

THE PROBLEM OF TRANSCENDENCE
IN HEIDEGGER AND DERRIDA

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Matthew C. Halteman, M.A.

Stephen H. Watson, Director

Graduate Program in Philosophy

Notre Dame, Indiana

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Abstract

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This dissertation seeks to clarify the import of the transcendence problem in Heidegger and Derrida. The guiding suggestion of my interpretations of both thinkers is that following the development of this problem through their respective projects can help to demonstrate in each an underlying continuity in light of which their seemingly discrepant shifts in emphasis from early to late can be understood as moments of an ongoing hermeneutic task.

My argument unfolds in four chapters and a brief conclusion. Chapter one motivates the project in view of the contentious standing of the problem in continental philosophy as it is characterized in the competing narratives advanced by Richard Rorty, John Caputo, and Rodolphe Gasché.

Chapters two and three trace the problem through Heidegger's *Denkweg*. While *Being and Time* might seem to be the obvious place to start, I argue that the character of the problem is difficult to see without recourse to both the context in which the problem first arises, and the future interpretations of the problem toward which *Being and Time* proceeds. Accordingly, I attend to the emergence of the problem in Heidegger's

dissertation and early lectures, and then leap ahead to its more explicit appropriations in the writings of 1928 where the provisional standing of fundamental ontology becomes increasingly apparent. In view of its past and future trajectories, then, I return to *Being and Time* to exhibit therein what I take to be latent indications of Heidegger's later disposition toward transcendence.

Chapter four situates Derrida in terms of his debts to and departures from Heidegger. I argue that Derrida's debts in fact compel his departures; since he concurs that the transcendence of predecessor discourses necessitates their destruction in the name of advancing their undeveloped possibilities, he must dismantle Heidegger to do justice to him. In applying this insight to Derrida's project, I maintain, the careful reader can find traces of his later injunctions to "absolute responsibility" in his early affirmations of "infinite play".

I conclude with a few brief remarks as to how this investigation might contribute to a richer understanding of contemporary continental philosophy.

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CHAPTER ONE
THE PROBLEM OF TRANSCENDENCE
IN CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY

As in Nietzsche or Schelling then, the whole business of transcendence is done away with and our attitudes are ultimately just “symptoms,” products of life in general. A simple but crucial question is thus raised: If there is nothing *beyond* life, why continue to admit the existence of values situated *above* it, of ideals in the name of which one might still dream of making what a vain and outdated morality until recently referred to as “the supreme sacrifice”?

–Luc Ferry¹

To look beyond seems to me to be the excellence of human beings. We can conceptualize this transcendence by saying, “Human beings are questioning beings.” To raise questions is something that is not really embedded in the architecture and order of nature. Instead it is like an outburst of something beyond the order of the instincts and drives which is impelling all living beings. It presents a new possibility, a new responsibility, and a new dimension of experience on which human excellence is based.

–Hans-Georg Gadamer²

I. Introduction

The question of how to do philosophy after “metaphysics” is among the oldest and most persistent concerns of the “continental” tradition. From Kant’s dissatisfaction with modern rationalism, to Nietzsche’s revaluation of moral and religious thinking, to Heidegger’s “destruction” of the history of metaphysics, the seminal thinkers of this

¹Luc Ferry, *The New Ecological Order*, trans. Carol Volk, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995, 81.

²Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Articulating Transcendence” in *The Beginning and The Beyond*, Supplementary Issue of *Loneragan Workshop*, Volume 4, 1984, 4.

tradition have argued that the integrity of future philosophical inquiry depends on philosophy's ability to overcome its beholdenness to certain uninterrogated (or, in any case, inadequately interrogated) metaphysical assumptions.³ As the likes of Gadamer, Levinas, Foucault, Deleuze and Derrida have taken up this concern, it has become increasingly clear that the temptation of unchecked metaphysics is even harder to resist than their predecessors had imagined, both because of the pervasive degree to which the metaphysical tradition has shaped the discourses that seek to overcome it, and because the very act of thinking itself would seem to be implicated from its origins in the metaphysical desire to ground the search for truth on an impassible foundation.

This legacy of subjecting criticism to further criticism (and, moreover, of subjecting the legitimacy of criticism itself to suspicion) has earned for continental philosophy its well-deserved reputation as a radical, iconoclastic enterprise. In less than two hundred years, after all, almost all the traditional philosophical totems are alleged to have toppled under its scrutiny: the “Copernican turn” estranged us from “the things themselves”, which hastened the “death of god,” which threatens us today with the “disappearance of man,” and the extinction of “reason,” “knowledge,” and “truth” along with him. We have arrived—or so we are often told—at the end of metaphysics, if not at the end of philosophy itself.

In this age of fallen idols, then, a dissertation on the problem of transcendence in continental philosophy may seem a bit behind the curve. One might wonder: what could

³For example, in these three cases respectively, that there exists a determinate, objective world to which we have unmediated access; that there exists a benevolent deity who created and ordered this world with our best interests in mind; and that the order of this world guarantees the reliability of analogies we might want to make between the kinds of things that exist in our world, the kind of thing that we take ourselves to be, and the kind of thing that God is, if God exists.

possibly be left to say at the end of metaphysics about one of the most stalwartly “metaphysical” problems in the Western canon? Even if there is a story to be told about this problem’s continuing unresolved status, isn’t contemporary continental philosophy—with all its radical revaluations, destructions, and deconstructions of traditional philosophical problems—among the last places one should hope to find support for such a narrative?

These are certainly fair questions to ask. Accordingly, my aim in chapter one is to build a *prima facie* case for two modest claims: first, that the status of the problem of transcendence in recent continental philosophy (and in Heidegger and Derrida in particular) remains in dispute; and second, that the unresolved status of this problem merits ongoing investigation. Let me acknowledge from the outset that establishing the *prima facie* plausibility of the first claim is not sufficient, on its own, to establish that of the second. It could be the case, after all, that the problem is simultaneously unresolved and unworthy of further attention; one might protest, for instance, that the problem is irresolvable in its very structure—merely an artifact of a conflicted approach to thinking whose best days are behind it—and so we would do better to direct our attentions elsewhere. In view of such considerations, I will aim to show, in making my case for the second claim, that an investigation of this problem in the proposed context is merited *even if* one grants, for the sake of argument, that the problem itself is structurally irresolvable or trivial.

I should attend to first things first, however. The easiest way to demonstrate the unresolved status of a problem is to show that a variety of people are talking about it and saying substantially different things (so much the better if most of what is being said

remains contentious). I will begin, therefore, with a selective survey of the recent secondary literature. In particular, I will focus on three highly visible alternative accounts that illustrate the existing diversity of approaches to the standing of this problem in continental philosophy, as well as the wide variety of contemporary philosophical issues to which this problem remains pertinent. The first account, advanced in different but complementary ways by Richard Rorty and Charles Taylor, portrays the evolution of recent continental philosophy in terms of an increasingly virulent antipathy toward narratives of truth and transcendence that culminates in an aesthetics of unrestricted freedom and self-creation. The second account, offered by John D. Caputo, situates a continuing concern over the problem of transcendence at the core of both the continental critique of metaphysics and the philosophies of emancipation that grow out of it. The third account, finally, drawn from the work of Rodolphe Gasché, interprets the problem of transcendence as a problem of the origins of conceptual production, and finds resources in contemporary continental philosophy (especially Derrida) for delimiting the “quasi-transcendental” infrastructures that make thinking possible.

II. A Case for the Unresolved Status of the Problem

A. Richard Rorty and Charles Taylor

Though the continental tradition is still marginal to the interests of most Anglo-American philosophers, certain of its general themes and seminal texts have gained visibility over the past two decades in English-speaking debates over modernity’s legacy

to contemporary philosophy.⁴ In the broadest terms, these debates focus on the question of how to reorient the aims of philosophy in view of the unrealized epistemological and ethical aspirations of the Enlightenment. While discussants—most notably Richard Rorty and Charles Taylor—commonly disagree about the salient features of an adequately “post-modern” philosophy, their stories about the decay of the modern paradigm are remarkably similar, especially in respect to their assessments of the role played in this decay by continental philosophy. On both accounts, the import of recent continental philosophy is portrayed—whether celebrated or lamented—in unambiguously iconoclastic terms: for better or for worse, philosophy’s age-old engagement with the problem of transcendence is over, and the limitless expansion of individual autonomy is on.

Richard Rorty has promoted this portrayal for over twenty years, appropriating the works of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Gadamer, Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to the “anti-representationalist, anti-essentialist” ends of his pragmatism.⁵ His strategy, in broad strokes, has been to wield the work of these thinkers against the monolithic “Plato—Kant canon,” the Western metaphysical tradition that, in his view, has kept philosophy mired for millennia in perpetual re-dressings of the same old “psuedo-problems” and

⁴For a current assessment of this literature and its implications for the analytic/continental divide, see Gary Gutting’s *Pragmatic Liberalism and the Critique of Modernity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, especially 1-6, 163-193.

⁵Rorty’s reading of Nietzsche as the catalyst of the late-modern shift from “truth-discovery” to “truth-creation” sets the tone for his reading of the continental tradition as a whole. What he finds in this tradition is an increasingly “virulent anti-platonism” that engenders possibilities for thinking *after* the demise of the “Plato—Kant canon”. See Richard Rorty, “Self-creation and affiliation: Proust, Nietzsche, and Heidegger,” in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 96-121.

“unanswerable questions” about transcendent origins.⁶ According to Rorty, the latest incarnation of this endless, fruitless search for foundations is epistemology, a product of modernity’s attempt to replace “God” with “Reason”.

Rorty’s antidote to epistemology (and, more broadly, to the “Plato—Kant” canon) is prescribed in two influential books, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979) and *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (1989). In the first, he attempts to loosen epistemology’s grip on contemporary philosophy by playing its shortcomings, in pragmatic fashion, against the advantages of what he takes to be a compelling alternative vision for thinking, “hermeneutics”. Drawing on the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer, Rorty sketches a version of hermeneutics that is perhaps too surprisingly in line with the goals of his own pragmatism. Gadamer’s *Warheit und Methode*, he suggests, is a “tract against the very idea of method,”⁷ a book that invites us to take an attitude towards thinking in which “the acquisition of truth dwindles in importance”⁸ and “getting the facts right...is merely propaedeutic to finding a new, more interesting way of expressing ourselves, and thus of coping with the world.”⁹ It turns out, moreover, that this “hermeneutics with polemical intent” is also characteristic of “Heidegger’s and Derrida’s attempts to deconstruct the [metaphysical] tradition.”¹⁰

These attempts take center stage in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, where Rorty spins the recent history of continental philosophy as a series of increasingly anti-

⁶Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, 96 ff.

⁷Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 358, note 1.

⁸Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 365.

⁹Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 359.

¹⁰Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 365.

metaphysical patricides: Nietzsche murders Kant (the closet Platonist), Heidegger offs Nietzsche (the inverted Platonist), and Derrida kills Heidegger (too nostalgic!), each because the last is still somehow, if unwittingly, complicit with Platonism.¹¹ While Rorty acknowledges that all, including Derrida, seem at times to want to align their discourses with forces beyond the human, he suggests that we ignore this “metaphysical nostalgia” and focus on these discourses’ utility for inspiring novel self-descriptions and thereby expanding individual freedom.¹² For the sake of proliferating private autonomy, Rorty looks with similar favor on Lyotard’s “incredulity towards metanarratives,”¹³ and Foucault’s “radical, Nietzschean anti-Platonism.”¹⁴

Though Charles Taylor is far from convinced that abandoning philosophy’s concern over the problem of transcendence will serve the ends of emancipation, he is in striking agreement with Rorty’s general portrayal of recent continental philosophy. In fact, he is as critical of this tradition for its alleged endorsement of limitless freedom (at the expense of the quest for deeper significance) as Rorty is congratulatory. Taylor’s concerns arise in the context of his efforts to vindicate the modern ideal of the “authentic self” from

¹¹Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 96-137.

¹²Since 1978, Rorty has continuously revisited Derrida’s work in over ten articles and book chapters. Highlights include “Is Derrida a Transcendental Philosopher,” in *Essays on Heidegger and Others*, 119-128; “From Ironist Theory to Private Allusions: Derrida,” in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 122-137; and most recently “Derrida and the Philosophical Tradition,” in *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers Volume 3*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 327-350.

¹³Rorty, *Essays on Heidegger and Others*, 164. For a closer look at Rorty’s reading of Lyotard, see “Postmodernist Bourgeois Liberalism,” in *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth: Philosophical Papers Volume 1*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, 197-202; and “Habermas and Lyotard on Postmodernity,” in *Essays on Heidegger and Others*, 164-176.

¹⁴Rorty, “Moral Identity and Private Autonomy: The Case of Foucault,” in *Essays on Heidegger and Others*, 193-198.

currently prevalent “debased” forms of this ideal that, on his reading, lapse into “radical anthropocentrism.”¹⁵ Like Rorty, Taylor reads the Nietzsche-to-Derrida trajectory in terms of a movement from metaphysics-in-spite-of-itself—what Rorty calls “ironic theory”¹⁶—to the wholesale abandonment of metaphysics—what Rorty calls “private irony.”¹⁷ Unlike Rorty (who recommends that we jettison the former in favor of the latter), however, Taylor praises the former for its (if strained) openness to sources beyond itself, and deems the latter vacuous by comparison:

Derrida doesn’t have the saving inconsistency of Nietzsche, for whom there emerged, out of the uncompromising recognition of the flux, something which deserved unconditional affirmation, yea-saying. For Derrida, there is nothing but deconstruction...Nothing emerges from his flux worth affirming, and so what in fact comes to be celebrated is the deconstructing power itself, the prodigious power of subjectivity to undo all the potential allegiances which might bind it; pure untrammelled freedom.¹⁸

On Taylor’s view, this post-modern debasement of the emancipatory ideal is also endemic in the work of Lyotard and Foucault; along with Derrida, “they offer charters for subjectivism and the celebration of our own creative power at the cost of occluding what is spiritually arresting in this whole movement of contemporary culture.”¹⁹ So, while

¹⁵Taylor articulates this project in painstaking detail in his *Sources of the Self*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989, and in a considerably abbreviated form in *The Ethics of Authenticity*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991.

¹⁶See Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, chapter 5.

¹⁷See Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, chapter 6; and “Is Derrida a Transcendental Philosopher,” in *Essays on Heidegger and Others*, 119-128.

¹⁸Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 489.

¹⁹Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 490. Taylor attacks these figures with equal vehemence in *The Ethics of Authenticity*: “The impact of these thinkers is paradoxical. They carry their Nietzschean challenge to our ordinary categories to the point even of “deconstructing” the ideal of authenticity, and the very notion of the self. But in fact, the Nietzschean critique of all “values” as created cannot but exalt and entrench anthropocentrism. In the end, it leaves the agent, even with all his or her doubts about the

Taylor laments this alleged swap of spiritual depth for unmitigated freedom, and Rorty commends it, each is committed to the same general account of recent continental philosophy's critical significance.²⁰ On both readings, the continental critique of metaphysics is interpreted as culminating in a radical aesthetics of self-creation. Having said this, however, it is worth mentioning in conclusion that, unlike Rorty, Taylor does not commit this tradition (as a whole) to an unqualified rejection of the search for truth and transcendence.²¹

category of the "self," with a sense of untrammelled power and freedom before a world that imposes no standards, ready to enjoy "free play," or to indulge in an aesthetics of the self." *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 61.

²⁰Interestingly, both Rorty and Taylor express concern over the implications of this account for the public sphere. Rorty's worry is that the kind of thinking that increases freedom in the private sphere (as he suggests Derrida's does) can actually inhibit the drive for emancipation in the public sphere. On this point, Rorty ties deconstruction to an "unfortunate over-philosophication of leftist political debate" that has helped, on his view, to create a "self-involved academic left" whose contributions are "increasingly irrelevant to substantive political discussion." See Rorty, "Response to Ernesto Laclau," in *Deconstruction and Pragmatism*, ed. Chantal Mouffe, New York: Routledge, 1996, 69. Taylor is concerned, by contrast, about the fallout of this reading for more general audiences: "As this "higher" theory filters down into the popular culture of authenticity—we can see this, for instance, among students, who are at the juncture of the two [modern and postmodern] cultures—it further strengthens the self-centered modes, gives them a certain patina of deeper philosophical justification." See Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 61.

²¹If Taylor has reservations about the direction that contemporary French philosophy (Derrida, Lyotard, Foucault, etc.) has taken, he has nevertheless drawn extensively over the past 40 years on the work of both Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty in articulating his own narrative of the transcendence of the self. On Merleau-Ponty, see Charles Taylor, *The Explanation of Behavior*, New York: The Humanities Press, 1964, 68-69, 95; "The Validity of Transcendental Arguments", in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Volume LXXIX, 1978-1979; and "Embodied Agency", in *Merleau-Ponty: Critical Essays*, ed. Henry Pieterma, Washington: University Press of America, 1989. On Heidegger, see *Sources of the Self*, especially in chapter 24, "Epiphanies of Modernism", 456-493. Rorty, of course, is unsympathetic: "[T]here is a strain in Taylor's writing—one which I think of as unfortunately Aristotelian and as opposed to the laudible, dominant Hegelian strain—which leads him to want a theory of the self as *more* than a self-reweaving mechanism. It leads him to want something like metaphysical, as well as democratic, freedom." See in Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, 110.

B. John D. Caputo

Of course, this narrative about recent continental philosophy's unrepentant abandonment of the problem of transcendence is by no means the only one in wide circulation. Since the late nineteen-seventies, John D. Caputo has offered no fewer than six monographs (and dozens of articles) in support of a decidedly different story. In his view, the continental critique of metaphysics not only continues to be disciplined by a conscious engagement with the problem of transcendence, but in fact has been motivated all along by an urgent concern over the metaphysical tradition's lack of attunement to the profound and unsettling implications of *this very problem* for the efficacy and integrity of philosophical inquiry. Far from endorsing a blasé dismissal of a passé pseudo-problem, Caputo argues, the likes of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida, and Lyotard offer resources for deepening philosophy's engagement with a fundamental problem that has yet to be adequately formulated—a problem whose full depths and myriad dangers have been persistently and systematically leveled by “the hollow assurances and tranquilizing powers of the ‘metaphysics of presence’”.²²

From his earliest writings, Caputo's chief concern has always been to demonstrate the facility of the continental tradition for exposing the “philosophical idolatry” of these “metaphysical assurances,” and for jarring thinking, through the “destruction” (or “deconstruction”) of its idols, into an unblinking recognition of its own “vulnerability”

²²John D. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987, 6.

and of the “dangers” implicit in worshipping the idols it constructs.²³ If in themselves, Caputo’s worries over the finitude of human understanding and the risks associated with its uncritical employment are par for the post-modern course,²⁴ the uniqueness of his position is nonetheless apparent in his construal of this worrisome condition as a vulnerability to “idolatry” that must be overcome through the cultivation of an “openness to mystery”—a “vigilant” (even “prayerful”) attentiveness to the “withdrawal” of the “abyss” that “recedes” behind the “graven images” of finite understanding.²⁵ As is manifest in his surprising choice of language, Caputo’s post-modern appraisal of the contemporary status of philosophy is deeply indebted, and consciously so, to the pre-modern discourses of mystical theology.²⁶

It is precisely this question of the (dis)analogy between post-modern hermeneutics of finitude and pre-modern *via negativa* that is the point of entry for Caputo’s first two book-length engagements with Heidegger: *The Mystical Element in Heidegger’s*

²³Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger’s Thought*, Revised Second Edition, New York: Fordham University Press, 1986, xxii. The first edition of this volume appeared in 1978 from University of Ohio Press.

²⁴I have in mind here the usual “post-modern” concerns about “foundationalist” or “metaphysical” thinking, e.g., that it sustains naïve pretensions to certainty or systematic completeness, that it underwrites unjust, exclusionary hierarchies (both literal and figurative), that it perpetuates repressive regimes of thought, politics, etc.

²⁵The words and phrases cited here are not drawn from any one source in particular, but they occur so frequently throughout Caputo’s *corpus* that I placed them in quotation marks to indicate their representative status.

²⁶Caputo has never been bashful about the fact that an interest in cross-fertilizing pre-modern and post-modern discourses in explicitly religious contexts is at the heart of his philosophical program. See most recently, for instance, in “Philosophy and Prophetic Postmodernism: Toward a Catholic Postmodernity,” in *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. LXXIV, No. 4, 549-567.

*Thought*²⁷ and *Heidegger and Aquinas: An Essay on Overcoming Metaphysics*.²⁸ The first of these texts addresses the issue of whether and to what extent Heidegger's understanding of the task of "thinking" at the end of philosophy involves a "mystical leap" beyond the rational. The principle focus of this study is an examination of a "structural" and "historical" link between the works of Heidegger and Meister Eckhart—structural, Caputo contends, in that there is a parallel counter-onto-theo-logic at stake for each thinker;²⁹ and historical in that Heidegger himself, from early on, had a "special interest" in Eckhart that is evidenced, among other places, in his later appropriation of Eckhart's notion of *Gelassenheit* (letting-be).³⁰

This program of appropriating Heidegger for the task of thinking transcendence after onto-theology continues in the Aquinas volume. Caputo's strategy here is that of the double-gesture: with one hand, he debunks the common Thomist view that the metaphysical distinction between Being (*esse*) and beings (*ens*) exonerates Thomas from

²⁷Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1978; and New York: Fordham University Press, 1986.

²⁸Caputo, *Heidegger and Aquinas: An Essay on Overcoming Metaphysics*, New York: Fordham University Press, 1982. Caputo has addressed this question in numerous other pieces as well, including "Mysticism and Transgression: Derrida and Meister Eckhart," in *Derrida and Deconstruction*, ed. Hugh Silverman, New York: Routledge, 1989; and in "The Good News About Alterity: Derrida and Theology," in *Faith and Philosophy*, Vol. 10, No. 4, 1993, 453-470; and, most recently, in "People of God, people of being: the theological presuppositions of Heidegger's path of thought," in *Appropriating Heidegger*, eds. James Faulconer and Mark Wrathall, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 85-100.

²⁹This parallel logic is observable, for instance, in Heidegger's attempts to think the transcendence of Dasein toward Being as "abyss" without ground (*Ab-grund*), and in Eckhart's to think the ground of the soul in a God that is "nothing," "without why," "beyond being." See *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*, 140-218.

³⁰Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*, 6-7.

Heidegger's charge of *Seinsvergessenheit* ("oblivion": the forgetting of Being);³¹ and with the other, he points toward an alternative, "mystical" strain in Aquinas that intimates, if problematically, "a deep momentum...of transgression, excess, delimitation, of overcoming metaphysics."³² Though Caputo has more recently been less sanguine about the reading of Heidegger advanced in these two early works, the themes he addresses herein are crucial in that they set the trajectory and introduce the vocabulary of his current program: for Caputo, the problem of transcendence is inextricably linked to the problem of God—not, however, the God of magisterial presence, manifest power, and resplendent glory covenanted to onto-theology, but the God of withdrawal, absence, abyss, oblivion, *lethe*—a God whose disappearance delimits at once the closure of the possibility of grounding metaphysics and the opening of the possibility for thinking.

Caputo's transition from the Heidegger of his early work to the "demythologized" Heidegger of more recent offerings is prompted in large part by the increasing influence on his thinking of three French critics of Heidegger: Derrida, Levinas, and Lyotard. That this shift is underway first becomes apparent in the mid-eighties in two important articles: "From the Primordiality of Absence to the Absence of Primorality: Heidegger's Critique

³¹Caputo's primary target here is the "pure Thomism" of Etienne Gilson, a thinker who Caputo chooses because of his "relative unfamiliarity" with Heidegger; "hence," Caputo claims, "I cannot be accused of answering Heidegger with a Heideggerianized Thomism." The argument, in brief, is that while there *are* resources in Thomas (and in Gilson's Thomas) for overcoming metaphysics, these resources *are not* to be found in the metaphysical language that underwrites the *esse/ens* distinction, as Gilson argues. Later in the volume, Caputo tries the "Heidegger school" of Thomists (especially Gustav Siewerth) on the same charge. See, respectively, in *Heidegger and Aquinas*, 100-121, and 211-245.

³²Caputo, *Heidegger and Aquinas*, xix.

of Derrida”³³ and “Heidegger and Derrida: Cold Hermeneutics”.³⁴ Caputo’s underlying concern in both articles is to demonstrate a hermeneutic synergy between these two thinkers that can be mobilized to subvert and transform the indiscretions of each on the terms of the other. What the two have in common, he claims, “is a great destructive unrest”:

Together they direct a tremendous critical energy on the encrusted dogmas of Western metaphysics. They expose the stratagems by which metaphysics seeks to comfort itself with dreams of presence and plenitude, and the various devices it employs to insulate itself from limit, negativity, impermanence, death, and difference.³⁵

The differences between their respective appropriations of this “destructive unrest”, Caputo continues, serve as perfect foils for one another. For if Heidegger is right that “the deconstructed meaning of transcendence” is the “withdrawal of *die Sache selbst*”³⁶ and that the appropriate comportment toward this withdrawal is “reverence, openness and respect for the mystery of what holds itself back”,³⁷ he is wrong to conceive of the onset of this reverence “eschatologically” as the fruition of the great Greek myth of recollection, as the event of finally getting back to the pure Greek well-spring that disseminated, regrettably, into Judeo-Christian thought. And if Derrida is right to counter

³³Caputo, “From the Primordially of Absence to the Absence of Primordially: Heidegger’s Critique of Derrida”, in *Hermeneutics and Deconstruction*, eds. Hugh Silverman and Don Ihde, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985, 191-200.

³⁴Caputo, “Heidegger and Derrida: Cold Hermeneutics”, in *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, Vol. 17, No. 3, October 1986, 252-274.

³⁵Caputo, “Primordially of Absence,” 191-192.

³⁶Caputo, “Primordially of Absence,” 197; “Cold Hermeneutics,” 272-273.

³⁷Caputo, “Cold Hermeneutics,” 269. Specifically, “[t]he final realization of Heidegger is that the highest truth available to thought lies in the acknowledgement of the withdrawal of things from our conceptual grasp, the refusal of truth in the sense that metaphysical and eschatological thinking expect and demand.”

this Heideggerian myth of the heroic return of Being with an uncompromising insistence that the play of signifiers opened by this withdrawal permits no such return, he is wrong to throw out the baby of *die Sache selbst* with the bathwater of the transcendental signified.³⁸ In this respect, then, Caputo argues, a certain Heidegger subverts Derrida “by enticing him to consider what is in play in the play, the mystery which withdraws...the *Sache* which is always and already in play.”³⁹

The complicated logic of this Heidegger/Derrida “double-cross,” as Caputo calls it, is revisited and greatly amplified in two more books, *Radical Hermeneutics* and *Demythologizing Heidegger*.⁴⁰ The very titles of the introductory and concluding chapters of *Radical Hermeneutics* indicate that we are on familiar ground: the task at hand is that of “Restoring Life to its Original Difficulty,” a prospect that necessitates an abandonment of the comforts of metaphysics in favor of an awakening to the abyss that is enabled and sustained through “Openness to Mystery.” Once again, Caputo is attempting to stake the problem of transcendence somewhere between Heidegger’s *Ereignis*, the event of Being’s perhaps too solemn (and thus potentially dangerous) reverence for what withdraws into the abyss, and Derrida’s *différance*, the movement of withdrawal that disappears entirely into the infinite play of signifiers it produces, thus inviting a perhaps too frivolous (and thus potentially dangerous) celebration of play for its own sake. Says Caputo:

What I call radical hermeneutics will not let either the Heideggerian or the Derridean gestures win the day, will not entrust full authority to either, but in a

³⁸Caputo, “Primordially of Absence,” 199; “Cold Hermeneutics,” 272-273.

³⁹Caputo, “Primordially of Absence,” 273.

⁴⁰Caputo, *Demythologizing Heidegger*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993.

conniving way keeps subverting one with the other. Just when thinking is lost in solemn stillness, when it is beginning to take itself seriously, dissemination bursts upon the scene with its disruptive laughter. Even so, thinking follows dissemination home, after the singing and dancing is over, through the city streets, to see if it ever takes off its mask.⁴¹

If the territory is familiar, though, there is much that is new. Most importantly, Caputo's search for the between of Heidegger and Derrida leads him to a decidedly less "mystical" interpretation of "openness to mystery" than we have seen so far. Caputo articulates this attitude of openness in terms of *kinesis*—motion, "keeping the exposure to the abyss in play, without arresting or tranquilizing it".⁴² It is precisely this notion of *kinesis*, Caputo argues, that is at stake both in Heidegger's notion of "authenticity"⁴³ and in Derrida's reappropriation of authenticity as "solicitude" (*ébranler*, "making the whole tremble").⁴⁴ If "radical hermeneutics" begins in the "loss of meaning" of the withdrawal, Caputo maintains, it must proceed as "kinetics"—i.e., as an ongoing movement of keeping the play in play, of "construing" the "meaning of the loss" as it unfolds in the play itself. Thus, the "mystery" toward which this kinetic hermeneutics is directed is not finally that of the "*deus absconditus*", the withdrawn God whose return can be secretly solicited by a negative theology, but that of the disseminative play itself, "of *a-letheia*, of the

⁴¹Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics*, 206.

⁴²Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics*, 199.

⁴³"Authenticity," Caputo explains, "means unrest, disquiet, uneasiness, agitation, keeping off balance (even as running is a constant falling forward), resisting the illusion of stability and solid foundations. Authenticity means *vor-laufen*, running forth, keeping Dasein on the run." Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics*, 200.

