where the modes of time are experienced as a primordial unity

from which our understanding of sequential time is derived.

In the closing section of *Being and Time*, Heidegger queries whether the ontological may require an ontical foundation (487/436), and in his later writing he acknowledges that an inquiry into the being of the human is inadequate as a means of understanding being itself, since Dasein can still be understood metaphysically as a subject or a centre of reference.

3.1 *The medievals and religious experience*

Heidegger began his studies in theology, and he later described how the path of his overall thought was determined by his work in this field.³ Of central importance to him was the question of how to connect objective knowledge with subjective experience. He developed an interest in medieval philosophy, and in his dissertation of 1915, he proposes that the attitude of life of the Scholastics is to be found in “the transcendent and primordial relationship of the soul to God.”⁴ Such an approach seemed to him to avoid the pitfalls arising from the kind of subjectivism that had originated with Descartes. For Heidegger, the attitude of the medievals is characterised by an absolute surrender to the content of knowledge, the matter for thought being given priority over the thinking subject. He writes: “Scholastic psychology, precisely inasmuch as it is not focused upon the dynamic and flowing reality of the psychical, remains in its fundamental problems oriented towards the objective and noematic, a circumstance which greatly favors setting one’s sight on the phenomenon of intentionality” (*DS*, 15). Through his reading of medieval literature, including the writings of the mystics, Heidegger formed the view that Scholasticism and mysticism are not opposing concepts: “The two pairs of ‘opposites’ rationalism-irrationalism and scholasticism-mysticism do not coincide. And where their

equivalence is sought, it rests on an extreme rationalization of philosophy. Philosophy as a rationalist creation, detached from life, is powerless; mysticism as an irrationalist experience is purposeless” (*DS*, 241). A further aspect of Heidegger’s thinking was the work of the medieval philosopher, Thomas Aquinas, who describes the “characters of Being” that underlie the way anything at all can be classified (*BT*, 34/14). Aquinas adopts Aristotle’s view that truth is not in things but in the mind. Since Aquinas also holds that there is truth in every being, he is able to define truth as “adequation of thing and intellect.”⁵ He invokes an entity, “the soul (*anima*),” on the grounds that it is “properly suited to ‘come together with’ entities of any sort whatever” (34/14).

In his exploration of both the Presocratics and the Scholastics, Heidegger had moved towards his later position where being and the human are revealed as belonging together, but instead of continuing with this line of thinking, he became involved in what Hans-Georg Gadamer and other scholars refer to as an “aberration” or a “detour,”⁶ where his focus shifts to the question of the transcendental. It is not until the mid-1930s that Heidegger emerges from this stage in his thinking.

3.2 *Being and the transcendental*

Of particular significance to Heidegger’s thought in the 1920s is the work of Kant, who analyses the conditions under which knowledge of things is possible. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* he writes: “I call all knowledge *transcendental* if it is occupied, not with objects, but with the way that we can possibly know objects, even before we experience them.”⁷ Kant explains transcendental knowledge by examining the relationship between the knowledge we have that is presupposed by experience

(*a priori*), and knowledge that arises from experience (*a posteriori*). In seeking to establish that there are synthetic *a priori* truths, Kant argues that cognition presupposes the mind's being affected by the sensible world: "Since, then, the receptivity of the subject, its capacity to be affected by objects, must necessarily precede all intuitions of these objects, it can readily be understood how the form of all appearances can be given prior to all actual perceptions, and so exist in the mind *a priori*" (*CPR*, A26/B42).

Intuitions in Kant's theory concern our immediate relations to objects in the way we are sensibly affected by them. He defines space and time as *a priori* "forms of intuition" that structure our experience of both outer objects and inner states (*CPR*, A23/B38). Henry Allison writes that for Kant, these forms function as "universal and necessary conditions in terms of which alone the human mind is capable of recognizing something as an object at all."⁸ To the forms of intuition, Kant adds twelve *a priori* categories or "pure concepts of the understanding." In their application to the objects of sensible experience, these categories function as the transcendental rules for organising experience into empirical representations or judgments.

In his reformulation of Kant's theory of *a priori*, Heidegger advances the view that our experience is not grounded in the functions of the intellect as proposed by Kant, but in the way entities are always already understood in terms of their being: "In early antiquity it was already seen that being and its attributes in a certain way underlie beings and precede them and so are a *proteron*, an earlier. The term denoting this character by which being precedes beings is the expression *a priori*, *apriority*, being earlier or prior. As *a priori*, being is earlier than beings."⁹ Heidegger claims that our *a priori* understanding of the being entities concerns the way we are engaged with them in the context of our everyday involvements: "Beings, which encounter us, must already

be understood in advance in their ontological constitution. This understanding of the being of beings, this synthetic knowledge *a priori*, is crucial for every experience of beings.”¹⁰ The word “understanding” in Heidegger does not refer to an intellectual comprehension, but to a pretheoretical way of “grasping” the object concerned. His theory removes the *a priori/a posteriori* distinction from the level of the mind and its representations as outlined in Kant, to the level of practical experience in the world.

3.3 *Phenomenology and life*

The work of Heidegger was also influenced by his mentor, Edmund Husserl, who argues that the idea of philosophical concepts being the product of psychological, social, and historical causation, cannot account for the *a priori* validity of logical laws. He claims that these laws are ideal, and exist independently of the acts through which they are understood.¹¹ Husserl seeks a method for determining truth that involves both the externality and contingency basic to the human sciences, and the internality and rational certainty without which knowledge would be impossible. His aim is to provide an account of what guarantees the objectivity of knowledge, beginning with an examination of those cognitive acts where meaning is conferred. Husserl’s theory is that consciousness is essentially intentional in that it is always directed towards objects in the world.¹² With regard to the intentionality of perception, since different kinds of objects are perceived in different ways, these various perceptual acts cannot all have the same structure. For Husserl, “*every kind of object has its own mode of self-giving, i.e. self-evidence.*”¹³

Heidegger agrees with Husserl’s basic argument about our directedness towards things in the world, but he claims that the understanding of meaning must be grounded in

the concrete life of the historical subject. The idea of conscious reflection on experience is contrasted by Heidegger with a pretheoretical awareness characteristic of everyday living or “factual life.”¹⁴ He argues that Husserl’s inquiry fails to address the nature of the being of consciousness,¹⁵ and that the being of the human as an entity that has intentional states is prior to the subject-object relation (*HCT*, 114-115). Heidegger also avoids the mention of intentional “acts,” because he is interested in exploring the “belonging together” that constitutes the relation itself. This kind of relation, he argues, is founded in something that is not intentional, otherwise an infinite regress would result. We cannot have access to an entity, perceptually or in any other intentional way, unless we already understand how the entity is to be taken “as”; in other words we must understand the being of the entity (*MFL*, 101). The form of being Heidegger is describing includes the way things “matter” to us. For example, only a human can touch an object or another person, whereas an object such as a chair cannot touch a wall; such an action “would presuppose that the wall is the sort of thing ‘for’ which a chair would be *encounterable*.” (*BT*, 81/55).

Additional influences in Heidegger’s thought during this period include the work of Wilhelm Dilthey, Henri Bergson, and other thinkers in the “personalistic” movement, who studied the question of life as a whole (*BT*, 72/46). Against the prevailing naturalistic theories, Dilthey argues that the development of psychology must take place on the basis of lived experience.¹⁶ He also examines the question of historical epochs and their determining spirit or ideas (Arens, 155-157), including the way in which humans seek to master their environment. A similar approach had been taken by Heidegger in his dissertation of 1915, where he seeks to link the experiential and the

historical dimensions, and to understand each epoch in terms of its goals rather than its logic or epistemology (*DS*, 231).

3.4 *Human experience in the world*

Heidegger brings together his insights into the Kantian *a priori*, the concept of intentionality in Husserl, and the lived experience described by the personalistic philosophers. He inquires into the meaning of being itself by analysing the being of the human on the basis of our involvement in a meaningful world. In his major work, *Being and Time*, written in 1928, Heidegger introduces the subject of his inquiry by quoting from Plato's "Sophist": "For manifestly you have long been aware of what you mean when you use the expression 'being'. We, however, who used to think we understood it, have now become perplexed" (*BT*, 19/1). Heidegger then states that although, since the time of Plato, there has been no clear conception of the word "being," we no longer find ourselves disturbed by our inability to understand the meaning of the term. The reason for this lack of interest in making the tacit understanding of being explicit, he claims, is the assumption made by the tradition that as the most universal concept, being is clear and self-evident, but that at the same time, its universality renders it indefinable (23/4). Heidegger outlines the centrality of being for his thinking: "Everything we talk about, everything we have in view, everything towards which we comport ourselves in any way, is being; what we are is being, and so is how we are. Being lies in the fact that something is, and in its Being as it is" (26/7). He proposes that the understanding of being itself can be obtained through an investigation of the being of the human, on the grounds that its own mode of being involves questioning itself about its being (27/7). Against the traditional view, Heidegger argues that if we posit the "I" as a "subject," this term can be

interpreted as a “soul substance” involving a reification of consciousness (72/46). Such a description, he maintains, overlooks the being or the phenomenal content of the subject in terms of its experience in the world. Heidegger defines our existence as a background of familiarity in which we are inevitably immersed (107/76). In addressing the question of intelligibility, or how we make sense of anything at all, he describes being as “that on the basis of which entities are already understood” (26/6). For Heidegger, the world is not a collection of things but constitutes a meaningful whole on the basis of our everyday lived experience. The relation we have with this world of our involvements, according to Theodore Kisiel, is for Heidegger as intimate as that of the medievals to the transcendent: “As the mystic is related to the influx of the Divine life, so am I immediately related to my own life in its unfathomable nearness and inaccessibility.”¹⁷

The being of the human is defined as “Dasein” (*BT*, 26/7), the meaning of which is “there being” or “being there.” Because of the way it is involved with things of practical concern, the being of Dasein is described as “Being-in-the-world” (149/114). Heidegger uses the term “transcendence” in the context of Dasein’s relation to entities. Traditionally, the meaning of this term is to go beyond or to step over, but in Heidegger’s analysis, transcendence does not imply any distance between Dasein and entities; “going beyond” is already part of Dasein’s being, and the entities already belong to the world of its involvements: “Transcendence does not mean crossing a barrier that has fenced off the subject in an inner space. But what gets crossed over is the being itself that can become manifest to the subject on the very basis of the subject’s transcendence” (*MFL*, 166). Entities are transcended or “surpassed in advance,” and in this process their being is revealed. Intentionality had traditionally been understood as the ontic transcendence of objects with properties, whereas the ontological transcendence Heidegger is describing

involves the being of the entities, or the way we encounter them in terms of our everyday activities. His claim that there can be no separation between ourselves and the world of our involvements, contrasts with the thought of Descartes, where consciousness, as the means by which we understand the world, is metaphysically separate from the world.¹⁸ Dasein's relation to being itself, together with the priority Heidegger accords to experience over the conceptual, is indicated in a later work, where he claims that Dasein "names that which should first of all be experienced, and subsequently thought of, as a place namely, the location of the truth of Being."¹⁹

The being of the entities Dasein encounters is their sense or meaning in a given situation. In Heidegger's theory, the fundamental relationship we have with entities is the way we are involved with them in accomplishing tasks, and he describes the being of such entities as "*readiness-to-hand*" (BT, 98/69). For example, a tool such as a hammer is not primarily a thing with certain characteristics, but something we can manipulate. This form of engagement is contrasted with the derivative mode of "cognition," and the being of the entities we encounter in such a way is "presence-at-hand." Heidegger applies this description to situations outside the normal use of things, such as the examination of an object's properties where there is a breakdown in its functioning (103/73), or the search for an object that has been misplaced. The difference between the two forms of being in relation to objects is that between a pre-reflective and a reflective awareness on the part of Dasein.

In the context of the way our existence is purposefully structured, Heidegger uses the general term "equipment" to define "something in-order-to," where one task is carried out for the sake of another: "In the 'in-order-to' as a structure there lies an *assignment or reference* of something to something. Equipment – in accordance with its

equipmentality – always is in terms of its belonging to other equipment: ink-stand, pen, ink, paper, blotting pad, table, lamp, furniture, windows, doors, room” (97/68). These reference relations are not consciously defined, but are understood implicitly when things are being used; such relations in totality are called “the world” (107/76). Involvements of the ready-to-hand constitute a chain, such as hammering to make something fast in order to protect against bad weather. The purpose of the task, the “in-order-to,” is linked to a chain of “in-order-tos,” leading ultimately to the being of Dasein, described as “for-the-sake-of-which” (119/87).

In its practical involvements in the world, Dasein uses entities to accomplish the tasks for which they are intended, and in so doing it projects or understands its own possibilities. For example, an individual who projects herself as an agriculturalist will use equipment in the appropriate way for the production of crops. The basis of Heidegger’s claim that Dasein understands the being of entities is that Dasein has an understanding of being in its different manifestations. Sallis explains how these various forms of being coalesce: “To ask about the meaning of Being...is to ask about Dasein’s understanding of Being. Yet, understanding of Being is, in general, that which makes possible the apprehension of beings as such. Hence, to question about the meaning of Being, about Dasein’s understanding of Being, is to ask about that understanding which makes it possible...for beings to show themselves to Dasein.”²⁰ A contrast is drawn by Heidegger between “being-in” as a component of being-in-the-world, and the way in which one entity is said to be contained in another, such as water in a glass (*BT*, 79/54). Our encounter with the world is not built up from sensations, but is directed by what is already meaningful. Heidegger uses an everyday illustration: “Coming into the lecture-room, I see the lectern...What do I see? Brown surfaces, at right angles to one another?

No, I see something else. A largish box, with another smaller one set upon it? Not at all. I see the lectern at which I am to speak. You see the lectern, from which you are to be addressed, and from where I have spoken to you previously.”²¹

In his exposition of the being of Dasein, Heidegger claims it has no essential core such as a soul, but that it is constituted only by potentiality. Dasein finds itself in a situation where it has to choose between two basic possibilities: “to be itself or not itself” (*BT*, 33/13). Such a choice involves taking hold of its own existence or neglecting it. The way the individual Dasein understands and relates to the particularity of its own being is described as ontic, and Heidegger outlines the connection between the ontic and the ontological:

[Dasein] is ontically distinguished by the fact that in its very being, that being is an *issue* for it. But in that case, this is a constitutive state of Dasein’s being, and this implies that Dasein, in its being, has a relationship towards that being – a relationship which itself is one of being. It is peculiar to this entity that with and through its being, this being is disclosed to it. *Understanding of being is itself a definite characteristic of Dasein’s being.* Dasein is ontically distinctive in that it *is* ontological. (32/12)

The structures of Dasein’s being that are involved in the choices it makes are existentials or *existentialia* – a term distinguished from the categories of readiness-to-hand and presence-at-hand, which are used to define the being of non-Dasein entities (70/44). Heidegger describes the being of Dasein as “existence” rather than the traditional term *existentia*, denoting actuality and objectivity (67/42). He contrasts his interpretation with the metaphysical understanding of selfhood as substance or subject, and with the definition of the human as the “rational animal.”²² Because selfhood is Dasein’s being as potential, Heidegger rejects the traditional idea of the human as a self-contained subject. He also discusses the being of Dasein in terms of its

relation to other people: “Being with Others belongs to the Being of Dasein, which is an issue for Dasein in its very Being. Thus as Being-with, Dasein ‘is’ essentially for the sake of Others” (*BT*, 160/123). Dasein’s understanding of the being of others forms a union with the existential understanding of its own being. In Heidegger’s theory, such awareness is ontologically prior to an ontic knowledge about other people.

3.5 *The care structure*

Having discussed the being of Dasein as being-in-the-world, Heidegger introduces a basic character of Dasein, “disclosedness.” This term refers to its situatedness in the world, where entities are uncovered or disclosed in terms of their being. The basis for disclosedness is that in its directedness towards the world, Dasein has an *a priori* understanding of being – with respect to itself as well as to entities: “The entity which is essentially constituted by Being-in-the-world *is* itself in every case its ‘there’...This entity carries in its ownmost Being the character of not being closed off. In the expression ‘there’ we have in view this essential disclosedness...Dasein, together with the Being-there of the world, is ‘there’ for itself” (171/132). Disclosedness is grounded in what Heidegger terms “care,” which consists of three basic elements: attunement, understanding, and discourse.

Attunement, also translated as “state-of-mind” or “affectedness,” refers to the individual Dasein in its facticity – the fact that it finds itself already thrown into the world in a particular way, and that because its being is potentiality, it is called upon to take responsibility for making something of its existence (173/134). Facticity is encountered by way of mood, including a particular kind of boredom where Dasein is indifferent towards entities; the world loses its relevance, and there is an absence of

motivation to choose from among the various possibilities that are disclosed. Heidegger writes that mood “brings Dasein before the ‘that it is’ of its ‘there’, which, as such, stares it in the face with the inexorability of an enigma” (175/136). In his theory, the most powerful attunement we experience is that of *Angst* or anxiety, in which we become aware of our thrownness and sense ourselves as being endangered and abandoned. This state is described as “uncanniness,” a feeling of “nothing and nowhere” and “not being at home” (233/188). Anxiety is distinguished from fear, which is understood in an ontical sense as directed to a particular entity: “We become afraid in the face of this or that particular being that threatens us in this or that particular respect. Fear in the face of something is also in each case a fear for something in particular.”²³ By contrast, anxiety is indeterminate. When we say that we feel “ill at ease,” we are unable to state the cause of the feeling, since everything seems to lack meaning: “That in the face of which one is anxious is completely indefinite. Not only does this indefiniteness leave factually undecided which entity within-the-world is threatening us, but it also tell us that entities within-the-world are not ‘relevant’ at all...The world has the character of completely lacking significance” (*BT*, 231/186).

Heidegger links attunement to “understanding,” defined as the projecting of possibilities. Because it is thrown into the world, Dasein must engage in a process of self-creation by projecting “its ownmost potentiality for Being”(188/148). It chooses from among the ontic possibilities arising from the situation in which it finds itself; these can then be projected onto their ontological possibility. Heidegger distinguishes the idea of possibility as something ontic or factual, for example, completing a degree in nursing, from existential possibility, such as a professional devotion to the care of the sick. The possibilities Dasein is able to project do not necessarily involve the meeting of specific

goals, but are rather ongoing ways of being. Iain Thomson writes: “Existential possibilities are what Dasein forges ahead into: the roles, identities, and commitments which shape and circumscribe the reflexive comportment of Dasein as ‘thrown project’.”²⁴

The third element of care is discourse, which is manifest in talking, hearing, and keeping silent, and is a primordial state from which language arises: “The intelligibility of something has always been articulated, even before there is any appropriative interpretation of it” (*BT*, 203-4/161). Discourse is the basis on which we are able to articulate the meaning of individual things, so that we can understand how they are related to each other. A further element associated with care is “fallenness.” This term refers to a particular response to anxiety, where Dasein flees into a state of absorption in the world of the “they”; authentic individuality is lost or covered over through conformity to publicly accepted norms of behaviour (163/126). Other aspects of care are “*concern*,” which includes activities such as producing something or looking after it (83/56), and “*solicitude*,” the authentic form of which helps the other person to become “transparent to himself” (159/122).

3.6 *Temporality*

Following his analysis of care, Heidegger states that the discussion has not yet answered the question about the meaning of “Being in general,” since the being of Dasein has not been given an originary interpretation (274/231). Such an interpretation is now to be provided by “temporality.” In his explanation of the meaning of care, Heidegger had given a temporal interpretation of Dasein’s being: “ahead-of-itself-Being-already-in-(the world) as Being-alongside (entities encountered within the world)”

(237/192). Temporality is to be revealed as constituting the primordial unity of the care structure.

The Introduction to *Being and Time* states that temporality is the meaning of the being of Dasein (38/17). Although being has always been conceived in terms of time, Heidegger claims that the traditional concept of being is based in the prioritisation of a particular mode of temporality – the present. This interpretation of time is appropriated from the understanding of entities as things with an enduring presence. Furthermore, time is regarded as *a* being, so that the focus is on its “whatness” or “beingness,” with the result that the being of time is overlooked. According to Heidegger, the idea of time as a permanent presence originates in Plato’s theory of an eternal realm of ideas, which is set in opposition to the changing world of matter and the senses. The eternal is then prioritised so as to form the metaphysical understanding of time (*BT*, 475/423). In this approach, time is regarded as the non-lasting “is,” which immediately passes away and is succeeded by another “is” in an infinite process.²⁵ Time is therefore understood as an endless sequence of “nows.”

In contrast to the traditional view, Heidegger outlines a concept of originary temporality described as “*the primordial ‘outside-of-itself’ in and for itself*” (*BT*, 377/329). The succession integral to the metaphysical understanding of time is replaced with the “ecstases” of temporality: future, having been, and present, each of which is a movement of standing out into time. The ecstases do not come in a sequence, which would reflect the traditional view of time as sequential. Instead, Heidegger explains that “the future is *not later* than having been, and having been is *not earlier* than the Present. Temporality temporalizes itself as a future which makes present in the process of having

been” (401/350). The unity of the care structure is made possible by the primordially of unified temporality: *“In every ecstasis, temporality temporalizes itself as a whole; and this means that in the ecstatical unity with which temporality has fully temporalized itself currently, is grounded the totality of the structural whole of existence, facticity, and falling – that is, the unity of the care structure”* (401/350). The past of the care structure is Dasein’s thrownness into certain possibilities, which then have to be grasped and appropriated: *“Taking over thrownness...is possible only in such a way that the futural Dasein can be its ownmost ‘as-it-already-was’ – that is to say, its ‘been’...Only in so far as Dasein is as an ‘I-am-as-having-been’ can Dasein come towards itself futurally in such a way that it comes back”* (373/326). The futural aspect of care, understanding, is Dasein’s ultimate potential, where it grasps itself as something it can be. Projecting a possibility does not involve fixing attention on a goal, or on the impending completion of the work at hand (405/353). Dasein’s temporality as futural is more like a perspective than a task that could be fulfilled.

Heidegger concludes the temporal interpretation of care by connecting the past and the future to the present in describing the temporal structure of “concern”: *“Letting things be involved makes up the existential structure of concern. But concern, as being alongside something, belongs to the essential constitution of care; and care, in turn, is grounded in temporality...The existential condition of the possibility of letting things be involved must be sought in a mode of the temporalizing of temporality”* (404/353).

Understanding the purpose of a task is a futural orientation – a “towards-which,” and it has the temporal structure of “awaiting” (461/409). The past aspect of concern is the “retaining” of that which is already given. From these two forms of time arises a

“making-present,” where Dasein is absorbed in the work at hand. In awaiting a possibility, Dasein retains what is ready-to-hand and thus brings it into the present. The unifying of past, present and future in the context of completing tasks, links the care structure to originary temporality, and reinforces the connection between the for-the-sake-of-which of Dasein and the in-order-to-structure of the ready-to-hand (417/366).

3.7 *Death*

In its thrownness, Dasein projects itself purposefully in a process of self-creation. The projection of possibilities is “the most primordial and ultimate positive way in which Dasein is characterized ontologically” (183/144). Although it is able to choose from among certain possibilities of being, there is one possibility that cannot be avoided. This represents for Dasein “the possibility of no-longer-being-able-to-be-there” (294/250), and is described as a “limit-Situation” of Dasein’s ability to be, or to determine who it is: “Death, as possibility, gives Dasein nothing to be ‘actualized’, nothing which Dasein, as actual, could itself *be*” (307/262). The awareness of its finitude and the anticipation of death is fundamental to Dasein’s realisation that ultimately it will be unable to create itself through projection. Its being is therefore interpreted as “Being-towards-death” (296/252). In Heidegger’s theory, “death is a way to be that Dasein appropriates as soon as it exists,”²⁶ and is something Dasein is “in the depths of its Being” (436/384). He explains that the awareness of our mortality is fundamental to who we are: “Implicit in Dasein is a possibility that is imminent for it and in which human Dasein itself stands imminently before itself in its most extreme possibility...I myself am my death precisely when I live.”²⁷

3.8 *Beyond Being and Time*

Within Heidegger's major work, the various kinds of experience constituting the being of Dasein include: a tacit understanding of its own being as questioning and as the place where the being of entities is disclosed; a background awareness of an already meaningful world; practical involvement with things of use that are set within particular contexts; being attuned to its own thrownness through the moods of boredom and anxiety; having to create itself through choosing among the possibilities into which it has been thrown; experiencing time on the basis of a non-sequential form of temporality; and being aware of the imminent possibility of death.

Being and Time was never completed, but in any case it failed to achieve its goal. Heidegger's account of the particularity of Dasein's experience as a self-creating being could not provide an adequate explanation for the meaning of being itself. Jean Grondin holds that Dasein is "too finite and too historically situated" for it to be able to understand the fundamental structures of being.²⁸ Heidegger's considered view is that the work represents an inadequate interpretation of his own intention.²⁹ Although he gives the ontological a transcendental function, there is an absence of clear boundaries in his work between the ontological and the ontic, and there are also places where the ontic seems to require, or to be given, a fundamental role (see Chapters Four to Eight). Towards the end of the work, Heidegger admits uncertainty regarding the function of the ontic when he asks: "Can one provide *ontological* grounds for ontology, or does it also require an *ontical* foundation?" (*BT*, 487/436). He then attempts to formulate a concept of metaphysics that is to be a radicalisation of the fundamental ontology of *Being and Time*. The failure of this later project moves Heidegger towards his theory of an

originary form of difference, on the basis of which being and the human are understood as belonging to each other.

The position I will be defending is that in the period of his “detour” into the question of the transcendental, what Heidegger categorises as ontological is integral to the ontic, and that his descriptions of Dasein’s involvement in the world cannot ultimately be differentiated from the experience of the human as a rational, embodied, ontic being.

NOTES

¹ See Chapter 1, section 1 herein.

² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, tr. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 188/148 (hereafter cited in text as *BT*).

³ Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, tr. Peter Hertz (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1971), 10.

⁴ Heidegger, *Die Kategorien und Bedeutungslehre des Duns Scotus*, (Tubingen, J. C. B. Mohr, 1916), 1 (hereafter cited in text as *DS*), cited in John Caputo, “Meister Eckhart and the later Heidegger: the mystical element in Heidegger’s thought,” in *Martin Heidegger: Critical Assessments* Vol. 2, ed. Christopher Macann (London: Routledge, 1992), 132.

⁵ Jan Aertsen, “Truth as Transcendental in Thomas Aquinas,” *Topoi* 11 (1992): 159.

⁶ Sebastian Luft, Review of Steven Galt Crowell, “Husserl, Heidegger, and the Space of Meaning. Paths Toward Transcendental Phenomenology” (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001), *Husserl Studies* 22 (2006): 62. Luft refers to Gadamer’s claim that *Being and Time* was an “aberration” from Heidegger’s early intentions that were already influenced by the notion of *Ereignis*. Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Die phänomenologische Bewegung,” in *Neuere Philosophie I, Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger* (Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 1987), 120.

Michael Zimmerman, “The foundering of *Being and Time*,” *Philosophy Today* 19, no. 2, (1975): 106. The author endorses Otto Pöggeler’s assessment that “because *Being and Time* has still not sufficiently extricated itself from metaphysical-presentational thinking and from the modern tendency to go forth from the subject as the fundament to be secured first, it is not able to find its way back from the detour upon which it has set itself.” Otto Pöggeler, *Der Denkweg Martin Heideggers* (Pfullingen: Günther Neske, 1963), 180.

⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* tr. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), A12/B25 (hereafter cited in text as CPR).

⁸ Henry Allison, *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), p.9.

⁹ Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, tr. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 20.

¹⁰ Heidegger, *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason*, tr. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 38.

¹¹ Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, tr. J. N. Findlay (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), 215.

¹² Edmund Husserl, *General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, tr. Fred Kersten (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982), 349.

¹³ Edmund Husserl, *Experience and Judgment*, tr. James Churchill and Karl Ameriks (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1975), 20.

¹⁴ Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, tr. John van Buren (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 12.

¹⁵ Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985) 114 (hereafter cited in text as *HCT*).

¹⁶ Katherine Arens, *Structures of Knowing: Psychologies of the Nineteenth Century* (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), 166.

¹⁷ Theodore Kisiel, "The genesis of *Being and Time*," *Man and World* 25, (1992): 30.

¹⁸ Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 99.

¹⁹ Heidegger, "The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics," in *Existentialism from Dostoyevsky to Sartre*, ed. Walter Kaufman (New York: Penguin, 1975), 270.

²⁰ John Sallis, *Delimitations: Phenomenology and the End of Metaphysics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 92.

²¹ Heidegger, *Towards the Definition of Philosophy*, tr. Ted Sadler (London: The Athlone Press, 2002), 60 (hereafter cited in text as *TDP*).

²² Heidegger, *Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected "Problems" of "Logic"*, tr. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 121.

²³ Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?" tr. Walter Kaufmann, in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 88.

²⁴ Iain Thomson, "Can I die? Derrida on Heidegger on death," *Philosophy Today* 43, no. 1 (1999): 31.

²⁵ For a discussion on this idea as developed in Plotinus, see Helene Weiss, "The Greek Conceptions of Time and Being in the Light of Heidegger's Philosophy," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 2, no. 2, (1941): 181.

²⁶ BT 289/245, as cited in Dan Magurshak, "Heidegger and Edwards on *Sein-zum-Tode*," *The Monist* 62, no. 1 (1979): 113.

²⁷ Theodore Kisiel and Thomas Sheehan (eds.), *Becoming Heidegger: On the Trail of His Early Occasional Writings 1910-1927* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 263.

²⁸ Jean Grondin, "Prolegomena to the Understanding of Heidegger's Turn," *Sources of Hermeneutics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 69.

²⁹ Heidegger, Preface to William J. Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967), xiv.

Chapter Four

THE PROBLEM OF THE BODY

In Heidegger's theory, the being of Dasein is the condition of possibility for the ontic interpretation of the human in terms of its properties and characteristics. One of the aims of his work is to distinguish Dasein from the traditional view of the human as a unity of body, soul, and spirit.¹ Commentators are divided on whether the body is included in the being of Dasein, and on the related question of whether such an exclusion is justified in a work that examines the meaning of being.² My position is that Heidegger regards the body as merely ontic, both in *Being and Time* and in his later writing, and that the exclusion of the body from Dasein's being creates problematic distinctions such as that between being and life, ontological and ontic anxiety, and Dasein's involvement in a world of meaning, in contrast to the existence of non-human animals who lack such a world. I propose that the aporias arising from Heidegger's view of the body can be resolved through a holistic understanding of the human, as exemplified in the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Since the attribution of *a priority* to the ontological requires a clear separation between the ontological and the ontic, the difficulties Heidegger encounters in demarcating an ontological dimension within the human, in my view, undermine his attempt to reformulate the Kantian *a priori*.

4.1 *Heidegger's conception of the body*

Although Heidegger recognises that Dasein is never without a body,³ he distinguishes the being of Dasein from the traditional definitions of the human such as "the animal that speaks," God's creation, and the conscious subject:

Whether this entity [Dasein] “is composed of” the physical, psychic, and spiritual and how these realities are to be determined is here left completely unquestioned. We place ourselves in principle outside of these experiential and interrogative horizons outlined by the definition of the most customary name for this entity man: *homo animal rational*. What is to be determined is not an outward appearance of this entity but from the outset and throughout its *way to be*, not the what of that of which it is composed but the *how of its being and the characters of this how*.⁴

The ontological prioritisation of Dasein’s being over its embodiment is in part a response to the life-philosophies of writers such as Wilhelm Dilthey and Max Scheler, which, according to Heidegger, overlook the question of being (*BT*, 73/47-48). Dilthey situates his investigations in history by interpreting the human mind as it manifests itself in various cultural forms. In Heidegger’s view, such an approach tends towards a philosophical anthropology, where the being of the human is taken as something self-evident. He contrasts his interpretation of Dasein with findings in scientific disciplines that analyse the human “purely as life” with respect to things such as longevity, propagation, and growth (291/246). Anthropology and psychology are similarly associated with “mere aliveness.” Heidegger’s view is that when the body is studied in disciplines such as biology and physiology, “Dasein moves into that domain of being which we know as the world of animals and plants” (290/246). The being of Dasein, he claims, cannot be reduced to elementary drives such as willing, wishing, urge, and addiction, since these can be constitutive even for entities that merely live (238/194). According to Heidegger, life is neither Dasein nor something present-at-hand, but owing to the priority he gives to the ontological, he states that Dasein cannot be defined as life “plus something else” (75/50). Questions concerning the body and life, from Heidegger’s

perspective, are within the realm of the ontic, and can therefore be interpreted only on the basis of Dasein's being.

Whereas in the thought of Nietzsche, a similarity is proposed between humans and other living creatures, Heidegger maintains that "the animality of man has a deeper metaphysical ground than could be inferred biologically and scientifically by referring man to an existent animal species that appears to be similar to him in certain external respects."⁵ The being of the human, in Heidegger's view, is not a form of organic life, but a place incorporating world and language; animals, on the other hand, are without language and are "poor in world."⁶ Because of their inability to speak, non-human animals are "separated from our ek-sistent essence by an abyss."⁷ Similarly Heidegger writes of "our appalling and scarcely conceivable bodily kinship with the beast" (*LH*, 206), and in the Hölderlin course of 1934-35, he states that "the leap from the animal that lives to man that speaks is as great, if not greater, than that from the lifeless stone to the living being."⁸

An indication of the priority given to the ontological vis-à-vis the body, is the way Heidegger understands anxiety, defined as an existential state of Dasein. Because anxiety has physical manifestations, he seeks to explain the connection between its ontological and ontic forms: "Only because Dasein is anxious in the very depths of its Being, does it become possible for anxiety to be elicited physiologically" (*BT*, 234/190). Heidegger admits an ontic causation in his statement that anxiety "is often conditioned by 'physiological' factors" (234/190), and in outlining the physical symptoms of anxiety, "it is so close that it is oppressive and stifles one's breath" (231/186), he uses the medical term *Auslosung*, which is the triggering or incidental occasion that causes a dormant disease to awaken.⁹

In *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, Heidegger reinforces the distinction between being and the body by describing the “neutrality” of Dasein, which he regards as prior to its individual expression: “The peculiar neutrality of the term ‘Dasein’ is essential, because the interpretation of this being must be carried out prior to every factual concretion. This neutrality also indicates that Dasein is neither of the two sexes.”¹⁰ The passage continues: “As factual, Dasein is, among other things, dispersed in a body and concomitantly...in a particular sexuality.” Then in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, Heidegger defines Dasein as being co-determined not only through “spirit” and “living,” but also through the way in which a human being, “which to a certain extent has been fettered in a body,”¹¹ is bound up with other beings through its bodiliness. He also contrasts bodily fetteredness with the “highest” form of Dasein’s existence, which occurs when it glimpses the “pinnacle of its own possibility” (*KPM*, 203).

Whereas in his early writing, the body is associated only with organic life and scientific inquiry, in the *Zollikon Seminars* of 1959 to 1969, Heidegger explains that when understood phenomenologically, the body is actively directed towards the world. He distinguishes the “living” body from the concept of the body as a corporeal thing through the notion of “bodying forth” – a way of being that includes movement and gesture, hearing and speaking.¹² This “bodying” is a contributing factor to being-in-the-world, but although it is a necessary condition for our relationship to the world, it is not a sufficient condition: “Being-in-the-world as such is a bodying forth, but not *only* a bodying forth...Bodying forth belongs to Being-in-the-world, which is primarily the understanding-of-being. Therefore, this [understanding-of-being] is not just something still added to bodying forth...A bodying forth also co-participates in the receiving-

perceiving of what is present” (ZS, 200). In another passage, bodying is explicitly excluded from understanding, an existiale of Dasein: “Being-in-the-world is not exhausted in bodying forth. For instance, the understanding of being also belongs to being-in-the-world...Bodying forth *does not occur here* [in the understanding of being]” (ZS, 196-197; italics added). The use of the word “understanding” does not refer merely to the conceptual, but to the fact that Dasein projects itself into possibilities of being. Dan Zahavi comments that although in the *Zollikon Seminars* there is a recognition that the lived body is more than simply a physical body, Heidegger insists that “we can only exist embodied because, fundamentally speaking, we are characterized by our Being-in-the-world.”¹³

4.2 *Conflicting interpretations of Heidegger’s position*

Among the commentaries on Heidegger’s work, opinions differ as to whether he includes the body in the being of Dasein. Also examined in these interpretations is the possible justification for the exclusion of a discussion on the body in *Being and Time*, where Heidegger signals that an analysis of the body is to be postponed: “This ‘bodily nature’ hides a whole problematic of its own, though we shall not treat it here” (BT, 143/108). The idea that the omission of the body from Heidegger’s analysis implies that the body is not part of the being of Dasein, is contested by Søren Overgaard on the grounds that in Heidegger’s 1924 lecture course on Aristotle, the passions or emotions are described as something that “carries *Dasein* away,”¹⁴ and that “the whole being of the human being [is] characterized in such a way that it must be grasped as the *corporeal being-in-the-world* of the human being.”¹⁵ Overgaard supports his interpretation by claiming that *Being and Time* merely attempts to avoid the traditional view of the body in

relation to the soul. This argument does not take into account Heidegger's considered position in the seminars of 1959-1969, where he states that "understanding," previously defined as an existential of Dasein, does not involve the body (ZS, 196).

The absence of a discussion on the body in *Being and Time* is explained by Brent Singer on the basis that since both mental and physical occurrences are categorised as present-at-hand, they are outside the scope of an inquiry into the ontological status of being-in-the-world.¹⁶ Similarly, Michel Haar proposes that the reason for the omission of the body in *Being and Time* is that the *existentialia*, including understanding and attunement, are "permeated with transcendence" and are thus more original than the body.¹⁷ The interpretations of Singer and Haar are reflected in Heidegger's statement that understanding is ontologically prior to "hearing" as interpreted in psychology. A sound is never a "pure noise," but is situated in a context of meaning, for example, "the column on the march, the north wind, the woodpecker tapping, the fire crackling" (BT, 207/163).

David Cerbone addresses the possibility that since the body is excluded from the *existentialia*, it could be regarded as a "category" such as ready-to-hand or present-at-hand (212). In explaining that these categories are applicable only to entities, Cerbone challenges the claim that "having a body does not belong to Dasein's essential structure."¹⁸ He maintains that such a view comes "precariously close to the Cartesian position" where body and mind are distinct, and also that it is inconsistent with the recognition in *Being and Time* that Dasein is never without a body.¹⁹ Yet Heidegger's inability to find within his own existing categories an appropriate way in which to define the body, does not, of itself, indicate that he regards it as integral to the being of Dasein.

4.3 *Critical evaluations of Heidegger*

In defining Dasein in terms of “how” rather than “what,” Heidegger explains that “those characteristics which can be exhibited in this entity are not ‘properties’ present-at-hand of some entity which ‘looks’ so and so and is itself present-at-hand” (*BT*, 67/42). This argument overlooks the fact that Dasein as embodied can be regarded as having the kind of physical properties that other entities possess, in the sense that there is no difference between Dasein and other entities as objects of vision; looking at either involves observing physical form. The possession of features that can be “exhibited” does not require that Dasein be interpreted merely as a present-at-hand entity; as a meaning-disclosing being, Dasein could never be reduced to the status of an object.

Among the scholarly critiques of Heidegger’s theory are the claims that:

a) the body cannot be overlooked in a description of Dasein’s practical involvement with entities; b) there are inadequate grounds for the claim that “life” is ontologically derivative of being; and c) Heidegger is unsuccessful in the method he uses to demarcate the being of Dasein from the existence of animals.

Writers such as Alphonse de Waelhens contend that activities described in relation to the being of Dasein such as hammering, touching and hearing, necessarily involve the existence of the body, and that the omission of a discussion on the body creates a problem for Heidegger’s theory as a whole.²⁰ Didier Franck points out that although Heidegger uses the phrase “ready-to-hand,” he fails to acknowledge that Dasein is a being with hands.²¹ In the view of Kevin Aho, Heidegger’s analysis does not address the role that the body plays in our everyday acts and practices, in that our ability to know our way around a concrete situation depends on a body that must “face” things in order to

deal meaningfully with them.²² Similarly, de Waelhens asserts that Heidegger ignores bodily functions such as perception: “Heidegger always situates himself at a level of complexity which permits imagining that the problem which concerns us here is resolved. For it is at the level of perception and the sensible that this problem must receive its decisive treatment...But in *Being and Time* one does not find thirty lines concerning the problem of perception; one does not find ten concerning that of the body” (xviii–xix).

Heidegger’s position is that the bodily or ontic state of “life” is a kind of being, but that it can only be accessed through the ontology of *Dasein* (238/194). On these grounds, he proposes that existential anxiety is ontologically prior to its ontic counterpart. Although Heidegger attempts to distinguish the two forms of anxiety in claiming that ontic anxiety concerns merely a fear in the face of a particular event,²³ the fact that both states have the same physical manifestations makes his position difficult to defend. David Krell explains that the symptoms of existential anxiety outlined in *Being and Time* such as disturbances of breathing are characteristic of anxiety neurosis, and that the so-called “ontological” state is imply that of “just-plain-life” (1992, 70). Heidegger’s theory is contested by Franck on the grounds that physiologically conditioned anxiety can only be experienced by a living being, and that such anxiety has its origin in the intertwining of the death and life drives (145). In addressing the question of Heidegger’s method, whereby access to life is based on an understanding of being that is ontologically other to life, Franck asks, “Against what horizon of meaning of Being and of negation can it be said that ‘life is not Being-present-at-hand nor *Dasein*’ if universal phenomenological ontology is shared between these two modes of Being?” Franck also queries whether life and living phenomena are “forever at a remove from the clearing of

Being” (108), this clearing referring to the being of Dasein as a primordial openness. His assessment of Heidegger’s theory as a whole is that “the disappearance of the body is *the phenomenological price* of the appearance of Being” (118). According to Franck, Heidegger reduces the phenomenology of our total experience in the world to an ontology in which the body has no place. An uncertainty in Heidegger’s thinking concerning the relation between life and being, is indicated in his comment that even Dasein may be considered “purely as life,” and that life can be understood “as a kind of Being to which there belongs a Being-in-the-world” (*BT*, 290/246). Krell refers to a comment by Heidegger on the ideas of Nietzsche: “Perhaps this body as it lives and bodies forth is what is ‘most certain’...in us, more certain than the ‘soul’ and ‘spirit’, and perhaps it is this body and not the soul about which we say that it is ‘inspired’.”²⁴ According to Krell, Heidegger is tacitly accepting the possibility that life itself could be fundamental to Dasein’s being. In discussing the transcendental conditions for the possibility of “mere-aliveness,” Krell asks: “Would not the human *body* give us access to something like just-plain-life? If Dasein is in each case mine, and if the ‘mine’ is also distributed across the bodies of men and women who exist, would not Dasein always and everywhere be some body who is alive?” (1992, 51).

On the question of other living creatures, Heidegger admits: “It remains a problem...to define ontologically the way in which the senses can be *stimulated* or *touched* in something that merely has life” (*BT*, 396/346). This comment is set in the context of a discussion of attunement, defined as being “affected” by something, where Heidegger provides no equivalent for this state of affectedness that would be applicable to the experience of animals. In her challenge to Heidegger’s theory of the body, Maxine Sheets-Johnstone states that both humans and animals possess a biological disposition to

use the body as a “semantic template,” to understand sensory experiences, and to interpret the responses of others. She explains the origins of these capacities:

Concepts were either generated or awakened by the living body in the course of everyday actions such as chewing, urinating, striding, standing, breathing, and so on. As everyday actions gave rise to new concepts, so new concepts gave rise to new possibilities, new possibilities to new ways of living, and new ways of living to the establishment finally of those revolutionary new practices and beliefs that are definitive of hominid evolution.²⁵

Sheets-Johnstone’s argument is that corporeity is fundamental to the ways in which we have developed into the kind of beings who understand ourselves on the basis of our involvement in a meaningful world.

The greater the similarities between Dasein and other living creatures, the more difficult it is for Heidegger to maintain that Dasein’s being is ontologically prior to its embodiment (ZS, 196-197). David Levin contends that whenever Heidegger’s thinking requires him to address the question of embodiment, particularly in relation to human nature and our kinship with animals, “Heidegger finds himself entering a realm where he has no compass and loses his way.”²⁶ In an article comparing human incarnation with Heidegger’s description of Dasein in terms of its “essence,” John Caputo argues that Heidegger seeks to “decontaminate the body...to purify it of anything organic, biological, non-essential.”²⁷ Caputo also outlines what he regards as an inconsistency in Heidegger’s theory. On the one hand, Dasein as a place of disclosedness for being’s manifestation is not viewed as an embodied entity, but on the other hand, the human being is located on a scale where it is below divinity and above animals, in which case its embodiment is presupposed. With this form of reasoning, Caputo claims, Heidegger “ends up reproducing...the most conventional metaphysical hierarchy,” reinforcing the traditional

distinction between “the pure inside of human being – where there is truth, clearing, Being, language, world – and the impure, contaminated *outside* – where there are only organic functions and environment”(37). A similar theme is addressed by Hans Jonas, who points out that “animal” in the Greek sense means any animated being, including gods, and that no “lowering” is indicated when the term is applied to humans. Jonas regards Heidegger’s use of a comparative scale as being merely a continuation of the classical view that the human, by virtue of possessing a “soul,” stands outside nature.²⁸ The self-awareness that is essential to the being of Dasein is described by Jonas as having its origins in organic existence. He proposes that “the organic even in its lowest forms prefigures mind” (1), and that “mind even on its highest reaches remains part of the organic.” Jonas outlines an ontology beyond the dualities of the living body in its outward form as an organism, and in its inward form as “selfhood and finality” (19). His phenomenon of “life” is a holistic understanding of the human involving a movement beyond partial abstractions such as “body and soul,” “extension and thought.” He defines his work as the quest for “an integral monism on a plane about the solidified alternatives” (19).

4.4 *An alternative approach*

The aporias resulting from Heidegger’s inability to conceive of the body as fundamental to the being of Dasein, can be resolved through an understanding of the means by which the embodied human is situated in the world. Both Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty expound the concept of “being-in-the-world,” but their interpretations are based on differing perspectives.

