

A Question of Faith: Heidegger's Destroyed Concept of Faith as the Origin of Questioning in Philosophy

Vincent Blok

Heidegger always had an ambiguous relationship to the domain of faith and religion. From the outset of his career, he already characterized philosophy as questioning—for instance, as “a proper stance within questioning itself, in the actualization of questionability”—and excluded religion from this questionability of philosophy (Heidegger 1994a, 197; 2001, 147–48). However, while his early destruction of the concept of religion can be seen as an attempt to conceive it as a characteristic of philosophical method (Blok 2011a), in his *Introduction to Metaphysics*, for instance, it becomes clear that faith is radically excluded from the questionability of philosophy (Heidegger 1983a, 9).¹ The reason for this is that faith already has an *answer* to the questionability of philosophy, and therefore, isn't able to have any relation to this questionability at all: “Faith has no place in thought” (Heidegger 1977, 372; 2002, 280).

In this essay, we raise the question whether the concept of faith can be radically excluded from Heidegger's method of questioning, as Heidegger claims in his *Introduction to Metaphysics*. In his phenomenology of questioning, for instance, Edmund Husserl characterized questioning precisely as a modality of faith (1985, 117–19). In the 1930s, Heidegger himself provided a formal analysis of thought as faith or belief; belief is *holding-to-be-true* (cf. 1986, 131–42; 1991, 121–32 and 1994b, 368–70; 1999, 257–59). Our hypothesis is that Heidegger's

¹ The concept of destruction can be seen as one of the main characteristic of Heidegger's philosophical method (Heidegger 1982; cf. Blok 2009). It does not only concern the destruction of metaphysical concepts such as “idea” or “ousia,” but also the destruction of the metaphysical meaning of philosophical concepts such as will “logic,” “world” or “God” in order to articulate a nonmetaphysical meaning of these concepts (cf. Heidegger 1976). In this respect, we can also speak about a destruction of the concept of religion in his early work (cf. Blok 2011a).

concept of holding-to-be-true is a necessary condition for the “original stance of inquiry [*Fragehaltung*] of philosophy” (1986, 110; 1991, 104–5) because only in a philosophical questioning that is characterized by faith as holding-to-be-true, the “truth of being” can originally resonate.

After our exploration of Heidegger’s characterization of philosophy as questioning in the first part of this essay, we articulate three characteristics of Heidegger’s concept of questioning in the second part. It becomes clear that Heidegger’s method of philosophical questioning concerns the exploration (*Entfaltung*) of questioning in which the truth of being originally resonates (Heidegger 1986, 110; 1991, 104–5). After our exploration of Heidegger’s concept of the *Entfaltung der Frage* in the second part, we inquire into the relation between philosophical questioning and Heidegger’s destructured concept of faith in the third part.²

1. Philosophy as Questioning

From the outset of his career, Heidegger characterized philosophy as questioning (Blok 2011a; Derrida 1989, 9). In his *Introduction to Metaphysics*, questioning is characterized in the following way: “Questioning is the genuine and the right and the only way of deeming worthy that which, by its highest rank, holds our Dasein in its power. This understanding of being of ours, and being itself altogether, is therefore what is most worthy of questioning in all questioning” (Heidegger 1983a, 89; 2000b, 87–88). Heidegger distinguishes however between two specific types of questioning: the “guiding question” (*Leitfrage*) of the metaphysical tradition and the “grounding question” (*Grundfrage*) that is inaugurated by himself. Let us focus on Heidegger’s characterization of the method of questioning in the guiding and grounding question first.

According to Heidegger, metaphysics is the name for the questioning of philosophy. Although there are several philosophical questions, these questions are guided by one single question, namely, the question of last grounds (*archē*). This ground is unusual, because it is not a cause that we can locate somewhere in the world. It concerns the essence of things, that is, their *Wesensgrund*. The

² Parts of this article are already published in Blok (2015). While in that article we focus on the Heidegger and Derrida controversy about the nature of questioning in order to rehabilitate questioning as an essential characteristic of contemporary philosophy, in this article, we focus on Heidegger’s concept of questioning in relation to his destructured concept of faith.

archē of things is found in their essence, that is, in the what-is of this being. All metaphysical questions can be reduced to this question of last grounds. It is this question that, according to Aristotle, was raised long ago, is still and always will be asked and continues to baffle us. The only endeavor of philosophy is therefore to find an answer to the question “what is being?” (Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 7.3.1028b2-8). For this reason, Heidegger calls this question the *guiding* question, the question that guides all our questioning in the metaphysical tradition.

The distinction between the guiding question of metaphysics and Heidegger’s own method of questioning becomes clear if we consider the following remark:³ “The more this question becomes the guiding question, and the longer it remains such, the less the question itself becomes an object of inquiry. Every treatment of the guiding question is and remains *preoccupied with the answer*, preoccupied with finding the answer” (Heidegger 1986, 212; 1991, 106–7). According to Heidegger, the primary aim of metaphysical questioning is to find an answer to this guiding question what being is and to secure this answer. This answer had several configurations in the metaphysical tradition—being appeared as *phusis*, as *ens creatum*, as *Wille zur Macht* and so on—but all these answers appeared within the framework of the guiding question; being appears for instance *as will to power*, and this concept of the will to power is an answer to the guiding question what being is. With the answer to the guiding question, the questioner adopts a certain stance or position toward the whole of being (Heidegger 1986, 212–13; 1991, 107–8). According to Heidegger, therefore, the guiding question is characterized by the preoccupation with the answer, while the nature of this questioning itself remains undeveloped and unexplored.

