



A paradigm shift in Heidegger research*

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Abstract. The *Beiträge zur Philosophie* mandates a paradigm shift in Heidegger scholarship. In the face of (1) widespread disarray in the current model, the new paradigm (2) abandons “*Sein*” as a name for *die Sache selbst*, (3) understands *Welt/Lichtung/Da* as that which “gives” being, (4) interprets *Dasein* as apriori openedness rather than as “being-there,” (5) understands the *Kehre* as the interface of *Geworfenheit* and *Entwurf*, not as a shift in Heidegger’s thinking, (6) interprets *Ereignis* as the opening of the *Da* rather than as “appropriation,” and (7) understands human finitude as what gives all forms of being and all epochs in the history of being. The conclusion alludes to the function of *Mitdasein* (“co-openness”) as *die Sache selbst*.

ὁρθοτομεῖν τὸν λόγον

Introduction

The English translation of Heidegger’s *Beiträge zur Philosophie* arrives not a moment too soon. After fifty years of Heidegger scholarship in North America we find ourselves on the verge of a paradigm shift in how we understand his work. We teeter on the edge, and the *Beiträge* could tip the balance.¹

By my count we have gone through two paradigms of Heidegger-scholarship in the United States. The first, which came into its own after World War II and held strong through the 1950s, was existentialist in character. Based mainly on *Sein und Zeit* and influenced by Sartre’s *L’Être et le néant*, it saw Heidegger as focused primarily on human existence. A major statement of this first paradigm was Thomas Langan’s *The Meaning of Heidegger: A Critical Study of an Existentialist Phenomenology*, which interpreted Heidegger as “absolutizing *Dasein*” to the degree that “truth is what *Dasein* does, has done, and will do.”²

The second paradigm dawned in 1963 with William J. Richardson’s majestic *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought*. This work covered the whole of Heidegger’s corpus as it was then known and established a frame-

work for interpreting the unity of the earlier and later periods of his career. Richardson's book inaugurated the classical paradigm that has dominated mainstream Heidegger-scholarship for the last forty years, a model that rests on the twofold foundation of (1) its interpretation of the *Kehre* as a shift in Heidegger's thought from an earlier *Dasein*-centeredness to a later *Sein*-centeredness, and (2) the attendant understandings of *Dasein* and *Sein* that support that interpretation. Richardson's paradigm shift found immediate confirmation in two parallel works of that period: Otto Pöggeler's *Der Denkweg Martin Heideggers* (1963), and Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann's *Die Selbstinterpretation Martin Heideggers* (1964).³

This classical paradigm views the decisive difference between the earlier and later Heidegger as "the shift of focus from There-being to Being" (Richardson, 624.28). That is, Heidegger's early work privileged *Dasein*, and viewed *Sein* from that perspective: "Being (the World) was considered basically as the project of There-being." (238.32–33). In the later work, however, "the focal point of Heidegger's reflection passes subtly from There-being to Being itself" (ibid., 238.34–35). This *Kehre* – "reversal" or "shift of focus" – in Heidegger's thought "was demanded by the exigencies of the hermeneutic analysis itself, as soon as it became clear that the primacy in the Being-process belongs to Being itself" (ibid., 624.30–32). After the turn, Being/ἄλθῆεια is no longer understood as a horizon projected by *Dasein*, within which beings are encountered and discovered as true. "Rather, it is experienced as an active force, a process that assumes an initiative of its own by revealing itself to *Dasein* – but concealing itself as well."⁴

Bolstered by the appearance of Heidegger's *Gesamtausgabe* (1975–) this second paradigm led to the heyday of Heidegger scholarship in North America: its establishment, diffusion, and major impact on other disciplines. Today the classical model is characterized by an expansive plurality within an overriding unity. We may chart at least four tendencies spread out across a spectrum running from right to left.

- 1) On the extreme right stands the *ultra-orthodox* interpretation which finds expression in the journal *Heidegger Studies*. This tendency is generally associated with the work of Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann and the Heidegger Gesellschaft in Germany and with the Beaufret-Fédier-Vezin school of Heideggerians in France.
- 2) On the extreme left stands the *rejectionist wing*, much of it inspired by the revelations of Heidegger's scandalous involvement with the Nazis. Some of it has been fueled by John D. Caputo's 1993 manifesto *Demythologizing Heidegger*, which goes substantially beyond the question of Nazism and at-

tacks the very core of Heidegger's philosophy. It is probably unfair to call these colleagues "self-hating Heideggerians" – perhaps more kindly, "Heideggerians against Heidegger."

The space between these two extremes is occupied by a fluid center-right/center-left, devoted in the one instance to a strict commentary on Heidegger's texts and, in the other, to more free-wheeling efforts to place his thought in dialogue with other philosophers.

- 3) The center-right represents the *orthodox position*, comprised of scholars dedicated to getting Heidegger right, not unlike the "Dantisti" of Italian studies whose goal is a close reading of every line of the *Divina Commedia*. Among the immensely valuable achievements of this tendency has been the meticulous charting of the genesis of Heidegger's thought by Theodore Kisiel and John Van Buren.
- 4) On the center-left stand the *liberal-assimilationists*. Beyond getting Heidegger right, these scholars seek to put his work into dialogue with other contemporary philosophers and perhaps to amend or correct him in the process. The last thirty years have witnessed fruitful engagements of Heidegger's work with other Continental philosophies (Derrida, Levinas, Lacan, French feminism, etc.) as well as with non-Continental thought (Wittgenstein, analytical philosophy, pragmatism, and so forth). Among the latter we might locate Hubert Dreyfus' interpretation of the first half of *Being and Time* as anticipating certain anti-representationalist critiques within the philosophy of mind.

The above characterizations hardly exhaust the scholarly spectrum. Variations are endless, including the widespread application of Heidegger's thought (often "creatively" understood) within literary criticism, the arts, Eastern thought, ecology, and so forth. But however one charts the multiple tendencies in mainstream Heidegger scholarship, they all remain grounded in the dominant paradigm's vision of *Sein*, *Dasein*, and the *Kehre*.

