

HEIDEGGER NEVER GOT BEYOND FACTICITY

Thomas Sheehan
Stanford University

Abstract:

(1) The “thing itself” of Heidegger’s thinking was *Ereignis*. (2) But *Ereignis* is a reinscription of what *Being and Time* had called thrownness or facticity. (3) But facticity/*Ereignis* is ex-sistence’s ever-operative appropriation to its proper structure as the ontological “space” or “clearing” that makes possible practical and theoretical discursivity. (4) Such facticity is the ultimate and inevitable presupposition of all activities of ex-sistence and thus of any understanding of being. (5) Therefore, for ex-sistence – and *a fortiori* for Heidegger as a thinker of *Ereignis* – there can be no going beyond facticity.

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Note:

1. I translate the German *Dasein* by “ex-sistence,” misspelled and hyphenated so as to bring out Heidegger’s meaning: “made to stand out ahead” (ἵσταναι + ἐκ- / ἐξ-).
2. I translate *Seiendes* as “things” rather than as “beings.”

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INTRODUCTION

My thesis is that over the half-century stretching from the final draft of *Being and Time* in 1926 up to his death in 1976, Heidegger never got beyond the issue of facticity. Nor did he want to. Nor could he have gotten beyond it, had he wanted to.

The thesis is, at first blush, controversial. And the only way to clarify the controversy, and perhaps even to resolve it, is to step back and review the whole of Heidegger's thinking with an eye to its unity (if there is one) and its final intention (if there was one).

Heidegger claimed to be the thinker "of one thing only." However, since the early 1960s, when William J. Richardson and Otto Pöggeler published their groundbreaking works and constructed the "classical paradigm" for interpreting Heidegger, the question of what that "one thing" is has divided rather than united Heidegger scholarship. Was "the thing itself"

Sein or *Seyn*?
Seyn or ~~*Seyn*~~?¹
 ἀλήθεια or Λήθη?
Lichtung or *Ereignis*?

Or are all these terms simply different ways of saying the same thing? And if they are, how can we articulate that "same thing" in a clear English idiom that is not a rhapsodic parroting of Heidegger's idiosyncratic jargon?

Despite disagreements about what constitutes "the one thing only," this much seems clear: Within the classical Richardson-Pöggeler paradigm, *die Sache selbst* was not ex-sistence, no matter how much the pre-1960s scholarship, intoxicated as it was by Heidegger's so-called "existentialism," may have claimed it was. Thus it is claimed that Sartre, blinkered by his reading of the early Heidegger, remained "on the plane where there are only human beings,"² whereas Heidegger's thought moved well beyond that, to the plane where there is being above all. In Heidegger's view

the human being is "thrown" by being itself into the truth of being, so that ex-sistence might, in this fashion, guard the truth of being, in order that things might appear in the light of being as the things that they are.³

In fact,

being is still waiting for the time when It itself will become thought-provoking to the human being.⁴

¹ GA 73, 2: 997: "Seyn ist nicht ~~Seyn~~." Further on ~~Seyn~~: *ibid.*, 968, 1033, 1122; also GA 9: 306 (g) = 374 (a).

² GA 9: 334 = 254.

³ *Ibid.*, 330 = 252.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 322 = 246: "Noch wartet das Sein, daß Es selbst dem Menschen denkwürdig werde."

So, in the Richardson-Pöggeler paradigm, it's clear that *die Sache selbst* is not ex-sistence. At best, ex-sistence is only the shepherd of being. Moreover, existentialia like “facticity” are clearly confined to the early analysis of ex-sistence and are overcome – or at least disappear – in the later thought of *Ereignis*. End of argument.

But is that really the case? This paper argues that it is not.

Before we go any farther, we have to distinguish the *existentia*l from the *existentiel*, the structural from the personal – that is: *Existenz* – the *existentia*l essence of any human being – from *Dasein* when taken as any given *existentiel* person living in his or her particular world with his or her personal genealogy. We could indicate this distinction in any number of ways, for example:

<u>existentia</u> l / structural		<u>existentiel</u> / personal
<i>Existenz</i>	—	any given <i>Dasein</i>
<i>Da-sein</i>	—	<i>Dasein</i>

But instead I will use follow this convention:

<u>existentia</u> l / structural		<u>existentiel</u> / personal
ex-sistence	—	I, you, we, etc.