Following the tradition of Husserl, neither of the above thinkers interprets the world as an objective entity, but rather, in Heidegger's terms, as something with which we are "primordially familiar" (*BT*, 119/87), or as Merleau-Ponty describes it, "a familiar setting of our life."²⁹ The major difference between the two approaches is that Heidegger excludes the body from understanding (the projection of possibilities), and thereby from the being of Dasein, also defined as "existence" (*BT*, 34/13). For Merleau-Ponty, by contrast, neither the body nor existence is original, since each presupposes the other and defines itself in reference to the other (*PP*, 166). The body is an expressive unity, and the sense experience of the body is "a vital communication with the world" (52). What we perceive is not simply the objective world, but is conditioned by various factors that form the relationship between the perceiving subject and the perceived object. Merleau-Ponty writes: "Inside and outside are inseparable. The world is wholly inside and I am wholly outside myself" (407). Self and world can only be understood through practical, bodily engagement, described as a state of being directed towards something. The body is "that by which there are objects" (92). I am conscious of the world through my body and I am conscious of my body through the world (406). Aho explains that "the body is inseparable from the world because the world is simply what my body perceives, and the objects that I perceive are always perceived in reference to my body" (16). Our actions are continuously responsive to worldly events, which are at the same time continuously responsive to our actions. For Merleau-Ponty, the body is "a system of possible actions, a virtual body with its phenomenal 'place' defined by its task and situation" (250). Bodily capacities function as a domain of practical possibility. The body as part of the world is the condition of possibility of self and world in perception.

The traditional view of the body as merely an assemblage of organs juxtaposed in space, is contrasted by Merleau-Ponty with what he calls a “body schema,” which integrates the body’s awareness of its posture and the positioning of body parts and limbs, and constitutes a latent knowledge of the spatiality of the world to which the body conforms. Shaun Gallagher writes: “Body schemas enable us to find our way in space...to run without tripping and falling; to locate targets; to perceive depth, distance, and direction; to throw and to catch a ball with accuracy.”³⁰ At the same time, a body-schema incorporates significant parts of the immediate environment, as in the example given by Gallagher, where “the carpenter’s hammer becomes an operative extension of the carpenter’s hand” (32).

In Merleau-Ponty’s view, when we consciously think about something, it is experienced as having definite meanings, but such experience is made possible by an indeterminate, ambiguous background. Reflection is derivative of this pre-reflective domain that enables some of our involvements to occur without conscious deliberation: “Insofar as I have hands, feet, a body, I sustain around me intentions which are not dependent on my decisions and which affect my surroundings in a way that I do not choose” (*PP*, 440). Since it is the body itself that understands and reflects upon its existence, conscious life is subtended by an “intentional arc,” which “projects round about us our past, our future, our human setting, our physical, ideological and moral situation, or rather which results in our being situated in all these respects. It is this intentional arc which brings about the unity of the senses, of intelligence, of sensibility and motility” (136). Merleau-Ponty also explains that bodily perception is not the activity of a subject, nor is it something that happens *to* the subject. The “I” is a production of reflection, but perception is more primordial than reflection. He therefore describes

perception as “pre-personal”; it belongs to all bodies capable of perception. The body is “a core of meaning, a oneness with a unified field or world and a oneness with others.”³¹

A central feature of Merleau-Ponty’s theory is the way he addresses the questions of immanence and transcendence. The sphere of immanence is interpreted as the sphere of conscious life, while transcendence refers to things existing independently of consciousness. Two approaches have traditionally been used to explain how we can know things in the world: empiricism, which attempts to ground knowledge in experience; and what Merleau-Ponty calls “intellectualism” (*PP*, 247), which conceives perception as constituting objects through acts of the mind. With respect to empiricism, he claims that scepticism is inevitable, since there is no way of ascertaining that the object as perceived conveys accurate information about the transcendent thing. In the intellectualist view, by contrast, error becomes an impossibility, due to the absence of connection to a transcendent measure of truth and falsity (295-297). In Merleau-Ponty’s view, empiricism and intellectualism are abstractions from an underlying foundation of all rationality and existence, defined as the “perceived world” (*x*). He argues that what is primary is the phenomenon, which has features of both immanence and transcendence. Martin Dillon writes that for Merleau-Ponty, “the paradox of immanence and transcendence is grounded in perception inasmuch as perception intrinsically embodies both revelation and concealment.”³²

Among the differences between the theories of Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger is the way they describe bodily orientation towards things in the world. Merleau-Ponty adopts Husserl’s theory that the centre of orientation is the body, by which the subject perceives things as near or far, above or below, right or left.³³ The body is always “here,” in relation to which other things are “there”; the constitution of spatiality is therefore

dependent on the body.³⁴ Heidegger, on the other hand, describes Dasein as having a unique kind of spatiality: “Because Dasein is ‘spiritual’, *and only because of this*, it can be spatial in a way which remains essentially impossible for any extended corporeal Thing” (*BT*, 419/368). He then explains that “directionality” (orientation) and “de-severance” – a process of “bringing things close,” constitute “Dasein’s making room for itself.” This process, he argues, is existentially possible only on the basis of Dasein’s temporality. Whenever we handle equipment, we are already being “directional” and “self-directive” (420/368). Jeff Malpas argues that for Heidegger, orientation is primarily temporal, “a matter of being oriented towards that which one can be – towards a possibility of one’s own.”³⁵ Adopting a similar position, John Protevi claims that “embodied sense” in Merleau-Ponty’s analysis is “fundamentally spatial in a way that the articulation of Dasein’s temporality, as demanded by fundamental ontology, could never abide.”³⁶

A further difference between the two approaches concerns the question of necessity and contingency in the way the human is defined. Heidegger contrasts the “essential” structures of Dasein’s being with the “accidental” structures relating to the body that can be studied in the physical sciences (*BT*, 38/17). Merleau-Ponty raises the question of contingency in proposing that existence “has no fortuitous attributes” (*PP*, 169). He addresses the objection that we could conceive of a person without hands, feet, head, or even sexuality, but he argues that this would be the case “only if we take an abstract view of hands, feet, head or sexual apparatus, regarding them, that is, as fragments of matter, and ignoring their living function.” In Merleau-Ponty’s view, if our interpretation is based on human experience in the world, and if the organs are understood as integral to total bodily functioning, “a handless or sexless man is as

inconceivable as one without the power of thought” (170). He continues that it is therefore impossible “to distinguish in the total being of man a bodily organization to be treated as a contingent fact, and other attributes necessarily entering into his make-up. Everything in man is a necessity.” Merleau-Ponty’s argument is that a person’s individual features are derivative of primordial human corporeity. In general terms, he interprets the body as our practical engagement with the world, in contrast to Heidegger’s view that our being is ontologically prior to our embodiment.³⁷ Marito Sato points out that Merleau-Ponty’s use of the concept “being-in-the-world” denotes bodily being, but that for Heidegger, Dasein as being-in-the-world “remains a consciousness without a body.” In Heidegger’s theory, according to Sato, the body is treated as something merely external, the notion of “world” being “constituted on a higher level than the primordial field of sensibility.”³⁸ The fundamental difference between the two theorists is that what Heidegger would have regarded as the ontic approach of Merleau-Ponty, can legitimately be described as ontological on the grounds that for Merleau-Ponty, “the body expresses total existence” (*PP*, 166).

Heidegger’s exclusion of the body from the being of Dasein means that there is an inadequate basis for his attempt to associate the ontological with a definition of the *a priori* as that which is “prior to all ontic experience” (*KPM*, 9). In this period of Heidegger’s work, whatever may be understood by his notion of the “experience of Being”³⁹ is ultimately inseparable from what he would regard as experience defined ontically.

The following chapter discusses the problem of the *a priori* in the context of the way time is understood. Just as Heidegger is unable to establish the necessary distinction between an ontological interpretation of Dasein and an ontic conception of the

human as embodied, I will argue he cannot substantiate his claim that the being of Dasein as temporality is the ground for the ontic understanding of ordinary time – an understanding that, in my view, is inseparable from the fact of our physical situatedness in the natural world.

NOTES

¹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, tr. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 74/48 (hereafter cited in text as *BT*).

² David Cerbone, "Heidegger and Dasein's 'Bodily Nature': What is the Hidden Problematic?" *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 8, no. 2 (2002): 210-211.

³ Evidence for this claim is Heidegger's reference to the "bodily nature" of Dasein (*BT*, 143/108).

⁴ Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 154.

⁵ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, Vol. 3, *The Will to Power as Knowledge and as Metaphysics*, tr. Joan Stambaugh, David Krell, and F. A. Capuzzi (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 81 (hereafter cited in endnotes as N3).

⁶ Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, tr. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 177.

⁷ Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. David Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 206 (hereafter cited in text as *LH*).

⁸ Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymns "Germanien" und "Der Rhein"*, (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1980), 75.

⁹ David Krell, *Daimon Life: Heidegger and Life-Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 69.

¹⁰ Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, tr. Michael Heim (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 136-137.

¹¹ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 181 (hereafter cited in text as *KPM*).

¹² Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001), xxvi (hereafter cited in text as *ZS*).

¹³ Dan Zahavi, Review of Lilian Alweiss, "The World Unclaimed. A Challenge to Heidegger's Critique of Husserl" (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003), *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 13, no. 1 (2005): 132.

¹⁴ GA 18, 197, cited in Søren Overgaard, "Heidegger on Embodiment," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 35, no. 2 (2004): 121.

¹⁵ GA 18, 199, cited in Overgaard, 122.

¹⁶ Brent Singer, "Sein und Zeit Revisited," *Philosophy Research Archives* 14 (1988-89): 321.

¹⁷ Michel Haar, *The Song of the Earth: Heidegger and the Grounds of the History of Being* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 35.

¹⁸ Hubert Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 41.

¹⁹ Overgaard, 212. Also see note 3 above.

²⁰ Alphonse de Waelhens, "The Philosophy of the Ambiguous," tr. A. L. Fisher, Foreword to 2nd French edn. of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Behavior* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), xix.

²¹ Didier Franck, "Being and the Living," in *Who Comes After the Subject?* ed. Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, and Jean-Luc Nancy (London: Routledge, 1991), 144.

²² Kevin Aho, "The Missing Dialogue between Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty: On the Importance of the *Zollikon Seminars*," *Body & Society* 11, no. 2 (2005): 9.

²³ Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?" tr. Walter Kaufmann, in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 88.

²⁴ N3, 79; Krell, 232.

²⁵ Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, *The Roots of Thinking* (Philadelphia: Templeton University Press, 1990), 4.

²⁶ David Levin, "The Ontological Dimension of Embodiment: Heidegger's Thinking of Being," in *The Body*, ed. Donn Welton (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 124.

²⁷ John Caputo, "Incarnation and Essentialization," *Philosophy Today* 35, no. 1 (Spring, 1991): 36.

²⁸ Hans Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 228.

²⁹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, tr. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 1962), 53 (hereafter cited in text as *PP*).

³⁰ Shaun Gallagher, *How the Body Shapes the Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 141.

³¹ Patrick Bourgeois, "Maurice Merleau-Ponty; Philosophy as Phenomenology," in *Phenomenology World-Wide*, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002), 361.

³² Martin Dillon, *Merleau-Ponty's Ontology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1997), 57.

³³ Edmund Husserl, *Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, tr. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), 158.

³⁴ Ibid., section 58. For Merleau-Ponty's analysis, see PP, 102.

³⁵ Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007), 107.

³⁶ John Protevi, "The 'Sense' of 'Sight': Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty on the meaning of bodily and existential sight," *Research in Phenomenology* 28 (1998): 219.

³⁷ Although he does not engage directly with Merleau-Ponty's work, Heidegger commented that he was "disturbed" by the way the French thinkers misinterpret being-in-the-world, conceiving it as being either present-at-hand or as "the intentionality of subjective consciousness" (ZS, 272). See also Richard Askay, "Heidegger, the body, and the French philosophers," *Continental Philosophy Review* 32 (1999), 31: "It is, in fact, remarkable that Heidegger, in his extensive analysis of over fifty pages on the problem of the body, did not refer to Merleau-Ponty at all even though it is clear that he was aware of Merleau-Ponty's work."

³⁸ Marito Sato, "The Incarnation of Consciousness and the Carnalization of the World in Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy," in *Immersing in the Concrete: Maurice Merleau-Ponty in the Japanese Perspective*, *Analecta Husserliana*, Vol. 58, ed. A-T. Tymieniecka and S. Matsuba (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998), 6-7.

³⁹ Heidegger, Postscript to "What is Metaphysics?" tr. R. F. C. Hull and Alan Crick, in *Existence and Being* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1949), 386.

Chapter Five

TEMPORALITY

In the previous chapter, I proposed that Heidegger is unable to demonstrate that the being of Dasein is exclusive of the body, and that this limitation in his theory undermines his basic position that the ontic presupposes the ontological. I will now discuss how a similar problem emerges in Heidegger's exposition of time. He argues that the metaphysical view of ordinary time as an endless sequence of "nows" is derivative of Dasein's being defined as "temporality," where the modes of time as non-successive form a primordial unity.¹ To explain how temporality is the origin of sequential time, Heidegger introduces the concept of "world-time," which functions as an intermediary between temporality and ordinary time. By claiming that world-time involves a sequence of tasks, Heidegger posits temporality as the origin of sequentiality in both world-time and ordinary time. His theory is that all modes of Dasein's experience can be traced back to its being as temporal.

I will argue that Heidegger is unsuccessful in the way he attempts to connect temporality to world-time. The futural projection of temporality cannot be shown as giving rise to the kind of sequence in the performance of tasks that is required to explain the sequentiality of ordinary time. In some cases, a sequence of tasks will be determined by the nature of the work to be undertaken, rather than being dependent on the projection of a given individual. I also propose that ordinary time cannot be derived from temporality on the grounds that our understanding of ordinary time involves our embodied interaction with the natural world. Heidegger's exclusion of the body from the

being of Dasein preempts the possibility of addressing the physical dimension of our experience in a discussion on temporality. I conclude the chapter by referring to Paul Ricoeur's theory that the way we engage with both forms of time involves a mutual borrowing of concepts, where each form of time can only be understood in reference to the other. Ricoeur's argument, in my view, undercuts the primacy Heidegger accords to the ontological.

5.1 *Defining temporality*

In his analysis of traditional thought, Heidegger claims that although being has always been conceived in terms of time, the present has been prioritised over the other modes of time, such understanding being derived from the view of entities as things with an enduring presence. Each "now" is regarded as an instant in time that is immediately replaced by another, with the result that time becomes an endless sequence of nows.² Heidegger explains that within metaphysics, time is divided into three discrete segments: past, present, and future, or before, now, and after. This traditional conception of chronological time (also described as ordinary, objective, or natural time) is an understanding based on the motion of the planets.

The background to Heidegger's critique is the claim by Aristotle that time depends on movement, this theory having a significant influence in the traditional understanding of time (*BPP*, 231). Aristotle proposes that movement, including the motion of the planets, bodily movement, and the processes of growth and decay, is the foundational principle of nature.³ When a body moves from one state to another, for example if there is a change in its temperature, the motion is continuous because the body (the "magnitude") is itself continuous: "But what is moved is moved from

something to something, and all magnitude is continuous. Therefore the movement goes with the magnitude. Because the magnitude is continuous, the movement too is continuous, and if the movement, then the time; for the time that has passed is always thought to be as great as the movement.”⁴ Aristotle points out that time does not exist without change (*Phys.* 219a). If there were no movement or change, we would be unable to mark the “before” and “after” on the basis of which we can say that time has elapsed. The continuity and indivisibility of both motion and time is explained by the “now” in relation to the moving body: “The ‘now’ corresponds to the body that is carried along as time corresponds to the motion. For it is by means of the body that is carried along that we become aware of the ‘before and after’ the motion, and if we regard these as countable we get the ‘now’ ” (219b12). Just as motion and change are indivisible, so, too, is time. If this were not the case, each motion would be reducible to ever-smaller motions, and time could be endlessly divided. Aristotle connects time and movement through the concepts of “locomotion,” relating to the thing being carried, and “motion,” which refers to time: “Motion is known because of that which is moved, locomotion because of that which is carried. For what is carried is a ‘this’; the motion is not. Thus the ‘now’ in one sense is always the same, in another it is not the same” (219b12). In Aristotle’s theory “the nows destroy each other reciprocally” (218a), since it is impossible for one now to coexist with another. He also reasons that the now cannot be a permanent “other,” nor can it be adjacent to another now, or it would exist simultaneously with the infinity of nows between the two (218a9). Aristotle’s interpretation of time contains a paradox in that on the one hand, the past now must cease to be before the present now can come into being, but on the other hand, the past now is already the present now.

In Heidegger's view, the above explanation makes the phenomenon of time "more opaque than accessible" (*BPP*, 238), and he concludes that "we shall never find time if we hold to what Aristotle says." Heidegger finds problems with Aristotle's claim that time is "countable," and also that it is dependent on motion. Taking the example of a moving rod, Heidegger asks: "Where is time here, if it is supposed to pertain to the motion? It is certainly not a property of this rod, not anything corporeal, not heavy, not colored, not hard, not anything that belongs to its extension and continuity (*suneches*) as such; it is not something, not a piece of the rod's manifold of points, if we think of the rod as a line" (239). He claims that the only thing that can be counted with respect to the moving rod is its changes of location, but that neither these changes, nor the speed of movement of the rod, can ever account for time itself: "It seems to be pure assertion on Aristotle's part that time is what is counted in connection with motion. Even if we go so far as to mark the rod's change of place by numbers, so that we provide each place with a number and thus find something counted or enumerated directly at each place in the transition of the moving thing, we do not uncover time with this device" (240). According to Heidegger, our experience of following a moving object is an experience of time, even though our focus is on the object and the various positions it occupies in the course of its movement. We do not experience motion if we simply re-count these individual places, but only when we understand such places as deriving from the horizon of an "away from there – toward here" (245).

Heidegger argues that since "before" and "after" are already time determinations, Aristotle's argument is circular. His own view is that these terms should be understood as "the horizon of the earlier and later" (240). According to Heidegger, the measuring of the intervals marked out by the end points of "before" and "after" indicates

that time for Aristotle is a sequence of nows with an ambiguous definition. On the one hand the nows make time continuous, but at the same time they divide it into sections or points. From Heidegger's perspective, each now in Aristotle's theory represents the same concept as the previous one, where the now measures a fixed change, "for example, the advance *from* one stroke of a second *to* the next" (251). Furthermore, time cannot depend on movement, otherwise it would be "used up" by infinite simultaneous movements (239). Counting can fix a present point in time, but time itself is not a point, nor is it countable or divisible. The now is always in transit and is therefore a continuum rather than a limit or a sum of isolated points within time. Heidegger argues that by using the natural concept of movement, Aristotle is attempting to define time as a "thing" or an entity within the world, and that the nows in Aristotle's theory are isolated entities. In Heidegger words, "they come and go like beings; like extant entities they perish, becoming no longer extant" (272).

An alternative to Aristotle's metaphysical view of time is outlined in Heidegger's interpretation of Dasein's being as temporality. At the beginning of his inquiry, he addresses the question, "How can different entities and different moving things which are in time be in or at the *same* time if they are *different*? How is the *simultaneity* of different things possible?" (237). He is also concerned with the way things persist through change, and how the relevant moments of time in this context are coordinated. Rather than indicating a sequence of independent instants as in the traditional approach, the endurance of something, for Heidegger, implies a temporal extendedness. The experience of objects in this way can only be understood on the basis that the being of Dasein is an extended temporal structure. In Heidegger's theory, the modes of time in a primordial sense are dimensions of human experience: "If temporality

constitutes the meaning of the being of the human Dasein and if understanding of being belongs to the constitution of the Dasein's being, then this understanding of being, too, must be possible only on the basis of temporality...Time is the horizon from which something like being becomes at all intelligible. We interpret being by way of time" (17). The term "horizon" is used to denote the limits of an understanding; the interpretation of being is within the horizon of temporality (16).

In analysing the structure of *Being and Time*, Stephan Käufer refers to a "hierarchy of origins," which, in his view, concerns the question of meaning: "A is a more originary interpretation of human existence than B if A makes sense of B, i.e. if B presupposes A as its background."⁵ Similarly Jeff Malpas writes that for Heidegger, X is hierarchically dependent on Y in the sense that "Y provides the conditions under which X is meaningful or 'intelligible'."⁶ Heidegger states that the originary, ontological interpretation of Dasein must ensure that "the *whole* of the entity which it has taken as its theme" is brought into view (*BT*, 275/232). Within the hierarchical structure, temporality is defined as the ontological meaning of care (370/323), which in turn explains being-in-the-world. All modes of Dasein's experience can therefore be traced back to the original interpretation of Dasein as temporal. Heidegger claims that there is no such thing as nature-time, since all time belongs to Dasein. In his theory, "the world" cannot be equated with "nature," but is rather "that which first makes possible the uncoveredness of nature" (*BPP*, 262). Heidegger also proposes that temporality itself is a form of time in that it "temporalizes" or defines the various ways in which time is expressed. Temporality is characterised as "*the original outside-itself*, the *ekstatikon*" (267). The term "ecstatic" means "stepping-outside-self" or being "carried away." Temporality is a movement of standing out in three directions or "ecstases": future, having been, and

present. Heidegger explains that because of the primordial unity of temporality, these ecstases do not come in a succession: “The future is *not later* than having been, and having been is *not earlier* than the Present” (BT, 401/350). If the ecstases were understood as successive, he argues, Dasein would be understood as a present-at-hand entity that runs its course in time (375/327). George Steiner interprets temporality as indicating that “past events are altered, are given meaning, by what happens now and will happen tomorrow.”⁷ As a “potentiality-for-being,” Dasein creates itself by choosing from among the possibilities into which it has been thrown (BT, 183/144). In allowing itself to come toward the future, Dasein becomes itself: “Expecting a possibility, I come from this possibility toward that which I myself am. The Dasein, expecting its ability to be, *comes toward itself*. In this coming-toward-itself, expectant of a possibility, the Dasein is *futural* in an original sense” (BPP, 265). Because of the integration of the three temporal modes, Dasein’s futural anticipation involves coming back to what it already was: “Only in so far as Dasein *is* as an ‘I-am-as-having-been’, can Dasein come towards itself futurally in such a way that it comes *back*. As authentically futural, Dasein *is* authentically as ‘*having been*’ ” (BT, 373/326).

5.2 World-time

A fundamental difference between temporality and ordinary time is that sequentiality does not occur in temporality, whereas it is integral to ordinary time. Heidegger’s theory therefore has to include an explanation for the emergence of sequentiality. His method is to posit an intermediate form of time known as “world-time,” which is a modification of temporality. William Blattner describes this modification as “a reduction in complexity or features, a narrowing down of

understanding.”⁸ With regard to the progressive reductions between the various forms of time, Blattner writes: “Just as ordinary time is a leveled off version of world-time, so world-time is a leveled off form of originary temporality” (319). As the intermediate form of time, world-time is defined as that which concerns human interests; it is the “time for something” (*BT*, 467/414), such as going to work or having a meal. Because world-time derives from temporality, both forms of time have similar features. With respect to world-time, Dasein is defined as “ahead-of-itself-Being-already-in-(the-world) as Being-alongside (entities encountered within-the-world)” (237/192). Dasein’s involvement with entities includes actions such as “concernfully reckoning up, planning, preventing, or taking precautions” (458/406).

In Heidegger’s theory, world-time and care are both direct derivatives of temporality, and relate to Dasein’s purposeful involvements in the world. An example is the use of a hammer: “*With* this thing...a ‘hammer’, there is an involvement in hammering; with hammering, there is an involvement in making something fast; with making something fast, there is an involvement in protection against bad weather” (116/84). These activities are connected to Dasein’s own being: “Dasein has assigned itself to an ‘in-order-to’, and it has done so in terms of a potentiality-for-Being for the sake of which it itself is” (119/86). In using things to perform tasks, Dasein projects itself in terms of a particular ability-to-be. Within the temporal outline of the care structure, existentiality as futural projection is defined as “*Being-ahead-of-itself*,” the past of facticity concerns the state of having been thrown into the world, and the present is described as “*Being alongside* those things ready-to-hand within-the-world” (237/192). World-time similarly focuses on the temporal aspect of Dasein’s involvements, and is discussed in terms of its four basic features: significance,

datability, spannedness, and publicness.

As the “totality of relations of the in-order-to” (*BPP*, 262), significance relates to the appropriate or inappropriate use of time for a particular activity: “Time as right and wrong time has the *character of significance*, the character that characterizes the world as world in general” (262). Datability refers to the fact that the now is a time when something happens; it is a feature that allows time to be recorded in a systematic way by attaching it to a particular event. For Heidegger, time is a relational structure comprised of the present as “now,” the future as “then,” and the past as “at-the-time” (262). The interconnection of the three time dimensions is possible only on the basis that the now is “ecstatically open” (269). Theodore Schatzki states that since the bounds of a person’s situation are usually elastic, so, too, is the identity of the now; present courses of activity are informed by an understanding of both future purpose and past consequence.⁹

In his analysis of spannedness, the third feature of world-time, Heidegger explains that the future “then” can only be interpreted from the standpoint of a “now” (*BPP*, 263). The span “from now till then” does not represent merely the distance between one point in time and another. It is rather that each of the time dimensions – the now, the future then, and the past at-the-time – is “spanned and stretched within itself” (264). The breadth of the span is variable, depending on the circumstances surrounding the now, for example, “now, during the lecture,” “now, during the recess” (264). Heidegger bases this claim on the fact that world-time derives from originary temporality, which is spanned because of its ecstatic character: “Since every expecting has the character of coming-toward-self and every retaining the character of back-to,...and every coming-toward-self is intrinsically a back-to, temporality *qua* ecstatic is

stretched out within its own self. As the primary outside-itself, temporality is stretch itself” (270).

The last feature of world-time is publicness. Heidegger explains that whenever we say “now,” everyone understands what is meant, even though the now for each person may have a different content (264). The public accessibility of the now is made possible because Dasein’s being includes being-with-one-another in a world of shared meaning. Time as public has a particular form of objectivity: on the one hand it has content, but on the other hand it is still recognisable outside the meanings attaching to it in the individual case. Public time is exemplified in the use of the clock. In Heidegger’s exposition of world-time, looking at a clock does not constitute a quantification of time: “The position of the clock’s hand only determines the how much. But the how much and the so much of time understands time originally as that with which I reckon, as time in order to...When we look at the clock and say ‘now’ we are not directed toward the now as such but toward that *wherefore* and *whereto* there is still time now; we are directed toward what occupies us” (259). Public time is also related to spannedness. When we “regulate ourselves *according to the time*” (BT, 469/416), the now spans from one particular task to the next. Sunrise is similarly discussed in the context of time-reckoning and the allocation of tasks that require daylight: “Then, when the sun rises, it is *time for* so and so” (465/412).

World-time reckoning concerns the use of equipment in order to fulfill a task. With respect to the world-time past, Dasein’s reliance upon equipment to function is described as “retaining.”¹⁰ Understanding the purpose of the equipment is the futural aspect of “expecting” (404/353). Retaining and expecting together form the basis of the “enpresenting” of the equipment: “Inasmuch as each then is a not-yet-now and each at-

the-time a no-longer-now, there is an enpresenting implicit in every expecting and retaining. If I am expecting something, I always see it into a present. Similarly, if I am retaining something, I retain it for a present, so that all expecting and retaining are enpresenting” (*BPP*, 260). When the world-time now is enpresented, the world-time future is expected in the completion of the task, and the world-time past is retained in the functioning of the equipment.

5.3 *Projection, sequentiality, and the in-order-to*

Through his examination of world-time, Heidegger proposes a way of explaining the emergence of sequentiality: “The question arises, whether we can let the sequence of Nows explicitly arise out of temporality, and let it arise with respect to its essential structures – significance, datability, spannedness, and publicness. If time as the sequence of Nows is temporalized out of originary temporality, then *these structures must become ontologically intelligible in terms of the ecstatic-horizonal makeup of temporality*” (268). The time with which Dasein reckons is defined as “the now, then (not-yet-now), and at-the-time (no-longer-now)” (261). Each now in world-time becomes a then, which in turn becomes a now, and so on. On this basis, Heidegger is able to describe world-time as the “sequence of nows (succession)” (261). The connection between sequentiality and temporality is indicated in his claim that “the now, the then, and the at-the-time are nothing but temporality expressing itself” (269).

The above interpretation of temporality as the origin of sequentiality in world-time raises the question of sequentiality in relation to projection. Significance in world-time is the totality of relations of the in-order-to. Heidegger links these relations to

projection, defined as Dasein's "potentiality-for-Being" (*BT*, 360/312). On the basis of its thrownness into the world, Dasein's projection of possibilities can give rise to a series of concrete tasks, but as Blattner explains, "world-time times do not neatly form a purposive chain."¹¹ He argues that whatever activities may be involved, they are not imposed by any particular projection, but result from "having to fit several tasks into a given time sequence." If this objection can be sustained, temporality can no longer be regarded as the origin of sequentiality in either world-time or ordinary time.

A problem with Heidegger's theory is that in a situation where steps have to be taken in a particular order, such as in the construction of a building, the sequences involved will be determined by the nature of the tasks and the materials used, rather than being dependent on any individual's projection of an ability to be. Where the order of tasks is not determined by the nature of the work itself, the projection of a possibility of being may involve a selection of things that have to be completed within a particular time frame. For example, if I project myself as a mother, my tasks will include a variety of responsibilities towards my family and my home, and on any given day, these can be carried out in any order. Such activities would not generate a particular sequence such as reading to my children in order to clean the kitchen in order to feed the cat. As Malpas states: "Originary temporality carries nothing within it that would explain the sequential ordering of the entire range of diverse tasks and activities in which we are involved" (142).

In Heidegger's theory, the being of Dasein as projection is presupposed in its involvement with world-time:

Can these structural moments of time...be understood by means of *what* is expressed in the now, then, and at-the-time, by means of enpresenting, expecting, and retaining? When we are expecting

any particular happening, we comport ourselves in our Dasein always in some particular way toward our own most peculiar ability to be. Even if what we are expecting may be some event, some occurrence, still our own Dasein is always conjointly expected in the expecting of the occurrence itself. (*BPP*, 265)

Although it is true that we may engage in certain tasks for the sake of a particular way of being, it is equally the case that we could not project a possibility unless we performed the tasks required. The mutual dependence of projection and the in-order-to creates problems for the theory that temporality is the origin of world-time. Heidegger states that the sequence of in-order-to leads to the towards-which of Dasein's being, also described as the "for-the-sake-of-which" (*BT*, 116/84). He continues: "This primary 'towards-which' is not just another 'towards-this' as something in which an involvement is possible." On the other hand, since it is merely the terminal point of the in-order-to sequence, the being of Dasein cannot function as the origin of the in-order-to themselves. For example, I may interview a client in order to obtain evidence in order to present a case in court for the sake of projecting myself as a lawyer, but that projection itself is dependent on the carrying out of the tasks involved.

Heidegger is unable to show that temporality as projection gives rise to the kind of sequence in world-time that he ultimately attributes to our experience of ordinary time, and his attempt to define temporality as the origin of all forms of time is problematised by the mutual dependence of world-time and temporality.

5.4 *From world-time to ordinary time*

The sequentiality of ordinary time is explained as having its origins in the stretchedness of temporality that is manifest in world-time: the now spans from the past as the no-longer-now, to the future as the now-not-yet, each future now having its own

span (*BPP*, 264). By this means, the now itself stretches throughout time. Heidegger explains that the nows of datability and significance refer to the way time is used with regard to the in-order-to and the use of equipment. A covering-up occurs, he claims, when the nows of the two world-time features are “shorn of these relations” (*BT*, 474/422), becoming something merely present within time. The “now that” of datability is transformed into a decontextualised “now,” and significance is no longer linked to Dasein’s involvements. Without their essential connection to world-time, the nows are indistinguishable from each other. The original understanding of the present in relation to the future and the past is replaced with a view of time “as a succession, as a ‘flowing stream’ of ‘nows’, as the ‘course of time’” (474/422). Ordinary time becomes something in-itself, an objective entity:

That which gets counted when one measures time concernfully, the “now”, gets co-understood in one’s concern with the present-at-hand and the ready-to-hand. Now so far as *this* concern with time comes back to the time itself which has been co-understood, and in so far as it “considers” that time, it sees the “nows”... within the horizon of that understanding-of-Being by which this concern is itself constantly guided. Thus the “nows” are in a certain manner *co-present-at-hand*. (475/423)

In losing its datability and significance, world-time becomes the equivalent of a present-at-hand entity in the world, the modification in this case being from the ontological to the ontic. Blattner states that world-time is “ontologically leveled off” in the modification that results in ordinary time (1999, 227). The reasons given for the fact that “Dasein experiences and knows time first and primarily only as it is commonly understood” (*BPP*, 268), include its orientation to clock time, described as “a making-present of the travelling pointer” (*BT*, 473/420).

In Heidegger's theory, the use of the clock is made possible by Dasein's temporal being:

Along with the temporality of Dasein as thrown, abandoned to the world, and giving itself time, something like a clock is also discovered, that is, something ready-to-hand which in its regular recurrence has become accessible in one's making present awaitingly. The Being which has been thrown and is alongside the ready-to-hand is grounded in temporality. Temporality is the reason for the clock. As the condition for the possibility that a clock is factually necessary, temporality is likewise the condition for its discoverability. (BT, 466/413)

When Dasein fails to recognise its own temporal structure, the awareness of clock time becomes dissociated from the ontological understanding of world-time: "The idea of a standard implies unchangingness; this means that for everyone at any time the standard, in its stability, must be present-at-hand." Public time as measured becomes "a *present-at-hand multiplicity of 'nows'* " (470/417). Similarly, dated time is "determined numerically in terms of *spatial* stretches and changes in the *location* of some spatial Thing" (470/418). What is decisive for Heidegger in the interpretation of time on the basis of spatiality and movement, is that "in obtaining the measurement, we, as it were, forget what has been measured as such, so that nothing is to be found except a number and a stretch" (471/418). Following the hands of the clock involves a process of counting the *nows* and disregarding the datability and significance of world-time. The result is that Dasein tends to understand itself "primarily by way of things"; it "determines its own being by means of the mode of being of the extant" (BPP, 272). Because of its fallenness, Dasein defines itself in terms of the categories applicable to entities.

The theory that our experience of ordinary or measured time derives from our being as temporality, is at variance with Merleau-Ponty's view that our being is a bodily form of practical engagement with the world. Whereas for Heidegger, the being of

Dasein is ontologically prior to the body, in Merleau-Ponty's theory, the body is the condition of possibility of both the world and the self.¹² Our continuing existence as embodied beings requires that we provide for our basic needs, and these cannot be shown to have their origins in temporality. Although provision for essentials could be regarded as an aspect of Dasein's self-projection, the nature of that provision derives ultimately from our bodily existence. We are aware that some tasks take longer than others due to the properties of the materials we are working with and our own physical and mental abilities. The carrying out of the various activities necessary for our survival presupposes the awareness of an objective measure of time.

Because of his exclusion of the body from the being of Dasein, Heidegger gives the act of "taking a rest" an ontological interpretation by situating it within care (*BT*, 238/193). The need to sleep and eat would presumably be understood on the same basis. From a Heideggerian perspective, it could be argued that the choices we make regarding rest, sleep and food are the outcome of a projection, but if these should give rise to certain tasks, they would not form a sequential chain, as discussed above in relation to Blattner's critique. Regardless of whether we are projecting ourselves into possibilities, or are living "inauthentically," the reason we eat in the evening is not in order to sleep, and the reason we sleep is not in order to have breakfast. We act in these ways simply to stay alive. One of the reasons Heidegger can argue that temporality is the origin of sequential time, is that he overlooks the fundamental significance of human corporeity.

5.5 *Where times coalesce*

Heidegger's theory of originary temporality is contested by Paul Ricoeur, who analyses cosmological time, or the way we experience time as succession, and

phenomenological time, which is our awareness of the past, present, and future. Ricoeur integrates these two forms of experience in his concept of “human time,”¹³ where the natural processes of time are interpreted in terms of human memories, present experiences, and future expectations. What we mean by the “now,” he argues, results from the conjunction between the phenomenological experience of time and the “indifferent instant” of cosmological time.¹⁴ He claims that the order of past, present, and future in phenomenological time presupposes the order of succession in cosmological time, experienced as a “before” and “after.” Conversely, the instants of cosmological time imply an understanding of past, present, and future. Whereas for Heidegger, the process of world-time “reckoning” is the basis for the measurement of time, Ricoeur points out that “the first measurements of the time of our preoccupation are borrowed from the natural environment – first of all from the play of light and of the seasons.”¹⁵ His theory is that days and hours are both “intimate measures of action” and “external measures punctuating the sovereign firmament” (*NT*, 177).

Ricoeur illustrates the conjunction of cosmological and phenomenological time by means of the calendar, where a given point in a succession of time is associated with events in human experience (*OA*, 53). For example, a national day is both a numerical date and the commemoration of a significant event in a country’s history. The dual temporality of the calendar is explained by Ricoeur in terms of an earlier “mythic” time that was understood to envelop all reality: “The primary function of this great time is to order the time of societies and human beings who live in society in relation to cosmic time” (*TN*, 105). According to Ricoeur, calendars have three common features: a founding event or “axis moment” such as the birth of Christ that constitutes the basis on which other events are dated; the possibility of moving from the past to the present and

from the present to the past by reference to this axis; the determination of a set of units, for example, days and years, that measure the intervals between cosmic phenomena (106). Whereas Heidegger gives ontological priority to world-time over natural time (*BT*, 466/413), Ricoeur describes a relation of interdependence in his claim that calendar time “cosmologizes lived time and humanizes cosmic time” (*TN*, 109). He also explains that there is a logical gap between the present as experienced, and the instant as an arbitrary point in sequential time. Heidegger’s failure to recognise this gap is one of the reasons he is unable to provide a satisfactory explanation as to how succession is derivative of temporality. Furthermore, he describes the future as “*not later* than having been” (*BT*, 401/350), whereas the mutual implication of natural and phenomenological time requires that the temporal past be prior in time to the future.

In Heidegger’s theory, the body is excluded from the being of Dasein, defined both as temporality and as being-towards-death. An alternative view is presented by Kim Atkins, who proposes that cosmic time as succession, and subjective time as phenomenological, intersect in Dasein’s embodied being.¹⁶ With regard to the question of death as the ending of bodily existence, Atkins explains how temporality or phenomenological time is in no sense prior to chronological time: “The order of ‘before and after’ implicit in phenomenological time is expressive of Dasein’s passivity in relation to the passage of objective time – a passivity that is correlative to Dasein’s passivity to the natural world acknowledged in the inevitability of physical death. This passivity undercuts the primacy Heidegger grants to the future since chronological time is equiprimordial with phenomenological time” (116).

5.6 *The general problem of derivation*

Heidegger has not provided a convincing account in attempting to explain how ordinary time derives from originary temporality. The temporal interpretation of self-projection cannot be regarded as originary, since it is mutually dependent on the world-time in-order-to and the performance of tasks. World-time sequences can be based on the nature of the tasks themselves, and a given projection does not give rise to the kind of sequence on which ordinary time is based. Furthermore, our embodied existence and our participation in the natural world involve an understanding of ordinary time that does not derive from temporality. The interdependence of the two basic ways in which we engage with time, as outlined in Ricoeur, precludes the possibility of one form of time being derivative of the other.

Because Heidegger cannot establish that temporality is the origin of an ontic understanding of time, his interpretation of the being of Dasein collapses. Whereas in the previous chapter, I argued that an ontology of Dasein cannot be abstracted from a comprehensive understanding of the human as an embodied being, with regard to our understanding of time, the holistic nature of our existence is revealed in the complementary ways in which we experience ordinary time on the one hand, and the future in relation to the past and the present on the other.

NOTES

¹ Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, tr. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 17 (hereafter cited in text as *BPP*).

² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, tr. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 474/422 (hereafter cited in text as *BT*).

³ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, tr. Hugh Tredennick (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), 1071b30.

⁴ Aristotle, *Physics*, ed. Richard McKeon, tr. R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye (New York: Random House, 1941), 219a (hereafter cited in text as *Phys.*)

⁵ Stephan Käufer, "Systematicity and Temporality," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 33 (2002): 174.

⁶ Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007), 115.

⁷ George Steiner, *Heidegger* (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1978), 107.

⁸ William Blattner, "Temporality," in *The Blackwell Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Hubert Dreyfus and Mark Wrathall (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 319.

⁹ Theodore Schatzki, "Where Times Meet," *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy* 1 no. 2 (2005): 203.

¹⁰ The ideas of "retention" and "protention" (the intuition of what is to come) were originally outlined in Edmund Husserl, *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*, tr. J. S. Churchill (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964), 51.

¹¹ William Blattner, *Heidegger's Temporal Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 181.

¹² See Chapter 4, section 4 herein.

¹³ Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, Vol. 3, tr. Kathleen Blarney (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 109 (hereafter cited in text as *TN*).

¹⁴ Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself As Another*, tr. Kathleen Blarney (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 53 (hereafter cited in text as *OA*).

¹⁵ Paul Ricoeur, "Narrative Time," *Critical Inquiry* 7, no. 1, (1980): 173 (hereafter cited in text as *NT*).

¹⁶ Kim Atkins, "Ricoeur's 'human time' as a response to the problem of closure in Heideggerian temporality," *Philosophy Today* 44, no. 2, (Summer, 2000): 116.

Chapter Six

AUTHENTICITY, THE BODY, AND BEING-TOWARDS-DEATH

The problems Heidegger faces in attempting to define an ontological dimension of the human that functions as the basis of an ontic interpretation, have so far been analysed with respect to the body and temporality. Both of these topics are relevant to his discussion of the question of death. In *Being and Time*, death is defined as the state where Dasein is no longer able to create itself through the projection of possibilities. Heidegger uses the phrase “Being-towards-death” to describe the authentic attitude that can be taken towards this ultimate possibility,¹ and he contrasts such an understanding with an “inauthentic” view, where death is regarded as the mere cessation of life.

My critique of this theory is that an attitude towards death will necessarily include attitudes towards the ending of life, and that the prioritisation of the authentic view creates a problematic distinction between what Heidegger describes as the ontological and ontic forms of anxiety we experience in the face of death. Furthermore, I propose that awareness of mortality is not an ontological state, that finitude is a consequence of corporeity, and that since there are numerous ways in which humans have conceptualised death throughout history, Heidegger’s account lacks an adequate basis on which his ostensibly authentic approach to death can be valorised over some of these other interpretations.

Although Heidegger defines the being of Dasein in terms of its attitude to death, he provides no ontological equivalent with respect to the beginning of its life. My view is that he has an ambiguous position as to when Dasein’s being actually begins. In

one of his works, the event of birth is associated with the *existentiale*, thrownness, but in *Being and Time*, the ontological descriptions of projection, *Angst*, and authenticity, would indicate that the state of Dasein is achieved some time after birth. These conflicting interpretations as to whether an individual becomes Dasein at birth or at some later time, together with Heidegger's exclusion of the body from being-towards-death, undermine his theory that the ontological interpretation of Dasein is presupposed in the understanding of the human merely as "life." The problematic status of the body in Heidegger's analysis of death and birth, disrupts his attempt to categorise the ontological as *a priori*, and as that which is "prior to all ontic experience."²

6.1 *Death as possibility*

The issue of utmost concern to Dasein is the fact that it has to be (*BT*, 173/134). In its thrownness, Dasein must choose from among various possibilities of being, where it projects itself purposefully in a process of self-creation: "Possibility as an *existentiale* is the most primordial and ultimate positive way in which Dasein is characterized ontologically" (183/144). Heidegger distinguishes this understanding of possibility from "empty logical possibility," which signifies "what is *not yet* actual and what is *not at any time* necessary...the *merely* possible" (183/143). Projection represents an ongoing orientation to a way of being, rather than the attainment of a specific goal. For example, a person may become a teacher by completing a course of training, but she projects herself as a teacher through devoting herself to her profession.

Although Dasein chooses certain possibilities of being, which would include not only professional commitments but personal aspirations such as being a dedicated parent or a loyal friend, there is one possibility Dasein cannot avoid – the end of being-

in-the-world, which is death (303/259). Heidegger describes death as “the possibility of no-longer-being-able-to-be-there” (294/250). Each Dasein has to “take over” this possibility, since no one else can take the place of the individual in death. Rather than being a future event, or the state of having passed away, death in Heidegger’s theory is a way of being where Dasein understands itself as the possibility of its “ownmost nullity” (379/330). In being aware of its finitude, it must create itself, or fall back into nothingness. Dasein exists finitely in recognising that death is the imminent possibility that it will no longer be able to actualise itself through projection.³ Just as death is an experience that is inescapably “mine,” so, too, is the responsibility I must take for making something of my existence.

Heidegger explains that the being of Dasein does not come to an end as a stopping or a cessation, such as occurs in the disappearing of something previously present, or in a premature termination before the intended goal is reached. The reason for the inappropriateness of these forms of ending is that Dasein, whose essence is projection, must become “what it is not yet” (*BT*, 287/243). Because of its existence as potentiality, Dasein can never reach a state of completion: “If existence is definitive for Dasein’s Being and if its essence is constituted in part by potentiality-for-Being, then, as long as Dasein exists, it must in each case, as such a potentiality, *not yet be* something” (276/233). Death as the ultimate future possibility is not something that can befall Dasein, but is rather a “limit-Situation” of Dasein’s ability to be, or to determine who it is (356/308). In the “Letter on Humanism,” Heidegger defines Dasein’s existence as “standing out into the truth of Being.”⁴ Because of this openness, Dasein interprets its possibilities as ways of being. In death, Dasein is closed off to these possibilities and thereby to existence itself. Heidegger distinguishes the existential concept of death from

the ending of the life of other kinds of entities. The latter form of death is termed “perishing” – the cessation of biological functioning, whereas the death of Dasein is indicated by an intermediate term, “demise” (*BT*, 291/247). Blattner describes this phenomenon as “the perishing in so far as it is modified by Dasein’s distinctive way of being. Dasein’s demise is the end of its pursuit of tasks, goals, and projects, an ending that is forced by organic perishing. Demise is thus the possible and certain event that brings Dasein’s living to a close.”⁵ Heidegger questions whether our observation of the death of others might provide a basis for the ontological interpretation of death. He points out, however, that we can never experience the “no-longer-Dasein” of the deceased (*BT*, 282/238). It is only by facing its own ultimate possibility that Dasein “gains its authentic potentiality-for-Being-a-whole” (356/308). Carol White explains that the possibility of Dasein to be complete or whole is its “ability to *be* as the entity that ‘exists’ by taking a stand toward being.”⁶ If death were merely a future event, such wholeness would be rendered impossible on the grounds that Dasein cannot experience its own physical death.