⁴⁴"Derrida is involved in a project of "authenticity" in the only sense that Heidegger ever meant it. He has not razed the project of authenticity, but rewritten it so that it means not *le proper* (the properly self-present, stable, and self-identical) but the work of *kinesis*, of keeping underway, of keeping on the move, of not allowing movement and play to atrophy. He calls it *ébranler*, solicitude, making the whole tremble." *Radical Hermeneutics*, p. 199.

concealment and un-concealment which plays itself out in the history of the West, the history of the high and dangerous play in which the essence of man is caught up”.⁴⁵

The play is dangerous, of course, because it is open to an infinite number of possible “construals,”⁴⁶ and Caputo is aware that this danger is nowhere more apparent than in the *Denkweg* of Heidegger himself, a path that, for all its private, meditative appeal, had disastrous ethical and political implications. Thus, the question of how a radical hermeneutics might better (less disastrously?) construe the “meaning of the loss” (and adjudicate rival construals) is a question of *Demythologizing Heidegger*—not of dispensing with myth-making entirely (which Caputo thinks is “no more possible than laying aside metaphysics”), but of mythologizing differently, of “inventing new and more salutary myths, or of recovering other and older myths...to counter the destructive myths of violence, domination, patriarchy, and hierarchy.”⁴⁷

If Heidegger and a certain Nietzschean Derrida are the principle players up to and including *Radical Hermeneutics*, the task of mythologizing after Heidegger is reserved for Levinas and a certain Levinasian Derrida. The antidote to Heidegger’s great Greek myth of Being, on Caputo’s account, is precisely that which is most conspicuously absent from it: the Semitic and biblical myth of “hyperbolic justice”—a justice irreducible to the

⁴⁵Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics*, 201.

⁴⁶Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics*, 271. Caputo is clear that “construing” the withdrawal is not akin to “coming to grips with” or “grasping” it. This move, Caputo claims, might lead us back to a traditional hermeneutic “bent on interpretive projection and finding meaning,” or worse, to the metaphysics of presence. Insofar as radical hermeneutics arises “only at the point of breakdown and loss of meaning”, construal means “coming to deal with this loss of meaning by confronting the meaning of the loss.” Thus, a construal is “the particular way one has found of remaining open to the mystery and venturing out into the flux.”

⁴⁷Caputo, *Demythologizing Heidegger*, 3.

algorithmic rule of law, a justice that is owed to the suffering, the powerless, the widow, the orphan, that binds one to singular obligation before an other who is “over, beyond, and otherwise” than Being.⁴⁸ Caputo’s attempt to put this myth of justice into play is appropriately titled *Against Ethics*, for if such a justice were possible, he maintains, it would surely scandalize any attempt to calculate it in advance, to reduce it to the effect of a prescribed action. The problem of transcendence, thus, is no longer a problem of the distant call of Being into the abyss of its ownmost (Greco-Germanic) destiny, but of a call for justice from beyond being, from the other whose “face” is the appearance of an “infinity” that is “being otherwise.”⁴⁹ Even so, if Heidegger-the-champion-of-the-great-Greek-myth is laid to rest by Levinas and Derrida, Heidegger-the-proselyte-of-“openness to mystery” is reborn transformed in their prophetic calls for justice and responsibility before the other.

Caputo gives a sustained defense of this perhaps unexpected affiliation of deconstruction with hyperbolic justice in *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion*.⁵⁰ Deconstruction’s commitment to justice, he argues, resides in a “passion for the impossible” that is akin to the “messianic hopes” of religious faith:

[D]econstruction is set in motion by an overarching aspiration, which on a certain analysis can be called a religious or prophetic aspiration, what would have been called, in the plodding language of the tradition (which deconstruction has rightly made questionable), a movement of “transcendence”. Vis-à-vis such transcendence, the immanent is the sphere not only of the actual and the present, but also of the possible and the plannable, of the foreseeable and the

⁴⁸Caputo, *Demythologizing Heidegger*, 187.

⁴⁹Since Caputo is skeptical that there is ultimately anything “otherwise than being” to which we have meaningful access, he inverts Levinas’s formula such that the transcendence of the other is that of “being otherwise”.

⁵⁰Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997.

representable, so that deconstruction, as a movement of transcendence, means excess, the exceeding of the stable borders of the presently possible.⁵¹

But insofar as this “messianic passion for the impossible” is always in “expectation of the unrepresentable” (its hopes always remain “yet-to-come”), it cannot commit to the revelation (“presentation”) of any one of the historic “messianisms” and must remain, therefore, a “religion without religion.”⁵² So even though Derrida “rightly passes for an atheist,” his passion for justice, his “prayers and tears” for the impossible, indicate nonetheless—at least to Caputo—“a passion for God.”⁵³ In this Derridean “religion without religion”, thus, Caputo comes full circle back to an account of thinking as a meditative, prayerful openness to mystery, but one that is motivated this time not by a longing for the clearing in the *Schwartzwald*, but by a passion for the ethical, political—indeed, religious—responsibility of “being otherwise” in the name of justice.

C. Rodolphe Gasche

If we can generalize the two accounts surveyed thus far as narratives, respectively, of “anti-transcendence” and “hyper-transcendence,” the third account is situated somewhere between them in a sphere that Rodolphe Gasché calls the “quasi-transcendental”. Whereas Rorty finds “nostalgia” or “irony” in words like *Ereignis* and *différance*, and Caputo finds “openness to mystery”, Gasché finds “quasi-conceptual conditions-of-

⁵¹Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida*, xix.

⁵²Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida*, 134-151.

⁵³Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida*, 311-329.

im/possibility”—i.e., resources for giving an account of the origins and limits of discursive thinking.⁵⁴

Gasché’s account begins as a polemic against readings of the continental tradition that “misconceive” its critique of metaphysics—Gasché calls it a critique of “reflection”⁵⁵—as entailing a wholesale rejection of Western philosophy’s traditional search for foundations.⁵⁶ Though the work of Jacques Derrida in particular has been the primary focus of his two major contributions to the literature,⁵⁷ Gasché’s offerings are deeply

⁵⁴Rodolphe Gasché, *Inventions of Difference*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994. There is a useful discussion on precisely this point in the introduction, where Gasché offers an extended defense of his understanding of terms like *Ereignis* and *différance* in the specific context of Rorty’s charge that such terms are merely “magic words” that evidence a nostalgia for a “master name.” See *Inventions*, 4-6.

⁵⁵That Gasché equates the history of the problem of reflection with the history of “Western metaphysics” is clear from the very first page of his *magnum opus*: “I am concerned here...with the philosophical concept of reflection, which from the outset has turned away from the immediacy and contingency of the reflective gesture by which philosophizing begins in order to reflect on the beginning of philosophy itself. The concept of philosophical reflection is, as we shall see, a name for philosophy’s eternal aspiration toward self-foundation.” Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986, 1.

⁵⁶Gasché’s account of the continental tradition from Nietzsche onward stands in bold opposition to Rorty’s. Far from a retreat into irony, Gasché finds an increasingly heightened sensitivity to the “terrible challenge” of Hegel’s “superior solution of the traditional problems of philosophy”: “Instead of ignoring the task, such a tradition, on the contrary, testifies to the increasing urgency of meeting that challenge, as well as to an equally increasing vigilance concerning all the methodological tools and themes that purport to unhinge the discourse of absolute knowing. After Heidegger’s destruction, Derrida’s deconstruction is the latest and most complex development of that tradition.” Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 125.

⁵⁷Gasché has published numerous important articles since 1985, but most of them appear in some form or another in his two books on Derrida, *The Tain of the Mirror* (1986) and *Inventions of Difference* (1994). For the sake of continuity and clarity, I have chosen to focus in particular on Gasché’s treatment of the problem of transcendence in *The Tain of the Mirror*. Though the essays in *Inventions of Difference* do not differ substantially in content from the main lines of argument advanced in *Tain*, several titles in particular merit mention. First, “Deconstruction as Criticism” (22-57) offers an interesting counterpoint to *Tain* in situating Derrida with respect to Lyotard and Merleau-

engaged in the texts and problems of continental philosophy more broadly insofar as his guiding aim has always been to defend the *philosophical* import of Derrida's project within this tradition against American literary criticism's "philosophically purged notion of deconstruction" on the one hand, and American philosophy's "misreadings of Derrida as literary humbug" on the other.⁵⁸

Contra these readings of deconstruction as a literary assault on philosophy, Gasché situates Derrida's project among recent history's most rigorously and self-consciously philosophical enterprises; "whether discussing Hegel, Husserl, or Heidegger," Gasché claims, "Derrida is primarily engaged in a debate with the main philosophical question regarding the ultimate foundation of what is."⁵⁹ While this question has always been a matter for philosophical reflection, broadly construed, Gasché maintains that it is only since Descartes' turn from "the immediacy" of the "straightforward consideration of objects" toward "a consideration of the very experience in which objects are given" that

Ponty (on "hyper-reflection") instead of Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger (on the search for "ultimate foundations"). Second and of particular importance for adjudicating between Heidegger and Derrida on the problem of transcendence is "The Eclipse of Difference" (82-106). Here, Gasché implicates Derrida, Levinas, and Jean-Luc Marion in what he calls a "deliberate indifference" to Heidegger's "ontological difference." Finally, "God, for Example" (150-170) is useful both for its application of Gasché's notion of the "quasi-transcendental" to the problem of God, and for its engagement with Heidegger and Derrida on the possibility of God after metaphysics. Though there is some overlap here with Caputo both in Gasché's recognition of the influence of negative theological discourse in Heidegger and Derrida, and in his acknowledgement that philosophy cannot foreclose the possibility of God, Gasché remains considerably less "open to mystery" than Caputo, viewing God, ultimately, as another "exemplar" in deconstruction's infrastructural chain of "quasi-transcendental undecideables."

⁵⁸Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 3. Gasché takes aim, in particular, at New Criticism, as well as at philosophers (such as Richard Rorty and Mark C. Taylor) whose "ironic" readings of Derrida, and continental philosophy more broadly, undervalue this tradition's serious philosophical elements. See Gasché, *Inventions*, 1-21.

⁵⁹Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 7.

“reflection” has achieved its status as the “principle par excellence” of philosophy’s quest for the ultimate ground.⁶⁰

The problem is that this supposition of the self-reflexive subject as ground opens an unbridgeable gulf between the subject itself and the object it must account for—a quandary that results in the manifold contradictions, antinomies, and aporias to which the great speculative systems of Kant, the German Idealists, and Hegel are addressed.⁶¹ Of these modern attempts to account for the “shortcomings of subjectivity” within the “closed-system” of reflexivity itself, Gasché maintains, Hegel’s solution is the most promising, and in any case, the standard by which post-Hegelian attempts to close this system must be measured.⁶² Hegel’s strategy, as Gasché tells the story, is to posit a dialectical process through which the aporias of reflection are *aufgehoben* in the “absolute identity” of pure “speculation”—a process, in short, that ultimately absorbs difference (the other) into a higher totality of the same.⁶³

In this context, Gasché’s ambition is to read deconstruction as providing an account of the aporias of reflection that is not straightforwardly a rejection of Hegel’s speculative solution, but, quite literally, its “foil.” He clarifies this ambition in expounding the guiding metaphor of his investigation:

This book’s title, *The Tain of the Mirror*, alludes to that “beyond” of the orchestrated mirror play of reflection that Derrida’s philosophy seeks to conceptualize. *Tain*, a word altered from the French *étain*, according to the OED,

⁶⁰Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 13.

⁶¹Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 13-59.

⁶²Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 87. Gasché’s lengthy and complicated argument for this contentious claim is woven throughout the first five chapters of *Tain*. While the intricacies of his argument are not pertinent in this context, interested parties may wish to consult, especially, pages 22, 23, 31, 60-78, 87.

⁶³Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 44.

refers to the tinfoil, the silver lining, the lusterless back of the mirror. Derrida's philosophy, rather than being a philosophy of reflection, is engaged in the systematic exploration of that dull surface without which no reflection and no specular or speculative activity would be possible, but which at the same time has no place and no part in reflection's scintillating play.⁶⁴

Far from an abandonment of the search for foundations, in Gasché's view, Derrida's enterprise is an attempt to go one deeper on Hegel, to glimpse the transcendence of a difference that cannot be totalized into the speculative system of the same precisely because it is the "ground" of that very system—the difference through which speculative "totality" itself is made possible. At the same time, however, this "ground" is not a ground in any traditional sense, for though it "accounts" for the aporias of reflection in the sense of explaining why they arise, it does not provide for, and indeed precludes, their resolution. Gasché concludes, thus, that deconstruction must posit the "difference" in question (i.e., the difference beyond that of the same/difference totality constituted in speculative reflection), as simultaneously the condition of possibility *and* impossibility of speculative totality. In short, Gasché is interested in the explanatory power of deconstruction not only for establishing the conditions of possibility of reflection, but also for contextualizing its aporias as irreducible (indeed "essential") limits imposed by those very same conditions.⁶⁵

⁶⁴Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 6.

⁶⁵The status of this difference as a "condition of im/possibility" and its privileged standing in respect to the philosophical tradition are difficult to explain succinctly. The following excerpt is a representative example of Gasché's many attempts to do so: "Although this "radical" alterity does not present itself *as such*, the history of philosophy in its entirety is, indeed, the uninterrupted attempt to domesticate it in the form of its delegates. In presenting it in negative images—as the opposites of valorized metaphysical concepts—specular reflection seeks to account for, and do away with, the sort of alterity that subverts its hope of reflexive or speculative self-foundation. This alterity forever undermines, but also makes possible, the dream of autonomy achieved through a

If Derrida's work is the latest and most radical attempt to glimpse this fundamental difference, it is by no means the first. Accordingly, in preparation for an in-depth analysis of deconstructive "methodology", Gasché turns to sources in Husserl and Heidegger that he suggests "anticipate" and "prefigure" Derrida's concept of deconstruction.⁶⁶ The general project at stake for all three thinkers, according to Gasché, is *heterology*—"a science of" or "discourse on" the Other" that aims to reinvigorate the possibilities for thinking in Western philosophy by investigating the "pre-suppositions" that confound its essential drive to "domesticate Otherness" in a speculative synthesis.⁶⁷ For all three thinkers, Gasché claims, this heterological task involves a "nonreflective retrogression" to a difference that makes reflection possible, and thus "cannot *in principle* be given [to reflection] as such."⁶⁸

Gasché's short history of heterology as "nonreflective retrogression" begins with a brief discussion of Husserl's notion of *Abbau* ("dismantling").⁶⁹ Akin to phenomenological reduction, *Abbau* designates a process of "dismantling" the logical and psychological "idealizations" of the "objective world" in order to penetrate "to origins that must remain essentially concealed if they are to function as the original historical

reflexive coiling upon self, since it names a structural precondition that represents the limit of such a possibility." Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 105.

⁶⁶Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 109-110.

⁶⁷Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 100.

⁶⁸Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 111.

⁶⁹Though Gasché is well aware that Husserl's *Experience and Judgment* (1938, wherein the notion of *Abbau* is first explicitly developed) appears more than a decade after Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1927, wherein the notion of *Destruktion* first "acquires the status of a philosophical concept"), he elects to discuss Husserl's *Abbau* first insofar as this notion, "in spite of some essential differences...is in large part another name for phenomenological reduction." Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 109.

premises of history.”⁷⁰ The key insight here, in other words, is that the hidden origins of reflection cannot come into view in the natural process of “reflecting on oneself” precisely because such reflection is already saturated, even (and especially) in its everyday mode, in idealizations that obscure its origins; one must begin, thus, by dismantling reflection itself. But if *Abbau* is a process of *dismantling* the “garb of ideas thrown over the world” by logical and psychological reflection, it is simultaneously a process of *construction* insofar as it is directed ultimately at providing an account of the sources of such reflection, i.e., the “sense-constituting structures of transcendental subjectivity.”⁷¹ This process of dismantling, then, culminates not in a rejection of logical and psychological discourses, but in a grounding of their positive value *within certain limits*—limits that these discourses themselves are unequipped to determine.

This “nonreflective turning back” toward hidden origins and the double-movement of “dismantling with positive intent” that it produces are also major features, Gasché contends, of Heidegger’s notion of *Destruktion*—“the systematic removal or dismantling of the concealments (*Verdeckungen*) of the meaning of Being by the history of ontology.”⁷² Whereas Husserl’s *Abbau* turns back to a transcendental subject, however, Heidegger’s *Destruktion* turns decisively away from “egological” thinking toward the “ontological difference” of Being itself, a difference that he constitutes first in terms of the pre-reflective “equiprimordial structures” of Dasein, and later on (less subjectively still) in terms of the “event-ing” (*Ereignis*) of Being itself. Despite this essential difference, Gasché claims, the constructive yield of Heidegger’s *Destruktion* parallels

⁷⁰Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 109-111.

⁷¹Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 111.

⁷²Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 113.

that of Husserl's *Abbau*; what is gained, he observes (citing the later Heidegger), is a certain "nonreflexive capturing" of "a place from out of which there first opens the space traversed at any given time by all our doing and leaving undone."⁷³ Moreover, for Heidegger as for Husserl, the outcome of this dismantling process for the thing dismantled is not ultimately a rejection or repudiation of its value, but a positive grounding of its possibilities within certain limits.⁷⁴

From this preparatory discussion of Derrida's predecessor discourses, Gasché gleans three distinguishing characteristics that deconstruction shares with its Husserlian and Heideggerian counterparts:

All three are nonreflective methodological devices; all three are in essence positive movements, never negative in the usual sense, and certainly not "purely negative"; and all three attempt to construct, in a more or less systematic fashion, grounds of greater generality for what is to be accounted for.⁷⁵

But insofar as Gasché intends this discussion merely as "background" for a "subsequent attempt to demarcate "deconstruction" radically from its antecedents,"⁷⁶ he is quick to add that these similarities only go so far. The profundity of Derrida's divergence from his predecessors begins to show itself, he suggests, when one attends to the surprising difference in character between the aforementioned "grounds of greater generality" sought by each thinker. For both Husserl and Heidegger, Gasché contends, the search for foundations is still staged within the horizon of metaphysics insofar as phenomenology

⁷³Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 117. The passage Gasché cites here is in Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. W. Lovitt, New York: Harper and Row, 1977, 180.

⁷⁴"[D]estruction, says Heidegger, must stake out the positive possibilities of that tradition, and this always means keeping it *within its limits*." Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 113.

⁷⁵Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 118.

⁷⁶Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 109.

(even in its most radical Heideggerian incarnation) remains “a systematic transition toward essences.”⁷⁷ For Derrida, by contrast, “these foundations...are no longer essences, however radical”; moreover, the “resources necessary to conceive of [them] are not a positive part of metaphysical conceptuality but are given in metaphysics in a negative manner.” Thus, the “ultimate foundations” sought by deconstruction, and the strategic “quasi-conceptual” apparatus it employs in seeking them are “in a certain way”—indeed a problematic way—“*exterior* to metaphysics”.⁷⁸

The heart of Gasché’s argument in *The Tain of the Mirror* is an attempt to account for this radical exteriority as it is intimated both in “deconstructive methodology” and in the “system beyond being” toward which the former reaches out. This account opens with the standard cautionary tales about the necessity, on the outset, of carefully parsing the post-metaphysical significance of metaphysically-charged terms such as “method”, “concept”, “aporia”, and “ultimate foundation”. Gasché’s first concern is to establish that Derrida’s well-known criticisms of the scientific and philosophical (i.e. “metaphysical”) concepts of method neither warrant the view that deconstruction is a non-method (and thus “an invitation to wild and private lucubrations”) nor preclude the possibility of “formalizing

⁷⁷More specifically, “[t]he phenomenological reduction of which Heidegger’s destruction aimed to be a more radical interpretation led Heidegger, as it had led Husserl, to an ever more fundamental notion of the essence of what is under consideration. The very concept of essence that accompanies the operation of destruction is only a more radical, more original concept than the naïve onto-theological concept of it. Phenomenology in general, whether in its Husserlian form or its more radical Heideggerian form, is by definition a methodical passage to essentiality. Reduction, dismantling, and destruction are in agreement with such a systematic transition toward essences.” Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 120.

⁷⁸Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 120.

to some extent the different theoretical movements that make up one rigorous notion of deconstruction.”⁷⁹

In preparation for this formal account of deconstructive “movements”, Gasché turns next to clarifying Derrida’s presuppositions about philosophical discourse and to elucidating how they differ from those of metaphysics. Derrida is committed first and foremost, Gasché maintains, to the irreducible heterogeneity of philosophical discourse, both at the level of concept-formation (where aporias are a necessary condition of the process of opposition and negation through which concepts are manufactured); and at the level of discursive and argumentative usage (where suppressed inconsistencies and equivocations abound, and the opposite genres of myth and logos inevitably, if silently, commingle).⁸⁰ Derrida is convinced, moreover, that the metaphysical tradition has been naïve about the degree to which these heterogeneities are constitutive of its discourse, and therefore blind to the inevitable failure of its attempts to absorb these inconsistencies into ever-purer concepts of unity, totality, and non-contradiction—concepts which, in fact, are already tainted at their origins by the very impurities they seek to negate.

Thus, since Derrida assumes from the very beginning that concepts and discursive totalities are always “already cracked and fissured by necessary contradictions”, he has an entirely different agenda in respect to these problems than that of the metaphysical tradition. For if metaphysics is characterized by a striving to purify philosophical discourse of its disparate, heterogeneous elements, then Derrida’s *exteriority* to metaphysics can be glimpsed in his acknowledgement of the “generality and irreducibility of these various inequalities”:

⁷⁹Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 124.

⁸⁰Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 124-135.

Deconstruction is...the attempt to account for the heterogeneity constitutive of the philosophical discourse, not by trying to overcome its inner differences but by maintaining them.⁸¹

On Gasché's account, this fundamental difference in disposition toward the heterogeneity of philosophical discourse indicates an important change in the way we are to understand the notions of "aporia" and "contradiction". From the standpoint of metaphysics, these notions have always signified problems to be solved, either through "mutual self-destruction" or "dissolution in an all-embracing ground or essence."⁸² Within the framework of deconstruction, however, these notions must be understood as "referring to the general dissimilarity between the various ingredients, elements, or constituents of the discourse of philosophy as such."⁸³ The "aporias" and "contradictions" with which deconstruction is concerned, thus, are precisely those that never appeared on the metaphysical radar, even though they were silently regulating the limited successes and inevitable failures of its discourse all along.

How, then, does deconstruction succeed in "maintaining" these regulative "aporias" and "contradictions", and in what sense does this deconstructive maintenance constitute a "reaching out" toward "ultimate foundations"? According to Gasché,

A first schematic answer is that deconstruction attempts to "account" for these "contradictions" by "grounding" them in "infrastructures" discovered by analyzing the specific organization of these "contradictions".⁸⁴

⁸¹Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 135.

⁸²Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 142.

⁸³Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 128.

⁸⁴Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 142. Gasché places all of these terms in scare quotes to indicate that his usages differ substantially from the standard metaphysical usages.

Deconstruction's attentiveness to aporias, thus, is directed not at the neutralization of philosophical discourse, but at the opportunity that analysis of these aporias provides to glimpse the "infrastructures" that give rise to and limit philosophical discourse.⁸⁵ An "infrastructure", Gasché explains, is "the formal rule that each time regulates differently the play of oppositions in question," or again "the 'open matrix' in which these oppositions and contradictions are engendered."⁸⁶ Insofar as these infrastructures give rise to the oppositions from which concepts are constructed, however, they cannot be given in conceptual discourse as such, and can be inferred only through analysis of the "traces" they leave in the oppositions and concepts they produce.

For obvious reasons, then, the "nature" of these infrastructures is decidedly curious. They are "pre-ontological" in that they "precede, in a nontemporal way, the alternative of being and nothingness, of presence and absence".⁸⁷ They are "quasi-conceptual" in that they are prior to concepts, and yet similar in philosophical function and purchase. They are "quasi-transcendental" in that they designate conditions of possibility that lie "beyond being", though they are not "*a priori* structures of the subjective cognition of objects".⁸⁸ Perhaps most important of all, however, they are manifold and heterogeneous—an

⁸⁵More specifically, "[d]econstruction does not merely destroy metaphysical concepts; it shows how these concepts and themes draw their possibility from that which ultimately makes them impossible. The infrastructures achieve this double task. Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 175.

⁸⁶Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 142, 147.

⁸⁷Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 148.

⁸⁸Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 317. Gasché's argument for the "quasi-transcendental" status of these "infrastructures" first appeared in 1985 (albeit in abbreviated form) in "Quasi-Metaphoricity and the Question of Being," in *Hermeneutics and Deconstruction*, ed. Hugh Silverman, 1985, 166-190. Parts of this essay are reproduced in *Tain*, Chapter 11, "The Inscription of Universality," 272-318.

irreducible multiplicity of origins that cannot be captured by any one in particular of the “quasi-transcendentals” in the deconstructive “system”.

Gasché concludes his analysis of deconstruction’s philosophical import with a study of the “chain of infrastructures” that make up this “system beyond being.”⁸⁹ His intention here is to illustrate the radical heterogeneity of Derrida’s search for “ultimate foundations” by demonstrating how the manifold “infrastructures” (e.g. “arche-trace”, “différance”, “supplement”)⁹⁰ within this system supplement, complement and even undermine one another, without any one of them controlling the system or ascending to the status of a master name. It is precisely Derrida’s success in resisting the temptation to unify these “infrastructures” in a prior synthesis, Gasché maintains, that marks his radical departure from the previous heterologies of Husserl and Heidegger.⁹¹

D. A Literature Conflicted, A Problem Unresolved

If anything is certain at our survey’s end, it is that more questions have been raised than answered about the status of the problem of transcendence in continental philosophy and its implications for the question of what remains for thinking at the end of metaphysics. At the very least, each of these accounts recognizes the same general difficulty, *viz.*, that the continental tradition’s strategies for getting beyond metaphysics

⁸⁹Interestingly, Gasché invokes Plato to describe the transcendence of Derrida’s “chain of infrastructures”: “The “nature” of the infrastructures can be further clarified by exploring the system, or rather the chains in which they are linked together, which, opened up in a deconstructive vista, form an irreducible “space”—in Platonic terms, *epekeina tes ousias*—beyond being...The “source” of being and beingness is, for Derrida, the system or chain beyond being of the various infrastructures or undecideables.”

⁹⁰Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 186-194, 194-205, and 205-212 (respectively).

⁹¹Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 181 ff., 316-17. In respect to Heidegger in particular, see also “Quasi-Metaphoricity and the Question of Being”, 188 ff.

frequently find their practitioners in the conflicted position of having to suggest an alternative to metaphysics from within the very conceptual machinery they are criticizing. As we have seen, this quandary gives rise to unstable “concepts” (such as *Ereignis* and *différance*) that seem in the end to be every bit as transcendent (and thus every bit as dependent upon traditional conceptual hierarchies) as the metaphysical concepts they are invoked to deconstruct. Such strategies, on all accounts, raise an exceedingly difficult question: how is it possible to distinguish the transcendence that supposedly impels the critique of metaphysics and inaugurates philosophy’s “new beginning” (i.e., the transcendence of *Ereignis* or *différance*) from the transcendence of the metaphysical “idols” under scrutiny? What can it mean, in other words, to attempt to transcend transcendence itself?

Beyond their minimal agreement that such strategies propose a problem, however, the accounts we have surveyed differ considerably in their assessments of the character of this problem and its implications for thinking after metaphysics. Do the discrepancies raised here indicate that we should abandon the search for truth and transcendence, or take it up with an ever-greater vigilance? If increased vigilance is necessary, what form should it take? Should it proceed as an “openness to mystery” that would push philosophical reflection ever closer to a kind of religious faith? Or should it take shape, rather, as an ever-more radical pursuit of foundations—a pursuit that would finally systematize the very impossibility of accounting for “reason” as a closed system?

In addition to these discrepancies regarding the character and implications of the problem itself, questions also remain about the standing of the relationship between Heidegger and Derrida in respect to this problem. Are we to understand their relationship

in terms of a movement from nostalgia to irony? Could it consist, instead, in a symbiotic “destructive unrest” in which each keeps the other in check? Or is it explained, finally, as an evolution from pure to impure heterology? The remainder of such difficult and interesting questions testifies to the unresolved status of the problem.

III. A Case for the Merit of Ongoing Investigation

At the most general level, this dissertation is addressed to the question of what role the problem of transcendence has to play in continental philosophy’s initiative to begin thinking anew—to show up the shortcomings of the Western metaphysical tradition, and to find inspiration, thereby, for initiating other, novel, as-yet-undetermined (but hopefully more promising) philosophical pursuits. In this context, I offered the foregoing survey of recent literature as a *prima facie* case for thinking that the jury is still out on this question, that the status of the problem itself and its standing in respect to philosophy’s post-metaphysical employment remain unresolved.

To some philosophers, the existing case for the unresolved status of the problem might seem to provide reason enough in itself for thinking that further investigation is merited. If one is inclined to think, as both Caputo and Gasché seem to, that the problem of transcendence and its accompanying aporias are endemic to (or even constitutive of) thinking in whatever form it might happen to take (metaphysical or otherwise), then keeping the problem under constant surveillance and vigilantly attending to the character and extent of the limits it places on thinking will seem indispensable to the task of discerning philosophy’s future possibilities. For those so inclined, thus, the unresolved status of the problem provides what one might call an “internal” justification for the merit

of ongoing investigation: insofar as the problem of transcendence is viewed as constitutive of thinking, the importance of demonstrating the need for continued vigilance over this problem and clarifying how best to be vigilant is paramount.

But to those of a different temperament, the lack of convergence as to whether and how words like *Ereignis* and *différance* map onto “quasi-transcendental conditions of im/possibility” or “withdrawal into an abyss” is *anything but* evidence that further discussion of such things is merited. Folks of this latter stripe are likely to object, rather, that this “unresolved problem” is simply an irreducible feature of a conflicted approach to thinking, and that on these grounds, we would do much better simply to divest the problem of its philosophical purchase by abandoning the kind of thinking that gives rise to it in the first place.