Ex-sistence in its full range (and largely as delineated in the early work) remained the only field of Heidegger's research from beginning to end. Yes, the *articulation* of that field changed from the early to the later work, but *die Sache* remained unchanged. Heidegger did not go “through” the phenomenology of *ex-sistence* and “out the other end” to a thinking of being. Nor did he “turn” from ex-sistence to being in the 1930s. Rather (so this paper argues), his work was always and only an investigation into the depths of ex-sistence / *Existenz*.

Heidegger's final intention was not any kind of theory, whether of being or of ex-sistence, but rather an *existentiel*-personal “transformation of human being.”⁵ In the final analysis all his labors came down to a second-order “call of conscience,” a thematized exhortation to what he at first called resolve-and-authenticity and later named releasedness (*Gelassenheit*). Therefore, we can correctly say – where “correctly” means “in accordance with the intention of all his work” – that Heidegger's efforts as a whole were directed towards *knowing* and *embracing* the *facticity* that we essentially are. To state those moments in classical Greek terms: first, “Know yourself!” and then “Become what you already are!”⁶

⁵ GA 45: 214 = 181: “eine *Verwandlung des Menschseins* selbst.” Heidegger's emphasis.

⁶ Respectively: *Protagoras* 342b3: γνῶθι σεαυτόν, and SZ 145 = 186, citing Pindar's Pythian Odes II, 72: γένοι' οἷός ἐσσί μαθῶν.

The argument of this paper unfolds according to the following logic: **(1)** The “thing itself” of Heidegger’s thinking was *Ereignis*. **(2)** But *Ereignis* is a reinscription of what *Being and Time* had earlier called thrownness or facticity.⁷ **(3)** Authenticity is ex-sistence’s “owning” of its thrownness or facticity, i.e., of its a priori appropriation (*Ereignis*) to its proper structure as the ontological “space” that makes possible the practical and theoretical discursivity whereby we understand the being of things. **(4)** Such *Ereignis*/facticity is the ultimate and inevitable presupposition of all activities of ex-sistence and thus of any understanding of being. **(5)** Therefore, for ex-sistence – and *a fortiori* for Heidegger as a thinker of *Ereignis* – there can be no going beyond facticity.

1. IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, WHAT WAS HEIDEGGER AFTER?

This question may not be as easy to answer as one might think. Let us begin, then, by asking about the general structure of any question, and then apply that structure first to the “guiding question” (*Leitfrage*) of metaphysics and then to the “basic question” (*Grundfrage*) of Heidegger’s own work. [This first section repeats what *Making Sense of Heidegger* lays out on pp. 13-19.]

As regards any question at all: Heidegger identifies three interrelated moments of any inquiry: the *Befragtes*, the *Gefragtes*, and the *Erfragtes* – let us say: the object, the optic, and the heuristic outcome of the inquiry.

1. The *Befragtes* or **object** refers to the thing under investigation.
2. The *Gefragtes* or **optic** refers to the specific focus the inquirer adopts in investigating the material object, and the question that follows from that.
3. The *Erfragtes* or heuristic **outcome** is what the inquirer hopes to obtain by bringing the formal focus to bear on the material object.

With this in mind, we can distinguish metaphysics’ guiding question from Heidegger’s meta-metaphysical inquiry.

1.1 Heidegger’s basic question using the metaphysical term “being” (*Sein*)

Metaphysics in its ontological moment takes *things* as its material object: that which is “in-being,” that which has reality; and then asks what makes them be real/in-being. (I use the word “reality” in what Heidegger calls its “traditional” sense of existence as mere presence-at-hand.)⁸ Depending on the metaphysician, the answer will vary: for Plato it will be εἶδος, for Aristotle, ἐνέργεια, for Aquinas *esse* or *actus essendi*; and so on.

⁷ SZ 135 = 174: Geworfenheit = die Faktizität der Überantwortung. See *ibid.*, 179 = 223: “Die Geworfenheit, darin sich die Faktizität phenomenal sehen läßt, gehört zum ex-sistence, dem es in seinem Sein um dieses selbst geht. ex-sistence existiert faktisch.”

⁸ SZ 211 = 254: “Realität . . . seine überlieferte Bedeutung . . . Sein im Sinne der puren Dingvorhandenheit.”

METAPHYSICS: THE *LEITFRAGE*

<i>das Befragte:</i>	things-in-being: the real
<i>das Gefragte:</i>	What makes them be real?
<i>das Erfragte:</i>	their being <i>qua</i> εἶδος, ἐνέργεια, etc.