For Heidegger, philosophy consists in questioning as well. But contrary to the metaphysical tradition, Heidegger’s method of questioning does not primarily consist in finding an *answer* to the questionability of philosophy: “Actually asking . . . means venturing to exhaust, to question thoroughly, the inexhaustible wealth of this question, by unveiling what it demands that we question. Whenever

³ In this essay, we consider Heidegger’s work not as a new philosophy with a new content compared with the metaphysical tradition, but as an effort to develop a new method of philosophical thought that is able to reflect on the hegemony of representation (*Vorstellung*) without itself being subjected to representation (cf. Oudemans 1990; Van Dijk 1991; Blok 2005). To the extent that Heidegger’s thought has to be understood as a *methodical thinking*, it is legitimate to consider his *grounding* question as another *method* of questioning, compared with the guiding question of the metaphysical tradition. In this chapter, the *Entfaltung der Frage* concerns another method of questioning, compared with the *Beantwortung der Frage* (cf. section 2).

such a venture occurs, there is philosophy” (Heidegger 1983a, 10; 2000b, 8).⁴ What demands us to question is the possibility that beings have of being “what they are and how they are” but also “*of not being*” and Heidegger’s questioning consists in opening up beings in their question-worthiness (*Fragwürdigkeit*), that is, in their wavering between nonbeing and being (Heidegger 1983a, 32; 2000b, 31). For Heidegger, therefore, being is not the answer to the question of being as in the guiding question, but what is most question-worthy: “Henceforth an essential differentiation and clarification can be brought into the question of being. Such clarification is never an answer to the question of being but rather only a thorough grounding of questioning, awakening and clarifying the *power* to question this question—which always arises out of Dasein’s distress and upward swing” (Heidegger 1994b, 75; 1999, 52). If we restrict ourselves to Heidegger’s characterization of the *method* of questioning in the guiding question and the grounding question—rather than the *content* of both questions—we receive an indication of the difference between both methods of questioning. The main difference between the metaphysical and the Heideggerian method of questioning has to be situated in the difference between the focus on finding and securing an answer (guiding question) and the openness of every possible answer (grounding question), that is, the openness to the “inexhaustible wealth of this question.”⁵

In his *Introduction to Metaphysics*, it becomes clear that religious faith is radically excluded from this questionability of philosophy, which is at stake in the grounding question. Heidegger argues: “One who holds on to such faith as a basis can, perhaps, emulate and participate in the asking of our question in a certain way, but he cannot authentically question without giving himself up as a believer” (Heidegger 1983a, 9; 2000b, 7–8). The reason for this is that faith already has an *answer* to the questionability of philosophy—being as a whole appears *as ens creatum*, which is created by God *as ens increatum*. Therefore, faith has no relation to the questionability of philosophy at all. This is confirmed in an early lecture on *Phenomenology and Theology* from 1927, in which Heidegger conceives faith as the natural enemy of philosophy: “This peculiar relationship does not exclude but rather includes the fact that faith, as a specific possibility of existence, is in its

⁴ This doesn’t mean that Heidegger’s method of questioning rules out the possibility of an answer: “An answer is no more than the final step of the very asking; and an answer that bids adieu to the inquiry annihilates itself as an answer. It can ground nothing like knowledge. It rests content with the sheer opinions it traces and in which it has ensconced itself. A question—especially a question that involves being as a whole—can be appropriately answered only if it is adequately posed in the first place” (Heidegger 1986, 214; 1991, 192).

⁵ The overcoming of the guiding question consists therefore in the “Überwindung des bisherigen Fragens” (Heidegger 1986, 230).

innermost core the mortal enemy of the form of existence that is an essential part of philosophy and that is factually ever-changing” (1976, 66; 1998, 53).

But why is it the case that “what is asked for in our question, is for faith foolishness” (Heidegger 1983a, 9; 2000b, 8). Why is a “Christian philosophy a round square and a misunderstanding,” as Heidegger argues in his *Introduction to Metaphysics*? Is it likely that faith is completely excluded from philosophical questioning, which constitutes the piety (*Frömmigkeit*) of thinking (Heidegger 2000a, 36)? If we focus our analysis on the nature of questioning in relation to faith, we can conclude that Heidegger’s rejection of faith has nothing to do with the *content* of Christian faith. On the contrary, Heidegger rejects Christian faith here because it is preoccupied with finding answers. Only because of its preoccupation with finding and securing an answer does Christian faith fail to have a relation to the questionability of philosophy, *just like the guiding question of philosophy*. In this respect, we can conclude that, according to Heidegger, not only a Christian philosophy but also a metaphysical philosophy is a round square and a misunderstanding.

More important, Heidegger doesn’t exclude the concept of faith from his method of questioning, but only a metaphysical concept of faith that is preoccupied with finding answers. In his *Contributions to Philosophy* from 1936 to 1938, on the one hand, Heidegger calls the ones who question *genuine believers* (Heidegger 1994b, 12; cf. also the third section of this essay). On the other hand, he even seems to be quite positive about questioning as a proper relation to God: “It remains to be considered whether the god possesses more divinity in the question concerning him or in the situation where we are sure of him and are able, as it were, to brush him aside or fetch him forward, as our needs dictate” (Heidegger 1986, 71; 1991, 68). If Heidegger excludes faith from his method of questioning, therefore, it is only faith that is concerned with finding and securing answers. A destructed concept of faith still may be associated with the questionability of philosophy.

Before we can explore this relation between Heidegger’s method of questioning and a destructed concept of faith, in the next section, we first turn to a radical criticism of Heidegger’s privilege of questioning.