The awareness of finitude creates a fundamental anxiety or *Angst*, in which there is no longer any sense of purpose, and where everything seems insignificant. As a form of “existential death,” *Angst* foreshadows the ultimate impossibility of being able to project. When Dasein lives authentically, it faces its anxiety in a form of being called “resoluteness” (347/300). Accepting responsibility for what it makes of its existence, it chooses from the range of possibilities arising from its thrownness. This resolute facing of death is contrasted with an inauthentic “fleeing” in the face of death (477/425). Dasein is then caught up in the attitudes of the “they” – a term referring to the anonymous public’s endorsement of norms and conventions. The “they” seeks to transform genuine

anxiety into fear of a coming event. Alternatively it declares that anxiety is a weakness, and that what is appropriate is an “indifferent tranquillity as to the ‘fact’ that one dies” (298/254). Being-towards-death is thereby replaced with a focus on demise, where the ending of life is regarded simply as an everyday occurrence, a “mishap.” For Heidegger, this form of indifference “*alienates* Dasein from its ownmost non-relational potentiality-for-Being” (298/254). White compares the two attitudes we can adopt towards the possibility of our death, based on whether or not we view it as merely a physical event: “Inauthentic understanding takes Dasein’s Being to be precarious only in that we each face personal, physical extinction. Thus Dasein avoids recognizing the more profound precariousness that invades its very Being.”⁷

6.2 *Interpreting death*

I will challenge Heidegger’s theory of being-towards-death on grounds that:

- a) awareness of mortality constitutes factual knowledge and is therefore not descriptive of an ontological state; b) our attitude to death presupposes our bodily involvement with the world; c) the question of death cannot be regarded as ontologically prior to that of life; d) there are problems in the attempt to distinguish between an ontological and an ontic form of anxiety in the face of death; e) since interpretations of death have changed throughout time, the attitude of being-towards-death cannot be regarded as an ontological structure of Dasein; and f) certain philosophical attitudes to death within Western culture that are opposed to Heidegger’s view, cannot be categorised as inauthentic.

Basic to Heidegger’s position is his claim that death is “a way to be, which Dasein takes over as soon as it is. ‘As soon as man comes to life, he is at once old enough to die’ ” (289/245). The juxtaposition of “as soon as it is” and “comes to life” indicates a

necessary connection between the beginning of existence and the awareness of death.

Such an association is challenged by Maxine Sheets-Johnstone in a discussion of how we come to be aware of our mortality. She writes: “If a human were isolated completely from birth onwards, with no living beings about, he or she would have no reason to conceive of death.”⁸ Since knowledge of finitude is a fact that has to be acquired, it can by no means be used in the description of an ontological state.

Heidegger’s theory presupposes a separation between bodily existence and the understanding of being-towards-death. Dasein is defined as stretching between birth and death (*BT*, 425/373), but the idea that this “between” state consists of the various ways of Dasein’s being, cannot be used to argue that the authentic anticipation of death is ontologically prior to the awareness of the physical processes leading to death. Through the body we are thrown into the world as finite beings; we are not finite because we have some inner way of being that prevents us from existing indefinitely. We are a species that is biologically destined to die as a result of our interaction with the earth’s environment. If finitude is the ground of our being, and we are finite because we are embodied, our being must derive ultimately from the fact that we are part of the natural world. It cannot therefore be argued that a focus on physical death or demise is in a different ontological category from the attitude Heidegger defines as being-towards-death.

Without Dasein’s awareness that its life will one day cease, it would lack the ability even to conceptualise the meaning of “ultimate impossibility.” In this context, Dan Magurshak asks: “What structure does Dasein grasp when it grasps itself as mortal? Is it a structure ontologically prior to whatever constitutes its biological mortality? What is the evidence for this ‘ontological’ mortality? In what sense can this intuitive insight be genuine knowledge? Can one really demonstrate that Dasein’s awareness of its mortality

is *not* based upon some form of discursive reasoning?”⁹ In his critique of Heidegger’s overall views on life and the body, David Krell addresses a similar question in discussing the relation between death and life: “What is death for a Dasein that is never defined essentially as a living thing? This is not a matter of opposing death to life, but of wondering what semantic content can be given to death in a discourse for which the relation to death, the experience of death, remains unrelated to the life of the living thing.”¹⁰ Krell situates his comments in a discussion of Heidegger’s claim that “within the ontology of Dasein, which is *superordinate* to an ontology of life, the existential analysis of death is, in turn, *subordinate* to a characterization of Dasein’s basic state” (*BT*, 291/247). In Krell’s view, Heidegger has no valid basis for claiming that the existential is ontologically prior to the biological, and he argues that ontology and life should be regarded as interdependent. Krell also contests the way Heidegger attempts to distinguish an authentic from an inauthentic attitude towards death through the use of the intermediate term “demise.” According to Krell, the purpose of this term is “to prevent an inappropriate Dasein from dying like an animal, to preclude its collapsing into just-plain-life when it dies ignobly, but also to preserve a certain propriety for Dasein when it dies properly” (97).

Heidegger describes the differing attitudes Dasein adopts towards “no-longer-being-able-to-be-there.” In the authentic attitude, Dasein faces its primordial anxiety and accepts responsibility for what it makes of its existence. With respect to the inauthentic attitude, Dasein flees from *Angst* by conceptualising death as merely an event in time. A problem with this aspect of Heidegger’s theory is that it involves a questionable distinction between the two forms of anxiety we experience at the prospect of our death. The authentic attitude concerns awareness of the eventual loss of our ability to project

possibilities, whereas the inauthentic attitude would include fear of the progressive loss of our basic faculties, and ultimately the total breakdown of those faculties as life comes to an end. This inauthentic way of viewing death would be consistent with the “fear in the face of an oncoming event” that Dasein experiences when focusing on its demise (BT, 298/254). On the basis of Heidegger’s theory that the being of Dasein is ontologically prior to questions concerning life and the body, he would claim that in the authentic approach, when we are facing imminent death, for example, if we are drowning, we would clutch at a lifeline, not primarily to ensure our physical survival, but so that we could continue to project possibilities. Earlier I discussed the difficulties arising from Heidegger’s claim that “only because Dasein is anxious in the very depths of its Being, does it become possible for anxiety to be elicited physiologically” (234/190). With regard to the question of death, his attempt to define the being of Dasein as the ontological ground for an ontic interpretation, is problematised by the fact that the attitude he describes as being-towards-death cannot be regarded as prior to ontic experience. The various forms of anxiety we undergo when facing death are interwoven to such an extent that it would seem impossible to distinguish an ontological expression of anxiety from its ontic counterpart in such a way that the former could be demonstrated as being the *a priori* condition for the latter.

In Heidegger’s theory, the only two attitudes he outlines towards death are fleeing in the face of it, and facing up to it. Christopher Ellis quotes a statement from Heidegger regarding the Holocaust: “Hundreds of thousands die *en masse*. Do they die? They succumb. They are done in. Do they die? They become items, resources for the manufacture of corpses...But to die is to endure death in its essence. To die means to be

capable of this endurance. We are capable of this only if the essence of death makes our essence possible.”¹¹ This passage is interpreted by Ellis as indicating that for Heidegger, “a concrete event, no matter how or how many people die, cannot alter the essence of death” (167). The nature of this essence concerns Dasein’s “ownmost” possibility (*BT*, 295/251): “By its very essence, death is in every case mine...Death signifies a peculiar possibility-of-Being in which the very Being of one’s own Dasein is an issue” (284/240). Regardless of the prevailing circumstances, Heidegger’s theory requires that individuals be divided into two distinct groups: those who face death authentically, and those who focus only on demise.

A historical overview reveals that humans have had various approaches to death, but according to Heidegger, all of these must be interpreted on the basis of Dasein’s being. He writes: “The ways in which death is taken among primitive peoples, and their ways of comporting themselves towards it in magic and cult, illuminate primarily the understanding of *Dasein*; but the interpretation of this understanding already requires an existential analytic and a corresponding conception of death” (292/247). This statement does not address the attitudes to death that have been adopted in more advanced societies. Ellis examines the work of the death historian, Philippe Ariès, and concludes that the prioritisation of a person’s own death as the basis of individuality would have been incomprehensible before the eleventh century. Death was generally considered to be just one of the “great laws of the species.”¹² Heidegger’s position, according to Ellis, is itself a product of historical influences, and that fleeing in the face of death should be regarded as an early twentieth century attitude rather than a description of an ontological state.

An opposing position to that of Heidegger is taken by Gilles Deleuze, who regards death as an “accident,” rather than as a future possibility providing the meaning of existence. Deleuze considers that the goal of life should be to live so intensely that death, as something external, is of little significance.¹³ He discusses the philosophy of Baruch Spinoza, where the traditional notion of good and evil is replaced with that of good encounters and bad encounters (*SPP*, 22). A good encounter involves an enhancement of the body’s powers, whereas bad encounters concern illness and death. Spinoza endorses the “positive, affirmative life,” rejecting “all that separates us from life, all these transcendent values that are turned against life” (26) and everything that measures life against death. As an example, Spinoza refers to the form of hatred that is turned back against the self in the form of guilt. Both Deleuze and Spinoza regard death as a bad encounter that is external to a living being’s essence. Death is something to be resisted and even overcome through active joys (103). Deleuze finds in Spinoza’s philosophy an intensification of living, where the prospect of a loss of life does not entail a loss of power. According to Spinoza, the finitude of finite modes is not a privation of a greater perfection, and that while it exists in duration, “a mode has no power that is not actual: it is at each moment all that it can be.”¹⁴ Following Spinoza, Deleuze proposes that death is a secondary and derived phenomenon, and that it is ultimately extrinsic: “There is no death that is not *brutal, violent and fortuitous*” (*EPS*, 239). According to Deleuze, there is no internal necessity for death, and that although it “has an extreme and definite relation to me and my body,” in a fundamental sense, death is “incorporeal and infinitive, impersonal, grounded only in itself.”¹⁵ The idea of death as an impersonal event contrasts with Heidegger’s view that when understood ontologically, death is

Dasein's uttermost possibility (*BT*, 307/262).

The purpose of the above discussion is not to evaluate the relative merits of the approaches to death advocated by Spinoza and Deleuze on the one hand, and Heidegger on the other, but to challenge Heidegger's claim that positions such as the ones discussed represent an inauthentic attitude. The basis of his critique would be that the two philosophers are not facing their primordial anxiety in that they regard death as a future event that is external to their being. In my view, the differing ways we approach death cannot be given an ontological categorisation, since they are influenced by historical and cultural factors, and also by our individual belief system, our psychological disposition, and the circumstances prevailing in our lives at any particular time. For Heidegger, these "ontic" factors would be regarded as being derivative of the being of Dasein, but in the theories of Deleuze and Spinoza, there is no underlying way of being that is either presupposed or overlooked in the attitudes they adopt towards death.

Drawing on Theodor Adorno's critique of Heidegger, Roger Foster argues that Heidegger lacks an adequate basis for his attempt to articulate the difference between an ontological and a conventional understanding of death: "It is as though simply *stating* that...death has an ontological sense that is not the same as its everyday conceptual significance makes it so; as though such a sense were unproblematically available, and as though the gravitational force of the concept would not corrupt any attempt to *say* what that deeper, non-conceptual meaning might be."¹⁶ Heidegger subsequently admits the inadequacy of his original theory of death. In a course of lectures delivered in 1929 and 1930, he explains that because of "the difficult problem of death,"¹⁷ he was unable to write the proposed final section of *Being and Time*.

6.3 *Birth*

A further issue with respect to being-towards-death is the priority Heidegger accords to the question of death over that of birth. Because of Dasein's futural orientation, being-towards-death is regarded as fundamental to its being, whereas there is no form of being directly attributed to birth in Heidegger's work. The absence of an ontological account of the beginning of life, together with the exclusion of the body from the being of Dasein, reveals the inadequacy of a theory that attempts to describe "being" as ontologically prior to physical existence. I will discuss Heidegger's conflicting views as to when an individual becomes Dasein, and the problems this creates for the interpretation of the care structure. Also I will argue that his theory fails to take into account the forms of awareness experienced by the fetus, and the fact that infants respond physiologically in giving meaning to their surroundings.

Christina Schües challenges the priority Heidegger gives to the question of death in her claim that "Dasein is natal because it has a future by way of its birth. The human being is mortal from the beginning and natal until her death."¹⁸ Similarly, Klaus Held sees the movement of life as a transition with a twofold meaning: "descenting-from-birth and declining-into-death."¹⁹ Whereas the disclosedness of death is mortality, he considers that the disclosedness of life should be seen as natality. In contrast to Heidegger's view of being-towards-death, Hannah Arendt states that humans are not born in order to die but in order to begin.²⁰

Heidegger defines Dasein as being stretched along between birth and death (*BT*, 425/373), but this does not necessarily mean that he regards birth as the beginning of Dasein. In Blattner's view, birth and death for Heidegger are both limit-situations. Just as death is a limit on Dasein's ability to be, so thrownness in relation to birth indicates

Dasein's inability to escape what it already is.²¹ Blattner admits, however, that Heidegger does not define birth, and that what he means by the concept is unclear. The question can therefore be asked as to the time or stage of development at which the infant becomes Dasein. In *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, Heidegger identifies thrownness with birth as a natural occurrence: "Dasein is thrown, factual, thoroughly amidst nature through its bodiliness."²² However, the descriptions in *Being and Time* imply that the state of Dasein is achieved some time after birth. In this work, care is an indivisible structure of Dasein, so that thrownness would be inseparable from another element of care – understanding or projection. Whatever abilities she may possess, a young child is insufficiently developed to be able to project possibilities. Furthermore, thrownness involves attunement, an experiential term, but the child would be unable to experience a primordial anxiety in the awareness that she is not the ground of her existence, nor would she be able to adopt an authentic or inauthentic attitude towards her death. If the Dasein state does occur at some time after birth, the child would have to evolve from not being thrown to being thrown, which would then preclude thrownness from being a fundamental element in the structure of Dasein's being. Lilian Alweiss points out, on the other hand, that if thrownness involves corporeality, a temporal distance arises in Heidegger's theory between thrownness and projection:

If Dasein were primordially embodied, then it would be *first* "here" (in its *thrownness*) before it would be "over there" (*Da*, in its projection). Dasein would always already be bonded to its body before it was "there" in its possibilities. The finitude would no longer lie in the possibility of the impossibility of existence (death), but in the impossibility of dissolving Dasein's bond to its body. It is because SuZ wishes to maintain Dasein's primordial (existential) freedom that it refuses and resists the return to an embodied Dasein.²³

The view that Dasein begins at birth, or some time thereafter, overlooks the fact that the origin of human life is not birth but conception.²⁴ Leslie MacEvoy describes coming into existence as arbitrary and contingent: “My conception and birth need not have happened; it arose through the actions of others.”²⁵ Heidegger discusses the contingency that is associated with facticity or thrownness: “As being, Dasein is something that has been thrown; it has been brought into its ‘there’, but not of its own accord” (*BT*, 329/284). In this context, thrownness is inseparable from embodiment, which means that the contingency involved would be attributable to natural biological processes. The growth of the human organism from conception involves a development of many of the forms of awareness which, for Heidegger, are fundamental to the being of Dasein in its intentional relation to objects. Schües points out that directedness towards things in their spatiality is experienced in the process of gestation. From the moment of conception, the fetus lives in a vital symbiosis with the mother. The development of the fetus is described by Schües as a “being-toward-being-there-in-the-world” (246). It has a form of intentionality expressed in bodily movements and responses to conditions in the womb. Birth represents not only environmental changes, but also a leap into the “differentiated world of objects” to which the infant can direct her senses (246). A consequence of this theory is that, if Dasein is defined as stretched between birth and death, the ontological priority given to the being of Dasein over Dasein as embodied cannot be sustained when considered from the point of view of gestation. As a physical transition from one form of intentionality to another, birth can by no means be understood as an aspect of “stretching” that is ontologically prior to our embeddedness in nature. Furthermore, Heidegger’s theory does not take account of the way infants initially give meaning to their world through perceptual processes involving physical interaction

with others. Shaun Gallagher and Daniel Hutto cite research indicating that infants “are able to see bodily movement as goal-directed intentional movement, and to perceive other persons as agents.”²⁶ Such an ability is defined as a perceptual capacity that is “fast, automatic, irresistible and highly stimulus-driven.”²⁷ The infant’s awareness of emotion in the movement of others has been similarly described as “a perceptual experience of an embodied comportment.”²⁸

According to Sheets-Johnstone, Heidegger has no narrative of events describing the genesis of Dasein’s existence; she considers that *Being and Time* is concerned purely with an “ahistorical” being (290). This form of critique is consistent with the problems discussed earlier in Heidegger’s attempt to posit an *a priori* form of being that grounds Dasein’s ontic existence in the world.²⁹ In a similar manner, Alweiss writes that there is “no beginning at which Dasein *becomes* immersed in the world” (86). Heidegger states that from an existential viewpoint, birth is not “something past in the sense of something no longer present-at-hand,” since birth is to be understood ontologically on the basis of Dasein’s being as care (*BT*, 426/374). By this means, he attempts to give birth an ontological meaning, thereby distinguishing it from the ontic understanding of birth as a physical process that can be placed in objective time and categorised as present-at-hand. A holistic view of the individual would involve the interpretation of conception and birth as events in ordinary time, and also as stages in the development of an understanding of being. Neither conception nor birth can be regarded as a present-at-hand event with no ontological significance. From the moment of conception, the fetus experiences a growing bodily awareness involving both her relationship with the natural world and the meaning of her existence.

6.4 *Ontology and authenticity*

Owing to his definition of Dasein's being as exclusive of the body, Heidegger is unable to incorporate physical death within his theory of Dasein as finite. The solution he attempts is to change the meaning of death from a future event into a way of being, and at the same time to categorise as inauthentic any alternative attitudes to the questions of living as well as dying. His theory fails to provide an adequate basis on which an attitude to death could be given ontological priority over an attitude to life. The manifold ways in which death has been interpreted in history, together with the phenomenological dimension of human responses to death, problematise the possibility of demarcating an authentic and an inauthentic approach to the ending of existence. Heidegger's position is compounded by the ontological priority he accords to the notion of being-towards-death over the beginning of life, and the unresolved problem of how conception and birth as physical events relate to thrownness and the care structure as a whole. The discussion of death and birth reveals the overall difficulty Heidegger faces in developing a concept of the ontological in respect of human existence, and in attempting to define the ontological as the *a priori* ground of the ontic.

NOTES

¹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, tr. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 296/252 (hereafter cited in text as *BT*).

² Heidegger, *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, tr. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 32.

³ Theodore Kisiel and Thomas Sheehan (eds.), *Becoming Heidegger: On the Trail of His Early Occasional Writings 1910-1927* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 263.

⁴ Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. David Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 206.

⁵ William Blattner, "The concept of death in *Being and Time*," *Man and World* 27 (1994): 54.

⁶ Carol White, *Time and Death: Heidegger's Analysis of Finitude*, ed. Mark Ralkowski (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), 65.

⁷ Carol White, "Dasein, Existence and Death," *Philosophy Today* 28 (1984): 62.

⁸ Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, "On the Conceptual Origin of Death," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 47, no. 1 (September, 1986): 45.

⁹ Dan Magurshak, "Heidegger and Edwards on *Sein-zum-Tode*," *The Monist* 62, no. 1 (January 1979): 116.

¹⁰ David Krell, *Daimon Life: Heidegger and Life-Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 24.

¹¹ Heidegger, GA 59, 56, cited in Ellis, 167.

¹² Philippe Ariès, *Western Attitudes Toward Death: From the Middle Ages to the Present*, tr. M. Ranum (London: Marion Boyars, 1976), 52, cited in Ellis, 160.

¹³ Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, tr. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Light Books, 1988), 41 (hereafter cited in text as *SPP*).

¹⁴ Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, tr. Martin Joughin (New York: Zone Books, 1990), 93 (hereafter cited in text as *EPS*).

¹⁵ Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, ed. Constantin Boundas, trans. Mark Lester and Charles Stivale (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 151.

¹⁶ Roger Foster, "Adorno and Heidegger on language and the inexpressible," *Continental Philosophy Review* 40 (2007): 200. The original version of this citation also includes a reference to Heidegger's concepts of being and care.

¹⁷ Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, tr. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 294.

¹⁸ Christina Schües, "The Birth of Difference," *Human Studies* 20, (1997): 249.

¹⁹ Klaus Held, "Phänomenologie der Zeit nach Husserl," *Perspektiven der Philosophie, Neues Jahrbuch*, 7, ed. R. Berlinger et al (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, Verlag, 1981), 213, cited in Schües, 244.

²⁰ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 246.

²¹ William Blattner, *Heidegger's Temporal Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 287.

²² Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, tr. Michael Heim (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 166.

²³ Lilian Alweiss, *The World Unclaimed: A Challenge to Heidegger's Critique of Husserl* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003), 146.

²⁴ Bernard Dauenhauer, "On Death and Birth," *Personalist*, 57 (1976): 162-170.

²⁵ Leslie MacEvoy, "The Heideggerian bias toward death: A critique of the role of Being-towards-death in the disclosure of human finitude," *Metaphilosophy* 27, nos. 1 & 2 (January/April 1996): 74.

²⁶ Shaun Gallagher and Daniel Hutto, "Understanding others through primary interaction and narrative practice," in *The Shared Mind: Perspectives on Intersubjectivity*, ed. Jordan Zlatev et al (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, in press).

²⁷ Brian Scholl and Patrice Tremoulet, "Perceptual causality and animacy," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 4, no. 8 (August 2000): 299-309.

²⁸ Derek Moore et al, "Components of person perception: An investigation with autistic, non-autistic retarded and typically developing children and adolescents," *British Journal of Developmental Psychology* 15 (1997): 401-423.

²⁹ See Chapter 3, section 8 herein.

Chapter Seven

READINESS-TO-HAND, WORLD, AND THE ONTIC

Heidegger's attempts to formulate an ontological interpretation of Dasein have been discussed in relation to his understanding of the body, temporality, and being-towards-death. His theory also includes a description of the way Dasein is involved with objects or entities in the world. These are encountered in two ways: in the first instance they are "ready-to-hand,"¹ a phrase indicating the way they are used in accomplishing tasks; the other mode of being, "presence-at-hand," occurs when there is a breakdown in readiness-to-hand and entities are viewed theoretically. Readiness-to-hand is an element in the definition of Dasein's being, whereas presence-at-hand is associated with the ontic.

My critique of this theory is that Heidegger is unable to provide a definitive basis on which to distinguish readiness-to-hand and presence-at-hand, with the result that his ontological interpretation of Dasein is called into question. Some of his writing suggests an interdependence between the two forms of being, and he also expresses uncertainty as to where the boundary between them is drawn. I will challenge the primordially of readiness-to-hand on the grounds that our earliest experience of objects involves an exploration of their properties, and that such activities have no necessary connection to particular tasks. Even in the case of mature individuals, the awareness of something as having certain characteristics will normally precede its use.

The being of Dasein as being-in-the-world is interpreted as an *a priori* non-thematic awareness based on a familiar engagement with things in our immediate surroundings. My view is that in Heidegger's ontological reinterpretation of the *a priori*,

the notion of the pre-given is abrogated in his description of Dasein's being as its ongoing experience in the world. I discuss the way Heidegger merges the ontic and ontological in his various definitions of "world," and the problems arising from his exposition of thrownness and projection, where the ontological requires the prior existence of the ontic. Although he does not attribute any form of being to natural entities, Heidegger claims that they can only be understood on the basis of Dasein's being, defined as absorption in contexts of involvement of the ready-to-hand (*BT*, 107/76). I argue that natural entities are not ready-to-hand items in a pre-given equipmental context, and that their existence creates a further problem for the concept of being-in-the-world. Although readiness-to-hand is used in defining the being of Dasein, Heidegger describes both readiness-to-hand and presence-at-hand as "categories" – a term applicable to non-Dasein entities. His differing interpretations of "world" and readiness-to-hand undermine the distinction he needs between the ontological and the ontic in his attempt to establish the *a priority* of Dasein's being.

7.1 *The origins of readiness-to-hand*

In Heidegger's theory, the being of an entity is its meaning for Dasein in a given situation. The basic relationship we have with entities is the way we are engaged with them in practical activity, and the being of such entities is defined as "*readiness-to-hand*" (*BT*, 98/69). Heidegger writes that if we "seize hold" of something and use it, we have a primordial relationship with the object in which it is not the focus of our direct attention. A contrast with this pre-reflective form of involvement is the conscious awareness of the object, where its being is "presence-at-hand" (103/73). Such a situation may arise when the object malfunctions or is mislaid. Heidegger uses the general term

“equipment” to describe ready-to-hand entities, and he explains that these are always situated within a particular context. For example, the various utensils used by a chef would form part of the context of meal preparation. Having described being-in-the-world as “a state of Dasein which is necessary *a priori*” (79/53), Heidegger uses readiness-to-hand in defining the being of Dasein as the way we find ourselves already involved with things of use: “Being-in-the-world...amounts to a non-thematic circumspective absorption in references or assignments constitutive for the readiness-to-hand of a totality of equipment” (107/76).

One of the problems arising from the above theory is that Heidegger’s starting point is what Gail Soffer calls the “full-fledged world of mature Dasein.”² In the previous chapter, I argued that Heidegger fails to address the question as to when an individual becomes Dasein.³ Similarly, in the present context, he disregards the processes by which we learn to make meaning in our earliest encounters with things in our environment. Apart from an infant’s engagement with other humans, her basic attention is directed towards separating individual objects from the visual background. From the beginning, babies exhibit an attraction to stripes and contrasting colours, which enables them to develop an understanding of where one thing ends and another begins.⁴ They also explore the properties of objects with all their senses. The infant is concerned with questions such as: “What tactile and kinesthetic sensations accompany the vision of my hand juxtaposed to my other hand? Or again, given the visual separation between my hand and a given object, what kinesthetic movements will bring about tactile contact?” (Soffer, 386). Such behaviours have led researchers to claim that “the drive to learn is our most important and central instinct” (*HBT*, 8). Because of the primitive nature of this drive, it sometimes gives rise to the taking of physical risks, and can be associated with

emotional distress when an experiment proves unsuccessful (162). These various activities are ends in themselves, and have no necessary connection to the goal-oriented and contextualised nature of the ready-to-hand. Associated with the drive to learn is the need to have a causal effect on the environment – an inclination that manifests in the infant as early as three months. Initially she draws no clear distinction between physical and psychological causality, but at about twelve months she becomes aware of the difference, and of how one event or object influences another (74-75). Involvement with the ready-to-hand will normally presuppose an understanding of both physical causality and movement. An infant's awareness of movement, however, is not given *a priori*, but derives from her experience of the spontaneous and directed movements of her own body, for example swallowing and grasping an object.

As discussed earlier, the body in Heidegger's thought is a conceptual category associated with the ontic and the theoretical, resulting in its exclusion from the definition of Dasein's being.⁵ For Merleau-Ponty, on the other hand, our being is our embodiment.⁶ Although he does not deal directly with the question of readiness-to-hand as outlined in Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty's account of bodily intentionality encompasses the kind of awareness of properties and bodily skills in infancy that are the conditions of possibility of using objects. Heidegger's position involves a failure to recognise that at a fundamental level, the process of giving meaning to the world includes a grasp of our environment that is exercised and expressed through bodily capacities, and that in the absence of these capacities, we would lack the motivation to act at all. In Heidegger's theory, the being of an object is defined on the basis of its use. For Merleau-Ponty, by contrast, the way an object is used is determined partly by its material properties, and partly by the physical abilities of the individual concerned. He describes a relation of

mutual implication between the lived body and the world, where the body is regarded as “a system of possible actions” (*PP*, 250). Just as an object has to have certain properties to be used in a particular way, certain capacities of the body are required in order for objects to be used purposively. It is because the properties of the object and the physical environment are independent of the subject, that humans from birth are motivated to engage in exploratory activity.

In a discussion on Descartes, Heidegger claims that anything experienced through the senses is of no importance ontologically, since the senses indicate merely the ways in which things in the world are “useful or harmful for human creatures encumbered with bodies” (*BT*, 129/97). By way of illustration, Heidegger states that “hardness” and “resistance” for Descartes involve immovability and the present-at-hand, and that the world of Dasein’s involvements is thereby overlooked (130-131/97-98). Although for an adult, resistance would probably be associated with readiness-to-hand, it is likely that our earliest experience of resistance would not occur in the accomplishment of a task, but in our futile efforts to pull or push something in the context of exploring our surroundings and testing our physical strength.

Heidegger expresses an interest in the way children learn, but the priority he accords to the ready-to-hand is revealed in the example he gives of early curiosity. The child’s question, “What is this thing?,” is answered by indicating what it is used for (*HCT*, 260). Such a response, on the other hand, is just one of many possible answers to the question. The name of the object could be given first, and with a young child, the opportunity could be given to explore the properties of the object such as its weight, texture, and malleability. Heidegger claims that when a statement is made such as “the hammer is too heavy” (*BT*, 196/154), the object in question is regarded as something

with a particular property, so that its being is changed to present-at-hand from its initial state as ready-to-hand. This argument overlooks the possibility that a child's first encounter with an object may not be in the context of its use. She may see it lying somewhere, and in exploring its properties she may try to lift it, only to be told that it is too heavy. This statement could represent her initial introduction to the word "heavy," but at that stage she may be unaware of the object's function. In adulthood, the phrase "too heavy" would carry a certain meaning based on the child's experience of learning about weight. Since the original understanding of objects is normally obtained through sensory information and exploratory processes in childhood, when we subsequently use equipment in an everyday setting, that initial information-processing will already have formed part of our background awareness. Rather than being necessarily primordial, the experience of the ready-to-hand will usually be a consequence of the increasingly sophisticated ways in which we come to understand and manipulate our environment.

7.2 Theoretical and practical interests

A contrary position to that of Heidegger is taken by Husserl, who describes things we find in our environment as primarily useful, and he interprets this usefulness as being like a "layer" of the thing that is grounded in visual and tactile perception; purpose can only be attributed to something we already take to be existing.⁷ According to Husserl, "theoretical interest is concerned with what is; and that, everywhere, is what is identical through variation of subjects and their practical interests...Anybody can verify (if he takes a theoretical attitude) that this thing here counts for subject A as such and such a piece of equipment, for B as quite a different one, that anything can be woven into equipmental nexus of many kinds, both for the same and for different subjects...Whatever

is cognized, it is a being that is cognized; and a being is something identical, something identifiable again and again.”⁸ In Heidegger’s view, Husserl’s “layer ontology” overlooks the real being of the object, so that it becomes merely something with properties or values: “When we speak of material Thinghood, have we not tacitly posited a kind of Being – the constant presence-at-hand of things – which is so far from having been rounded out ontologically by subsequently endowing entities with value-predicates, that these value-characters themselves are rather just ontical characteristics of those entities which have the kind of Being possessed by things?” (*BT*, 132/99). Heidegger’s argument is that Husserl disregards the ontological dimension in merely adding together two ontical elements: the materiality of things and their usefulness.

Husserl contests this critique in an unpublished manuscript of 1931, where he writes:

Special motives are required in order to make the theoretical attitude possible, and, against Heidegger, it does appear to me, that an original motive lies, for science as for art, in the necessity of the game (*Spiel*) and especially in the motivation for a playful “intellectual curiosity”, one that is not springing from any necessity of life, or from calling, or from the context of the goal of self-preservation, a curiosity which looks at things, and wants to know things, with which it has nothing to do. And no “deficient” praxis is at stake here.⁹

In discussing our involvement with objects, Husserl claims that things can be variously apprehended “as a means of nutrition, or as use objects of various sorts: heating materials, choppers, hammers, etc. For instance, I see coal as heating material; I recognize it as useful and as used for heating... it is ‘burnable’.”¹⁰ Husserl understands these things of use as satisfying needs such as hunger and warmth, and he contrasts them with objects that are just lying about. Similarly, he refers to the use of a tool in terms of a specific goal: “I understand the signification unity that the word ‘hammer’ expresses by

relating it back to that which posits the end, to the subject creating at any time useful means for purposeful productions of a definite type.”¹¹ Paul MacDonald explains that for Husserl, the way we grasp objects of use “is not an operation of explicit awareness, no judgment is formed by means of which one could *infer* or derive value; it is thus a *pre-predicative* awareness.”¹² According to Dermot Moran, the theoretical in Husserl is merely “one possible outcome of our lived engaged dealings with things, to be valued in itself” (61). He continues that the attitude of “absorbed engagement” for Husserl “already harbours an inbuilt possibility of a radical shift of perspective, a shift in perspective towards the purely contemplative or theoretical,” and that we are able to move freely from one perspective to another. (Later I will claim that the two ways in which we are involved with entities are merely aspects of our general ways of existing in the world, as argued by Husserl.) The difference between the positions of Heidegger and Husserl is revealed in the way they interpret the being of implements used for cutting. In Heidegger’s view, we would not be able to recognise a knife as a thing to cut with unless we had an *a priori* understanding of “a tool for cutting.”¹³ Husserl, on the other hand, uses a pair of scissors to illustrate his claim that initially a child conceives the world as being constituted by individual things, and only later is able to comprehend their given meaning.¹⁴ Peter Steeves comments that because the child “does not understand the useful, public, final sense of scissors,” she takes the item to be an object, and then as a result of growing awareness, “judges that object to be a pair of scissors.”¹⁵

Heidegger examines the possibility that an initial encounter may involve the present-at-hand: “If we never perceive equipment that is ready-to-hand without already understanding and interpreting it,...does this not mean that in the first instance we have experienced something purely present-at-hand, and then taken it *as* a door, *as* a house?”

(*BT*, 190/150). The answer he gives is that interpretation is not the placing of a signification on a present-at-hand entity, and that the things we encounter are already part of the world of our practical involvements. Taking the example of opening a door, Mark Wrathall writes that understanding the door does not involve focusing on it as an object, since attention is directed to the room on the other side.¹⁶ Against this argument, the lack of conscious awareness as to how a door functions at the time we happen to open it cannot, of itself, establish the ontological priority of the act of door-opening over our basic understanding of the door's structure.

As is the case in respect of the child, awareness of properties may precede use in the experience of the mature Dasein. Simon Blackburn contends that it is “only because an artisan sees a hammer as an enduring object with a location and a shape that he sees it as useful for driving nails.”¹⁷ In Gilbert Ryle's view, even if our initial interest is in the way something is used, we are already aware of the object as something with properties: “It is perhaps a fact of human nature that I begin by being interested in things for what I can or can't do with them and only later do I want to know as a scientist what they are. But the former attitude involves equally with the latter the knowledge of things as having attributes and relations.”¹⁸ In a similar manner, Harrison Hall asserts that Heidegger gives priority to the ready-to-hand in terms of intelligibility, and then takes this to be “equivalent to priority in the logical, ontological and epistemological senses.”¹⁹ Hall's alternative position is that the familiarity and skills involved with the ready-to-hand and present-at-hand are just particular cases of our general ways of coping.

7.3 *Defining the being of entities*

Having described readiness-to-hand as the way objects are given primordially, Heidegger raises the possibility that presence-at-hand may have an ontological priority:

To lay bare what is just present-at-hand and no more, cognition must first penetrate *beyond* what is ready-to-hand in our concern. *Readiness-to-hand is the way in which entities as they are “in themselves” are defined ontologico-categorially.* Yet only by reason of something present-at-hand, “is there” anything ready-to-hand. Does it follow, however, granting this thesis for the nonce, that readiness-to-hand is ontologically founded upon presence-at-hand? (*BT*, 101/71)

This question remains unanswered, but since “knowing,” which is linked to the present-at-hand, is “a mode of Dasein founded upon Being-in-the-world” (90/63), an explanation is required for the way in which cognition could be exercised in the manner described above. Heidegger also claims that in our absorption in work, the relevant entities are “discoverable in varying degrees of explicitness” (101/71), which would suggest a changing balance between readiness-to-hand and presence-at-hand, rather than indicating an opposition between the two. The idea of a continuum is also implied in the description of tool use: “The less we just stare at the hammer-thing, and the more we seize hold of it and use it, the more primordial does our relationship to it become” (98/69). In a later passage, the two forms of the way we engage with entities are presented as mutually dependent: “ ‘Practical’ dealings have their *own* ways of tarrying. And just as *praxis* has its own specific kind of sight (‘theory’), theoretical research is not without a *praxis* of its own” (409/358). Heidegger then conveys an expression of uncertainty: “It is by no means patent where the ontological boundary between ‘theoretical’ and ‘atheoretical’ behaviour really runs!” In these various texts, there seems to be a tacit awareness that the question of use is not some discrete state of affairs that can ground a completely different way of

engaging with entities, but that the way something is used is interwoven with an understanding of the entity as an object with properties. An additional complication between the two forms of being is the claim that when a piece of equipment is damaged or found to be unusable, its readiness-to-hand is discovered as “a certain un-readiness-to-hand.” Heidegger adds, however, that the object concerned “has constantly been present-at-hand.” He continues:

Pure presence-at-hand announces itself in such equipment, but only to withdraw to the readiness-to-hand of something with which one concerns oneself – that is to say, of the sort of thing we find when we put it back into repair. This presence-at-hand of something that cannot be used is still not devoid of all readiness-to-hand; equipment which is present-at-hand *in this way* is still not just a thing which occurs somewhere...The ready-to-hand shows itself as still ready-to-hand in its unswerving presence-at-hand. (104/74)

The intermingling of readiness-to-hand with presence-at-hand results in a breakdown of the distinction between the two forms of truth to which they relate – the ontological and the ontic respectively. If both forms of the being of entities are in a relation of complementarity, there are insufficient grounds for Heidegger to posit the *a priority* of Dasein’s being-in-the-world by including readiness-to-hand and excluding presence-at-hand.

In his work, *Heidegger’s Topology*, Jeff Malpas proposes that *Being and Time* is based on “a hierarchical structure of dependence leading back to an originary unity – that of originary time.”²⁰ The nature of this dependence is explained in terms of conditions of meaning or intelligibility. Being-in-the-world is dependent on care, which in turn is dependent on Dasein as temporal. Despite a lack of clarity in Heidegger’s thought concerning the relation between the ready-to-hand and the present-at-hand, it is only readiness-to-hand that is integral to his definition of the being of Dasein at every

level of the above structure. With respect to being-in-the-world, the use of equipment is part of a chain of involvements described as a sequence of the “in-order-to,” where one action is performed for the sake of another. Within care, the in-order-tos are linked to Dasein’s being, defined as the “for-the-sake-of-which” (*BT*, 117/84). Dasein uses things to perform tasks because it projects itself in terms of a particular ability-to-be. The temporal aspect of readiness-to-hand is indicated in the definition of equipment use as a process of “retaining,” where Dasein relies upon the tools to function (404/353). Understanding the purpose of the equipment is the “expecting” of that which is involved. Retaining and expecting form the basis of “making present” (401/350). Dasein’s temporality is defined as “*ahead-of-itself-in-already-being-in-a-world*” (236/192), the in-order-to of the ready-to-hand being an aspect of this futural orientation.

Heidegger’s inclusion of readiness-to-hand in the *a priori* being of Dasein requires the existence of a clear distinction between readiness-to-hand and presence-at-hand. The fact that theoretical interest may occur prior to, or be interwoven with, practical engagement, problematises his claim that readiness-to-hand is primordial and presence-at-hand is derivative. In the following section, the question of readiness-to-hand is discussed as a focal point in Heidegger’s interpretation of “world.”

7.4 *A priority and world*

The being of Dasein, being-in-the-world, is defined as a non-thematic absorption in contexts of involvement of the ready-to-hand, where “world” is interpreted as “something ‘wherein’ Dasein as an entity already *was*” (*BT*, 106/76). Dasein and the world are in a relation of mutual dependence: “So far as the Dasein exists, a world is cast-forth with the Dasein’s being. To exist means...to cast-forth a world.”²¹ Although

the latter sentence could suggest that the world is cast forth *in and through* Dasein's encounter with entities, the meaning given by Heidegger is that the world is "thrown beforehand" – that it is "an *a priori* of the Dasein."²² Thomas Sheehan explains that the phrase used by Heidegger, "having already let something be involved," denotes the *a priori* perfect tense. In Sheehan's view, "the 'already' is not that which has been and still is, but that which at any given moment is always prior to and beyond our determination, always already operative and determining us."²³ I will argue that in reformulating the *a priori* as the *a priori* perfect tense, Heidegger is unable to maintain the distinction he needs for the purposes of establishing his claim that the ontic presupposes the ontological.

A central aim of Heidegger's work is to overcome the subject/object dichotomy of metaphysics. He proposes an existing connection between Dasein and the world that goes beyond all previous explanations, which, in his view, have been concerned merely with the ontic. The way in which Dasein discovers entities is "by the prior projection of their state of Being" and for Heidegger, projection "*discloses something that is a priori*" (BT, 414/362). This statement indicates that Dasein already has an awareness of the being of entities that is not subject to revision through experience. Because he rejects any form of transcendental idealism in which the qualities of the world are regarded merely as a projection of the subject, Heidegger attempts to explain this prior awareness by using a concept of "world" that is interpreted on the basis of Dasein's everyday involvements with the ready-to-hand.

At the outset of the inquiry, the world is removed from the domain of the objective. It is described as being "like the *Dasein*, the being-da [das Da-sein] which we ourselves are...The world is not extant but rather it exists, it has the Dasein's mode of

being” (*BPP*, 166). Furthermore, it is “a characteristic of Dasein itself” (*BT*, 92/64). In listing the various ways he uses the concept of “world,” Heidegger explains that ontologically, the term does not refer to the being of non-Dasein entities. He then states that “world” functions as an ontological term indicating the being of present-at-hand entities (93/64). As an example, Heidegger refers to the world of a mathematician, signifying “the realm of possible objects of mathematics.” A further meaning of world is “ontical” and “pre-ontological existentiell,” and includes both the public “we-world” and an individual’s domestic environment. For Heidegger, the difference between the world of the mathematician on the one hand, and the public or private worlds on the other, is that the former is ontological, whereas the latter is defined as ontic, “world” in this context being “that ‘wherein’ a factual Dasein as such can be said to ‘live’ ” (93/65). (In Heidegger’s theory, the factic refers to the individual Dasein in its thrownness). The final sense of “world” is “the ontologico-existential concept of *worldhood*,” which is later defined as assignments and referential totalities of the ready-to-hand (107/76).

Worldhood is also described as an ontological concept that “stands for the structure of one of the constitutive items of Being-in-the-world” (92/64), and it is therefore defined as an existentiale. Included in worldhood are “whatever structural wholes any special ‘worlds’ may have at the time,” examples of which are the specific worlds of Dasein listed above. A further description of worldhood is “the Being of that ontical condition which makes it possible for entities within-the-world to be discovered at all” (107/76); worldhood is the basis on which these entities are “discovered as they are ‘substantially’ ‘in themselves’” (122/88). Between the earlier and later passages in the text is an exposition of the in-order-to and equipmental contexture, but the ontic and ontological descriptions of both world and worldhood are interwoven to such an extent that no clear

explanation emerges as to how the ontological in either case can be the *a priori* ground of the ontic.

Heidegger claims that Dasein's understanding of being "pertains with equal primordially" to an understanding of world and of the being of entities (33/13). In attempting to find a method of connecting the ready-to-hand to the being of Dasein, he describes the ready-to-hand as ontological on the grounds that "world," which comprises the contexts of involvement of the ready-to-hand, is an existentials linked to worldhood. However, readiness-to-hand, together with presence-at-hand, is defined as a category pertaining to entities "whose Being is not of the kind which Dasein possesses" (121/88). The obvious differences between Dasein and entities are that Dasein does not belong to a context of involvements, and entities do not question themselves about their being. Yet when ready-to-hand entities are considered as elements within a given context, they come under the definition of worldhood and are categorised as ontological. As a structure of Dasein's being, worldhood is associated with the "in-order-to" and the "for-the-sake-of," but Heidegger states that when its "real phenomenal content" is lost, worldhood is understood in a merely formal way as a system of relations providing access to the present-at-hand (122/88). There is an absence of any convincing argument to explain how readiness-to-hand can be an essential element in the ontological definition of Dasein, and at the same time, a category applicable to things or non-Dasein entities (70/44).

As indicated above, Heidegger claims that the world is already "cast forth" with Dasein's being (*BPP*, 168). By this means, he attempts to link Dasein to his interpretation of the world as ontological. However, as Cristina Lafont points out, the

fact that Heidegger's analysis "begins with a *factual* Dasein dependent upon a world, undermines the assertion of a *founding relationship* between ontological structures and their ontic embodiments."²⁴ According to Lafont, world-disclosure is factually given and therefore ontic, yet it is defined as "always already ontological" (18). She describes Heidegger's use of the *a priori* as "a detranscendentalization of the conditions of possibility of experience" (xiv, n6), and claims that his attempt to develop Kant's transcendental/empirical distinction by substituting the *a priori* perfect tense for Kant's *a priori* is an invalid form of reasoning by virtue of the fact that the being of the Dasein is historically contingent. On the one hand, Heidegger states that Dasein "harbors right within itself the possibility of transcendental constitution...the existence-structure of Dasein makes possible the transcendental constitution of everything positive."²⁵ This statement indicates that the understanding of the world is based on the being of Dasein. However, Heidegger also claims that Dasein has "always submitted itself" to the world, and that this submission "belongs essentially to its being" (*BT*, 121/87). In this context, Ethan Kleinberg analyses "the difficult dynamic between the individual *Dasein* and the world that gives it its possibilities." He proposes that the two themes in *Being and Time* become "muddled," since Heidegger moves freely between them without giving an adequate explanation of their differences.²⁶

The being of Dasein is defined as absorption in contexts of involvement of the ready-to-hand (*BT*, 107/76), where there is an assignment or reference of one thing to another. For example, a pen is part of an arrangement of other equipment such as ink and paper, and it derives its being from this context. Heidegger claims that there is "no such thing as *an* equipment" (*BT*, 97/68), but only an equipmental contexture: "Each single

piece of equipment carries this contexture along with it, and it is this equipment *only* with regard to that contexture” (*BPP*, 292; italics added). What is primarily given is “the unity of an *equipmental whole*” (163), the context being given prior to the individual item: “The totality of involvements which is constitutive for the ready-to-hand in its readiness-to-hand, is ‘earlier’ than an single item of equipment” (*BT*, 116/84). According to Heidegger, we never think of a single thing such as a wall, but rather the context of “wall, room, surroundings” (*BPP*, 162).

David Kelley contests theories such as the above, claiming that they presuppose the kind of background awareness held by the *adult* perceiver.²⁷ This objection is relevant to Heidegger’s discussion of walls. Although they form part of a background for the mature person, our initial experience of a wall could be to see it as a large object on which we could make marks. As indicated in section 1, research shows that one of the earliest things infants learn is how to divide the continuous visual image in front of them into separate things (*HBT*, 65). Through growing awareness of perspective and the concept of containment, a child would come to understand the wall’s actual function, and thereby to situate it within a context of involvements. Although walls as stable structures can be understood in this way, an object such as a toy would not form part of any given context, since it is understood as an individual item of play that can be located anywhere in the house or thrown randomly into a basket. In any case, toys are ends in themselves and are not designed for the purpose of accomplishing tasks. (Husserl’s reference to playful curiosity cited above, indicates that such objects would fall outside the definitions of readiness-to-hand and presence-at-hand.)