The question arises about the effect Heidegger's *Beiträge* – now available in English as *Contributions to Philosophy* – will have on this North American scholarship. Will *Beiträge/Contributions* confirm the ultra-orthodox interpretation (including its idiosyncratic language) as the "true" reading of Heidegger? Or could it pitch us into a new paradigm, a more fruitful way of reading Heidegger's texts?

1. Sister Constantia's exam

Emad's and Maly's *Contributions* is an important event if only because, as past experience proves, whoever gets to translate a major work by Heidegger

gets to define the terms of the discourse for the next fifty years. Think of Macquarrie-Robinson's unfortunate "state-of-mind," "temporalizing," and "handing down," which still plague us to this day, or such godawful terms as "enframing," "regioning," and "destining," which continue to haunt English-language scholarship. Now, after *Contributions to Philosophy*, we may expect a spate of articles that speak of "enowning," "ab-ground," "enquivering," and even "cleavage" — as in "The cleavage is the unfolding unto itself of the intimacy of be-ing. . ." (CP, 172.27). Mac West could not have said it better.

This new translation will at least promulgate, and at worst inculcate, the more bizarre forms of expression that have come to typify the ultra-orthodox interpretation. For if this really is Heidegger's "second *magnum opus*" and if it supposedly gives us the full Heidegger along with the language in which he finally says what he means (in both German and, *faute de mieux*, English), then we should not be surprised if Heideggerians soon begin jabbering the idiolect of *Contributions*, just as earlier they became fluent in the Double Dutch of Macquarrie-Robinson's *Being and Time*. Get ready for such gems as this definition of *Denken*: "Thinking no longer appears as a faculty of the mind but as the mystery through which the sway of being sways as the counter-sway of a finite projection and a finite but always already on-going and self-sustaining forth-throw" (in Babich, 144.29–32).

The *Beiträge* hits us at a time of crisis when, in the eyes of many, the Heidegger establishment has painted itself into a corner. It's not just that outsiders don't understand what we're talking about; there is a growing suspicion that we don't either. Heideggerians seem to have abandoned philosophy to become glossolalics

Who think the same thoughts without need of speech
And babble the same speech without need of meaning.⁵

Medard Boss, the Swiss psychiatrist, reports that well into the 1930s Heidegger was plagued by a recurring nightmare in which he is back at his *Maturitätsprüfung*, the final exam before leaving high school. He freezes up and cannot find the right answer to the examiners' question. It's a terrifying experience; and only when, in real life, Heidegger finally hit upon the notion of *Ereignis* ca. 1936 did the dream go away.⁶

I imagine a similar nightmare in which all of us in the Heidegger Conference are compelled, like elementary school children, to take a standardized test in Heidegger. The bell rings out over the schoolyard — say, at my own Mission Dolores Grammar School in San Francisco. Reluctantly we leave our games and, under the watchful eyes of the Sisters of Notre Dame, trudge into

our seventh-grade classroom. We slouch into our seats and whisper a desperate prayer to *der letzte Gott* as the stern-faced Sister Constantia hands each of us a number-two pencil and a bluebook. There is only one question:

“In plain English, define each of the following terms and relate them to one another:

Ereignis, Geschick, Lichtung, Austrag, Entzug,
ἀλήθεια, Seyn, Sein, Sein, and Wesung.”

It is a scary dream, and I offer it only half in jest. What if we actually *did* have to take such an exam at our annual Heidegger meeting, professors as well as graduate students, “Presbyterians and pagans alike,” as Melville says. Wouldn’t it be interesting to compare blue books at the end? And how would we distinguish a right answer from a wrong one?

There was a time, not long ago, when doing Heidegger did not mean sacrificing analytic precision, when terms had crisp edges as well as elegance (I think of Richardson’s book), and when explaining Heidegger did not mean straining to be a bad poet. But let us leave all that to the tender mercies of Sister Constantia. It is time to wake up from the nightmare.

As much as one welcomes it, the publication of *Beiträge* in 1989 has been a mixed blessing. On the negative side, this is a needlessly difficult text, obsessively repetitious, badly in need of an editor. The volume is certainly a helpful collection of notes but not really a “book,” as Heidegger himself acknowledged soon after he had finished it. The *Beiträge*, he wrote ca. 1941, fails to achieve “the *form* that I precisely require for publication as a ‘work’” (GA 66, 427.11–13). I am among those who agree with Heidegger on this point and who would argue that the *Beiträge* is hardly the second *magnum opus* it is touted to be, much less the Third Secret of Fatima that the Ultra-Orthodox take it to be.

But on the positive side, once one cuts to the core of this complicated text, there is no doubt that *Beiträge* gets things right. Above all it shows how certain settled readings of Heidegger are in need of major revision. So yes, as we teeter at the far edge of the second paradigm, the *Beiträge* could tip the balance by clarifying some important matters and leading to a revolution in how we read Heidegger.

2. Farewell to “being”

Since Heidegger’s focal topic never was “being” in any of its forms, and since the term “being” in the current secondary literature is plagued by so much

confusion and absurdity, we would do well to follow Heidegger's example and abandon the word "being" as a marker for *die Sache selbst*. Heidegger set the good example as early as 1929 in *Was ist Metaphysik?* where the word *Sein* hardly appears.⁷

To return for a moment to Sister Constantia's exam, it would seem that Heidegger scholarship is not always clear on some crucial distinctions among terms based on the verb "*sein*," for example:

das Seiend in distinction to *das Seiende*
das Seyn
das Sein des Seienden
das Sein selbst
das Seiendsein
das Sein
das Sein in the phrase "*die Wesung (or Wahrheit or Lichtung) des Seins.*"

Let's glance at some blue-book entries from Sister Constantia's exam. (These actually come from texts published in the last six years.)

"Heidegger defined his life project as asking the 'question of being' – the question, 'What makes entities of various sorts (rocks, tools, thoughts, numbers, etc.) the entities they are?'"

Sister's note in red ink: "But isn't that Aristotle's question rather than Heidegger's? Stay after school and read *Metaphysics* E, 1, 1025b 3–4: Αἱ ἀρχαὶ καὶ τὰ αἴτια ζητεῖται τῶν ὄντων, ὃν ἄλλο δὲ ὅτι ἢ ὄντα."