2. Three Characteristics of Heidegger’s Destructed Concept of Questioning

In this section, we explore three characteristics of Heidegger’s method of questioning. In *What is Metaphysics?* we find a first characteristic of Heidegger’s

method of questioning: “First, every metaphysical question always encompasses the whole range of metaphysical problems. Each question is itself always the whole. Therefore, second, every metaphysical question can be asked only in such a way that the questioner as such is also there within the question, that is, is placed in question” (Heidegger 1976, 103; 1998, 82). The question of being concerns the “whole” of being. Our inclusion in the question of being makes clear that the “whole” of being cannot be understood in a metaphysical way, that is, as the principle, *archē* or ground of beings which is found in the essence of these beings (ontology) and in a highest being (theology).⁶ Contrary to this onto-theological framework of traditional metaphysics, in which the being of *beings* is the point of departure, Heidegger’s question of being concerns the whole of being or *being as such*: “According to the usual interpretation, the ‘question of being’ means asking about beings as such (metaphysics). But if we think along the lines of *Being and Time*, the ‘question of being’ means asking about being as such” (Heidegger 1983a, 21; 2000b, 20–21). It is this whole of being that is question-worthy (*das Fragwürdige*) according to Heidegger.

As a consequence of Heidegger’s question concerning the whole of being, the questioner is *included* in this question; that which is asked—the question of being—in return affects the one who asks.⁷ The primacy of questioning therefore doesn’t testify to a humanistic tendency, as Derrida suggests (Derrida 1984, 125–26; Blok 2015), but is motivated by the *Sache*:

The question of who man is must in its very formulation include in its approach man in and with his relations to beings as a whole; it must include in its inquiry the question of being as a whole. But we have just now heard that being as a whole can only be interpreted by human beings in the first place—and now man himself is to be interpreted in terms of being as a whole. Everything here is spinning in a circle. Of that there can be no doubt. The question is whether and

⁶ “Once we had explained the fact in this way, we characterized it as the unshaken point of departure for all the traditional metaphysical questioning about ‘Being.’ It begins with *beings* and is directed toward them. It does *not* begin with *Being* in the questionworthiness of *ist openness*” (Heidegger 1983a, 91; 2000b, 90).

⁷ “Yet what accounts for the fact that with this thought it is precisely thinking, and the conditions of thinking, that are emphasized so essentially? What else could it be but the thought’s ‘content,’ what it gives us to think? Accordingly, the content does not really go into abeyance, as it seemed to; rather, it comes to the fore in a singular way. For now the conditions of the thought-process as such thrust their way to the forefront. With the thought in question, *what* is to be thought recoils on the thinker because of the *way* it is to be thought, and so it compels the thinker. Yet it does so solely in order to draw the thinker into what is to be thought” (Heidegger 1986, 204; 1991, 183; cf. 1983a, 7; 1986, 237).

in what way we can succeed in taking this circle seriously, instead of continually closing our eyes in the face of it.

Heidegger 1986, 110; 1991, 104–5

The whole of being cannot be understood in a metaphysical way and calls for a radical new method of questioning in which the questioner is included.

Heidegger calls his method an *exploration* of questioning. Already in *Being and Time*, Heidegger does not claim to answer the question of being, but to explore (*ausarbeiten*) this question.⁸ The objective of this exploration (*Ausarbeitung*) of the question of being is to prepare (*ausarbeiten*) for a question, that is, the grounding question with regard to the sense (*Sinn*), or in his later work, the truth of being.⁹ What is the nature of this exploration of questioning? Heidegger's answer is: "to explore the question as it is formulated, is to pose the question more essentially: in asking the question one enters explicitly into those relationships [*Bezüge*] that become visible when one assimilates virtually everything that comes to pass in the enactment of asking [*Vollzug*] the question" (Heidegger 1986, 214; 1991, 192 [my emphasis]).¹⁰ In the enactment (*Vollzug*) of the exploration of the question of being, we experience the *relation* between being and thinking, that is, the sense or truth as the un-concealment of being.¹¹

Which *relation* is opened by the *exploration* of the guiding question? The exploration of the guiding question first of all draws our attention to the *direction* of questioning and demands that we follow this direction, as is said in *Being and Time*. Every questioning is a seeking and every seeking takes its direction beforehand from what is sought (Heidegger 1993, 5). When we explore

⁸ "*Being and Time* can be evaluated only by the extent to which it is equal or unequal to the question it raises. There is no standard other than the question itself; only the question, not the book, is essential. Furthermore, the book merely leads us to the threshold of the question, not yet into the question itself" (Heidegger 1985, 23; 1991, 20–21).

⁹ "Rather, the determining ground of the development of the guiding question is to be sought in a renewed posing of the question, indeed, in a more original asking of that question" (Heidegger 1986, 214; 1991, 192). Also, the title of the "introductory remarks" of the aim of *Being and Time*—"The exposition of the question of the sense of being"—cannot be understood as an introduction to this book. Its aim is to explore questioning itself in view of the exposition ("exponere") of the question about the sense of being: "Quite apart from the fact that if we were to follow up the problem of the ontological structure of world-historical historicizing, we would necessarily be transgressing the limits of our theme, we can refrain from this all the more because the very aim of this exposition is to lead us face to face with the ontological enigma of the movement of historicizing in general" (Heidegger 1993, 389; 2008, 441).

¹⁰ See also the following remarks: "Henceforth as essential differentiation and clarification can be brought into the question of being. Such clarification is never an answer to the question of being but rather only a thorough grounding of questioning, awakening and clarifying the *power* to question this question—which always arises out of Dasein's distress and upward swing" (Heidegger 1994b, 75; 1999, 52).

¹¹ For Heidegger's concept of the truth of being, see Blok 2011b.