An apt illustration of Heidegger’s theory that “the equipment-context of a

world” has already been given to Dasein, is provided by Charles Guignon: “If all our practices take place within a horizon of vague and inexplicit understanding, then even the possibility of something obtruding as *unintelligible* is determined in advance by this understanding. The mysterious article I find while digging in my garden, for instance, can be puzzling to me only because I already have a prior grasp of what should and should not be there.”²⁸ An alternative explanation of the unknown object is that instead of the “vague and inexplicit understanding” described above, the owner of the garden would have factual knowledge of what had previously been placed there, together with an acquired knowledge of the kinds of things that can normally be found in such a setting. The “equipment-context” consists of things we can assume to be present, either as a result of our own actions, or through the way we learn about the world. Since this kind of awareness is a product of accumulated experience, examples such as the above indicate the extent to which Heidegger has moved away from the Kantian *a priori*.

The totality of involvements goes back ultimately to a “towards-which” – the being of Dasein defined as the authentic “for-the-sake-of-which” (116/84). In understanding the context of the relations of entities, Dasein assigns itself to an “in-order-to” in terms of its own potentiality for being. Hubert Dreyfus explains that “*Dasein discloses the being of entities in order to disclose itself.*”²⁹ He defines equipment in terms of “what it is normally used for by a normal user in a culture where such objects have an established function” (1991, 64). An example of this theory is that if in my professional activity I use a chainsaw in the appropriate manner in order to fell a tree, I am disclosing or projecting myself as an arborist. Dreyfus regards the “background of everyday practices into which we are socialized” as forming the basis of Heidegger’s ontology (3). Similarly, John Haugeland claims that “projecting entities onto their

possibilities is the same as projecting them onto their being.”³⁰ In discussing the difference between ontic and ontological possibilities, he writes: “Ontical know-how masters entities as they are or are not *in fact*. Ontological know-how masters entities as they *could* or *could-not* be.” For example, he continues, even though it would be physically possible to stir paint with a hammer, such an action is “ruled out for this equipment as the equipment that it is” (54). From an ontic perspective, any object can be used in novel or unpredictable ways, but in the above illustration, the ontological categorisation of the hammer as “equipment” would involve the implausible claim that it “carries along with it” the pre-given equipment context of paint-preparation.³¹ Together with Dreyfus, Haugeland argues that the ontological is defined on the basis of shared mores of behaviour. Such an interpretation is confirmed in Heidegger’s statement that “in its factual being-in-the-world the Dasein is well practiced in a specific way,” and that “in the use of equipment, the Dasein is also always already well practiced in being-with others” (*BPP*, 292). (“Being-with” is one of the elements of Dasein’s being)(*BT*, 160/123). In the above passage, the being of Dasein is associated with its acquisition of skills through its involvement with others, providing support for the view that such involvement relates to the background of practices into which it is socialised. However the *a priority* of Dasein’s being is undermined by the fact that this ontological state ultimately involves a learning process and a dependence on other people.

7.5 *The natural world*

Just as the ontology of Dasein does not take account of the embodied human as part of the natural world, Heidegger’s theory that entities are both given primordially as

ready-to-hand, and situated in a pre-given context of involvements arising from commonly-accepted practices, fails to address the being of natural entities. He writes: “The ‘Nature’ by which we are ‘surrounded’ is, of course, an entity within-the-world; but the kind of Being which it shows belongs neither to the ready-to-hand nor to what is present-at-hand as ‘Things of Nature’. No matter how this Being of ‘Nature’ may be interpreted, *all* the modes of Being of entities within-the-world are founded ontologically...upon the phenomenon of Being-in-the-world” (254/211). Although Heidegger is unable to attribute a being to nature itself, his theory that entities are given in the first instance as ready-to-hand, enables him to claim in the above passage that the being of all entities is founded on the being of Dasein. A problem with this view is that natural entities, for example, icebergs or whales, could never be understood in their original state as ready-to-hand equipment that derives its being from a pre-given context of involvements.

A further difficulty with Heidegger’s theory is that contexts of involvement are said both to be pre-given and to concern only the ready-to-hand. However, naturally-occurring entities that are not ready-to-hand can also be used in a manner that would be indistinguishable from the way “equipment” is used. Eccy de Jonge provides an example of the confusion surrounding the being of things that would fall outside Heidegger’s understanding of the ready-to-hand as the primordial way in which things are encountered:

Supposing a man finds a piece of metal on a factory floor. He takes it home in case he finds some use for it. Subsequently he has to hammer a nail, but finds his hammer is broken and sends it to the repairer. He then uses the piece of metal as a hammer. Although it is more difficult than the hammer to hold, because of its greater weight, it is more effective in hammering nails into hardwood. The man is uncertain whether in future he will use

the repaired hammer or the piece of metal for hammering. In the meantime he uses the piece of metal to prop up some trade manuals on a shelf in the garage. What is the Being of the piece of metal? According to Heidegger, its Being would be uncertain. Is it a hammer? Is it a bookend? If it were thrown out into the rubbish, and thus became neither ready-to-hand nor present-at-hand, would it have any Being at all?³²

Using a similar argument, Herman Philipse points out that although a natural entity such as a stone can be regarded as ready-to-hand if we happen to use it, it is independent of Dasein in its original state:

Heidegger's notions of occurrentness (*Vorhandenheit*), readiness-to-hand (*Zuhandenheit*), and independence are too ill-defined for constructing a satisfactory philosophical view. For example, Heidegger does not distinguish between things accidentally used as tools (one picks up a stone in order to throw it at a dog) and tools as artifacts (a hammer). The stone is both dependent on Dasein and independent from Dasein. On the one hand, it is dependent because it becomes a tool when it is picked up and loses its status as a tool again when it is thrown away. On the other hand, it is independent because humans did not produce it and because it may continue to be after all humans have perished.³³

Heidegger's difficulty in defining the being of natural entities is indicated in an earlier work, where he admits not only that nature is mysterious, but that it may even have some kind of primacy: "*Nature is what is in principle explainable and to be explained because it is in principle incomprehensible*" (*HCT*, 217); "Precisely when we are led from an analysis of the work world, in following its references to the world of nature, finally to recognize and to define the world of nature as the fundamental stratum of the real, we see that it is not the authentic being in every concern that is placed under care which is the primary worldly presence, but rather the reality of nature. This conclusion, it seems, cannot be avoided" (199). The existence of a range of naturally occurring objects in the world that can be used, but that cannot be given an original classification of readiness-to-

hand, or placed within a pre-given context, creates further problems for Heidegger's attempt to categorise the world of Dasein's involvements as *a priori*.

7.6 *The ontological and Kant*

The "difficult dynamic" discussed above between the individual Dasein and the world understood as an element of its being, is evidenced in the merging of the ontological and the ontic in respect of Dasein's existence. Heidegger posits an ontological form of the *a priori* as the condition under which things are open to human understanding.³⁴ From a Kantian perspective, the *a priori* has a universal applicability, whereas Heidegger situates Dasein's being in its ongoing experience of the world. The "particular" Dasein must determine whether it will take hold of existence or neglect it, this issue being one of its ontic "affairs" (33/13). Dasein also has to choose between the authentic approach of being-towards-death, or an inauthentic focus on demise. These various attitudes, however, are not determined once and for all, since they are affected by the situations in which we find ourselves at any given time. With regard to projection, the individual Dasein adopts certain ontic possibilities arising from its having been thrown into the world. These possibilities can then become ontological because of the fact that Dasein's being is projection (360/312). Heidegger thereby posits the ontic as a prerequisite for the ontological, which means that the ontological no longer reflects the understanding of *a priority* proposed by Kant.

The absence of a clear differentiation between the ontic and the ontological also occurs in Heidegger's analysis of significance, understanding, thrownness, and world disclosure. As the "totality of relations of the in-order-to" (*BPP*, 262), significance is an aspect of "world," defined as "that wherein Dasein as such already is" (120/87). With

respect to the being of Dasein, the existentials, “understanding,” involves the disclosedness of the “for-the-sake-of-which” (182/143). Understanding is then linked to significance as “that on the basis of which the world is disclosed as such,” but Heidegger also associates significance with the ontic: “*Dasein, in its familiarity with significance, is the ontical condition for the possibility of discovering entities which are encountered in a world with involvement (readiness to hand) as their kind of Being, and which can thus make themselves known as they are in themselves*” (120/87). World disclosure arises from Dasein’s having been thrown into the world; the being of Dasein is described as “*thrown possibility through and through*” (183/144). However, thrownness is also understood in an ontic sense since it concerns the individual: “To Dasein’s state of Being belongs *thrownness*; indeed it is constitutive for Dasein’s disclosedness. In thrownness is revealed that in each case Dasein, as my Dasein and this Dasein, is already in a definite world and alongside a definite range of entities within-the-world. Disclosedness is essentially factual” (264/221). Since thrownness is associated with significance and world disclosure interpreted as ontic, Heidegger can no longer claim that significance and world disclosure are ontological and therefore *a priori*. As was discussed in the case of projection and ontic possibilities, the ontological cannot be dependent on an already existing ontic state. Such a critique is supported by Lafont’s view that world disclosure cannot be factually given and therefore ontic on the one hand, and “always already ontological” on the other (18).

7.7 *Distinguishing the ontological*

The problems outlined above are associated with the differing ways in which the ontological difference is presented. On the one hand, it is defined as the difference

between the way we understand the being of entities, and our understanding of entities as objects with properties (*BPP*, 17). Heidegger then formulates the ontological difference at another level, where he distinguishes between the being of Dasein and the being of non-Dasein entities (*BT*, 121/88). By defining Dasein as both ontological and ontic, Heidegger collapses the fundamental separation he initially makes between the prior disclosure of meaning and the empirical experience of the world.

Commentators who are in agreement with the challenges to Heidegger's thought already discussed, analyse the problems of his theory in terms of the way he defines the ontological and the ontic, the absence of empirical content in his descriptions of Dasein, and a lack of clarity regarding the questions of "world" and the transcendental. Robert Bernasconi proposes that Dasein's ontic situatedness means it is unable to grasp ontological structures, and that Heidegger cannot sustain the purity of the distinction he outlines between the ontic and the ontological.³⁵ Such a view is endorsed in David Wood's argument that, although it may be necessary for Heidegger to shift from a discourse about beings to one about being, what cannot be ignored are the "back-door entanglements" between the ontological and the ontic, and between the transcendental and the empirical.³⁶ The attempt to demarcate the ontological is challenged by Caputo in the form of a series of questions: "Would not anything we say about Being inevitably be entitative, ontic, based upon a transference from some order of beings? How could it avoid bearing the traces of some ontico-historical setting? Is Being not always 'contaminated' by something ontic, something entitative? How would it ever be possible to get so far removed from beings as to attain Being in its uncontaminated purity?"³⁷

In his critical assessment of Heidegger's ontology, Theodor Adorno proposes that the traditional concept of subjectivity is replaced with Dasein as "existence" so as to distinguish Dasein from all other kinds of beings,³⁸ and that the nature of the ontological is thereby altered by the transformation of being into a "quality" (118). Adorno asserts that Heidegger ontologises the ontic, so that the human, the "existent," becomes merely a mode of being. With regard to the ontological difference, Adorno claims that the "primacy of difference" is shifted to being itself (94, n72), the existent being reduced to an ontological factual state. He argues that because Heidegger refuses to define selfhood in relation to anything external to it, "the living subject is robbed of all definition, in the same way as it loses its attributes in reality" (122). The absence of empirical content in respect of the subject arises from Heidegger's elimination of concrete phenomena in favour of an abstract analysis of *existentialia*, the basic elements of Dasein's being (74).

A summary of the difficulty in Heidegger's position is provided by Ernst Tugendhat, who holds that the ambiguous nature of "world" problematises Heidegger's concept of the transcendental:

In *Being and Time*, the transcendental-philosophical approach was pre-given as the methodological standpoint. But with the problem of world, transcendental philosophy is confronted with a phenomenon that no longer fits within the subject-object schema. The world is neither an entity of which one might say that it is constituted in subjectivity, nor is it a determination of the subject itself...It is precisely the concrete analysis of disclosedness in *Being and Time*, in which this structure is exhibited in its "finitude," that leads to the insight that Dasein can no longer bear the weight of acting as the grounding structure that is still ascribed to it here in the manner of transcendental philosophy.³⁹

Addressing the question of the transcendental in Heidegger from a historical perspective, Sandra Bartky writes: "The notion of 'conditions' in Heidegger's philosophy is

profoundly equivocal, for the conditions which make any historical event possible are not and cannot be made into those historical conditions, i.e. those purely empirical conditions, which produce other historical conditions.”⁴⁰

7.8 *Being and the ontic*

The theory of an ontological dimension within the human is complicated by the fact that even if it were possible to list all the forms of prior awareness a person could have, they could not be assembled under the heading “being,” on the grounds that they are too qualitatively variable, and (as discussed below) for certain people some of them may not be applicable at all. Those attributed to Dasein span different affective states and differing degrees of conscious activity, insight and maturity, none of which can be demonstrated as having an ontological priority, or as being essential to any given individual. For example, the experience of *Angst* is by no means universal,⁴¹ and within a definition of being, involvement with equipment could hardly be grouped together with questions such as authenticity and attunement. The elements said to constitute the ontological, in my view, are philosophically inseparable from the interpretation of the human as a rational, embodied, ontic being.

Heidegger’s attempt to establish the *a priority* of Dasein’s being through the concept of world as pre-given, is problematised by the fact that world cannot be regarded as prior to the historicity of experience. His claim that all entities are given primordially as ready-to-hand within a pre-given context of involvements, fails to take account of the fact that naturally occurring substances fall outside that description. Heidegger’s theory is further compounded by the description of readiness-to-hand as integral to the being of Dasein, and also as a category applicable to non-Dasein entities.

In his reinterpretation of Kant, Heidegger defines the being of Dasein as factic and contingent, which means that a normative status is no longer attributable to the *a priori*. Thrownness or facticity as ontic concerns the individual and the choices it makes, yet thrownness is also an existentially of Dasein. This ambiguity in Heidegger's thinking relates also to his definition of significance and understanding as both ontic and ontological. Overall, the manner in which Heidegger merges the factual and the pregiven, serves to subvert his claim that the ontic can only be understood on the basis of the ontological.

NOTES

¹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, tr. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 100/70 (hereafter cited in text as *BT*).

² Gail Soffer, "Phenomenologizing with a hammer: Theory or practice?" *Continental Philosophy Review* 32 (1999): 389.

³ See Chapter 6, section 3, herein.

⁴ Alison Gopnik, Andrew Meltzoff, and Patricia Kuhl, *How Babies Think: The Science of Childhood* (London: Phoenix, 2001), 63-65 (hereafter cited in text as *HBT*).

⁵ See Chapter 4, section 1 herein.

⁶ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, 1962), 166 (hereafter cited in text as *PP*).

⁷ Edmund Husserl, *Husserliana IV, Ideen zur einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*, ed. Marly Biemel (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1952), 214, cited in Søren Overgaard, *Husserl and Heidegger on Being in the World* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2004), 173.

⁸ Edmund Husserl, "This is against Heidegger," an unpublished note cited in Hubert Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991) 66.

⁹ Edmund Husserl, Archiv B, 1, 32, No. 17 (unpublished), cited in Dermot Moran, "Heidegger's Critique of Husserl's and Brentano's Accounts of Intentionality," *Inquiry* 43 (2000): 62.

¹⁰ Edmund Husserl, *Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, tr. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), 196-197, cited in Moran, 62.

¹¹ Edmund Husserl, "Natural Scientific Psychology, Human Sciences and Metaphysics," in Thomas Nenon and Lester Embree, (eds.) *Issues in Husserl's Ideas II*, (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1996), 10.

¹² Paul MacDonald, "Husserl's Preemptive Responses to Existentialist Critiques," *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology* 1, no. 1 (April, 2001), 3.

¹³ Heidegger, GA 27, 192, cited in Overgaard, 168.

¹⁴ Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, tr. Dorian Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963, 2nd edn.), 111.

¹⁵ H. Peter Steeves, *Founding Community* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998), 71.

¹⁶ Mark Wrathall, "Heidegger on Plato, Truth, and Unconcealment: The 1931–32 Lecture on *The Essence of Truth*," *Inquiry* 47 (2004): 460.

¹⁷ Simon Blackburn, "A review of *Contributions to Philosophy (from Enowning)*," *New Republic* (October, 2000). <http://evans-experientialism.freewebspace.com/blackburn.htm>.

¹⁸ Gilbert Ryle, "Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*," in *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy*, ed. Michael Murray (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 59.

¹⁹ Harrison Hall, "Intentionality and world: Division I of *Being and Time*," *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Charles Guignon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 130.

²⁰ Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007), 144.

²¹ Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, tr. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 168 (hereafter cited in text as *BPP*).

²² *Ibid.*, editor's footnote.

²³ Thomas Sheehan, "Heidegger's New Aspect: On *In-Sein*, *Zeitlichkeit*, and *The Genesis of 'Being and Time'*," *Research in Phenomenology* 25 (1995): 217.

²⁴ Cristina Lafont, *Heidegger, Language, and World-Disclosure* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 18.

²⁵ Theodore Kisiel and Thomas Sheehan (eds.), "Letter to Husserl," in *Becoming Heidegger: On the Trail of His Early Occasional Writings 1910-1927* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 326-327.

²⁶ Ethan Kleinberg, *Generation Existential: Heidegger's Philosophy in France, 1927-1961*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 2005), 12.

²⁷ David Kelley, *The Evidence of the Senses* (London: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 182.

²⁸ Charles Guignon, *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983), 172.

²⁹ Hubert Dreyfus, "Responses," in *Heidegger, Authenticity, and Modernity*, ed. Mark Wrathall and Jeff Malpas (Cambridge: MIT, 2000), 314.

³⁰ John Haugeland, "Truth and Finitude. Heidegger's Transcendental Existentialism," in *Heidegger, Authenticity, and Modernity*, ed. Mark Wrathall and Jeff Malpas (Cambridge: MIT, 2000), 53.

³¹ See discussion above, where Heidegger refers to the way a piece of equipment carries the contexture along with it (*BPP*, 292).

³² Eccy de Jonge, “Heidegger’s Hammer; Spinoza’s Hatchet.” (unpublished essay; personal communication with author, October 2008).

³³ Herman Philipse, “Heidegger’s ‘Scandal of Philosophy’: The Problem of the *Ding an sich* in *Sein und Zeit*,” in *Transcendental Heidegger*, ed. Steven Crowell and Jeff Malpas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 184.

³⁴ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, tr. Richard Taft (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 10.

³⁵ Robert Bernasconi, *Heidegger in Question: The Art of Existing* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1993), 33.

³⁶ David Wood, “Reiterating the Temporal: Toward a Rethinking of Heidegger on Time,” in *Rereading Heidegger: Commemorations*, ed. John Sallis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 139.

³⁷ John Caputo, “Incarnation and Essentialization,” *Philosophy Today* 35, no. 1 (Spring, 1991): 34.

³⁸ Theodor Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity*, tr. K. Tarnowski (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973): 113.

³⁹ Ernst Tugendhat, *Der Wahrheitsbegriff bei Husserl und Heidegger* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1967), 263, cited in Lafont 38, n36.

⁴⁰ Sandra Lee Bartky, “Originative Thinking in the Later Philosophy of Heidegger,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 30, no. 3 (March, 1970), 375.

⁴¹ Søren Overgaard, *Husserl and Heidegger on Being-in-the-World* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2004), 28. The author describes Heidegger’s concept of anxiety as “balanced on a not immediately convincing description of a possibly uncommon phenomenon.”

Chapter Eight

TRUTH AND THE TRANSCENDENTAL

In attempting to formulate an ontological understanding of Dasein, Heidegger bases his thought on a reinterpretation of Kant's conception of the *a priori*. Although Heidegger defines the ontological as that which is always already given, I have argued that the various ways in which he expounds the notion of being are intertwined with what he would regard as ontic considerations. This structural flaw in his theory is also evident in the way he analyses the question of truth in relation to Dasein's understanding of the being of entities.

Heidegger explains that the early Greeks interpreted *aletheia*, the unconcealedness of beings, as a "coming forth and emerging,"¹ and as the original understanding of truth. On the basis of this approach, he proposes that unconcealment or disclosure is the ground of the metaphysical view of truth as "correctness" (*BQP*, 51). In Heidegger's view, Dasein as disclosedness understands the being or the "essence" of the entities it encounters, thereby taking them out of concealment. He describes this form of disclosure as ontological truth,² whereas propositional truth or correctness is defined as ontic. Although Dasein as disclosedness is "in the truth," because of its ontological state of fallenness and thrownness, it is also "in untruth."³ The being of Dasein is an interplay between revealing and concealing, and constitutes the ontological ground of the correctness and falsity associated with ontic claims. However, there is no correlation in Heidegger's theory between untruth and falsity. Ontological truth does not concern the question of correctness, but is the basis on which a proposition can be determined as

being either true or false. In order to support his claim that ontic truth is derivative of ontological truth, Heidegger introduces the concept of “uncoveredness” that functions as a bridge between the two forms of truth. My critique of this position is that uncoveredness is given an ambiguous meaning. In some passages the term is equated with both disclosedness and ontic truth, while elsewhere it is equated with either one form of truth or the other. Heidegger therefore lacks a basis for his claim that ontological truth is the ground of truth as correctness.

To illustrate his theory of truth, Heidegger uses an analysis of science, where he proposes that the data, or the scientific entities, are interpreted “with regard to their basic state of Being” (*BT*, 30/10). He argues that this form of interpretation is given *a priori*, and determines the nature of the “facts” that will constitute the subject matter of the inquiry.⁴ Heidegger’s view is that the historical developments in science are not the result of observations or experiments, but are a consequence of differing projections of being, since it is only ontic truth that can be revised through empirical experience. Furthermore, he claims that since projections arise within a given era, for example, that of Galileo or Newton, a particular projection will be valid for all scientists who belong to the era in question. I argue that the assumptions on which scientific inquiry is based are not necessarily pregiven, but can arise as a result of anomalous findings in experimental outputs. The presence of conflicting views among contemporary scientists indicates that their understanding of the being of the entities they investigate does not constitute an *a priori* awareness, but arises from a theoretical appraisal of the relative merits of particular approaches. Heidegger’s problems with *a priori* in respect of science, in my view, arise from his inability to demonstrate that ontic or propositional truth originates

from ontological truth, understood on the basis of Dasein as a world-disclosing being.

In the 1930s, Heidegger recognises that his attempt to understand being itself through analysing the being of Dasein is unsuccessful. He then seeks an ontical or “metaphysical” foundation for the ontology of Dasein that he had outlined in *Being and Time*. This new understanding, described as a “metaphysics of metaphysics,”⁵ is to constitute a more radical form of ontology. Having moved beyond the transcendental approach in his earlier work, Heidegger subsequently abandons his next attempt as well. He concludes that the interpretation of being does not involve any form of ground, and that being is therefore prior to and beyond the domain of metaphysical inquiry.

8.1 *Unconcealedness and correctness*

In his critique of the traditional conception of truth, Heidegger examines the definition of the human as an animal endowed with reason. He points out that “reason” in metaphysics means the immediate perception of beings, so that the human becomes the being that perceives beings (*BQP*, 20). The origin of this understanding, in Heidegger’s view, lies in the definition of “essence” at the time of Plato and Aristotle, where it included four elements:

“what something is in general, what applies over the entire extent of the particular instances”; “that from which anything, in what it is as such, has its origin, whence it stems. An individual house is of the genus: house in general”; “what something already was, before it became what it is as an individual. An individual house is not first a house as an individual thing, but what it is as this individual thing, namely ‘house,’ was already”; “what lies over or before the individual, or what lies under it as its ground.” (57-58)

Heidegger explains that although Plato regarded the ideas as existing “untouched by all change and perishing...in a place above the heavens,” he and Aristotle, together with the

other Greek thinkers, interpreted the notion of essence not as something “manufactured” or as a present-at-hand thing, but as that which is brought forth in a “productive seeing...out of invisibility into the visible, out of what is unthought into what is henceforth to be thought” (77). However, Heidegger claims this understanding became distorted when the “idea” was understood as a representation. The essence was then interpreted as the view offered by the thing – its mere “whatness” or “dominant look” (61). With regard to Aristotle’s conception of “the essence as such,” Heidegger states that Aristotle provides no foundation for his view that the essence of truth resides in the correctness of an assertion, and that this correctness is “the ‘idea’ of truth” (64). According to Heidegger, truth thereby becomes the correspondence of knowledge with an object, where “knowledge” includes representation, thought, judgment or assertion. His basic objection to the notion of correspondence is that it assumes a common ground between internal mental representations and the external objects to which they refer: “With regard to what do *intellectus* and *res* agree? In their kind of Being and their essential content do they give us anything at all with regard to which they can agree?...It is impossible for *intellectus* and *res* to be equal because they are not of the same species” (BT, 259/216).

In an analysis of Heidegger’s theory of truth, the question to be determined is whether primordial truth or “world-disclosure” can be the ground of ontic truth – the correctness of propositions, since the original meaning of Dasein’s being as disclosedness (also defined as openness) does not concern the question of truth in opposition to falsity. Heidegger proposes that some kind of relation already exists between the ontic and ontological forms of truth: “The return to this openness leads to the original essence of truth only if it can be shown in advance with good foundation that

correctness already in some way contains, even if not originally, the essence of truth” (*BQP*, 82). He further claims that Dasein as disclosedness “is the *most primordial* phenomenon of truth” (*BT*, 263/221). Because of Dasein’s transcendence, the world itself is an integral part of Dasein’s preconceptual understanding: “Dasein is *absorbed* by beings in such a way that, in its belonging to beings, it is *thoroughly attuned* by them. *Transcendence means projection of world in such a way that those beings that are surpassed also already pervade and attune that which projects.*”⁶ Heidegger argues that because we are always already involved in the world, the way in which we perceive an object is not dependent merely on the thing itself, nor does the process belong to “the subject’s immanent sphere.”⁷ In Mark Wrathall’s interpretation, Heidegger outlines a position in which understanding “takes its measure from things,” but in which we cannot distinguish our contribution to meaning from that attributable to the world.⁸ This aspect of Heidegger’s theory is consistent with his attempts to link both unconcealment and truth as correctness to the way the world is: “A proposition is true by conforming to the unconcealed, to what is true. Propositional truth is always, and always exclusively, this correctness.”⁹

8.2 *Disclosedness, essence, and being*

In Heidegger’s view, there is no possibility of a correspondence or agreement between an idea and an object; as something pertaining to the “soul,” representation is not of the same “type” as an object such as a stone (*BQP*, 15). What has to be determined is the prior relation existing between the two, which is described in terms of an openness or accessibility: “If our representations and assertions – e.g., the statement, ‘The stone is hard’ – are supposed to conform to the object, then this being, the stone itself, must be

accessible in advance in order to present itself as a standard and measure for the conformity with it. In short, the being, in this case the thing, must be out in the open” (18). A statement or assertion is based on the understanding of being that “guides and illuminates in advance” Dasein’s comportment towards things (*EG*, 104). An example given of how the knowledge of being or essence precedes all other forms of “cognizing, confirming, and founding” is that of walking around a house. We would not know what a house is, Heidegger argues, if we did not already have an understanding of “house-ness.” He writes: “That which sustains and guides all particular cognitions and comportment, namely the knowledge of the essence, must, in accord with its sustaining and guiding function, be founded all the more. Its founding, in conformity with its rank, will claim the highest possible mode of foundation” (*BQP*, 66). We imagine that what is closest to us are the immediately given facts, but what is closer still is the “essence” of things – something which “we know and yet do not know.” The understanding of essence is described as “uncommon,” “strange,” and “enigmatic.” Rather than something which can be explained, essence has to be “awakened” in the human:

We are acquainted with the “essence” of the things surrounding us: house, tree, bird, road, vehicle, man, etc., and yet we have no knowledge of the essence. For we immediately land in the uncertain, shifting, controversial, and groundless, when we attempt to determine more closely, and above all try to ground in its determinateness, what is certainly though still indeterminately “known”: namely, house-ness, tree-ness, bird-ness, humanness. (*BQP*, 73)

Even our basic ability to perceive depends on this primordial understanding: “However sharp and highly developed our tools for seeing, however excellent our sense of sight, we can never see a book through our sense of sight. We would never see anything like a

book were we not able to see in another more primordial sense. To this latter kind of ‘seeing’ there belongs an understanding of what it is that one encounters.”¹⁰

For Heidegger, the disclosing of a being, or the uncovering of an essence, does not guarantee truth as correctness, as illustrated in the following example: During World War I, the German commander of a division selected for an attack on an enemy fort, received a message that he incorrectly interpreted as indicating that the fort was already occupied by his own army. When the officers of the division subsequently reached the fort, they interpreted what they saw in accordance with the commander’s understanding of the message (*BQP*, 60). Instead of recognising that the French Army was in control, the officers believed they were seeing German black-white-red banners waving over the fort, and German soldiers walking on the ramparts. Heidegger refers to this account in explaining that the pre-given essence does not necessarily result in correctness of perception, but that it is nevertheless the essence that determines what we see:

“According to the way and to the extent that we regard the essence, we are also capable of experiencing and determining what is unique in the things. What is viewed in advance and how it is in view are decisive for what we factually see in the individual thing” (59).

8.3 *Uncoveredness and world-disclosure*

Heidegger claims that “truth, understood as agreement, originates from disclosedness by way of definite modification” (*BT*, 266/223). To provide a link between disclosedness as ontological, and perception or assertion as ontic, he introduces the concept of “uncoveredness.” However, in the following passage, he merely associates this concept both with perception and with disclosedness or the projection of being: “Not only does its uncoveredness – that it is uncovered – belong to the entity which is

perceived in perception, but also the being-understood, that is, the disclosedness of that uncovered entity's mode of being" (*BPP*, 72). On the other hand, Heidegger explains that uncoveredness cannot simply be equated with disclosedness:

We therefore distinguish not only terminologically but also for reasons of intrinsic content between the *uncoveredness of a being* and the *disclosedness of its being*. A being can be uncovered, whether by way of perception or some other mode of access, only if the being of this entity is already disclosed – only if I already understand it. Only then can I ask whether it is actual or not and embark on some procedure to establish the actuality of the being.
(72)

Although there is a distinction between uncoveredness and disclosedness, Heidegger states that we can comprehend "the possible unity of the two." A complication in his theory is that in some passages, uncoveredness is used only in relation to the ontic, ontological truth being the condition for the truth or falsity of assertions that may "uncover or cover things up." Assertion in this context is "the basic form of those utterances that can be either true or false" (*BQP*, 9). The ground of assertion is the *logos*, which Heidegger interprets as the disclosure of being: "The statement can only be true at all, can only uncover, insofar as it can also cover over, i.e. because *qua* statement it moves about *a priori* in the 'as'...The possibility of being true or false, which characterizes asserting, must in its possibility be built upon one and the same structure of the *logos*."¹¹ In the predication of assertion, there is an explicit restriction of view, the focus being shifted to a particular feature of the object such as the heaviness of a hammer (*BT*, 197/155). A state of affairs is abstracted from what is disclosed, and then formulated as a statement that can be assessed as either true or false.

In the following example, uncoveredness is equated with truth as correctness:
"Let us suppose that someone with his back turned to the wall makes the true assertion

that ‘the picture on the wall is hanging askew.’ This assertion demonstrates itself when the man who makes it, turns round and perceives the picture hanging askew on the wall” (260/217). The uncoveredness of the entity, or its being-uncovered, is confirmed when the entity “shows itself *just as* it is in itself; that is to say, it shows that it, in its selfsameness, is just as *it* gets pointed out in the assertion as being – just as *it* gets uncovered as being” (261/218). The entity in itself is equivalent to the entity in its uncoveredness: “To say that an assertion ‘*is true*’ signifies that it uncovers the entity as it is in itself. Such an assertion asserts, points out, ‘lets’ the entity ‘be seen’ in its uncoveredness” (261/218). In this example, uncoveredness indicates the correctness of the statement that the picture is crooked. Heidegger’s analysis is in conflict with his claim that uncoveredness is the condition of possibility for both true and false statements, uncoveredness being merely the primordial disclosure that enables things to be revealed: “Uncoveredness is...an exemplary *possible* present of the addressed entities in their being and in their being-thus” [italics added].¹² As ontological, uncoveredness reveals only what *can* be the case. Similarly, an assertion can be true without necessarily involving an uncovering of the essence or the being of the entity. In Heidegger’s view, correctness “*by no means needs to uncover* the thing in question in its essence. Only at the point where such an uncovering happens does the true come to pass. For that reason the merely correct [i.e., that which corresponds with the way things are] is *not yet the true* [= unconcealed].”¹³ For example, a scientific calculation may be correct, but it does not unconceal or uncover the projection of being used by the scientist.¹⁴ Wrathall explains that “true sentences are all made possible by unconcealment, but they do not necessarily ‘unconceal’. Thus, the reason for claiming that the essence of truth is unconcealment is *not* that all true assertions unconceal. Instead, true assertions are capable of being true

only because a world has already opened up – a world about which meaningful claims can be made.”¹⁵

According to Heidegger, ontic truth is based on the prior disclosure of the world. In the following example he describes this disclosure as “a circle of prefigurations,” but at the same time, he associates the *a priori* awareness with an act of covering over:

Let us consider...a trivial example of deception and of the covering over of entities: I am going along in a dark wood and see something come toward me between the pines – a deer, I say...Upon closer approach it can be seen that it is a shrub which I am moving toward. In my understanding and deliberating dealings, I have comported myself in a way that covers over. The tacit statement allowed the entity to be seen as something other than what it is.¹⁶

With reference to the tacit statement concerning the deer, Heidegger claims that in seeing something that he interprets as coming towards him, he has already disclosed a “world,” involving an understanding of “the kinds of things that could be in a forest at night.” He continues: “In the case described, I would not believe that the Shah of Persia is coming toward me, although in itself such a thing would be possible.” In Heidegger’s theory, ontological truth is not correspondence with the facts but the disclosedness of the world, understood as a primordial givenness on the basis of which we are always already aware of possibilities in a given situation. This form of disclosure reveals only that which is meaningful, and does not relate to the truth or falsity of ontic claims (*BQP*, 9). A problem with the above example is that on the one hand, covering over is associated with a false perception, but it is also linked both to “understanding,” an *existentiale* of Dasein, and to comportment, which similarly denotes the ontological: “That kind of Being towards which Dasein can comport itself...we call ‘*existence*’ ” (*BT*, 32/12). Covering

over in the above passage is thereby given both an ontic and an ontological interpretation. Furthermore, the world-disclosure regarding things that can be found in a forest could not be given *a priori*. That there was a Shah of Persia, that he would have the capacity to walk in a forest, but that he would be unlikely to do so in Germany in the darkness, constitutes empirical knowledge of the world. As factual information, it would be acquired in the course of ordinary learning, and could not therefore be described as an *a priori* awareness. Heidegger's theory is that we are always already involved in a meaningful world, but as I have previously argued,¹⁷ he fails to take account of the processes through which we initially acquire such understanding.

Owing to its derivative nature, perception, together with assertion, is grounded in something more primordial, but Heidegger gives a dual definition of this "earlier" concept: Dasein's uncovering and Dasein's disclosedness (*BT*, 269/226). He describes the uncoveredness of entities within the world as being "equiprimordial with the Being of Dasein and its disclosedness" (264/221). When linked to world-disclosure, uncoveredness indicates merely that which is meaningful. The question of truth and falsity is introduced only when uncoveredness is associated with entities as objects with properties. Since it is a condition for a statement to show the entity as it *can* be, disclosedness does not necessarily establish the correctness of a proposition about an entity. In Heidegger's theory, disclosedness or unconcealment is not the equivalent of truth as correctness, which means that concealment cannot be equated with falsity. Unconcealment as the originary form of truth is the basis for the false as well as the true, but in the passage discussed below, a form of falsity is equated with Dasein's ontological state of untruth.

Heidegger refers to Dasein's basic state of being as fallenness, where it is absorbed in the world of the "they," merely adopting the way things are generally or publicly interpreted (264/222). This "inauthentic" state is contrasted with a resolute acceptance of responsibility for projecting possibilities (347/300). Because of its fallenness, Dasein is ontologically in "untruth," a result of which is that entities are revealed in the mode of disguise or "semblance": "Only in so far as Dasein has been disclosed has it also been closed off; and only in so far as entities within the world have been uncovered along with Dasein, have such entities, as possibly encounterable within the world, been covered up (hidden) or disguised" (265/222). In this passage, Heidegger is associating the ontological state of untruth with the way entities can be incorrectly perceived. Dasein is exhorted to defend what is uncovered against semblance and to do so "again and again" on the grounds that truth as uncoveredness "must always first be wrested from entities." Such an action is described in terms of "making one's decision." However, since fallenness is an ontological state, Dasein could not move from untruth to truth simply by deciding to take an entity out of disguise, nor does there seem to be any connection between defending against semblance and the authentic projection of possibilities. In the example of the deer and the shrub, the process of wresting truth from the entity would involve merely the correction of a perceptual distortion attributable to the workings of nature. These would include the fading of the light, the fact that one object has a similar shape to another, and perhaps the visual capacities of the individual concerned. The original passage on semblance is situated in a discussion of *aletheia*, described as Dasein's "primordial understanding" of its own being (265/222). In Heidegger's interpretation, the Greek term indicates that entities are originally in a state of concealment, but in the example of the shrub, it would not be in a state of disguise

when physical circumstances are favourable. Heidegger in this case is equating unconcealment as ontological, with a form of unconcealment involving a process of correction within the ambit of natural occurrences.

8.4 *The problem of essence*

With regard to the example of the war-time fort, Heidegger discusses essence as a “view in advance” that opens up a field and thereby makes interpretation possible. He also holds that the knowledge of essence is both given *a priori* and based on a shared knowledge of the world (*BQP*, 78). The former definition would preclude the possibility of an essence being determined on the basis of information received, as occurred with the soldiers. Yet Heidegger asserts that uncoveredness, when linked to Dasein’s disclosedness, may be appropriated “not by one’s own uncovering but rather by hearsay of something that has been said” (*BT*, 266/224). Since this kind of knowledge involves the conveying of facts, the receiving of information could not be included within the definition of essence as something uncommon, strange, enigmatic, uncertain, shifting and controversial (*BQP*, 73), nor could the information be regarded as having been given *a priori*.

In discussing the theory of essences outlined in Heidegger, Charles Guignon explains that an essence of a thing “is not picked out by a mere empirical regularity.”¹⁸ He writes: “If there are no essential features of a table, then my assertion ‘there is a table in the room’ could be referring to anything, and thus is incapable of being either true or false” (251). In Guignon’s interpretation, “facts come too late for essential definitions, since we need to assume that the definition is true in order to definitively identify the fact or facts to which it corresponds” (253). Although we could not examine all possible

examples of a particular object in order to determine its “essence,” this argument cannot be used to establish that an essence, defined as “strange” and “enigmatic,” is the means by which an object such as a table can be understood. It is rather that our initial experience of a table would consist in observing the way things are placed upon it. Then at a later time we would be told that the name of the object is “table.”

According to Heidegger, an essence cannot be explained, but has to be “awakened” in the human (*BQP*, 78), and he claims that the grasping or bringing-forth of an essence is the means by which we are able to recognise an instance of a particular genus. He examines the theory that an essence could result from a general agreement by speakers to use a certain word as a sign for an individual class of things (72). Such an arrangement, he argues, would still necessitate the advance positing of an essence – in this case to serve as the foundation for the signification. Heidegger’s position overlooks the fact that the first use of a particular word in a culture would not require a group of speakers to be in agreement regarding every possible description and feature falling within a certain definition. Through the evolution of language, a word such as “table” would come to be associated with a structure having a particular function. It would not be necessary, however, for all the individuals within a linguistic group to distinguish between “table” and other objects, for example “bench,” in exactly the same way.

In his discussion of essence, Heidegger asserts that we already know in advance “the bodily as the bodily, the plant-like of the plant, the animal-like of the animal, the thingness of the thing, and so on.” (*WT*, 73). With regard to the first example, our primary understanding of “the bodily” is the awareness of our own body, which would precede any possible knowledge of a bodily essence. In respect of the other examples, a young child would not have a prior awareness of what is “plant-like” or “animal-like”

before her first experience of an actual plant or animal, either living or in pictorial form. Cristina Lafont challenges the very concept of essence as outlined in Heidegger: “It may well be doubted that we have such knowledge even in implicit form, or even that there is such knowledge at all” (190).

8.5 *Uncoveredness and unconcealment*

The problems Heidegger faces in his attempt to ground the ontic in the ontological, are revealed both in his discussion of essence, and in the ambiguity surrounding the concept of uncoveredness. He claims that because of their factual uncoveredness, entities “have, in a certain way, been uncovered already, and yet they are still disguised” (*BT*, 265/222). Lafont proposes that uncoveredness in this passage is a matter of degree, reflecting Heidegger’s other theory that *Dasein* is equiprimordially both in the truth and in untruth, and is thus “in a continuum between two” (140), so that uncoveredness would contain both truth and falsity. A consequence of Heidegger’s reasoning, as explained by Lafont, is that either uncoveredness is unrelated to the distinction between truth and falsity, or the distinction between the covered and the uncovered is identical to that between the false and the true (141). Uncoveredness could not therefore be used in the context of determining whether something is true or false. Because of the obscurity surrounding uncoveredness, it is inadequate to serve as a bridge between unconcealment and ontic truth in a way that would enable ontological truth to be revealed as the *a priori* ground of truth as correctness.

Initially, ontic truth does not form part of truth as unconcealment, since the meaningfulness arising from unconcealment is neutral with respect to truth and falsity. Heidegger then moves from the position that openness or unconcealment is “the ground

and the soil and the arena of all correctness” (*BQP*, 19), to the claim that open comportment *itself* is the standard for correctness: “A statement is invested with its correctness by the openness of comportment; for only through the latter can what is opened up really become the standard for the presentative correspondence. Open comportment must let itself be assigned this standard. This means that it must take over a pregiven standard for all presenting.”¹⁹ Similarly, Heidegger states that “knowledge as the representation of individual beings is founded to the extent that it is correct” (*BQP*, 87); it is only “truth as correctness” that has its ground in “truth as unconcealedness,” defined as “the coming-forth, and being in view in advance, of the beingness (essence) of beings.” The basis for the above claims is that because of Dasein’s transcendence and the way it discloses the being of entities in the world, it is already “attuned” by those entities (*EG*, 128). Wrathall explains that for Heidegger, “the unconcealment of a world is not understood as a projection which could have the content it does independently of the way things are. To the contrary, the beings that surround us are inextricably incorporated into our understanding of things” (2002, 225). Ontic propositions are therefore true only on the grounds that Dasein comports itself towards entities in a particular way. Heidegger has previously claimed that unconcealment is merely that which makes possible the assessment of ontic claims with regard to their truth or falsity. However, the above exposition of “standard” and “conformity” in relation to unconcealment and projection, means that he is attributing to the ontological dimension an ontic conception of “true” vis-à-vis “false,” since anything that functions as a standard must necessarily be true in an ontic sense. A consequence of Heidegger’s position is that he has no means of explaining how the grasping of an essence, or the disclosure of being, could result in anything *other than* a correct perception or statement.

The manner in which Heidegger merges the ontic and ontological conceptions of truth is the subject of a critique by Ernst Tugendhat. He writes: “Instead of broadening the specific concept of truth, Heidegger simply gave the word truth another meaning. The broadening of the concept of truth, from the truth of assertion to all modes of disclosing, becomes trivial if one sees the truth of assertion as consisting simply in the fact that it is in general disclosive.”²⁰ Following Tugendhat’s argument, if Heidegger had used “uncover” only as a synonym for “disclose,” uncoveredness would have been a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for determining questions of truth and falsity. By surrounding uncoveredness with ambiguity, however, he is able to link the concept to factual situations on the one hand, and to the being of Dasein on the other, the latter possibility being indicated in his statement that the uncoveredness of entities is “equiprimordial” with Dasein’s being as disclosedness (*BT*, 264/221). There is an absence of any convincing grounds to support the theory that correctness or falsity is derivative of openness as the primordial form of truth. Lafont also points out that Heidegger must already presuppose the sense of truth as correctness in order for his investigation of an original understanding of truth to be meaningful (2000, 122).

The notion of truth as correctness is associated with uncoveredness in order to provide a link between unconcealment on the one hand, and truth as a standard on the other. Because of his ontological interpretation of correctness, Heidegger lacks a basis for his claim that the ontic form of truth is grounded in unconcealment. The conclusions drawn from the examples given above are indicative of the overall problems he experiences in defining the ontological as the *a priori* ground of the ontic.

8.6 *Science and the projection of being*

Heidegger proposes an interpretation of science in order to illustrate his theory that access to an entity is based on a prior disclosure of its being, and that the ontic truth of science presupposes the ontological truth of a projection. He argues that the understanding of being is not itself the product of scientific method, but is the *a priori* condition for the “ontical inquiry of the positive sciences” (*BT*, 31/11). An example he gives is that modern natural science is based on a mathematical projection of nature (*BPP*, 321). In rejecting the idea that there can be “bare facts” concerning the physical world, Heidegger states: “Only ‘in the light’ of a nature which has been projected...can anything like a ‘fact’ be found and set up for an experiment regulated and determined in terms of this projection” (*BT*, 414/362).