"As 'onto-theology,' metaphysics thinks the 'beingness' (*Seiendheit*) of entities . . . without thinking about the 'being' (*Sein* or *Seyn*) of entities."

Sister's marginal comment: "That's as bad as George Steiner's 'the Beingness of being/the being of Being' (*Heidegger*, 28.18, 29.23). Rewrite, spelling out the distinctions among your three German terms."

"[Metaphysics] is still no more than. . . a science of *beingness (Seiendheit)*. This shows that it still does not move in the dimension of what Heidegger calls the 'ontological difference' that constitutes his fundamental thought."

Sister Constantia's remark: "Is that really Heidegger's fundamental thought? Doesn't he insist that the ontological difference is not applicable to *Seyn*? – cf. '*nicht anwendbar ist*' (GA 77, 245.1–3)."

Other blue book entries reveal that many Heideggerians still believe that "being" is Heidegger's central topic. By first positing the ontological difference between being and entities and then opting for the "being"-side, they think

they have arrived at *die Sache selbst*. But to the contrary Heidegger has shown that *all* philosophy posits the ontological difference and enjoys an understanding of *Sein* (he mentions Aquinas in particular) – and yet never escapes from metaphysics (GA 15, 310.12–15).

After insisting for forty years that Heidegger is the thinker of “being” rather than a philosopher of human existence, are we quite sure that *Sein* was his focal topic? In 1962 Heidegger explicitly said it was not: “*das Sein [ist] nicht . . . das eigens zu Denkende*” (SD, 44.6–7).⁸ He insisted that his own issue was entirely different from *Sein* (“*ganz anderes*”: *ibid.*, 22.5) In 1955 he resorted to crossing out the word *Sein* so as to emphasize the distance between “being” and his own topic (GA 9, 385.5), and in 1969 he reiterated what he had been saying for thirty years: *die Sache selbst* is not “being” but something prior (SD, 77.18–19). Nor does it help much to say Heidegger was after the “meaning” of being, as if that meaning were unknown before he came on the scene. Heidegger himself insists that metaphysics has always known what being means. “From the dawn of the Greek world down to the dusk of our own century,” he writes, “*Sein* has meant only one thing: *Anwesen*” (GA 9, 400.20–23). And surely such *Anwesen* was not Heidegger’s focal topic.

In short, we should abandon the word “being” as a title for *die Sache selbst*, first and foremost because being is manifestly not the central topic of Heidegger’s thought. To use Latin in place of Heidegger’s German, his issue is neither *quidquid est* (“whatever is”: *das Seiende*); nor the *quidditas* of *quidquid est* (i.e., *Seiendheit*); nor the *esse* (= *Sein*) that is contracted in any given *est* (Thomas Aquinas had already covered that ground); nor the *est* (*simpliciter*) of any *quidquid est*, since in Heidegger’s phenomenological perspective *est* never appears alone but always in conjunction with an *Entwurf des Seins*, an act of “taking-something-as.”

A second reason for abandoning “being” as a name for *die Sache selbst* is that the current paradigm invariably hypostasizes and inflates it into “Big Being,” a metaphysical “Something” (however ethereal) that lies somewhere beyond entities and that we can allegedly “pursue” and “relate to.” In this aggrandized and reified form, Big Being ends up performing a host of extraordinary activities (all in the middle voice, we are told): it conceals itself and reveals itself, withdraws itself yet dispenses epochs of being, calls out to us while abandoning us to technology, wraps itself in mystery and yet occasionally pulls aside the veil to show Itself to select human beings -- nowadays only to paid-up Heideggerians.

In the current paradigm “being” has become a ridiculous metaphysical caricature, so freighted with confusion and absurdity that it cannot serve as a marker for Heidegger’s focal topic. Rather than perpetuating the disarray, we

should decisively abandon this word as a name for *die Sache selbst* and reserve it instead for what metaphysics has always been famously about – the “is” of whatever-is, “*das ‘ist’, d.h. das Sein*” (GA 40, 97.21). Here is the *pons asinorum* of Heidegger-scholarship. To refuse to cross that bridge means, if nothing else, to flunk Sister Constantia’s exam.

The ancients spoke of ὀρθοτομεῖν τὸν λόγον, a phrase that falls somewhere between “rightly dividing the word” and “getting the meaning straight.” It entails separating out terms that may look alike but really belong in different hampers. To “rightly divide” the word *Sein* means at least to recognize that everything that is said in the next six paragraphs stands on *this* side of Heidegger’s thought, i.e., on the banks of what traditional philosophy already knows (or could know) without yet crossing over to the shores of Heidegger’s own topic.

1. Properly speaking, the being of entities (*das Sein des Seienden*) is not ontological but only the ontic-ness of the ontic, *die Seiend-heit des Seienden* – or as Richardson puts it, “the Is of what-is” (Babich, 619.17). This “is” or “is-ness” is the same as what Heidegger means by “being”: “*Seiendheit – Jenes, was das Seiende als ein solches auszeichnet, eben das Sein*” (GA 9, 260.6–7).
2. Moreover, the measure and norm of such is-ness – its ideal, perfect state – is ontic self-presence: “[D]ie *sich selbst gegenwärtige Gegenwart* ist die Maßstab aller Seiendheit” (GA 65, 200.9–10). But this perfect self-coincidence is a traditional definition of the divine: νόησις νοήσεως (*Metaphysics*, 12, 9, 1074^b 34–35). This is further confirmation that such *Sein-als-Anwesen*, whether in its infinite or finite forms, cannot be Heidegger’s focal topic.
3. In any case, there is no such thing as “*the*” being of entities; there is only the *current* being of entities – *das jeweilige Sein des Seienden* (GA 9, 263.33–34), which is simply the present “*Sein*” from among an infinite number of “*Sein ‘s*” that an entity might have. The current being of an entity is what and how I happen to *take this thing as* at the present moment. For example, in the absence of a hammer at my campsite, I use this rock to pound in tent pegs. This piece of granite is currently a mallet. Once I find my hammer, the rock will cease to be a mallet, and I may take it instead as a paperweight, or as a weapon, or as something useless. In a matter of minutes this hard grey mass will have gone through three or four different “beings.” The being of something comes about only when “*man entwirft etwas auf etwas*.” The proper translation of *entwerfen auf* . . . is not “to project something upon” (a meaningless phrase in this context) but “to take something as,” i.e., to make sense of it.