(*auseinanderfalten*) what is at stake in the guiding question—what is being—it becomes clear that it is about being (*Gefragte*). This is not just any being, but the being of beings. But because all questioning is somehow a questioning of something—a being—this *Gefragte* is, second, dependent on that which is interrogated (*Befragte*). We call that which is interrogated the field of the question. This field is not a neutral domain of questioning of which we can take notice in an arbitrary way. Asking the guiding question has a specific aim because beings are asked about *insofar* as they are. That which is asked for (*Gefragte*) is in other words the essence of that which is interrogated (*Befragte*).¹² With this, questioning aims at the “being” of these beings. The “being” of these beings is that which is asked about (*Gefragtes*) of that which is interrogated (*Befragte*). The fact that beings are interrogated in their relation to being means, third, that beings themselves are already accessible and sufficiently determined; they are not question-worthy (*fragwürdig*).

In order to become that which is asked about (*Gefragte*), that which is interrogated (*Befragte*) is questioned in certain respects. These respects are determined by the aim or goal of our questioning; in this case, the definition of the being of beings as an answer to the guiding question “what” being is. Heidegger indicates that this being has been understood in a very specific way since the beginning of the metaphysical tradition.

Greek science (*epistēmē*) asks about *phusis*. Based on an example from Aristotle, Heidegger shows that for the Greeks *phusis* does not have the narrow meaning of a natural being. Furthermore, the *epistēmē phusikē* does not yet designate a scientific discipline directed toward the facts within a specific area of research only. The Aristotelian *epistēmē phusikē* is reflection primarily on the question of what life, time, space and so on are as that in which the variable, and therefore, the moved (*phusis*) is what it is, namely, the whole of being: “This ἐπιστήμη φυσική has as its object everything that in this sense belongs to φύσις and that the Greeks designate as τὰ φυσικά. The questioning proper to these sciences dealing with φύσις is the supreme question of the Prime Mover, of what this whole of φύσις is in itself as this whole” (Heidegger 1983b, 49; 1995b, 32–33).

¹² In *Being and Time*, Heidegger does not only speak about the *Gefragte*, but also about the *Erfragte*. This *Erfragte* concerns the specific scientific-theoretical way the *Gefragte* is articulated: “In investigative questions—that is, in questions which are specifically theoretical—what is asked about is determined and conceptualized. Furthermore, in what is asked about there lies also *that which is to be found out by the asking* [*das Erfragte*]; this is what is really intended: with this the inquiry reaches its goal” (Heidegger 1993, 5; 2008, 24). In his later work, Heidegger seems to take these two moments of questioning—*das Gefragte* and *das Erfragte*—together (cf. Blok 2011a).

Aristotle asks about the whole of being through the question about the prime mover. This question about the prime mover, which is understood by Aristotle as the Divine without any specific religious doctrine, belongs to the *epistēmē phusikē*.

Phusis however not only designates nature in this sense. *Phusis* also concerns the *nature* of things, that is, nature in the sense of the essence of beings. The metaphysical question concerning being *as such* (*ousia*) is called the *ontological* question. In Aristotle's work, the different questions concerning *phusis* as the whole of being (theology) and as being as such (ontology) belong together in the *first philosophy* (*protē philosophia*). The beginning of Greek science is therefore the beginning of onto-theology.

What Heidegger tries to show with his *exploration* of the guiding question is that questioning is not neutral, but has a certain onto-theological arrangement (*Fügung*). This arrangement originates from the mode of questioning itself. What is asked about is the beingness (*Seiendheit*) of beings, which is understood as the whole of being (theology) and as being as such (ontology). In this specific arrangement of questioning, the interrogating relation between questioning and that which is asked about in questioning remains forgotten, according to Heidegger.¹³

Our exploration of Heidegger's concept of the *Entfaltung der Frage* makes clear that the exploration of questioning is something completely different than traditional questioning. It is not preoccupied with finding answers to the guiding question, but explores the self-evident relation between questioning and the interrogated. The exploration of questioning is indeed circular, but not a *circulus vitiosus*. Why? Characteristic of the exploration of questioning is that this questioning *withdraws* from beings without letting them go completely. The exploration of questioning "challenges beings as a whole, so to speak, outstrips them, though never completely. But this is precisely how the questioning gains its distinction. What is asked in this question rebounds on the questioning itself, for the questioning challenges beings as a whole but does not after all wrest itself

¹³ "During the course of a factually experienced day, I deal with quite different things; but in the factual course of life, I do not become aware of the different *hows* of my reactions to those different things. Instead, I encounter them at most in the content I experience itself: factual life experience manifests an *indifference* with regard to the manner of experiencing. It does not even occur to factual life experience that something might not become accessible to it" (Heidegger 1995a, 12). The reason for this is the tendency of life to be absorbed by the world it is engaged in: "Living is caring and indeed is so in the inclination toward making things easy for oneself, in the inclination toward flight. Thereby arise a directionality toward possible mistakes as such, mistakability, decline, making things easy, fooling oneself, fanaticism, and exuberance" (Heidegger 1994a, 109; 2001, 81).

free from them” (Heidegger 1983a, 6; 2000b, 6). The exploration of the question doesn’t ask about *beings*, but withdraws from these *beings* in order to have an indirect view of the *relation* between being and thinking, that is, the whole of being. In this respect, the circularity of Heidegger’s exploration of questioning doesn’t involve a “circular argument,” but the “laying bare the ground” for any question and answer (Heidegger 1994a, 8; 2001, 7–8; cf. Heidegger 1993, 153). The *exploration* of questioning concerns the whole of being, that is, the relation between being and thinking which encircles every question and answer.

The exploration of questioning cannot be compared with the guiding question according to Heidegger: “Certainly, giving up the ordinary and going back into questioning interpretation [*Auslegung*] is a leap” (Heidegger 1983a, 185; 2000b, 188). Only a completely different mode of questioning has access to the *whole* of being. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger therefore argues:

The being of beings “is” not itself a being. If we are to understand the problem of being, our first philosophical step consists in not μῦθόν τινα διηγείσθαι, in not “telling a story”—that is to say, in not defining beings as beings by tracing them back in their origin to some other being, as if being had the character of some possible being. Hence being, as that which is asked about, must be exhibited in a way of its own, essentially different from the way in which beings are discovered.