But how, more concretely, might such an objection go? Let us briefly consider two different versions of the same basic protest. We have already encountered one version—call it the “smug shrug”—in surveying Richard Rorty’s recommendation for dealing with the “nostalgia” of thinkers like Heidegger and Derrida. On Rorty’s account, as we have seen, the value of these thinkers is their utility for disabusing us of “outmoded self-descriptions” that appeal groundlessly to “forces beyond the human”. If, however, their discourses sometime seem to invoke lofty powers of a new order in “magic words” like *Ereignis* and *différance*, the appropriate response is to shrug off any such incantations (insofar as they are intended “in earnest”) as symptomatic of a lingering “nostalgia” for the very kind of thinking they are invoked against.⁹²

⁹²Rorty allows for the use of such “magic words” insofar as they are wielded in irony as a means of engendering laughter at the futility of the search for yet another

A second version of this protest against ongoing transcendence talk in continental philosophy is to be found in Michel Foucault's famous criticism of the "anthropological sleep"—a new kind of "dogmatic slumber" that he claims has beset modern thinking in general, and that is perpetuated, he adds, by phenomenological thinking in particular.⁹³ This slumber is "anthropological" in that posits "man" (reason, consciousness, etc.) as the condition of all possible experience, and "dogmatic" in that it does so pre-critically. The result, Foucault maintains, is that such thinking "produces, surreptitiously and in advance, the confusion of the empirical and the transcendental," a conflagration that, despite its pretensions to "vigilance," unwittingly "doubl[es] over dogmatism, dividing it into two different levels each lending support to and limiting the other."⁹⁴ Thus, from inside any form of thinking that has succumbed to this slumber, the so-called "problem" of transcendence will necessarily appear as a permanent fixture insofar as thinking is constituted in advance in terms of it.

Foucault's point is that this modern fixture is ultimately no more permanent than any of the other contingent problems that constituted past modes of thinking, and his agenda is thus to "reject all concrete forms of the anthropological prejudice" in the name of "question[ing] afresh the limits of thought."⁹⁵ Though Foucault does not implicate Heidegger or Derrida by name, his recitation of the "warped and twisted forms of

"master name". See Rorty, "Deconstruction and Circumvention," in *Essays on Heidegger and Others*, 85-106, especially 95 ff.

⁹³Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, New York: Vintage, 1971. See, in particular, in chapter 9, "Man and his Doubles," 303-343, especially 340 ff.

⁹⁴Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 341.

⁹⁵Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 342.

reflection” that we can safely dismiss with a “silent laugh” leaves little doubt that he counts them among the sleeping:

To all those who still wish to talk about man, about his reign or his liberation, to all those who still ask themselves questions about what man is in his essence, to all those who wish to take him as their starting point in their attempts to reach the truth, to all those who, on the other hand, refer all knowledge back to the truths of man himself, to all those who refuse to formalize without anthropologizing, who refuse to mythologize without demystifying, who refuse to think without immediately thinking that it is man who is thinking, to all these warped and twisted forms of reflection, we can answer only with a philosophical laugh—which means, to a certain extent, a silent one.⁹⁶

To summarize, then, there may be little hope that our existing case for the unresolved status of the problem will persuade those inclined to the “smug shrug” or the “silent laugh” that ongoing investigation is merited. It is tempting, perhaps, simply to say “so what?”. Such “external” objections poison the well, after all, and while they may not be answerable, they do not defeat the “internal” project either. In short, there is no reason to think that the legitimacy of a project aimed at exploring and attempting to clarify the issues surrounding the problem of transcendence depends in any way on its ability to answer these “external” objections.

If providing an “external” justification is unnecessary, however, it is still useful to think through how such a justification might proceed. Thus, against objections that call the very legitimacy of the problem into question, the strongest case for the merit of an ongoing investigation would be one that could demonstrate that such an inquiry would still be valuable *even if* one granted, for the sake of argument, that the objections raised against the kind of thinking under investigation are ultimately damning. Answering the

⁹⁶Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (a translation of *Les mots y les choses*), New York, Vintage Books, 1966, pp. 342-343.

“smug shrug” and the “silent laugh” in this respect is simply a matter of showing that an ongoing investigation of the problem of transcendence, regardless of its putative success or failure in resolving the problem or demonstrating its inescapable importance, has genealogical value as a necessary step on the path to contextualizing and adjudicating the various thought experiments that make up the broader project of thinking after metaphysics.

While my foremost concern in undertaking this investigation is to clarify the issues pertinent to what I have called the “internal” project, I want to consider briefly a particularly instructive example of how one might contextualize the “external” merits of such an investigation. In a recent essay entitled “Absolute Immanence,”⁹⁷ Giorgio Agamben offers an intriguing taxonomy of the possibilities for post-metaphysical philosophy entertained in the contemporary continental literature. As his essay’s title unequivocally announces, however, Agamben’s principle concern is not with transcendence; the bulk of the piece, on the contrary, is devoted to examining recent continental interest in understanding the end of metaphysics as the opening of new possibilities for articulating philosophies of “immanence”.

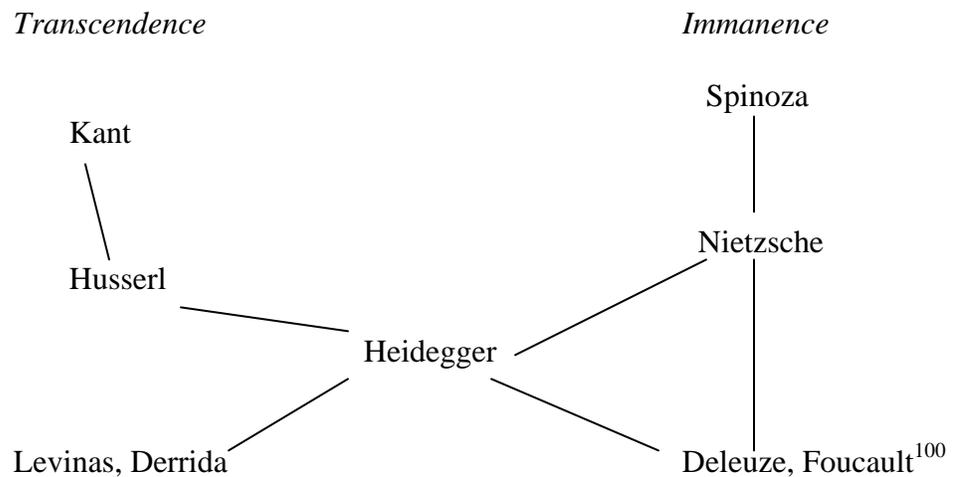
Unsurprisingly, the principle figures of this study are Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze. The legacy of these two thinkers, on Agamben’s account, is a movement in philosophy toward a concept of “life” as “immanence and beatitude,” i.e., of existence as characterized by “a striving that obstinately remains itself” and that “does not once again

⁹⁷Giorgio Agamben, “Absolute Immanence,” in *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1999, 220-239.

produce transcendence.”⁹⁸ In contrast to the life of the knowing subject (which takes place in what Foucault called, as we have seen, the “empirico-transcendental” field of consciousness), this life of “immanent movement” is one of “contemplation without knowledge” that, according to Agamben, “will have its precise correlate in thought that has freed itself of all cognition and intentionality.”⁹⁹

This exposition of Agamben’s account is brief, and on its basis the “coming philosophy” at issue remains, no doubt, opaque. An assessment of the finer details and prospects of this emerging philosophy of immanence, however, is not what we are after here. What is interesting for our present purposes, rather, is Agamben’s concluding suggestion as to what must be done in order to put such a philosophy in play:

To assume this legacy as a philosophical task, it will be necessary to reconstruct a genealogy that will clearly distinguish in modern philosophy—which is, in a new sense, a philosophy of life—between a line of immanence and a line of transcendence, approximately according to the following diagram:



⁹⁸ Agamben, “Absolute Immanence,” 236, 238.

⁹⁹ Agamben, “Absolute Immanence”, 239.

¹⁰⁰ Agamben, “Absolute Immanence”, 239.

While I do not intend to adopt Agamben's suggestion as a thesis, I do want to maintain that his taxonomy of the tradition is instructive for our purposes in a number of respects. First, it indicates the complexity of the debates in the broader continental tradition, both over how philosophy after "Western metaphysics" should proceed, and over how this "philosophy to come" should situate itself in regard to the philosophical tradition. On this particular survey of the landscape, more specifically, none of the popular trend-stories that might tempt us to look for a unified trajectory in this tradition seems very convincing. The inclusion of Kant and Spinoza as key figures, for one, casts suspicion on the common view that the coming philosophy is straightforwardly "postmodern." Similarly, the separation of Derrida and Foucault makes "post-structuralism" seem a less likely candidate for the tradition's master name, and the placements of Levinas and Deleuze remind us that there is more than one way to attempt metaphysics after "Western metaphysics." Finally, Heidegger's centrality to both branches of the taxonomy indicates the important degree to which the discourses of transcendence and immanence within this broader tradition have commingled and infiltrated one another. In each of these respects, Agamben's survey is a valuable reminder of the richness and complexity of this tradition's engagement with the question "Whither philosophy?".

Most important, however, is Agamben's suggestion that a proper accounting of what remains for philosophy after metaphysics must include, first of all, the reconstruction of a genealogy that "clearly distinguishes...between a line of transcendence and a line of

immanence.”¹⁰¹ This suggestion lends support to our claim that there is a plausible “external” justification for undertaking the task at hand in this dissertation, *viz.*, that of exploring the “internal” coherence of Heidegger’s and Derrida’s respective engagements with the transcendence problem, and elucidating what is at stake between them. For if the results of such a project were to suggest, on the one hand, that the problem of transcendence is an ineluctable hurdle for thinking, then perhaps there is a platform for criticizing the immanence trajectory—at least insofar as it simply denies or underemphasizes the continuing viability of this problem as a worthwhile philosophical pursuit. If, on the other hand, such research were to indicate that the significance Heidegger and Derrida attach to this problem is ultimately untenable—perhaps the residue of a lingering metaphysical nostalgia, or an indefensible adherence to a subject-centered understanding of language—then maybe there would be good reason to think, along with Foucault, Deleuze and others, that life and language, redirected in a certain way, could shed the encumbrance of the problem of transcendence. In either case, I want to maintain—in concurrence with Agamben—that such work would contribute to a richer understanding of continental philosophy’s historical and contemporary possibilities, as well as to an appreciation of its broader relevance for current debates regarding the future of philosophy.

It would seem, then, that a dissertation on the problem of transcendence in the work of Heidegger and Derrida is potentially valuable in at least two respects: first, as an investigation of an important continental legacy (transcendence) as it is manifest in the

¹⁰¹This suggestion is not original to Agamben; Georges Bataille had suggested as much in 1946 (see *On Nietzsche*, trans. Bruce Boone, New York: Paragon, 1992, ch. 5).

work of two pervasively influential twentieth-century thinkers; and second, as groundwork for further discussion about how to mediate and/or adjudicate the legacies of transcendence and immanence in respect to the question of philosophy's proper post-metaphysical employments.

In *this* dissertation, let me emphasize in closing, my aim is merely to take a few modest steps in the first direction. I hope to give a measured introduction, through attentive readings of a handful of carefully selected texts, to a promising interpretation of these figures that takes the problem of transcendence (and its implications for future thinking) as a guiding theme. My strategy, thus, will be hermeneutic: the goal is to glimpse the significance of the subject matter *as a whole* by reading it in view of a unifying theme that, once foregrounded and clarified, can discipline further, more in-depth engagements.

CHAPTER TWO

HEIDEGGER:

THE GENESIS OF ONTOLOGICAL TRANSCENDENCE

The finitude of philosophy consists not in the fact that it comes up against limits and cannot proceed further. It rather consists in this: in the singleness and simplicity of its central problematic, philosophy conceals a richness that again and again demands a renewed awakening.

–Martin Heidegger¹

There would be more to say on the figure of the circle in Heidegger. His treatment is not simple. It also implies a certain affirmation of the circle, which is assumed. One should not necessarily flee or condemn circularity as one would a bad repetition, a vicious circle, a regressive or sterile process. One must, in a *certain way* of course, inhabit the circle, turn around in it, live there a feast of thinking, and the gift, the gift of thinking, would be no stranger there.

–Jacques Derrida²

I. Introduction

Chapters two and three are devoted to an investigation of Martin Heidegger's engagement with the problem of transcendence. The principal aims of this investigation are, first and foremost, to clarify the importance of this problem for understanding Heidegger's attempts to articulate what remains for philosophy after metaphysics; and,

¹Martin Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, trans. Michael Heim, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984, 156.

²Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, 9.

second, to lay the groundwork for a similar investigation of this problem in the work of Jacques Derrida. There are three points of strategy to make explicit on the outset regarding my approach to reading Heidegger in these chapters.

First, I deliberately refrain from approaching Heidegger's thinking on the problem of transcendence with intent to construct or defend a Heideggerian "position on" or "doctrine of" transcendence. My aim, instead, is to take Heidegger at his word that his thinking is ultimately oriented toward questioning problems rather than positing their solutions. Heidegger never tired of reminding us, after all, that the fundamental problems of philosophy are exceedingly difficult to formulate in spite of (and indeed because of) their assumed familiarity; such problems have been around so long and rehashed so often that their complexities settle into caricatures everyone "knows" but no one really understands. Heidegger's perennial concern is that the ascendance of these familiar caricatures obscures the possibilities for actively engaging the deeper problems they intimate, and that genuine thinking risks lapsing, as a result, into the passive reception and reshuffling of academic distinctions and doctrines: the problems that we *ought* to acknowledge as posing the most fundamental challenges for thinking become, regrettably, the ones for which we have the most ready answers.

For Heidegger, then, the matter that is given to thinking in a genuine philosophical problem is anything but a "puzzle" whose solution is merely a foregone conclusion of appropriately rigorous calculation. While a "puzzle" invites us to narrow down and finally settle an issue, a "problem" (in Heidegger's sense of the term) occasions an opening up of possibilities for questioning, and charges thinking, thereby, with the ongoing task of keeping open the questions it provokes. Engaging a fundamental

philosophical problem besets us, thus, in Heidegger's view, with an obligation that cannot be discharged in the simple collection, division, and adjudication of alternative solutions.³ As Heidegger advises in a later lecture on *Time and Being*, the challenge of philosophical questioning "is not to listen to a series of propositions, but rather to follow the movement of showing."⁴ Though the significance of this advice will become much clearer over the course of our study, the insight, in a nutshell, is that philosophical inquiry is essentially historical insofar as what is shown to us in the "present" is always already bound up with its "past" and "future" possibilities: to understand what is given to thinking in the present, therefore, we must follow the movement "back and forth" through which this showing is first presented as such.

³If Heidegger emphasizes the importance of questioning problems over solving them, however, it is misleading to suggest that his disposition of openness devalues or precludes the kind of rigorous analysis that is commonly associated with "problem-solving" philosophy. His point, rather, is that if such analysis is to be productive, it cannot aspire to being "immediately intelligible" (*unmittelbare Verständlichkeit*), but must be directed intentionally and from the outset toward an open horizon; it must recognize, in short, that it is always only "on the way." We will address this aspect of Heidegger's approach to thinking in great detail below.

⁴Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, New York: Harper and Row, 1972, 2. One might protest here that this characterization of Heidegger's approach to philosophical questioning is of later provenance and sits ill with the project of fundamental ontology pursued by the so-called "early Heidegger." The lecture from which this characterization is drawn, however, is one of Heidegger's many conscious attempts to re-appropriate a task for thinking that he sees as set by *Being and Time*, wherein he already clearly distinguishes between thinking as mere data-collection and manipulation and thinking as the questioning of what appears (i.e., "shows" itself): "Scientific research (note here that the German *Wissenschaftliche Forschung* encompasses a considerably broader scope of possibilities for thinking than the English "scientific research") accomplishes, roughly and naively, the demarcation and initial fixing of the areas of subject matter...And although research may always lean towards this positive approach, its real progress comes not so much from collecting results and storing them away in 'manuals' as from inquiring into the ways in which each particular area is basically constituted". See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Macquarrie and Robinson, New York: Harper and Row, 1962, 29; and Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1927, 9.

In the spirit of this advice, my intention is to read Heidegger's engagement with the problem of transcendence as a "movement of showing" rather than as "a series of propositions". The second point of strategy to bear in mind, then, is that I am ultimately concerned with the meaning of this engagement *as a whole* rather than with Heidegger's treatment of this problem at any one particular stage of his philosophical journey. This strategic consideration merits mention on the outset insofar as it marks a divergence from the common understanding of Heidegger's *corpus* as a series of discrepant, if not mutually exclusive, fits and starts that is best accounted for in terms of several distinct and discontinuous "Heideggers": the "early" Heidegger of fundamental ontology, the Heidegger of "the turn" to the history of being, and, finally, the "later" Heidegger of mystical-poetic contemplation. While I do not deny that the "positions" on transcendence entertained in each of these "stages" differ considerably and indeed perhaps even sit ill with one another on the level of propositional analysis, I hope to show that that the methodological and terminological shifts in emphasis at issue here reveal a deeper continuity when understood in terms of the *hermeneutic* movement they constitute *as a whole*.⁵ In short, I will attempt to read Heidegger as a philosopher whose development—

⁵While this general approach to reading Heidegger is perhaps underrepresented in the contemporary literature, it is hardly unprecedented. The locus classicus of this approach is William Richardson's *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963. Other good examples include Hans-Georg Gadamer's many offerings on Heidegger (especially, "Martin Heidegger's One Path", trans. P. Christopher Smith, in *Reading Heidegger from the Start: Essays in his Earliest Thought*, eds. Kisiel and Van Buren, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994, 19-34; and *Heidegger's Ways*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994.); Françoise Dastur's *Heidegger and the Question of Time*, trans. François Raffoul and David Pettigrew, Atlantic Heights: Humanities Press, 1998; and, as we shall see in chapter four, Derrida's many offerings on Heidegger.

early to late—is disciplined by (and unified through) a deep-seated concern over the problem of transcendence.

Given this general approach, my third and final point of strategy pertains to the issue of how these different stages of Heidegger’s journey are to be thought together as continuous specifically in relation to the guiding theme of the *Transzendenzproblem*. The question, in other words, is that of why I take the problem of transcendence in particular to be so important for understanding Heidegger’s work as a whole. For obvious reasons, it is difficult to provide a compelling answer to this question before the reading has even begun. My provisional answer, however, is that the much-discussed “turns” in Heidegger’s thinking first become intelligible as stages of an ongoing task when one understands these “turns” as necessitated not by Heidegger’s recognition of the *impoverishment* of his past thinking, but rather by his acknowledgement of the *transcendence* of what he is ultimately attempting to think—a transcendence that “conceals a richness that again and again demands a new awakening”.⁶ In its most basic formulation, the problem of transcendence names for Heidegger this unceasing necessity for thinking to return to and reawaken the “concealed richness” that always lies at once within thinking and beyond it. From this vantagepoint, then, the shifts in emphasis throughout Heidegger’s career are not to be viewed as a series of *rejections* of past “positions”, but must be understood instead as comprising an ongoing task of *rejuvenating* what is essential in past thinking by *reappropriating* it in view of what inevitably remains unthought therein. On my reading, in short, the problem of

⁶Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, trans. Michael Heim, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984, 156. The passage from which this citation is drawn appears at the head of this chapter as an epigraph.

transcendence is a *catalyst* in Heidegger's repeated efforts to pose old questions anew and to "say the same differently".

In view of these strategic considerations, we will attempt in what follows to trace the movement of the *Transzendenzproblem* through Heidegger's *Denkweg*, taking care to show in the process how this problem both motivates the fundamental ontology of *Being and Time* and prepares the way simultaneously for the "turn" from fundamental ontology indicated in the texts of the late-twenties and beyond. If our task is historical, however, it is by no means straightforwardly chronological. Rather than reading Heidegger "in order", we will pursue a hermeneutic reading that is designed to demonstrate, within Heidegger's *corpus*, the very movement of transcendence that the *corpus* as a whole takes up as its subject matter. In chapter two, we will clarify the central aims and concepts of fundamental ontology by attending to their genesis in three texts written in the years leading up to *Being and Time*: first, Heidegger's doctoral thesis⁷ of 1915 will allow us to establish the seminal importance of the transcendence problem for his general orientation to philosophical inquiry; second, his lectures on "The Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of Worldview"⁸ (1919) will aid us in further elucidating the methodological implications of this orientation; and third, the lectures on *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*⁹ (1923) will provide for the transposition of these methodological insights into the terminological context of fundamental ontology.

⁷Heidegger, "Die Kategorien- und Bedeutungslehre des Duns Scotus" in Heidegger, *Frühe Schriften*, Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1972, 131-354.

⁸Heidegger, "The Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of Worldview" in *Towards the Definition of Philosophy*, trans. Ted Sadler, London: The Athlone Press, 2000, 2-99.

⁹Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, trans. John van Buren, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.

In chapter three, then, rather than moving directly into a reading of *Being and Time* (in which the central importance of the *Transzendenzproblem*, while acknowledged, remains oblique), we will leap ahead to a lecture and a short treatise written immediately following *Being and Time* in which the importance of this problem for understanding Heidegger's *magnum opus* (and its latent "future" possibilities) is addressed explicitly and at length: *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*¹⁰ (1928) advances an interpretation of ontological transcendence as "being-in-the-world"; and "On The Essence of Ground"¹¹ (1928) sheds light on the issues both of how this interpretation of transcendence provokes the "turn" from fundamental ontology, and of the direction Heidegger's thinking will take following upon it. With the past and future trajectories of fundamental ontology in view, then, we will conclude with a brief synopsis of *Being and Time* itself, taking care to show up the latent indications of "later" concerns within it.¹² Our guiding intention throughout, finally, is to underscore the importance of these discussions for understanding Heidegger's assessment of what remains for philosophy after metaphysics.

¹⁰Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, trans. Michael Heim, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.

¹¹Heidegger, "The Essence of Ground", trans. William McNeill, in *Pathmarks*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 97-135.

¹²In stressing texts other than *Being and Time* in order to articulate the transcendence problem at stake within it, this dissertation must presuppose in its readers a general familiarity with Heidegger's *magnum opus*. As we shall see, this approach is particularly useful for foregrounding the importance of the *Transzendenzproblem*. Though it is mentioned by name in only a handful of instances throughout *Being and Time*, and is addressed directly and at length in but one section buried in division two, the 1928 lectures establish in no uncertain terms that the whole of *Being and Time* is to be understood as an engagement with the problem of transcendence.

If our strategy here is perhaps atypical, there are several advantages to taking this approach. First, from the standpoint of contributing to the literature, it occasions a fresh perspective on the often neglected relationship between the *Transzendenzproblem* and fundamental ontology. A second advantage is that the texts that will avail us of this fresh perspective—several of which, I will argue, are of pivotal importance for understanding the development of Heidegger’s thinking as a whole—have received very little attention in the secondary literature, in some cases because they have been eclipsed by the monumental status of *Being and Time* (where, again, the importance of the transcendence problem remains oblique), and in others because they have only recently become available (in German, within the past ten to fifteen years, and in English within the past two to five, if at all). A third advantage, which we have already intimated and which will become clearer as our study unfolds, is that in foregrounding what Heidegger would call the “having-been” and the “toward-which” of the task attempted in *Being and Time*, this approach emphasizes the “event-character”¹³ of his thinking *as a whole* (over any single “position” one might attempt to stake out within it), and provides, thereby, a performative illustration within his thinking of the very movement of ontological transcendence (i.e., the futural “retrieval” of the past) that this thinking takes up as its subject matter. In view of these aims and advantages, then, let us begin.

¹³In appealing to the “event-character” of *Being and Time*, I simply mean to reiterate the previously discussed hermeneutic idea that the intelligibility of a text is a product of the movement from whence it came to where it is headed. A text, in other words, is more like an “event” than an “object”, and it can thus be said to have “event-character”.

II. Transcendence as “Living Mind”: The Scotus Dissertation

At the most basic level, the thesis of our reading of Heidegger is that an investigation of his engagement with the problem of transcendence *in particular* provides an instructive framework for understanding the broader aims of his approach to philosophy *as a whole*. Accordingly, our first order of business is to establish that the problem of transcendence has been among Heidegger’s foremost concerns from the very beginning, and to clarify the general context in which he first comes to see this problem as delimiting the horizon within which any discussion of philosophy’s future prospects must proceed.

Notwithstanding the many twists and turns along his tortuous *Denkweg*, Heidegger’s concern over the relationship between thinking and being is unflinchingly persistent from beginning to end. It should come as no surprise, then, that his interest in the problem of transcendence first arises in the context of his earliest efforts to think through this problematic relationship. His first encounter with philosophy, in fact, was Franz Brentano’s dissertation “On the Manifold Meaning of Being According to Aristotle”, a work which brought these concerns to his attention in 1907 while he was still just a student in Gymnasium. Brentano’s text not only opened the young Heidegger’s eyes to the inadequacy of the subject-object schema for explaining the kinship between thinking and being, but lead him as well to the work of Brentano’s student Edmund Husserl, whose more fully developed phenomenological method opened new possibilities for “unlocking” the multiplicity of being, and for articulating, more importantly, the

uniqueness of the special kind of *being* that enables *beings* to show themselves in the first place: human consciousness.¹⁴

One of Heidegger's earliest attempts to articulate this set of issues in writing unfolds in his 1915 dissertation "Duns Scotus's Doctrine of the Categories and Meaning".¹⁵ The subject matter of the dissertation proper is Scotus's account of the "hylomorphic relation" (*das Form-Materialverhältnis*) between "the objective in general" ("that which can be experienced") and the "categories" (the "elements and media") of thought through which being is meaningfully interpreted.¹⁶ The majority of the dissertation, thus, is devoted to elucidating Scotus's strategy for fulfilling the "fundamental requirement" of any theory of categories, *viz.*, that of providing a "conceptual" delimitation of "the various domains of objects into domains that are categorically irreducible to each other."¹⁷

If Heidegger dedicates the bulk of the project to elucidating the "logic" of high-scholasticism, however, the conclusion of his dissertation demonstrates in no uncertain terms that his reasons for undertaking the project are far more universal in scope.¹⁸ What is most important to Heidegger, it turns out, is neither the consistency of Scotus's logic on its own terms, nor the possibility of reconstructing this logic into a viable

¹⁴Rüdiger Safranski, *Martin Heidegger: Between Good and Evil*, trans. Ewald Osers, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998, 24-26, 82. See also "My Way to Phenomenology" (1963) in Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002, 74-75.

¹⁵This text is currently unavailable in translation. The translations below are mine. In cases where a lengthy passage is cited, or where the English translation is particularly controversial, I provide the German for comparison.

¹⁶Heidegger, "Duns Scotus", 342.

¹⁷Heidegger, "Duns Scotus", 342.

¹⁸In accordance with the general practice of German philosophers of his day, Heidegger understood "logic" to mean "epistemology" or "theory of knowledge" in general.

contemporary theory of knowledge. Heidegger's concern, rather, is to read Scotus's theory of knowledge as an opportunity to glimpse a hidden metaphysical problem that is touched upon in Scotus's theory, but that remains largely uninterrogated. The problem arises, according to Heidegger, when one attends to the question of how (i.e., "on what basis") the relationship between the "categories" and the "objective in general" is made intelligible (i.e., "meaningful") in the first place. The difficulty, as Heidegger sees it, is that the meaning of this relationship is treated as though it were "strictly conceptual", when in fact it is conceivable only in terms of a unifying "judgment" enacted by a "subject" whose status as the fundamental "domain of the logical" is presupposed, but never adequately explored, much less fully articulated.¹⁹ According to Heidegger,

The category is the most general determination of the object. Object and objectiveness have sense, as such, only *for* a subject. In the latter, objectivity is built up through judgment. If one wants thus to grasp the category as decisive of the determination of the object, then the category must be brought into essential relationship to the structure on which objectiveness is built.²⁰

In Heidegger's view, Scotus's theory lacks precisely this account of the relation of the categories to the "structure" within which the "problem of cognition" itself is first conceivable *as a problem*. What is missing, in short, is "the conscious penetration of the problem of judgment in the subject-object relation" that would illuminate "the situated interrelation [*die In-Beziehung-Setzung*] of the categories to judgment."²¹ Heidegger's

¹⁹Heidegger, "Duns Scotus", 343.

²⁰Heidegger, "Duns Scotus", 345. "Die Kategorie ist allgemeinste Gegenstandsbestimmtheit. Gegenstand und Gegenständlichkeit haben nur Sinn als solche *für* ein Subjekt. In diesem baut sich die Objektivität auf durch das Urteil. Will man somit die Kategorie als *Gegenstands*-bestimmtheit entscheidend begreifen, so muss sie in Wesensbeziehung zu dem die Gegenständlichkeit aufbauenden Gebilde gebracht werden."

²¹Heidegger, "Duns Scotus", 344.

concern, in a nutshell, is that Scotus formulates and attempts to solve the problem of cognition as a problem of “logic” on the level of the pure concept, without properly acknowledging that the intelligibility of this “logic” itself is implicated in the more fundamental problem of discerning the character of that for which (or, more properly, that for “whom”) its concepts are in the first place meaningful.

Though Heidegger makes an example here of Scotus in particular, he is careful to add that the “Subtle Doctor” is neither the first nor the last to reduce the categories to “pure functions of thought”, and to overlook, thereby, the necessity of a more profound inquiry into the character of the judging “subject”. On the contrary, Scotus is in excellent company among ancient, modern, and contemporary philosophers alike; in addition to Aristotle and Kant,²² Heidegger implicates the “present forms” of both “realism” and “transcendental idealism”, the former because it naively gives priority to “external objects”, and the latter because it “asserts from the beginning that all thought and cognition are always thought and cognition *of an object*.”²³ What all of these theories of cognition have in common, despite their myriad and complex differences, is that each

²²Throughout Heidegger’s early work, “Aristotle” and “Kant” are used as general place holders for the epistemological positions of “critical realism” and “transcendental philosophy” respectively, “positions” that Heidegger characterizes as “two typical attempts at a solution” to the “diverse and almost unsurveyable problematic of the reality of the external world”. In using these thinkers thus in his 1919 lecture course on “The Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of Worldview”, Heidegger readily admits “To be sure, I am treating more their modern expressions, without losing myself in details.” See *Towards the Definition of Philosophy*, trans. Ted Sadler, London: The Athelone Press, 2000, 67. Heidegger is well aware, of course, that there is much more of value at stake in the work of both thinkers for his own attempts to think beyond them, a fact that is well documented by his extensive engagements with both in minor publications, and more importantly, in his early lecture offerings (e.g., “Phänomenologische Interpretation zu Aristoteles”, winter semester, 1921 (*Gesamtausgabe*, Band 61), and “Interpretation von Kant Kritik der reinen Vernunft”, winter semester, 1927 (*Gesamtausgabe*, Band 25).