The question of *a priori* in connection with science is also discussed in one of Heidegger’s works on Kant: “In the sciences of beings something is fixed about the objects before they are given to us. This fixing, which is *a priori* and free from experience – occurs prior to all experience – makes possible that these objects be given to us as what they are. These *a priori* fixings are *prior* to all experience and are valid *for* all experience, i.e., they make experience possible.”²¹ Similarly, in *What is a Thing?* Heidegger proposes that “synthetic judgments *a priori* are already asserted in all scientific judgments. They are pre-judgments in a genuine and necessary sense” (*WT*, 180). Herman Philipse holds that whereas Kant regards the transcendental structures of experience as determinative for the way we view the phenomenal world scientifically, for Heidegger, the mathematical projection of nature deprives the world of its “meaningfulness.”²² A different way of understanding the world is therefore required in

order for its meaning to be restored. Earlier I referred to Heidegger's claim that Kant's theory fails to address the question of the ontological, and that the relation between the *a priori* and the *a posteriori* in Kant should be interpreted at the level of practical experience in the world (*KPM*, 10). Heidegger's concept of *a priority* maintains the Kantian view that what makes experience possible is already given to us, but whereas for Kant, the pre-given relates to structures of understanding, Heidegger claims that we have a pre-conceptual awareness of the being of entities. However, his position reveals a major departure from Kant's theory, in that the way Heidegger interprets the *a priori* undermines the fundamental *a priori/a posteriori* distinction outlined in Kant. According to Trish Glazebrook, Heidegger "neglects the epistemic certainty that is definitive for Kant of a priori judgments."²³

In his analysis of science, Heidegger refers to Aristotle's view that heavy bodies fall faster than light ones. Since it has been proved that all bodies fall at the same speed, modern science regards the above theory as incorrect (*BQP*, 47). However, Heidegger argues that it makes no sense to regard Aristotle's view as "antiquated" and Galileo's theory as "progressive," each theory being based on a different projection of nature. In the above discussion of truth (section 6), I cited a wartime example, where Heidegger claims that the essence is "decisive for what we factually see in the individual thing." Similarly, with regard to science, his view is that in a projection "there is posited that which things are actually taken as, as what they are and how they are to be evaluated in advance...Natural bodies are only what they show themselves as, within the realm of the projection...How they show themselves is prefigured in the projection. Therefore, the projection also determines the manner of taking in and investigating what shows itself" (*WT*, 72). The way scientific entities are understood is dependent on an *a priori*

projection, so that a change in the interpretation of the data is never a consequence of a challenge to an earlier projection, nor can a “fact” in one projection be equivalent to its successor in the next. Heidegger writes: “Both Galileo and his opponents saw the same ‘fact’. But they made the same fact or the same happening visible to themselves in different ways, interpreted it in different ways. Indeed, what appeared to them in each case as the authentic fact and truth was something different” (WT, 90). Lafont argues that the Aristotelian and Newtonian projections of nature are regarded by Heidegger as having different content, “not only in spite of the fact that the things explained surely were the same way before and after the revolution [of modern science], but even though in many cases *the same facts were available* to participants of both projections.”²⁴ For Heidegger, different projections give rise to differing content, so that a new projection could not be regarded as better or worse than its predecessor, value judgments being applicable only to ontic claims. Similarly, it would be impossible to use a new projection as a means of disproving its predecessor; the only thing that can be claimed for an earlier projection is that it has become irrelevant. Heidegger states that Newton’s First Law of Motion “was up until the 17th century not at all self-evident. During the preceding fifteen hundred years it was not only unknown; rather, nature and *entities in general* were *experienced* in a way with respect to which this law *would have been meaningless*” (WT, 79). The projection of a particular understanding of nature determines only the range of what can be meaningful for those who operate within the bounds of that projection. On the basis of Heidegger’s theory that the projection of being is ontological truth, and does not address the question of truth in opposition to falsity, he is able to claim that “before Newton, his laws were neither true nor false” (BT, 269/226).

Heidegger's position raises the question of how to account for the historical changes that have occurred in our understanding of nature. These changes, he argues, did not arise from scientific observation or experiments, but from interpretations of the being of entities. Joseph Kockelmans explains that for Heidegger, all aspects of scientific activity are forms of interpretation, that scientists "always project the phenomena they are dealing with upon a framework of meaning that is accepted in advance,"²⁵ and that such an acceptance may be independent of the observed phenomena. This framework involves the use of axioms or "working hypotheses," which Heidegger claims "already presuppose the positing of a determinate essence of the beings aimed at" (*BQP*, 78). His view is that the axioms of science are "hidden" from the scientist, and cannot be made apparent "as axioms."²⁶ What Heidegger defines as ontological cannot therefore be subject to revision as a result of scientific discovery: "Latent in every science of a realm of entities there always lies a regional ontology which belongs to this science, but which can never in principle be developed by this science" (*PIK*, 25). William Blattner comments that ontology as Heidegger defines it "is immune to empirical refutation, because no conceptually articulate, empirical activity can violate, hence call into question, the results of ontological inquiry."²⁷ It is only the truth and falsity claims of ontic knowledge that can be revised through experience. For Heidegger, according to Lafont, "the attempt to conceive the historical changes in our understanding of being as a learning process is based on an illusion" (2007, 112).

In contrast to the theory that axioms are based on the pre-given, a view commonly held by scientists is that axioms "*are neither synthetic judgments a priori, nor experimental facts*. They are *conventions*: our choice among all possible conventions is *guided* by experimental facts, but it remains *free* and is limited only by

the necessity of avoiding all contradiction.”²⁸ Since Heidegger claims that axioms presuppose the positing of an essence, and essences in his view are pre-conceptual, an explanation is required in his work for the historical changes that have occurred in relation to axioms as well as to the larger question of what are now called “paradigms.” While admitting that there have been major shifts performed through science itself, Heidegger proposes that when science transcends the idea of correctness and understands the projection of being, it can then be regarded as philosophy. He describes the “authentic, disclosing research” undertaken by the originators of quantum theory, Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg, who in his view “think in a thoroughly philosophical way” (*WT*, 73). Lafont argues that Heidegger’s conception of the differences between purportedly non-philosophical and philosophical approaches to science, constitutes his attempt to interpret the modern transformation of science in terms of the distinction drawn by Thomas Kuhn between “normal” science, where it is operating within an accepted paradigm, and “revolutionary” science, where old paradigms are replaced by the new.²⁹ However, since scientists are always operating in the realm of the conceptual, their understanding at the twilight of one paradigm in comparison with that in the emergence of the new, will be qualitatively different from the distinction Heidegger draws between the pre-conceptual grasping of a being or essence on the one hand, and the understanding of empirical facts on the other.

An illustration of the difficulty in Heidegger’s position is that the theory of quantum mechanics to which he refers, arose from anomalies revealed in experimental outputs.³⁰ It would therefore be impossible in this case to hold that the new “essence” was somehow given in advance, or that the truth or falsity of conclusions based on the theory could be determined in the absence of a conceptual grasp of the paradigm. The

idea of *a priori* in relation to quantum theory is problematised by the fact that competing interpretations of the data have lead to the establishment of different schools of thought within this field.³¹ These various approaches were understood by Albert Einstein, but near the end of his life he stated that even the success of the theory did not convince him that quantum mechanics was “the real thing.”³² Disagreement among scientists, regardless of whether or not they could be categorised as philosophers, precludes the possibility of establishing that a scientific projection is “prior to all experience” (*PIK*, 32). According to Lafont, “the mere fact that experimentation is guided by prior theoretical assumptions does not by itself imply their immunity from revision.”³³ She also points out that since projections throughout history have been shown to be *empirically* false, Heidegger’s position with regard to science involves “defending the implausible claim that all knowledge is synthetic a posteriori, i.e., directly revisable through experience” (2007, 113).

In Heidegger’s view, science as an ontic discipline would be characterised by propositional truths. However, he lacks a basis on which to explain the refutation of scientific claims, since his own conception of the status of propositional truth is flawed. His theory cannot establish that the findings of science are based on the *a priori* function of Dasein’s disclosedness, or that there exists what Lafont describes as “an absolute and permanent dichotomy between two different kinds of knowledge (ontic and ontological) and their respective kinds of truths” (2007, 117).

8.7 *Beyond the transcendental*

I will now discuss how Heidegger moves away from his original exposition of the ontological difference. In later works, he acknowledges the limitations of his

transcendental approach, though he does not specifically address the problem of projection and the *a priori*, either in general or in relation to the question of truth.

Heidegger recounts the way in which Dasein, as the place of being's disclosedness, was proposed as a way of access to being itself as the open:

To characterize with a *single* term both the involvement of Being to the essence of man and the essential relation of man to the openness ("there" ["*Da*"]) of Being [*Sein*] as such, the name of "Dasein" [there-being] was chosen for the essential realm in which man stands as man. This term was employed even though in metaphysics it is used interchangeably with *existentia*, actuality, reality, and objectivity.³⁴

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger examines the being of Dasein because of the ontical and ontological priority it has over all other entities: "The first priority is an *ontical* one:

Dasein is an entity whose Being has the determinate character of existence. The second priority is an *ontological* one: Dasein is in itself 'ontological' because existence is thus determinative for it" (*BT*, 34/13). The ontic is associated in Heidegger's thought with the metaphysical, but his basic claim is that because Dasein is essentially ontological, to describe it as metaphysical would be inappropriate.

In the "Letter on Humanism," Heidegger acknowledges some of the problems of his earlier work. The reason he gives for holding back the proposed final section of *Being and Time* is that the "language of metaphysics" used in the sections published is inadequate to describe being itself.³⁵ (This form of language refers to objects of thought set over against a thinking subject.) One of the definitions of Dasein's being in Heidegger's work of the 1920s is transcendence, where Dasein "goes beyond" entities and thereby reveals their being.³⁶ Although he initially attempts to bridge the traditional gap between the self-contained subject and the external world, Heidegger admits that "even when 'transcendence' is grasped differently than up to now, namely as *surpassing*

and not as the *super-sensible* as a being, even then this determination all too easily disassembles what is ownmost to Dasein. For, even in this way, transcendence still presupposes an *under and this-side*...and is in danger of still being misinterpreted after all as the action of an 'I' and a subject."³⁷ Heidegger further states that if being as the open is understood in the same sense in which it is the horizon of Dasein's transcendence, Dasein would be regarded as the centre of reference, and the horizon would be its field of vision within which beings appear as objects to man taken as the subject.³⁸ He also recognises that "Being does not exhaust itself in Dasein, nor can it by any means simply be identified with it" (*WIM*, 283).

Since the knowledge of being in Heidegger's earlier work is said to be based on a "pre-ontological understanding" (*BT*, 33/13), such awareness would have to be limited to the ontic – the perspective of the individual inquirer, which would thereby preclude access to the ontological. Several commentators draw attention to the problems in Heidegger's attempt to understand the meaning of being itself by means of an inquiry into the being of Dasein. Otto Pöggeler describes *Being and Time* as "a split and disunited endeavour."³⁹ He argues that in the exposition of the meaning of being, Heidegger still speaks an inadequate language by describing the being of Dasein as "existence," this term suggesting a subjectivity taken from the "modern metaphysics of will" (18). Pöggeler further claims that because Heidegger's aim is to base all understanding of the meaning of being on the being of Dasein, the earlier work is metaphysical in the sense that it is still reaching for a "final ground" (19). Using a similar argument, John Caputo proposes that a "thinking being" is required in order to uncover the meaning of being itself, and that "*Being and Time*, despite its strenuous effort to treat man ontologically, is still caught up in the tradition which lays the ground

of beings in another being. This tradition, of which Hegel and Nietzsche were the latest victims, was set into motion by Descartes' identification of the ground with the *cogito*.”⁴⁰ Consistent with the above critiques, Michael Zimmerman asserts that the failure of Heidegger's work lies in its attempt to go beyond the traditional notion of subjectivity, while at the same using the being of a subject in order to achieve that goal, with the result that Heidegger is unable to extricate himself from metaphysical-subjectivistic thinking. Zimmerman continues: “Throughout *Being and Time* there is a tension owing to the fact that the work lies half-way between metaphysical thinking and the new way of thinking.”⁴¹ He also points out that although Heidegger describes unconcealment as a process of being itself rather than that of the subject, the need for Dasein to discover who it is orients the discussion away from being to the question of subjectivity: “As soon as Heidegger says that Dasein is the entity which is ‘mine’, i.e. the entity for whom its Being is at issue, he is necessarily led to the question of ‘who’ Dasein is and thus to the question of Selfhood” (102).

A similar critique of Heidegger's early work is the claim by Theodor Adorno that “if concepts are to be concepts, they must mean something.”⁴² The being of concepts must therefore be meaningful “because it is not given otherwise than as a concept.” He argues that this fact is overlooked in Heidegger's attempt to portray being as something immediate and thereby prior to the conceptual. According to Adorno, being in Heidegger is “a sort of nonobjective objectivity” (ND, 99), situated in an imaginary realm beyond the subjective and objective. For Heidegger, Adorno writes, “the concept of Being, whose transmissions are not to be put into words, becomes the ‘non-essence’ which Aristotle recognized in the Platonic idea, the paragon of essence.” (The problem of how

to describe the indescribable concept of being forms the background to Heidegger's later theory of an originary form of language.)⁴³

The inadequacies of *Being and Time* and works of that period led Heidegger to adopt a different approach in his attempts to understand the relation between being itself and the being of the human.

8.8 *The truth of being*

Up to this point, I have argued that Heidegger has difficulty in establishing that the ontological is the *a priori* ground of the ontic, and that this problem is foregrounded in his analysis of truth. In the closing section of *Being and Time*, Heidegger raises a question that concerns the fundamental relation between the ontic and the ontological: "Can one provide *ontological* grounds for ontology, or does it also require an *ontical* foundation?" (487/436). Heidegger then revisits the question of metaphysics, which he describes as an investigation of "beings as such and as a whole." This traditional inquiry has two components: the "essence" of beings, or what it is that defines something as a being, and the "existence" of beings, or the manner in which beings as a whole exist as beings (*WIM*, 281-283). In *Being and Time*, Heidegger seeks to go behind these metaphysical questions by investigating the being of Dasein in its experience of the world. Since this approach is unable to provide access to being itself, Heidegger changes his focus to what he calls the "truth" of being, where he inquires into being as the ground of metaphysics, or as that which makes metaphysics possible: "The truth of Being may thus be called the ground in which metaphysics, as the root of the tree of philosophy, is kept and from which it is nourished" (278).

The problem with the traditional position, in Heidegger's view, is that it overlooks the way in which being becomes manifest. Through a new kind of experience he describes as "thinking," the metaphysical idea of "representing beings as beings" is not abolished but is rather deepened for the purpose of discovering the source or origin of metaphysics (278). Whereas the traditional understanding of thinking concerns that which is performed by a subject, the kind of thinking Heidegger envisages does not originate with the individual: "Being itself...lets such thinking spring forth in springing from Being itself in such a way as to respond to Being as such" (279). The idea of "thinking" in Heidegger does not relate merely to intellectual activity, but concerns the experience of being open to that which is revealed.

8.9 *Metontology and the Nothing*

Heidegger's reformulation of metaphysics is given the title "metontology," and he describes it as a radicalisation of the fundamental ontology of *Being and Time*. The aim of metontology is "to make beings thematic in their totality in the light of ontology" (MFL, 157). At this point, Heidegger is addressing the possibility discussed in his earlier work that ontology may require an ontical foundation (BT, 487/439). On the other hand, he insists that metontology is not to be regarded as "a summary ontic in the sense of a general science," since the unity of fundamental ontology and metontology is to constitute the new understanding of metaphysics.

The word "metontology" first appears in an Appendix to *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* of 1928, but although the term is not used in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, written in 1935, it is this later work that discusses the issues outlined briefly in 1928. Heidegger begins with what he describes as the most far reaching, the deepest,

and the most fundamental question in philosophy: “Why is there anything at all rather than nothing?”⁴⁴ Whereas the central question of metaphysics is the *Seinfrage* concerning the being of entities, the fundamental question, the *Grundfrage*, asks why beings should exist. As the work progresses, Heidegger reveals that he is investigating the reason or ground of beings in terms of the being of such beings, and that he is thereby analysing the two basic questions of traditional metaphysics concerning essence and existence.

A major departure in Heidegger’s concept of metontology is that the inquiry terminates in what he calls “the nothing.” He writes: “Everything that is not nothing is covered by this question, and ultimately even nothing itself: not because it is *something*, since after all we speak of it, but because it *is* nothing” (*ITM*, 2). The fundamental question therefore concerns the nothing, the being of Dasein, and the being of beings as a whole. In *Being and Time*, Dasein is identified as the ontic questioner whose being is determined by asking about its being, but in the later work there is no privileging of any particular being: “If our question ‘Why are there beings rather than nothing?’ is taken in its fullest sense, we must avoid singling out any special, particular being, including man...Within beings as a whole there is no legitimate ground for singling out this being which is called mankind” (*ITM*, 4). Dasein, as the place where beings are disclosed with respect to their being, is replaced by an originary form of questioning that is associated with Heidegger’s earlier description of “thinking” (*WIM*, 279). It is necessary, in his view, to move beyond the ontological difference – between the being of entities and the entities as objects in themselves, and beyond transcendence, to the notion of a primordial “event” (234). Nevertheless, the original exposition of Dasein has a preparatory role in

relation to the fundamental question, “Why is there anything at all rather than nothing?” so that the connection between Dasein and questioning is maintained.

Heidegger then rephrases the above question as: “Why are beings torn away from the possibility of nonbeing? Why do they not simply keep falling back into nonbeing?” (*ITM*, 28). In seeking a “ground” to explain the emergence of beings as an overcoming of nothingness, he inquires as to “whether the ground arrived at is really a ground, that is, whether it provides a foundation; whether it is a primal ground (Ur-grund); or whether it fails to provide a foundation and is an abyss (Ab-grund); or whether the ground is neither one nor the other but presents only a perhaps necessary appearance of foundation – in other words, it is a non-ground (Un-grund)” (3). The answer given is that the process of originary questioning, rather than providing a “present ground and explanation for what is present,” seeks for the kind of ground described as “the decision for beings over against nothingness, or more precisely, the ground for the oscillation of beings” (28). In Heidegger’s theory, beings oscillate between being and nonbeing; being and nothing belong together as a finite essence where nothingness is the finitude of being. In *What is Metaphysics?* he writes: “ ‘Pure Being and pure Nothing are therefore the same.’ This proposition of Hegel’s...is correct. Being and the nothing do belong together, not because both – from the point of view of the Hegelian concept of thought – agree in their indeterminateness and immediacy, but rather because Being itself is essentially finite and reveals itself only in the transcendence of Dasein which is held out into the nothing” (95). Being is the appearing or the manifestness of beings. Since being is finite, nothingness indicates that which is concealed, but in belonging to the nothing, being is both concealment and unconcealment (*ITM*, 192). The essence of Dasein is now to be understood as the openness where being “announces and conceals

itself, grants itself and withdraws” (*WIM*, 283). This paradox of being is revealed in Heidegger’s statement that the nothing “nothings”; the possibility of not-being originates in the nothingness of being. It is only as a non-ground or *Abgrund* that being is the ground of beings.

An Introduction to Metaphysics depicts Dasein as coming face to face with the “nothing” of its death. In the process of experiencing the withdrawal of its own being, the human becomes the “there” or the historical place of being’s disclosure: “Being itself hurls man...beyond himself to venture forth toward being, to accomplish being” (163). In inquiring into its own grounds, questioning belongs to the history of being itself as it appears in the human being. In contrast to *Being and Time*, it is no longer possible for being to be understood simply in its difference from beings. This does not mean, though, that the ontic is “dissolved in the ontological.”⁴⁵ It is rather that the phenomenological interpretation of being in *Being and Time* is replaced by the event of questioning. In opening up beings for questioning about their ground, the questioning itself inquires into its own grounds: “But whenever beings as a whole enter into this question, a privileged, unique relation arises between them and the act of questioning. For through this questioning beings as a whole are for the first time opened up as such with a view to their possible ground, and in the act of questioning they are kept open” (*ITM*, 4).

Heidegger describes fundamental ontology as the original form of questioning, which itself is put into question so as to become metontology. The *Seinfrage* of metaphysics and the *Grundfrage* concerning why there are beings at all, is followed by the “leading” question, the *Vor-frage*, which turns back on itself in a radical form of questioning. The place of the asking of the *Vor-frage* is Dasein, but as a questioning of itself, the *Vor-frage* goes beyond Dasein to being as such:

From out of the basic question of metaphysics: “Why are there beings at all, and not rather nothing?” we have explicated the *Vor-frage*: How does it stand regarding being? The relation between the two questions requires clarification, for it is of a unique kind...Here the *Vorfrage* does not at all stand outside the *Grundfrage*, but is as it were the fire glowing in the hearth of the asking of the basic question, it is the hearth of all questioning.⁴⁶

In facing its finitude and experiencing the withdrawal of its own being, Dasein is no longer its own “there,” but becomes the place where being, as the absence of ground, is disclosed in beings. Being is not prior to Dasein, nor are the two concepts independent of each other. A reciprocal relation exists between the original ground and the place of its manifestation. Heidegger likens his theory of being to the early Greek concept of *physis*, understood as “self-blossoming emergence” and as that which manifests and endures in its unfolding (*ITM*, 14).

The new concept of being is neither transcendent nor transcendental in the traditional sense. It is not a universal principle, nor is it something that stands behind and above beings. Having described being as the “recoil” in which fundamental ontology itself is put into question, Heidegger does not continue with this line of thinking, ultimately rejecting the idea of an ontology based on the ontic, or on a reformulated version of metaphysics. Steven Crowell writes: “Rather than follow the fruitless path toward world formation – a path that confuses being (meaning) with beings, phenomenological with ontic grounds – Heidegger tries to think the ‘truth of being,’ to ‘experience’ ...that which, in allowing access to beings, conceals itself.”⁴⁷ In William McNeill’s view, the reasons for Heidegger’s change of direction include the fact that his new concept of being “proves so radical, so abyssal, that the horizon of the possible thematizing projection of beings as a whole as such is far from assured” (77). Heidegger

recognises that an absence of any kind of ground means that there can be no basis for ontology. He also comes to the conclusion that the finitude of Dasein does not belong to an ontic being, but to the history of being itself. In McNeill's words, "the essence of the human being is the displaced place where being itself appears" (78).

8.10 *Towards originary difference*

A consequence of Heidegger's thinking on metontology is that he no longer discusses Dasein's *a priori* understanding of being as the means of access to beings. In his subsequent writing, Heidegger formulates an originary concept of difference where being and beings cease to be understood as independent concepts, and are comprehended only on the basis of difference itself.⁴⁸

In the discussion so far, I have described the phases of Heidegger's work in his exploration of the early Greek concept of being as an experience of wonder, medieval mysticism with its unity of being and thinking, the meaning of being on the basis of human experience in the world, and the attempt to reinterpret metaphysics as metontology. I propose that Heidegger's problems with *a priori* and the ontological, including the way he applies his theory to the question of truth, together with his acknowledged inability to formulate an ontological approach to metaphysics, led to the central concept of his later thinking: the belonging together of Dasein and being.

NOTES

¹ Heidegger, *Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected "Problems" of "Logic"*, tr. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 86 (hereafter cited in text as *BQP*).

² Heidegger, *The Essence of Reasons*, tr. Terrence Malick (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 27.

³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, tr. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 265/223 (hereafter cited in text as *BT*).

⁴ Heidegger, *What is a Thing?* tr. William Barton Jr. and Vera Deutsch (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1967), 90 (hereafter cited in text as *WT*).

⁵ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, tr. Richard Taft (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 161 (hereafter cited in text as *KPM*).

⁶ Heidegger, "On the Essence of Ground," in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 128 (hereafter cited in text as *EG*).

⁷ Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, tr. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 69 (hereafter cited in text as *BPP*).

⁸ Mark Wrathall, "Heidegger, Truth, and Reference," *Inquiry* 45 (2002): 222.

⁹ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, tr. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 51.

¹⁰ Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth: On Plato's Parable of the Cave and the Theaetetus* tr. Ted Sadler (London: Continuum Books, 2002), 38.

¹¹ Heidegger, GA 21, 135, cited in Cristina Lafont, *Heidegger, Language, and World-Disclosure* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 129.

¹² Heidegger, GA 21, 415, cited in Lafont, 134.

¹³ Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, tr. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 6.

¹⁴ The question of projection in science and mathematics is addressed in section 6 below.

¹⁵ Mark Wrathall, "Heidegger and Truth as Correspondence," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 7, no. 1 (1999): 84.

¹⁶ Heidegger, GA 21, 187-188, cited in Lafont, 137.

¹⁷ See Chapter 7, section 1 herein.

¹⁸ Charles Guignon, "Truth and Essence of Truth in Heidegger's Thought," in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Charles Guignon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 253.

¹⁹ Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. David Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 124.

²⁰ Ernst Tugendhat, "Heidegger's Idea of Truth," in *Martin Heidegger: Critical Assessments*, Vol. 3 (London: Routledge, 1992) 88.

²¹ Heidegger, *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, tr. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 32 (hereafter cited in text as *PIK*).

²² Herman Philipse, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Being: A Critical Interpretation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 138.

²³ Trish Glazebrook, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Science* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 49.

²⁴ Cristina Lafont, "Replies: Symposium: Cristina Lafont, 'Heidegger, Language, and World-disclosure'," *Inquiry*, 45 (2002): 244.

²⁵ Joseph Kockelmans, "On the hermeneutical nature of modern natural science," *Man and World* 30 (1997): 312.

²⁶ Theodore Kisiel and Thomas Sheehan, eds., *Becoming Heidegger: On the Trail of His Early Occasional Writings, 1910-1927* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 229.

²⁷ William Blattner, "Ontology, the *A Priori*, and the Primacy of Practice: An Aporia in Heidegger's Early Philosophy," in *Transcendental Heidegger*, ed. Steven Crowell and Jeff Malpas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 21. Although Blattner seeks to defend Heidegger's overall use of the *a priori*, he claims that in order to do so, it is necessary to "abandon the most aggressively anti-empirical aspects" of Heidegger's attitude toward the sciences (18).

²⁸ J. W. A. Young, Review of Henri Poincaré, "Science and Hypothesis," *Science, New Series*, 20, no. 520 (December 1904), 834.

²⁹ Lafont 2000, 263. See Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 91.

³⁰ Jacob Hamblin, *Science in the Early Twentieth Century: An Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO Inc., 2005). The author discusses these anomalies with respect to Niels Bohr's interpretation of wave/particle duality (34), and the uncertainty principle of Werner Heisenberg (141).

³¹ David Bohm and Basil Hiley, *The Undivided Universe: An Ontological Interpretation of Quantum Theory* (London: Routledge, 1993) 13-26.

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- ³² David Shiang, *God Does Not Play Dice* (Delhi: Pustak Mahal, 2008), 67.
- ³³ Cristina Lafont, "Heidegger and the Synthetic *A Priori*," in *Transcendental Heidegger*, ed. Steven Crowell and Jeff Malpas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 111.
- ³⁴ Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?" in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 283 (hereafter cited in text as *WIM*).
- ³⁵ Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. David Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 208.
- ³⁶ Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, tr. Michael Heim (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 166 (hereafter cited in text as *MFL*).
- ³⁷ Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, tr. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 226.
- ³⁸ Joseph Kockelmans, *On the Truth of Being: Reflections on Heidegger's Later Philosophy*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 58.
- ³⁹ Otto Pöggeler, "Metaphysics and Topology of Being in Heidegger," tr. Parvis Emad, *Man and World* 8, no. 1 (1975): 18.
- ⁴⁰ John Caputo, "Being, Ground and Play in Heidegger," *Man and World* 3, no. 1 (1970): 28.
- ⁴¹ Michael Zimmerman, "The Foundering of *Being and Time*," *Philosophy Today* 19 (1975): 102.
- ⁴² Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, tr. E. B. Ashton (London: Routledge, 1990), 87, hereafter cited in text as *ND*).
- ⁴³ See Chapter 11, section 2 herein.
- ⁴⁴ Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, tr. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 1 (hereafter cited in text as *ITM*). The word "essents" in the various passages cited from this work has been changed to "beings".
- ⁴⁵ William McNeill, "Metaphysics, Fundamental Ontology, Metontology 1925-1935," *Heidegger Studies* 8 (1992): 78.
- ⁴⁶ *ITM*, 42, as cited in McNeill, 71.
- ⁴⁷ Steven Crowell, "Metaphysics, Metontology, and the End of *Being and Time*," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 60, no. 2 (2000): 331.
- ⁴⁸ Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, tr. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 71.

Chapter Nine

BELONGING TO BEING

In the *Beiträge*, or *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, written between 1936 and 1938, Heidegger introduces the concept of *Ereignis* as the mutual belonging together of Dasein and being. Such a movement in Heidegger's thought became necessary because in his view, Dasein in the earlier work could still be regarded as a thinking subject for whom the world is given as an object. The new concept involves the kind of belonging where Dasein and being can no longer be regarded as self-sufficient concepts, but are understood on the basis of their interdependence. Heidegger describes the mutual belonging of the two as "appropriation," where the human is "delivered over" to the ownership of being, and where being is regarded as "appropriate" to the essence of the human.¹ The background to *Ereignis* is Aristotle's concepts of *dynamis* and *kinesis*, interpreted as a movement from concealment into presence.

According to Heidegger, the metaphysical era is characterised by the fact that being has "withdrawn completely" and "abandoned beings",² the result of which has been the emergence of concepts to explain being such as God or a first cause (*CP*, 77). Because of what Heidegger describes as the "self-withdrawing" of being,³ these various historical interpretations are to be understood not primarily as the outcome of philosophical inquiry, but rather as "the epochs of the destiny of Being" (*TB*, 9). Heidegger's theory is that being has manifest itself in different ways in the early Greek period, the Middle Ages, and modernity. He discusses the need for a form of thinking where being may reveal itself in a new beginning and the metaphysical approach overcome. In some of his writing, Heidegger seems to regard *Ereignis* as a fundamental

reality of existence, but on the basis of other passages, the state of “Da-sein,” understood on the basis of *Ereignis*, has been described merely as that which we have the potential to become.⁴ A further interpretation concerns being’s possible future revelation – an event that may occur if humans prepare themselves for its arrival (*CP*, 177).

As a way of reconciling these different approaches, Miguel de Beistegui proposes that Heidegger’s understanding of the new beginning transcends the traditional understanding of time. On such a reading, being is at the same time past, present, and futural. De Beistegui refers to Heidegger’s description of past thinkers such as Hölderlin, who have already experienced being and yet are described as the “future ones.”⁵ This conception of time as non-successive involves the possibility of “a future that in a way already was, and could coincide with the present.”⁶ I propose that the uncertainty as to whether the new beginning will ever eventuate, together with the interpretation of *Ereignis* on the basis of a present human potential, means that these aspects of Heidegger’s argument cannot be dissociated from chronological time. Furthermore, I argue that humans are always appropriated, and that since individuals throughout history have experienced what could be described as being owned by being, the possibility of such an experience is not dependent on some unknown future event.

9.1 *Aristotle and kinesis*

Although Heidegger regards all thinking since Plato as metaphysical, he affirms Aristotle’s interpretation of being as movement or “becoming.” This concept forms the background to Heidegger’s theory of *Ereignis*, defined as the belonging together of being and the human (see section 2 below). He cites Aristotle’s work, *De Anima*, which describes the activity of the rational soul in terms of its receptiveness to the forms or the

being of entities: “The intellect must be therefore impassible but receptive of the form potentially without actually being its object.”⁷ For Aristotle, the potentiality of a thing is the organisation of its matter, defined in terms of the way it can act or be acted upon. For example, a caterpillar is potentially a moth, and an embryo is potentially an animal. Actuality is the fulfillment of the purpose or *telos* of the potentiality.⁸ The being of an entity involves a question of degree, and is determined by the extent to which the potential of the entity has been fulfilled.

In his interpretation of Aristotle’s *Physics*, Heidegger explains that Aristotle’s use of the term *physis* concerns movement as the being of nature. Aristotle draws a distinction between natural beings – those having their origin and ordering in themselves – and artifacts, which are not self-moving,⁹ and he applies *physis* only to the former. Heidegger points out that Aristotle is the first philosopher to posit the idea that movement (*kinesis*) is not merely something given along with other things, but that “being-moved” is the fundamental mode of being.¹⁰ In the history of metaphysics, by contrast, the eternal and permanent have been prioritised ontologically over the changing and finite. Because of its exclusion from being, movement has traditionally been understood as non-being.¹¹

Heidegger proposes that the basic difference between a physical and a metaphysical interpretation of movement concerns the question of rest. From a physical perspective, rest is a stopping or the absence of movement, but when considered metaphysically, rest is the simultaneous existence of possibilities (*CP*, 136). In Aristotle’s theory, entities defined by *physis* are those arriving at the fulfillment of their movement by realising their potential to be what they are, this potential being integral to the entities themselves. For example, the potentiality of a seed to become a plant is a part

of what the entity is. In the state of becoming, an entity is not completely present since it does not fully appear as what it is; its being includes a “becoming-absent” (*Physis*, 266). Aristotle uses the word *dynamis* to describe the presence-in-absence of moving entities. For Heidegger, this “movement into presence” is the equivalent of *kinesis*. He translates both of Aristotle’s terms as indicating an entity’s coming into presence and achieving the fulfillment of its potential.¹² The being of entities is a movement from hiddenness into appearance, by which the presence of an entity signifies both its past and its future.

Thomas Sheehan explains that the presence of a moving entity

is always fraught with absentiality: a not yet and a no longer, a coming into and a going from presence. But such relative absentiality is precisely what lets the entity *be* a moving entity. Therefore, to know a moving entity as what it truly is means to keep present to mind not only the *present entity* but also the *presence of the absentiality* that makes it a moving entity. The presence-of-its-absentiality is the moving entity’s being-structure. (307)

A limitation in Aristotle’s theory, according to Heidegger, is that he restricts the meaning of *physis* to the being of natural entities, whereas for Heidegger, this concept conveys the same idea as *aletheia*, unconcealment: “Truth as self-revealing belongs to being itself. *Physis* is *aletheia*” (*Physis*, 230). Heidegger interprets *physis* as a process by which all things emerge into presence from concealment.¹³ Although Aristotle is aware of the movement into presence, both he and the earlier thinkers, in Heidegger’s view, fail to investigate *lethe* or concealment itself. Both *kinesis* and *Ereignis* are conceived by Heidegger as an ontological movement from absence to presence.

9.2 *Ereignis* and the two beginnings

In developing his concept of *Ereignis*, Heidegger continues his critique of the metaphysical notion that being is the ground of entities. Rather than attempting to understand being itself through analyzing the being of Dasein, as occurs in *Being and Time*, Heidegger in the *Beiträge* describes a belonging together of being and Dasein (spelt Da-sein),¹⁴ which he defines as *das Ereignis*, translated in a later work as “the event of appropriation” (*ID*, 39). The German word *Ereignis* is a compound of *eignen* – the verb “to own,” and the prefix “er,” meaning either the beginning of an action or the reaching of its end.¹⁵ Jeff Malpas comments on the English translation of *Ereignis* as “enowning” (or “en-ownment”), and explains that *Ereignis* contains three main ideas: an event or happening, in contrast to the static idea of being as presence; a “belonging to” in the sense of that which is appropriate to Da-sein; and the idea of “coming to sight” or “being disclosed.” This third sense is summarised as follows: “*Ereignis* is the name for the particular sort of unifying and differentiating happening by which things come to presence, by which they come to be.”¹⁶ Heidegger states that through appropriation, “man and Being reach each other in their nature, achieve their active nature by losing those qualities with which metaphysics has endowed them” (*ID*, 36). These qualities include the description of the human as the “animal that speaks,”¹⁷ God’s creation,¹⁸ or as subject, soul, consciousness, spirit, person (*BT*, 72/46).

Understanding the concept of *Ereignis* is described by Heidegger as a new beginning in philosophy – a way of thinking contrasted with the first beginning, which inaugurated the metaphysical era. This period commences with the thought of Plato, and represents a departure from the Presocratic understanding of the world as the mysterious self-disclosure of being. It is at this time that philosophers begin to focus on the nature of

beings or entities rather than on the idea of being as emergence from concealment.

Heidegger writes: “One should speak of *the epoch of the total lack of questioning*...In this epoch nothing essential – if this determination still has any meaning at all – is any longer impossible and inaccessible. Everything ‘is made’ and ‘can be made’ if one only musters the ‘will’ for it” (*CP*, 76). A consequence is the metaphysical idea of being as the ground of beings, exemplified in the concept of God as the first cause or the highest being (*ID*, 60). A further example is the thinking of Descartes, for whom the claim “*cogito, ergo sum*” represents an indubitable truth, serving as the foundation of knowledge.¹⁹ Although these ideas arise from philosophical inquiry, Heidegger claims that such thinking should be understood ultimately as the “words of Being” (*TB*, 9). The basis of his argument is that because of its self-withdrawal at the time of Plato, being sends itself in the various ways it has been interpreted by the tradition.

Heidegger then outlines the possibility of another beginning, where being may once again be revealed and the metaphysical approach overcome (*CP*, 3). The basic question of this new beginning is “how does be-ing sway?”²⁰ Heidegger’s use of the word “sway” conveys the idea of the happening or “essencing” of being, and refers to the movement from concealment to unconcealment outlined in his interpretation of *physis* in Aristotle. The metaphysical idea of “Being as the ground of beings” (*ID*, 39) is replaced by the notion of being as the abground or an absence of ground (*CP*, 53). In contrast to the Cartesian idea that what we perceive are properties of an underlying substrate that is imperceptible to the senses,²¹ Heidegger argues that the absence of ground is that which enables entities to come to presence for humans.

The movement from the first to the second or the “other” beginning involves the taking of a leap, described as “the most daring move,” where everything familiar is

thrown aside (*CP*, 157). Although Heidegger refers to the need for a change in philosophical thinking, his writing seems to imply a corresponding need for humanity as a whole, as in his reference to the “essential transformation of the human from ‘rational animal’ (*animal rationale*) to Da-sein” (3). He describes the leap as “a spring that departs from Being as the ground of beings, and thus springs into the abyss” (*ID*, 39). Taking the leap involves a paradoxical form of awakening – “a recollection of something which has never been thought” (*TB*, 30). The other beginning “calls to us” (*CP*, 16), evoking a “deep foreboding” and a “startled dismay” when we become aware that in the era of metaphysical thinking, being “has abandoned all ‘beings’ and all that appeared to be beings and has withdrawn from them” (11). Such an awareness consists of the realisation that we can no longer depend on the certainty of being, understood in the sense of a ground. Because of the fact that in Heidegger’s thinking, being has been withdrawn throughout the whole of the metaphysical era, what he is advocating is that we immerse ourselves in the idea that being is still absent.

Responding to the call of the other beginning means risking a loss of the sense of who we are. Richard Polt writes that the decision to take the leap is “neither an arbitrary choice nor a necessity that is forced upon us but a free venture...We are motivated by an urgent plight that impels us to risk our own identity in a leap into the happening of be-ing.”²² It is not only the case that we have a need to belong to being; there is a corresponding need for the human on the part of being [beyng].²³ Miguel de Beistegui explains that “the essence of man is to be the properness and the property of beyng. While Da-sein ‘belongs’ to beyng, beyng ‘needs’ man in order to unfold. The relation is one of reciprocal and co-originary implication, a relation of

co-responsence” (241). The way Dasein and being are related to each other bears no resemblance to the relation between a subject and object. It would be misleading therefore, according to Heidegger, to refer to a relation of Da-sein *to* being (CP, 179-180), as this would imply two self-contained concepts being in a relation with each other. Such a view conflicts with the idea that Da-sein and being are each derivative of a prior interdependence.

A difficulty Heidegger acknowledges in defining *Ereignis* arises from his view that all Western languages are characterised by metaphysical thinking (ID, 73). They are constituted by propositions, he argues, involving a theoretical approach exemplified in the distinction drawn by Descartes between the knowing subject and the known object. Even being itself is questioned in metaphysics as though it were a kind of entity. Since Heidegger’s work is written in a Western language, he has to find a way of discussing *Ereignis* so that it is not conceptualised as a “thing” or a determinate object. The problem he faces is outlined by Sallis:

As soon as it is named *Ereignis*, one has already named it otherwise, already represented it as *something present*. Even if one were somehow to elude this trap, going on then to formulate the decisive question, the question that philosophy will always formulate, the question “What is *Ereignis*?,” one will only have stumbled on into another trap. For in asking about the “what,” about the essential Being of *Ereignis*, one asks about that which is now only to be determined from *Ereignis*, almost as if one wanted to derive the source from the stream.²⁴

Interpreting *Ereignis* involves being aware of its fundamental openness. Rather than using the definitive language of *Being and Time*, Heidegger seeks the kind of language that “pushes forth into domains that are still closed off to us” (CP, 54), including the idea of understanding being without reference to entities. He describes his approach to

language in a later work as the disturbance of settled meanings in favour of ambiguity and openness to difference.²⁵

Ereignis implies on the one hand an absence of entities in the “emptiness” of the abgrund, but on the other hand it encompasses the “fullness” of the unfolding of being (*CP*, 266). A tension exists between being as self-revealing and world-disclosing, and as the self-concealing ground of such disclosure. In Heidegger’s theory, things emerge into presence from their original state of concealment, absence being the prior condition of presence. He explains that “fullness is pregnant with the originary ‘not’” (189), defined as the other of being. *Ereignis* is a “bursting open,” where everything that is, including “man, world, earth,” is gathered into the abgrund (341). It is by virtue of the “not-character” of being that the nothing is a creative power.²⁶ (This fundamental negativity is relevant to Heidegger’s concept of originary difference, discussed in the next chapter.) In referring to the idea of being as “the emptiest and at the same time the overflowing,”²⁷ Sonya Sikka outlines Heidegger’s notion of being, based on its relation to the nothing as the source of presencing:

Being qua presencing, the occurrence of beings, is suspended in nothing and arises from nothing. Nothing is then the source of all presencing and so in spite of, or because of, its emptiness, it is an overflowing abundance. But this is being itself, not presencing but the hidden source of presencing, that which lets all beings be, the nothingness of which consists not in nonbeing but in being the impenetrably dark origin of beings. (85)

The “active essence” of being, understood as concealing and unconcealing, exists only in appropriation as the belonging together and mutual articulation of being and the human (*ID*, 38).

Since Heidegger is comparing his new understanding of being with the traditional approach, there is a certain overlap between his reasoning in the *Beiträge* and

that in *Being and Time*. He states, however, that the earlier work can be given a metaphysical interpretation: “Da-sein still stands in the shadow of the ‘anthropological’, the ‘subjectivistic’, and the ‘individualist’ ” (CP, 208), which means that Dasein can be regarded as a central reference point and as a subject set over against objects.²⁸ Such a possibility is preempted in the later work by virtue of the fact that in this writing, unlike *Being and Time*, Da-sein is understood only on the basis of *Ereignis* as a belonging to being. Heidegger has no further interest in questions such as involvements with the ready-to-hand, background familiarity with the world, or in concepts such as authenticity and attunement.

The original idea of Dasein having to create itself on the basis of the possibilities arising from the situation into which it has been thrown (BT, 360/312), is replaced in the *Beiträge* by a concept of selfhood Heidegger describes as “more originary than the one which the ‘fundamental ontological’ approach to Dasein in *Being and Time* had to set forth” (CP, 34). He writes: “No ‘we’ and ‘you’ and no ‘I’ and ‘thou’...ever reaches the self; rather it only misses the self and continues to be excluded from the self, unless it grounds itself first of all on Da-sein” (226). In contrast to the definitive idea of an “authentic” self outlined in the earlier work (BT, 312/267), Da-sein as the “ground” of the self can only be understood on the basis of an absence of ground (CP, 21). This question is discussed by Dennis Skocz in his comparison of Heidegger’s approaches in the two works: “The groundless ground of *Being and Time* grounds Dasein itself – as freedom or potentiality-for-Being. In the call of conscience which pronounces Dasein ‘guilty!’ Dasein is called to account and held responsible in its individuality. The call is from Dasein and to Dasein...In contrast, Dasein as ab-ground grounds the truth of being, not itself.”²⁹ Although belonging to being is defined in the *Beiträge* as “coming-to-

oneself,” the awareness of selfhood in this context involves a conscious rejection of the idea that the human is a self-contained being.

Whereas being and Da-sein are mutually appropriated in *Ereignis*, a different kind of relation exists between being and entities. Elsewhere Heidegger discusses the early Greek idea that in its self-concealment or withdrawal, being discloses itself in that which is: “The unconcealment of beings, the brightness granted them, obscures the light of Being. As it reveals itself in beings, Being withdraws.”³⁰ In the *Beiträge* he writes: “Be-ing...needs beings so that be-ing may hold sway” (*CP*, 22). Being is never manifest as itself, but is an original illumination in which it conceals itself in manifesting entities, and withdraws from them back into indeterminacy.³¹ Whereas the aim of *Being and Time* had been to uncover the meaning of being itself through analyzing the being of Dasein, Heidegger moves to describing “humans”³² as guarding the truth of being as the absence of ground, by means of which entities can appear as what they are. Joseph Kockelmans comments that in the *Beiträge*, “being is that which enables beings to be present to man and to each other” (50). Non-being is fundamental to being, to Da-sein, and to entities. Their belonging together arises from their common origin in a non-ground, this dynamic principle being the movement from absence to presence.

9.3 *Interpreting Ereignis*

The *Beiträge* is written more like a series of notes than a book, and at Heidegger’s direction it was not published during his lifetime.³³ It has been described as a kind of “sourcebook” for his later thinking (Malpas, 214). With regard to his work as a whole, some scholars describe Heidegger as “a wanderer frequently adopting new beginnings and striking off hither and yon on paths and pathways, the direction of which

he never in any way calculated or mastered in advance.”³⁴ Such a view accords with Heidegger’s comment at the end of *Being and Time* concerning the way he approaches the fundamental question of ontology in that work: “Whether this is the *only* way or even the right one at all, can be decided only *after one has gone along it*” (BT, 487/437). Later he explains: “All specific ‘contents’ and ‘opinions’ and ‘pathways’ of the first attempt in *Being and Time* are incidental and can disappear” (CP, 171).

One of the difficulties in the interpretation of the *Beiträge* is that the descriptions of the belonging together of being and Da-sein seem to suggest that *Ereignis* is a fundamental reality of existence. Such a view is confirmed in a later work, where Heidegger writes: “A belonging to Being prevails within man, a belonging which listens to Being because it is appropriated to Being” (ID, 38). On the other hand, the state of Da-sein, interpreted on the basis of *Ereignis*, has been described merely as a present state of potential rather than something we already are (Polt 1997, 658). Such a reading is supported by Heidegger’s claim that it is only by taking the leap and throwing aside everything familiar, that the human can “accomplish his utmost destiny as Da-sein” (CP, 177). A tentative connection is made between human response and the possibility of being’s future revelation: “If a history is ever to be allotted to us again, i.e., if we are to be creatively exposed to beings out of belongingness to being, then we cannot turn away from this destiny” (10). The interpretation of *Ereignis* as a possible future event is indicated in the statement that because of human weakness, being may ultimately “refuse” *Ereignis* (6). Heidegger’s uncertainty about the event includes the nature of the approach we are required to take in order for it to occur: “Thus it must be possible – with, of course, the corresponding leap ahead into be-ing – to find the way from ‘a being’ to the essential swaying of truth...But where should this way begin?” (272). In a similar

manner, he describes the helplessness of the human to bring about the “crossing,” which is the movement from metaphysical thinking to the other beginning: “The thinking question of the truth of be-ing is the moment that carries the crossing. This moment can never be really fixed – and even less calculated. *It* first establishes the time of enowning...Thus a long future is in store for this moment, assuming that the abandonment of beings by being is to be broken once again...*For that* man can do nothing” (CP, 15). An expression of uncertainty regarding the event is the statement that *Ereignis* and Da-sein “are still fully hidden and will remain strange for a long time yet” (23). Heidegger is also concerned about the potential effect on humans of a totally different revelation of being; he is unsure as to “whether in the future man belongs to the truth of being – and thus, from within and for this belongingness, shelters the truth as what holds true in beings – or whether the beginning of the last man drives man into a deranged animality” (20).