As these formulations show, the metaphysical question is focused decidedly on *things*, specifically from the viewpoint of why and how they are real/in-being, to the extent that they are real/in-being. Metaphysics begins with things, then “steps beyond” them to discover what makes them be real at all, i.e., their *being* (*Sein*) in a variety of changing forms. But finally metaphysics *returns to things* with that news. As Aristotle puts it, metaphysics announces “whatever belongs to things in and of themselves” and their “first principles and highest causes.”⁹ This is clearly a question of “*onto*-logy” insofar as the operations of questioning and answering (-logy) all bear ultimately on things (onto-). Metaphysics wants to know how and to what degree *things* are real.

Heidegger’s question, on the other hand, begins where metaphysics leaves off. It takes the very being of things (whatever its historical form) and puts *that* under the microscope as its subject matter. It then asks: Why is being necessary, and how is it possible? That is, Heidegger’s *Grundfrage* seeks “the inner possibility and necessity of being’s openness to us.”¹⁰

HEIDEGGER: THE *GRUNDFRAGE*

<i>das Befragte:</i>	the very “being” [of things]
<i>das Gefragte:</i>	What makes such “being” possible and necessary?
<i>das Erfragte:</i>	<i>Ereignis</i>

⁹ *Metaphysics* IV 1, 1003a21-2, 26-7: τὰ τοῦτω ὑπάρχοντα καθ’ αὐτό and τὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ τὰς ἀκροτάτας αἰτίας.

¹⁰ “die innere Möglichkeit und Notwendigkeit der Offenbarkeit des Seins”: Martin Heidegger, “Vorrede zur japanischen Übersetzung von ‘Was ist Metaphysik?’ (1930)” in Hartmut Buchner, ed., *Japan und Heidegger: Gedenkschrift der Stadt Meßkirch zum hundertsten Geburtstag Martin Heidegger*, Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke, 1989, p. 209. Re “to us”: GA 73, 1: 337: “Das Sein jenes – was nur im Menschen eigens erscheint.”

Thus it would seem that being in *any* form is not the heuristic goal of Heidegger's thinking but only its subject matter. The very being [of things], in all its incarnations, is only the *Befragtes*, whereas the *Erfragtes* is *Ereignis*, which answers the question "What makes being possible and necessary in the first place?" Consider the following analogy.

	METAPHYSICS		HEIDEGGER
<i>das Befragte:</i>	the Smith children		Mrs. Smith
<i>das Gefragte:</i>	What is their source?		What is her source?
<i>das Erfragte:</i>	Mrs. Smith		Mrs. Jones

Metaphysics is a bit like asking the question "Who are these children?" and answering it by tracing the kids back to Mrs. Smith. The kids are the subject matter of the question, and Mrs. Smith is the answer: the inquiry reaches back behind the children to her. However, this question is geared entirely to *defining the children* in light of Mrs. Smith.

On the other hand, Heidegger's *meta*-metaphysical question is like starting with Mrs. Smith herself and considering her not as the mother of the little Smiths (which of course she never ceases to be, even if we bracket that out for a moment) but rather in terms of herself and *her* own origins. Mrs. Smith herself now becomes the subject matter, and the new inquiry reaches back behind her to where *she* comes from, which turns out to be Mrs. Jones. Heidegger's *Grundfrage* is like Mrs. Smith's night out. It focuses on her alone when she leaves the kids with the babysitter (while still remaining their mother) and takes off for an evening on her own. It asks about Mrs. Smith seen for herself, apart from her relation to the children, and seeks out the reason why Mrs. Smith is there at all.

This is analogous to what Heidegger means when he says his effort is "to think being without regard to its being grounded in terms of things"¹¹ – in a word, to think being "itself." But the intensifier "itself" can be misleading if it encourages us to elevate "being itself" into a different and higher kind of being, a super-*Sein* that can "give" (unconceal, grant, bring forth, gather, let-be, etc.) things in their beingness. This is not Heidegger's intention. What, then, does the "itself" refer to?

When metaphysics asks about a thing as such ($\tau\acute{o}\ \delta\acute{\nu}\ \tilde{\eta}\ \delta\acute{\nu}$ = *das Seiende als solches*), it is asking for the "essence" of that thing: not the "whatness" of the thing but rather *whatever allows the thing to be present* as what and how it is. The phrase "a thing as such" *points away* from the thing toward what is *responsible* for that thing: its being.¹²

¹¹ GA 14: 5 = 2: "das Sein ohne die Rücksicht auf eine Begründung des Seins aus dem Seienden."