Heidegger 1994a, 6; 2001, 6

Heidegger’s other method of questioning consists precisely in the *exploration* of questioning with respect to the whole of being. The exploration of questioning withholds the answer and commits itself to the *relation* (*Bezug*), which is opened up by the *enactment* (*Vollzug*) of questioning.

In order to see what this method comprises, we focus for a moment on a specific thesis in Heidegger’s *Introduction to Metaphysics*, in which he argues that a human being doesn’t receive any particular emphasis:

For what is this being, after all! Let us consider [*Vorstellen*] the Earth within the dark immensity of space in the universe. We can compare it to a tiny grain of sand; more than a kilometer of emptiness extends between it and the next grain of its size; on the surface of this tiny grain of sand lives a stupefied swarm of supposedly clever animals, crawling all over each other, who for a brief moment have invented knowledge. . . . Within beings as a whole there is no justification to be found for emphasizing precisely *this* being that is called the human being and among which we ourselves happen to belong.

Heidegger 1983a, 6; 2000b, 4

Heidegger's aim here is not to utter an informative proposition about a being that is called human, but in an *indirect* way, he tries to show how human being is already understood, which *relation* between being and thinking is already presupposed in our proposition about beings.¹⁴ This self-evident relation shows itself in an indirect way in our propositions *about* beings, so also in Heidegger's proposition we cited a moment ago. "Stellen wir uns vor" means that the self-evident relation between being and thinking is one of presentation and re-presentation, in which also human being is represented. "No justification [*Rechtsgrund*] can be found" means that the representing relation is self-evidently determined by the truth as *recht* and *richtig*, by the *rectitudo* between representation (thinking) and the represented (being). Philosophical thought only has access to this *relation* by its withdrawing from beings without its losing contact with these beings. Only because of the fact that we are included in representation (thinking) does the exploration of questioning have access to the representing relation between being and thinking that marks the whole of being.

With this, we encounter the philosophical meaning of the circularity of questioning the grounding question. Because questioning the grounding question withdraws from beings without losing contact, the risk is always that our questioning of the grounding question is still bound up to the representation of an *archē* or principle as an answer to the question of being:¹⁵ "Our questioning is not yet the leap; for that, it must first be transformed; it still stands, unknowing, in the face of beings" (Heidegger 1983a, 8; 2000b, 6–7). The actual *enactment* of the grounding question presupposes a *Rückstoß* of that which is asked for in our questioning; being *itself* comes up and that we are touched by the hidden power of the question of being (cf. Heidegger 1983a, 15). And yet, our questioning cannot be understood in a passive way: "Thus the leading into the asking of the grounding question is not a passage over to something that lies or stands around somewhere; instead, this leading-to must first awaken and create the questioning. Leading is a questioning going-ahead, a questioning-ahead" (Heidegger 1983a,

¹⁴ "Philosophy is essentially untimely because it is one of those few things whose fate it remains never to be able to find a direct resonance in their own time, and never to be permitted to find such a resonance. . . . Philosophy, then, is not a kind of knowledge which one could acquire directly, like vocational and technical expertise, and which, like economic and professional knowledge in general, one could apply *directly* and evaluate according to its usefulness in each case" (Heidegger 1983a, 10; 2000b, 9 [my emphasis]).

¹⁵ "Why the why? What is the questioning of the grounding question, VB] itself, a question that presumes to establish the ground of beings as a whole? Is this Why, too, just asking about the ground as a foreground, so that it is still always a *being* that is sought as what does the grounding?" (Heidegger 1983a, 6–7; 2000b, 5).

22; 2000b, 21). Our questioning is only confronted with being when it *creates* the grounding question, “compelling oneself into the state of this questioning” (Heidegger 1983a, 3; 2000b, 1). With regard to our *questioning* of this question, Heidegger remarks: “The scope of our question is *so* broad that we can never exceed it” (Heidegger 1983a, 4; 2000b, 2). The grounding question concerns the whole of being in which thought is included and the scope of this whole is so broad that our questioning will never exceed it. Questioning the grounding question then means “venturing to exhaust, to question thoroughly, the inexhaustible wealth of this question, by unveiling what it demands that we question. Whenever such a venture occurs, there is philosophy” (Heidegger 1983a, 10; 2000b, 8). Our questioning of the grounding question always remains *finite* compared with the whole of being. With this, it is said that human thinking may compel oneself into the state of this questioning, but that the grounding question is in the end not achieved by *thinking* (Heidegger 1994b, 84–87; cf. 90–95). Our questioning of the grounding question is our being opened *to* this question *by* a demand of being, *if* it takes place (cf. Heidegger 1983a, 151). A philosophical thinking that really wants to be open to being touched by the hidden power of the grounding question must be able to *wait* for the awakening of this question as well. In this sense, Heidegger argues that that which is asked for in the grounding question in return affects the one who asks. Only thanks to this circularity of questioning does our questioning of the grounding question enable us to ask for the whole of being.

When the grounding question is really enacted, then it is a “distinctive occurrence,” a “happening” which *comes over us*, which *visits* our thought (Heidegger 1983a, 7; 2000b, 6). Until that happens, our questioning is bound up with the representation of a being (principle, *archē*) as the answer to our question. With this, it becomes clear why human thinking may compel itself into the state of this questioning, but that this questioning is in the end opened *by* a call of being, or not: “being able to question means being able to wait, even for a lifetime” (Heidegger 1983a, 215; 2000b, 221).¹⁶

¹⁶ See also the following remarks: “The thinking attempted in *Being and Time* (1927) sets out on the way to prepare an overcoming of metaphysics, so understood. That, however, which sets such thinking on its way can only be that which is to be thought” (Heidegger 1976, 368; 1998, 279). With regard to the coming generation of philosophers, Heidegger therefore argues: “The question of being is *the* leap into be-ing which man as seeker of be-ing enacts, insofar as he is one who creates in *thinking*. . . . But we of today have only this one duty: to prepare for that thinker by means of a grounding that reaches far ahead, of a secure preparedness for what is most question-worthy” (Heidegger 1994b, 11; 1999, 9).