²³Heidegger, “Duns Scotus”, 345.

accords a privilege to the “object” that begs the question of what “objectiveness” could mean apart from its sense for a judging “subject”.

On Heidegger’s reading, then, this tendency to privilege the “object” of cognition at the cost of obscuring the role played in “objective” constitution by the judging “subject” is not just a failure of scholasticism, but an oversight that pervades the history of philosophy right up to the present. If philosophy is to wrest itself from the inertia of this deeply entrenched obstacle to thinking, Heidegger maintains, nothing short of a “*fundamental* investigation of the value and limitations” of the subject-object relation (and the “hylomorphic-duality” it presupposes) will suffice.²⁴ Such an investigation, moreover, cannot proceed within the sphere of “logic” (epistemology) insofar as the intelligibility of logic itself, as we have seen, is precisely what is at stake. As Heidegger explains,

Logic and its problems cannot be seen in their true light at all if the relationship from which they gain meaning does not become translogical. In the long run, philosophy cannot avoid its proper optics–metaphysics. For the theory of truth, this indicates the task of an ultimate metaphysical-teleological meaning for consciousness. What is of value already dwells primordially in consciousness insofar as it is a living act (*lebendige Tat*) that is sense-filled and sense-actualizing and which has not been even remotely understood if it is neutralized into the concept of a blind, biological actuality (*Tatsächlichkeit*).²⁵

²⁴Heidegger, “Duns Scotus”, 347.

²⁵Heidegger, “Duns Scotus”, 347-348. I have translated “*Tatsächlichkeit*” as “actuality” here (*Tatsächlich* (actual) + the “*keit*” suffix) in order to call attention to the linguistic symmetry (but conceptual dissymmetry) Heidegger sees between a sense-filled “*lebendige Tat*” (living act) and a blind “*Tatsächlichkeit*” (blind actuality). However, “*Tatsächlichkeit*” is a pregnant word in this context, and there are several important intonations that are lost here. First, “*Sachlichkeit*” is “objectivity”; to understand consciousness as *Tat-Sachlichkeit*, thus, is to see it as an “act of objectivity” or perhaps as an “objectivizing act”. Second, “*sächlich*” is “neuter”, and thus “*Tatsächlichkeit*” suggests consciousness as a neutral (or “neutralizing”) activity; Heidegger is suggesting, then, that one neutralizes consciousness when one views it as a neutralizing act upon the things it encounters. Finally, “*Tätlichkeit*” is an “act of violence”, and Heidegger has inserted “*Sache*” (matter as in “subject matter”) into “*Tätlichkeit*” to form

Unpacking this characterization of consciousness as “living mind” (*lebendigen Geistes*) will help to clarify further both why the requisite interrogation of the subject-object schema cannot be carried out within the horizon of “logic”, and how the relationship between the problem of categories and the problem of judgment opens the “translogical” horizon within which a “metaphysical-teleological meaning of consciousness” can be sought. On the traditional (epistemo)logical understanding of the subject-object relation, the object has priority as an independent, pre-existing entity that “is as it *is*” before the subject arrives. The “subject” is said to have “objective knowledge” of the object when it succeeds in bringing the object under the concepts (or categories) appropriate to the object’s kind of being. While the nature and number of these categories and the complexities of their successful “application” vary widely from philosopher to philosopher, the important thing to recognize, in Heidegger’s view, is that on this general model *only the possibility of the subject’s knowledge is at issue; the being of the object itself is never put into question.*

In view of this concern, Heidegger’s interest is in the question of how it is possible that “there are” objects at all. This question is *translogical* in that it problematizes the presupposition of objective being from which logic takes its departure. As Heidegger sees it, one can’t make sense of what it means to ask how *knowledge* of objects is possible

“*Tatsächlichkeit*”; to see consciousness as “*Tatsächlichkeit*” is to characterize its activity as a kind of violence against the matter under its consideration. In German, the passage reads as follows: “Man vermag die Logik und ihre Probleme überhaupt nicht im wahren Lichte zu sehen, wenn nicht der Zusammenhang, *aus* dem heraus sie gedeutet werden, ein translogischer wird. Die *Philosophie kann ihre eigentliche Optik, die Metaphysik, auf die Dauer nicht entbehren.* Für die Wahrheitstheorie bedeutet das die Aufgabe einer letzten metaphysisch-teleologischen Deutung des Bewusstseins. In diesem lebt ureigentlich schon das Werthafte, insofern es sinnvolle und sinnverwirklichende lebendige Tat ist, die man nicht im entferntesten verstanden hat, wenn sie in den Begriff einer biologischen blinden *Tatsächlichkeit* neutralisiert wird.”

without first inquiring as to how *objects* themselves are possible—a question that puts the *meaning of being* itself at issue. And insofar as the *meaning* of being is in question, this translogical inquiry must be prosecuted within the horizon of consciousness—the field in which the possibility of a meaningful relationship between subject and object is grounded.

As we have seen, Heidegger is convinced that the clue for opening this field of inquiry is the problem of judgment—the process through which, in traditional logic, the categories are applied to what can be experienced objectively, actualizing, thereby, the sense of the object for the subject. Heidegger’s key insight here is that the judgment of consciousness as “living mind” in no way resembles that of an isolated subject’s algorithmic application of static categories to independent, pre-existing stuff. The “living mind”, rather, is always already actively situated in experience: it is “sense-actualizing” only insofar as it is already “sense-filled”—in other words, only insofar as “what is of value already dwells primordially within it.”²⁶ Thus, “objects” encountered in the theoretical attitude come to intelligibility for a “subject” only on the basis of a pre-theoretical understanding of what is of value in the “object”—an understanding, in turn, that is possible only on the basis of a primordial dwelling-together of the subject-object. If “logic and its problems are to be seen in their true light”, then, philosophy must seek their ground in the “dwelling-together” of thinking and being that orients the “living mind”.

Though Heidegger’s account of “living mind” in the Scotus dissertation is brief and admittedly provisional, it clearly sets the trajectory for the hermeneutic interpretation of the understanding of being that comes to fruition in *Being and Time*. First, the “living

²⁶Heidegger, “Duns Scotus”, 348.

mind” is in its very essence *an activity*. As such, it can never be exhaustively disclosed, but must be investigated by way of an “ever provisional” (*immer vorläufige*) synopsis of the manifold “structural orientations” (*Gestaltungsrichtungen*) and “fundamental tendencies” (*Grundtendenzen*) that show themselves in its activity.²⁷

Second, the “subject of theoretical cognition” (*das erkenntnistheoretische Subjekt*) is only one among the manifold “structural orientations” of the “living mind”, and it is for that matter a deficient one to the extent that it fails to acknowledge its derivative status in respect to the “metaphysically most meaningful sense of mind”—the “historical mind” (*historischer Geist*) of situated, purposive activity.²⁸ The meaning of the theoretical attitude (and its concepts and categories) must be understood, thus, as rooted in the historical *world* in which the “living-mind” dwells:

If one wants to think differently about working out the *cosmos* of categories in order to get beyond a scanty, schematic table of categories, history and its philosophico-cultural-teleological interpretation *must become a meaning-determining element for the problem of categories*.²⁹

Most important for our purposes, finally, is that Heidegger sees in the philosophy of “living mind” the possibility of claiming for human existence a unique kind of transcendence that is wholly different in character from the “epistemological” transcendence of “objects” that are said to lie “beyond” the domain of thinking in “external reality”. Though Heidegger commends the task of articulating this

²⁷Heidegger, “Duns Scotus”, 348-353.

²⁸Heidegger, “Duns Scotus”, 349.

²⁹Heidegger, “Duns Scotus”, 350. “Die Geschichte und deren kulturphilosophisch-teleologische Deutung *must ein bedeutungsbestimmendes Element für das Kategorienproblem werden*, wenn anders man daran denken will, den *Kosmos* der Kategorien herauszuarbeiten, um so über eine dürftige, schematische Kategorientafel hinauszukommen.”

transcendence to the future, he maintains that we can glimpse a clue to its character in the past, specifically in the “experiential world of medieval man” (*Erlebniswelt des mittelalterlichen Menschen*).³⁰

Unlike the modern individual who is “lost” from the very beginning in the “broad expanse of sensory reality”, and who is seeking, thus, to anchor himself in “objective” knowledge of it, the medieval person—in virtue of the “primordial relation of the soul to God”—transcends the world of unconnected external things toward a world that is imbued with value on the basis this very transcendence:

The metaphysical linkage accomplished through transcendence is at the same time a source of manifold oppositions and thus the source of the most abundant thriving of the immanent personal lives of individuals.³¹

For the medieval person, thus,

Transcendence does not mean a radical, disorienting remoteness from the subject—it consists precisely in a living relationship built on correlativity,³² and as such it does not have an absolute, inflexible orientation in its sense, but rather it has to be compared to the stream of experiences flowing back and forth in spiritually kindred individualities...The positing of value, thus, does not gravitate exclusively to the transcendent, but rather is reflected, so to speak, from its fullness and absoluteness and rests in the individual.³³

³⁰Heidegger, “Duns Scotus”, 351.

³¹Heidegger, “Duns Scotus”, 351.

³²Heidegger addresses this correlativity earlier on in discussing Scotus’s treatment of the problem of “immanent and transient (that which lies ‘outside of thought’) validation” (“*immanenten und transeunten* (“*ausserhalb des Denkens*” *liegenden*) *Geltung*). Says Heidegger, “Immanence and Transcendence are concepts of relation. They first gain a sure meaning through the establishment of that to *which* something immanent must be thought of as transcendent.” Martin Heidegger, “Duns Scotus”, 346. “Immanenz und Transzendenz sind Relationsbegriffe, die erst ihre sichere Bedeutung durch die Festsetzung dessen gewinnen, *dem* etwas immanent, bzw. Transzendent gedacht werden muss.”

³³Martin Heidegger, “Duns Scotus”, 351. “Die Transzendenz bedeutet keine radikale, sich verlierende Entfernung vom Subjekt—es besteht eben ein auf Korrelativität aufgebauter lebensbezug, als welcher er nicht einen *einzig*en starren Richtungssinn hat,

In this assessment of the experience of “medieval man”, four important aspects of the transcendence of “living mind” stand out. First, this transcendence is an activity: it transcends not as a fixed, *transcendent* objectivity, but as a living, *transcending* correlativity. Second, this transcendence is enacted in community: it transcends not *in* isolated subjectivity, but *with* “spiritually kindred” individuals. Third, this transcendence must be conceived as essentially historical insofar as any community of spiritually kindred individuals is constituted in the “back and forth” of a shared “stream of experience”. Finally, this transcendence is the very ground of purposiveness: it transcends the individual entities in its world insofar as its shared stream of experience plays a constituting role in the order and meaning of these entities *as a whole*.

Heidegger recognizes, of course, that the parallels between the transcendence of “medieval man” and that of the contemporary “living mind” only go so far. But if this transcendence can no longer be grasped in terms of the primordial relation of the soul to God, perhaps it can be thought afresh in an investigation of “living-mind” as the primordial “belonging-together” of thinking and being. For it is precisely on the basis of this transcendence of “living mind”, Heidegger suggests, that the transcendence of the “transcendentals” (The Good, The True, The Beautiful), and even that of God, are first conceivable as *meaningful* possibilities of being, possibilities that can henceforth have value for and make a claim upon the being of “living mind”. In this respect, Heidegger concludes, an investigation of the transcendence of “living mind” provides an opportunity

sondern dem hin- und zurückfliessenden Strom des Erlebens in wahlverwandten geistigen Individualitäten zu vergleichen ist...Die Wertsetzung gravitiert also nicht ausschliesslich ins Transzendente, sondern ist gleichsam von dessen Fülle und Absolutheit reflektiert und ruht im Individuum.”

to glimpse “the ‘origin’ of metaphysics” (*metaphysischen “Ursprung”*): the very opening-to-sense of “the relatedness between time and eternity, change and absolute validity, world and God”.³⁴

It is precisely in this intimate relation of “living mind” to the “origin of metaphysics” that Heidegger sees the opportunity for making the “hylomorphic relation”—philosophy’s most ancient and most persistently recurring presupposition—a *problem anew*. For if the problems of metaphysics are first opened to sense as *problems for* “living mind”, they must be understood as indicating the priority of a heretofore uninvestigated transcendence, a region that transcends (indeed, constitutes) even the form-matter relation upon which the transcendence of “the transcendentals” is *intelligible* as such.³⁵

Upon completion of the Scotus dissertation in 1915, thus, many of the most important insights of *Being and Time* are already in play, albeit only in their seminal form. What is at stake is a fundamental re-orientation of philosophy’s self-understanding guided by a metaphysical investigation of the “domain of the logical” within which the concepts and aspirations of philosophical inquiry first come to intelligibility. This domain is the “living mind”—a transcendent “belonging-together” of thinking and being that is essentially in activity, essentially in community, and essentially historical—and its investigation must proceed, Heidegger insists, in view of the uniqueness of its subject matter. More specifically, this horizon of inquiry presents a particularly thorny methodological

³⁴Heidegger, “Duns Scotus”, 352.

³⁵Here we get an early glimpse of the insight that Heidegger believes Husserl has missed in locating the origin of meaning in eidetic (formal) intuition. As we shall see in chapter four, this Heideggerian insight is the point of departure for Derrida’s early work on the form-meaning distinction in Husserl’s phenomenology of language.

challenge in that the subject-matter under investigation (the transcendence of “living mind”) becomes possible as a subject-matter only on the basis of its own transcendence; in other words, “living mind” must already be “there” in the questioner if its status is to become questionable in the first place. An investigator of “living mind”, thus, is anything but an impartial spectator; on the contrary, *she herself is* “living mind” in the activity of investigating itself—an activity that is but one among many activities possible for “living mind” on its own basis.

Accordingly, insofar as what is meaningful for “living mind” (its “world”) comes to intelligibility in the historical “back and forth” of its shared experience, the investigation of “living mind” itself must proceed as a movement “back and forth”—“back” in that its impetus and aims are intelligible as such only in respect to the discoveries and oversights of past investigations; and “forth” in that its own results are intelligible as such only in respect to their anticipation of and appropriation by future investigations. The methodological challenge of such an investigation, in summary, is that of finding a productive point of entry into this “back and forth”. In the intervening years between the Scotus dissertation and *Being and Time*, Heidegger’s concern is focused on precisely this challenge.

Already by 1915, then, Heidegger has established the *Transzendenzproblem* as the fundamental horizon within which the requisite re-evaluation of philosophy’s traditional aims and results must be carried out. He has established, moreover, that this guiding problem must be taken over from the epistemological context in which it is traditionally conceived, and understood anew in terms of the concrete, lived-experience of situated, pre-theoretical human existence. Perhaps most importantly, Heidegger is already attuned

to the necessary circularity involved in investigating this field, and convinced that this circularity, rightly approached, can be productive.

If the problematic of *Being and Time* is latent in the work of 1915, however, it remains to be shown how Heidegger comes to understand the general task set for philosophy in the Scotus dissertation (*viz.*, an investigation of the “transcendence” of “living mind” by way of an “ever-provisional synopsis” of the “manifold structural orientations” exhibited in its “activities”) as a task that must be carried out specifically as “fundamental ontology” (an investigation of the “being-in-the-world” of “Dasein” by way of a “hermeneutic-phenomenology” of the “existentials” exhibited in its “facticity”). The remainder of chapter two will serve to clarify this development.

III. Methodology: “The Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of Worldview”

Our task, then, is to chart the path from “living mind” to “Dasein”—the path that leads Heidegger to “fundamental ontology”. His point of departure, let us recall, is the question of how to enter, and productively so, into the circle of situated, historical experience—indeed, into the *lived* experience of “living mind”. Recall also that Heidegger has already asserted the inadequacy of the “theoretical attitude” of “living mind” even for fully acknowledging its dependence upon this circularity, much less for “leaping into it” in a productive way. If philosophy is to penetrate this sphere of experience, Heidegger maintains, it must do so pre-theoretically, which is to say it must overcome its own history as an exclusively theoretical science.

Heidegger offers his first account of how philosophy is to achieve this pre-theoretical “leap” (*Sprung*) into lived experience in his 1919 lecture course “The Idea of Philosophy

and the Problem of Worldview.” The lecture begins with a reappropriation of the “circularity of logic” argument, formulated this time in terms of a tension in “the idea of philosophy” itself that Heidegger calls “the paradox of the problem of worldview”. On the one hand, philosophy’s “immanent task” has traditionally been that of “teaching” a “worldview”, that is, of bringing to rest “the inner struggle with the puzzles of life and the world...by establishing the ultimate nature of these”. As such, Heidegger maintains, “every great philosophy realizes itself in a worldview”—an ordering of things that aspires to be “in every sense ultimate, universal, and of universal validity”.³⁶ On the other hand, especially since the advent of modernity and of Kant’s project in particular, the facility of philosophy for teaching worldview has come to be understood as dependent upon the prior task of providing “a scientifically elaborated foundation upon which a possible scientific worldview can arise”.³⁷ Though this second assessment of philosophy’s proper employment still culminates ultimately in a worldview (a “critical and scientific” one to be precise), the relation here between philosophy and worldview has changed: in this second case, worldview is no longer philosophy’s “immanent task”, but instead “stands right at the limit of philosophy” insofar as it presupposes the critical science of value as its “necessary foundation”.³⁸

³⁶Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 7.

³⁷Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 7.

³⁸Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 8-9. Heidegger addresses the inadequacy of “value philosophy” for attaining to primordial science explicitly and at length in a second lecture course offered in the summer semester of 1919, “Phenomenology and Transcendental Philosophy of Value”. Heidegger’s concern here is to demonstrate the advantage of phenomenology (over the Neo-Kantian paradigm ascendant at that time) for capturing “lived experience”. “The philosophy of value”, Heidegger explains, “is the authentic scientific philosophy of culture, which does not have the presumptuous ambition of creating new values, but interprets factually existing

Heidegger finds both of these conceptions of philosophy wanting, and his intent is to exploit the tension between the two in order to show that “the construction of a worldview in no way belongs to philosophy”, not even in the latter sense of a “boundary task”.³⁹ His strategy for demonstrating this incompatibility is to bring the “unphilosophical character of worldview” into stark relief over and against “the idea of philosophy as primordial science”.⁴⁰ This incompatibility can be glimpsed, first and foremost, according to Heidegger, in the difference between the aspiration to “absolute validity” of worldview on the one hand, and the recognition of the “circularity” of primordial science on the other. The problem Heidegger points to here is a familiar one:

The idea of philosophy as primordial science can and must, in so far as it is supposed to make visible precisely the origin and scope of the problem-*domain* of science, itself be scientifically demonstrated, and, as primordially scientific, only by means of a primordial scientific method...The idea of philosophy must in a certain way already be scientifically elaborated in order to define itself.⁴¹

Though this problem is traditionally conceived as an obstacle to philosophy, Heidegger argues that it is in fact definitive of philosophy’s method, and, indeed, a condition of its possibility and progress:

culture in terms of universally valid values. It is *critical* in so far as it “examines the factual material of thought [in the given sciences], willing, feeling, with a view to universal and necessary validity.” (124) Though this approach to philosophy acknowledges, as Heidegger does, that the discourses of empirical science must find their “firm foundation in experience”, it fails to go far enough in that it continues to understand experience in terms of universal values (“the good, the true, the beautiful, the holy”). In Heidegger’s estimation, thus, value philosophy still operates within the theoretical attitude insofar as it neutralizes experience into a logic of reified concepts that fails, once again, to penetrate the primordial sphere of lived experience. See in *Towards the Definition of Philosophy*, trans. Ted Sadler, London: The Athlone Press, 2000, 101-171.

³⁹Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 10.

⁴⁰Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 10.

⁴¹Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 13.

The circularity of self-presupposition and self-grounding...is not an artificial, cleverly constructed difficulty, but is already the expression of an essential characteristic of philosophy, and of the distinctive nature of its method. This method must put us in a position to *overcome* the apparently unavoidable circularity, in such a way that this circularity can be immediately seen as necessary and as belonging to the essence of philosophy.⁴²

If philosophy is to make sense of itself as primordial science, thus, it must acknowledge, first, that it is ultimately a self-grounding enterprise, and provide, second, an account of how its self-grounding is productive rather than vicious.

Having clarified the aims of his inquiry, Heidegger devotes the remainder of the course to showing why these aims cannot be achieved within the theoretical attitude (part one),⁴³ and to explaining, then, how their fulfillment is to be sought in the idea of “phenomenology as pre-theoretical primordial science” (part two).⁴⁴ Insofar as we are already acquainted with the general contours of the concerns addressed in part one, I will turn directly to part two, attending first to Heidegger’s understanding of “phenomenology” as the possibility for a pre-theoretical “leap” into life-experience, and, second, to his phenomenological descriptions of two experiences in particular that are

⁴²Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 14.

⁴³Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 11-52. It is important to keep in mind here that Heidegger never recommends a wholesale rejection of the value of theoretical inquiry. His concern is simply to show that such inquiry cannot be understood as primordial science insofar as it is grounded in something still more primordial: “This primacy of the theoretical must be broken, but not in order to proclaim the primacy of the practical, and not in order to introduce something that shows the problems from a new side, but because the theoretical itself and as such refers back to something pre-theoretical”. (50)

⁴⁴Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 53-99.

pivotal for the development of fundamental ontology: “the experience of the question: ‘Is there something?’” and “environmental experience”.⁴⁵

From Heidegger’s standpoint on the outset of part two, the philosophical implications of transitioning from “theoretical inquiry” to “phenomenology” could scarcely be more profound:

We are standing at the methodological cross-road which will decide on the very life or death of philosophy. We stand at an abyss: either into nothingness, that is, absolute reification, pure thingness, or we somehow leap into *another world*, more precisely, we manage for the first time to make the leap [*Sprung*] into the world as such.⁴⁶

On its face, however, the suggestion that this “leap into the world” is to be achieved through “phenomenology” is perhaps puzzling, especially to those acquainted with the complexities of Husserl’s classical formulation of the project. If the problem with

⁴⁵Heidegger’s criticisms of the theoretical attitude in part one of “The Problem of Worldview” closely parallel those of the Scotus dissertation. The central thrust of these criticisms, once again, is that this attitude fails to penetrate to the sphere of lived experience in which its meaning is ultimately grounded and in which the enabling aspects of its circularity can be glimpsed. Abstracted from this prior context, the problem of circularity can appear only as an obstacle to the theoretical attitude, and as such the very ground upon which its meaning is based remains concealed from it. In part one, Heidegger articulates this difficulty specifically in terms of philosophy’s unsuccessful attempts to find a “way out” of this circularity through appeals, respectively, to progress in the history of philosophy (14-18), to “the philosopher’s scientific attitude of mind” (18-19), to “inductive metaphysics” (20-23), and finally, to “teleological-critical method” (which inverts the emphasis of the latter three on “the object of knowledge”, and focuses on “the knowledge of the object”, unfortunately to the same misguided result (24-52). For the sake of brevity, I will not discuss the details of these criticisms here. Make no mistake, however, that Heidegger sees his working-through of the theoretical problematic in part one as essential groundwork for part two. For it is only in seeing the theoretical trajectory through to its logical conclusion, he maintains, that the possibility of a “leap” into the world can be glimpsed. According to Heidegger, this trajectory ends in a reified context of pure things, a context whose neglect of the question of its own meaning gives rise to the motivating question of part two: “Is there even a single thing when there are only things? Then there would be no thing at all; not even *nothing*, because with the sole supremacy of the sphere of things there is not even the ‘there is’ [*es gibt*]. Is there the ‘there is’?” Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 52.

⁴⁶Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 53.

theoretical inquiry, after all, is that its search for “pure thingness” neutralizes the lived experience in which the thought that “there is something” first becomes intelligible, then what sense does it make to attempt to rediscover this experience by systematically reducing it to the “pure intuition” of “eidetic” structures?

Heidegger admits that his attempt to vindicate a “pre-theoretical” phenomenology marks a departure from the *letter* of Husserlian law, but he maintains, nonetheless, that this departure remains true to Husserl in *spirit*. Says Heidegger,

The fundamental methodological problem of phenomenology, the question concerning the scientific disclosure of the sphere of lived experience, itself stands under phenomenology’s ‘principle of all principles’. Husserl formulates it thus: ‘Everything that presents itself...originarily in “intuition” is to be taken simply...as it gives itself.’ This is the ‘principle of principles’, in regard to which ‘no conceivable theory can lead us astray’. If by a principle one were to understand a theoretical proposition, this designation would not be fitting. However, that Husserl speaks of a *principle* of principles, of something that precedes all principles, in regard to which no theory can lead us astray, already shows (although Husserl does not explicitly say so) that it does not have a theoretical character. It is the primordial intention of a genuine life, the primordial bearing of life-experience and life as such, the absolute *sympathy with life* that is identical with life-experience.⁴⁷

This phenomenological “bearing” toward life, Heidegger continues, cannot be achieved in the construction of a “system of concepts” (“no matter how extensive”) insofar as pursuing its achievement in this “merely mechanical” way leads right back to the very “formalism” and “concealment of all genuine problems” that it originally sets out to overcome.⁴⁸ Phenomenology is not to be understood, thus, as just another “taking-up of a standpoint” from which a particular “worldview” can then be systematically constructed

⁴⁷Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 92.

⁴⁸Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 93. The indictment here of Husserlian phenomenology is thinly veiled at best, and it is clear, in any case, that the insights that would culminate in Heidegger’s infamous “break” with Husserl upon the publication of *Being and Time* in 1926 are already in play in 1919.

and validated. Rather, phenomenology is the “primal habitus” of *living* thinking, the fundamental human activity from out of which the possibility of *any meaningful standpoint at all* first arises.

Though Heidegger does not unpack this notion of the “primal habitus” in any significant detail, a closer look at the meaning of his unique choice of language here can help to clarify the sense in which he sees this phenomenological “bearing” as facilitating a productive “leap” into “life-experience”. To begin with, the literal meaning of the phrase “primal habitus” itself is already instructive: the content of phenomenological consciousness—at least on Heidegger’s reading of Husserl’s “principle of principles”—is quite literally the “first” or “fundamental having” (from the Latin “*primalis*” + verb “*habere*” + verbal noun suffix “-*tus*”) of “everything that presents itself...simply as it gives itself” in “life-experience”. As such, every meaningful theoretical “having” of “life-experience” (including all “standpoints”, “worldviews”, and “values”) already presupposes the pre-theoretical “fundamental having” of phenomenological consciousness.

At this point, however, the problem of circularity once again asserts itself. For if the “fundamental having” of phenomenological consciousness is the ground of *every* meaningful “having”, then how are we to understand the meaning of the “fundamental having” itself? Are we to believe, in all seriousness, that the meaning of this “primal habitus” is explicable solely in terms of itself? The character of this difficulty can be glimpsed in view of two additional resonances of “primal habitus” that also derive from *habere* and that Heidegger undoubtedly has in mind here even if he leaves them unmentioned: first, “habitat”—the environmental sphere that is naturally suited to the

particular kind of being that finds itself “at home” there; and second, “habit”—an acquired pattern of behavior that is so well instantiated in its practitioner’s way of life that its influence is scarcely noticeable to the practitioner herself.

As “habitat” and “habit” respectively, the “primal habitus” is simultaneously revealed and concealed in consciousness: as “identical with life-experience”, this “fundamental having” is disclosed where consciousness is most “at home”; but as that which is most “familiar”, the “primal *habitus*” so thoroughly pervades the “at home” that it threatens to disappear entirely unless its very “nearness” (and the difficulties raised by its “nearness”) are grasped explicitly in consciousness—in other words, unless the character of “fundamental having” as that which is most near, and thus, as that which is most readily forgotten, can be made an issue for “fundamental having” itself. It is precisely in this challenge that Heidegger sees the possibility for making a productive “leap” into life-experience. In order to achieve this “leap”, the “fundamental having” of phenomenological consciousness must become a *phenomenon for itself*: it must be made to show itself in life-experience *as always already “there”*, especially in those experiences where the prevalence of the theoretical attitude has rendered it all but invisible.

On Heidegger’s reading, then, the idea of philosophy as a self-grounding, productively-circular “primordial science” becomes thinkable for the first time in this phenomenological “leap” into life-experience. Insofar as life-experience itself is experienced on the basis of its “primal habitus”, however, “phenomenology can prove itself only through itself”,⁴⁹ and accordingly, it “can progress only through an absolute

⁴⁹Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 93.

sinking into life as such” that is always “only preliminary” and “never concluded”.⁵⁰ Phenomenology thus inaugurates an *ongoing* philosophical task that is opposed in its very essence to the “freezing, finality, end, and system” of “worldview” philosophy in which “life is objectified and frozen in a definite moment”.⁵¹ In phenomenological inquiry, Heidegger concludes,

[T]heories do not struggle with one another...but only genuine with ungentuine insights. The genuine insights, however, can only be arrived at through honest and uncompromising sinking into the genuineness of life as such, in the final event only through the genuineness of *personal life* as such.⁵²

To be sure, there is no shortage of such insights in the second half of the “Worldview” lecture course. Two in particular stand out, however, as especially pertinent for the development of fundamental ontology, *viz.*, Heidegger’s discussions of “the experience of the question: ‘Is there something?’” and “environmental experience”—two phenomena in which he suggests the pre-theoretical “fundamental having” of life-experience can be glimpsed. In addition to being the seminal articulations of the insights he will soon call “the question of being” and “being-in-the-world” respectively, Heidegger’s discussions of these two experiences provide concrete examples of how he carries out the task of “sinking into the genuineness of *personal life*” that is definitive of his *hermeneutic* understanding of phenomenology.

Heidegger’s discussions of these two experiences proceed through a kind of phenomenological reduction. Unlike that of Husserl, however, Heidegger’s reduction

⁵⁰Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 188. Excerpt from the transcript by Franz-Josef Brecht.

⁵¹Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 187-188. Excerpt from the transcript by Franz-Josef Brecht.