¹² See GA 66: 316 = 281: "Anwesenung und d.h. Sein und d.h. Seiendheit und d.h. Seiendes als solches."

Similarly when Heidegger asks about being – not things – as such (οὐσία ἢ οὐσία = *das Sein als solches*), he is asking for the “essence” of being¹³ – what Aristotle would call its ἀρχή and αἰτία – that which allows being to be present and operative at all, that which makes being possible and necessary. “Being itself” is not some form of being that is “higher” than the being of things. Rather, “being itself” is only *a formal indication that proleptically stands in for whatever might make the being of things possible.*

Clearly, then, in Heidegger’s meta-metaphysical question about the “essence” of being, being is only the *Befragtes*, the subject matter that is under question. And the *Erfragtes* – the heuristic outcome that Heidegger is after – is not any form of being but rather that which lets being occur at all. And when it comes down to that *Erfragtes*, Heidegger declares emphatically “*ist sogar für den Namen Sein kein Raum mehr*” – “there is no longer room *even for the word* ‘being.’”¹⁴

Therefore, *Ereignis* is not just “another name” for being itself. Rather, “being itself” is simply a heuristic phrase that directs our gaze *away* from being toward its “essence,” toward that which lets it come about in the first place. To confuse being in *any* form with *Ereignis* is to confuse the *Befragtes* with the *Erfragtes*. It’s like equating Mrs. Smith with Mrs. Jones: a major category mistake – and a potential embarrassment.

1.2 Heidegger’s basic question using the phenomenological term “presence” (*Anwesen*)

The previous formulation of Heidegger’s basic question follows his own early terminology, using the metaphysical term “being” (*das Sein*). But in employing that term Heidegger meant something radically different from metaphysical “being” insofar as his entire corpus takes a *phenomeno-logical* approach to his topic. Metaphysics was focused on “being,” that is, the in-itself-ness of things seen apart from their relation to human beings. Phenomenology, on the other hand, is *correlation-research*, that is, it is about the dynamic space of mediation “between” the human knower or actor and whatever is known or acted-upon. That space is the field of *meaning*, and phenomenology in its first moment is about the meaningful presence (Heidegger: the παρουσία or *Anwesen*) of what one encounters.

Thus Heidegger radically reinterprets “being” phenomenologically as the *meaningful presence* of things to human beings within specific “worlds” of meaningfulness structured by the intentions, purposes, desires, etc. of those persons. However, unfortunately Heidegger continued to use the misleading metaphysical phrase “the being of things” (*das Sein des Seienden*) when in fact he meant *das Anwesen des Anwesenden*, the meaningful presence of things to the specific person or persons involved with those things. Henceforth I will use the phrase “meaningful presence” as the proper translation of Heidegger’s *Sein*. Thus, to restate his basic question in *phenomenological* terms:

HEIDEGGER: THE *GRUNDFRAGE* IN PHENOMENOLOGICAL TERMS

<i>das Befragte:</i>	the meaningful presence [of things]
<i>das Gefragte:</i>	What makes such meaningful presence possible and necessary?
<i>das Erfragte:</i>	<i>Ereignis</i>

The *Erfragtes* of Heidegger's *Grundfrage*, however, is directed finally not toward *Anwesen*, the meaningful presence of things, but toward the *source* of such meaningful presence, *die Herkunft des Anwesens*.¹⁵ In that regard, a later text of Heidegger's makes a crucial distinction that is often overlooked in the scholarship. The text, which is found at GA 14: 45 = 37, can be confusing to readers who may know it only in its current English translation, where a *crucial italicization is omitted*. I interpret the distinction here by emphasizing Heidegger's italics with bold face type.

1. *Anwesen*lassen:

letting things be meaningfully present

2. Anwesen*lassen*:

letting meaningful presence (not things) come about at all

As regards no. 2, with its emphasis on *lassen* rather than on *Anwesen*: That which allows – indeed, requires – meaningful presence to occur in human experience is, Heidegger says, *Ereignis*. The outcome of that second *lassen* is not directly things-in-their-meaningfulness but rather that which is responsible for the meaningfulness of things. This no. 2, Heidegger says, is a matter of thinking *Anwesen* back to its source in *Ereignis* (“*auf das Ereignis zu . . . gedacht*”).¹⁶ That is, *Ereignis* actually *is* the second *lassen*: it is the indefinable “it” that “allows for” or “gives” meaningfulness, at all. This move “back” from meaningfulness to its source is what Heidegger calls “the return from *Anwesen* to *Ereignen*.”¹⁷ The heuristic phrase “*das Anwesen selbst*”—or in Heidegger's misleading “being” language, *das Sein selbst*—stands in for that which makes meaningfulness both possible and necessary: it is only a heuristic indication of *Ereignis*.