4. In theoretical activity we take *X as* something. In practical activity we take *X as for* something. In both cases, whether we take Socrates as an Athenian (the apophantic “as” of $\tau\acute{\iota}$ κατὰ τινὸς λέγειν) or take up this rock as suitable for hammering (the hermeneutical “as” of $\tau\acute{\iota}$ εἰς $\tau\acute{\iota}$ λαβεῖν), the first name for “is” or “being” is the “as” of an act of taking-as.
5. Heidegger spells this out in §§15–18 of *Sein und Zeit*, which constitute his *Bedeutungslehre*, his doctrine of ἐρμηνεία or sense-making. Those sections provide Heidegger’s phenomenological-hermeneutical explanation of how “being” functions whenever we make sense of things, whether in the S-and-P framework of apophantic statements or in the tools-for-tasks framework of practical operations. In both contexts, he argues, “being” is always a matter of the synthetic-differential relation between things and human interests: it is about the sense that things have in the light of those interests. So yes, “being” is the “presence” of things, but that presence is always the current *sense* that things have in relation to, and within the world of, human concerns (GA 2, 201.8–14).
6. However, this *Seinslehre qua Bedeutungslehre* – which shows that *Sein* = *Anwesen* = *Sinn* – does not yet broach Heidegger’s own topic. It simply (if brilliantly) provides a phenomenological-hermeneutical rewrite of traditional metaphysics and epistemology – it merely does Husserl’s homework for him. Heidegger’s *Bedeutungslehre* shows that within his own hermeneutical phenomenology there is no “is” to things without a taking-as, no “being” that exceeds the sense things have, and no sense that is independent of human being (GA 2, 201.25–31). This is a firm position that Heidegger never renounced: “being” is given or appears (*das Sein west*) only in the activities of human beings, which are always discursive, synthetic-differential activities. Before *homo sapiens sapiens* evolved, there was no “being” on earth: it did not lurk within things, waiting to be discovered; it was not hiding in the wings, waiting for a *Dasein* to come along so that it could reveal itself. Likewise before creation there was no “being” in God’s heaven, because “being” for Heidegger does not mean “in existence.” The status of “out-there-ness” – i.e., “existence” whether in this universe or in God’s heaven – is not what constitutes “being” for Heidegger. If anything, “in-here-ness” does, the condition of *Innerweltlichkeit*, of “having sense.”

A decisive “farewell to being” does not mean abandoning all the good stuff above, which arguably ranks among Heidegger’s greatest achievements. The farewell merely says that this *Seinslehre-qua-Bedeutungslehre* does not yet touch on the *Sache selbst* of Heidegger’s thought. It is merely traditional metaphysics at its best, which is to say, it is Heidegger’s phenomenological-

hermeneutical rearticulation of the great tradition about “being” that stretches from Plato to Husserl.

If “being” isn’t *die Sache selbst*, what is?

3. *Die Frage nach dem Da*

The being of entities – i.e., the *sense* of entities – shows up only in our synthetic activities of taking-as. Being/sense is neither “out there” in entities nor “in here” in our heads. Once dehypositized, “being” comes down to the implicit “as” of taking-as and the articulated “is” of statements; indeed, the “is” of statements is an abbreviation of “makes-sense-as.” “This rock is now a hammer” means “This rock currently *makes sense as* a hammer.” Thus “being” is never the object of an immediate, intellectual intuition. Yes, Heidegger agrees that we do enjoy a categorial intuition of “is,” but that is hardly a blinding insight into Being-As-Such. Rather, categorial intuition is our immediate presence to mediation, to the inevitability of taking-as and making-sense-of (κατὰ-ἀγορεύειν, “categorizing”). The categorial intuition does not deliver an all-at-once vision of Big Being but is about our thrownness into the “as,” our ineluctable discursivity. That is why Heidegger prefers to call it the “hermeneutical intuition” (GA 56/57, 117.13).

Heidegger enters upon “the thing itself” when he grounds his doctrine of sense-making in the essence of human being. “*Die Bedeutungslehre ist in der Ontologie des Daseins verwurzelt*” (GA 2, 220.29–30). His own issue is: What makes taking-as (and thus any occurrence of “being”) possible? Note that Heidegger’s focal topic is not “being” but *that which “gives”* being. The *Sache* is not “as” or “is” in any form, but *what makes possible* any “as” or “is.” There are many ways of expressing that topic.

1. **Welt:** “As” expresses relation; and being/sense occurs only in an “as,” i.e., only in the act of taking something in terms of (in relation to) a human concern. The particular “as” of a specific act of taking-as, which underlies the current “is,” expresses only *one* relation-to-human-concern from among many such possible relations, which in turn underlie just as many possible “is’s.” The field of possible relations to human concerns – the region of the “as” – is what Heidegger calls “the world.” This semantic field is the *Entwurfbereich des Seins* (GA 9, 201.31–32), the realm of possible takings-as and occurrences of “is.” The world is not flat and homogenous but articulated as a dynamic tension of synthesizing-while-keeping-distinct (σύνθεσις/διαίρεσις), a tension that Heidegger calls λόγος or πόλεμος.

As the realm of possible taking-as, the world is the “meaning of being” (GA 9, 201.30-32). It is what makes possible all instances of “is.” *Die Welt weltet*: The world is what gives being.