When this *Rückstoß* actually takes place, then it disrupts our way of questioning, it disrupts ourselves as the ones who question. It results in a “leap away from all the previous safety of their Dasein, be it genuine or presumed” (Heidegger 1983a, 8; 2000b, 6), the farewell of the guiding question and the establishment of the grounding question with regard to the relation between being and thinking. Questioning the grounding question only *is* in this leap, which is not an act of human thought, but “attains its own ground by leaping, performs it in leaping [*er-springt, springend erwirkt*]. According to the genuine meaning of the word, we call such a leap that attains itself as ground by leaping an ordinary leap [*Ur-sprung*]: an attaining-the-ground-by-leaping” (Heidegger 1983a, 8; 2000b, 7). Contrary to the guiding question of the metaphysical tradition, Heidegger’s grounding question is characterized by the questioning confrontation (*fragende Auseinandersetzung*) with the whole of being, and this questioning confrontation consists precisely in the exploration of questioning that we discussed in this section.¹⁷

3. Faith and the Questionability of Philosophy

In the previous section, we articulated three essential characteristics of Heidegger’s method of questioning: (1) Dasein is included in the question of being, in which primarily (2) the relation (*Bezug*) between being and thinking or the whole of being is explored. (3) In our enactment (*Vollzug*) of the exploration of the question of being, the sense or truth of being in return affects the one who asks. This means that the question of being only *is* in the case of a call of being and at the same time, that this call of being only *is* in our exploration of the question of being. With this, we are sufficiently prepared to raise the final question, whether the concept of faith can be radically excluded from Heidegger’s method of questioning, as he claims in his *Introduction to Metaphysics*, or not.

In his *Contributions*, Heidegger argues that the abandonment of the guiding question of metaphysics and the shift toward the grounding question presupposes that the truth of being becomes *distress*. According to Heidegger, the only one who can succeed in this is the one who questions: “It is only through the ones who question that the truth of be-ing becomes a distress. They are the genuine *believers*, because, in opening themselves up to what is essential to truth, they

¹⁷ For Heidegger’s method of confrontation, see Blok 2009.

maintain their bearing to the ground” (Heidegger 1994b, 12; 1999, 10). So contrary to his *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger argues here that the ones who question are the genuine believers. Why? “[B]ecause, in opening themselves up to what is essential to truth, they maintain their bearing to the ground” (Heidegger 1994b, 12; 1999, 10). Heidegger continues: “Those who *question* . . . establish the new and highest rank of inabiding in the midpoint of be-ing, in the essential swaying of be-ing (enowning) as the midpoint” (Heidegger 1994b, 12–13; 1999, 10). It is important to notice that Heidegger, in his characterization of this specific type of questioning of the grounding question, precisely refers to the concept of *faith* or *belief*. Why is Heidegger referring here to the concept of belief, contrary to our findings in the previous section?

We follow Heidegger’s *Contributions* for a moment in order to understand what is meant by this concept of belief and why the one who questions is positively seen as the true believer here. Belief or faith is not understood here in a confessional way, that is, “faith . . . is not the particular form of belonging to a ‘confession’” (Heidegger 1994b, 368; 1999, 357). He introduces a “destroyed” concept of faith here, namely, “the essence of faith, grasped from within what is essential to truth” (Heidegger 1994b, 368; 1999, 357). This essence of faith is found in holding-for-true (Heidegger 1994b, 368; cf. Heidegger 1986, 132–42). In this destroyed concept of faith, it is not the appropriation (*Aneignung*, *Zustimmung*) of what is “true” that is stressed.

Faith or believing is normally understood in opposition to knowing. In opposition to knowing, “faith . . . means holding-to-be-true that which withdraws from knowing in the sense of explaining intuition [*erklärende Einsichtnahme*]” (Heidegger 1994b, 368; 1999, 258). Because faith is understood here from its opposition to knowing, Heidegger first asks what knowing actually means: “It is the knowing that knows what is essential to truth and accordingly determines it primarily in the turning [*Kehre*] from within this essence” (Heidegger 1994b, 368; 1991, 258 (modified)). In Heidegger’s characterization of knowing, we recognize our characterization of questioning in section 2: Philosophical questioning concerns the exploration of questioning, in which the truth of being originally resonates. Knowing “is originally *holding oneself within the essential sway of truth*” (Heidegger 1994b, 369; 1999, 258).

On the one hand, it is clear for Heidegger that his concept of knowing is more originary than any faith, “which always refers to *something* that is true” (Heidegger 1994, 369; 1999, 258 [my emphasis]). But since his own *destroyed* concept of faith as holding-to-be-true grasps from within what is the essence of truth,

Heidegger can on the other hand conceptualize the essence of knowing in terms of his destructed concept of faith:

Thus, if one takes “knowing” in the heretofore sense of representation and possession of representation [*Vorstellung und Vorstellungsbesitzes*], then of course essential knowing is not a “knowing” but a “faith.” However, this word then has an entirely different meaning, no longer that of holding-to-be-true, whereby truth is already known—even if confusedly—but rather that of holding-oneself-in-truth. And this holding oneself, having the character of a *projecting-open*, is always a questioning, nay *the* originary questioning as such by which man exposes himself to truth and puts what is essential up for decision.