The question now becomes: What exactly is this phenomenon called *Ereignis*? The key to answering this question lies in realizing that *Ereignis* is Heidegger's reinscription of what he had earlier called *Geworfenheit*, “thrownness,” and more fully *der geworfene Entwurf*, “thrown-openness” – in a word, facticity.

2. WHY IS “OPENNESS” SO CRUCIAL TO HEIDEGGER’S THINKING?

One could just as easily argue that the focal topic of Heidegger's philosophy is not *Ereignis* but *die Lichtung*, a.k.a., *das Offene* – the so-called “clearing” or “open space” that Heidegger designated as an *Urphänomen*.¹⁸ So we may ask: Why is such openness necessary? Indeed, what is it? How can we know it? And what does it have to do with *Ereignis*?

¹⁵ GA 6, 2: 304 = 201. See also GA 10: 131 = 88: “Wesensherkunft des Seins” and GA 2, 53 (note a) = Stambaugh 37 (note): “Das Anwesen aus dieser Herkunft.”

¹⁶ Loc. cit.

¹⁷ GA 14: 55 = 45: “der Rückgang vom Anwesen zum Ereignen.”

¹⁸ GA 14: 81 = 65.

2.1 Why is openness necessary?

Throughout Heidegger's work, human understanding, whether theoretical or practical, is always mediated and discursive rather than immediate and intuitive. We understand what and how anything is – i.e., we understand what it means – only by taking the thing *as* this-or-that in apophantic-declarative statements or thoughts, or *as-for* this or that purpose in practical or productive activity. In other words, our experience of the meaning of something is inevitably discursive (*dis-currere*: to run back and forth). Lacking a God-like intellectual intuition, we have to “run,” so to speak, from tool to task, or from subject to predicate, and then back again, in order to synthesize these two elements that lie apart from one another.¹⁹ Metaphorically speaking, such discursivity means we have to “traverse an open space” (*eine offene Weite zu durchgehen*) in order to synthesize things and their possible meanings.²⁰ Only in that way do we make sense of things – or in metaphysics-speak, understand their “being.”

2.2 What is this openness?

We are able to *do* such “traversing of an open space” in praxis and theory only because we already *are* such an open space in our very essence (thus, a priori and structurally and not of our own volition). Our essence is to be thrown open and ahead as the ontological wiggle-room required for existential acts of *dis-currere*/taking-as, i.e., synthesizing things with some meaning or other. “To exist,” Heidegger says, “might be more adequately translated as ‘sustaining a realm of openness.’”²¹ Thus, the *Da* of *Da-sein* “should designate the openness where things can be present for human beings, and human beings for themselves.”²² However, this *Da* that we sustain and are is not separate or even distinct from our nature as ex-sistence. Rather:

The human being occurs in such a way that he or she is the *Da*, that is, the clearing for meaningful presence.²³

[Ex-sistence] *is* itself the clearing.²⁴

Ex-sistence must be understood as being-the-clearing [*die-Lichtung-sein*]. *Da* is

¹⁹ See “rekurriert” at SZ 34 = 57, where Heidegger is simply following the tradition of *Summa theologiae* I, 58, 3, ad 1: “discursus quondam motum nominat” and *Summa contra gentes*, I, 57, 7: “Ratiocinatio autem est quidam motus intellectus transeuntis ab uno in aliud.”

²⁰ GA 15: 380 = 68. See GA 14: 81 = 66 and 84 = 68: durchmißt, duchmeßbaren; and GA 7: 19 = 18: durchgeht.

²¹ *Zollikoner Seminare* 273f. = 218: “Wahrer ist ‘existieren’ mit ‘aus-stehen eines Offenheitsbereiches’ zu übersetzen.”

²² *Ibid.*, 156f. = 118: “[Das *Da* in ‘Sein und Zeit’] soll die Offenheit nennen, in der für den Menschen Seiendes anwesend sein kann, auch er selbst für sich selbst.”

²³ GA 9: 325 = 248: “Der Mensch west so, daß er das ‘Da,’ das heißt die Lichtung des Seins, ist.”

