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## Heidegger and the mystery of being

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*University of Wollongong*

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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

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## 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.