2. **Lichtung**: As an open field of sense-making relations, the world is an “opening” that “clears” things, i.e., makes them intelligible-as (τῶ ποιεῖν πάντα [sc. νοητά]).⁹ To “clear” something means to free it from dumb lethic “thereness” by relating it to human purposes. In that capacity the world is called *Lichtung* (GA 9, 326.15–16), not the “lighting process” but the synthetic-differential “clearing” that opens-things-up-as.¹⁰ *Lichtung erbringt Anwesen*: By rendering things intelligible-as, the clearing gives being.¹¹
3. **Da**: One of the least happy moves of Heidegger-scholarship has been to translate the *Da* of *Da-sein* as “there.” But with Heidegger’s *Da*, as with Gertrude Stein’s Oakland, there is no there there. As Heidegger puts it: “*Da ≠ ibi und ubi*” (GA 71, ms. 121.18). The *Beiträge* and other texts show that Heidegger understood the *Da* not as the “there” but as *das Offene* or *die Offenheit*, the “open” (GA 65, 328.28, etc.).¹² In other words, the *Da* is the same as *Welt* and *Lichtung* (GA 9, 326.15–16, 336.27). Like them, it is the dynamic openness, the synthetic-differential πόλεμος, that makes possible all acts of taking-as.

In short, *Welt/Lichtung/Da* – these three that are actually one – constitute *die Sache selbst*, the open that “gives” all forms, and all historical epochs, of being.

Then what does it mean “to-be-the-open”?

4. No there there

It is a scandal that forty years after the publication of *Being and Time* Heidegger’s key term *Dasein* is still usually left in the German. Translating it as with variations on “there” is bad enough, but leaving it untranslated is no better. That’s like issuing a promissory note: “Let the word *Dasein* stand for the unknown, and when we figure out what it means, we’ll get back to you.”

Heidegger understands the *Da* not as “the there” but as “the open.” As such, the *Da* is not only the same as *Welt* and *Lichtung* but is also equivalent to all the other terms that Heidegger used for *die Sache selbst*. The *Da* is the *Es* of *Es gibt Sein*: it is ἀλήθεια, *Ereignis*, and *die Wahrheit des Seins selbst*.¹³

The most extraordinary thing about all of Heidegger’s thought, both early and late, is his unwaivering insistence that *human being is* that “open” and thus *is* “the thing itself.” From the beginning to the end of his career, he never got beyond that point.

Heidegger insists that the verbal emphasis in the word *Dasein* falls on the second syllable: *Da-sein*, “having-to-be open” (*Zollikon*, 157.8, 188.14). His point is that human beings are the *Da* not occasionally or by their own choice, but *of necessity*. We cannot *not* be the open (the possibility of taking-as) just as we cannot not be our own minds. In Heidegger’s early language, we are always already *thrown-open* (*geworfen*). We are not thrown “into” the open, as if the *Da/Lichtung/Welt* already existed without us; we are not open “to” the open, as if it were something separate from us; we do not “transcend to” the open as if we had to cross from here to there; and we do not “project” the open as if we brought it about as our own personal achievement. Without us, there is no open at all; but with us, the open is always apriori operative. In that regard some of Heidegger’s terms can be misleading. “Being-in-the-world” actually means “being-the-world” (*die Lichtung-sein*: GA 69, 101.12), and “*thrownness into the world*” means being-the-world *of necessity*, i.e., apriori.

Beiträge shows that the later Heidegger was focused on the same central topic as the earlier: the apriori openedness of the open-that-gives-being. In the early period this openedness of the open was termed *Geworfenheit*, whereas in the later period it is called *Ereignetsein*. Thus *Beiträge* equates *geworfen* with *ereignet* (GA 65, 239.5 and 304.8) and with *zugehörig der Er-eignung* (252.24), and it reformulates *die Übernahme der Geworfenheit* as *die Übernahme der Er-eignung*, without changing the issue (GA 65, 322.7 and 327.7; cf. GA 2, 431.13). What Heidegger is expressing in both the earlier language of *Geworfenheit* and the later language of *Ereignis* is that being-open is the ineluctable condition of our essence, not an occasional accomplishment of our wills. It is our “fate,” the way we always already are (GA 2, 431.16–17). This is the central issue of his thought, and it does not change between Heidegger I and Heidegger II. To-be-the-open is to be apriori opened, and only as such can we take-things-as. *Dasein* is “*erschließend erschlossenes*” (GA 27, 135.13), able to open up other things only because it itself is already opened up.

That is why we should not translate *Dasein* as “being-there” or “being-the-there” or “there-being” but, rather, as “always-being-open” or “already-having-been-opened,” or “apriori openedness.” But those phrases are so immensely awkward, and as Richardson says, “a man must live with himself” (579, n. 6). So I settle simply for “openness.”

Beiträge makes a further, crucial point. Openness exists only to take-as and express “is”; yet there can be no “is” without openness. In other words (GA 65, 251.11–25):

1. A human being's *raison d'être* is to-be-the-open (= to be able to take-as). The facticity of our "cannot-not-be-the-open" is what Heidegger calls our "belonging" to the open (*das Zugehören*).
2. But reciprocally, the open or *Da* functions only as long as there is human being. This necessary grounding of the open in the human is what Heidegger calls the open's "need" of human being (*das Brauchen*).

Das Zugehören and *das Brauchen* – our "belonging" to the open, and the open's "need" of us – are complementary expressions of a single facticity: the interface of *Da-* and *-sein*. There is an unbreakable reciprocity (back-and-forth-ness, *reci-proci-tas*) between our thrown-open essence (*-sein*) and the possibility-of-sense-making (*Da-*), and this apriori interface constitutes the dynamic structure of *Dasein*. In *Beiträge* Heidegger calls it a *Gegenschwung* (a "back-and-forth-ness": GA 65, 251.24), or a *kehriger Bezug* (a "reciprocal relatedness": GA 65, 7.21) or simply *die Kehre*, the reciprocity of openness' ineluctable sense-making and sense-making's grounding in openedness.

There are not two apriori's here, but only one: thrown-open-ness-as-ability-to-make-sense-of. The hyphens hold together *Geworfenheit* and *Entwurf*, whose reciprocity is the essence of *Dasein*. The *Kehre*, therefore, is not something that happened in the 1930s. In fact it never happened at all. It is simply the structure of openness. "*Im . . . geworfene Entwurf . . . liegt die Kehre*" (GA 65, 259.30–32). Indeed, "*Das Da-seyn 'ist' die Kehre*" (GA 71, ms., 118.11).