⁵²Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 188. Excerpt from the transcript by Franz-Josef Brecht.

does not terminate in a “subjective” field of possible “objects”, but aims instead to reduce experience still further to a sphere of meaning beyond even the “meant world” of subjectively constituted objectivity. The insight that prompts Heidegger’s recognition of the need for this more “radical” reduction is the insufficiency of any interrogation of the “psychic subject” on its own to ground the *meaning* of the very “subject” it presupposes, let alone that of the “object” allegedly constituted therein:

Knowing as a psychic process is in no way explained when I acknowledge it as occurring in a psychic subject. One thing is put in relation to another thing, one psychic thing is connected to another, but the material context of the psychic itself is still highly problematic. What is it supposed to mean that one psychic thing is in another, and establishes a connection with something external to it? We are thrown from one thing to another, which like any thing remains mute.⁵³

What is in question, for Heidegger, then, is precisely the meaning of the subjectivity of the subject. But insofar as his aim is to clarify the context in which “subjectivity” itself is meaningful, he realizes that he must leave even the presupposition of the subject behind and attend to life-experience “simply as it gives itself”.

Heidegger’s first task, thus, is to leap into the circle: if he wishes to access the “primal habitus” of life-experience that precedes even the “subject” of consciousness, he must first find a way to make this “fundamental having” a phenomenon for itself. He begins with “the experience of the question ‘Is there something?’”.⁵⁴ His intention in exploring

⁵³Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 54.

⁵⁴It is crucial to point out again (see note 46) that Heidegger is not simply pulling this particular experience out of thin air as a kind of isolated counter-example to the theoretical accounts of experience he is criticizing. His claim is rather that the history of the idea of philosophy as theoretical science has led up to this question, but is unprepared to deal with it in a meaningful way. Without this history, in other words, the problem Heidegger is pursuing would never have arisen *as a problem*: “We now know that a comprehensible series of problems and questions has led us to this insignificant and miserly question [‘Is there something?’]. If we forget this road, we deny our provenance *and ourselves*. If *we* were not at all first here, then there would be no such question.” And

this experience is to understand what is implied in the “simple sense” of this question *as it is lived*, or again, “to hear out the motives from which it lives”.⁵⁵ What, then, is given to *living* understanding in the experience of this question? Perhaps most important is what we do *not* find therein: “when we simply give ourselves over to this experience,” Heidegger maintains, “we know nothing of a process passing before us”, and “neither anything physical nor anything psychic is given”.⁵⁶ The moment one stands back from this experience, no doubt, it occurs to one that, at the very least, a psychic substance is presupposed; but *as the experience itself is lived* no such reification is as yet in play.

What *is* in play, Heidegger contends, is “the interrogative comportment”: “in asking ‘Is there something?’ I comport myself by setting something, indeed anything whatsoever, before me as questionable.”⁵⁷ But already a caveat is necessary, for as this experience of comportment is *lived*, nothing like an ‘I’ is discovered; what is experienced, rather, is “just that ‘it lives’ [*es lebt*], moreover that it is directed towards something by way of questioning, something that is itself questionable”.⁵⁸ But yet again,

still more explicitly: “The content of the question ‘Is there something?’ resulted from following the assumption of a single exclusive reified context as existent (absolutization of thingliness).” Martin Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 53, 59.

⁵⁵Given the popularity of the view that Heidegger’s early project aims at a kind of “transcendental” delineation of the “conditions of possibility” for subjective meaning as such, it is most interesting to note that Heidegger in fact takes great pains (here and elsewhere) to distinguish his interest in “hearing out the motives of lived experience” from any kind of systematic aspiration to lay out “conditions” for the “emergence” of meaning. Says Heidegger, “[n]o misunderstanding must creep into the word ‘motive’. To hear out motives does not mean to search out causes of emergence or reifying conditions [*Be-dingungen*], it does not mean to search out things which explain the experience in a thingly way and within a thingly context.” Martin Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 55.

⁵⁶Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 55.

⁵⁷Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 55.

⁵⁸Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 56.

Heidegger warns, we must be on our guard; for though “it is tempting to interpret the comportment of questioning in relation to a sought-after answer”, such interpretations import a theoretical motivation that leads away from the “simple sense of the experience.”⁵⁹ If we remain faithful to the lived experience as such, however, we find that in asking ‘Is there something?’, the “living towards something” of the questioning comportment is not given in relation to a concrete something (such as a “sought-after answer”) at all; it is given, rather, as a questioning of something in relation to the very possibility of “anything whatsoever”—indeed, as a questioning whether “there is” a something *in any case*. Heidegger puts the point as follows:

The questioning has a definite content: whether ‘*there is*’ a something, that is the question. The ‘there is’ [es geben] stands in question, or, more accurately, stands in questioning. It is not asked whether something moves or rests, whether something contradicts itself, whether something works, whether something exists, whether something values, whether something ought to be, but rather whether *there is* something. What does “there is” mean?⁶⁰

The fact that we are so accustomed to employing the “there is” with such seeming ease in such a wide variety of contexts (“there are numbers”, “there are trees”, “there is still rain today”), Heidegger continues, only testifies further to the futility of attempting to discern “the identical moment of meaning” common to these contexts—the meaning of “there is” as it pertains, stripped of all particular meanings, to “anything whatsoever”—in relation to an ever more “universal” or “general” something. For insofar as “it belongs to the meaning of ‘something in general’ to relate to something concrete”, any attempt to

⁵⁹Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 56. Heidegger has Aristotle in mind here: “Questioning comportment is motivated, one might say, by a desire to know. It arises from a drive for knowledge which itself originates from...astonishment and wonder.”

⁶⁰Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 56-57.

understand “the meaningful character” of *this ‘relating’ itself* in terms of even the most general “something” must still remain problematic.⁶¹

But if no “thingly” context can do the job, Heidegger asks, where, then, are we to find the “meaningful motive for the meaning of ‘there is’?”⁶² Heidegger’s ultimate concern, as we shall soon see, is to show that the meaning of this “there is” is to be understood in relation to the essential difference between the theoretical sphere of “things” and the pre-theoretical sphere of meaning opened by an ‘I’ that is always already “in the world” (the ‘I’ of “environmental experience”). In the present context, however, Heidegger’s interest is merely to show that even the most stripped-down, presuppositionless attempt to understand the meaning of experience in relation to “things”—the experience of the question ‘Is there something?’—already gestures, at least insofar as it is *lived*, toward “new contextures of meaning” that “refer the question and its content (there is) beyond itself”—that is, beyond the sphere of things.⁶³ From this experience, Heidegger concludes, “a ground-laying and essential insight can now be achieved”, *viz.*, that lived experience is to be understood as “event [*Er-eignis*]”, as “meaningful, [rather than] thing-like”:⁶⁴

⁶¹Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 57. Note the profound resonance here between this insight and Heidegger’s previous claim in the Scotus dissertation that the proposed investigation of “living mind” presents an opportunity to “make the hylomorphic relation a problem anew”. Here again, Heidegger is aiming to show that the possibility of a meaningful relation between “something general” (form) and “something concrete” (matter) already points beyond the “thingly” sphere of meaning.

⁶²Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 57.

⁶³Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 57.

⁶⁴Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 58. Note here that even though we are still just on the way to “fundamental ontology”, Heidegger has already arrived at the essential insight (the character of lived experience as *Ereignis* (“event”, or “event of appropriation”)) that will eventually lead him, upon attending to its “concealed richness”, to abandon “fundamental ontology” in the middle 1930’s. I will attend to this development in more explicit detail in chapter three.

The living out of ex-perience is not a thing that exists in brute fashion, beginning and ceasing to be like a process [*Vorgang*] passing by before us. The ‘relating to’ is not a thing-like part, to which some other thing, the ‘something’ is attached. The living and the lived of experience are not joined together in the manner of existing objects...From this particular experience, the non-thingly character of all experiences whatsoever can be brought to full intuitive understanding.⁶⁵

To summarize, then, Heidegger’s exploration of the question ‘Is there something?’ has a three-fold significance. First, it gives an experience of the limit of the theoretical attitude by beginning with the most basic question that can be asked within this attitude and then showing that the resources of this attitude itself are insufficient to ground the meaning of the question. Second, it shows that all experiences have, at bottom, a non-thingly character by demonstrating the inadequacy of even the most general “something” for explaining the meaning of the “there is” that is given in any experience whatsoever.⁶⁶ Finally, in showing the non-thingly character of all experience, this question points to “new contextures of meaning” in which the “event-character” of lived experience can be glimpsed.

This insight into the character of experience as “event” comes into sharper relief in Heidegger’s description of a second experience that initially “stands in contrast to the first”, *viz.*, “environmental experience”. Heidegger incarnates this experience for his students, famously, by drawing them into an environmental experience of the very lectern at which he is standing. The engaging clarity of this description merits citing it at length:

⁶⁵Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 59.

⁶⁶That the “there is” is given in any experience whatsoever is somewhat clearer in German than it is in English, insofar as the German “es gibt” means, quite literally, “it gives”. In the phenomenological context in which Heidegger is working, “experience” means, at the most general level at least, the intuition of what gives itself. Without the “es gibt”, then, there simply is no experience to speak of, at least not in any meaningful sense.

You come as usual into this lecture-room at the usual hour and go to *your* usual place. Focus on this experience of ‘seeing *your* place’, or you can in turn put yourselves in my own position: coming into the lecture-room, I see the lectern...What do ‘I’ see? Brown surfaces, at right angles to one another? No, I see something else. A largish box with another smaller one set upon it? Not at all. I see the lectern at which I am to speak. You see the lectern, from which you are to be addressed, and from where I have spoken to you previously. In pure experience there is no ‘founding’ interconnection, as if I first of all see intersecting brown surfaces, which then reveal themselves to me as a box, then as a desk, then as an academic lecturing desk, a lectern, so that I attach lecternhood to the box like a label. All that is simply bad and misguided interpretation, diversion from a pure seeing into the experience. I see the lectern in one fell swoop, so to speak, and not in isolation, but as adjusted a bit too high for me. I see—and immediately so—a book lying upon it as annoying to me (a book, not a collection of layered pages with black marks strewn upon them), I see the lectern in an orientation, an illumination, a background.⁶⁷

In this environmental experience of the lectern, the non-thingly character of experience once again stands out. This time, however, we get a much clearer picture of how the “sinking into lived experience” at stake here is ultimately a sinking into *personal* experience. For in this second case, the ‘I’ that is “my own” (which was absent from the presuppositionless experience of “living towards something”) is very much “there”, but in a significantly different way than the reifying ‘I’ of subjective, theoretical consciousness. Far from standing over and against a fixed object whose givenness is indifferent to “my I” in particular, ‘I’ experience the lectern as immediately meaningful *for me* on the basis of my previous familiarity with (and indeed, my orientation within) its environmental context. My *present* experience, in other words, happens from out of my *past* toward my *future*: ‘I’ go “out toward” the lectern on the basis of my already “having been” there with it.⁶⁸

⁶⁷Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 59-60.

⁶⁸The intimate relation of the future to the past and present is clearer in the German, where the word for “future” indicates, literally, what is “coming toward”: *die Zukunft* (derived from *zu* (toward) + *kommen* (to come)).

But if environmental experience is always personal, Heidegger insists, it is by no means akin to a radical subjectivization of the meaning of experience. On the contrary, he argues, this description of the environmental character of the lectern's givenness is equally appropriate to the experience of persons from fundamentally different environments—an insight that he clarifies through an instructive (if woefully dated) description of the same experience as undergone by a “Negro from Senegal”. While it is difficult to say precisely *what* the latter sees when confronted with the lectern (perhaps, Heidegger ventures, “something to do with magic” or “something behind which one could find protection against arrows and flying stones”), the *how* of his seeing is precisely the same as that of the university student: the “lectern” is given to him as meaningful on the basis of his own previous environmental experience.⁶⁹ Moreover, even if his own environmental sphere is so far removed from that of the “lectern” that he can see it only as “something which *he* cannot make out”, it remains the case that he sees it *as such* on the basis of its *strangeness* in respect to the *familiarity* of his own environment. In short, Heidegger maintains, “the meaningful character of ‘instrumental strangeness’ and the meaningful character of the ‘lectern’ are in their essence absolutely identical”.⁷⁰

The “essence” of this environmental sphere of “non-thingly” meaning, Heidegger concludes, is its “worldly” character:

In the experience of seeing the lectern something is given to me from out of an immediate environment [*Umwelt*]. This environmental milieu...does not consist just of things, objects, which are then conceived as meaning this and this; rather, the meaningful character is primary and immediately given to me without any mental detours across thing-oriented apprehension. Living in an environment, it

⁶⁹Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 60.

⁷⁰Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 61.

signifies to me everywhere and always, everything has the character of world. It is everywhere the case that ‘*it worlds*’ [*es weltet*].⁷¹

To be sure, Heidegger’s unorthodox usage of “world” as a verb in this passage is strategically significant. His aim here is to emphasize that the worldly “essence” of environmental experience is not to be understood as the ultimate “whatness” of a fixed “*some-thing*”, but that it signifies, instead, the originary “how” of an ongoing “happening” or “event”. The worldly “essence” of lived experience, thus, pertains not to the “what” of its being, but to the “how” of its being—to the “way” or “mode” of being that is most proper to it. The “how” of lived experience, in short, is that “it worlds” *for me*.

What this “how” of lived experience indicates, Heidegger maintains, is that the being of “my” particular, historical ‘I’ and that of the “it worlds” are fundamentally correlative: “only through the accord of this particular ‘I’ does it experience something environmental, where we can say that ‘it worlds’. Wherever and whenever it worlds for me, *I am somehow there*”.⁷² But if the *meaning* of my status as “there” always already includes the “it worlds”, once “there”, it remains an essential possibility of my experience to neutralize the “worldly” character of my *living* ‘I’ into the detached, indifferent ‘I’ of theoretical comportment. In fact, Heidegger claims, it is precisely this “process” of “de-vivification” (*Ent-leben*, the removal of the ‘I’ from life) that we observed at work in the first experience—that of the question ‘Is there something?’. As he explains,

I do not find myself [in this experience]. The ‘anything whatsoever’, about whose ‘there is’ I ask, does not ‘world’. The worldly here is extinguished, and we grasp every potential environing world as ‘anything whatsoever’. This grasping, this firm fixing of the object as such, occurs at the cost of forcing back my own ‘I’. It

⁷¹Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 61.

⁷²Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 62.

belongs to the meaning of ‘anything whatsoever’ that in its determination *I do not* as such come into accord with it: this resonating, this going out of myself [that is characteristic of worldly experience], is prevented. The object, being an object as such, does not touch *me*. The ‘I’ that firmly fixes is no longer *I myself*. The firm fixing as an experience is still only a rudiment of vital experience; it is a de-vivification [*Ent-leben*]. What is objectified, what is known, is as such re-moved [*ent-fernt*], lifted out of the actual experience. The objective occurrence, the happening as objectified and known, we describe as a *process*; it simply passes before my knowing ‘I’, to which it is related only by being-known, i.e. in a flaccid I-relatedness reduced to the minimum of life-experience...In the theoretical comportment, I am directed to something, but *I do not live* (as historical ‘I’) towards this or that worldly element.⁷³

Against the backdrop of this theoretical process of de-vivification, Heidegger continues, the “event-character” of lived experience is all the more apparent:

Lived experience does not pass in front of me like a thing, but I appropriate [*er-eigne*] it to myself, and it appropriates itself according to its essence. If I understand it in this way, then I understand it not as process, as thing, as object, but in a quite new way, as an event of appropriation [*Ereignis*]...The experiences are events of appropriation in so far as they live out of one’s ‘own-ness’, and life lives only in this way.⁷⁴

On the basis of the insights derived through the description of these two experiences, Heidegger goes on to give a detailed (and tremendously complicated) account of the theoretical attitude’s pre-theoretical origin in which he specifies the different “levels” of theoretical de-vivification and grounds their “motives” in “worldly” and “pre-worldly” lived experience.⁷⁵ Though the particulars of this account are beyond the scope of our

⁷³Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 62.

⁷⁴Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 63.

⁷⁵Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 71-79, 95-99. The following table (next page) excerpted from Appendix II (186) gives the general contours of Heidegger’s account. For a helpful exposition of this account, see Theodore Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger’s Being and Time*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, 38 ff.

inquiry, there are two issues that merit brief mention as germane to the advancement of our problematic. The first is that the outcome of this account is by no means a rejection of the philosophical importance of the theoretical attitude. On the contrary, Heidegger is explicit that “research into the various levels of theoretization and into their motivational contextures is an important concern of philosophy”.⁷⁶ His aim, then, is not to reject theory, but rather to show that the meaning of being is not exhausted in the theoretical sphere: “the ultimate problems remain concealed when theoretization itself is absolutized without understanding its origin in ‘life’, i.e. without comprehending the process of ever intensifying objectification as a process of de-vivification”.⁷⁷

The second issue that merits our attention is Heidegger’s eleventh-hour association of the “event-character” of worldly experience with “hermeneutical intuition”. Though the hermeneutic character of his understanding of phenomenology’s “primal habitus” has been implicit all along, he makes this connection explicit for the first time on the very last page of his lectures:

The empowering experiencing of living experience that takes itself along is the understanding intuition, the *hermeneutical intuition*, the originary phenomenological back-and-forth formation of the receipts and precepts from which all theoretical objectification, indeed every transcendent positing, falls out.

<u>The Pre-theoretical Something</u>		<u>The Theoretical Something</u>	
Pre-worldly something	worldly something	objective-formal-logical something	object-like something
(fundamental moment of life as such)	(fundamental moment of definite experiential spheres; aesthetic)	(motivated in the primal-something)	(motivated in the genuine experiential world)
primal-something	genuine experiential world		

⁷⁶Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 76.

⁷⁷Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 76.

Universality of word meanings primarily indicates something originary: worldliness of experienced experiencing.⁷⁸

The picture that emerges is that Heidegger's hermeneutic-phenomenology points to an origin of meaning that is prior even to "givenness". For though we must "begin" with experience "simply as it is given", the very possibility of our so beginning indicates that we have already begun: the "given" itself appears in an event of appropriation that is meaningful as such only insofar as it is already underway in "experienced" experiencing. As given, thus, the "phenomenon" is not an object, but *showing*, and understanding is not a matter of "fixing on" the given, but of working backward (and forward) from the given—of "following the movement of showing".

By the end of the "Worldview" lectures, then, Heidegger is well on the way to *Being and Time*. First, his investigation of the correlative 'relating-to' of the personal, historical 'I' and the "it worlds" in environmental experience significantly clarifies the question posed in 1915 of how to articulate the primal togetherness of thinking and being in "living mind". Second, his account of the origin of theoretical experience as the "de-vivification" of living events of hermeneutic appropriation speaks clearly to the "how" of his inkling in 1915 that situated, historical "interpretation *must become a meaning determining element*" of the theoretical attitude. Finally and most importantly, his strategy of following the "guiding question" ("Is there something?") of the theoretical attitude over to the "grounding question" (as he will later call it)⁷⁹ of how the guiding

⁷⁸Heidegger, "The Problem of Worldview", 99.

⁷⁹As we shall see, this event of "crossing over" from "the guiding question" to "the grounding question" is among the central themes of "beyng-historical thinking" in *Contributions to Philosophy*. Heidegger calls this activity "thinking in the crossing" and he describes its primary accomplishment in terms of "preparation for the other questioning". Though he penned the latter in 1936, it is a suitable enough description

question itself is meaningful provides a concrete enactment of how his proposed reorientation of philosophy is to be carried out, and of how traditional philosophical discourse is affected by and “taken over” into this transition. More specifically, upon transitioning into the grounding sphere of meaning toward which the guiding question only gestures, we find that the question of “being” (formerly addressed to *a being*—“something”) is now addressed to *be-ing*, an event of appropriation in which the possibility of meaningful “being-there” is grounded. Accordingly, we find that the question of “essence” (formerly addressed to the ultimate “whatness” of *a being*) is now addressed to the “ownmost how” of *be-ing*, to the way or mode of being that is most characteristic of a being-in-activity. The crucial insight here is that the proposed reorientation of philosophy is *anything but*—is indeed *opposed in its very constitution*—to the rejection of traditional philosophical discourse: on the contrary, it can be carried out only through the hermeneutic appropriation of precisely *this* discourse into new contexts of meaning *toward which this discourse, in its ownmost possibility, already gestures*. As we shall see, this very insight underlies both the rise and the fall of fundamental ontology.

IV. Terminology: *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*

If the methodological insights that give rise to the central problematic of *Being and Time* are brought to light in the 1919 “Worldview” lectures, the terminology that Heidegger employs in advancing this problematic is developed in a second course of lectures offered in 1923: *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*. Since this second

indeed of his discussion of the question ‘Is there something?’ in 1919. Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, 303.

lecture course is directed primarily at appropriating familiar insights into a new terminological context, we will approach it with the following two aims in mind: first, to situate important new terminology in relation to the ground we have already covered; and second, to reappropriate the central tasks of Heidegger's general problematic in terms of this new language.

Our first concern is to clarify the meaning of six terms in particular as they relate to one another in the following synopsis of the problematic of *Being and Time*: fundamental ontology is an investigation of the *being-in-the-world* of *Dasein* through a *hermeneutics* of the *existentials* exhibited in its *facticity*. Insofar as the meaning of each of these terms is grounded in *Dasein*, it is appropriate to begin there. Like "living mind" in the Scotus dissertation and the "personal, historical 'I'" in the "Worldview" lectures, "Dasein" names the special kind of being who is always already "there", and whose "being-there" is the ground of meaning for all other beings. Quite literally, *Dasein* is the kind of being (*Sein*) whose "there" (*da*) is already "there" with it: *Da-sein*.

As we have seen, the uniqueness of this being is that—unlike trees, numbers and Rembrandt paintings—it is "there" in such a way that its "there" is meaningful *for itself*. Though it is capable of "living toward" the meaning of its own "there" as though it were merely a static object (a thing among other things), the very *act* of addressing itself *to itself* in this way indicates already that it is not just *a being*, but *be-ing*: not simply a thing, but meaningful activity. As activity, moreover, the meaning of *Dasein*'s "there" has the character of "event": it is *present* to itself from out of its *past* toward its *future*, and as such its self-understanding is always both already underway (in its having-been) and as yet provisional (in its toward-which). As Heidegger puts the point, "Dasein is

Dasein only in it *itself*. It is, though as *being-on-the-way* of itself to *itself!*".⁸⁰ In short, the essence of Dasein—the way of being that is most proper to it—is its “existence” in itself, or more precisely, its *existing* from itself toward itself.

As we have also seen, the “there” of this being-for-itself, at least in its most primordial sphere of activity, is not in isolation, standing, as it were, over and against the “objects” of its experience; rather, its “there” is *lived* in the “back and forth” of “situated, historical experience” (“living mind”), or again, in the “event of appropriating” itself, personally, to its “immediate environment” (“personal, historical ‘I’”). To exist in a meaningful way from out of the past toward the future, after all, is to be “there” as “myself” right “now”, in “this” particular place, at “this” particular time. Heidegger’s term for this personal, historically-situated character of Dasein’s being is “facticity”, and insofar as Dasein’s lived-experience is a mode of this being, he refers to it as “factual life”:

“Facticity” is the designation we will use for the character of the being of “our” “own” *Dasein*. More precisely, this expression means: *in each case* “this” Dasein in its being-there *for a while at a particular time* insofar as it is, in the character of its being, “there” *in the manner of be-ing*...Accordingly, “*factual*” means something which is of itself articulated with respect to, on the basis of, and with a view to such a *factual* character of being and “is” in this manner. If we take “life” to be a mode of “being,” then “factual life” means: our own Dasein which is “there” for us in one expression or another of the character of its being, and this expression, too, is in the manner of being.⁸¹

Though we have only just encountered “Dasein” and “facticity” so called, we are already familiar, once again, with the difficulties that Dasein’s facticity presents for its attempts to understand itself and its world. For if factual life is the most primordial sphere of Dasein’s experience, it is for that very reason the sphere that is most readily forgotten; like a pair of eyeglasses on one’s nose, it is so nearby that it vanishes

⁸⁰Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 13.

⁸¹Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 5.

completely unless its nearness, for some reason, becomes an issue. The way in which factual life and its unique sphere of problems first becomes an issue for Heidegger himself is instructive here. For it is not at all the case that he simply *posits* Dasein's facticity in the manner of a counterexample to alternative "theories" or "standpoints" in which the appearances of Dasein's being are saved otherwise; rather, it is only in the *event* of his own situated, historical working-through *to its end* of the theoretical trajectory of understanding that he comes to recognize the dependence of this attitude, and therefore of all "standpoints" entirely, upon a prior context of meaning: the fundamental having of hermeneutical intuition that precedes even "givenness" itself—a sphere that can be accessed, Heidegger claims, only through the interpretation of Dasein's facticity.

But even in the event that the facticity of Dasein's being *does* become an issue, the difficulties have only just begun. For upon glimpsing the priority of facticity as the sphere of being in which the meaning of *all* Dasein's modes of being (including the theoretical attitude and even factual life itself) are ultimately grounded, it becomes clear that the act of *interpreting* facticity is itself a mode of Dasein's factual being, and that, as such, it must reorient its aims in accordance with its unique relation to its subject matter. For if Dasein *is* the ongoing event of appropriating itself, on the basis of its already having-been, to its as yet undetermined future possibilities, then the *interpretation* of Dasein, as a mode of Dasein's being,⁸² must proceed as an open-ended questioning of

⁸²As Heidegger puts the point, "interpretation is itself a possible and distinctive how of the character of being of facticity. Interpreting is a being which belongs to the being of factual life itself." Martin Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 12.

Dasein's previous self-understanding toward as yet undetermined possibilities of its future self-understanding.

Though this reorientation of philosophical questioning in view of the uniqueness of the *being* of the questioner has been Heidegger's chief concern from the very beginning, he associates this task with "ontology" for the first time here in 1923. As is usually the case with Heidegger's appropriations of traditional philosophical terminology, however, the sense of "ontology" he has in mind here is articulated in view of the unsuitability of the traditional meaning for his present purposes. "The fundamental *inadequacy of ontology* in the tradition and today", he explains, "is twofold":

[First], from the very start, its theme is being-an-object, i.e., the objectivity of definite objects, and the object as it is given for an indifferent theoretical meaning, or a material being-an-object for the particular sciences of nature and culture concerned with it, and by means of the regions of objects—should the need arise—the world, but not as it is from out of its being-there for Dasein and the possibilities of this being-there...[Second], [w]hat results from this: it blocks access to that being [*Seienden*] which is decisive within philosophical problems: namely, *Dasein*, from out of which and for the sake of which, philosophy "is".⁸³

In opposition to this traditional sense of ontology as a "doctrine" of "objective being" that obscures the priority of Dasein, Heidegger understands "ontology" as pertaining in a "nonbinding" sense to "any questioning and investigating which is directed to being as such"; the term "ontological", thus, "refers to the posing of questions, explications, concepts, and categories which have arisen from looking at beings as be-ing [*Seiendes als Sein*] or, alternately, have failed to do this".⁸⁴

It is difficult to overstate the importance of Heidegger's emphasis on "questioning" here for understanding his interpretation of ontology and the ontological priority it grants

⁸³Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 2.

⁸⁴Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 2.

to Dasein. “Questions”, Heidegger tells us, “grow out of a confrontation with “subject matter”...and subject matter is *there* only where eyes are.”⁸⁵ In emphasizing “questioning” as the defining activity of ontology, thus, Heidegger is seeking to shift the field of ontological research from the sphere of “objects” (in which the meaning of being is already constituted in advance as “objective”, thus preempting the questioning of the meaning of being *as such*) to the sphere of Dasein’s factual life in which the meaning of being first becomes an issue, or in other words, in which *being as such* is first encountered *as questionable*. Though Heidegger does not yet articulate the “opening” of this field explicitly in terms of Dasein’s “ontological difference” (as he will in *Being and Time*), the “motivation” that gives rise to this name for the ontological priority that is disclosed to Dasein in questioning and that distinguishes Dasein’s *being* from all other *beings* is already clearly manifest:

Being-there *in the manner of be-ing* means: not, and never, to be there primarily as an object of *intuition* and definition on the basis of intuition, as an *object* of which we merely take cognizance and have knowledge. Rather, Dasein is there for itself in the “how” of its ownmost being. The how of its being opens up and circumscribes the respective “there” which is possible for a while at the particular time. Being is itself never the possible object of a having, since what is at issue in it, what it comes to, is itself: *being*.⁸⁶

But if Dasein is *never* the fully disclosed “object” of a “having”, it is *always* already provisionally disclosed to itself in the fundamental having of its factual “there”, and on that basis, as we have seen, its self-understanding is always already both underway and incomplete. In accordance with this hermeneutic character of Dasein’s self-understanding, then, Heidegger’s ontological questioning of Dasein’s factual being is to proceed as a “*hermeneutics* of facticity”. In keeping with his commitment to hermeneutic

⁸⁵Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 4.

⁸⁶Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 5.

understanding, Heidegger situates his usage of the term in reference to the history of the meaning of “hermeneutics”.⁸⁷ Rejecting the modern notion that hermeneutics is a “doctrine *about* interpretation”, Heidegger aligns his usage with what he claims is its original, ancient meaning: a living, discursive *activity* through which being addresses itself to itself—an activity that, in the present context, involves the “*interpreting of facticity* in which facticity is being encountered, seen, grasped, and expressed in concepts.” In short, hermeneutics is the “self-interpretation of facticity”:

Hermeneutics has the task of making the Dasein which is in each case our own accessible to this Dasein itself with regard to the character of its being...In hermeneutics, what is developed for Dasein is a possibility of its becoming and being for itself in the manner of an *understanding* of itself.⁸⁸

⁸⁷Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 6-16. “A few references”, Heidegger maintains, “will allow us to narrow down the original meaning of this word and understand as well the way its meaning has changed.” (6) As one might expect, the story is one of the decline of hermeneutics from a discursive activity closely connected to life (in antiquity) into a methodical and lifeless procedure (in modernity). The key moments here, among others, are Plato (for whom hermeneutics is not “theoretical comprehension”, but “the announcement and making known of the being of a being in its being in relation to...(me)”, 7); Aristotle (for whom hermeneutics is associated with “making what was previously concealed, covered up, available as unconcealed, as there out in the open”, 8); the early Christian church and Augustine (in which hermeneutics pursues (in a commentary or interpretation) what is authentically meant in a text and thereby makes the “matters which are meant accessible, facilitating access to them”, 9); the 17th century (during which the meaning of hermeneutics shifts from “interpretation itself” to “a doctrine about the conditions, objects, means...and practical application of interpretation”, 10); and finally Schleiermacher and Dilthey (in whose work “the idea of hermeneutics which had formerly been viewed in a comprehensive and living manner (cf. Augustine!)” was “reduced”, respectively, to an “art of understanding another’s discourse” and to “the formulation of rules of understanding”, 10-11).