Heidegger 1994b, 369; 1999, 258

The essence of knowing is understood here as faith, namely, as holding-oneself-in-the-essence-of-truth, and this destructed concept of faith has the character of questioning.

A critical reader could argue that according to this quote, essential knowing is understood as faith only *if* we oppose knowing as representation and essential knowing (holding oneself within the essence of truth). This doesn't mean that essential knowing as such can be understood in terms of faith; faith is holding-for-true, and therefore, refers always to something—a being—which is true.¹⁸ And yet, Heidegger argues that “holding-for-true changes according to what is true (and finally foremost according to truth and what is its ownmost)” (Heidegger 1994b, 368; 1999, 257). In this respect, the essence of faith is grasped from within what is essential to truth according to Heidegger. The connection between the essence of faith and the essence of knowing is found in the fact that in faith, not only a relation to what is believed in is at stake, but also to the one who believes him- or herself; *holding oneself*. According to Heidegger, knowing as “*holding oneself* within the essential sway of truth” can be understood as faith as “*holding-oneself-in-truth*,” and this destructed concept of faith is characterized by questioning (Heidegger 1994b, 368–69; 1999, 257–58). Such a *positive* interpretation of the essence of knowing as faith and questioning is legitimate, since Heidegger already in the beginning of his *Contribution* stated that “the ones who question” are “the genuine *believers*” (Heidegger 1994b, 12; 1999, 10). This positive relation between Heidegger's destructed concepts of faith or belief as holding-oneself-in-truth and questioning is also confirmed toward the end of

¹⁸ I am very grateful for the critical discussions with my colleague Antonio Cimino regarding my interpretation of this passage in Heidegger's *Contributions*.

the *Contributions*, where he defines the “originary believer” once again in a comparable way:

Those who question in this manner are the originary and actual believers, i.e., those who take *truth* itself—and not only what is true—seriously and from the ground up, who put to decision whether what is essential to truth holds sway and whether this essential swaying itself carries and guides us, the knowing ones, the believing ones, the acting ones, the creating ones—in short, the historical ones.

Heidegger 1994b, 369; 1999, 258

More important for our objective in this chapter is the question why, according to Heidegger, is it the case that questioning is always a holding-oneself-in-the-truth? In order to answer this question, we consult another passage in which Heidegger conceptualizes faith or belief as holding-to-be-true, from a lecture course on Nietzsche’s *Eternal Recurrence of the Same* from 1937.¹⁹

In this lecture course, the “formal essence” of faith is characterized as holding-to-be-true as well:

From these words we derive one thing alone, but the most important thing: to believe means to take what is represented as true, and thus it also means to hold fast to the true and hold firm in the true. In belief there lies not only a relation to what is believed but above all to the believer himself. Taking to be true is holding firm in the true, hence holding in a dual sense: having a hold on something *and* preserving the stance one has. Such holding receives its determination from whatever it is that is posited as the true.

Heidegger 1986, 134; 1991, 124

In the case of Nietzsche, it is clear that truth refers to something—a being—that is true according to Heidegger (cf. Heidegger 1986, 139), and therefore, that Nietzsche’s concept of faith is embedded in the metaphysical representation of the beingness of beings. Although Heidegger primarily interprets Nietzsche’s concept of faith in this passage, we can read this passage also *against the grain* as a formal indication of his own destructed concept of faith we developed before.²⁰

Like in the *Contributions*, the “formal essence” of faith is characterized as holding-to-be-true in his lecture course from 1937. According to Heidegger, this

¹⁹ See Derrida (2002, 97) for his discussion of this passage. Derrida wasn’t able to read this passage in light of Heidegger’s *Contributions to Philosophy*.

²⁰ For Heidegger’s concept of the formal indication, see Oudemans 1990, Van Dijk 1991, Blok 2005. For the ambiguous relation between interpretation and confrontation in Heidegger’s lecture courses on Nietzsche, see Blok 2009.

essence of faith depends on our concept of truth. In the case of Heidegger, what is posited as the truth is the truth of being. In a formal way and contrary to Nietzsche's concept of faith, therefore, we can characterize Heidegger's holding firm in the truth as a holding-oneself-within-the-truth of being (cf. Heidegger 1994b, 368–70). This concept of truth has also consequences for the nature of this *holding oneself*. Faith as holding-oneself-in-the-truth of being is formally characterized by (1) holding firm in the truth of being *and* (2) a holding oneself in the questioning stance in this questioning of the truth of being.

Here, it becomes clear why, according to Heidegger, questioning is always a *holding-oneself-in-the-truth*. Questioning is always such a holding-oneself-in-the-truth-of-being, because questioning the grounding question presupposes a holding firm in the truth of being *and* a holding oneself in the questioning stance in this questioning of the truth of being: “this holding oneself, having the character of a projecting-opening, is always a questioning” (Heidegger 1994b, 369; 1999, 258).

Our foregoing analysis of the exploration of questioning can help us to understand the necessity of faith or belief for questioning the truth of being. In order to enact the exploration of the question of being, what is asked (the truth of being) should in return affect the one who asks the question. On the one hand, the exploration of questioning as projecting-opening *holds* onto the truth of being; the exploration of questioning presupposes our disclosedness *for* the call of being *by* the call of being, if it takes place. This last condition is important, as we have seen, because the truth of being doesn't automatically have a hold on us in the age of the abandonment of being (*Seinsverlassenheit*). There is no call of being, nothing to hold oneself in. For this reason, Heidegger argues: “This originary believing, of course, has nothing in common with accepting that which offers immediate support and renders courage superfluous. Rather, this believing is persevering in the utmost deciding. This alone can once again bring our history to a grounded ground” (Heidegger 1994b, 369–70; 1999, 258–59). In this respect, it is clear that Heidegger's destructured concept of faith or belief cannot be understood, as Derrida suggests (Derrida 2002, 95), as trust in or conviction of (*fides, pistis*) the truth of being. This “persevering in the utmost deciding” consists in a holding-oneself-in-the-truth-of-being *without any hold*:²¹ “Such holding firm and the stance it implies will be more genuinely successful the more