5. The *Kehre* never took place

The *Beiträge* thus clarifies another crucial matter: the *Kehre* is not the change that Heidegger's thinking underwent in the 1930's. There is no doubt that Heidegger's approach shifted during that decade, and Richardson's book is the unsurpassed text-of-record on that. But we now know that the proper name for that shift is not *die Kehre* but what Heidegger called *die Wendung im Denken* or "change in thinking" (Richardson, xvii.25). The *Kehre* did not take place between 1930 and 1938 but is the very structure of *die Sache selbst*. As Heidegger put it in 1962:

First and foremost the *Kehre* is not a process that took place in my thinking and questioning. It belongs, rather, to the very issue that is named by the titles "Being and Time"/"Time and Being." [. . .] The *Kehre* is at work within the issue itself. It is not something that I did, nor does it pertain to my thinking only. (Richardson, xix.1-3, 6–8)

During the 1930s, as Heidegger pursued his abiding topic (apriori openedness as the ability to make-sense-of), he saw that the quasi-Kantian language of

transcendence and horizon was inadequate to express the reciprocity (*Kehre*) of thrownness and taking-as. The crowning section of SZ was left unpublished, he later said, because “thinking failed to adequately express this *Kehre*” (GA 9, 328.2–3). So Heidegger adjusted his presentation of the issue, (1) expressing *Geworfenheit* as *Ereignetssein* and (2) re-emphasizing that the open must be always already opened up (*geworfen, zugeworfen; Zuwurf*) if there is to be any taking-as (*Entwurf*).

That adjustment in formulation constitutes *die Wendung des Denkens*, and we can date it to the 1930s, and especially to 1936–38, when *Beiträge* was composed. The *Kehre*, however, has no such date. When he was asked how it took place (“*ist geschehen*”) within his thinking, Heidegger did two things. First he denied the premise – “There is no particular kind of happening connected with the *Kehre*” – and then he located the *Kehre* where it properly belongs: “The supposed ‘happening’ of the *Kehre*,” he wrote, “‘is’ *Seyn* as such,” (Richardson, xxi.16–18), i.e., *Ereignis* (GA 65, 318.21–23), i.e., the apriori opening of the open.

6. *Ereignis*: The opening of the open

Beiträge and later works make it clear that *Ereignis* is not an “event” in any usual sense of the term (i.e., *Vorkommnis und Geschehnis*: SD 21.27) and that what Heidegger meant by *Ereignis* is not primarily “appropriation” or “enowning.” In the forthcoming GA 71 (*Das Ereignis*, 1941–42) Heidegger shows that the original etymon of *Ereignis* is not *eigen* (“own,” parallel to the Latin *proprium*, from which derive “appropriation” and “enowning”) but rather *eräugen/ereugen*, “bringing something out into view.” Heidegger got much of this from Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm.¹⁵ More importantly, however, in GA 71 (section “Das Ereignis,” sub-section “Er-eigen – Er-eignen,” ms. 100a), Heidegger annotated the Grimm etymologies, thereby providing his own understanding of *Ereignis*.

The noun *Ereignis* (“event, occurrence”) points back to the reflexive verb *sich ereignen*, “to happen, occur.” The etymology of the verb is quite complex; in what follows I have added the hyphens for the sake of clarity.

1. The original form of *sich er-eignen* was *sich er-eigen*
 - a. The Old High German *ouga*, “eye” (cf. the modern *Auge*), underlies the Old High German *ir-ougen* and the Middle High German *er-öugen*, “to place before the eyes.”
 - b. As the diphthongs *äu* and *eu* gradually devolved into *ei*, *er-äugen* and *er-eugen* became *er-eigen*.

- c. The Grimm brothers translate this *er-eigen* with the Latin infinitives *monstrare* and *ostendere* (*obs* + *tendere*: to stretch something out in front of) – that is, “to show something, to bring it forth into view.”
 - d. Thus in the reflexive, *sich ereigen*, “to occur” = *sich erweisen*, *sich erzeigen* (*ostendi*, *monstrari*), “to come forth, to show itself as it is.”
2. As *er-äugen* and *er-eugen* devolved into *er-eigen*, *eigen* came to be associated with
 - a. the entirely unrelated adjective *eigen*, (“own,” as in the Latin *proprium*);
 - b. and subsequently with the infinitives *eignen* (obsolete: “to fit with, belong to”) and *an-eignen*/*zu-eignen* (“to appropriate something to oneself”).
 3. Finally, by the beginning of the 1600s
 - a. not only did the root-meaning “own” begin to creep into verbs like *er-eigen*, *er-äugen*, and *er-eugen*,
 - b. but also the additional letter “n” (of *eignen*, etc.) came over into *er-eigen*, *er-äugen*, and *er-eugen*, transforming them into
 - i. *er-äugnen* and *er-eugnen*, which have since died out,
 - ii. and *er-eignen*, which has survived.

In GA 71 Heidegger accepts the Grimms’ etymology, including the fact that *eigen/proprium* is not the original etymon.

Er-eignen (dasselbe [wie *Er-eigen*]) *eu* in *ei* –
 und dazu *Verwirrung* mit dem *unverwandten*
 “*eigen*”, *proprium*,
 d.h. mit “*an-eignen*”, “*zu-eignen*.”

Heidegger likewise accepts that the primary meaning of *sich ereignen* is “to come into view, to appear, to be brought forth and revealed”:

Er-eigen: *er-eugen* - *er-äugen* - *ostendere*, *monstrare*,
in die Augen, *Blick*, *Anblick*
fallen – *erscheinen*
sich offenbaren, *zu-tragen*,
be-gehen.

Most significantly, he glosses all this with a verb that does not appear in the Grimms’ etymology. In apposition to Grimms’ *erweisen* and *erzeigen* Heidegger places *lichten*, “to disencumber and free up, to open up or clear”: “*lichten* –

erweisen – *erzeigen*.” Thus, in the reflexive, *sich erweisen* and *sich erzeigen* (“to show up or appear as what one is”) mean the same as *sich lichten*, “to be opened up and cleared.” *Sich ereignen* (“to occur”) means that something is brought out into the open, comes into the clear: “*in die Lichtung einbeziehen*.” Heidegger reinforces this when he states that *das Er-eigen* (which he glosses as *Er-aigen*) has the transitive sense of “*lichtend – weisen*” – “to show by opening up” (in the reflexive: “to appear by having been opened up”).