⁸⁸Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 11. In a brief section entitled “The Phenomenological Path of The Hermeneutics of Facticity”, Heidegger reasserts the connection of his work to phenomenology along the same lines as he established it in the “Worldview” lectures. The upshot, once again, is that Heidegger embraces phenomenology as a “how” of research (“phenomenon means a constant *preparation of the path to be traveled*”, 60), but rejects the contemporary “industry” of phenomenology which he claims is consumed by a misplaced preoccupation with “epistemological questions” and a “drive for system” that are in fact “meaningless” to genuine phenomenology. Indeed, Heidegger is not mincing words here: “It is impossible

If this “self-interpretation of facticity” is to be “expressed in concepts”, however, the “concepts” at issue are by no means to be confused with the garden variety “theoretical” kind found in a fixed table of categories. In this context, by contrast, “a ‘concept’ is not a schema but rather a possibility of being”—an expression of the “how” of Dasein’s existence that is thus more appropriately termed an “existential”. As Heidegger explains,

The *ownmost* possibility of be-ing itself which Dasein (facticity) is...may be designated as *existence*. It is with respect to this authentic be-ing itself that facticity is placed into our forehaving when initially engaging it and bringing it into play in our hermeneutical questioning. It is from out of it, on the basis of it, and with a view to it that facticity will be interpretively explicated. The conceptual explicata which grow out of this interpretation are to be designated as *existentials*.⁸⁹

Insofar as these “existentials” are made accessible to Dasein in interpreting its own facticity, moreover, their status, like Dasein’s understanding of itself, is always only *provisional*: they express Dasein “in advance” and “propel it forward” in the manner of a “forehaving”⁹⁰ which, for reasons we have seen, “cannot be made present as the thematic

to make out anything about phenomenology or obtain a definition of it from this philosophical industry. The business is hopeless! All such tendencies are a betrayal of phenomenology and its possibilities. The ruin can no longer be halted!”. See 53-60, especially 57, 58.

⁸⁹Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 12.

⁹⁰On the basis of the ground we have already covered, it should be clear enough what Heidegger means here by “forehaving”. He gives several helpful glosses of this term throughout the course of the lectures, including the following three short passages: “Forehaving is what Dasein is approached as in advance—a formal indication is not a proposition with a fixed meaning, but rather guides us onto the right path of looking.”(ix); “The *anticipatory forehaving of the unity of style which prepares a path of research* in advance not only proves itself regarding its adequacy to its subject matter, but it thereby explicates itself for the first time with regard to the previously still hidden basic characteristics of style in the starting point.” (41); “Looking toward something and seeing it and the defining of what-is-held-in-sight (a defining which works within the looking-toward and actualizes it in the sense of developing it) already in advance “have” what they wish to look into as such and such a being—what is had in advance in this manner

object of a straightforward and exhaustive account”.⁹¹ As such, the self-interpretation of facticity does not come to its end in bringing these “existentials” into view, but merely inaugurates for itself the new labor of appropriating the forehaving developed in these “concepts” into the “toward which” that they indicate only provisionally in the present moment.

Achieving access to these “existentials”, of course, is a substantial hermeneutic feat in its own right. For to begin this event of self-interpretation, Dasein must be able to enter the circle in a productive way: it must develop a forehaving of its own facticity that “puts it onto the right path of looking”.⁹² Since Dasein’s factual character is disclosed to it in the fundamental having of its situated, historical “being-there”, the self-interpretation of facticity must begin, Heidegger contends, where Dasein finds itself “today”, i.e., it must make Dasein’s facticity accessible to it on the basis of its present factual situation. Moreover, since Dasein’s *present* factual situation is intelligible only as a coming-toward itself from out of its having-been, its present forehaving of itself must reflect its past and future trajectories.

Heidegger’s strategy for developing this forehaving thus involves a three-fold task: first, he distinguishes Dasein’s facticity from past self-interpretations that he claims have obscured Dasein’s factual character from itself (specifically those of “human being” as “rational animal”, “*imago dei*”, and “modern ego”);⁹³ second, he situates Dasein’s

and is found in each instance of accessing and dealing with the matter in question can be designated as a *forehaving*.” (61-62).

⁹¹Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 13.

⁹²Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, ix.

⁹³Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 17-24. Heidegger concludes this discussion with the following summary, much of which is already familiar

facticity in the present in reference to “two directions of interpretation” carried out, respectively, in the “historical human sciences” and “philosophy”;⁹⁴ and finally, he turns to showing how Dasein’s self-interpretation in each of these two directions is rooted in a specific “how of facticity”, a mode of Dasein’s factual being that “can be expressed in a formal indication” of a forehaving: “*the being-there of Dasein (factual life) is being in a world*”.⁹⁵

The path that leads Heidegger from these two directions of Dasein’s self-interpretation to “being-in-a-world” is somewhat tortuous, but the structure of this transition is one that we have already observed in the transition from the question ‘Is there something?’ to environmental experience. For what shows itself in both directions of Dasein’s “present” self-interpretation, according to Heidegger, is the phenomenon of *curiosity*: “the how of a

on the basis of the ground we have already covered: “If fundamental definitions of human being which are dogmatically theological are to be excluded in radical philosophical reflection on human being (it is not just this but rather the positively ontological problematic which is hindered by this approach, insofar as it already has an answer), then we must refrain from an explicit and especially a hidden, *inexplicit* orientation to already defined ideas of human being...In being defined with the terms “our own”, “appropriation”, “appropriated”, the concept of facticity–Dasein which is in each case our *own*–initially contains nothing of the ideas of “ego,” person, ego-pole, center of acts. Even the concept of the self is, when employed here, not to be taken as something having its origin in an “ego”!” (24)

⁹⁴Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 28-52. The motivating concern here is to provide an example of Dasein’s “being-interpreted in the today” by listening in on “the talk heard in the public realm from the average educated mind”. The “historical human sciences” (in which Dasein is understood as an “expression” of “historical consciousness”) and “philosophy” (in which Dasein is understood as “always-being-in-such-a-manner”) are two prominent examples of such “talk”. What Heidegger is hoping to glean from looking at these two directions of interpretation is not at all a “typology of views” or “attitudes”, or a “psychology of philosophy” that would address “everything there is to be seen”. His interest, rather, is “to see in them how our Dasein *is*, our Dasein today, and indeed see it with regard to *modes of being*, categorically, and in “holding” to Dasein, to consult it about whether this tendency of interpretation brings Dasein into view–whether this is at all ontology and what kind.” (28)

⁹⁵Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 62.

self-comporting (of being) which consists in being-directed toward something in the mode of knowing and defining it”.⁹⁶ If this comportment is new to us as “curiosity”, we are already well acquainted with it under the name of the “theoretical attitude”, and equally well acquainted with the necessity of its reference beyond itself to the “there” in which the possibility of every meaningful something is grounded. In 1919, Heidegger expresses this “there” in terms of the correlative ‘relating-to’ of the personal, historical ‘I’ and the ‘it worlds’ in the event of environmental appropriation. Here in 1923, he draws explicitly on this latter account,⁹⁷ but appropriates it this time in view of the “existential” that he claims is at the root of the phenomenon of curiosity (“*cura* [care]–*curiositas* [curiosity]!”),⁹⁸ allowing thus for an illuminating new disclosure of the “appropriating” character of Dasein’s “being-there” in terms of “caring” being-in-a-world:

This world is something being encountered as *what we are concerned about and attend to*, and the latter, as having the character of initial givens now and soon to come which are closest to us, gives to the world of everydayness the character of an *environing world, a world round-about*. Interpreted on the basis of their significance, these environs open up an understanding of the factual spatiality from out of which and on the basis of which the space of nature and geometrical space originally arise by means of a certain shift in our way of looking at it. It is on the basis of factual spatiality that we can define the ontological meaning of *being “in”* [*Seins “in”*] the environs of the world...This “being” itself is what is encountering the world and indeed in such a manner that it is in the world as what it is concerned about and attends to, as a worldly being-there [*Weltdasein*]. It is characterized by *caring*, a fundamental mode of being which is distinctive in that it “is” its world, the very world it has encountered. This being–*being a worldly being-there which it is concerned about and attends to*—is a mode of the being-there of factual life.⁹⁹

⁹⁶Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 61.

⁹⁷In addition to drawing on the terminology of “environmental experience”, note that Heidegger’s discussion of “factual spatiality” as the ground of the “space of nature” and “geometrical space” is an explicit appropriation of his account of the origin of the theoretical attitude in the “de-vivification” of environmental experience.

⁹⁸Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 80.

⁹⁹Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 66.

In opening the originary factual spatiality in which the initial givens of everyday life are experienced, Heidegger continues, the phenomenon of care simultaneously discloses the essentially *temporal* character of this experience. For as caring, I encounter these givens as meaningful on the basis of their concrete temporal relatedness to *me*, and, more specifically, to the involvements, pursuits and concerns that are part and parcel of my factual situation (i.e., my personal, historical “being-there”).

As a means of both developing this forehaving of Dasein as “caring” being-in-a-world and “characterizing the kind of disastrous mistakes which are easily made in such primitive descriptions”, Heidegger considers an “inaccurate” description of the immediate givens of experience that is, by all indications, an indictment of traditional phenomenology’s failure to penetrate the primordial, pre-theoretical sphere of hermeneutical intuition.¹⁰⁰ In describing an everyday encounter with a table, for instance, this inaccurate analysis focuses on the how of the perception of this table as “a material thing in space”:

¹⁰⁰Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 67-68. Heidegger does not mention phenomenology by name here, but it is clear from his characterization of the “inaccurate” description that he has phenomenology in mind: “[This inaccurate description] is not a fabrication and affectation on our part, but rather the one which everyone would today happily have pass for the most unbiased and straightforward description of what is immediately given and which is made the foundation of all subsequent descriptions of the so-called structural relations in an object.” Even in chastising phenomenology, however, Heidegger is aware of his debt: “However, this description is still far superior to all those theories which tell stories about the transcendence of objects and reality without ever having taken a look at the matters so valiantly written about”. Also, in an aside at the end of the section, Heidegger explicitly implicates Husserl in the project of “traditional ontology and logic” in which “authentic being has as its appropriate mode of access and apprehension perceptual meaning, “thinking,” theoretical apprehension, science”: “(By the way: intentionality–no accident that today Husserl is still characterizing the intentional as the “noetic”).” (70)

This material thing in space which offers itself to possible sensation from different directions always shows itself as being-there only from a certain side and indeed in such a way that the aspect seen from one side flows over in a continuous manner into other aspects sketched out in advance in the spatial gestalt of the thing...Aspects show themselves and open up in ever new ways as we walk around the thing...[and] the aspects themselves change according to lighting, distance, and similar factors bound up with the position of the perceiver.¹⁰¹

If this description gives importance to the position of the perceiver, however, it fails to do so radically enough for Heidegger insofar as the *significance* of the encounter is still ultimately referred to a “thing in nature” that serves as a stratum for “valuative predicates” ascribed after the fact by the perceiver. On this account, then, the “authentic being” of the table—the *meaning* of its being or its “ownmost possibility”—is still that of a “material thing in space”, and as such, access to the most primordial level of its “being there” (the “it worlds”) is blocked. The fatal flaw of this description, Heidegger concludes, is its “fundamental lack of clarity...about the fact that significance is not a characteristic of things, but a characteristic of being.”¹⁰²

On Heidegger’s description, by contrast, the significance of the “being-there” of everyday givens is referred to the explicitly temporal “being-there” of “caring” being-in-a-world. In the “temporalizing” absorption of care, Heidegger explains, the being of *this* table is disclosed not as the stratum of such and such a weight, color, shape, duration, and value but as “there”, “playing this role in such and such characteristic use”: it is “a

¹⁰¹Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 68.

¹⁰²Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 68. Heidegger is careful to note upon concluding this discussion that his characterization of this description as “inaccurate” in regard to the task at hand is not to be equated with the claim that it is “false”: “Of the two descriptions, the first was characterized as an inaccurate description, i.e., with respect to the basic task posed: ontologically and categorically grasping the immediate givens closest to us in the beings-which-are-there. This does not mean it is “false,” as if it had no basis in the subject matter. It is possible for the essential content of its results to prove itself vis-à-vis a specific domain of being-there to be *objectively* there for a theoretical observing which has a definite direction and focus.” (70)

writing table, a dining table, a sewing table”; it is “there” where “the boys like to busy themselves”, where “that decision was made with a *friend* that time” and where “that *work* was written”; in the same way, *those* old, broken skis in the basement are not “material things of different lengths, but rather the skis from that daredevil trip with so and so”.¹⁰³ As “caring” being-in-a-world, thus, Dasein brings its factual situation along with it, “making present” the initial givens of everyday experience by “temporalizing” them—by going out toward them concernfully on the ground of already having been there with them. In encountering its world, hence, Dasein encounters itself.

In view of this second description, Heidegger’s claim that “caring” Dasein “*is its world*” comes into considerably sharper relief. His point here is that the “worldly” “being-there” of the initial givens disclosed to Dasein in caring is not an abstract “what” to which various predicates are attached by a *disengaged* subject, but is rather a concrete “how” of Dasein’s concernful *absorption* in the situated involvements of its *own* “being-there”. As Heidegger puts the point,

Caring is concerned about itself and attends to itself in that it meets up with itself in a worldly manner in the there it is encountering. Caring as such is precisely what originally has the world there and puts temporality in place in such a manner that the world is something being encountered in caring and for it.¹⁰⁴

This insight that the meaning of Dasein’s “caring” being-in-a-world is temporality is the forehaving that motivates the project (and the title) of *Being and Time*. Before moving on, however, it is essential for our understanding of Heidegger’s work *as a whole* to take explicit note of the fact that this forehaving is necessarily *provisional* and to clarify the implications of its provisional standing for the central tasks (and the ultimate

¹⁰³Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 69-70.

¹⁰⁴Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 79.

aim) of fundamental ontology. It is crucial to make this fact explicit because the temptation is strong to understand fundamental ontology as a self-contained “philosophy of existence” whose ultimate aim is to bring this forehaving of Dasein to complete expression in an account of the transcendental conditions of subjectivity, language, meaning, etc. On this interpretation, the eventual “turn” from fundamental ontology thus appears to be indicative of the project’s “failure” to achieve this account, as though Heidegger recognizes after the fact—upon crossing the last ‘t’ in “ontology”—that the project, alas, is a non-starter after all and that a radical shift in emphasis is in order. Despite its popularity, however, this reading is predicated on a serious misunderstanding of the *hermeneutic* character of fundamental ontology, a task that Heidegger understands from the very beginning to be *wholly preparatory* in purpose, and that he undertakes, in fact, with the aim of its eventual and necessary overcoming already explicitly in mind.

To grasp the aim of fundamental ontology as merely preparatory we must briefly review the development of the forehaving from which it takes its departure, attending this time to the specific character of the movements through which this event of appropriation is advanced. As we have seen, fundamental ontology proceeds through the hermeneutics of facticity, and as such it is acknowledged from the outset to be a mode of Dasein’s existence, *viz.*, Dasein’s being in the mode of understanding itself. The “how” of this self-interpretation of facticity thus parallels the “how” of Dasein’s being: it *is* from out of its past toward its future. To make its own being a subject matter for itself, thus, Dasein must glean the toward-which of its present self-interpretation in view of its ground in past self-interpretation.

The problem, as we have seen, is that Dasein's past self-understanding is characterized by its tendency to "cover up" the meaning of its own being by giving priority to the sphere of beings and by understanding itself, accordingly, as a thing among other things: *a being* to be objectively perceived and known, i.e., theoretically apprehended. As such, Dasein cannot simply build uncritically on the foundations of its past self-understanding, but must raze these foundations with a view to the possibilities that remain hidden within them, a view from which the positive insights of this past can be appropriated into their toward-which. We have observed this approach to the past at work in Heidegger's writing since 1915, but it is here in 1923 that he submits this approach as a "fundamental task of philosophy" under the name of "dismantling" [*abbau*] or "destruction" [*Destruktion*].¹⁰⁵ "Taking up the subject matter [of Dasein's self-

¹⁰⁵Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 59-60 ("dismantling"), 68 ("critical phenomenological destruction"). In fact, Heidegger had already lectured on this notion of "destruction" a year earlier in his summer semester course of 1922 on the phenomenological interpretation of Aristotle ("*Phänomenologische Interpretation zu Aristoteles. Ontologie und Logik*"). Heidegger had anticipated turning this course into a book, and though this aspiration did not obtain, his planned introduction to the book just recently appeared in English as "Phenomenological Interpretations in Connection with Aristotle: An Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation" (in *Supplements*, ed. John Van Buren, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002, 111-145). The first ten pages of this text read like a summary of the *Ontology* course of 1923. Just before transitioning into the engagement with Aristotle, Heidegger has the following to say of "destruction": "*Hermeneutics carries out its tasks only on the path of destruction. If philosophical research has really understood the kind of objectivity and being belonging to its thematic toward-which (namely, the facticity of life), it takes the form of "historical" knowing in the radical sense of the term. In philosophical research, this destructive confrontation with its own history is not merely a supplement for illustrating how things stood in earlier times, an occasional overview of what others before us "came up with," or an opportunity for depicting entertaining perspectives in world history. Rather, destruction is the authentic path upon which the present needs to encounter itself in its own basic movements, doing this in such a way that what springs forth for it from its history is the permanent question of the extent to which it itself is worried about appropriating radical possibilities of founding experiences and of their interpretation. It is by means of this question that contemporary tendencies toward a radical logic of origins and toward*

understanding] in a straightforward manner”, Heidegger tells us, “guarantees nothing at all”. Rather,

What is needed is to get beyond the position started from and arrive at a grasp of the subject matter which is free of covering up. For this it is necessary to disclose the history of the covering up of the subject matter. The tradition of philosophical questioning must be pursued all the way back to the original sources of its subject matter. The tradition must be dismantled. Only in this way is a primordial position on the subject matter possible. This regress places philosophy once again before the decisive contexts...Such is possible today only through fundamental *historical critique*. This is not a mere exercise in providing convenient historical illustrations, but rather a fundamental task of philosophy itself.¹⁰⁶

Dismantling the tradition, Heidegger continues, is not an end in itself, but a moment in an ongoing event of appropriation in which the insight glimpsed in these “decisive contexts” is “redeveloped in a manner appropriate to the changed historical situation” such that it “becomes something different and yet remains the same”.¹⁰⁷ The event of appropriation in which the forehaving in question is developed can thus be seen to have a three-fold movement as (1) a *destruction* of the past self-understanding of being in terms of beings, which enables (2) a *reduction* from Dasein as *a being* to Dasein as *be-ing*, which makes possible, in turn, (3) a *construction* of this be-ing in terms of the “existentials” that show themselves therein.¹⁰⁸ The essential insight to grasp here is that

formulating the starting points of ontologies can gain a fundamental, critical clarification.” (124)

¹⁰⁶Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 59.

¹⁰⁷Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 59-60.

¹⁰⁸Though each of these three moments of the movement of appropriation are explicitly visible in *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, I am drawing the terms “reduction” and “construction” from the introduction to Heidegger’s 1927 lecture course *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982, 21-23. In the introduction to the course, Heidegger offers the following useful summary of the *positive* value of the above insight: “These three basic components of phenomenological method—reduction, construction, destruction—belong together in their content and must receive grounding in their mutual pertinence.

the foregoing yielded to Dasein in this three-fold event of appropriation is always merely a “formal indication” of interpretation yet to come:

A formal indication is always misunderstood when it is treated as a fixed universal proposition and used to make deductions from and fantasized with in a constructivistic, dialectical fashion. Everything depends on our understanding being guided from out of the indefinite and vague but still intelligible content of the indication onto the right path of looking.¹⁰⁹

Even after Heidegger is well onto this path, moreover, having advanced from being-in-a-world to the existentials of care and temporality that show themselves therein, his progress is still dependent, as ever, on the perpetual re-submission of his findings to destruction:

The apparent difficulty of untangling this context of tightly interwoven categories and demonstrating it in intuition will disappear if from start to finish our treatment of it is required always anew to hold to the task of appropriating the corresponding position of looking at it and holding out in this looking to the very end, i.e., staying clear of a certain sedimented customary approach and being on guard against slipping back into it unawares.¹¹⁰

The upshot of this discussion is that the ultimate aim of fundamental ontology is not to converge on an ever-more determinate philosophy of existence at all, but to affect precisely the opposite result: to open a path of philosophical questioning whose clearing will inevitably demand the destruction and overcoming of fundamental ontology itself. As we will see in chapter three, the fruition of fundamental ontology is its overcoming in the “crossing” from Dasein’s “being-there” to the thinking of being itself.

Construction in philosophy is necessarily destruction, that is to say, a de-constructing of traditional concepts carried out in a historical recursion to the tradition. And this is not a negation of the tradition or a condemnation of it as worthless; quite the reverse, it signifies precisely a positive appropriation of the tradition. Because destruction belongs to construction, philosophical cognition is essentially at the same time, in a certain sense, historical cognition.” (23)

¹⁰⁹Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 62.

¹¹⁰Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 66.

Before following Heidegger into this “crossing”, however, we must briefly review the milestones along the path traveled thus far. We began with the Scotus dissertation of 1915 in which Heidegger first establishes the seminal importance of the transcendence problem for understanding his proposed re-orientation of philosophy’s traditional aims and results. What Heidegger argues here, let us recall, is that the problem of transcendence must be taken over from the epistemological context in which it is traditionally conceived, and reappropriated in terms of situated, pre-theoretical human existence (“living mind”). In the 1919 “Worldview” lectures, then, we saw this inkling of the necessity for an investigation of “living mind” refined into a phenomenology of the “lived experience” of the “personal, historical I” through which the givens of said experience are traced back to their basis in the “hermeneutical” intuition of an “envirning world”—the “non-thingly” context of “prior involvements” that provides the “background” against which our “intentional” intuitions of particular things stand out as meaningful. In the “Ontology” lectures of 1923, finally, we saw this insight into the originary, pre-theoretical correlation of the “personal, historical I” with her “envirning world” sharpened into its “fundamental ontological” expression as an account of Dasein’s “being-in-the-world”. By 1923, then, the requisite re-orientation of philosophy that Heidegger had intimated provisionally in 1915 as an investigation of the “transcendence” of “living mind” (through an “ever-provisional synopsis” of the “manifold structural orientations” exhibited in its “activities”) had crystallized into the project that he would prosecute in *Being and Time*: a “fundamental ontological” investigation of the “being-in-the-world” of “Dasein” through a “hermeneutics” of the “existentials” exhibited in its “facticity”.

What we have learned in chapter two, in summary, is that Heidegger's proposed reorientation of the aims and results of philosophy requires, first and foremost, a reappropriation of the transcendence problem; and that, furthermore, this reappropriation of transcendence, in its turn, demands, first and foremost, an account of the pre-theoretical basis of so-called "subjective" experience ("intentional consciousness", the "theoretical attitude", etc.). In each of the three texts we've consulted, this pre-theoretical basis is articulated in terms of the necessarily *situated* character of human existence; what "living mind", the "personal, historical I" and "Dasein" all have in common is that they always already have a world—they carry their prior situation along with them. To be sure, this emphasis on the importance of Dasein's "situation" ("care", "facticity", "having-been", "absorption" amidst the totality of "environmental involvements") is pervasive throughout Heidegger's early writings, and is utterly indispensable for understanding his thinking as a whole. But if bringing to light the hermeneutic priority of Dasein's situatedness over the givens of "present" experience is where Heidegger's reappropriation of transcendence must begin, this emphasis on facticity is but a prelude to a decidedly more complicated (and decidedly less discussed) understanding of the problem. As we shall see directly, the "world" is much more than just the totality of received involvements in which Dasein, as factual, is always already absorbed. Or perhaps we should say, more precisely, that the "world" is "much less", given that our task in chapter three will involve coming to terms with the peculiar claim that—properly speaking—the "world" *is* "nothing".

CHAPTER THREE

HEIDEGGER:

BEYOND ONTOLOGICAL TRANSCENDENCE

Being and Time is therefore not an “ideal” or a “program”, but rather the self-preparing beginning of the essencing of beyng [*Wesung des Seyns*] itself, not what we think up, but rather what compels us, provided that we are ripe for it, into a thinking that neither gives a doctrine nor induces a “moral” action nor secures “existence”, but on the contrary “only” grounds truth as the time-play-space [*Zeit-Spiel-Raum*] in which beings can again become be-ing [*seiende*], i.e. can become in the safekeeping [*Verwahrung*] of beyng.

–Martin Heidegger¹

[T]he sense of being for Heidegger is literally neither “primary”, nor “fundamental”, nor transcendental, whether understood in the scholastic, Kantian, or Husserlian senses. The restoration of being as “transcending” the categories of the entity, the opening of fundamental ontology, are nothing but necessary yet provisional moments.

–Jacques Derrida²

I. Introduction

Chapters two and three, let us recall, are devoted to an investigation of Heidegger’s engagement with the problem of transcendence. As we explained on the outset of chapter two, however, our motivation for considering this engagement and our approach to investigating it are somewhat atypical. Many “problem-driven” projects aim to construct

¹Martin Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*, Gesamtausgabe, Band 65, Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989.

²Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974, 22.

and defend “philosopher *x*’s” solution to “problem *y*” by adjudicating discrepancies among the various propositional formulations of this solution offered by “philosopher *x*” or her interpreters. By contrast, we are less interested in entertaining possible solutions than in seeing how a study of Heidegger’s efforts to keep this *particular* problem open (over the course of a long and varied career) can contribute to a richer understanding of his thinking *as a whole*. As we argued in the introduction to chapter two, Heidegger’s motivation for preserving the problem of transcendence *precisely as a problem* speaks to his belief in the unceasing necessity for thinking to return to and reawaken the “concealed richness” that always lies at once within past thinking and beyond it. Given this understanding of the problem, we maintained, the much discussed shifts in emphasis throughout Heidegger’s career are not to be viewed as a series of *repudiations* of past “positions”, but are better understood as comprising an ongoing task of *revivifying* what is essential in past thinking by *reappropriating* it in pursuit of what remains unthought therein. With these strategic considerations in view, then, we proposed to follow the movement of the *Transzendenzproblem* through Heidegger’s *Denkweg*, taking care to show how his engagement with this problem both plays a key role in the genesis of the fundamental ontological concerns of *Being and Time*, and prepares the way simultaneously for the “turn” from fundamental ontology indicated in the texts of the late twenties and beyond.

In chapter two, we attended to the former task. In following the genesis of fundamental ontology, however, the problem of transcendence may well appear to have fallen by the wayside. While the lecture courses of 1919 and 1923 clearly advance the direction of questioning opened by Heidegger’s engagement with the

Transzendenzproblem in 1915, these early lectures do not thematize their relation to this problem in a direct or explicit way. Even in *Being and Time*, moreover, Heidegger's explicit references to the problem of transcendence are few and far enough between that, without adequate preparation in advance, it is all too easy to overlook the fact that he understands this problem as the fundamental horizon within which the question of being is first posed and toward which the subsequent analysis of the "existentials" of Dasein proceeds.³

In the texts and lectures that immediately follow *Being and Time*, however, the pivotal significance of this problem for understanding the tasks and limits of fundamental ontology is asserted repeatedly, decisively, and indeed, more succinctly than in *Being and Time* itself.⁴ Our principal task in chapter three, in this regard, can be understood as a "leaping over" of *Being and Time* in order to project the foregoing account of the "having

³As we noted briefly in the introduction to chapter two, the *Transzendenzproblem* is mentioned by name in only a handful of instances throughout *Being and Time*, and is addressed directly and at length in but one section buried in division two (section 69, "The Temporality of Being-in-the-world and the Problem of the Transcendence of the World", 401-418).

⁴In addition to the two texts we will consult directly (*The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* (1928) and "On the Essence of Ground" (1928)), three other texts written during the same period offer parallel articulations of the importance of the transcendence problem for the fundamental ontological task set forth in *Being and Time*: *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (1927), trans. Albert Hofstadter, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982, see especially section 20, sub-section (e) "Being-in-the-world, transcendence, and temporality. The horizontal schemata of ecstatic temporality", 294-302; "What is Metaphysics?" (1928), trans. David Farrell Krell, in *Pathmarks*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 82-96, see especially 91 ff; and *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (1929), trans. Richard Taft, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990, see especially sections 16 ("The Elucidation of the Transcendence of Finite Reason as Basic Intention of the Transcendental Deduction", 50-53), 19 ("Transcendence and Making-Sensible", 63-65), 24 ("The Highest Synthetic Principle as the Full Determination of the Essence of Transcendence", 81-84), 25 ("Transcendence as the Laying of the Ground for *Metaphysica Generalis*, 85-88), and 36-45 ("The Laying of the Ground for Metaphysics in a Retrieval", 143-173).

been” of fundamental ontology into its “toward which”, and to do so explicitly in view of the transcendence problem. Our two-fold aim in so doing is to facilitate in advance a heightened attunement to the indications of the importance of this problem that will show themselves in our subsequent, highly selective reading of *Being and Time*, as well as to clarify further the preparatory status of fundamental ontology and to indicate the direction of its overturning. More concretely, the goal is to prepare the way for a reading of *Being and Time* in which the analysis of the existential structures of Dasein (being-in-the-world, care, temporality, etc. as they are unified in the phenomenon of transcendence) is understood not as a closed system of Dasein’s “being-there”, but as the opening to—indeed, as the requisite preparation for—the task that will dominate Heidegger’s thinking after the “turning”, viz., that of crossing over from thinking the “being-there” of Dasein as the “ground of all grounding” to thinking Being itself in “the abyss of ground”.