²⁴ SZ 133 = 171: “daß es [= ex-sistence] selbst die Lichtung ist.”

specifically the word for the open expanse.²⁵

The clearing: the open – *is* itself *ex-sistence*.²⁶

[the] clearing of the open, which occurs as *ex-sistence*.²⁷

Insofar as we are, we are the open.²⁸

2.3 How are we this openness?

To be *ex-sistence* is to have oneself as possibility, always already exceeding oneself as actuality. To be *ex-sistence* is to be structurally *ἐπέκεινα*, an *excessus*. “Higher than actuality is possibility,” Heidegger wrote,²⁹ not just as a jab at Husserl but more importantly as an inversion of the entire Platonic-Aristotelian-Plotinian-Christian-modern metaphysics of movement towards full realization. Such metaphysics is structured as the dynamism of filling out the limits/*πέρας* of one’s essence; and traditionally in that project actuality (i.e., the *state* of being) stands higher than possibility (the *ability* to be). But Heidegger reverses that. Now the maxim governing human being is no longer *μηδὲν ἄγαν* (*Protagoras* 343b3) but rather *πάν ἄγαν*: everything about human being is a matter of excess. With that, we have the end of the worldview that stretches from Platonic *ἔρω*s and Aristotle’s *κινεῖ ὡς ἐρώμενον*, through Gregory of Nyssa’s *ἐπέκτασις* and Augustine’s *donec requiescat in te*, all the way down to Hegel’s “development and realization of Spirit.”³⁰

One of the early Heidegger’s key terms for our condition of always already being the clearing was *Existenz* (*ex + sistere*): “being made to stand ahead [of oneself] and beyond [whatever one encounters].” Soon enough he specified this existential structure of aheadness/beyondness as *der geworfene Entwurf*, or simply *Geworfenheit*. We are a priori “thrown-open” as the space that makes possible all taking-as and thus all understanding of the possible meanings of whatever we encounter.

In his later writings Heidegger designated such thrown-openness as our being “ap-*propri*-ated” (*ereignet*) into our *proper* condition of openness, but without a discernible reason why. “Ex-

²⁵ GA 15: 380 = 69: “*ex-sistence* muß als die-Lichtung-sein verstanden werden. Das Da is nämlich das Wort für die offene Weite.” Also GA 69: 101: “*Die Lichtung – sein* – in sie als Offenes sich loswerfen = das *Da-sein*.” Also SZ 147 = 187: *Gelichtheit* = der *Erschlossenheit* des Da.

²⁶ Heidegger, “Die ‘Seinsfrage’ in Sein und Zeit,” *Heidegger Studies* 27, 2011, p. 9: “die Lichtung des Da – *ist selbst das Da-sein*.” Heidegger’s emphasis.

²⁷ GA 70: 125.12: “[die] Lichtung des Da-, die als Da-sein west.”

²⁸ GA 73, 1: 450: “Wir sind – indem wir sind – das Da.”

²⁹ SZ 38 = 63: “Höher als die Wirklichkeit steht die *Möglichkeit*.” Heidegger’s emphasis.

³⁰ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XII 7, 1072b3: God moves [the world] by being desired. Gregory: *De vita Moysis*, P.G. 44, 401A9-11: [ἡ ψυχὴ] *συνεπεκτεινομένη*: the soul striving for perfection (see Philippians 3:13). Augustine, *Confessions* I. 1. 1. Hegel, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Georg Lasson. Bd. IX, *Philosophie der Weltgeschichte* [1830-31], 2. Hälfte. Leipzig : Felix Meiner, 1923, p. 938: “dieser Entwicklungsgang und das wirkliche Werden des Geistes.”

sistence is thrown, i.e., appropriated.”³¹ “Appropriating,” Heidegger writes, is a matter of “becoming thrown [open],”³² and “thrown [open] . . . means the same as ap-propriated.”³³ More importantly, the whole point of *being* ex-sistence is to personally *become* ex-sistence, that is, to “take over one’s thrownness,” which is the same as to “take over one’s ap-propriation.”³⁴

2.4 What can one know about this openness?

Heidegger argues that our ex-sistence or thrown-openness is underivable from anything else and is ultimately unknowable. He calls this state of affairs “facticity.” One can certainly *experience* one’s groundless thrown-openness (this is the point of Heidegger’s analysis of dread), but it remains radically unknowable if “knowing” means τὴν αἰτίαν γινώσκειν, knowing what causes something.³⁵ We can experience the *fact* that thrown-openness is the case, but not the *reason why* – for the simple reason that our thrown- / appropriated-openness is the ultimate presupposition of the very possibility of asking that question. (Thus Heidegger’s mantra: “No presuppositionless philosophy!”) We will never get an answer to the question “What possibilizes that which possibilizes everything?”³⁶ Even to ask that question is a fool’s errand insofar as it traps us in a *petitio principia* – in this case, the trap of not realizing that we are already wrapped up from the outset in what we are attempting to find.