In Heidegger’s view, the process of interpreting the *Beiträge* involves understanding the significance of the work as a revelation of being. He describes his writing as a “preparatory exercise” (4), which does not proclaim or teach, but which itself is a part of being’s revelation. Heidegger also claims that his theory comes from being as the “hinting of a hint,” and that his work is a future thinking that has been “completely hidden up to now” (3). In rejecting the idea that his exposition of being is a “doctrine” or a “system” (59), Heidegger states that his writing is not a “report” about *Ereignis* or a description of something objective, but represents a process he later describes as being “appropriated to Being” (ID, 31). The words of the *Beiträge*, according to the author, are a response to being as a “sounding” or a “saying” (CP, 4), and represent his attempt to articulate what Susan Schoenbohm describes as “belonging

and responding...to being's own enactment" (18). Because of the significance Heidegger attributes to his work, he claims that Western thinking is now entering the other beginning, though he states that the pathway involved may represent "a very long sojourn" (*CP*, 3).

Heidegger asserts that no one understands his thinking (6), but the reason he gives for his struggle with language and the inability of his writing to initiate the other beginning, is that such an event must arise from being itself: "Whether...the grounding of the more originary truth in a being of a new history is successful, cannot be calculated, but rather is the gift or withdrawal of enownment [*Ereignis*] itself" (175). A problem with Heidegger's overall position is that since being is said to be withdrawn in the present era, and is therefore unavailable to humans other than in a metaphysical form, there are inadequate grounds for the claim that it is Heidegger's own thought that has been "hidden" up to the present time (3), so that only his work could be a response to the call of being. My critique is supported by Adorno's reference to Heidegger's "disguise of his own voice as that of Being."³⁵ Similarly, the claim made by Heidegger that he *is* able to articulate an experience of being, conflicts with his view that appropriation for the "man of today" may be "something already impossible" (175), owing to the dominance of metaphysical thinking. The idea that people today may be precluded from adopting an attitude towards being that would enable the advent of a "new history" (175), problematises Heidegger's assumption that he himself could know what such an attitude would involve. Because he is a product of the metaphysical era, Heidegger, in my view, is precluded from adopting a perspective external to that era, and thereby declaring what being has done or may do in the future.

9.4 *Ereignis* as existing reality, present possibility, or future event

There is an absence in the *Beiträge* of a clear explanation as to whether *Ereignis* is a fundamental reality of existence, merely something we have the potential to become, or a possible event of being's future revelation. These conflicting approaches are analysed by Sheehan, who proposes that commentators on this topic fall into two general groups: the first emphasises the future “new advent” of being that will replace the modern era, where the way humans engage with technology obscures their openness to being; the second group focuses on the mysterious character of being and the primacy Heidegger accords to its abyssal character – an interpretation that does not rely on the arrival of some future event.³⁶ Although Da-sein is “the ground of the possibility of future humanness” (*CP*, 209), when interpreted on the basis that the other beginning may not eventuate, this description implies that only if being is revealed at some indeterminable point in the future will humans become Da-sein, defined as “the preserver of the truth of be-ing” (13). A difficulty with Heidegger's theory is that if *Ereignis* is interpreted as a basic reality of existence, humans would be regarded as deriving from that original state, whereas if *Ereignis* is something that may occur in the future, an explanation is required as to how existence is to be interpreted in its present form. In other words, if we do not make the prescribed response to being, are we to be understood merely on the basis of a metaphysical definition?

According to Polt, “Dasein is clearly a historical possibility rather than what we already are; it is what ‘we’ already have the potential to become” (1997, 658). On this reading, the state of Da-sein is neither a description of an existing reality, nor does it depend on an unknown future event. De Beistegui proposes that Da-sein is both a task and a goal, as well as being the “future man” who has “overcome the last metaphysical

man” (240). He also claims that this future human will be a “repetition” of Da-sein, “in and through which the ‘there’ is made to be as if for the first time.” His commentary continues: “Heidegger gives too many indications of the fact that this man once existed – in the person, and more so even in the writings, of Hölderlin – and nonetheless still constitutes a future.” De Beistegui explains that Heidegger is not referring to a future that is endlessly postponed so that it never eventuates, but rather to a future that is not determined chronologically since it “already was” (241).

The interpretation of de Beistegui is based on Heidegger’s descriptions of “the ones to come,” who are the bearers of the truth of being and who “reside in masterful knowing” (*CP*, 278). Hölderlin, a writer of the past, is “the most futural” of these bearers of truth on the grounds that “he comes from the farthest away” (281), his work projecting us towards future thinking. His poetry is a “destiny” that is at the same time a beginning. This destiny is “present, insofar as it remains in its coming...The beginning remains all the more, the closer it keeps itself within the possibility that it can come” (*EHP*, 195). The suggestion that the new beginning will occur when humans have the kind of insight into being already possessed by Hölderlin, or even Heidegger himself, can only be understood against the background that the other beginning may never arrive (*CP*, 6). Because of this negative possibility, an explanation is required concerning the basis on which Hölderlin, as a past representative of “the ones to come,” could already have been designated as a bearer of the truth of being.

Heidegger attempts to address questions such as the above through the idea of an “essential” history, which he distinguishes from history as understood by the tradition: “The priority of Da-sein is not only the opposite of any manner of humanizing of man; this priority grounds a totally other essential history of man, one that is never graspable

in terms of metaphysics and thus also not in terms of ‘anthropology’ ” (*CP*, 345). Rather than being a period that has “not yet been” (161), this other history is one in which being comes to the thinker as having-been-already in what is, and is manifest in the present through the articulation of words. For Heidegger, the true thinker of being “endeavors to comprehend and express not what another thinker thought/said, but what he did not think/say, could not think/say, and why he could not think/say it.”³⁷ This kind of thinker engages with the past in the present, which is understood in relation to future possibility. An example would be Heidegger’s own thought, which in his view draws out the implications of a past writer such as Kant, at the same time as it anticipates new avenues of inquiry. Heidegger also raises the question, “In which history must man stand in order to belong to en-ownment [*Ereignis*]?” (*CP*, 223), and then states that this history will involve Da-sein’s being “thrown ahead” into an experience from within the truth of being. History is not that of the human and its relation to being and to entities, but is the happening of being itself in its various epochs or historical sendings, where it is interpreted in the ways outlined above.³⁸ William Richardson points out that in distinguishing between an “ontic” and an “ontological” history, Heidegger claims that with the former, we have no legitimate grounds to assume a continuity between one epoch and another, but that when considered ontologically, the epochs all arise from being as their hidden source, never permitting themselves to be “reduced to the sequence of a consecutive process” (*TPT*, 547).

The idea that that being transcends ontic history is problematised by Heidegger’s claim that the other beginning will involve “a very long preparation,” that it will be “unknown for a long time yet” (*CP*, 327), and that it may never occur (6). This uncertainty means that both the futural aspect of his theory in the form of a coming

epoch, and his indication that Da-sein is merely a present human potential, cannot ultimately be dissociated from chronological time. In a previous chapter, I argued that the temporality of Dasein outlined in *Being and Time* cannot function as the ground for the ontic understanding of time as sequential.³⁹ I referred to the work of Paul Ricoeur, who discusses the “*dated now*” as the inscription of phenomenological time onto cosmological time,⁴⁰ and his view that neither form of time can function as the ontological ground of the other. The epochs in Heidegger’s theory can similarly be dated according to the calendar, for example the 5th to the 4th century BC for Plato, and the 17th century for Descartes. In the application of Ricoeur’s principle, a succession of epochs could not be regarded as ontologically derivative of an “essential” history.

Heidegger fails to provide a convincing argument in support of his claim that the purported continuous epochs are ontologically prior to their ontic counterparts. Although he moves away from the subjectivist approach of *Being and Time*, where he posits the temporality of Dasein as the ground for the understanding of sequential time, a residue of this kind of thinking is evidenced in the way in which he attempts to derive an ontic interpretation of history from the kind of history that he claims is nonsequential. His thinking leaves unresolved the question of whether *Ereignis*: a) relates to our fundamental existence; b) is what we now have the potential to become; or c) can only occur if being is revealed at some indeterminate point in the future.

My argument is that Heidegger is correct when he describes the belonging together of being and Da-sein as a basic reality of existence, but later I will claim that throughout history, certain individuals have been able to experience what could be interpreted as belonging to being, and that Heidegger can only speculate regarding the idea of a new beginning in which being will reveal itself in a way that has never before

occurred in human history. In the following chapter, I propose that the autonomous agency and unilateral activity implied in the way being “withdraws” and “sends” itself, are inconsistent with Heidegger’s notion of *Ereignis*, where being and the human can only be understood on the basis of their mutual belonging together.

NOTES

¹ Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, tr. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 36 (hereafter cited in text as *ID*).

² Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, tr. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 77 (hereafter cited in text as *CP*).

³ Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, tr. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 22 (hereafter cited in text as *TB*).

⁴ Richard Polt, "Metaphysical Liberalism in Heidegger's *Beiträge zur Philosophie*," *Political Theory* 25, no. 5 (October, 1997): 658.

⁵ Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, tr. Keith Hoeller (New York: Humanity Books, 2000), 78 (hereafter cited in text as *EHP*).

⁶ Miguel de Beistegui, "The transformation of the sense of Dasein in Heidegger's *Beiträge zur Philosophie (vom Ereignis)*," *Research in Phenomenology* 33 (2003): 240.

⁷ Aristotle, *De Anima* (London: Penguin Books, 1986), 429a 15-17.

⁸ Aristotle, *On Generation and Corruption* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 319b-320a.

⁹ Aristotle, *Physics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 199a 8-15.

¹⁰ Heidegger, "On the Being and Conception of *Physis* in Aristotle's *Physics* B, 1," tr. Thomas Sheehan, *Man and World* 9, no. 3 (August, 1976): 225 (hereafter cited in text as *Physis*).

¹¹ Walter Brogan, "Double *Archê*: Heidegger's reading of Aristotle's kinetic ontology," *Angelaki* 11, no. 3 (January, 2006): 86.

¹² Thomas Sheehan, "Heidegger's Philosophy of Mind," in *Contemporary Philosophy: A New Survey*, ed. G. Floistad, Vol. 4, Philosophy of Mind (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1984), 308.

¹³ Heidegger, *Parmenides*, tr. André Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 67.

¹⁴ The hyphenated form, Da-sein, emphasises the verbal form of "being", in contrast to the earlier concept of Dasein as the being of the human who is "there," in the world.

¹⁵ Martin Dillon, *Merleau-Ponty's Ontology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1997), 233.

¹⁶ Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007), 216.

¹⁷ Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 92.

¹⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, tr. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 125/92 (hereafter cited in text as *BT*).

¹⁹ René Descartes, “Discourse on Method,” in *The Philosophical Works of Descartes* Vol. 1, tr. Elizabeth Haldane and G. Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 101.

²⁰ CP, 5. Heidegger’s concept of being in the *Beiträge* is translated by some commentators as either “be-ing” or “beyng”.

²¹ John Bricke, *Hume’s Philosophy of Mind* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 60.

²² Richard Polt, “The Event of Enthinking the Event,” in *Companion to Heidegger’s Contributions to Philosophy*, ed. C. Scott et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 91.

²³ See note 20.

²⁴ John Sallis, *Echoes: After Heidegger* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 72. In the last phrase of the citation, Sallis is referring to a passage in *On Time and Being* (TB, 24).

²⁵ See Chapter 11, section 2 herein.

²⁶ CP, 174. The idea of a “fecund negative” appears in Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, tr. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 263.

²⁷ Sonya Sikka, *Forms of Transcendence: Heidegger and Medieval Mystical Theology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 81.

²⁸ Joseph Kockelmans, *On the Truth of Being: Reflections on Heidegger’s Later Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 58.

²⁹ Dennis Skocz, “The Mysterious Disappearance of Dasein: From DA-sein through Da-SEIN to Seyn,” *Current Studies in Phenomenology and Hermeneutics*, 2003.
<http://www.filoinfo.bem-vindo.net/filosofia/modules/news/index>.

³⁰ Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 26.

³¹ Susan Schoenbohm, “Reading Heidegger’s *Contributions to Philosophy*: An Orientation,” in *Companion to Heidegger’s Contributions to Philosophy*, ed. C. Scott et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 26.

³² In some of his works after *Being and Time*, Heidegger uses the term “human” rather than “Dasein”. In “The Letter on Humanism”, *Pathmarks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 252, he refers to the need for the human to guard the truth of being. The reason for the change in terminology could be that Heidegger is moving away from the “subjectivist” view that he considers is present in the earlier work.

³³ Daniel Ferrer, *Philosophical Aphorisms: Critical Encounters with Heidegger and Nietzsche* (Varanasi: Kishor Vidya Niketan, 2004), 134. Heidegger gives instructions regarding publication of the work.

³⁴ Gregory Smith, *Martin Heidegger: Paths Taken, Paths Opened* (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007), 84.

³⁵ Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, tr. E. B. Ashton (London: Routledge, 1990), 88.

³⁶ Thomas Sheehan, "Derrida and Heidegger," *Hermeneutics and Deconstruction*, ed. Hugh Silverman (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1987), 202.

³⁷ William J. Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967), 22 (hereafter cited in text as *TPT*).

³⁸ See section 2 of this chapter.

³⁹ See Chapter Five herein.

⁴⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself As Another*, tr. Kathleen Blarney (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 53.

Chapter Ten

EREIGNIS, EPOCHS, AND DIFFERENCE

A fundamental aspect of Heidegger's thought is his description of the self-withdrawal of being at the beginning of the metaphysical era. In the *Beiträge*, he claims that this withdrawal makes possible the revelation of being in its various historical expressions throughout the epochs of Western philosophy, not only from Plato to Nietzsche, but up to and including the present time.¹ Traditional interpretations of being, according to Heidegger, cover over the Presocratic understanding of being as the process of emergence from concealment. He proposes that it may eventually be possible for being to reveal itself in a new way, and that such an event could be precipitated when humans allow themselves to enter into *Ereignis*, the event of appropriation, through a form of meditation and openness to being as the ultimate mystery. Heidegger acknowledges, however, that even if certain people enter into such a state, there is no certainty that the new revelation of being will ever eventuate (*CP*, 6).

My critique of the theory of epochs is that within any given period of history, there will be conflicting views concerning the question of being, and also that the varying interpretations of philosophical concepts at a particular time are influenced by empirical factors, including discoveries in the human and physical sciences. Furthermore, I propose that the idea of epochs should be dissociated from the concept of *Ereignis*. In one of Heidegger's later works, this concept is interpreted as an originary form of difference, where being and the human have no individual identity, but can only be understood on the basis of difference itself. I argue that since *Ereignis* is the belonging together of

Da-sein and being, it would not be possible for being to act independently in a process of self-withdrawal, or to “send” itself in various ways throughout history. Any suggestion of agency on the part of being would have consequences for humans, and would imply that being and Da-sein have some form of independent existence. My position is that we have always had access to experiences that are interpreted in a manner consistent with the notion of originary difference, but that there is no connection between these experiences and the ways being has been conceptualised in the history of metaphysics.

10.1 *Epochs and the sending of being*

Heidegger’s theory of being is that on the basis of its withdrawal at the time of Plato, it reveals itself in various ways throughout the phases or epochs of Western thought.² Each epoch is determined by the manner in which being both gives and withholds itself, and by the way in which the concept of being is interpreted. Heidegger discusses the relation between the ideas of giving and sending, and the meaning he gives to the term, “epoch”: “A giving which gives only its gift, but in the giving holds itself back and withdraws, such a giving we call sending...The history of Being means destiny of Being in whose sendings both the sending and the It which sends forth hold back with their self-manifestation. To hold back is, in Greek, *epoché*. Hence we speak of the epochs of the destiny of Being” (*TB*, 8-9). These epochs for Heidegger are the Greek, the Middle Ages, and modernity. In “The Origin of the Work of Art,” he explains the various ways in which artworks have revealed an understanding of being. In the period of the Greeks, “what was in the future to be called Being was set into work, setting the standard. The realm of beings opened up was then transformed into a being in the sense of God’s creation. This happened in the Middle Ages. This kind of being was again transformed at

the beginning and in the course of the modern age. Beings became objects that could be controlled and seen through by calculation.”³ Throughout this whole period, according to Heidegger, being has been understood as a kind of entity. In his view, no particular expression of metaphysics is “the achievement and possession of a thinker,”⁴ since the various interpretations are attributed to the activity of being itself: “Being-as-history is neither the history of man and of humanity nor the history of man’s relationship to beings or Being. Being-as-history is Being itself and nothing else.”⁵ Whereas in *Being and Time*, the forgetting of the true meaning of being is said to be the result of problems in the thinking of Plato and those who followed, Heidegger comes to the view that metaphysical thinking does not represent an “omission” on the part of the philosophers concerned, but is a consequence of being’s self-concealment: “As the privation of Being, the concealment of Being belongs to the opening up of Being. The oblivion of Being which constitutes the essence of metaphysics and became the stimulus for *Being and Time* belongs to the essence of Being itself” (*TB*, 29). Because of its self-withdrawal, being is responsible both for its concealment and for the differing ways it gives itself in the various epochs:

When Plato represents Being as idea,...when Aristotle represents it as *energeia*, Kant as position, Hegel as the absolute concept, Nietzsche as the will to power, these are not doctrines advanced by chance, but rather words of Being as answers to a claim which speaks in the sending concealing itself, in the “there is, It gives, Being.” Always retained in the withdrawing sending, Being is unconcealed for thinking with its epochal abundance of transmutations. (*TB*, 9)

Joseph Kockelmans writes that being addresses the thinker, and that in each epoch of history, being “dictates what the thinker is to say in response.”⁶

Heidegger links *Ereignis* and *aletheia* in proposing that each “gives voice to a bond that binds all thinking, providing that thinking submits to the call of what must be thought” (*TB*, 24). Both of the Greek concepts are based on the idea of non-essence as being fundamental to essence,⁷ and the fact that concealment is presupposed in unconcealment. Although being is always withdrawn, Heidegger’s theory is that from the beginning of the metaphysical era, there has been a progressive deterioration in the way being has been understood: “The history of Being is the history of the oblivion of Being escalating itself...The further one moves away from the beginning of Western thinking, from *aletheia*, the further *aletheia* goes into oblivion” (*TB*, 52). The result is that we are now in an epoch defined by Heidegger as *Gestell* or “enframing.”⁸ Humans and entities are reduced to the status of a “standing-reserve” or a stockpile for technological purposes, and being is conceived as merely a store of energy for human use. This present epoch, in Heidegger’s view, represents “the supreme danger” (*QCT*, 26). He states that we may be standing “in the very twilight of the most monstrous transformation our planet has ever undergone, the twilight of that epoch in which earth itself hangs suspended.”⁹ Even the destructiveness of an atomic bomb, he claims, is not in itself the real danger, but the attitude towards technology that it represents. Heidegger’s theory is that the epochs of being cannot be controlled, and that *Gestell* “will never allow itself to be mastered either positively or negatively by a human doing” (*QCT*, 38). Since it is a manifestation of being, *Gestell* “holds complete sway over man” (25). On the other hand, Heidegger refers to Hölderlin’s statement that the present age cannot completely block the appearing of truth, since the presence of greatest danger gives rise to an upsurge of saving power (28). An era such as the present still represents a particular sending of being, despite the fact that the actions of humans would seem to be the result of their own

misguided thinking. Heidegger proposes that the next era may herald the “other” beginning, when being will finally be revealed.

10.2 *The human response to epochs*

On the one hand, Heidegger claims that it is impossible for any individual or group of people to “break or direct the progress of history,”¹⁰ and that the dominance of *Gestell* threatens the possibility that humans will be denied the opportunity to experience a more original revealing of being. However, he offers a solution to the problem: “It is precisely in this extreme danger that the innermost indestructible belongingness of man within granting may come to light, provided that we, for our part, begin to pay heed to the coming to presence of technology” (*QCT*, 32). We are exhorted to engage in the process of *Gelassenheit* or releasement, where we focus on the mystery of how everything emerges from concealment: “Releasement towards things” and openness to the mystery of being’s revealing and withdrawal belong together, and allow us to inhabit the world in a totally different way, provided we engage in a meditative and “persistent courageous thinking” (*DT*, 56). The need for courage is due to the fact that we cannot be sure how being will be revealed. We are to wait upon the arrival of a new unveiling of being, but this waiting does not involve the anticipation of a determinate event, since that kind of approach would involve representational thinking: “In waiting we leave-open what we are waiting for” (*DT*, 68). Through adopting such an attitude, we are brought into the openness, the indefinable horizon that surrounds us, where we wait for something beyond human will, preparing ourselves for whatever may eventuate.

In the *Beiträge*, Heidegger proposes that the new beginning may arrive when humans make the appropriate response to being, and although in some of his writings he

seems to regard the new beginning as a definite possibility, in one of his last works he expresses doubt as to whether the present world civilization will be able to overcome the present focus on using things and humans merely for technological purposes.¹¹ His concern is that because of human weakness, *Ereignis* may not occur: “But if enowning [*Ereignis*] is what makes up the essential swaying of be-ing, how close must the danger be that be-ing refuses and must refuse enownment because man has become feeble for Da-sein” (*CP*, 6). Admitting that his thinking “does not wish and is not able to predict the future,” Heidegger remains uncertain about the nature of what is to come. He writes that the new era

may happen not of and through itself, but in virtue of the readiness of man for a determination which, whether listened to or not, always speaks in the destiny of man which has not yet been decided. It is just as uncertain whether world civilization will soon be abruptly destroyed or whether it will be stabilized for a long time, in a stabilization, however, which will not rest in something enduring, but rather establish itself in a sequence of changes, each of which presenting the latest fashion. (*EP*, 379)

10.3 *Critical assessments*

My critique of Heidegger’s position begins by addressing his claim that the present epoch is the one of greatest danger, and that the next epoch may represent the new beginning. In the darkest periods of human history, it would have been equally legitimate for thinkers to claim that their particular era was the worst conceivable. The fifth century, which witnessed the barbarity of Attila the Hun, would qualify in this regard. Furthermore, it is possible that in a coming epoch, individuals may be forced to succumb to a process of complete dehumanization. On the other hand, an argument can be made that alongside the problems arising from technology, there have been significant

developments in areas such as standards of education and the elimination and treatment of disease. Sociological advances in recent times would include the abolition of slavery, the recognition of the rights of women, children, and members of minority groups, together with worldwide movements towards the abolition of the death penalty and the inhuman treatment of prisoners, freedom of religious practice, and the awareness of our responsibility towards the planet. The beliefs and practices of societies in any period of history are inevitably influenced by a variety of interlocking factors, including discoveries in the human and physical sciences. With respect to events in the past, Heidegger outlines a strange possibility without elaborating on its meaning. After the statement, “be-ing en-owns Da-sein for itself, for grounding its truth,” he claims that without this grounding, “be-ing would have to be consumed by the fire of its own unredeemed glow” (*CP*, 343). He then asks: “How can we know how often this has not already happened? If we knew that, then there would be no necessity of thinking be-ing in the uniqueness of its essential sway.” Whatever is meant by the self-consuming of being would seem to preempt both the need for humans today to respond in a particular way, and the possibility that being may be revealed at some point in the future.

Several scholars contest Heidegger’s theory of epochs and the possibility of being’s coming advent. Sandra Bartky explains that a historical epoch is given the ontological meaning of a “mittence” or “sending” of being, involving a particular form of being’s self-disclosure. She claims, however, that Heidegger has no way of showing how any given sending can be the origin of what occurs at the “ontic” level of “ordinary social, political or economic history.”¹² An event such as the French Revolution, for example, would provide the most likely explanation of how the concept of universal human rights developed historically. Similarly, Heidegger’s approach fails to take

account of the way in which cultural or religious factors can influence the way an individual interprets the mystery of existence. Bartky also points out that thinkers in a single epoch can hold apparently incompatible views, and that new forms of understanding can arise within any epoch.¹³ She cites Sartre's claim that "Marxism has defined the boundaries within which all contemporary philosophy must move" (1979, 230), a position that would conflict with other theories in political philosophy, as well as with the phenomenology of Husserl and the early Heidegger. These differing views undermine the theory that being is manifest in a particular way at any given period of time.

The idea that the early Greeks understood the world as the mysterious self-disclosure of being, is referred to by Sonya Sikka as the theory of "an originally present luminosity" in writings of that period.¹⁴ This description is based on Heidegger's view of the Presocratics' experience of wonder at the mystery of existence, whereby they had access to an understanding of being.¹⁵ Sikka regards Heidegger's theory as doubtful, but she claims that even if the Presocratics had some limited insight into being, "this would not necessarily mean that no thinker after the early Greeks could possibly see what they saw in what they said about being, or mean what they meant" (*FT*, 276). She also explains that "for Heidegger, what is originally uncovered has its roots in what can show itself, the phenomenon." (Heidegger interprets "phenomenon" on the basis of the Greek idea of a primordial manifestation.)¹⁶ Sikka therefore concludes that "what is uncovered originally may in some sense be always the same," so that it would be invalid to claim that the understanding of being necessarily differs from one period of history to another. It is also asserted by Sikka that if mystics such as Bonaventure or Eckhart were asked whether they heard or saw what being itself means, the answer could not be in the negative, as

Heidegger's theory implies, simply by virtue of the fact that they belong to "the supposed history of the forgetting of being," based on the idea of being's withdrawal. In Sikka's view, being can be accessed at all times by genuine thinkers, and that it is "constantly open to being both remembered and forgotten" (*FT*, 276).

Joseph O'Leary challenges Heidegger's description of a "progressive withdrawal of being and forgottenness of being," together with the claim that metaphysics reaches its culmination in German idealism and in technology.¹⁷ What is required, O'Leary argues, is a process of "reducing the grandiose project of 'overcoming metaphysics' to the modest one of a critical questioning of the metaphysical tradition." O'Leary further claims that instead of waiting for "an eschatological turn-about" as proposed by Heidegger, in our thinking and listening we should be aware of the fact that being has addressed humans throughout history (235). In O'Leary's view, the idea of the "grantings" and "withdrawals" of being represents the use of categories inappropriate to the way being is manifest, since Heidegger is depicting being as somehow acting "in an ordered sequence" (236). The possibility that a new epoch will eventuate is also contested by Karl Löwith, who enquires as to what assurance we could have that if being "conceals" itself in the way it has from Plato to Nietzsche, it would at some point in time be also moved to reveal itself.¹⁸

Having expressed uncertainty as to whether the new epoch will ever arrive, Heidegger nevertheless exhorts us to prepare ourselves and wait, the implication being that if a sufficient number of people engage in such preparation, the new epoch will arrive. The futility of this kind of thinking is outlined by Sikka:

The decision that Western Dasein makes or fails to make in the twilight of its history...cannot decisively determine the nature of the end of the destiny of being to which its own essence belongs.

Nor can Dasein guarantee the dawning of another beginning for itself, since this lies, ultimately, in the self-destining or granting of being...Dasein's own decision cannot turn being. It can only turn to being and wait, and hope, for being to turn itself. (*FT*, 260)

According to Heidegger, the initiative lies with being as to whether the other beginning will eventuate (*CP*, 6), so that the question of individuals' waiting and hoping for the event would seem to be of no consequence. The kind of preparation Heidegger discusses is described as "essential thinking,"¹⁹ by means of which Dasein can engage in an act of "sacrifice." The truth of being – that being as the ground of beings is a non-ground – must be preserved, he claims, regardless of what happens to human beings and to entities. In Caputo's words, "Dasein must become less and less so being can become more and more."²⁰ Being grants "the nobility of a poverty" (*WIM*, 236), by means of which humans can engage in an originary thanking for the grace and favour bestowed on them as recipients of the gift of being itself. The problems associated with preparing for a future epoch are addressed by Bartky, who points out that humans are required to respond in a certain way, but that at the same time they must wait for an act on the part of being: "The confused language of later Heidegger, and its very exhortatory tone, suggests that there is something I *can* do to move the world beyond the danger and despair of modern times, but when I try to discover what, I am told to wait attentively for Being to bestow its 'grace' " (1970, 381).

10.4 *Ereignis and difference*

My argument is that Heidegger's work lacks an adequate explanation for the connection he makes between *Ereignis* and the epochal sendings of being. This question is relevant to the way he develops the concept of *Ereignis* in the period following the

Beiträge. Even in this work, *Ereignis* can be regarded as incompatible with the theory of epochs, but I propose that Heidegger's later clarification of the concept creates additional problems for his theory.

Both the Presocratics and the thinkers of the tradition, according to Heidegger, overlook the fundamental significance of *aletheia*, unconcealment (*EGT*, 26). This situation, in his view, does not arise because of a weakness on the part of the philosophers concerned; rather, it originates in the self-concealment of being itself. Such descriptions have led certain commentators to claim that Heidegger tends to hypostasise being "into an autonomous 'other' that seems to function on its own apart from entities and from man."²¹ Such an interpretation is supported by Heidegger's statement that being "abandoned" beings in the Socratic era, his reference to the "distress" of being itself in having to overcome the first beginning (*CP*, 230), and the above descriptions of being as granting humans the nobility of a poverty and bestowing upon them grace and favour. The idea that being is ultimately responsible for appropriation, and that there are "the few" who seek to think about being (9), could even be interpreted as a form of selective process on the part of being regarding which humans will make the necessary response. This apparent autonomy of being is reinforced by the claim that the relation of being to beings can come only from being itself (*EGT*, 49), and also in the statement "Being itself hurls man...beyond himself to venture forth toward being" (*ITM*, 163). László Versényi comments that man is reduced to a helpless suppliant who has to wait upon the movements of an enigmatic mystery.²² The problem of implied unilateral activity on the part of being, in my view, is inconsistent with the concept of originary difference that Heidegger outlines in his work of 1957, *Identity and Difference*.

As is the case with the *Beiträge*, Heidegger in the later work sets his thinking

against the background of the metaphysical tradition. The major difference between the two approaches is that being is no longer described in terms suggesting a form of autonomy. Heidegger himself does not indicate a change of direction in his thinking, but in the decades following the *Beiträge*, his writing reveals a significant development in his understanding of difference as an originary concept. The belonging together of being and the human is now described as arising from difference itself – a position that in my view would problematise the idea of an independent functioning of being. Since the two concepts can be understood only on the basis of their mutual dependence, neither could be interpreted as an individual identity, or as having the capacity to engage in activity that would have consequences for the other.

Heidegger proposes that in his earlier theory of the ontological difference, the concepts of being and beings can be regarded as having a certain independence. He then explains that “man” belongs to the totality of being, which includes all other entities, but that unlike the latter, man is open to being and is thereby appropriated to being.²³ Being itself “concerns man through the claim it makes on him. For it is man, open toward Being, who alone lets Being arrive as presence” (*ID*, 31). Heidegger moves from this basic restatement of *Ereignis* that he had outlined in the *Beiträge*, to addressing the notion of being in relation to difference, and he seeks to trace the concept of difference to its essential origin. Although the theory of the ontological difference involves an overturning of the metaphysical position, according to Heidegger, it does not reach the origin of difference itself (50-51).

In developing his idea of an originary form of difference, Heidegger cites the statement of Parmenides: “For the same perceiving (thinking) as well as being” (27), where two different things, being and thinking, are regarded as the same. Heidegger

claims that Parmenides interprets being as a characteristic of identity, whereas in its definition of identity as the unity of a thing with itself, the tradition understands identity as a characteristic of being. The meaning of the above statement, according to Heidegger, is that “thinking and Being belong together in the Same and by virtue of this Same” (27). He contrasts the belonging together of being and thought with the traditional notion of identity: “The equal or identical always moves toward the absence of difference, so that everything may be reduced to a common denominator. The same, by contrast, is the belonging together of what differs, through a gathering by way of the difference. We can only say ‘the same’ if we think difference.”²⁴ In Heidegger’s view, the same is not equivalent to the identical: “In the merely identical, the difference disappears. In the same the difference appears” (*ID*, 45). He explains how the traditional view of identity as a characteristic of being is later replaced with the transcendental reflection of the German idealists and the notion of a mediated synthesis between subject and object. Joan Stambaugh proposes that if the above statement of Parmenides were to be reformulated by Hegel, the result would be the proposition that all being is ultimately thought.²⁵

Heidegger then draws a contrast between the process of emphasising “together,” which suggests a mediated synthesis, and of emphasising “belonging.” The latter approach means that thinking and being are held apart at the same time as they are held together, rather than being collapsed into a single metaphysical unit. For Heidegger, the meaning of “together” is “determined by the belonging” (*ID*, 29). He writes that, as the being who thinks, “man” is open to being, and is defined as “this relationship of responding to Being.” The passage continues: “A belonging to Being prevails within man, a belonging which listens to Being because it is appropriated to Being” (31). This interdependence determines what we understand by “man” and “being.” As Albert

Hofstadter explains: “Man is man only in his belonging together with Being, and Being is Being only in its belonging together with man. They are not given antecedently to the belonging.”²⁶ The human is nothing other than its response to being.

Metaphysics regards being and beings as two separate elements, the former being the ground of the latter, whereas in Heidegger’s theory, it is not possible to prioritise “being” over “man.” Because they belong to each other, their togetherness is conditioned by this belonging. For Heidegger, being and beings can only be understood in their relation of difference; they are not self-contained elements requiring coordination: “Beings and Being somehow are carried away from one another, are separated from one another, and yet are also related to each other; and that occurs from themselves and not on the ground of some act of distinction...Distinction in the sense of difference implies that there is an issuance between Being and beings.”²⁷

One of the difficulties Heidegger acknowledges with his theory is that because of the limitations of language, “difference” tends to be understood as that which distinguishes one concept from another. Although he has to use language to explain the meaning of being, Heidegger questions whether Western languages could ever offer possibilities outside those of metaphysics, where things and concepts are given definitive meanings (*ID*, 73). From the perspective of *Ereignis*, however, “man” and “being” arise from difference itself. (Heidegger also applies this principle to the relation between being and entities). Stambaugh writes: “We do not know and we cannot predict what is related. Man does not have the static essence of the *animal rationale* or the subject thinking its object. One of Heidegger’s most basic insights is that we do not know what man is, even if he could be understood as a ‘what’ at all” (12). In Heidegger’s view, the word “difference” is inadequate to express the notion of togetherness. He claims that until the

nature of the difference is understood, it is impossible to comprehend either being or beings, since each can appear only by virtue of such difference (*ID*, 71). Any attempt to conceptualise them leads to the idea of a distinction between the two, “something made up by our understanding” (62). According to Caputo, Heidegger’s later concept of difference does not indicate “any ontic difference between entities, *or even* the ontological difference between Being and beings, but that which *opens up* the ontological difference, the dif-fering in the difference.”²⁸ Stambaugh points out that in *Identity and Difference*, Heidegger’s inquiry into “the relation of man and being” is not concerned with the components of the relation, but rather “the relation as a relation” (8). In other words, Heidegger is not referring to the conventional understanding of a relation between two separate elements or entities, but he proposes instead a concept of “relation” that indicates a prior connection between the elements on the basis of which they can then be understood. If we adopt a metaphysical perspective, Heidegger argues, we cannot adequately address the meaning of “being” or the meaning of “man.” He writes: “As long as we ask our questions in this way, we are confined within the attempt to represent the ‘together’ of man and being as a coordination, and to explain this coordination either in terms of man or in terms of being” (*ID*, 30).

In developing his concept of originary difference, Heidegger refers to the early Greek concept of *physis*, which he associates with *aletheia* – the emergence from concealment into presence. The idea of being as the process of unconcealment, in his view, is a basic but unacknowledged presupposition in philosophy. In revealing itself, difference at the same time conceals itself, which means that “all presencing and every present entails a certain absence.”²⁹ Difference conceals itself and differs from itself because it is not a thing, and lacks the stability of a ground. For Heidegger, difference is

inseparable from being, as indicated in his claim that being as well as entities appear by virtue of difference. This originary form of difference has been interpreted as “the power to at once differentiate and identify,...the *dynamis* of dif-fering, bearing apart.”³⁰ Similarly, the process is described as “a scission (*Schied*) between (*Unter*) Being and beings that refers them to each other by the very fact that it cleaves them in two.”³¹ Heidegger refers to being as the “unconcealing overwhelming,” where it “arrives in” entities, but without leaving its own place; entities constitute “the sense of arrival that keeps itself concealed” (*ID*, 65). It is differentiation that grants and holds apart the “between,” in which being as overwhelming, and entities as arrival, are held towards each other and at the same time held apart. Being and beings “are present, and thus differentiated, by the virtue of the Same, the differentiation” (65). Since originary difference is portrayed in these passages as a primordial reality with respect to entities, Heidegger would have to apply his concept in the same way to the interpretation of *Ereignis* as an expression of originary difference with regard to Da-sein. It would then be impossible for him to claim that appropriation is something that has yet to occur. Furthermore, the idea of *Ereignis* as an underlying reality of existence is already implied in the statement that “the appropriation appropriates man and Being to their essential togetherness” (38).

A question that arises from the association of *Ereignis* with the epochal sendings of being, is that Heidegger envisions the new epoch as one where being will no longer be withdrawn. What would then be required is an alternative explanation both as to how things could appear at all, since being’s withdrawal is the condition for things to be manifest, and how the appropriation of the human would occur if being were fully present. In *Identity and Difference*, Heidegger expands the position he had taken in the

Beiträge that in its withdrawal, being sends itself in various ways at different periods of history. He now claims that the covering over of the original meaning of being as unconcealment involves not only the concealing of being as the process of emergence from concealment, but constitutes the historical “oblivion” or “veiling” of difference itself: “The oblivion of the difference has withdrawn itself from the beginning. The oblivion belongs to the difference because the difference belongs to the oblivion” (50). Since originary difference is clearly articulated in Heidegger’s work of 1957, on the basis of the above argument, he would have to admit that the concept is no longer “veiled” – either for himself, his readers, or even perhaps for the “future ones.”³² If the oblivion of originary difference is an essential component of originary difference itself, the concept would be abrogated once it is understood, and Heidegger could no longer claim that we must wait for the arrival of a new revelation of being.

I hold that the interpretations of being in the evolution of Western philosophy are unrelated to the purported sendings of being, but arise from the fact that we form conclusions and draw insights from the knowledge available to us, including the ideas that have been handed down to us from earlier thinkers. My argument is that since being and the human can only be understood in reference to each other, there is no possibility that being could engage in an independent process of manifesting itself to humans in different ways, either in the past, or at some unknown and indeterminable point in the future.

Heidegger’s writing as a whole focuses on the experience of being. In his later work, the descriptions of this experience include the process of “letting go” in the form of meditative thinking, and an openness to the mystery of being and the abgrund. However, I will argue that since the states he describes involve particular affective

reactions, some form of distinction still exists between the individual who is the subject of the experience, and the ideas to which attention is directed. Later I will claim that throughout history, mystics in various traditions have reported experiences that are interpreted in a manner compatible with the theory of originary difference. They are characterised by a complete absence of self-awareness, together with a sense of the mystery that gives rise to the spatio-temporal features of everyday existence. On that basis they could be described as experiences of “belonging to being.” My position represents a challenge to Heidegger’s theory that being may finally reveal itself in a coming epoch, or that it may refuse to do so because of human weakness and the dominance of metaphysical thinking.

In the next chapter, I analyse Heidegger’s theory of language, where originary difference is presented as a fundamental reality of existence that bears no relation to the question of epochs. I also outline similarities between originary difference and the concepts of the *apeiron* in Anaximander, and *chōra* in Plato. These three ideas will later be connected with the interpretation of mystical experience as a dynamic integration of unity and difference.

NOTES

¹ Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, tr. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 303-304 (hereafter cited in text as *CP*).

² Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, tr. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 9 (hereafter cited in text as *TB*).

³ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Poetry Language, Thought*, tr. Albert Hofstadter, (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 77.

⁴ Heidegger, "Nietzsche's Word: 'God Is Dead'," in *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. and trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 157.

⁵ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. 2: The Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, ed. and trans. David Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 82-83.

⁶ Joseph Kockelmans, "Heidegger on metaphor and metaphysics," in *Martin Heidegger: Critical Assessments Vol. 3*, ed. Christopher Macann (London: Routledge, 1992), 316.

⁷ Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. David Krell (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 133.

⁸ Heidegger, *The Question concerning Technology and other Essays*, tr. William Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 19 (hereafter cited in text as *QCT*).

⁹ Heidegger, "The Anaximander Fragment," in *Early Greek Thinking* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 17 (hereafter cited in text as *EGT*).

¹⁰ Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, tr. Hans Freund and John Anderson (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 52 (hereafter cited in text as *DT*).

¹¹ Heidegger, "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking," in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. David Krell (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 379 (hereafter cited in text as *EP*).

¹² Sandra Lee Bartky, "Originative Thinking in the Later Philosophy of Heidegger," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 30, no. 3 (March 1970): 377.

¹³ Sandra Lee Bartky, "Heidegger and the Modes of World-Disclosure," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 40, no. 2 (December 1979): 229-230.

¹⁴ Sonya Sikka, *Forms of Transcendence: Heidegger and Medieval Mystical Theology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 275 (hereafter cited in text as *FT*).

¹⁵ Heidegger, *Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected "Problems" of "Logic"*, tr. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 136.

¹⁶ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, tr. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 51/28.

¹⁷ Joseph O’Leary, “Theological resonances of *Der Satz vom Grund*,” in *Martin Heidegger: Critical Assessments* Vol. 1, ed. Christopher Macann (London: Routledge, 1992), 235.

¹⁸ Karl Löwith, “Nature, History and Existentialism,” in *Nature, History and Existentialism*, ed. Arnold Levinson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966), 17.

¹⁹ Heidegger, “What is metaphysics?” in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 236.

²⁰ John Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger’s Thought* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986), 27.

²¹ Thomas Sheehan, “On Movement and the Destruction of Ontology,” *The Monist* 64, no. 4, (October, 1981), 534.

²² László Versényi, *Heidegger, Being and Truth* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 155.

²³ Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, tr. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 31 (hereafter cited in text as *ID*).

²⁴ Heidegger, “Poetically Man Dwells,” in *Poetry Language, Thought*, tr. Albert Hofstadter, (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 218.

²⁵ Joan Stambaugh, Introduction to *Identity and Difference*, tr. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 10.

²⁶ Albert Hofstadter, “Enownment”, *Boundary* 4, no. 2 (1976): 365.

²⁷ Heidegger, *Nietzsche* Vol. 2: *The Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, tr. David Krell and Frank Capuzzi (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 150-55, as cited in Joseph Kockelmans, *On the Truth of Being: Reflections on Heidegger’s Later Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 79.

²⁸ John Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 179.

²⁹ Tracy Fessenden, “Mark C. Taylor and the Limits of the Postmodern Imagination,” ed. Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg, *Postmodernism and the Holocaust* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998), 87.

³⁰ Theodore Kisiel, “The genesis of *Being and Time*”, *Man and World* 25 (1992): 28.

³¹ Joseph Kockelmans, “Ontological Difference, Hermeneutics, and Language,” in Joseph J. Kockelmans (ed.), *On Heidegger and Language* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1980), p.215.

³² See Chapter 9, section 4 herein.

Chapter Eleven

LANGUAGE, THE APEIRON, CHŌRA

In some of his works following the *Beiträge*, Heidegger develops a new concept of language that is interpreted on the basis of originary difference. The significance of this theory in the present study is that it reinforces those aspects of Heidegger's thought where *Ereignis* is presented as a fundamental reality of existence.¹ On that basis I will use the theory to support my view that humans are already appropriated, and have always had access to the experience of being. In the first part of this chapter, I examine Heidegger's concept of language with particular reference to the notion of being as an absence of ground. I also draw attention to the similarities between the theories of Heidegger and Derrida in relation to the question of language and difference. In Chapter Twelve I will use these similarities to challenge Derrida's view that Heidegger's work as a whole is metaphysical. At the same time I will endorse Derrida's critique of Heidegger with respect to those passages where being is posited as a form of ultimate meaning.

Heidegger's theory of language is set against the background of structuralism, founded on the work of the linguistic theorist, Ferdinand de Saussure. In the structuralist approach, the meaning of a word is said to be based on its difference from all other words within a system of meaning determined on the grounds of social convention.² Saussure's theory is adapted by Derrida in his concept of *différance*, understood as a constant play of differences, where words or signs are substituted for each other, resulting in a continual deferral of meaning.³ As the origin of linguistic difference, *différance* is that

which precedes language. In a similar manner, Heidegger outlines an originary concept of language that makes possible the spoken word. He associates originary language with being, determined on the basis of *logos* as a gathering and presencing, and *physis* as emergence from concealment. Heidegger also links originary language to poetry, understood in the original Greek sense as *poiesis* – a process whereby the being of things is manifest. A further exposition of language concerns the way it “holds together” the fourfold of earth, sky, gods, and mortals. As a principle underlying everything that exists, the fourfold is interpreted by Heidegger on the basis of originary difference, each of the elements being understood only on the basis of its belonging to the other three.

Following the above analysis, I will argue that the idea of originary difference is already implied in the work of Anaximander and Plato, who describe a dynamic principle of potentiality underlying the emergence of the cosmos. I also propose that the insights of Heidegger and these two Greek thinkers can be confirmed through the interpretation of experiences involving the apparent dissolution of the dualities that structure language and thought. It is these kinds of experiences that, in my view, can be described as “belonging to being.”

11.1 *Différance*

The background to Heidegger’s concept of originary language is the linguistic theory of Saussure, who claims that language has an independent oral tradition, and that written language exists for the purpose of representing spoken language (*CGL*, 23). Saussure describes language as a system of signs governing the use of words. His concept of the sign comprises a “signifier,” the acoustical element or signifying sound, and the “signified,” the conceptual element of the sign (17). As a

composite, the sign points beyond itself to an object, the “referent.” Saussure’s theory is that the signifier has no necessary relationship to the signified, and that in language there are only differences. The relationship between the signifier and its referent is an arbitrary one; the meaning of signs is not determined by their positive content but by their differences from all other signs (120).