²¹ Derrida's argument that Heidegger presupposes faith, namely, the understanding of being (*Seinsverständnis*) (Derrida 2002, 94–95), has to be rejected therefore.

originally they are determined by the stance, and the less exclusively they are defined purely by the hold they have on things; that is to say, they will be more genuinely successful if they are essentially able to revert back to themselves and not lean on things, not depend on them for support” (Heidegger 1986, 135; 1991, 124–25). This holding-oneself-in-the-truth of being concerns a specific *Haltung* or attitude that enacts a *possible* projection of the truth of being, a *possible* hold (Heidegger 1986, 140; 1994b, 368–70).²² It is this *projecting-opening* attitude (*Haltung*) that holds onto its projection of the truth of being, holds onto the truth that discloses our questioning. Both ways of faith or belief as holding-oneself-in-the-truth of being essentially belong together in our philosophical questioning in the age of the abandonment of being. In the age of the abandonment of being, faith or belief is a necessary condition for the original stance of inquiry (*Fragehaltung*) of philosophy because the truth of being can only resonate in a philosophical questioning that is characterized by this *holding-oneself-in-the-truth*.

References

- Aristotle. 1989. *Metaphysics*. Translated by H. Tredennick. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Blok, Vincent. 2005. *Rondom de Vloedlijn. Filosofie en kunst in het machinale tijdperk. Een confrontatie tussen Heidegger en Jünger*. Soesterberg: Aspekt.
- Blok, Vincent. 2009. “Communication or Confrontation: Heidegger and Philosophical Method.” *Empedocles. European Journal for the Philosophy of Communication* 1: 43–57.
- Blok, Vincent. 2011a. “Der ‘religiöse’ Charakter von Heideggers philosophischer Methode: *relegere, re-eligere, relinquere*.” *Studia Phaenomenologica* 11: 285–307.
- Blok, Vincent. 2011b. “Establishing the Truth: Heidegger’s Reflections on *Gestalt*.” *Heidegger Studies* 27: 101–18.
- Blok, Vincent. 2015. “Heidegger and Derrida on the Nature of Questioning: Towards the Rehabilitation of Questioning in Contemporary Philosophy.” *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 46 (4): 307–23.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1984. *Margins of Philosophy*. Translated by Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

²² See also the following passage: “Creation is communication—it is important to listen here in the right way. Every creating is a sharing with others. This implies that creation in itself grounds new possibilities of Being—erects them or, as Hölderlin says, founds them. Creation as such, and not only in its utilization, is a gift-giving. . . . To create is to share—the most genuine service we can think of, because the most reticent” (Heidegger 1986, 136–37; 1991, 127–28).

- Derrida, Jacques. 1989. *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*. Translated by Geoffrey Bennington and R. Bowlby. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Derrida, Jacques. 2002. *Acts of Religion*. Translated by Gil Anidjar. New York/London: Routledge.
- Dijk, R. J. A. van. 1991. "Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik. Zur formalanzeigenden Struktur der philosophischen Begriffe bei Heidegger." *Heidegger Studies* 7: 89–109.
- Feher, Istvan, M. 1987. "Religion, Theologie und Philosophie auf Heideggers Weg zu *Sein und Zeit*." *Heidegger Studies* 3: 103–45.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1976. *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 9: *Wegmarken*. Edited by Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1977. *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 5: *Holzwege*. Edited by Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1982. *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 31: *Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit*. Edited by Hartmut Tietjen. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1983a. *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 40: *Einführung in die Metaphysik*. Edited by Petra Jaeger. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1983b. *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 29/30: *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik. Welt-Endlichkeit-Einsamkeit*. Edited by Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1985. *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 43: *Nietzsche: Der Wille zur Macht als Kunst*. Edited by Bernd Heimbüchel. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1986. *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 44: *Nietzsches metaphysische Grundstellung im abendländischen Denken*. Edited by Marion Heinz. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1991. *Nietzsche. Volumes One and Two*. Translated by David Farrell Krell. New York: HarperCollins.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1993. *Sein und Zeit*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1994a. *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 61: *Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles. Einführung in die phänomenologische Forschung*. Edited by Walter Bröcker and Käte Bröcker-Oltmanns. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1994b. *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 65: *Beiträge zur Philosophie. Vom Ereignis*. Edited by Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1995a. *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 60: *Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens*. Edited by Claudius Strube. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1995b. *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics. World, Finitude, Solitude*. Translated by William McNeill and Nicholas Walker. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1998. *Pathmarks*. Edited by William McNeill. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1999. *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*. Translated by Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

- Heidegger, Martin. 2000a. *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 7: *Vorträge und Aufsätze*. Edited by Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.
- Heidegger, Martin. 2000b. *Introduction to Metaphysics*. Translated by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.
- Heidegger, Martin. 2001. *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle. Initiation into Phenomenological Research*. Translated by Richard Rojcewicz. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Heidegger, Martin. 2002. *Off the Beaten Track*. Translated by Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Heidegger, Martin. 2008. *Being and Time*. Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: HarperPerennial.
- Husserl, Edmund. 1985. *Husserliana*, vol. 28: *Vorlesungen über Ethik und Wertlehre (1908–1914)*. Edited by Ullrich Melle. Dordrecht/Den Haag: Kluwer.
- Oudemans, Th. C. W. 1990. "Heideggers 'logische Untersuchungen.'" *Heidegger Studies* 6: 85–106.