Heidegger’s most basic point about the hermeneutical circle is that we must presuppose our thrown-openness in order to ask a question about our thrown-openness. *Existenz*, our always-already-standing-ahead-and-beyond, is what allows us to wonder why we are always-already-standing-ahead-and-beyond. Such ex-sistence (which is radically different from merely “existing” like anything in the world that is non-human) is the ultimate *factum*, that which is always already the case “before” anything else. As necessarily presupposed, this *factum* is always “hidden” from any attempt to understand it by trying to find out what causes it. It is intrinsically “concealed” and remains a “mystery.” This ever-operative but hidden *factum* is the intrinsically concealed structure of ex-sistence: “*das Geheimnis des Daseins*,” indeed “*das vergessene Geheimnis des Daseins*.”³⁷ As intrinsically hidden, thrown-openness can be spoken of as drawn-out, as *Aus-trag*. And yet, in this hidden or withdrawn thrown-openness we discover the concealed “essence” of meaningful presence: “*In diesem Entzug verbirgt sich das Wesen des Seins*.”³⁸ Moreover, “*Der Entzug ist des Da-seins*”³⁹ and in fact “*Entzug ist Ereignis*.”⁴⁰

³¹ GA 65: 304 = 240: “Das ex-sistence ist geworfen, ereignet.” See *ibid.*, 252 = 199: “*geworfene* und das will sagen zugehörig der Er-eignung”; also GA 9: 377 note d = 286 note d: “Geworfenheit und Ereignis.”

³² *Ibid.*, 34 = 29: “die Er-eignung, das Geworfenwerden.”

³³ *Ibid.*, 239 = 188: “geworfener . . . d.h. er-eignet.”

³⁴ Respectively: SZ 325 = 373: “die Übernahme der Geworfenheit” and GA 65: 322 = 254: “die Übernahme der Er-eignung.”

³⁵ Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* I 2, 71b10-1. See “rerum cognoscere causas”: Virgil, *Georgics* II, 490, repeated in the tondo of Raphael’s “School of Athens.”

³⁶ See GA 22: 106 = 87: “Alles ursprünglich *ermöglichend*.” Heidegger’s emphasis.

³⁷ Respectively, GA 9: 197 = 151 and 195 = 149.

³⁸ GA 10: 81 = 54. See GA 73, 1: 321: “Ereignis als Wesung des Seins.”

³⁹ GA 65: 293 = 231.

⁴⁰ GA 8: 10 = 9.

In the final analysis, ex-sistence as the intrinsically concealed, appropriated/thrown-open clearing is the “fact” – *die Sache selbst* – that Heidegger’s philosophy was always about and that he never got beyond. Referring to his mantra *Es gibt Sein*, he writes: “World ‘gives’ being; ex-sistence is the ever individualized ‘es’ that gives; it makes possible and *is* the ‘*es gibt*.’”⁴¹

2.5 What am I “ahead-and-beyond” *into*?

One of the Heidegger’s richest terms for our thrown-openness is *In-der-Welt-sein*, usually translated as “being-in-the-world.” However, Heidegger was careful (more careful than the scholarship usually is) to note that the “world” we are “in” is not first of all the universe of space and time that we share with stones and animals. Rather, it is *Bedeutsamkeit*, the realm of *the possible significance* of things. *In-der-Welt-sein* is our a priori engagement-with-meaningfulness: “*Dasein . . . in seiner Vertrautheit mit der Bedeutsamkeit.*”⁴² But this engagement-with-meaningfulness is not an add-on to some allegedly prior “immediate encounter” with things. Rather, it is the very condition of all our encounters, that which makes all such encounters necessarily discursive. We can, do, and in fact *must* encounter things *only as meaningful*, even if such meaning is merely interrogative (“What the hell is a meson?”). If we cannot make at least interrogative sense of something, we cannot meet it at all. And once we can no longer make *any* sense of *anything* (even if it be death-bed delirious sense), we no longer ex-sist.