Against Saussure, Derrida argues that since the sign is arbitrary and has no necessary reference to reality, the spoken word is no more natural than the written word.⁴ He adapts Saussure’s theory in his concept of *différance*, where the replacement of an “e” by an “a” in the French term can only be recognised in written form; the differences between phonemes remains inaudible (*Dif.*, 5). Derrida defines *différance* as a “play of differences” within a sign-system: “Every concept is inscribed in a chain or in a system within which it refers to the other, to other concepts, by means of the systematic play of differences” (11). Two aspects of *différance* are discussed in his work, one of which is the temporal sense of delay. Since there is no origin of language, words can only be defined through their relation to other words, with the result that meaning is always deferred. The other aspect of *différance* is “to be not identical,” and involves a distance or a “spacing” between terms (8).

The constant deferral of meaning, according to Derrida, problematises the idea of a natural bond of sense to the senses, or as Saussure describes it, “the only true bond, the bond of sound” (*CGL*, 25). In a similar manner, Derrida challenges Husserl’s theory of a “pure expression” that occurs as an interior monologue.⁵ He argues that for Husserl, the process of “hearing myself speak” means that my voice, serving as the signifier of my intended meaning, is in absolute proximity to the intended meaning itself (*SP*, 80).

Derrida’s alternative position is that when I express the “I” in written form, I signify the

“I” to myself, so that the proximity of the signifier to the signified is not only broken, but is revealed as never having existing in the first place. The signification of the “I” occurs through the medium of a word or sign that can be used repeatedly, so that the presentation of meaning, even to the self, is dependent on the possibility of its repetition (54).

As is the case with originary difference in Heidegger, Derrida explains that *différance* cannot be regarded as having any “being.” It can never be completely understood because it “bypasses the order of apprehension in general” (*Dif.*, 3). We cannot inquire concerning *différance* as though it were a concept by asking “What differs?” or “Who differs?” (14), since without *différance*, language would be impossible. According to Derrida, “*différance* is literally neither a word nor a concept, but is rather the origin of differences”; “*Différance* is not, does not exist” (6).

11.2 *Heidegger and language*

In his own movement away from the structuralist approach, Heidegger proposes a concept of language from which ordinary speech is derived. This originary understanding is described as a form of language “whereby everything first steps into the open, which we then discuss and talk about in everyday language.”⁶ As an original openness, language cannot be defined; it is impossible to speak about it, since any discussion would turn it into a thing: “To talk about language is presumably worse than to write about silence. We do not wish to assault language in order to force it into the grip of ideas already fixed beforehand. We do not wish to reduce the nature of language to a concept.”⁷

The theory of originary language is developed on the basis of *logos*, understood by the early Greeks as another name for being, or “the presencing of what is present.”⁸ Heidegger relates this concept to *physis*, defined as “the unconcealing of the concealed.” The term *logos* can be traced back to the verb *legein*, the meaning of which is to collect or gather, “to place one thing beside another” (*EGT*, 61). *Legein* is associated with the German verb *lesen*, “to read,” but Heidegger points out that reading is merely one kind of gathering, where the words on a printed page are brought together so as to form a context of meaning (61). Expression and signification are characteristics of language in a conventional sense, but they are derivative of *logos*, understood originally as that which lets something be seen (*BT*, 56/33).

As the process of making manifest, *logos* lacks any fundamental ground. Heidegger refers to his own statement, “language is language,” and explains that such a claim does not imply either that language is grounded in something else, or that language could be a ground for something other than itself. He also writes: “Language speaks. If we let ourselves fall into the abyss denoted by this sentence, we do not go tumbling into an emptiness. We fall upward to a height. Its loftiness opens up a depth” (*PLT*, 192). Originary language as an absence of ground is that which enables speech to occur: “At whatever time and in whatever way we speak a language, language itself never has the floor...Only because in everyday speaking language does *not* bring itself to language but holds itself are we able simply to go ahead and speak a language, and so to deal with something and to negotiate something by speaking.”⁹

Because of the mysterious nature of language, it conceals its “origin” and cannot therefore be conceptualised as having any form of being (*OWL*, 81). The idea of self-concealment relates to *physis*, so that for Heidegger, there can be no such thing as a

pure fundamental meaning from which other meanings are then derived, nor can a definitive meaning ever be attributed to an individual word. John Sallis writes: “Words are not like coins which with the passage of time, with the passage from hand to hand, get so effaced that their inscriptions become more and more difficult to discern. Words do not, in this sense, get worn out, used up...but rather are always already effaced, concealed, apparent only in what is already derivative. The root appears only in the stem.”¹⁰ Heidegger describes originary language as involving ambiguity and openness to difference and otherness. In his work, *On the Way to Language*, “way” is defined as a plurality of courses or directions involving both a wandering and a risk-taking, where meanings can be generated from that which remains unsaid. Originary language is a way of mystery underlying our everyday speech and thought, and Heidegger uses the imagery of sound in attempting to describe it: “It is just as much a property of language to sound and ring and vibrate, to hover and to tremble, as it is for what is spoken to carry a meaning” (*OWL*, 98). Gerald Bruns describes originary language as “overpowering and uncanny, uncontrollable and wholly other.”¹¹

11.3 *Language and Ereignis*

The concept of *Ereignis* in the *Beiträge* refers to the mutual belonging of being and the human, but in certain works after the mid-1930s, *Ereignis* is also associated with the reciprocal relation we have with language. Heidegger claims that although it is “not anything human” (*PLT*, 207), originary language occurs in our own speaking, since it “needs and uses the speaking of mortals.” Correspondingly, the human in speaking “has been brought into its own by language” (208). According to Heidegger, the term for “own” or “ownhood,” *das Eigen*, is that which enables beings to be manifest and to

“abide” as what they are. He associates appropriation with “Saying as showing in its showing” (*OWL*, 127). Just as humans and language have a mutual dependence, so things become truly themselves in being revealed through language. Heidegger’s theory is that we are appropriated by entering into the event of saying, though he gives no direction as to how entering into this event is to be accomplished. It could therefore be inferred that what he is describing is an existing, primordial state. Such an interpretation is supported by his claim that originary language involves a special kind of listening that has already occurred prior to speech: “Speaking is itself a listening. Speaking is listening to the language which we speak. Thus, it is a listening not *while* but *before* we are speaking... We do not merely speak *the* language – we speak *by way of it*. We can do so because we always have already listened to the language” (124). The process of listening refers to the way humans respond to originary language as the address of being. Since we belong to language, being reveals itself to us: “Being comes to language. Language is the house of Being. In its home man dwells.”¹²

Heidegger describes the primordial form of language as a kind of *poiesis* – the Greek term for bringing things forth out of concealment. He interprets poetry as “the founding of being in the word,” where the poet “names the gods and names all things with respect to what they are” (*EHP*, 59). This process does not involve giving particular objects a name, but is the act of speaking the “essential word” whereby beings “become” what they are already. Bruns proposes that Heidegger’s theory restates the ancient myth of Orpheus, who could summon things into being by the power of his language (38). For Heidegger, originary language is not to be understood as an audible or a written expression of a pre-existing meaning. In its primordial sense, language “brings what is, as something that is, into the Open... Language, by naming beings for the first time, first

brings beings to word and to appearance...Language itself is poetry in the essential sense” (*PLT*, 73-74). Heidegger interprets poetry as foundational to the disclosure of things, the essence of poetry being integral to the essence of language. As a founding of that which is, poetry is not an exalted form of ordinary speech (208), but is rather a process whereby the originary language of the poem brings things into the open from concealment. (In section 4 below, I cite Heidegger’s reference to a particular poem as an example of this form of manifestation.)

11.4 *Language and the fourfold*

In Heidegger’s essay, “The Thing,” he applies his theory of language to what has traditionally been called an object. He explains that the difference between an object and a “thing” is that an object in metaphysics is regarded as something with properties, whereas a thing belongs to what he calls the “fourfold,” involving the elements of earth, sky, gods, and mortals. The concept of the fourfold is used as a means of portraying the kind of mutual appropriation that is the constitutive principle of everything that exists.

The exposition of the fourfold includes an ostensibly conventional reading in respect of the elements, earth and sky: “Earth is the building bearer, nourishing with its fruits, tending water and rock, plant and animal...The sky is the sun’s path, the course of the moon, the glitter of the stars” (*PLT*, 178). Gods are interpreted by Heidegger as messengers of the divine; they represent what is holy for a given historical world. He adopts the Greek view of a god as an ultimate reality that comes forward into the world from concealment, thereby enabling phenomena to appear.¹³ As a process of lighting up a world, the god brings things to their appointed place.

Heidegger's understanding of gods is explained by Vincent Vycinas: "A god carries a whole world in himself, and thus he decides what things are and how they are related to the world and interrelated among themselves; what is man's place in the world and how he has to live his history; what is reasonable, what is foolish; what is a virtue and what is a vice. As unknown, a god stands behind everything which reflects his essence" (213). The definition of mortals reflects Heidegger's earlier description of Dasein as being-towards-death.¹⁴ In the present work he states: "Only man dies. The animal perishes. It has death neither ahead of itself nor behind it"; mortals are those who are "capable of death as death" (*PLT*, 178). A fundamental difference between the earlier and later concepts is that in *Being and Time*, Dasein is understood as an individual concept, whereas in the context of the fourfold, mortals, together with gods, earth, and sky, are interpreted in terms of *Ereignis* as originary difference, each element being understood on the basis of its belonging to the other three. The fourfold is described as a special kind of mirroring, where the elements become truly themselves through their interrelationships:

Each of the four mirrors in its own way the presence of the others. Each therewith reflects itself in its own into its own, within the simpleness of the four. This mirroring does not portray a likeness. The mirroring, lightening each of the four, appropriates their own presencing into simple belonging to one another. The appropriative mirroring sets each of the four free into its own, but it binds these free ones into the simplicity of their essential belonging toward one another. (179)

Heidegger uses the example of a jug in explaining the difference between an object as something with properties, and a thing as a gathering of the fourfold. The "thingness" of the jug is that it is understood not on the grounds of its materials or its structure, but in its being a vessel (169). In the celebration of a feast, a jug is used for

pouring in an act of gift or sacrifice by mortals to the gods. Through this act, the elements of the fourfold become or “stay” what they are: “In the gift of the outpouring that is drink, mortals stay in their own way. In the gift of the outpouring that is a libation, the divinities stay in their own way, they who receive back the gift of giving as the gift of the donation...Earth and sky dwell in the gift of the outpouring. In the gift of the outpouring earth and sky, divinities and mortals dwell *together all at once*” (173). In a metaphysical approach, the features of earth such as water and rock would be regarded merely as parts of nature, but such an understanding would not reveal their being as elements of the fourfold in the interpretation of “things.”

Heidegger also refers to the event (*Ereignis*) of the fourfold as the “worlding” of the world (180). Any given interpretation of a thing is determined by the way world is understood in relation to the fourfold. Jeff Malpas writes:

The character of the jug as jug depends on the way the world configures around it, just as the way world is configured depends on the configuration given in the being of the jug. The thing does not create the world, just as the world does not create the thing – there is, instead, a relation of reciprocity between thing and world, such that the thing allows the world to reveal itself in the interconnection of things, just as the world also enables the thing itself to be revealed through the way it stands within that set of interconnections...The jug is a thing...in virtue of the way it both gathers, and thereby brings other things, as well as the elements of the fourfold, into the differentiated unity of the world.¹⁵

The relation between world and things is a mutual penetration involving both an intimate union and a separation: “Intimacy obtains only where the intimate – world and thing – divides itself cleanly and remains separated. In the midst of the two, in the between of world and thing,...division prevails: a *dif-fERENCE*” (*PLT*, 202). World and thing are both separated and carried towards each other by means of this division, thereby enabling their

meaning to be revealed. This process involves originary language, which “goes on as the taking place or occurring of the difference for world and things” (207). Originary language as a rift or scission is described as “unity and ‘two-ness,’ hailing and hailed, differentiating and differentiated...the tension and mutual adhesion of unity and duality.”¹⁶ For Heidegger, originary language as “saying” holds itself back, and in so doing it holds together the fourfold as the four regions of the world: “Reserving itself in this way, as Saying of the world’s fourfold, language concerns us, who as mortals belong within this fourfold, us who can speak only as we respond to language” (*OWL*, 107).

Heidegger associates this response with *poiesis* as the primordial event of disclosure. He cites a poem by Georg Trakl, “A Winter Evening,” which speaks of a snowy night where travelers come upon a warmly lit house at vespers time, finding a table set for the evening meal. In Heidegger’s interpretation, the words in the poem indicating certain concepts do not represent them as such: “This naming does not hand out titles; it does not apply terms [*Wörter*], but it calls into the word” (*PLT*, 198). The call brings the presence of what was previously uncalled into a nearness; it summons the absent into presence. What is summoned are the elements of the fourfold, which in the Trakl poem appear as the snowy ground, the evening sky, the mortal travelers, and a vesper bell tolling for the divine.

According to Heidegger, our thinking is ultimately a function of language, understood in its originary sense as that which makes speech possible: “We human beings remain committed to and within the being of language, and can never step out of it and look at it from somewhere else” (*OWL*, 134). Martin Dillon cautions against interpreting this statement as implying a form of linguistic immanence – the thesis that language refers only to itself.¹⁷ In Heidegger’s view, language is both the abyss and the

presencing of that which is; language belongs to the difference or the intimate rift in which world and things become what they are. This difference is described by Heidegger as “the middle,” which determines things in their “*Wesen*” (*PLT*, 202), a term translated as “essence or rationale” (Dillon, 231). Language commands the difference that “gathers world and things” and “bids the two to come into their very nature” (*PLT*, 207). The association of language with *Ereignis* as originary difference means that language is an aspect of the fundamental process by which we come to be in an interdependent relation with being itself, and through which world and things can be revealed.

In his theories of language and the fourfold, Heidegger is developing the idea of originary difference that is clearly articulated in his work of 1957. He explains that the individual elements of the fourfold, together with the concepts of “world” and “thing,” are not self-contained identities, but are interpreted as the products of a differentiation that is at the same time a union. Heidegger’s idea of language as an originary concept is understood in relation to the origin of difference itself.

11.5 *Originary difference as concept and experience*

As the basis on which being and the human are understood, originary difference is not only related to the mysterious origin of language, but in my view, the concept can be supported through an analysis of the *apeiron* in Anaximander, and *chōra* in Plato’s “*Timaeus*.”¹⁸ (The connection with Plato would not have been endorsed by Heidegger, since he would argue that Platonic metaphysics is unable to incorporate the idea of originary difference.) My reason for examining the work of these two Greek philosophers is that they address the ultimate mystery of a dynamic state of potential from which everything that exists is generated and sustained. Similarly for Heidegger,

originary difference is that which makes possible the unfolding of being. In Chapter Twelve, I will examine Heidegger's interpretation of the experience of being, but I will argue that he is unable to integrate his idea of originary difference with the kind of experience that would provide confirmation of his theory. The solution I outline is an experience transcending the limitations of our everyday spatio-temporal existence, and of the dualities on which metaphysical thinking is based. The interpretation of such experiences, I will argue, is consistent with the theories of Anaximander and Plato.

11.6 *Anaximander and the apeiron*

The Greek philosopher, Anaximander, who lived in the sixth century BC, is considered to have written the earliest prose text in Western thought, one original fragment of which remains (*EGT*, 13). The concept for which he is remembered is the *apeiron*, understood in earlier times as the goddess of fate that governed the mythic gods.¹⁹ Anaximander does not give a precise definition of this concept, but he uses it to depict a fundamental first principle or *archê*, the meaning of which is the undifferentiated source of everything that is, and the unity comprising all things. Francis Cornford describes the *archê* as “the indeterminate, the inconstant, the anomalous, that which can be neither understood nor predicted.”²⁰ The *apeiron* has no characteristics, being prior to and beyond distinctions; it neither comes into being nor passes away. From it emerge the four basic elements: earth, water, air and fire. All things arise from the *apeiron*, then perish and return to it. Although in one sense the *apeiron* is a source, Aristotle states that for Anaximander, the only notion of an “effect” that can be ascribed to it is that of a principle: in giving direction to the unfolding of everything, the *apeiron* encompasses them all.²¹ Anaximander's writing does not suggest any causal connection between the

apeiron and the coming into being of the world; it is rather that the *apeiron* is a dynamic principle underlying the being of that which is. Whereas some contemporary scholars describe the concept as a kind of reservoir or matrix of matter surrounding everything,²² Heidegger interprets the *apeiron* as extending beyond a description of the physical or nature, to the idea of being as emergence from concealment (*EGT*, 26).

The Presocratic thinkers believed that the world as a whole is characterised by opposites such as hot and cold, wet and dry. According to Aristotle, Anaximander holds that these opposites already exist in some undetectable form in the *apeiron*, and are then split off from the source (*Physics*, 187a 20). Elizabeth Asmis describes the *apeiron* as a unitary mixture – the totality of all successively created things: “The opposites both are contained in the whole and are separated out as distinct entities because they make up the totality of which each is a distinct part” (286). She outlines the view of Simplicius, who proposes that the exchange between opposing forces is identical with the creation of things, and that the *apeiron* is “the unending succession of generation and destruction” (283). In a similar manner, Whitney Strub describes the *apeiron* as “a dynamic, cyclical process of emerging and fading.”²³ Within the *apeiron* are two opposing principles: emergence or “birth” continually usurps the power of *phthora*, a destruction or passing away, while the latter continually usurps the power of the former.²⁴ Through the process of separation, a given element is transformed into its other, such as day becoming night; the way is then prepared for the resurgence of the opposite, so that night becomes day. The *apeiron* is described by Edward Moore as a power that is present within everything: “All beings carry with them, as their ownmost possibility, the unlimited potential of/that is the *apeiron*.”²⁵ Simplicius points out that Anaximander is the first thinker to develop the notion of a temporally unbounded and spatially infinite entity that inheres in the

succession of created or bounded things (Asmis, 296). The *apeiron* is therefore understood as the process by which one thing is generated after another. As an “immanent force,” it guides things through their temporal and spatial development.

The above interpretations of the *apeiron* focus on what is known as the “Anaximander Fragment,” translated as: “Whence things have their origin, there they must also pass away according to necessity; for they must pay penalty and be judged for their injustice, according to the ordinance of time” (*EGT*, 13). The penalty referred to is carried out by the “ordinance” or “assessment” of time against finite existence. Through the principle of a primordial necessity, the *apeiron* determines that every created thing must suffer the ultimate retribution of non-existence.²⁶ Asmis writes: “Each successive thing transgresses by its growth on its antecedent which is destroyed by this transgression, and it pays the penalty in turn for its transgression by being destroyed into its successor” (283). In the interpretation of Simplicius, things pay for their injustice to each other and to the *apeiron*, both by making recompense to one another throughout their existence in the world, and by finally being reabsorbed in the *apeiron*. On this reading, the *apeiron* represents the unity of the process of injustice and retribution between generated things.²⁷ These can be “true” opposites such as near and far, or a sequence of individual entities or concepts such as human beings or spans of time. Moore proposes that “injustice” is the attempt by things to utilise the *apeiron* as an eternally productive principle for the purpose of establishing their own unending existence. Similarly, the word “penalty” in the fragment is interpreted by Nietzsche as a penance for the attempt by any existing thing to ascribe to itself an independent identity in the form of a permanent presence.²⁸ Dillon refers to Anaximander’s principle of coming into existence

“as the very process of individuation, as the negativity that differentiates one positive thing from another” (231).

11.7 *The apeiron, chōra, and originary difference*

The *apeiron* and *chōra* are described by Anaximander and Plato respectively as a source of potential from which everything emerges, including the possibility of human thought. *Chōra* in “Timaeus” is apprehended “without the help of sense, by a kind of spurious reason.”²⁹ (Within Plato’s dialogue, the *apeiron* is the origin of the four basic elements: fire, water, earth, and air)(52d-53b). Just as *chōra* is “prior to” time and space (37c-38c), the *apeiron*, as temporally unbounded and spatially infinite, enables things within time and space to realise their individual potential. Since the *apeiron* and *chōra* are prior to and beyond distinctions, they are also beyond divisions such as the intelligible and the sensible, the selfsame and the generated. Plato describes *chōra* as the receptacle providing a “home” for created things (52a-d), and Anaximander situates the *apeiron* within entities as the form of their coming into being and passing away. The concepts of *chōra* and the *apeiron* are therefore inseparable from the elements to which they give rise. Although he situates his own theory in a discussion of Heraclitus, Heidegger expresses a similar view in his exposition of concealment and unconcealment, defined as the process through which everything that is can both come into being and be open to our understanding (*ITM*, 14). Anaximander describes the way opposing elements overcome one another in a process of endless cycles, and in “Timaeus,” water, vapour, air, and fire are similarly transformed into each other in a circle of generation (49d). Plato also writes that *chōra* is unable to subdue or contain what will become the forces or the elements, because as that which is prior to sameness and difference, *chōra* shelters the proto-forces prior to their individuation. Whatever exists not only has to succumb to

its opposing force, but ultimately must return to the original undifferentiated state.

The *apeiron* and *chōra* are each defined as a source that is prior to and beyond distinctions, but they also contain within themselves the potential for individual elements to emerge and thereby to be differentiated from each other while at the same time belonging together. In “Timaeus,” *chōra* is depicted as the most originary account of creation, but in the immediately preceding discourse, the structure of the soul is described as a mixture of the selfsame and the different. Through a process whereby the soul touches things, there emerges a blending of sameness, difference, and being. Since *chōra* gives rise to the soul, *chōra* must contain the potential for both sameness and difference. This description is relevant to Heidegger’s concept of originary difference as both a difference and a belonging together. In our normal ways of conceptualising, objects appear to be separate from each other, and can therefore be described as being the same or different, but when viewed from the perspective of *chōra*, things which present as having individual identities are necessarily interdependent. They arise from a state where sameness and difference are not yet distinguished.

Just as *chōra* and the *apeiron* have no characteristics but permeate everything that emerges from them, Heidegger’s concept of *Ereignis* as an expression of originary difference is both an emptiness of ground and the fullness of the unfolding of being. The feature common to all three concepts is that each is an ungrounded ground. Being in Heidegger’s thought is a creative power, and is interpreted on the basis of an originary negation.³⁰ He associates this theory with the Greek concept of *physis* as emergence from concealment. The nothing, as intrinsic to being, is the source of all presencing. Being and nothing are in a struggle or “strife,” whether neither can overcome the other.³¹

A similarity between the *apeiron* and *Ereignis* is that the *apeiron* is a guiding principle in the temporality and spatiality of things, while *Ereignis* makes possible the spatialising of time and the temporalising of space (*CP*, 269). Furthermore, *Ereignis* is the basis on which the three time dimensions give themselves to one another without forming themselves into a monolithic unity, and where being and time are appropriated to each other. In “On Time and Being,” Heidegger writes: “In the sending of the destiny of Being, in the extending of time, there becomes manifest a dedication, a delivering over into what is their own, namely of Being as presence and of time as the realm of the open. What determines both, time and Being, in their own, that is, in their belonging together, we shall call: *Ereignis*, the event of Appropriation.”³² Anaximander’s statement that things must pay a penalty for seeking permanence, is reflected in “Timaeus,” where the “traces” of the elements flee from *logos* or discourse, rejecting any attempt to give them a fixed meaning. Similarly Heidegger’s concept of *Ereignis* means that neither the human nor being can be understood on the basis of a determinate essence, but only as arising from difference itself.³³ Since all things come from and return to the *apeiron*, Anaximander’s concept reflects Heidegger’s theory of originary difference involving both sameness and differentiation, where being “transits” to beings without leaving its own place (*ID*, 64). Originary difference and the *apeiron* comprise both emptiness and fullness, but in neither case do the entities arising from the given source evolve into anything completely self-contained, nor could they ever achieve a metaphysical independence from their origin. The similarities between originary difference, the *apeiron*, and *chōra* indicate that the kind of entity that emerges in each case must be understood as having an active, constitutive relation with its origin.

In Heidegger's theory, originary difference holds being and beings apart at the same time as it bears them towards each other (*ID*, 64). His concept reflects the thought of Heraclitus, where *logos* is described as a unity arising from differentiation: "What is discordant comes together, and the most perfect concordance emerges from what differs."³⁴ Originary difference similarly involves both a separation and a belonging together; unity and differentiation are expressions of the one reality whereby each element becomes truly itself. This form of becoming does not indicate the development of a separate identity, since the notion of separateness belongs merely to our ordinary ways of thinking. Heidegger recognises that ultimately there are no self-contained concepts, as evidenced in his theory that "being" and "man" can only be understood on the basis of their interdependence (*ID*, 30). This idea is also illustrated in Heidegger's portrayal of language as a "dif-ference," by means of which world and things are understood as both separated and carried towards each other (*PLT*, 202). I have proposed that originary difference is consistent with the Greek concepts of *chōra* and the *apeiron*, though I am aware that Heidegger would have rejected this kind of link between his thought and that of Plato. The traditional view of *chōra* as "a 'space' defined by extension," Heidegger writes, "was initiated by the Platonic philosophy, i.e. in the interpretation of being as *idea*" (*ITM*, 66). In the same passage, reference is made to Plato's concept of being as "permanence."

Chōra, the *apeiron*, and originary difference depict a state beyond the capacity of language to describe. It is not only the world or things that originate in this mystery, but also our own existence. The consequences of experiencing ourselves as embodied beings are the sense of a separate self, and the development of language with a dualistic structure, as exemplified in the thinking of metaphysics. The spatio-temporality of an

embodied perspective and the ordinary states of consciousness to which it gives rise, do not imply, however, that experience itself is confined to the spatio-temporal. We belong to an ultimate mystery, but the dualistic nature of our thinking prevents us from experiencing the sense of oneness that is foreshadowed in Heidegger's concept of originary difference, and in the theories of Anaximander and Plato.

In the final chapter, I will propose that the experience of oneness involves not merely an orientation away from metaphysical thinking, but entering into an altered state of consciousness in which we transcend the dualities of language and the limitations of our spatial and temporal existence. I will argue that such an experience could be interpreted as being "en-owned [appropriated] by be-ing" (*CP*, 169), understood in the light of Heidegger's theory that we and being arise from the mystery of originary difference.

NOTES

¹ Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, tr. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 38 (hereafter cited in text as *ID*).

² Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, tr. Wade Baskin (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 17 (hereafter cited in text as *CGL*).

³ Jacques Derrida, "Différance," in *Margins of Philosophy*, tr. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 11 (hereafter cited in text as *Dif.*).

⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, tr. Gayatri Spivak (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 44.

⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 80 (hereafter cited in text as *SP*).

⁶ Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, tr. Keith Hoeller (New York: Humanity Books, 2000), 60 (hereafter cited in text as *EHP*).

⁷ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, tr. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 190 (hereafter cited in text as *PLT*).

⁸ Heidegger, "The Anaximander Fragment," in *Early Greek Thinking*, tr. David Krell and Frank Capuzzi (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 37 (hereafter cited in text as *EGT*).

⁹ Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, tr. Peter Hertz (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 59 (hereafter cited in text as *OWL*).

¹⁰ John Sallis, "Meaning adrift," in *Martin Heidegger: Critical Assessments*, Vol. 3, ed. Christopher Macann (London: Routledge, 1992), 218.

¹¹ Gerald Bruns, *Heidegger's Estrangements; Language, Truth, and Poetry in the Later Writings* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 120.

¹² Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. David Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 193.

¹³ Vincent Vycinas, *Earth and Gods: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Martin Heidegger* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961), 173.

¹⁴ See Chapter 6, section 1 herein.

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- ¹⁵ Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007), 246-247.
- ¹⁶ Joseph Kockelmans, "Ontological Difference, Hermeneutics, and Language," in Joseph J. Kockelmans (ed.), *On Heidegger and Language* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1980), 216.
- ¹⁷ Martin Dillon, *Merleau-Ponty's Ontology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1997), 231.
- ¹⁸ See Chapter 1 herein.
- ¹⁹ Steven Rosen, *Dimensions of Apeiron: A Topological Phenomenology of Space, Time, and Individuation* (Rodopi: Amsterdam, 2004), 8.
- ²⁰ Francis M. Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology: The Timaeus of Plato* (New York, Liberal Arts Press, 1957), 172.
- ²¹ Aristotle, *Physics*, ed. Richard McKeon, trans. R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye (New York: Random House, 1941), 203b (hereafter cited in text as *Physics*).
- ²² Elizabeth Asmis, "What is Anaximander's *Apeiron*?" *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 19, no. 3 (July, 1981): 279. The author provides a list of 20th Century scholars who hold such a position.
- ²³ Whitney Strub, "Anaximander's Boomerang: Tracing the Return of a Pre-Socratic Notion," *Journal of Undergraduate Research*, La Crosse, University of Wisconsin, 2 (1999): 134.
- ²⁴ Edward Moore, "'De-Mything' the Logos: Anaximander's *Apeiron* and the Possibility of a Post-Metaphysical Understanding of the Incarnation," *Quodlibet Journal* 4, no. 1 (2002), <http://www.Quodlibet.net>.
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ Barry Sandywell, *Presocratic Reflexivity: The Construction of Philosophical Discourse c.600-450 BC*, 3 (London: Routledge, 1995), 161.
- ²⁷ Simplicius, *Physics*, ed. H. Diels and W. Kranz (Berlin: Weidmannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1951), 12, cited in Asmis, 283.
- ²⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, tr. Marianne Cowan (Chicago: Regnery Publishing, 1996), 46.
- ²⁹ Plato, "Timaeus," *Selections from Timaeus*, tr. Benjamin Jowett <http://ls.poly.edu/~jbain/mms/texts/B02.Plato.pdf>.
- ³⁰ Heidegger, "What is metaphysics?" in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 94.
- ³¹ Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, tr. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 186 (hereafter cited in text as *CP*).

³² Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, tr. Joan Stambaugh (New York:, Harper & Row, 1972), 19.

³³ See Chapter 10, section 4 herein.

³⁴ Heraclitus, Fragment DK 22 B 8, in John Robinson, *An Introduction to Early Greek Philosophy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968), 96.

Chapter Twelve

MYSTICISM AND BEING

The aim of Heidegger's work is to explore the experience of being.¹ He proposes that the traditional interpretation of being as a ground, and the world as an object for the thinking subject, be replaced with the idea of being as an abyss. Although such a process would seem to indicate merely a change in conceptualisation, Heidegger states that to understand the groundlessness of being, we must take a daring leap into the unfamiliar – a process that will involve the experience of dismay and foreboding. It is only in that way, he claims, that we can enter into the “truth” of *Ereignis*.²

My position is that both metaphysical thinking and our everyday understanding of the world are dualistic in character because of the nature of our existence as spatio-temporal beings. Since we are immersed in a binary form of language, the kind of experience Heidegger is attempting to portray must therefore involve a state beyond the linguistic. However deeply we may be aware that being is not a ground, the fact of our embodiment will normally preclude the possibility of transcending the dualistic forms of thought that undergird phenomenal experience. In contrast to the self-awareness integral to the affective states arising from taking the “leap” that Heidegger describes, the experiences reported by mystics throughout history involve a loss of individual identity, and of the spatio-temporal awareness that structures our thought processes. I propose that mystical states can be understood as experiences of being, on the grounds that they exemplify Heidegger's concept of *Ereignis*, interpreted on the basis of originary difference.³

During his early years as a theology student, Heidegger endorsed the mysticism of Meister Eckhart, because it seemed to combine the rationality of medieval philosophy with the experience of life.⁴ Subsequently Heidegger categorises all theology as metaphysical. While continuing to affirm the meditative practices outlined in Eckhart, Heidegger cannot accept the metaphysical implications of an approach based on the existence of the deity. I will argue that both Heidegger and Eckhart attribute a sense of agency to the mystery they are seeking to describe. Eckhart endorses the traditional idea of a personal God who is the creator of everything that exists, and who acts transformatively in the lives of the faithful.⁵ Similarly, Heidegger writes that being “sends” itself historically in various ways,⁶ and that eventually it may “refuse” *Ereignis* (CP, 6), the effect of which would be to preclude the human from accomplishing its utmost destiny (177). Since the above descriptions imply a distinction between an ultimate cause and its consequent, this aspect in the work of both thinkers can be categorised as metaphysical.

A similar critique of Heidegger and Eckhart is presented in the work of Derrida, who asserts that the attempt to transcend the traditional concepts of being or God inevitably involves the reinstatement of those concepts. Although Derrida follows a different line of argument, his basic conclusion with respect to Heidegger is compatible with the comments of scholars such as Theodor Adorno and Stephen Erickson, who claim that Heidegger tends to hypostasise being as some form of ultimate meaning or mythical power. My view is that there are two conflicting positions in Heidegger’s thought. The first is his description of being as a kind of independent agent that has “abandoned” beings – an activity with historical outcomes for the human. This approach suggests that being and the human have some form of separate identity. On the other

hand, Heidegger's theory that "man" and being can only be understood on the basis of their mutual belonging, not only precludes the possibility that either being or the human could act apart from the other, but it problematises the very idea of two independent concepts. From Eckhart's teaching Heidegger adopts the practices of releasement and meditative thinking, but I argue that the example of such thinking he provides in a later work does not reach the mystery of originary difference. His thought lacks an adequate basis for connecting an experience characterised by dismay and foreboding, to that of belonging to being. Furthermore, the claim by Heidegger that being was withdrawn at the time of Plato, preempts the possibility of interpreting mysticism as an experience of being.

12.1 *Originary difference and mystical experience*

Throughout human history, the kind of reported experience whose interpretation most closely reflects Heidegger's concept of originary difference is that of mysticism. This term covers a variety of states, the content of which can be influenced by an individual's expectations based on a particular set of beliefs or assumptions, and any retrospective analysis of the experience will tend to reveal a predisposition towards that prior conceptualisation. On the other hand, Philip Almond points out that in certain cases, the interpretations of mystical experiences have signaled a move beyond what was previously acceptable within the teachings of the respective tradition.⁷ Where an established religion or philosophy is concerned, the disclosure of the epiphanal experience has led either to a broadening of the perspective on which the system of thought is based, or to the formulation of a different approach. Almond's examples include the experiences of Isaac Luria, a Judaic Kabbalist, and of al-Hallaj, an Islamic

mystic. The result in each case was an expansion of the concept of God within the thinking of the tradition. Almond also refers to the Buddha's experience of enlightenment, which revealed an incompatibility with received Hindu teachings, and led to the establishment of an alternative philosophy.

Mystical experience is described by Richard Jones as involving a passive and receptive attitude, leading to the experience of a complete breakdown of duality; it is "a state of consciousness without an object *of* consciousness."⁸ For Leon Rosenstein, mysticism is a vision and perception of oneness, an encounter with, or a melding into, "the unifying source of what-is."⁹ Similarly, Robert Zaehner writes that mystical experiences are those "in which sense perception and discursive thought are transcended in an immediate apperception of a unity or union which is apprehended as lying beyond and transcending the multiplicity of the world as we know it."¹⁰ Such ways of being are perceived to be beyond the temporal and the spatial, and involve the dissolution of any sense of individual identity – either of the mystic or of anything known in the world. Mystical experience is defined by Ninian Smart as a unity where discursive thought and mental images disappear – a state that lacks any sense of the everyday distinction between subject and object.¹¹ According to William James, mystical experiences resemble states of feeling rather than states of intellect,¹² with the result that they are often regarded by the mystic as ineffable. In this context Arthur Danto explains that, contrary to the non-duality of mysticism, language requires a distance between the seer and the seen, or a "space" for encoding.¹³

In his research into altered states of consciousness, Stanislav Grof reports that the descriptions used by subjects involved "transcendence of all the limitations of the analytical mind, all rational categories, and all the constraints of ordinary logic."¹⁴ A

form of mystical experience described by certain of these subjects is an identification with “Cosmic Emptiness” and “Nothingness,” which has the paradoxical sense of an essential fullness containing the potential for all forms of existence and interrelationships. Often referred to as “the Void,” Grof writes that it “lies beyond all dichotomies and polarities, such as light and darkness, good and evil, stability and motion, microcosm and macrocosm, agony and ecstasy, singularity and plurality, form and emptiness, and even existence and nonexistence” (30).

Theorists who study the philosophical implications of mysticism describe similarities among the various experiences, and some writers have advanced the view that there is a definable common core in these states, separating them from any attendant peripheral interpretations.¹⁵ Although this core experience is interpreted as a oneness, such a description is inadequate to explain a state for which we have no language. It cannot be understood as a union of individual things, since it is that which enables such things to come into being. Walter Stace defines the core experience as “the apprehension of an *ultimate nonsensuous unity of all things*, a oneness or a One to which neither the senses or reason can penetrate.”¹⁶ It has also been argued by Eastern and Western philosophers alike that the presence of the core experience is indicative of a mysterious reality underlying the various belief systems to which it gives rise. According to Frank Happold, “not only have mystics been found in all ages, in all parts of the world and in all religious systems, but also mysticism has manifested itself in similar or identical forms wherever the mystical consciousness has been present.”¹⁷ In his commentary on Tibetan mysticism, John Blofeld proposes that the commonality of mystical experience is a ground for its claim to validity: “If, as the cynics would have it, the mystical experience is sheer illusion, the stuff of dreams, it is strange that men and women belonging to

widely different environments have, throughout the centuries, suffered the same delusions and dreamed the same dreams.”¹⁸ From a perspective within Western religion, Peter Appleby writes: “Ultimate mystical union is a truly universal phenomenon, occurring in the lives of all sorts and conditions of men and women, throughout history and without regard for cultural barriers. Of course there are widely divergent and conflicting interpretations of the experience, but the ‘universal core’ itself seems to shine through whatever parochial overlay is imposed upon it.”¹⁹ Stace gives an example given of this kind of overlay, where a theist may interpret the experience as indicating a relationship of union with God. If it is the case that there is a core element in mystical experience, as Stace and others propose, the theist’s view would represent merely an addition to the pure experience itself.

Although mysticism is often associated with a religion or a philosophy, similar kinds of experiences are reported in “nature” or “panenhenic” mysticism, described by Peter Kakol as “a direct and unmediated (or non-sensory) experience of a complex and interconnected world of actualities that lies hidden behind the play of simple forms and qualities of our ordinary sensory experience.”²⁰ In his essay, “Nature Mysticism,” Mike King explores the natural expression of mysticism in the writings of Traherne, Whitman, Jefferies and Krishnamurti, drawing parallels between the experiences of these authors and those of mystics in the Eastern and Western traditions.²¹ In King’s view, nature can be a trigger to mystical experience as an “expansivity,” involving the loss of boundaries, where time seems to be transcended. He also writes that “Arjuna’s overwhelming experience of the cosmic nature of Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita* is partly due to the abundance of creation that is manifest through Krishna.”²² The Hindu Upanishads,

according to King, have a high regard for the natural order, and contain much that is consistent with nature mysticism.

12.2 *Heidegger and mysticism*

I propose that if Heidegger had realised the full implications of originary difference, he could have connected this concept to mystical experience, without having to situate a corresponding theory of mysticism within a metaphysical system of thought such as traditional Christianity.

In his early writing, Heidegger seeks to understand the experience of being, which in his view, underlies established doctrines. His dissertation of 1915 states that when detached from life, philosophy is powerless, and that when detached from the rational, mysticism is purposeless (*DS*, 241). Caputo comments that for Heidegger, “a philosophy which is not open-ended and receptive to the vision of the mystic is a sterile rationalism; and a mysticism which resists the clarifying reflection of the philosopher is an irrationalism which serves no purpose and accomplishes nothing. Philosophy and mysticism belong together.”²³ As a student, Heidegger had intended to enter the priesthood, so that at this stage in his thinking, the “rational” would have been equated with medieval philosophy and theology. In 1919, he conducted a lecture course on the philosophical foundations of medieval mysticism, and he later announced his intention to write a book on Eckhart.²⁴ The profound influence of the medieval scholar on Heidegger’s work is evidenced in his comment that “the most extreme sharpness and depth of thought belongs to the genuine and great mystics...Meister Eckhart proves it.”²⁵ Near the time of his death, Heidegger indicated to a colleague that he regarded Eckhart’s thought as forming a unity with his own.²⁶ Adopting the basic premise of Neoplatonism,

Eckhart holds that the perfections in individual things must derive from a level of reality in which they are perfectly united. Multiplicity arises from change and decay, whereas such characteristics are not present in the general or ultimate perfection. This concept is defined by the Neoplatonists as the “One,” and by Eckhart as “God,”²⁷ access to which is not by way of discursive reason, but through “meditative stillness and total openness to that which is wholly other than beings” (Caputo, 1990, 29).

Although Heidegger initially endorses the mysticism of Eckhart, he rejects the non-theistic forms of Western mysticism, describing such practices as that into which people flee when, because of their enslavement to metaphysical thinking, they are “struck by the hiddenness in all revealment and lapse into unthinking helplessness.”²⁸ This statement is understood by Caputo as indicating a view of mysticism representing “a flight from reality and the sensible world...and an obscurantism which throws everything into confusion” (1990, 141). Such an interpretation is confirmed in Heidegger’s work, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, where he describes the above form of mysticism as that relating to curiosity, fear, terror and magic.²⁹ He contests the view that his own thought is “unfounded mysticism,” “bad mythology” or “a ruinous irrationalism” (*TB*, 71). Such comments could have arisen as a response to thinkers such as Paul Hühnerfeld, who describes Heidegger as a self-styled mystic because of the way he uses Eckhart’s thought.³⁰ Similarly László Versényi refers to Heidegger as “a prophet or mystic,” and claims that philosophical discussion with him is impossible since he rules out the use of reason.³¹

Heidegger’s original acceptance of the mysticism and philosophical theology of the medievals, is subsequently reversed in a recorded conversation published as the Appendix to *The Piety of Thinking*, where he proposes that Christian theologians should

confine their teaching within the bounds of “revelation” – the view that God reveals himself in the sacred scriptures and in the teachings of the church. Heidegger then describes his own concept of “thinking” as something unrelated to religious faith: “Within thinking nothing can be achieved which would be a preparation or a confirmation for that which occurs in faith and in grace. Were I so addressed by faith I would have to close up my shop. Within faithfulness one still thinks, of course; but thinking as such no longer has a task...Philosophy engages in a kind of thinking of which man is capable on his own. This stops when he is addressed by revelation.”³² In Heidegger’s view, faith is one of the themes of theology, which, as a “positive science,”³³ is an expression of metaphysics, and he includes Eckhart’s teaching within this description.³⁴ However, Heidegger continues to advocate the kind of preparation that is fundamental to Eckhart’s descriptions of an encounter with God. These include a detachment from the metaphysical approach, and an opening of the self to the ultimate mystery. Some commentators hold that Heidegger maintains a theistic position at the same time as he is seeking something beyond orthodox thinking,³⁵ while others interpret his statement, “philosophical research is and remains atheism,”³⁶ as indicating that for Heidegger, nothing can be said about the existence of God, and that any attempt to do so results in metaphysical thinking.³⁷ The latter interpretation of Heidegger’s position receives support from the way describes the theological basis of Eckhart’s work.

The question of whether *Ereignis* and originary difference can be connected to mysticism as a transcendence of metaphysics, is relevant to the question of the way Heidegger understands being. In my view, there is a metaphysical concept of being in the thought of both Heidegger and Eckhart, and I will analyse the claim by Derrida that both thinkers posit an essential reality said to be beyond the level of the conceptual.

12.3 *Eckhart and the Godhead*

The works of Heidegger and Eckhart describe an ultimate mystery that underlies and makes possible the metaphysical notion of being as an absolute ground. Eckhart seeks to confirm, as well as to transcend, the idea of the Judeo/Christian God who can be defined by means of certain qualities and characteristics. The aim of his teaching is to reach beyond such a God to the ultimate mystery, which he describes as the “Godhead” or the “God beyond God.” In the traditional view, God is the creator, who is revealed in history, scripture, and the teachings of the church, and in whom a person can believe through the exercise of faith. By contrast, the Godhead is beyond human capacity to define or describe, and can be accessed only through mystical experience. Ernesto Lapitan describes the way Eckhart distinguishes between God and the Godhead: “When he speaks of God, he means the God of metaphysics, that God that grants being and existence to other creatures. When he speaks of Godhead, he means the God beyond the grasp of metaphysics. Godhead is the God of mysticism, for the true God cannot be comprehended by any conceptualizations.”³⁸

In his teaching on the Godhead, Eckhart explains that “being is God,”³⁹ and that “outside God there is nothing.”⁴⁰ Creatures are deemed not to have being in themselves but only “in God.” According to Eckhart, “everything which falls short of God, inasmuch as it falls short of being, is both being and non-being, and something of being is denied of it.”⁴¹ Having described God as “the being of all beings,” Eckhart continues: “God is infinite in his simplicity and simple in his infinity. Therefore he is everywhere and is everywhere complete. He is everywhere on account of his infinity, and is everywhere complete on account of his simplicity. Only God flows into all things, their very essences. Nothing else flows into something else. God is in the innermost part of

each and every thing, only in its innermost part.”⁴² The essence of the Godhead, according to Caputo, “lies in a nameless region from which all properties and attributes (*Eigenschaften*) are excluded” (1990, 127), and he outlines the “strategic reversals” used by Eckhart in attempting to explain the kind of understanding required: “If you call God ‘Being’, he will call him Nothing (not even a little bit); if you call Him ground, he will call Him abyss” (1990, xx). A quotation from Augustine in an Eckhart sermon expresses a similar idea: “What one says about God is not true; but what one does *not* express is true” (Q, 242, 36 – 243, 1). Such an approach is described by Ian Almond as an expression of “pure Otherness,...the permanent ontological inverse of everything we think and say.”⁴³ The Godhead is also portrayed as “a deathly stillness, an abyss, a wasteland where nothing stirs” (Caputo, 1990, 132). Eckhart states: “I speak therefore of a Godhead from which nothing as yet emanates, and which is not in the least moved or contemplated.”⁴⁴ In his commentary on Eckhart’s works, Reiner Schürmann explains that the only attributes we have recourse to are “the very attributes of God, ‘one’ and ‘simple,’ *ein* and *einvaltic*, which are the negations of all attributes.”⁴⁵ Caputo summarises the problem of naming this unknown concept: “The one thing we can say about God which suits Him is that nothing we say about Him suits Him, that is, that He withdraws behind all names, that He has no master-name, no name which masters Him, no proper name which captures what are *propria* to Him” (1990, xix).

The ultimate experience for the human, in Eckhart’s thought, is defined as “the breakthrough to the Godhead.” Bernard McGinn defines this movement as “breaking through beyond all conceptions of God known by philosophy or revealed in scripture” into what Eckhart calls “the silent desert where distinction never gazed.”⁴⁶ In order for this to occur, the soul must engage in a process of detachment involving an elimination

of affection and desire for created things. (The soul is defined as an image of God; in its real nature, the basis of the soul is one with God.)⁴⁷ Eckhart states that “to be empty of all creatures is to be full of God; and to be full of creatures is to be empty of God.”⁴⁸ In this way, the soul becomes like God, who in his nothingness is similarly detached from the creation. When the soul desires nothing, the possibility arises for it to achieve mystical union with God. The soul is able to “penetrate to the hidden center of the divine being” because the soul itself possesses a “spark” of the divine (Caputo, 1990, 110).