To achieve this goal, we must clarify, first, how the account of being-in-the-world from which the *Daseinanalytik* takes its departure is to be understood explicitly in terms of the problem of transcendence; and second, how this interpretation of the transcendence problem is to be advanced (and finally dismantled) through an engagement with what Heidegger calls “the problem of ground”. In clarifying these two issues, we will consult, respectively, Heidegger’s 1928 lecture course on *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* and his short treatise of the same year, “On the Essence of Ground”.⁵ With these issues in

⁵In virtue of the fact that the latter treatise was developed from material presented in the former lecture course, the overlap (both in structure and in content) of these two texts is substantial. Both explicate fundamental ontology explicitly as an interpretation of the problem of transcendence, and both seek to appropriate this interpretation through an investigation of the connection between the transcendence of Dasein and the problem of ground. Given these substantial similarities, one could adequately clarify the issues in question in reference to either text; my intention in making reference to both is to play to

focus, finally, we will conclude our engagement with Heidegger by briefly situating *Being and Time* in view its “having-been” (chapter two) and its “toward-which” (chapter three)—a task that will allow us to glimpse the hermeneutic continuity of *Being and Time* with later offerings precisely as a preparatory provocation of the question that will direct Heidegger’s itinerary after the “turn”.

Before turning to the specifics of the 1928 texts, it is important to foreground Heidegger’s explicit statements in each that *Being and Time*, properly understood, is from start to finish an engagement with the transcendence problem—an engagement, moreover, that has only just begun even upon the conclusion of *Being and Time*. In *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, Heidegger devotes an entire section to reviewing the “guiding principles” of *Being and Time* expressly in order to “pin down the “problem of transcendence”” therein.⁶ What these guiding principles indicate, he explains, is that “the

what I take to be the strong suits of each: *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* offers a particularly accessible and succinct destruction of traditional formulations of the transcendence problem, and “On the Essence of Ground”, as the title suggests, provides a more developed discussion of the link between transcendence and ground. Though each text will be dealt with in turn, I will supplement our reading of *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* with occasional references to parallel passages in the “On the Essence of Ground”, especially in cases where Heidegger’s second pass at the same issue proves more illuminating.

I have chosen these two texts in particular over the texts cited in note 4 above for two reasons: first, while parallel, the discussions of transcendence offered in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* and *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* presuppose a familiarity with Kant’s first critique (as well as with Heidegger’s interpretation of Kant’s understanding of the transcendence problem therein) that is well beyond the scope of our inquiry; second, the notoriously difficult “What is Metaphysics?” was written as a companion piece to “On the Essence of Ground” (as Heidegger notes in his preface to the third edition of the latter in 1949), and is, as such, considerably less accessible without the latter in view. Though I will not treat “What is Metaphysics?” in any significant detail, I will incorporate its essential insight (that “the nothing” belongs to the essence of ground (transcendence)) into our discussion of the problem of ground.

⁶See section 10, “The problem of transcendence and the problem of Being and Time”, Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 136-154.

basic intent of the analysis is to show the intrinsic possibility of the understanding-of-being, which means at the same time the possibility of transcendence”.⁷ Later on, he addresses the details of this connection still more concretely in a passage that speaks to the specific stages of the problem’s development over the course of *Being and Time*. The importance of this passage for our study merits citing it at length:

[I]f transcendence in the sense of being-in-the-world is the basic metaphysical constitution of Dasein, then a metaphysics of Dasein, one with a fundamental ontological intent, must necessarily refer to this basic constitution. Thus the investigation in *Being and Time*...begins with: “Being-in-the-world in general as basic constitution of Dasein” and [sections] 12 and 13 present an outline and a first acquaintance with the phenomenon. Had one the least sensitivity to method, one could conclude that this basic constitution is obviously central for a metaphysics of Dasein, that it returns continually and does so even more primordially in the course of the interpretation; this means the phenomenon comes more and more to light as central. Therefore the attempt is then made, after a first description of the basic constitution, to articulate its structural moments and to elaborate them as a whole in further detail through the connections that provide the greatest access. But, insofar as the entire investigation tries to highlight temporality as the metaphysical essence of Dasein, transcendence becomes itself conceived by way of temporality; but, as basic constitution, transcendence must always come into central focus along the whole path of the investigation. The analysis of *Angst* (section 40), the problems of Dasein, worldhood, and reality, as well as the interpretation of conscience and the concept of death—all serve the progressive elaboration of transcendence, until the latter is finally taken up anew and expressly (section 69) as a problem, “The Temporality of Being-in-the-world and the Problem of Transcendence of World.” Here again is transcendence, for the first time a problem. By making this reference I want to say that the problem must not be underestimated and that one must have long wind, so as not to be exhausted just when the problem is first beginning.⁸

Perhaps most instructive of all is Heidegger’s concluding assessment of the ultimate import of this analysis as merely a springboard for further, still more radical interpretation of the problem:

So the expenditure of effort on concrete interpretations cannot be large enough, nor can the way be laid out rigorously enough for clarifying this basic

⁷Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 141.

⁸Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 168.

phenomenon of transcendence (cf. *Being and Time*, p. 351 ff.). I am far from believing I have worked out this basic constitution in such a way that one need only look at it, as if at a blackboard, in order to “confirm” it. There are no findings in this sense here at all! But a result of the second part [of *Being and Time*] is that an interpretation is possible that is still more radical than my previous interpretations.⁹

In “On the Essence of Ground”, we find a parallel assessment of *Being and Time* as the “inauguration” of an “interpretation [of the problem of transcendence] that must constantly be renewed”:

Here we may be permitted to point out that what has been published so far of the investigations on “Being and Time” has no other task than that of a concrete projection unveiling *transcendence* (cf. sections 12-83; especially 69). This in turn occurs for the purpose of enabling the *sole* guiding intention, clearly indicated in the title of the whole of Part I, of attaining the “*transcendental* horizon of the *question* concerning being”.¹⁰

With these explicit affirmations of the pivotal importance of the transcendence problem in mind, we may now turn to the tasks of clarifying, first, the interpretation of this problem advanced in Heidegger’s account of being-in-the-world, and of explaining, then, how its further appropriation in view of the problem of ground can allow us to glimpse an indication of the “turn” from fundamental ontology.

⁹Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 168. The page citation given here for *Being and Time* refers, in fact, to the German text; see *Sein und Zeit*, Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2001, 351. In *Being and Time*, this passage is found on page 401.

¹⁰Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 125, note 66. Heidegger insists that his usage of “transcendental” here is not to be understood in its ordinary epistemological or critical sense, but rather in relation to the transcendence of Dasein’s being-in-the-world: “World co-constitutes the unitary structure of transcendence; as belonging to this structure, the concept of world may be called transcendental. This term names all that belongs essentially to transcendence and bears its intrinsic possibility thanks to such transcendence. And it is for this reason that an elucidation and interpretation of transcendence may be called a “transcendental” exposition...What transcendental means, however, is not to be taken from a philosophy to which one attributes a standpoint of the

II. Transcendence as Being-in-the-world: *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*

At this point in our study, the tenor of Heidegger's course on *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* should be clear enough on the basis of its title alone. Here again, Heidegger's task is to expose the hidden dependence of "logic" (i.e., epistemology) on insufficiently interrogated metaphysical assumptions about the being of beings—assumptions, more specifically, which conceal the necessity of subordinating questions concerning the *truth* of beings to the prior question of how beings first become intelligible as such. On this particular occasion, however, Scotus is off the hot-seat and it is Leibniz's doctrine of judgment that is dismantled down to the metaphysical foundations concealed in its first principle ("nothing is without reason").¹¹ The particulars of Heidegger's dealings with Leibniz, however, are not our concern here. What is

transcendental or even of being epistemological." Heidegger, "On the Essence of Ground", 109-110.

¹¹One need only glance at the subject headings of the course to see that Heidegger's strategy here precisely parallels that of his destruction of Scotus's doctrine of categories. He examines the content of what Leibniz poses initially as a straightforwardly "logical" relationship between judgment and knowledge (27-108) in order to show that, in fact, this relation conceals a suppressed appeal to being (Dasein's in particular) whose meaning remains insufficiently clarified (109-216). As in the *Scotusbuch* (and every other destruction we have seen thus far), the idea here is not to gather "some arbitrary information about what one of the previous philosophers taught regarding judgment", but to embark "today" upon a "concrete path of reflection on what makes thinking possible as such". (27) Though the details of Heidegger's attempt to make Leibniz a fellow traveler are beyond the scope of our inquiry, the following short summary of his destruction of the "principle of reason" is an example of Heidegger at his dismantling best (Heim's translation of this passage is somewhat misleading, so the following translation is my own): "*Nihil est sine ratione. Nihil*, nothing, be it whatness, being-present-to-hand, being-true, [human] activity, nothing is as this being without its ground. Each way of being has its ground. Here a new and essential insight shows itself: the binding-together [*die Verklammerung*] of the idea of being as such and the idea of ground as such. Ground belongs to being." Heidegger, *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik*, Gesamtausgabe Band 26, Frankfurt Am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1978, 138.

important for our purposes, rather, is Heidegger's offering, in the midst of these lectures, of an incisive destruction of past interpretations of the problem of transcendence in which he reappropriates this problem specifically in terms of Dasein's being-in-the-world.

It is by no means inconsequential that Heidegger prefaces his discussion of the transcendence problem with his most explicit statement thus far of fundamental ontology's merely preparatory status.¹² He clarifies this status in view of the necessarily "finite", factual character of philosophical questioning:

We humans have a tendency, not just today and just on occasion, by which we either mistake what is philosophically central for that which is interesting or easily accessible, or we absolutize a central point immediately, blindly, and once we grasp it, we fixate on a single potential stage of the originating problematic and make it an eternal task, instead of summoning and preparing the possibility of new originations. To do the latter, one need not foresee these originations. One just needs to work continually at factual possibilities, because of Dasein's finitude. Since philosophizing is essentially an affair of finitude, every concretion of factual philosophy must in its turn fall victim to this facticity.¹³

Fundamental ontology itself, he goes on to insist, is no exception to this rule:

Fundamental ontology is not a fixed discipline which, once the baby is named, should now for good occupy the previously empty place reserved for it in some putative system of philosophy—a discipline which is now to be developed and completed so as to bring philosophy to a happy ending in a few decades (as the layman or positivist imagines).¹⁴

Rather, in keeping with the three-fold movement of finite philosophical questioning (reduction, construction, destruction), fundamental ontology must proceed explicitly in view of the possibility of its own overturning:

¹²This statement is offered in a five page "Appendix" ("Describing the Idea and Function of a Fundamental Ontology") inserted just before section 11, "The Transcendence of Dasein". Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 154-159.

¹³Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 155-156.

¹⁴Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 156.

Fundamental ontology is this whole of founding [*reduction*] and developing [*construction*] ontology; the former is 1) the analysis of Dasein, and 2) the analysis of the temporality of being. But the temporal analysis is at the same time the turning-around [Kehre], where ontology itself expressly runs back into the metaphysical ontic in which it implicitly always remains. Through the movement of radicalizing [*reduction*] and universalizing [*construction, formal indication*], the aim is to bring ontology to its latent overturning [Umschlag].¹⁵

In subsequently revisiting the destruction of the transcendence problem carried out in *Being and Time*, thus, Heidegger's intent is not simply to clarify the "findings" of this destruction, but to glimpse therein that which is itself in need of dismantling. For if fundamental ontology provides access to a radical, heretofore concealed interpretation of transcendence, this unveiling of transcendence must itself be unveiled—that is, pursued to the limits of its efficacy through reduction and construction, and then transformed through the destruction (and reappropriation) of the essential insights that simultaneously give rise to it and gesture beyond it. In attending to what follows, then, we must keep

¹⁵Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 158. The bracketed, italicized terms do not appear in the text; I have added them in order to call the reader's attention to the continuity here between the three-fold structure of "reduction-construction-destruction" that we have seen previously and Heidegger's usage here of the "radicalization–universalization–overturning" triad. This passage significantly clarifies Heidegger's still somewhat vague claim in the "Worldview" lectures that the sphere of meaning opened in the analysis of environmental experience indicates the possibility of "eidetic", "universal" thinking that does not give way to the "generalizing", "absolutizing" character of theoretical thinking. Here we see that the eidetic, universal thinking at stake in the development of a "formal indication" is always carried out in view of its own finitude, which is to say, in tension with its rootedness in the concrete. Heidegger conveys this inherent tension in hermeneutic philosophy as follows: "Not only to we need analysis in general, but we must produce the illusion, as it were, that the given task at hand is the one and only necessary task. Only the person who understands this art of existing, only the person who, in the course of action, can treat what is in each case seized upon as wholly singular, who at the same time nonetheless realizes the finitude of this activity, only such a one understands finite existence and can hope to accomplish something in it." (158) This statement gives us an early glimpse of the simultaneous necessity of Dasein's "willing" and "waiting" in engaging the problem of transcendence: while it is compelled to will its own future, the possibility of this willing is rooted in the necessity of waiting on what is "not yet".

Heidegger's two-fold intention in view, bearing in mind that the reinterpretation of transcendence that arises through the destruction of traditional formulations of the problem is itself only a factual construction—a “toward which” whose development is simultaneously the preparation of its overturning.

Like all of Heidegger's destructions of traditional philosophical problems, his dismantling of the transcendence problem begins with an analysis of the everyday “verbal meaning” of its central concept (“transcendence”) and then proceeds, on this basis, to “set down the meanings” found in traditional philosophical usages of the expression.¹⁶ The verbal meaning of transcendence, he explains, is derived from the Latin *transcendere*, “to surpass, step over, to cross over to”, and as such it has three components: “transcendence” itself means the “activity” or “doing” of “the surpassing, the going-beyond”; “the transcendent” means the “beyond” toward which the surpassing is carried out, or again, that which “requires surpassing in order to be accessible and attainable”; and finally, “that which does the surpassing is what carries out the stepping over”.¹⁷ When we understand the meaning of transcendence, then, “the range of our notions” includes at least the following: “1) an activity in the broadest sense of the term, a doing, 2) in the formal sense, a relation: the crossing over to X, from Y, 3) something which is to be surpassed, a limit, a restriction, a gap, something “lying between””.¹⁸

With this general clarification of the verbal meaning of transcendence in view, Heidegger turns to the task of characterizing its standard philosophical employments. In

¹⁶Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 160.

¹⁷Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 160.

¹⁸Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 160.

lieu of exhaustively cataloguing “all its variants”, he examines “two main meanings” of transcendence from which he claims “all the others are derived”: transcendence as opposed to immanence (or “epistemological transcendence”); and transcendence as opposed to contingency (or “theological transcendence”).¹⁹

The defining characteristic of the former is its subject-object structure: the immanent is what remains “within” the subject (or the soul, or consciousness), *viz.*, cognition (especially as representation), and the transcendent is thus what lies “outside” over and against it, the object(s) toward which cognition reaches out. From this standpoint, according to Heidegger, the subject is thought of “as a sort of box with an interior, walls, and an exterior” such that its interior “is, first of all, really restricted by the barrier and must first break through it, must first *remove the restrictions*”:

Transcendence, then, is taken to be the relationship that somehow or other maintains a passageway between the interior and exterior of the box by leaping over or pressing through the wall of the box.²⁰

In view of this first conception, thus, the “problem” of transcendence is that of explaining the possibility of the subject’s passage from an originary state of isolated confinement into a secure knowledge of the objects exterior to it. Whether one seeks to explain this passage in terms of causation, psychology, physiology or even intentionality, Heidegger contends, the structure of the problem remains the same: the task is to move from the inside outward—to ground immanent, “subjective” representations in the transcendent, “objective” entities that supposedly engender and determine them. Since it is on the basis of this conception of transcendence (and its subject-object structure) that the possibility of having a “theory of knowledge” (i.e., an account of how the passage

¹⁹Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 160-165.

from inside to outside is secured) first arises, Heidegger calls it “epistemological transcendence”.²¹

From this first understanding of transcendence as opposed to immanence, Heidegger distinguishes a second conception of transcendence as opposed to contingency. In contradistinction to “the contingent” (that which “touches us”, “pertains to us”, “belongs to our kind and sort”),

[t]he transcendent...is what is beyond all this as that which conditions it, as the unconditioned, but at the same time as the really unattainable, what exceeds us [das Überschwängliche]. Transcendence is stepping-over in the sense of lying beyond conditioned beings.²²

Though still a relational concept, this second meaning of transcendence concerns the relation not of subject and object, but of “conditioned beings in general” (a category that includes subjects and possible objects alike) and “the unconditioned” (“that to which transcendence transcends”, “the Absolute in some form or other”).²³ Given this second conception, then, the “problem” of transcendence is that of meting out the “difference in the degree of being” that supposedly separates conditioned beings from the Absolute such that, notwithstanding this difference, the possibility of a meaningful relation between the

²⁰Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 160-161.

²¹Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 161.

²²Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 161. In German, this last sentence reads as follows: “Transzendenz ist das Überschreiten im Sinne des Hinausliegens über das bedingte Seiende.” Though Heim elects to translate “des Hinausliegens” simply as “lying beyond”, the translation of this phrase as “that which lies beyond” is perhaps preferable insofar as it names not just a “doing”, but an unconditioned “thing” or “object”. See *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik*, Gesamtausgabe, Band 26, Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1978, 206.

²³Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 162.

two—expressed traditionally as a hierarchy of beings grounded in and ordered by the Absolute—is still somehow retained. Since the Absolute “means predominantly the divine”, Heidegger concludes, “we can speak here of a theological conception of transcendence”.²⁴

If these epistemological and theological conceptions of transcendence are heuristically distinguishable, however, the problems they designate have always been intractably entangled. For once beings are posited (“whether implicitly or explicitly”) as external to the subject, among the beings so posited is the highest being or first cause, which is “thus both something over against [the subject] and something which transcends all conditioned beings over against [the subject].” As Heidegger explains,

The transcendent, in this double sense, is the Eminent, the being that surpasses and exceeds all experience. So, inquiry into the possible constitution of the transcendent in the epistemological sense is bound up with inquiry into the possibility of knowing the transcendent object in the theological sense. The latter inquiry, in fact, is, in a certain sense, the impulse for the former. Therefore, the problem of the existence of the external world and whether it can be known is implicated in the problem of the knowledge of God and the possibility of proving God’s existence.²⁵

²⁴Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 162.

²⁵Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 162. Heidegger’s characterization here of the history of metaphysics as the recurrent, obfuscating intertwining of the ontological and theological problem spheres is a theme that persists from his earliest to latest writings. Though the submission of this theme under the famous heading of “onto-theology” is of comparatively late provenance (see for example in 1957, “The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics” in Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002, 42-75), Heidegger’s understanding of the tradition as pervasively onto-theological from its very origin is the foil of his reappropriation of the tradition from the Scotus dissertation onward. For a concise account of the onto-theological origins of the metaphysical tradition, see Heidegger’s 1924 lecture course on *Plato’s Sophist*, trans. Rojcewicz and Schuwer, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997, 153-155 (“First philosophy as ontology and as theology. Explication of this duality on the basis of the Greek understanding of Being (= presence”).

Even if this “tangle of partially and falsely posed problems” could be untangled—a dim prospect indeed given that, in Heidegger’s view, this state of entanglement is a birthright of Western metaphysics that is only increasingly entrenched as it is “passed along from hand to hand” throughout the history of philosophy—the philosophical import of untangling it would come to little insofar as no ground stands to be gained in respect to the question of the meaning of being. Thus, rather than attempting to iron out this confusion, Heidegger turns to showing how the problem of transcendence is transformed when posed in view of the latter question, and more specifically, to clarifying how the motivating concerns of the traditional formulations of the problem (*viz.*, the possibility of beings manifesting themselves, and the possibility of the relation of the finite to the infinite) are affected by this transition into the more primordial problem sphere of Dasein’s understanding-of-being.²⁶

A still shorter statement of these origins appears in the following “preliminary note” at the head *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* itself: “The concept of “metaphysics encompasses the unity of “ontology” and “theology”...The conception itself, incidentally, is of bibliotecal origin. [Aristotle’s] *meta ta physika* are treatises located “after” those on “physics” because they have a content of their own, namely, ontology and theology. The bibliotecal title becomes a designation of the contents: *meta*, instead of “after”, becomes “beyond,” and *physika* becomes beings of every kind of being. The subject-matter of metaphysics is what lies “beyond” beings—where and how it does so is not stated. It deals with a) being as such, b) beings as a whole. “Behind” the other books becomes “beyond” the others, an ordering of being and beings.” (25)

²⁶The principal emphasis of Heidegger’s treatment of these issues in *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* is laid on the relation of Dasein’s transcendence to the former possibility, that of beings manifesting themselves. His discussion of how this transcendence transforms the possibility of the relation formerly posed in terms of the finite and the infinite (“theological transcendence”) is relegated to a short but pregnant footnote that must not be left unmentioned, given its profound relevance to the question of “religion without religion” or “non-dogmatic faith” (a Heideggerian legacy that, as we shall see, is among Jacques Derrida’s chief concerns in respect to the problem of transcendence). Says Heidegger: “The problem of transcendence must be drawn back into the inquiry about temporality and freedom, and only from there can it be shown to what

At issue, then, is the task of thinking a transcendence that is neither “a relation between interior and exterior realms such that a barrier belonging to the subject would be crossed over”, nor “the cognitive relationship a subject has to an object...in addition to its subjectivity”, nor “the term for what exceeds and is inaccessible to finite knowledge”.²⁷ Heidegger articulates this transcendence initially in terms of the following four indications, abridged here for the sake of brevity:

- 1) Transcendence is the primordial constitution of the subjectivity of the subject. [...] To be a subject means to transcend. This means that Dasein does not sort of exist and then occasionally achieve a crossing over outside itself, but existence originally means to cross over. And this implies that transcendence is not just one possible compartment (among others) of Dasein toward other beings, but it is the basic constitution of its being, on the basis of which Dasein can at all relate to beings in the first place.
- 2) [W]hat Dasein surpasses in its transcendence is not a gap or barrier “between” itself and objects. But beings, among which Dasein also factually is, get surpassed by Dasein. Objects are surpassed in advance; more exactly, beings are surpassed and can subsequently become objects. [...] [A]s transcending, Dasein is beyond nature, although, as factual, it remains environed by nature. As transcending, i.e., as free, Dasein is something alien to nature.
- 3) That “toward which” [*Wohin*] the subject, as subject, transcends is not an object, not at all this or that being—whether a certain thing or a creature of

extent the understanding of being qua superior power [Übermächtig], qua holiness, belongs to transcendence itself as essentially ontologically different. The point is not to prove the divine ontically, in its “existence”, but to clarify the origin of this understanding-of-being by means of the transcendence of Dasein, i.e. to clarify how this idea of being belongs to the understanding-of-being as such...The above is purposely not dealt with in the lectures, because precisely here and now, with the enormously phony religiosity, the dialectical illusion is especially great. It is preferable to put up with the cheap accusation of atheism, which, if it is intended ontically, is in fact completely correct. But might not the presumably ontic faith in God be at bottom godlessness? And might the genuine metaphysician be more religious than the usual faithful, than the members of a “church” or even than the “theologians” of every confession?” Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 165, note 9. For a more developed treatment of this issue dating from roughly the same period (1927), see “Phenomenology and Theology” in Heidegger, *The Piety of Thinking*, trans. Hart and Maraldo, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976, 5-21, especially 20-21.

²⁷Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 165.

Dasein's sort or some other living being. The object or being that can be encountered is that which is surpassed, not the toward-which. That toward which the subject transcends is what we call *world*.

- 4) [B]ecause this primordial being of Dasein, as surpassing, crosses over to a world, we characterize the basic phenomenon of Dasein's transcendence with the expression *being-in-the-world*.²⁸

If the content of these indications is expressed here for the first time explicitly as an interpretation of transcendence, we already have a passing acquaintance both with the phenomenon of Dasein's being-in-the-world and with the possibilities opened by this phenomenon for beings (including Dasein itself) to manifest themselves and to be "de-vivified", subsequently, into "objects" in "nature".²⁹ What we have not previously encountered, at least not in terms of the language employed here, is the identification (noted briefly in the second indication) of Dasein's transcendence (being-in-the-world) with Dasein's being "free". Though the relation between being-in-the-world and freedom is mentioned only in passing in these preliminary indications, the clarification of this "intrinsic connection" is the central focus of Heidegger's ensuing development of his

²⁸Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 165-166.

²⁹In view of our foregoing study, it should be reasonably clear how the familiar insights expressed in these indications add up to an interpretation of transcendence. The first indication is a statement of essence pertaining to the "how" of Dasein's being: insofar as Dasein exists, it transcends (where "transcendence" refers to the surpassive movement (unique to Dasein) of Dasein's existing from itself toward itself ("for the sake of itself")). The categorial interpretation of this basic constitution (through a hermeneutics of facticity with fundamental ontological intent) yields access to the "equiprimordial existentials" (being-in-a-world, care, temporality) whose further interpretation illuminates the possible comportments to beings opened by this transcendence. The second indication names this transcendence as the ground of the ontological difference: it is only because Dasein surpasses beings (in its essential difference from them) that beings can manifest themselves to Dasein as such. As Dasein itself is the "passage across" this difference, it can thus appear to itself as a being among beings. The third indication names that toward which Dasein transcends in its passage beyond beings, the "world"—the totality of possibilities for Dasein's relating to beings taken as a whole. The fourth

interpretation of transcendence—a task that he insists will require (and please note the emphasis even here on the connection between understanding and freedom) “patience, step-by-step preparatory work, and especially *the will* to look toward that to which our indications point”.³⁰ As we shall see directly, this insight into the importance of freedom has profound—indeed, transformative—implications for the foregoing accounts of “world” and of Dasein’s “being-in” it.

Heidegger’s fifty-page appropriation (patience, indeed!) of these indications begins with an explanation of what he admits is a “peculiar” understanding of “world”—the concept in which he claims “the difficulty of seeing and understanding this basic constitution of transcendence obviously lies”.³¹ As strange as this concept of world may initially seem, however, Heidegger is intent to show (as usual) that, despite appearances, the history of philosophy has in fact given precedent for the understanding of world he is pursuing, albeit if only in vague and underdeveloped inklings.³² Drawing on the work of thinkers from Parmenides to Kant,³³ Heidegger argues that what is “metaphysically

indication, finally, is a restatement of Dasein’s essence (transcendence) in terms of the guiding indication “being-in-a-world”.

³⁰Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 170. It is no accident that Heidegger prefaces his discussion of the connection between transcendence and freedom by characterizing the task at hand as one that requires “patience” and “will” to be practiced simultaneously. As we shall soon see, Heidegger’s thinking on this relationship between “waiting” and “willing” plays a key role in catalyzing the “turn” from fundamental ontology.

³¹Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 170.

³²“If the phenomenon which we designate as a transcendental concept is central”, Heidegger explains, “then it must have already come to light in some form, even if quite veiled and not formulated as such, in all genuine philosophy.” Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 182.

³³Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 170-180. Appearing on this whirlwind tour of the history of the concept of world are Parmenides, Heraclitus, Anaxagoras (171-172), St. Paul (173), Augustine (173-174), Aquinas, and, of course,

essential” in the history of this concept is its “directed[ness] toward an interpretation of human existence [Dasein] in its relation to beings as a whole”.³⁴ He summarizes this “orientation in the history of the concept” as follows:

“World” as a concept of the being of beings designates the wholeness of beings in the totality of their possibilities, a wholeness which is itself, however, essentially related to human existence, and human existence taken in its final goal.³⁵

Heidegger’s agenda, in view of this history, is to discern the fundamental ontological meaning of world in terms of this essential relation. The question, then, is: “how is the essence of world implicated in the essence (or “final goal”) of Dasein?”. We can put a finer point on this question if we recall that, within the problem sphere of fundamental ontology, “essence” designates not “whatness”, but “intrinsic possibility” (or the “ownmost” “how” of be-ing), and that, moreover, Dasein’s essence is be-ing for the sake of itself, i.e., existing (“temporalizing”) toward itself from itself. Accordingly, the question becomes: “how is the intrinsic possibility of world (i.e., the “how” of the

Kant (174-180). (These same figures receive a virtually identical (if minimally revised) treatment in “On the Essence of Ground”, 111-121.) Heidegger’s discussion of Augustine merits special mention, insofar as Augustine’s understanding of world is an important, if not the definitive, archive of Heidegger’s account of being-in-the-world as “caring” (introduced, as we have seen, in the 1923 *Ontology* lectures, and developed in explicit detail in *Being and Time* (sections 39-44, 225-269). Says Heidegger: “For Augustine, *mundus* [world] means the whole of creation. But just as often *mundus* stands for the *mundi* habitatores, the inhabitants of the world, those who settle themselves in the world. But this does not only mean that they too are there, along with mountains and rivers. Settling themselves in is characterized primarily by certain basic compartments, evaluations, ways of behaving and approaching things, by the “attitude”, [to be with the world in one’s heart]. The [inhabitants of the world] are the [enjoyers of the world], the [lovers or impious or carnal]. Here world is clearly the God-forsaking way of behaving towards beings among which humans exist. Thus “world” is 1) a collective designation for the human community living in a certain way and means, 2) primarily the mode of this definitive sort of existence wherein and for which all beings manifest themselves in a definite evaluation and context. In general, world is the how, not the what.” (173-174)

³⁴Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 121.

³⁵Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 180.

wholeness of beings in the totality of their possibilities) implicated in the intrinsic possibility of Dasein (i.e., the “how” of be-ing for the sake of itself)?”.