As Heidegger’s term of art, *das Er-eignen* pertains to the open as coming into appearance in conjunction with intrinsic concealment: “*das in die Erscheinung kommende und so zugleich sich verbergende Sich zu eigen werden*.” Thus *Ereignis* = the opening of the open on the basis of a concealment. (Below we shall have to ask what that concealment is).

If we can call *Ereignis* an event at all, it is the “apriori event” of the opening up of the open. And clearly this apriori event is less about “appropriation” or “enowning” than about “opening up and appearing.” Nonetheless, this is not to entirely exclude “appropriation” as a possible translation of *Ereignis*. That word might work – but only if we understand the *proprium* of appropriation as the opening up of openness (cf. SD 24.5–7, 28–29).

7. What, then, clears the clearing?

Whether as *Welt*, *Lichtung*, *Da*, or *Ereignis*, Heidegger’s focal issue is the open that gives all forms of being and all epochs in the history of being. But this is only a formal indication and needs to be fleshed out. What exactly opens up the open? “*Wie gibt es die Lichtung?*” (SD, 80.25)

Heidegger’s most formal answer to the question *Woher die Lichtung?* (loc. cit.) is that “*das Sichentziehende*” is what opens the open (WD, 6.2).¹⁵ “That which withdraws itself” (or less anthropomorphically, “the intrinsically withdrawn”) pulls us out into *ἔκστασις*, into openedness. As Heidegger puts it: “What withdraws from us draws us along with it by that very withdrawal” (WD, 5.37). Of course that sentence has to be interpreted in terms of apriori-perfect aspect (GA 2, 114, n.): that which is intrinsically withdrawn has *always already* drawn us out and opened us up. “*Entzug ist Ereignis*” (WD, 5.27): the-intrinsically-withdrawn has apriori opened the open.

But this is hardly a satisfying answer. What exactly is it that has always already withdrawn, that remains intrinsically absent and hidden, and that thereby has drawn us out into openedness? We could fall back on the “Big Being” story and hypostasize *das Sichentziehende* into Being Itself in its absential mode (the “*Lethe*”) and then have It (whatever “It” is) do the with-

drawing, the opening-of-the-open, and the giving-of-being. But this would only be metaphysics in its most banal and vulgar form, the destruction of everything Heidegger stood for.

Heidegger gives a quite different answer to the question “What is *das Sichentziehende*?” If metaphysical closure, full self-presence, and perfect self-coincidence were the measure of complete being (τὸ τέλειον), then for Heidegger human openness is intrinsically “in-complete” (ἀτελής). Ever unfinished and always on-the-way, we may think of ourselves as stretched out towards full self-presence, but we never arrive there. Our lack-of-full-being is what makes us be human.¹⁶ It is “our fault” (or at least our nature) that we are this lack: *Schuldigsein*. We do not “possess” our lack-in-being; it possesses us and defines our essence. Our lack makes us be open and finite by ever remaining a lack, privatively “absent” and “concealed.” We cannot encompass and incorporate it. It is *intrinsically* withdrawn from our powers – “*self-withdrawn*,” if you will. Our lack-in-being “causes” and maintains our openedness.

Therefore, *Ereignis* is not Big Being or the “Lethe,” operating from some Beyond and heteronomously “appropriating” us into a place other than ourselves. Rather, our finitude is the absence that opens the open: *Der Entzug ist des Da-seins* (GA 65, 293.9) Our finitude makes all “as”-taking and “is”-saying possible by requiring us to understand things not immediately and ontically, as God does, but indirectly and ontologically (= imperfectly), through their being (GA 3, 280.30–31). Our finitude, and it alone, is the intrinsically hidden mystery, overlooked in fallenness and embraced in resolve: *das vergessene Geheimnis des Daseins* (GA 9, 195.23). Our finitude is the “it” that “gives being” and that is responsible for the various dispensations in *die Geschichte des Seins*. In the language of *Zeit und Sein*, our finitude is what *erreicht die Zeit* (opens the clearing) and *schickt das Sein* (makes possible all taking-as).

Our finitude is *die Sache selbst*. It does all the work. No more room for Big Being.

Conclusion

I have been applying to the *Beiträge* what I call “Heidegger’s razor,” namely, “*Die Sache selbst non est multiplicanda*.” One can multiply the *names* for the “thing itself,” but they are all names of a single issue. Heidegger’s razor has two slogans etched on its blade: “*verschiedene Namen für dasselbe*” (GA 65, 331.24) and “*Vielnamigkeit verleugnet nicht Einfachheit*” (ibid., 21.33–34) They don’t exactly roll off the tongue, but they do get things right: “Many

titles, one simple *Sache*." That topic is our finitude as opening up the world/clearing/open that we essentially are.

If there were time to work this out more concretely, I would interpret this finitude by way of Heidegger's discussion of *πάθος* and *τὸ παθητικόν* in Aristotle. *Πάθος* is our "being-exposed," another name for openness. By its very nature openness cannot be *ἀπαθής*, an isolated and self-contained individual (*Dasein* as Ayn Rand or as Aristotle's God) but is always-already extended and exposed, not only able but also *needing* to be affected by others: approached, touched, engaged. Human openness is always co-openness (*Mitdasein*). Our sociality -- co-extensive with finitude, and its first gift -- is what makes it possible and necessary to take-as and to understand "is." Our sociality is *die Sache selbst*.

This co-openness is also the basis for all forms of interpersonal togetherness, whether the shoulder-to-shoulder of solidarity, the eyeball-to-eyeball of political struggle, or the face-to-face of moral obligation. Co-openness is what lets us live a co-history, a *Ge-schick*, based not merely on national identity but, as Heidegger argues, on living and working together and making communal decisions (cf. GA 2, 508.23–25). To adapt a phrase, *co-operatio sequitur co-esse*.