Up to this point in the analysis, Eckhart has been describing the Godhead, but he also states that the Godhead “melts outwards” into the Trinity,⁴⁹ and he expounds the notion of the Godhead in terms of the manner in which the Son is born in the soul. The essence of the Father is to give birth and to bear his Son “incessantly” (*Q*, 185, 20), and the essence of the Son is to be born incessantly as the image of the Father. (The third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, represents the love between the Father and the Son.)⁵⁰ To prepare for the event of receiving the Son, the soul must be in the state of *Gelassenheit* or releasement, involving an emptying of the will and a letting-go of whatever could distract the soul from receptivity to such an experience. Beverly Lanzetta writes that for Eckhart, “breakthrough and salvation occur through *entering into* Christian metaphysics, and passing beyond the three Persons, as a necessary condition for liberation in the abyss – a liberation that takes place *in* and *returns to* the determinate divinity following a radical breakthrough in the desert of the Godhead.”⁵¹

12.4 *Eckhart’s God and Heidegger’s being*

The portrayal of the Godhead in Eckhart can be compared with the concept of being in Heidegger. Both thinkers move beyond the metaphysical idea of “man” as a

rational, self-contained entity, in proposing that the essence of the human is that which provides a place for the unification of the person with the ultimate mystery. In Eckhart, such a possibility arises from the fact that there can be no absolute separation between the individual and the source from which it derives, because of the oneness between the soul and God (*Q*, 197, 34-35). For Heidegger, the essence of the human is its belonging to being, described as “the mystery of enownment [*Ereignis*]” (*CP*, 287). Both thinkers describe a process of preparation enabling the union to be experienced, but in each case the initiative for the event lies within the mystery itself. Eckhart writes: “God effects this work in the innermost part of the soul, and in such a hidden manner that neither an angel nor a saint knows why, and even the soul itself can do nothing other than endure it. It belongs uniquely to God” (*Q*, 376, 32). In a similar manner, Heidegger describes as a “gift” our capacity for the originary thinking of being. This form of thinking does not involve merely the use of the intellect but is rather “inceptual thinking” (*CP*, 22), where we may experience belonging to being: “We must learn thinking because our being able to think, and even gifted for it, is still no guarantee that we are capable of thinking. To be capable we must before all else incline toward what addresses itself to thought – and that is that which of itself gives food for thought. What gives us this gift, the gift of what must properly be thought about, is what we call most thought-provoking.”⁵² Heidegger discusses the nature of the preparation required for receiving the gift, by using Eckhart’s term, *Gelassenheit* (releasement) (*DT*, 62). For both thinkers, this concept consists firstly of a detachment from creatures or beings as objects of thought. The next stage in the process is an opening towards the mystery. Eckhart speaks of “letting God be God” (*Q*, 180, 34), and Heidegger describes the letting-be of being itself.⁵³ A consequence of *Gelassenheit* is the event of “birth” in Eckhart and “appropriation” in Heidegger.

The similarity between mysticism and Heidegger's concept of being is addressed by Lapitan, who states that metaphysics "must give way to thinking, and for Heidegger this thinking is akin to mysticism."⁵⁴ An opposing position is adopted by Caputo in his claim that although there is a mystical element in Heidegger's thinking, the later work cannot be categorised as mystical on the grounds that the divine abyss cannot be compared with the "bottomless pit" of the Heideggerian abgrund (1990, 80). The experience of an absence of ground, on the other hand, is paralleled in certain forms of mystical states. Grof describes subjects' experience of identification with Cosmic Nothingness or the Void (30). As is the case in Heidegger's thought, this nothingness is not perceived as a negation but as a fullness. The kind of mystical experience outlined by Grof resembles Heidegger's concept of being as "the emptiest and at the same time the overflowing."⁵⁵

The reported experiences of mystics include the sense of an inward movement of union with the ultimate mystery. Commenting on Eckhart, Sikka writes: "The soul passes into a hidden region where everything returns to itself in pure inwardness. This inwardness is nothing 'subjective' but is the essential ground of all being, the condition for the possibility of being" (157). A complementary function in mystical experience is the movement "outwards," interpreted in Grof's research as a separation into individuality (77-78). Because the inward and outward movements in mystical experience have no temporal dimension and therefore are non-sequential, they can be linked to originary difference, interpreted as both unification and separation. Joseph Kockelmans describes a "common centre" that serves as the single dimension of being and beings, "a primal unity by reason of which each adheres to the other and out of which both 'issue forth'."⁵⁶

Although Eckhart and Heidegger seek to transcend metaphysical dualism, their thinking, in my view, is compromised by their description of the ultimate mystery as originating the process whereby birth or appropriation can occur (*Q*, 376, 32 and *WCT*, 357). A similar form of critique emerges in the work of Derrida, who claims that the ideas of both writers are situated within metaphysics.

12.5 *Derrida's critique of Eckhart and Heidegger*

When associated with theism, mystical experience often has as its theoretical basis a form of apophatic thinking known as “negative theology.” This approach to religious belief is based on the view that God can only be discussed in terms of what he is not, as illustrated in Eckhart’s teaching that there is nothing we can say about God (*Q*, 242, 36 – 243, 1). Derrida discusses a fundamental problem in negative theology, which he claims is also applicable to Heidegger’s claim that being is beyond the domain of metaphysical inquiry.

Derrida’s theory of *différance* is an adaptation of Saussure’s view that meanings generated within a language system are the effect of the differences between the signs comprising the language, rather than indicating a direct or unique relation to the objects indicated by the signs themselves.⁵⁷ The idea that the sign represents something that could be potentially present, is negated by Derrida on the grounds that signs always refer to other signs in an endless process, so there can be no ultimate referent. In contrast to the “metaphysics of presence,” which he describes as “giving a privileged position to a sort of absolute now,”⁵⁸ the history of a word’s usage in its difference from other words, constitutes its meaning as a kind of “trace.” However, this trace does not lead back to a source, since the origin of meaning is difference rather than a positive concept. The trace

emerges from other traces, which themselves refer to others in a never-ending process, thereby precluding the possibility of an origin: “The trace is not only the disappearance of origin...it means that the origin did not even disappear, that it was never constituted except reciprocally by a nonorigin, the trace, which thus becomes the origin of the origin” (*OG*, 61).

Derrida’s theory that there is no such thing as an origin, or even an originary trace, is used in his critique of negative theology. As discussed above in relation to Eckhart, this discipline outlines an ultimate concept said to be beyond the traditional view of God, and beyond the capacity of humans to describe. According to Denys Turner, negative theology is “the linguistic strategy of somehow showing by means of language that which lies beyond language.”⁵⁹ William Franke explains that an attempt to say something about an indefinable God involves a rejection of the attempt itself: “Any discourse we start with, anything we conceptualize and say, is itself always already a negation – the negation of reality itself as it transcends all our concepts and discourses.”⁶⁰ According to Owen Ware, “the apophatic desire to experience God beyond the finite structure of language must renounce itself in order to preserve the inaccessibility and invisibility of the divine.”⁶¹

Derrida argues that the attempt to name God as he “is,” beyond names, represents an “endless desertification of language,”⁶² and that the result of negative theology’s endeavours is the establishment of an idea of God that was said to be beyond human capacity to describe. He asserts that the process of reaching beyond the symbolic and the positive must inevitably be confined to “the same quantity of discourse” as that which it seeks to transcend: “In itself interminable, the apophatic movement cannot contain within itself the principle of its interruption. It can only defer the encounter with its own

limit.”⁶³ Although negative theology seeks to move beyond both positive and negative descriptions, it retains a concept of a being beyond being (*Denials*, 77). Derrida holds that the various forms of negative theology “are always concerned with disengaging a superessentiality beyond the finite categories of essence and existence, that is, of presence, and always hastening to recall that God is refused the predicate of existence, only in order to acknowledge his superior, inconceivable, and ineffable mode of being.”⁶⁴ Mark Taylor comments that the apophatic form of negation is always denegation; “disavowal” is always avowal. It is therefore impossible, he continues, to present a truly negative theology by a process of denial, since what is repressed always returns.⁶⁵ Similarly, Derrida claims that although it purports to be a process of negation, theological negativity cannot escape reaching some kind of positive conception of God (*Denials*, 76). In support of this position, he quotes from Eckhart: “[God] brought about being when there was no Being...I have not denied Him being but, rather I have exalted Being in Him” (78) With reference to Eckhart’s teaching that the deity that can be thought and named is not God himself, Derrida points out that “this deity is still determined as the essence-of-the-threelfold-God,” and he argues that even when Eckhart moves beyond the traditional idea of God, the result is still an ontic determination.⁶⁶ From Derrida’s perspective, negative theology is an expression of the metaphysics of presence, in that a form of ultimacy is being attributed to a concept said to be beyond human comprehension.

The critique used by Derrida in discussing negative theology’s attempt to transcend the idea of God, is applied in a similar manner to Heidegger’s claim that “Being is not (a being) and in truth is nothing (that is)” (*Denials*, 128). Derrida draws a parallel between the two approaches: “In the most apophatic moment, when one says:

‘God is not’, ‘God is neither this nor that, neither that nor its contrary’, or ‘being is not’, etc.: even then it is still a matter of saying the entity [*étant*] such as it is, in its truth, even were it meta-metaphysical, meta-ontological.”⁶⁷ Derrida’s critique is persuasive on the grounds that because Eckhart and Heidegger have already formed a concept of God or being as some kind of ultimate mystery that accounts for the existence of everything that is, this prior understanding in each case undermines their claim that the mystery they seek to describe transcends the possibility of its conceptualisation. The idea that Heidegger’s thinking is metaphysical reflects the comments of scholars who discuss his tendency to hypostasise being. Adorno asserts that despite Heidegger’s definition of being as an absence, the interpretation of being as ultimate meaning indicates that, for Heidegger, being is understood as a ground, and is thereby given what Adorno calls “ontological dignity.”⁶⁸ Erickson claims that to ascribe meaning to being alone “is to border on anthropomorphizing and reifying Being,”⁶⁹ and in this context he writes of “the haunting suspicion of Being’s agency” (163). In a similar manner, Sheehan refers to commentators who analyse Heidegger’s idea of being as a mythical power, “which, like a secular Yahweh [the Hebrew God], oversees the drama of the forgetfulness and recollection of Itself, mostly hiding Itself but occasionally revealing and salvifically sending Itself to select prophetic thinkers.”⁷⁰ Earlier I cited some of the passages in Heidegger that lend support to this interpretation, including the idea that being “abandoned” beings at the time of Plato (*CP*, 11), and that it “bestows” grace and favour.⁷¹

I hold that there are two conflicting positions within Heidegger’s thought. The one discussed by the above commentators presents a view of being as having a kind of autonomous agency, where it “sends” itself in ways that have historical consequences for

the human (*TB*, 8). This portrayal of being and the human as acting and being acted upon, implies that they each have some form of independent identity. Heidegger's other position is outlined in *Identity and Difference*, where being and Dasein can only be understood on the basis of originary difference. In this work, Heidegger explains that it is no longer possible to say what "being" is or what "man" is (*ID*, 29). The two form a mysterious union, where "man is man only in his belonging together with Being, and Being is Being only in its belonging together with man."⁷² Heidegger's first position, where being is portrayed as acting unilaterally, is vulnerable to the critique that he ontologises or reifies being, so that his interpretation of being as some kind of ultimate concept set over against the human, would remain within the ambit of metaphysical thinking. By contrast, the concept of originary difference, where neither being nor the human has a separate identity, indicates that this aspect of Heidegger thought is consistent with Derrida's concept of *différance*. (My position is that any attempt to describe "the experience of being" would necessitate the concept of originary difference as its theoretical basis, rather than the idea of being as an autonomous agent.) Having categorised the whole of Heidegger's thinking as metaphysical, Derrida himself would not support the view I have proposed, though his critique of Heidegger (outlined below) fails to address the concept of originary difference.

Derrida states that his own concept of *différance* cannot be given a name, not even that of "essence" or "Being." It is not a "pure nominal unity," but is a play that makes possible all names, including its own, through chains of substitutions (*Dif.* 26). According to Derrida, names are metaphysical, including those that determine the difference between being and beings. He therefore concludes that *différance* is "older" than the ontological difference in Heidegger (22), a concept which, in Derrida's view, is

still “in the grasp of metaphysics.”⁷³ Derrida claims that Heidegger ultimately turns back from the possibility of going beyond names, because of Heidegger’s need for the unique word, the “finally proper name”: being (*Dif.*, 27).

A counter to Derrida’s critique is the statement by Heidegger that being as well as beings “appear by virtue of the difference, each in its own way” (*ID*, 64). Furthermore, in a work of 1955, *The Question of Being*, Heidegger explains that language is inadequate to describe the relationship of “man” and “Being,” because in using language, we risk the singularisation of both concepts.⁷⁴ He continues: “In truth we can then not even say any longer that ‘Being’ and ‘man’ ‘be’ the same in the sense that *they* belong together; for in so saying we still let both be for themselves” (*QB*, 77). The word “Being” is therefore printed as crossed out, and the location of the human is said to be at the intersection of the lines (83). In comparing the theories of Heidegger and Derrida, Paul Manithottil writes: “Difference and *différance* are inseparable...Derrida’s *différance* cannot stay alone without the support of Heidegger’s difference.”⁷⁵ Walter Brogan points out that for Heidegger, originary difference

violates the law of contradiction... It is the other that constitutes sameness and otherness...the presencing that constitutes presence and absence, the nothing that constitutes “isness” and nothingness. But the nature of this constituting act and thus of this relation is such that it denies itself to that which it affirms, it holds itself to itself and thus crosses out its own constituting act, releasing this relation from bondage. The *sous rature*, the erasure, is not an afterthought but belongs essentially to the original writing of Heidegger’s difference. It is genesis – the originary difference that is traced in this act that contradicts the origin even as it signifies it. It is the trace that differentiates while deferring its own difference. It is *différance* as Derrida portrays it.⁷⁶

According to Derrida, the self-effacing trace is absent in Heidegger’s work, whereas Brogan equates the trace with originary difference itself. Just as the trace has no origin,

Heidegger interprets originary difference as the absence of ground (*ID*, 39). Because of the similarities between their respective positions, Derrida cannot successfully defend the claim that Heidegger's work as a whole is metaphysical. Derrida's argument that Heidegger has a "positive" conception of being, is valid only with respect to those passages where Heidegger attributes to being a form of agency, for example, his statement that being grants humans "the nobility of a poverty," thereby enabling them to be thankful for receiving the gift of being itself (*WIM*, 236).

12.6 *Mysticism and originary difference*

The idea of originary difference is foreshadowed in the *Beiträge*, where the prior relation between being and the human constitutes the basis on which each concept can be understood (*CP*, 179). Heidegger's description of the need to experience being as a mutual belonging, begins with the change of attitude that is required: the metaphysical idea of being is to be abandoned and replaced by the notion of being as an abyss or abground (53). This change in thinking involves taking a daring leap into the unfamiliar, where, in a "startled dismay" (11) and "deep foreboding" (15), we realise that we can no longer depend on being as a ground. Taking the leap, according to Heidegger, is the only way of entry into the "truth" of *Ereignis* (272).

A problem with Heidegger's theory is that on the one hand, he seeks to portray being as beyond the level of concepts, but his descriptions of the experience of belonging to being include a cognitive understanding that being itself is groundless. Also he provides no explanation as to how belonging to being is connected with the affective states of dismay and foreboding. The conceptual awareness that being is not a ground

does not necessarily lead to the emotions he describes,⁷⁷ and in any case, the abandonment of metaphysical thinking in Heidegger's theory does not mean that we are thereby appropriated by being. Earlier I outlined his various positions on the question of *Ereignis*, including the idea that it may only occur if being is revealed at some indeterminate point in the future (*CP*, 6). This latter view is based on the assumption that being has not been manifest to individuals in the past because of its withdrawal at the time of Plato. I have argued that such a position is unsustainable,⁷⁸ and that what is required is an account of the kind of experience that transcends the dualistic thinking characteristic of both metaphysics and our phenomenal experience of the world. The theoretical basis of such an experience, as it is interpreted after the event, would be consistent with the concept of *Ereignis*, understood on the basis of originary difference, and would not be associated with the arrival of some unknown future event. Mystical states involve the loss of individual identity, thereby reflecting Heidegger's view that in respect of originary difference, "man" and "being" can no longer be regarded as identifiable, self-contained concepts (*ID*, 30). What has been described as the core element of mystical experience would, however, preclude the possibility of the affective states Heidegger describes, since these would involve a consciousness awareness of the self. Although originary difference in Heidegger's work is presented as a theory, its connection with *Ereignis* as an experience means that whatever is involved in belonging to being would necessitate the transcendence of self-identity and all other forms of dualistic thinking.

The association of mysticism and originary difference would have been rejected by Heidegger, partly because of his later opposition to mysticism,⁷⁹ and also because of his view that even Eckhart's teaching can be categorised as metaphysical. Despite this

negative evaluation, Heidegger continues to affirm Eckhart's practices of releasement and meditation,⁸⁰ and in the *Beiträge* he outlines the need for becoming silent and attuning to the stillness in which be-ing can be heard (*CP*, 17). Such a process is described by Susan Schoenbohm as "the meditative awareness (*Besinning*) of thinking."⁸¹ Through releasement and meditative thinking, the individual comes to understand being as a gift, or the bestowal of a "grace" (*WIM*, 236). Rolfe von Eckartsberg and Ronald Valle point out that although Heidegger seems to dwell "in the vicinity of the mystical," he does not describe mystical experience as a "moment of eternity," which would involve a breakdown of the awareness of time; it is rather that he proposes a form of mystical openness to being that manifests in an experience of things.⁸²

In a work of 1959, *Discourse on Thinking*, Heidegger outlines his concept of meditative thinking. He proposes that humans generally engage in what he calls "calculative thinking" (*DT*, 46), involving the setting of goals, planning and investigation. The problem Heidegger finds with this approach is that in the process of objectification, calculative thinking fails to consider the meaning underlying everything that is. Meditative thinking, by contrast, concerns belonging to being, and is the means by which we can gain insight into the essence of who we are. According to Heidegger, humans are in flight from this kind of thinking. What he defines as "thoughtlessness" is portrayed as "an uncanny visitor who comes and goes everywhere in today's world. For nowadays we take in everything in the quickest and cheapest way, only to forget it just as quickly, instantly. Thus one gathering follows on the heels of another. Commemorative celebrations grow poorer and poorer in thought. Commemoration and thoughtlessness are found side by side" (45). The consequence of not thinking meditatively is that the human

will remain a “defenseless and perplexed victim at the mercy of the irresistible superior power of technology,” falling into bondage to the various technical devices (54). If we become aware of this danger, however, we can use the devices simply as instruments, so that we are free to let go of them at any time. Heidegger describes such an attitude as “*releasement toward things*,” where we ponder the meaning hidden behind the things with which we are involved, and open ourselves to whatever may be revealed: “That which shows itself and at the same time withdraws is the essential trait of what we call the mystery. I call the comportment which enables us to keep open to the meaning hidden in technology, *openness to the mystery*” (55).

Meditative thinking requires commitment and courage, together with the renouncing of willing. Entering into this state is defined as “keeping awake for releasement,” where we may “release, or at least prepare to release, ourselves to the sought-for essence of a thinking that is not willing” (60), and thus enter into the mystery of being itself. Since by our own efforts we cannot activate the manifestation of being, the only thing we can do is to wait, but to do so in the absence of any particular expectation. Leaving open what we are waiting for means opening ourselves to being. Heidegger explains that meditative thinking is not to be understood as a “floating unaware above reality” (46). Instead, we are exhorted to “dwell on what lies close and meditate on what is closest; upon that which concerns us, each one of us, here and now; here, on this patch of home ground; now, in the present hour of history” (47). We can then remember the circumstances of our particular situation, and are thereby motivated to deepen our thought processes in order to uncover what originally moved us to think.

As a way of enacting meditative thinking, Heidegger uses the occasion of a Memorial Address he is invited to give. His aim is to move his listeners from being

passive recipients of his words to a situation where they meditate about the meaning of the commemoration.⁸³ The address begins:

What does this celebration suggest to us, in case we are ready to meditate? Then we notice that a work of art has flowered in the ground of our homeland. As we hold this simple fact in mind, we cannot help remembering at once that during the last two centuries great poets and thinkers have been brought forth from the Swabian land. Thinking about it further makes clear at once that Central Germany is likewise such a land, and so are East Prussia, Silesia, and Bohemia. We grow thoughtful and ask: does not the flourishing of any genuine work depend upon its roots in a native soil? (*DT*, 47)

Heidegger then quotes the poet, Hebel, who likens humans to plants rising out of the earth. The poet's lines are followed by a series of questions addressed to the audience: "We grow more thoughtful and ask: does this claim of Johann Peter Hebel hold today? Does man still dwell calmly between heaven and earth? Does a meditative spirit still reign over the land? Is there still a life-giving homeland in whose ground man may stand rooted?" (48). Having stated that we are unaware of what we are waiting for, Heidegger seems to provide answers reflecting the sentiments of German romanticism and even nationalism. The insights he gives have little connection to the idea of being as a mystery, nor do they address his theory of belonging to being as interpreted on the basis of originary difference. Whereas in the teachings of Eckhart, releasement and meditation lead to mystical experience, in the thought of Heidegger, they lead merely to insights about underlying meanings. My view is that mystical experience is a pathway to the ultimate mystery Heidegger is seeking to describe, but that such an experience is unattainable when we are functioning in a normal state of awareness, or where our focus is directed to objects or events such as commemorations. I also propose that no matter how deeply we understand being as the absence of ground, such awareness does not

enable us to transcend the dualistic thinking that is a consequence of our spatio-temporal existence.

Apart from the absence of any obvious association between originary difference and the above example of meditative thinking, Heidegger precludes the possibility of interpreting originary difference in the light of mysticism, because in the context of his later exploration of being, he regards mysticism as an expression of metaphysics. The position adopted by Heidegger does not take into account the absence of any necessary connection between the core element of mystical experience and the beliefs systems to which it may give rise.⁸⁴ Similarly he overlooks the fact that nature mysticism is not based on a metaphysical idea such as God or a first cause. If Heidegger had understood the fundamental difference between mystical experience itself and its various traditional interpretations, he may have been in a position to acknowledge that the mystical state can be regarded an experience of being. The transcendence of duality experienced in all forms of mysticism means that it could never legitimately be categorised as metaphysical.

12.7 *Originary difference and chōra*

Earlier I proposed that the idea of originary difference is foreshadowed in Plato's concept of *chōra* (*khōra*). In his essay on this subject, Derrida writes: "What Plato in the *Timaeus* designates by the name of *khōra* seems to defy that 'logic of noncontradiction...of binarity, of the yes or no' ...One cannot even say of it that it is *neither* this *nor* that or that it is *both* this *and* that."⁸⁵ Derrida describes *khōra* as that which "belongs neither to the sensible nor to the intelligible, neither to becoming, nor to non-being (the *khōra* is never described as a void), nor to Being" (*Denials*, 105). In

relation to the question of time, *khōra* is interpreted as being “preoriginary,” so that it cannot be said to have either a “past” or a “present” (*Khōra*, 125).

Plato’s description of *khōra* is consistent with the ideas of *différance* in Derrida and originary difference in Heidegger. With regard to Derrida’s concept, Caputo writes: “*Différance*, like *khōra*, is a great receptacle upon which every constituted trace or mark is imprinted, ‘older’, prior, preoriginary...Just as *khōra*, by providing the space within which the sensible copy of the intelligible is inscribed, precedes and precontains the oppositions between the two, so *différance* precedes and precontains all the oppositions that are inscribed within it.”⁸⁶ In Heidegger’s thought, the reason we cannot define the essence of being or the human is that they can only be understood on the basis of originary difference. As is the case with *différance*, this original state therefore “precontains” the possibility of everything that emerges from it. These emergent phenomena are in one sense in opposition to each other, but for Heidegger, the nature of that opposition is always complicated by the belonging together of the respective elements, interpreted on the basis of “sameness” as originally expressed in Parmenides (*ID*, 27). Heidegger’s interpretation of the early Greek work is presaged in “*Timaeus*,” where *chōra* is depicted as prior to the activity of the soul, which blends the opposing concepts of the intelligible and the sensible, and then blends the selfsame and the different.⁸⁷

I have argued that *chōra* provides an insight into the nature of being as that which gives rise to our everyday experience of sameness and difference, and of the spatial and the temporal. As Kant noted, spatiality is the experience of objects as external to each other and to the subject of consciousness,⁸⁸ and time is the experience of things as successive or coexistent (A31/B46). In our normal states of consciousness, we lack the

resources that would enable us to conceive of an originary form of difference that is prior to our experience of the difference between individual things. *Chōra* and originary difference are ways of describing the potential for the differentiation that enables to us to recognise things as being the same or different.

The aim in all Heidegger's work is to explore being as a mystery, and to explain how we can experience belonging to being. His concept of originary difference provides a convincing explanation as to how being and the human belong to each other, but it is in his account of experience that his thought, in my view, does not reach its desired goal. Among the problems in his thinking is an uncertainty as to whether *Ereignis* is a fundamental reality of existence, a present possibility, or a future but indeterminate event having some relation to the willingness of humans to engage in meditative thinking. If Heidegger had developed the first position, he could have examined the way thinkers of the past have experienced being. He may then have become aware that the experience of a mystic such as Eckhart, when detached from its theological grounding, transcends metaphysical thought forms. Such a recognition would have undermined Heidegger's theory that being was "withdrawn" at the time of Plato, or that we will have to wait for some unknowable future event in order for it to be revealed.

Originary difference can be understood as an attempt to describe a mystery underlying our everyday experience. I have proposed that Heidegger's theory is compatible with interpretations of mysticism as a primordial dynamic integration of unity and difference, transcending all forms of conceptual reflection and the spatio-temporal awareness that characterises human existence. My thesis is that the experience

of mysticism is the experience *par excellence* that takes us beyond the notions of the self-contained subject and the world as the object of thought, together with the metaphysical concept of being as an absolute ground. In entering the mystical state, we may experience the ultimate oneness that underlies all Heidegger's thinking: "the mystery of Being itself."⁸⁹

NOTES

¹ Heidegger, Postscript to “What is Metaphysics?” tr. R. F. C. Hull and Alan Crick, in *Existence and Being* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1949), 386.

² Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, tr. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 272 (hereafter cited in text as *CP*).

³ Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 30 (hereafter cited in text as *ID*).

⁴ Heidegger, *Die Kategorien und Bedeutungslehre des Duns Scotus* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1916), 241.

⁵ Josef Quint, (Hrsg. u. übers.), *Meister Eckhart: Deutsche Predigten und Traktate* (München: Carl Hanser, 1965), 185, 20 (hereafter cited in text as *Q*).

⁶ Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 8 (hereafter cited in text as *TB*).

⁷ Philip Almond, *Mystical Experience and Religious Doctrine: An Investigation of the Study of Mysticism in World Religions* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1982), 168. Examples are given of the broadening of belief systems in Eastern and Western thought.

⁸ Richard Jones, “A Philosophical Analysis of Mystical Utterances,” *Philosophy East and West* 29, no. 3 (July, 1979), 255.

⁹ Leon Rosenstein, “Mysticism as Preontology: A Note on the Heideggerian Connection,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 39, no. 1 (September, 1978), 64.

¹⁰ Robert Zaehner, *Mysticism, Sacred and Profane: An Inquiry into Some Varieties of Praeternatural Experience*, London: Oxford University Press, 1973, 198.

¹¹ Ninian Smart, *The Yogi and the Devotee* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1968), 42.

¹² William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1902), 380.

¹³ Arthur Danto, “Language and the Tao: Some Reflections on Ineffability,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 1, no. 1 (March, 1977) 53.

¹⁴ Stanislav Grof, *The Cosmic Game: Explorations in the Frontiers of Human Consciousness* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998), 26.

¹⁵ Walter Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy* (London: Macmillan, 1960), 11.

¹⁶ Walter Stace, *The Teachings of the Mystics* (New York: New American Library, 1960), 14.

¹⁷ F. Crossfield Happold, *Mysticism; A Study and an Anthology* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970), 20.

¹⁸ John Blofeld, *The Way of Power; A Practical Guide to the Tantric Mysticism of Tibet* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1970), 25-26.

¹⁹ Peter Appleby, "Mysticism and Ineffability," *International Journal of Philosophy and Religion* 11 (1980): 164.

²⁰ Peter Kakol, "Is there more than one kind of non-constructed mystical experience? A response to Forman's 'Perennial Psychology'," *Sophia* 39, no. 1, (March-April, 2000), 68.

²¹ Mike King, "Nature Mysticism" (1995).
<http://web.ukonline.co.uk/mr.king/writings/essays/essaysukc/natmysta.html>.

²² Ibid.

²³ John Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1990), 7.

²⁴ Thomas Sheehan, "Heidegger's *Lehrjahre*," in *The Collegium Phaenomenologicum*, ed. John Sallis, Giuseppina Moneta, and Jacques Taminiaux (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1988), 94.

²⁵ Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason*, tr. Reginald Lilly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 53.

²⁶ Otto Pöggeler, "West-East Dialogue: Heidegger and Lao-tzu," in *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, ed. Graham Parkes (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 47-49.

²⁷ Robert Dobie, "Reason and Revelation in the Thought of Meister Eckhart," *The Thomist* 67 (2003): 412.

²⁸ Heidegger, *Nietzsche II* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1961), 28, cited in J. L. Mehta, "Heidegger and Vedanta: Reflections on a Questionable Theme," in *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, ed. Graham Parkes (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 35.

²⁹ Heidegger, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, tr. Matthias Fritsch and Jennifer Gosetti-Ferencei (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 167.

³⁰ Paul Hühnerfeld, *In Sachen Heidegger: Versuch über ein deutsches Genie* (München: Paul List Verlag, 1961), cited in Caputo (1990), 35.

³¹ László Versényi, *Heidegger, Being and Truth* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 162, cited in Caputo (1990), 41.

³² Appendix: "Conversation with Martin Heidegger," in *The Piety of Thinking: Essays by Martin Heidegger*, tr. James Hart and John Maraldo, recorded by Hermann Noack, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), 64.

³³ Heidegger, "Phenomenology and Theology," in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 48.

³⁴ Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, tr. John Anderson and E. Hans Freund (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 62 (hereafter cited in text as *DT*).

³⁵ Douglas Donkel, *The Understanding of Difference in Heidegger and Derrida* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1992), 187. In Heidegger's thought, "while God's status as the source of being has been called into question, the characterization of God as a being has not been so problematized."

³⁶ Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 80.

³⁷ Laurence Hemming, *Heidegger's Atheism: The Refusal of a Theological Voice* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 289.

³⁸ Ernesto Lapitan Jr., "The Oblivion of Being: An Overview of Metaphysics and Mysticism in Aquinas, Eckhart and Heidegger," 2003. <http://www.royce1114.tripod.com>.

³⁹ Armand Maurer (tr.), *Parisian Questions and Prologues*, (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1974), 85.

⁴⁰ James Clark and John Skinner (eds. and trs.), *Meister Eckhart: Selected Treatises and Sermons* (London: Faber & Faber, 1958), 230.

⁴¹ E. Benz, K. Weiss, B. Geyer, J. Koch, K. Christ, B. Decker (Hrsg.), *Die Lateinische Werke*, Hrsg. im Auftrage der deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft 5 Bände (hereafter cited in endnotes as LW), (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1936 ff), II, 77.

⁴² LW, XXIX.

⁴³ Ian Almond, "Negative Theology, Derrida and the Critique of Presence: A Poststructuralist Reading of Meister Eckhart," *The Heythrop Journal* 40 (1999): 151.

⁴⁴ James Clark, *Meister Eckhart* (London: Nelson & Sons, 1957), 230.

⁴⁵ Reiner Schürmann, *Meister Eckhart: Mystic and Philosopher* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 44.

⁴⁶ Bernard McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2001), 142.

⁴⁷ Q, 197, 34-5.

⁴⁸ Josef Quint (Hrsg.), *Die deutsche Wer V*. Hrsg. im Auftrage der deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft, 5. Bände, (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1936 ff.), 542.

⁴⁹ Reza Shah-Kazemi, *Paths to Transcendence: According to Shankara, Ibn Arabi, and Meister Eckhart* (Bloomington: World Wisdom Inc., 2006), 165.

⁵⁰ Q, 252, 32-5.

⁵¹ Beverly Lanzetta, "Three Categories of Nothingness in Eckhart," *The Journal of Religion* 72, no. 2 (April, 1992), 267.

⁵² Heidegger, "What calls for thinking," in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. David Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 357 (hereafter cited in text as *WCT*).

⁵³ Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. David (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 236.

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⁵⁶ Joseph Kockelmans, "Ontological Difference, Hermeneutics, and Language," in Joseph J. Kockelmans (ed.), *On Heidegger and Language* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1980), 215.

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⁵⁹ Denys Turner, *The darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 34.

⁶⁰ William Franke, "Apophysis and the turn of philosophy to religion: From Neoplatonic negative theology to postmodern negation of theology," *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion* 60 (2006): 65.

⁶¹ Owen Ware, "Impossible Passions: Derrida and negative theology," *Philosophy Today* 49, no. 2 (Summer, 2005), 175.

⁶² Jacques Derrida, "Post-Scriptum: Aporias, Ways and Voices," in *Derrida and Negative Theology*, ed. Harold Coward and Toby Foshay (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 300.

⁶³ Jacques Derrida, "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials," in *Derrida and Negative Theology*, ed. Harold Coward and Toby Foshay (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 81 (hereafter cited in text as *Denials*).

⁶⁴ Jacques Derrida, "Différance," in *Margins of Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 6 (hereafter cited in text as *Dif.*)

⁶⁵ Mark C. Taylor, 'nO nOt nO', in *Derrida and Negative Theology*, ed. Harold Coward and Toby Foshay (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 177.

⁶⁶ Jacques Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas," in *Writing and Difference*, tr. Alan Bass (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1995), 146.

⁶⁷ Derrida, "*Sauf le nom* (Post-Scriptum)," in *On the Name*, ed. Thomas Dutoit, tr. David Wood, John Leavey, Jr. and Ian McLeod (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 68.

⁶⁸ Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, tr. E. B. Ashton (London: Routledge, 1990), 87.

⁶⁹ Stephen Erickson, "Meaning and Language," in *Analytic Philosophy and Phenomenology*, ed. Harold Durfee (New York: Springer, 1976), 162.

⁷⁰ Thomas Sheehan, "Derrida and Heidegger," in *Hermeneutics & Deconstruction*, ed. Hugh Silverman and Don Ihde (New York: State University of New York Press, 1985), 204. The author himself rejects this position.

⁷¹ Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?" tr. Walter Kaufmann, in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 236 (hereafter cited in text as *WIM*).

⁷² Albert Hofstadter, "Enownment", *Boundary* 4, no. 2 (1976): 365.

⁷³ Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, tr. Alan Bass (London: Athlone, 1981), 10.

⁷⁴ Heidegger, *The Question of Being*, Bilingual edition, tr. William Kluback and Jean Wilde. (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1958), 81 (hereafter cited in text as *QB*).

⁷⁵ Paul Manihotttil, *Difference at the Origin* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2008), 184.

⁷⁶ Walter Brogan, "The Original Difference," in *Derrida and Différance*, ed. David Wood and Robert Bernasconi (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 36.

⁷⁷ In Chapter 7, note 41, I referred to Søren Overgaard's opinion that, contrary to Heidegger's view, anxiety is not a common phenomenon. Similarly in the present context, Heidegger makes the doubtful assumption that the intellectual awareness of the absence of ground is necessarily expressed in a particular affective state.

⁷⁸ See Chapter 10, section 3 herein.

⁷⁹ See section 2 above.

⁸⁰ See Caputo (1990), Chapter 4.

⁸¹ Susan Schoenbohm, "Reading Heidegger's *Contributions to Philosophy*: An Orientation," in *Companion to Heidegger's Contributions to Philosophy*, ed. C. Scott et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 23.

⁸² Rolfe von Eckartsberg and Ronald Valle, “Heideggerian Thinking and the Eastern Mind,” in *Metaphors of Consciousness*, ed. Rolfe von Eckartsberg and Ronald S. Valle (New York: Plenum Press, 1981), 301.

⁸³ See Barbara Pezze, “Heidegger on *Gelassenheit*,” *Minerva – An Internet Journal of Philosophy* 10 (2006): 101. <http://www.mic.ul.ie/stephen/vol10/Heidegger.pdf>.

⁸⁴ See Note 15 above.

⁸⁵ Jacques Derrida, “*Khōra*,” in *On the Name*, ed. Thomas Dutoit, tr. David Wood, John Leavey, Jr. and Ian McLeod (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995) 89 (hereafter cited in text as *Khōra*).

⁸⁶ John Caputo, ed., *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), 97 and 99.

⁸⁷ See Chapter 1, section 3 herein.

⁸⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* tr. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), A23/B38.

⁸⁹ Heidegger, “Poetically Man Dwells,” in *Poetry Language, Thought*, tr. Albert Hofstadter, (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 178.

CONCLUSION

In this study, I have focused on the predominant question in Heidegger's thought, which is how to understand and enter into "that most mysterious of all possibilities: the experience of Being."¹ The aim of his work is to overcome the limitations of metaphysical dualism, and all forms of thinking based in the conceptual. I have argued that although Heidegger fails to reach this goal, his theory of *Ereignis* as the belonging together of being and the human, represents an important step in understanding something of the mystery of being. His later work has been described by some commentators as a form of mysticism,² and although he initially endorses medieval mysticism with its basis in "rationality," he subsequently describes medieval philosophy and theology as metaphysical. My view is that the way in which mystical experience has been interpreted in various traditions contains parallels with Heidegger's concept of originary difference, and that his unwillingness to acknowledge these similarities is a limiting factor in his exploration of the experience of being.

Heidegger's critique extends to the non-theistic forms of Western mysticism, which he regards as the irrational counterpart to metaphysics.³ A difficulty with such a categorisation is that the expression of nature mysticism in the work of a writer such as Johann Goethe, could hardly be regarded as irrational. Edward Mercer writes that "man's communion with the cosmos, of which he is himself a part, will be grounded in the reason which permeates the whole."⁴ The kind of reason to which Mercer refers does not form part of the mystical experience itself, but emerges in the scholarly interpretations of such experiences as they have occurred throughout history. These investigations reveal commonalities that transcend established religious and philosophical systems of thought.

Heidegger uses two earlier approaches as a background to his theory – Presocratic wonder at the mystery of existence, and medieval mystical experience, but it is only the latter that, in my view, overcomes the problem of dualism; in the thought of the early Greeks, some form of distinction still exists between the focus of the wonder and the experiencing individual. I have also proposed that the “common core” theory of mysticism is consistent with the concepts of the *apeiron* in Anaximander and *chōra* in Plato, both of which describe a dynamic state of potential underlying the differentiation of sameness and difference on which the dualistic thinking of metaphysics is based.

In some of his work, Heidegger claims that we are always already experiencing being. As late as 1941, he defines being as that which the human “experiences before all beings.”⁵ On the other hand, he argues that we must experience being in a new way, and that such an experience will result from a change in the way being is conceptualised. His theory is that entry into the experience of belonging to being will involve a dismay and foreboding in the realisation that being is an absence of ground.⁶ I have argued that there is no necessary connection between these affective states and the rejection of a metaphysical position. According to Heidegger, being is beyond the level of concepts, but since the experience he discusses involves accepting the proposition that being is groundless, this cognitive act will form an essential element of the experience itself.

In his later work, Heidegger describes the experience of being in terms of “meditative thinking.”⁷ He advocates an attitude of “*releasement toward things*,” where we ponder their hidden meaning, and he defines such an attitude as “*openness to the mystery*” (*DT*, 55). The kind of thinking he outlines has no demonstrable connection with *Ereignis* or originary difference, nor does it involve any sense of the mystery of being. Heidegger also asserts that failure to think in a meditative way could result in humans

remaining victims of the power of technology (54). A counter to such a view is that the attitude we hold towards this modern phenomenon will be determined mainly by our personal value-systems – a situation unrelated to the presence or absence of meditative thinking. More importantly, in a mystical state, we would be unable to process material in a way that would permit the drawing of conclusions from the evidence, such as understanding the problems arising from a theory where humans and entities are considered to be reducible to a stockpile for technological purposes.⁸ Heidegger claims that in order to experience being, we must never lose touch with what he calls “reality” (*DT*, 46). Whatever this concept may mean, it will be interpreted from a spatio-temporal perspective. By contrast, mysticism involves a transcendence of the sense of time and space. It abrogates the idea of being as a ground, and the metaphysical distinction between subject and object.

Although there is a considerable shift between Heidegger’s earlier and later positions, a similar difficulty pervades both. In the 1920s, he describes ontological experience, including the use of equipment and the projection of possibilities, as prior to all ontic experience,⁹ but in my view, the being of both *Dasein* and non-*Dasein* entities is inseparable from what Heidegger categorises as ontic factors. With regard to the later work, his stated aim is “to get to just where we are already,”¹⁰ and he therefore limits his illustrations to the milieu of quotidian experience involving things such as objects and commemorations. Over a period of several decades, Heidegger attempts to overcome metaphysics and to point the way to a non-conceptual experience of being, but his claim that being is to be understood in the context of the everyday, situates his thinking within the constraints of the conceptual and the explanatory. Such an approach contrasts with the mystical state, where the sense of oneness and loss of individual identity would

preclude the subject from being aware of any distinct phenomenon such as an object or an event. The examples Heidegger gives of meditative thinking would reinstate the separation of self and world that his theory seeks to overcome.

One of the reasons Heidegger is unable to associate *Ereignis* and originary difference with mystical states, is his theory that being was withdrawn at the time of Plato, and that we cannot be certain as to whether it will ever be revealed again. The adoption of such a categorical position means that Heidegger is unable to conceive of the possibility that being has been experienced by thinkers in the past. His approach preempts an investigation of the mystical pathway as a means of experiencing being. Heidegger's view of being's possible future advent also conflicts with his theories of language and the fourfold, where *Ereignis* as an expression of originary difference is presented as a basic principle underlying the whole of existence.

An unresolved issue in relation to language is Heidegger's inability to find a way of overcoming the limitations imposed by the dualism of language structure. In some of his writing, he transgresses the rules of syntax,¹¹ and he claims in the *Beiträge*, "Making itself intelligible is suicide for philosophy" (*CP*, 307), but such manoeuvres are ineffective in resolving the problem that everyday language, in his view, is characterised by the metaphysical separation of subject and object.¹² The experience of mysticism, on the other hand, transcends the possibility of linguistic articulation. Heidegger's thinking indicates a movement towards this kind of mystery when he defines language in its originary sense as "the silent source," "a soundless echo," or "the peal of stillness" (*PLT*, 207). He also writes that the essence of language is unnameable and unsayable. In a similar manner, mystical experiences are referred to as a stillness beyond language.¹³ They are reported to resemble states of feeling rather than of intellect,¹⁴ so that they are

frequently described as ineffable. Heidegger refers to the language of *poiesis* as the means by which the world and things can be revealed (*PLT*, 194). In a similar manner, the sensing of an outward movement in certain forms of mystical experience has been interpreted as the manifestation of the ultimate mystery in the form of human beings and the world as we know it.¹⁵ Both the inward movement of unity and the outward movement of differentiation can be likened to Heidegger's description of the "strife" or the "rift," which is also the unification of an intimate belonging together.¹⁶

Just as individual mystics in the history of the various traditions have been able to add to the knowledge on which their particular belief systems are based,¹⁷ so Heidegger's concepts of *Ereignis* and originary difference can expand the understanding of our ultimate union with being. His theories also enhance our insights into the material arising from mystical states, and thereby into the mysterious dimension underlying our spatio-temporal existence.

The influence of Heidegger's early thinking regarding the centrality of lived experience in the world, is felt today not only in philosophy, but in disciplines such as psychiatry, literary theory, and the social sciences.¹⁸ His ideas of non-being as integral to being, and the belonging together of being and the human, have caused theologians to reflect on the way they understand the concept of God.¹⁹ It is in his constant struggle with the mystery of being that the challenge of Heidegger's monumental output is revealed.

NOTES

¹ Heidegger, Postscript to “What is Metaphysics?” tr. R. F. C. Hull and Alan Crick, in *Existence and Being* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1949), 386.

² Ernest A Lapitan Jr., “The Oblivion of Being: An Overview of Metaphysics and Mysticism in Aquinas, Eckhart and Heidegger,” (2003). <http://www.royce1114.tripod.com>.

³ John Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1990), 141.

⁴ J. Edward Mercer, *Nature Mysticism* (London: George Allen & Company Ltd., 1913), 21.

⁵ Heidegger, *Basic Concepts*, tr. Gary Aylesworth (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 25.

⁶ Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, tr. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 12 (hereafter cited in text as *CP*).

⁷ Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, tr. Hans Freund and John Anderson (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 46.

⁸ Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, tr. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 285.

⁹ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, tr. Richard Taft (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 9.

¹⁰ Heidegger, “Poetically Man Dwells,” in *Poetry Language, Thought*, tr. Albert Hofstadter, (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 190 (hereafter cited in text as *PLT*).

¹¹ Translators' Preface, Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (from Enowning)*,” tr. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), xlii. “Since no one has the slightest idea how Contributions would have looked had Heidegger smoothed out its syntax, no one has any idea of the measure by which to ‘reproach’ him for the present shape of this work.”

¹² Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 73.

¹³ Josef Quint, (Hrsg. u. übers), *Meister Eckhart: Deutsche Predigten und Traktate* (München: Carl Hanser, 1965), 237, 9-10.

¹⁴ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: The Modern Library, 1902), 371.

¹⁵ Joyce Weinstein, “The Golem,” *The Jewish Magazine*, October/November, 1999. <http://www.jewishmag.com/26MAG/GOLEM/golem.htm>. The author discusses the outward movement of creation in the *Sefer Yetzira*, a Jewish mystical work.

¹⁶ See Chapter 10, section 4 herein.

¹⁷ Philip Almond, *Mystical Experience and Religious Doctrine: An Investigation of the Study of Mysticism in World Religions* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1982), 168.

¹⁸ John Phillips, "Martin Heidegger".
<http://www.courses.nus.edu.sg/course/elljwp/heideggerlifeandwork.htm>.

¹⁹ Laurence Hemming, *Heidegger's Atheism: The Refusal of a Theological Voice* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 289-290.

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