2.6 What is the connection between the *Lichtung* and *Ereignis*?

The clearing, Heidegger says, is ex-sistence itself as thrown-open a.k.a appropriated-open, such that we can then take something *as* this-or-that and so understand what it means (in metaphysics, its “being”). We are *opened* in ourselves and ever *opening up* all that we meet⁴³ by rendering it meaningfully present: available, appreciable, enjoyable, usable, transformable, destroyable, affirmable, deniable, loveable, hateable – and a host of other *daseinsmäßig* “-ables.”

But Heidegger’s point is that the condition which makes all these “-ables” possible is not of our own doing. Rather, it is a matter of our ex-sistential “essence” (τὸ τί ἦν ἀνθρώπων εἶναι), which is always already operative and which he called *das Gewesen*.⁴⁴ This radically finite possibilizing condition of the meaningful presence of things – a condition that occurs only as ex-sistence – is the ultimate *factum*; and our condition of ineluctably *being* that condition is our facticity. The very possibility and necessity of humanizing the world (yes, *humanizing* it: bringing it into the world of ex-sistence) is “given” before we can do anything about it and thus before we can enact all the “-ables” that make up our lives.

⁴¹ GA 73, 1: 642: “Welt ‘gibt’ Sein; das ex-sistence ist das je vereinzelt ‘es’, das gibt; das ermöglicht und *ist* das ‘*es gibt*.’” See *ibid.*, 406: “das Sein (das Welten der Welt).”

⁴² SZ 87 = 120.

⁴³ Re *opened* and *opening up*: erschließend erschlossenes, GA 27: 135.

⁴⁴ GA 2: 114, note “a” = Stambaugh 83, n: “‘das jeweils schon voraus Wesende’, das Gewesen. . . . Nicht ein ontisch Vergangenes, sondern das jeweils Frühere.”

One of Heidegger's terms for the existential *factum* that underlies all our existential doings is "*die ereignete Lichtung*,"⁴⁵ a phrase that connects the two phenomena that most compete for the title of "the thing itself." This "appropriated clearing" refers to nothing but the realm of ex-sistence: it does not stand over against, or separate from, or ontologically higher than, our fate of being thrown-open / appropriated-open as the space required for discursivity and thus for understanding what and how something is. There is nothing that "does" the throwing or appropriating, nothing that "draws us out" unto itself and makes us its "personal property,"⁴⁶ nothing that is pathetically "waiting for the time when It itself will become thought-provoking" to human beings.⁴⁷ What does the throwing or appropriating is certainly not "Being" in its imaginary hypostasization as "Being *Itself*." Rather, the thrown-openness *has always already happened*: it is our very essence, and there's no getting behind it or beyond it. Like Heidegger and his philosophy, we are stuck with ourselves, in fact condemned to ourselves with no deep backup, no "rescue" (*Retten*) from beyond, no God on the horizon to save us from ourselves.

CONCLUSION

During and after the Great War Heidegger saw how completely devastating was the collapse of the God-intoxicated world that had stretched from the origins of Homo sapiens over 200,000 years ago, through the glories of the Axial Age in Greece and the *floruit* of the Abrahamic religions in the West, through the depredations of modern capitalism and imperialism, and up to the texts of Nietzsche. Thereafter, as William Barrett once noted, Heidegger's labors were those of a man crawling out from under the rubble of a bombed-out city.⁴⁸ He dragged himself out of the debris of metaphysics and fought free of what he called "the temptations . . . of a glib religiosity."⁴⁹ From 1922 on, he started all over again, from scratch, first taking the measure of the damage, and then seeing how far he could get by starting not from theories or worldviews or promises of progress, but from groundless first-person experience.

And in fact he didn't get far. Nor were the prospects for the future very promising. He reached the limits of his thinking early on, and then kept circling back, from whatever horizons he later opened up and explored, back to the core of his thinking: one's inescapable facticity and the corresponding exhortation to know and embrace it. For him, there was nothing else to do. *Amor fati*.

This rather dark reading of Heidegger is no doubt controversial and contestable. But what if even half of it were true – say, the part about no escape from facticity? Given that reading, what might be a desirable future for Heidegger studies? What might one reasonably "require" of such studies? Or at least, what might be a responsible next step?

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⁴⁵ GA 71: 211 = 181.

⁴⁶ See GA 65: 263 = 207: "Eigentum." GA 73, 1: "Eigen-tum," in italics.

⁴⁷ See n. 4, above.

⁴⁸ William Barrett, *Irrational Man* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor, 1962), 205.

⁴⁹ GA 62: 363.