This entails that resolve can be, at least in principle, not just *die Übernahme der Geworfenheit* – a single individual taking over his or her thrown-openness (GA 2, 431.13) – but also a *Mit-übername der Mit-geworfenheit* within the limit-idea of an unalienated polity based on co-appropriation of what is co-produced. But that is a topic for another time.

So, what would Heidegger research become if the *Beiträge* pushed us over the edge into a new paradigm? What if we swore off the sauce of Big Being and took the pledge for a de-hypostasized openedness (indeed, co-openedness) that could no longer, with any decency, go by the name of "being"?

What if we overcame our "*Dasein-anxiety*" and discovered that we can do all the work that Heidegger I and II wanted to get done – precisely by staying with *Dasein* as *geworfener Entwurf*?

What if we took all the language of throwing and projection (*Entwurf*, *Zuwurf*, *Geworfenheit*), as well as "appropriation" and "owning" (*Ereignis*), and interpreted it in terms of Heidegger's demystified topic: the openness opened up by our essential finitude?

What if we saw that our *Gewesenheit* (our "alreadiness") is that finitude – not the "past," not "what-is-as-having-been," but the *πρότερον τῆ φύσει*, the always-already-operative: our openedness?

And for good measure, what if we got rid of all the apocalyptic language – concealing and revealing, withdrawing and sending, light and dark – that so

obfuscates what Heidegger was about?

Some fear that in so doing we would lose all the important stuff in Heidegger – the cosmic drama, the mystical metaphors, the Teutonic bombast – everything that makes us Heideggerians and not analysts or pragmatists or “mere philosophers.”

I think it would be just the beginning of the fun.

Notes

- * This paper was presented at the Thirty-Fourth Annual Heidegger Conference, Marshall University, Huntington, West Virginia, 20 May 2000, where in the absence of the author it was read by Professor Robert Scharff and commented on by Professor Richard Polt. To both of them I express my cordial thanks. The present, revised text retains the spoken style of the original.
1. Martin Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*, *Gesamtausgabe* Band 65 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1983), hereinafter GA 65; E.T., *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, tr. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), hereinafter CP. In this essay I abbreviate the various volumes of Heidegger’s *Gesamtausgabe* as GA plus the volume number. Citations frequently refer to texts by page and line. The line-count does not include either the “header” or any empty lines on the page, but does count the lines of section titles.
 2. (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1959), 235.23, 38. Compare “absolutely creative Dasein” (236.14).
 3. William J. Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1963), hereinafter “Richardson.” Otto Pöggeler, *Der Denkweg Martin Heideggers* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1963); ET *Martin Heidegger’s Path of Thinking*, tr. Daniel Magurshak and Sigmund Barber (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press International, 1987). Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrman, *Die Selbstinterpretation Martin Heideggers* (Meisenheim am Glan: A. Hain, 1964).
 4. William J. Richardson, “Martin Heidegger,” in *From Phenomenology to Thought, Er-rancy, and Desire*, ed. Babette E. Babich, (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1995), 621.17–19; hereinafter I abbreviate the book as “Babich.”
 5. *The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot*, ed. Valerie Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), 206.
 6. Medard Boss, “Zollikon Seminar,” in *Erinnerungen an Martin Heidegger*, ed. Günther Neske (Pfullingen: Neske, 1977), 39.19–32.
 7. “*Sein*” appears only ten times in the essay’s 647 lines: only three within the first 525 lines (115.20, 117.7, and 104.21), seven within the next twenty-three lines (119.30–120.17), and none in the remaining seventy-nine lines.
 8. Martin Heidegger, *Zur Sache des Denkens* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1969), 44.6–7; hereinafter SD.
 9. *De anima*, 3, 5, 430^a 15. *Lichtung* is Heidegger’s answer to Aristotle’s νοῦς ποιητικός in that text.
 10. Heidegger explicitly rejects the interpretation of *Lichtung* as “lighting” or “lighting proc-

- ess”: GA 15, 262.12–20 and 231.10–17; GA 68, 45.7, 11 and 51.2, 5. Cf. Frédéric de Towarnicki, *À la rencontre de Heidegger: Souvenir d'un messager de la Forêt-Noire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1993), 146–149.
11. Richardson, xxi.29 and SD 80.24. See “Die Lichtung lichtet” (GA 71, ms. 119.6) as an expression of the same thing.
 12. GA 65, 325.28, 331.23, etc. Also GA 5, 40.1; GA 9, 184.11, 184.25, 185.29, 187.32, 188.21, etc.; GA 15, 415.11; GA 49, 56.31–32; *Zollikoner Seminare*, 9.6–10, 157.1, 157.30–32 188.15, etc.
 13. Respectively (1) ἀλήθεια: Martin Heidegger, *Lettre sur l'humanisme*, 2nd edition, ed. and trans. Roger Munier (Paris: Aubier, 1964), 184.2: Heidegger's letter to Jean Beaufret, November 23, 1945; (2) Ereignis: *Zollikoner Seminare*, 242.13 (3) die Wahrheit des Seins selbst: GA 9, 336.27.
 14. Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1854–1960[!]), sixteen volumes; vol. III (E-Forsche), 1862: “Eräugnen, Ereugnen, Ereignen,” “Eräugnis,” “Eräugnung,” “Eräugung” at 699; “Ereigen” at 784–785; and “Ereignung” at 785. See also Wolfgang Brokmeier, “Heidegger und die Suche nach dem Eigenen – Heidegger und wir –,” in Ingeborg Schüssler et al., eds., *Heidegger: Semaine de Chexbres, 1988* (Lausanne: Genos [Cahiers de Philosophie], 1992), 61–95, here, 89f., notes 3–5. Also François Fédier, “Traduire les *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*,” *Heidegger Studies*, 9 (1993), 15–34, esp. 32–33. In his published work Heidegger refers in passing to this etymology in *Identität und Differenz* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1957), 24.21–25.1, a passage that is omitted from the English translation by Joan Stambaugh, *Identity and Difference* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1969), 36.14.
 15. Martin Heidegger, *Was heißt Denken?* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1954), hereinafter WD.
 16. See Corinne Painter and Thomas Sheehan, “Choosing One's Fate,” *Research in Phenomenology*, 9 (1999), 63–82, especially 70–71.