If the fundamental ontological character of world is thus to be sought in the “wholeness” to which Dasein relates in existing for its own sake, Heidegger continues, then “world” in the sense we are seeking designates neither “nature” as the totality of extant or objective beings, nor the “context of useful items” (i.e., “the things of historical culture”) in which factual Dasein goes about its dealings. Rather, he explains, “all these beings belong to what we call intra-worldly beings”—beings already surpassed by Dasein’s transcendence toward world—“yet they are not the world itself”.³⁶ The point here is that within these natural and cultural contexts, Dasein’s various concrete modes of comportment to beings (theoretical: “what is x?”; practical: “what is x for?”; aesthetic:

³⁶Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 181. Heidegger designates these contexts, respectively, as the “ontic-natural world” and the “ontic-existential world”. See also in Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 120-121. This passage is important in that it shows that Heidegger’s previous discussions of the phenomenon of the enviroing world (developed in the 1919 and 1923 lectures) are but a prelude to his development of the more fundamental phenomenon of transcendence that makes possible the “it worlds” (i.e., the character of “intra-worldly beings”). If the “ontical context of useful items” is not the world as such, Heidegger explains, “the analysis of useful items and their context nevertheless provides an approach and the means for first making visible the phenomenon of world”.

Heidegger puts this point still more forcefully in a footnote from the parallel discussion of world in “On the Essence of Ground” (121, note 59): “If indeed one identifies the ontic contexture of items of utility or equipment, with world and interprets being-in-the-world as dealing with items of utility, then there is certainly no prospect of any understanding of transcendence as being-in-the-world in the sense of a “fundamental constitution of Dasein.” [...] The ontological structure of beings in our “enviroing world”—insofar as they are discovered as equipment—does, however, have the advantage, in terms of an *initial characterization* of the phenomenon of world, of leading over into an analysis of this phenomenon and of preparing the transcendental problem of world. And this is also the *sole* intent—an intent indicated clearly enough in the structuring and layout of sections 14-24 of *Being and Time*—of the analysis of the enviroing world, an analysis that as a whole, and considered with regard to the leading goal, remains of

“is x beautiful?”) are already open for it. But insofar as the principal task of fundamental ontology is “to go back behind those divisions into compartments to find their common root” in transcendence (being-in-the-world), the sense of “world” that co-constitutes this transcendence must be conceived as prior to every “ontic” sphere of activity.³⁷ At the same time, as we have seen, Heidegger characterizes this transcendence precisely *as an activity* (as a “surpassing” toward “world”), and thus it would seem that world must still designate in some sense a “sphere of activity”, albeit the exceedingly curious sphere of a praxis even more primordial than the theory-praxis distinction itself.

In an effort to clarify this admittedly still “vague” notion of world, Heidegger enlists the aid of a surprising analogy drawn from a decidedly unlikely source: Plato’s doctrine of ideas. The invocation of Plato at this critical juncture is surprising, of course, because the Platonic doctrine of ideas is arguably the origin (and surely the most enduring archive) of the very interpretations of transcendence that Heidegger is seeking to unseat, *viz.* those that “localize” transcendence in the “basic act” of “intuition” (“mere looking”) without questioning the pre-theoretical underpinnings of this theoretical comportment toward beings.³⁸ But if Plato’s correlation of the idea with intuition³⁹ prevents him from

subordinate significance.” In short, such analysis points us back to the sphere of the possibility of purposiveness as such, namely Dasein.

³⁷Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 183-184. “The genuine phenomenon of transcendence cannot be localized in a particular activity, be it theoretical, practical, or aesthetic. All these, as relationships to beings, are only possible on the basis of transcendence itself.”

³⁸Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 184.

³⁹In “On the Essence of Ground”, Heidegger offers the following helpful explanation of why Dasein’s transcendence fails to come to light as a problem for ancient philosophy: “[A]ccording to the doctrine that has become traditional...the task is merely to secure [the ideas] as the most objective of objects, as that which *is* in beings, without the “for the sake of” showing itself as the primary character of world so that the originary

investigating transcendence “down to its genuine roots” in Dasein’s being-in-the-world, the character of this primordial transcendence is “nevertheless brought to light”, according to Heidegger, in Plato’s discussion of “the idea of the good” as that which “still lies beyond beings and *ousia*, *beyond the ideas, epekeina tes ousias*”:

Here a transcendence emerges that one must consider the most primordial, insofar as the ideas are themselves already transcendent with regard to the beings that change.⁴⁰

On Heidegger’s reading, then, the adequacy of the hylomorphic relation for understanding the being of beings as a “wholeness” is already in question at its very inception insofar as Plato himself acknowledges the necessity of a ground prior to the sphere of ideas. In addition to calling our attention, yet again, to the limits of the hylomorphic relation, the idea of the good provides an instructive illustration of the structure and function of Dasein’s transcendence toward world, and clarifies, more specifically, how the possibility of world as a “wholeness” is rooted in Dasein’s being for its own sake. As Heidegger explains,

What we must...learn to see in the [idea of the good] is the characteristic described by Plato and particularly Aristotle as the...*for the sake of which*, that on account of which something is or is not, is in this way or that. The idea of the good, which is even beyond beings and the realm of ideas, is the for-the-sake-of-

content of the *epekeina* might come to the fore as the transcendence of Dasein. Indeed, there later awakens the converse tendency, already prefigured in Plato’s “recollective” “dialogue of the soul with itself,” to conceive of the ideas as innate to the “subject.” Both attempts testify that the world is both held before Dasein (beyond it), and yet also forms itself within Dasein. The history of the problem of the ideas shows how transcendence always already comes to light, yet at the same time oscillates to and fro between two possible poles of interpretation, poles that are themselves inadequately grounded and determined. The ideas count as more objective than the objects and at the same time as more subjective than the subject. Just as an exceptional domain of everlasting beings takes the place of the unrecognized phenomenon of word, so too the *relation* to world in the sense of a particular comportment toward this being comes to be interpreted as *noein*, *intuitus*, as an apprehending that is no longer mediated, as “reason.” (125)

⁴⁰Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 184.

which. This means it is the genuine determination that transcends the entirety of the ideas and at the same time thus organizes them in their totality. As *epekeina*, the for-the-sake-of-which excels the ideas, but, in excelling them, it determines and gives them the form of wholeness, *koinonia*, communality. If we thus keep in mind the [for-the-sake-of-which] characteristic of the highest idea, the connection between the doctrine of ideas and the concept of world begins to emerge: the basic characteristic of world whereby wholeness attains its specifically transcendental form of organization is the for-the-sake-of-which. World, as that to which Dasein transcends, is primarily defined by the for-the-sake-of-which.⁴¹

Heidegger's intent here, make no mistake, is certainly not to elevate Dasein to the mythic standing of a "highest idea". The strategy, on the contrary, is a destructive one. Heidegger wants to show that the idea of the good—once dismantled and thereby stripped of its "mythic quality"—yields an abiding insight into the dependence of intelligibility upon purposiveness, and more specifically, into the generative function of world as the primordial provision of purposiveness to beings, as the "wholeness" in relation to which beings become intelligible *as meaningful possibilities for Dasein*. For Heidegger's present purposes, then, the lesson of this dismantling of Plato may be summarized as follows: particular beings (be they "forms", "objects", or "things that 'world'") are intelligible as such only in relation to a "wholeness" (i.e., a "sphere" or "context" of meaning); any such "wholeness", moreover, is determinable as such only in relation to a purposiveness (be it theoretical, practical, aesthetic, etc.); and any such purposiveness, finally, is rooted in the *possibility* of purposiveness as such—in that "for-the-sake-of-which" beings *are* as intelligible in the context of a purposive totality.

⁴¹Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 185. "For-the-sake-of-which" translates the German "Umwillen": "Welt als das, woraufhin Dasein transzendiert, ist primär bestimmt durch das Umwillen." Heidegger, *Die Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik*, Gesamtausgabe Band 26, Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1978, 238. As we shall see directly, having the German in view here is important for understanding the connection between the "for-the-sake-of-which" [*Umwillen*] and "willing" [*Willen*], a connection that is less straightforwardly apparent in translation.

It is precisely this insight into the character of world as “for-the-sake-of-which” that brings to light the “intrinsic connection” between world and freedom. For as Heidegger explains (and here it is important to have the original German in view),

[A] purposive for-the-sake-of-which [*Umwillen*], is possible only where there is a willing [*Willen*]. Now insofar as transcendence, being-in-the-world, constitutes the basic structure of Dasein, being-in-the-world must also be primordially bound together with or born out of the basic feature of Dasein’s existence, namely, *freedom*. Only where there is freedom is there a purposive for-the-sake-of-which, and only here is there world. In short, Dasein’s transcendence and freedom are identical! Freedom gives itself intrinsic possibility; a being is, as free, necessarily in itself transcending.⁴²

But now the problems begin anew, Heidegger admits, for to claim that, as free, Dasein “gives itself” the “for-the-sake-of-which” (which amounts, as we have seen, to giving itself world) is to say that the “for-the-sake-of-which”—the very possibility of purposiveness as such—is Dasein’s “for-the-sake-of-itself”. And this claim, Heidegger continues, invites the misunderstanding that “we have pinned down the final purpose” of Dasein as an “extreme egoism” that asserts the “clearest delusion” (indeed, the “madness”!) that “all beings, including nature and culture and whatever else there might be, exist in each case only for the individual human being and his egotistic goals”.⁴³

In the interest of warding off such misinterpretations, Heidegger reasserts the importance of keeping the fundamental ontological intent of the proposed interpretation of freedom in view:

The statement, “For-its-own-sake belongs to the essence of Dasein,” is an ontological statement. It asserts something about the essential constitution of Dasein in its metaphysical neutrality. Dasein is for its own sake and herein, in the for-the-sake-of, lies the ground of possibility for an existentiell, egoistic or non-

⁴²Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 185. I have modified Heim’s translation slightly in view of the original German. See Heidegger, *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik*, 238.

⁴³Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 186.

egoistic, for-my-own-sake. But herein lies, just as primordially, the ground for a for-him-or-her-sake and for every kind of ontic reason-for. As constituting the selfhood of Dasein, the for-the-sake-of has this universal scope. In other words, it is *that towards which Dasein as transcending transcends*.⁴⁴

Far from an endorsement of “existentiell, ethical egoism”, then, the claim that Dasein is a “willing-for-its-own-sake” is an attempt to articulate the ontological structure of “egoicity” [*Egoität*] or “selfhood” [*Selbstheit*] as such, *viz.*, freedom as “the intrinsic possibility of willing” on the basis of which Dasein can “choose itself” (that is, relate to itself *as a self*) at all, either as egoistic or altruistic.⁴⁵

What Heidegger has in mind here by “freedom” is thus exceedingly difficult to grasp in view of familiar conceptions of the term. Insofar as this primordial willing is the existential-ontological “how” of Dasein’s capacity for self-choice, it must be understood as constitutive of the choosing self’s selfhood (i.e., the “subjectivity of the subject”), and therefore, as prior to every existentiell-ontic act of will originating therefrom. By the same token, the sense of freedom under development here must be rigorously distinguished from the “traditional” understanding of freedom as “self-initiating spontaneity...in contrast to a compulsive mechanical sequence”, given that only a *transcendent, primordially free* being (i.e., one before whom the excessive possibilities of self-choice already loom) can be either free or unfree in the former sense; in short, a *self* must already be in play in order to get the notion of a *self*-initiating spontaneity off the

⁴⁴Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 191.

⁴⁵Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 187-190; Heidegger, *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik*, 242-243.

ground.⁴⁶ It is precisely the “how” of the self’s coming-into-play that Heidegger calls “freedom”.

If it is clearer now what primordial freedom is *not*, it remains to be shown just how this freedom puts the self into play, and moreover, how the self’s coming-into-play is simultaneously the occasion for beings to manifest themselves. Lest we lose the forest for the trees, however, let us briefly take stock of our progress so far. We began with the question of how beings are intelligible as such, a question that is traditionally posed in terms of the relation between “subject” and “object”. Within the subject-object framework, the intelligibility of beings is presumed to reside in beings themselves as objects over and against (i.e., “independent of” or “external to”) the subject. Accordingly, the subject is faced with the problem of transcendence, which in this case is formulated as the task of explaining how the immanent subject gains access to the intelligibility of transcendent objects. But as we observed, this formulation of the problem stops short of interrogating the deeper problem that motivates it, for in order to situate itself as a subject in relation to external objects in the first place, the subject must already have a pre-understanding of itself as being in meaningful proximity to beings (i.e., as being in relation to beings as a whole), and it is on this basis and this basis alone that the question of the intelligibility of beings can arise at all. The problem of the transcendence of objects

⁴⁶Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 1911-192. In “On the Essence of Ground”, Heidegger offers a more in-depth explanation of this issue: “[I]f spontaneity (“beginning by oneself”) is to be capable of serving as an essential characteristic of the “subject,” then two things are first required: (1) Selfhood must be clarified ontologically for any possible appropriate conception of what is meant by this “by oneself”; (2) precisely the same clarification of selfhood must provide us in advance with an indication of the way in which a self *occurs*, so as to be able to determine the kind of movement that pertains to “beginning.” *The selfhood of that self that already lies at the grounds of all spontaneity, however, lies in transcendence.*” (126-127)

thus referred us back to the problem of the subjectivity of the subject—to the task, that is, of discerning how this pre-understanding of beings as a whole opens the possibility for being-with and understanding beings as such. We sought the “how” of this pre-understanding, then, in the more primordial transcendence of Dasein’s being-in-the-world (the surpassing of beings toward that for the sake of which beings are intelligible as a purposive whole), and discovered, finally, that this “for-the-sake-of” [*Umwillen*] “is what it is in and for a willing” [*Willen*].⁴⁷ Dasein’s transcendence toward world thus occurs as a willing for the sake of itself. In view of our progress, then, we may now formulate the question before us still more specifically: how does this primordial willing (freedom) put Dasein into play such that, in coming into play—in existing for its own sake (“toward itself from itself”)—Dasein gives itself world (“the wholeness of beings in the totality of their possibilities”) and grants to beings, thereby, the concomitant possibility of manifesting themselves?

Heidegger’s reply is that the “how” of this primordial freedom is to be glimpsed in the phenomenon of “world-projection” [*Weltentwurf*]*—*the primal event through which Dasein becomes “open” to (and thus “responsible” for) its capacity-for-being precisely as a capacity for *understanding* the totality of beings in the projection of its *own* possibilities onto this totality. As Heidegger explains,

[T]he world described primarily by the for-the-sake-of is the primordial totality of that which Dasein, as free, gives itself to understand. Freedom gives itself to understand; freedom is the primordial understanding, i.e., the primal projection of that which freedom itself makes possible. In the projection of the for-the-sake-of as such, Dasein gives itself the primordial commitment [*Bindung*]. Freedom makes Dasein in the ground of its essence, responsible [*verbindlich*] to itself, or more exactly, gives itself the possibility of commitment. The totality of the commitment residing in the for-the-sake-of is world. As a result of this

⁴⁷Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 191.

commitment, Dasein commits itself to a capability of being toward-itself as able-to-be-with others in the ability-to-be-among extant things. Selfhood is free responsibility for and toward itself.⁴⁸

Far from a “free-floating arbitrariness”, then, the freedom opened for Dasein in world-projection is essentially an opening to its own “boundedness” insofar as Dasein, as responsible, “holds itself in [this projection]...so that the free hold binds [it], i.e., so that the hold puts Dasein, in all its dimensions of transcendence, into a possible clearance space for choice” [*einen möglichen Spielraum der Wahl*].⁴⁹ The character of this primordial freedom comes into even sharper relief in view of the literal and colloquial meanings of the German *Spielraum* as “play space” and “room to move” respectively. In granting Dasein *Spielraum*, freedom puts Dasein into *play* by giving it *room to move*—by opening for it the sphere of possibilities to which it is bound and from which it must understand itself—those possibilities which, taken as a whole, delimit (as it were) the “playground” or “playing field”—in fact, the world—that is *open* for it. The world, thus, as that toward which free projection projects (or again, as that toward which transcendence transcends), “is maintained in freedom counter to freedom itself”: as free, Dasein holds the world “opposite to itself” such that the world is the “free counter-hold of Dasein’s for the-sake-of”.⁵⁰ If the language here is complicated, Heidegger’s point is relatively straightforward. The insight is simply that freedom in its very essence is a double-bind: to be free means precisely to be responsible for one’s own possibilities, and to be responsible for one’s own possibilities means precisely that these possibilities *matter*—that

⁴⁸Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 192.

⁴⁹Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 196, 192; and Heidegger, *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik*, 248.

⁵⁰Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 192.

they make a counter-claim, that is, on freedom itself. In short, Dasein has a “hold” on its possibilities as free projection, and its possibilities, in turn, have a “counter-hold” on it as world.

Having clarified the sense of the claim that freedom is primordial selfhood (the “how” of Dasein’s capability to relate to itself *as a self* in projecting its for-the-sake-of (world)), Heidegger turns to clarifying how this possibility of Dasein’s coming-into-play as a self occasions the possibility for beings to manifest themselves. We have already encountered the motivating insight here in the above-cited passage, *viz.*, that in making Dasein responsible for its own capacity-for-being-in giving it world as a possible “clearance space” for choice–freedom commits Dasein simultaneously to the “capability of being-toward-itself as able-to-be-with others in the ability-to-be-among extant things”. “In choosing itself”, in other words, “Dasein really chooses precisely its being-with others and precisely its being-among beings of a different character”.⁵¹ But in order to be able to choose itself *factically* as being-with and being-among *actual* beings, Dasein must have already surpassed these beings (including itself *as factual*) toward their *possibility* in the “clearance space” of world. In addition to freeing Dasein for self-choice, then, world-projection also frees beings for “world-entry” [*Welteingang*]: the entrance of beings into the totality of possibilities that is Dasein’s “clearance space” for choice:

Only insofar as Dasein in its metaphysical essence swings beyond itself [*sich überschwingt*], freely holding before itself its own for-the-sake-of, does it become, as this swinging-beyond [*Überschwingende*] [actual beings] toward the possible, the opportunity (understood metaphysically) for beings to be able to manifest themselves as beings. A being of Dasein’s essence must have opened itself up [*aufgetan*] as freedom, i.e., world must be held out [*entgegengehalten*] in the swing-beyond [*Überschwung*], a being must be constituted as being-in-the-world, as transcending, if that being itself and beings in general are to become

⁵¹Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 190.

apparent as such. Thus Dasein, understood metaphysically as this being-in-the-world, is therefore, as factually existing, nothing other than the existent possibility for the *world-entry* of beings...World-entry, furthermore, is the possibility for the revealability [*Enthüllbarkeit*] of beings.⁵²

In view of the phenomena of world-projection and world-entry, thus, it is now clearer how the possibility of self (“the subjectivity of the subject”) and the concomitant possibility of beings manifesting themselves are to be understood as having their common root in freedom (transcendence). But here we have arrived at a critical juncture. For if we have seen how the self and the “revealability” of beings are made *possible* by transcendence, we have yet to see how this surpassing of the actual toward the possible can result in Dasein’s *actually* encountering beings as manifest. To bring this problem into sharper focus, we must examine in more explicit detail the crucial difference indicated here between the world-entry of beings as *surpassed*, and the “appearance” of “intra-worldly” [*innerweltlich*] beings as *encountered*. In world-projection, beings enter world not *as beings*—that is, not as determinate, manifest things—but as surpassed: as the

⁵²Heidegger, *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik*, 249. I have modified Heim’s translation substantially here. The corresponding passage in *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* appears on page 193. In particular, I have rendered the “über” in the various forms of “überschwingen” as “beyond” (swing-beyond, swinging-beyond) rather than as “up” (upswing, etc.) in keeping with Heidegger’s intention to convey the movement of transcendence as “horizontal” or “horizontal” rather than as “vertical”. While “über” more often means “up” or “over”, both “upswing” and “overswing” indicate a vertical, rather than a horizontal movement. In addition, “über” can in fact mean “beyond” as, for example, in a construction such as “über den Verstand gehen”, which is indeed precisely how Heidegger means it here: as the condition of understanding beings, the swing-beyond beings is beyond understanding as such. In addition, whereas Heim translates the last phrase of the passage (...*Enthüllbarkeit von Seiendem*) as “for beings to be able to be revealed”, I have rendered this phrase as “revealability of beings” (from *enthüllen*: to reveal, unveil) in order both to preserve the structure of the sentence as it appears in German and to emphasize an important concept for Heidegger (“revealability” or “unveilability”) that is otherwise lost. It is especially important that we note this decision given that “*Enthülltheit*” is rendered throughout “On the Essence of Ground” as “unveiledness”.

totality of possibilities for beings *as possible* for surpassive be-ing, Dasein. What is crucial to see here, then, is that world-entry is not yet the manifestation of beings, but only the provision for beings to reveal themselves as such *from out of a surpassive excess of possibilities*. Accordingly, when beings that have become intraworldly reveal themselves—i.e., when factual Dasein encounters them *as beings*—this revelation has the character of a “restriction” [*Einschränkung*], quite literally a “limiting” or “cutting down” of possibilities:

World, as the totality of the essential intrinsic possibilities of Dasein as transcending, *surpasses* all actual beings. Whenever and however they are encountered, actual beings always reveal themselves—precisely when they are disclosed as they are in themselves—only as a restriction, as one possible realization of the possible, as the insufficient out of an excess of possibilities, within which Dasein always maintains itself as free projection.⁵³

But this difference between the surpassive world-entry of beings *as possible* and the restrictive revelation of beings *as actual* indicates that Dasein’s transcendence cannot be exhausted in world-projection. For if world-projection were the end of the story, Dasein would have possibilities for choice without recourse for choosing; it would have “room to move”, but no basis for moving. How, then, we must ask, does transcendence provide for this “movement” from possible to actual, from projection to revelation? How, that is, are these “moments” in the understanding-of-being to be understood as simultaneous, as unified, in the primordial event of transcendence?

The difficulty of this question becomes even more pronounced when we attend to the startling fact that it follows from the surpassive character of world that the beings

⁵³Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 192.

entering there as surpassed “undergo nothing” in so entering, and that, indeed, as surpassing everything, the world itself is, in fact, “nothing”:

When Dasein exists, world-entry has simultaneously also already happened together with it, and it has happened in such a way that extant things entering there in principle undergo *nothing*. They remain so completely untouched that it is on account of world-entry that Dasein can, on its part, approach, encounter, and touch them. But if what enters world undergoes nothing in the occurrence of world-entry, is then the world itself nothing? In fact the world is nothing—if “nothing” means: not a being in the sense of something extant; also “nothing” in the sense of no-thing, not one of the beings Dasein itself as such transcends; but Dasein transcends itself as well. The world: nothing, no being—and yet something; nothing of beings, but being. Thus the world is not nothing in the sense of “*nihil negativum*”. What kind of “*nihil*” is the world and then ultimately being-in-the-world itself?⁵⁴

The question of how projection and revelation are unified in primordial transcendence is therefore even more radical than we might have at first supposed. For as the above passage indicates, posing this question is akin to asking how something—indeed, anything whatsoever (and thus everything!)—can be understood as coming from out of “nothing”. And this question stirs one of the oldest and most obstinate sleeping dogmas in the Western tradition, *viz.* the proposition “*ex nihilo, nihil fit*”: “from out of nothing, nothing comes”. Let us recall, furthermore, that it is precisely the destruction of the modern incarnation of this dogma in Leibniz’s principle of sufficient reason (“nothing is without ground”) that is Heidegger’s point of departure in developing his interpretation of transcendence as being-in-the-world. It stands to reason, then, that the development of this interpretation would lead us to that which, in giving ground to everything, is itself without ground: “nothing”.⁵⁵ The critical juncture at which we now stand, thus, is the

⁵⁴Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 195.

⁵⁵Heidegger makes this insight explicit in “What is Metaphysics?” (see in *Pathmarks*, 82-96): “The old proposition *ex nihilo nihil fit* is therefore found to contain another sense, one appropriate to the problem of being itself, which runs: *ex nihilo omne*

intersection of the problems of transcendence and ground; to advance our interpretation of transcendence as being-in-the-world, we must inquire as to how the essence of ground is to be understood as residing therein, which is to inquire about the relation between “*grund*” and “*abgrund*”—reason and abyss, ground and nothing. This relation is addressed in greater detail in “On the Essence of Ground”.

Before departing from *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, however, one final task remains: we must examine Heidegger’s concluding suggestion that the character of the world as “nothing” is to be sought in “the intrinsic possibility of transcendence itself”—the three-fold “free ecstatic momentum” of “primordial temporality”.⁵⁶ But if attending to Heidegger’s discussion of temporality diverts us briefly from the problem of ground, this “diversion” is an instructive one insofar as the temporalizing movement of transcendence crops up again as the momentum that unifies the “three-fold strewnness” of the essence of ground. In addressing primordial temporality, in short, we are already anticipating the forthcoming analysis of ground.

Though Heidegger’s discussion of temporality here is compact and difficult, it is readily approachable if we recall our previous dealings in the 1919 and 1923 lectures with the three-fold movement of environmental “appropriation”—the “making-present” of beings in the “event” of “going out toward” them from already “having been” with them. In 1919, Heidegger associates this event of appropriation with “hermeneutical intuition”, the originary “back and forth formation” of the “recepts and precepts” from which every

ens qua ens fit [From the nothing all beings as beings come to be]. Only in the nothing of Dasein do beings as a whole, in accord with their most proper possibility—that is, in a finite way—come to themselves.” (95)

⁵⁶Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 195-196, 207.

“making present” falls out.⁵⁷ And in 1923, the essential relation of this movement of appropriation to “temporality” is first made explicit in terms of “caring”—that which “originally has the world there and puts temporality in place in such a manner that the world is something being encountered in caring and for it”.⁵⁸ In both of these discussions, as we have seen, the primary emphasis is laid on the appropriative character of Dasein’s “lived” or “factual” (i.e., “ontic”) experience of beings, and accordingly, the account of “world” (and the “how” of Dasein’s “being-in” it) is developed primarily in view of the formative significance of Dasein’s “thrownness” for its understanding-of-being. The emphasis, in other words, is on Dasein’s “being-in” as always already “having been” with beings, and on “world” as the “retention of” or “attunement to” the received “totality of involvements” in which Dasein, as factual, is always already situated.

But in the interpretation of being-in-the-world as transcendence (freedom) offered here in 1928, we find a significant shift in emphasis from these two previous accounts. For while the claim stands that Dasein, as factual, is always already with and among beings, the principal emphasis of the transcendence account is laid not on the “thrown” or “retentive” character of being-in-the-world as “having been”, but rather on its “projective” or “expectant” character as “surpassing toward”—a surpassing, moreover, without which there would be no “having been” (and thus no “making present”) in the first place. As we shall soon discover, this shift in emphasis from the “retentive” to the “surpassive” character of being-in-the-world is the pivotal step in Heidegger’s difficult

⁵⁷Heidegger, “The Problem of Worldview”, 99.

⁵⁸Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 79.

and often misunderstood transition in *Being and Time* from the account of *inauthentic* Dasein in division one to its *authentic* reappropriation as primordial temporality in division two. For now, however, we must simply mark this important sea change and turn to showing how Heidegger's interpretation of transcendence (freedom) leads to an understanding of primordial temporality as the three-fold movement in which the factual appropriation of beings is grounded.

Heidegger prefaces his analysis of temporality with a helpful summary of our current progress in which the elements and character of this "ecstatic momentum" are already clearly discernable:

What was designated as freedom, being-in-the-world, transcendence...is not some hidden apparatus inside an isolated subject and its inwardness, but freedom itself transcends, and the surpassing of beings transpires and has always already transpired in freedom; and we always come across these beings as being-in-themselves in a way that we return thereafter into freedom, from out of the origin and within it. All ontic comportment to beings...transcends, not just insofar as it opens up, insofar as it puts itself in an intentional relation to objects, but the intentional relation is only the given factual mode of appropriating what is already, on account of transcendence, overleapt and thus disclosed.⁵⁹

Being-in-the-world is thus a three-fold "stepping-out": it surpasses beings as projection (expectation), has always already surpassed beings as thrown (retention), appropriates surpassed beings from out of thrown projection (making present), and surpasses them once more ("returns into freedom") in so appropriating them. How, then, are we to understand temporality in view of "this basic phenomenon of transcendence"?

Heidegger's development of this question has two basic steps. The first is to demonstrate the dependence of the "common conception of time" (as a sequence of "nows" referring to beings made present through factual appropriation) upon "primordial

⁵⁹Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 196.

time” (as the unity of “expectance [*Gewärtigen*], retention [*Behalten*], and making-present [*Gegenwärtigen*]” in Dasein’s understanding of being). The second step, then, is to demonstrate the priority of “expectance” as the originary surpassive *ecstasis*—literally the “stepping out” (*ec-stasis*) or “being-carried-away” (*Entrückung*) through which “retention” and “making present” first arise, to which they constantly return, and in which they are unified as a three-fold ecstatic whole.

Given that we are already well acquainted with the strategy involved in making the first step, we may relegate these details to a footnote⁶⁰ and proceed briskly to the heart of the argument—that is, to the new insight (afforded by the transcendence account) that “temporality temporalizes itself primarily out of the future” (expectance), which is to say,

⁶⁰The strategy, once again, is to show how the experience of an everyday phenomenon, in this case “measured” time, refers back (and forward) to the deeper problem sphere of fundamental ontology; just as the experience of “immediate givens” (such as tables and skis) turns out, under the scrutiny of fundamental ontological analysis, to have the character of appropriation, so too does the ordinary experience of time have its seat in Dasein’s understanding-of-being.

As Heidegger explains, “[w]e measure time with the aid of numbers and distances, of quantities: from now to back then, from now till then, from this time to that time. We name time itself with “now,” “then,” and [“formerly”]”. (200) The crucial insight to grasp here is the way in which these expressions “speak of time”: “we utter “then””, Heidegger maintains, “from out of a *mode of existence* in which we are *expectant* of a thing to come, of something to be accomplished” (201). In a corresponding way, he continues, the same is true of the “formerly” and the “now”: “the “formerly” always pronounces the *retention* of something previous”, and “the “now” pronounces being toward what presences [*Anwesendes*], and we term this being toward presencing things a holding in attendance or, more generally, *making present*.” (202) The “peculiar connection” between these three moments of measured time becomes visible when we attend to the fact that every “then” is always understood as a “now not yet”, and that conversely, every “formerly” is a “now no longer”—a “bridge to a now”. In short, every “now” is in each case the “now” of “a particular “making present” in which a “then” and a “formerly” is in each case uttered”. (202) Heidegger calls this character of time “datability”: “[i]n the “then, when...,” an onward-reference occurs in the manner of an *indicator over to* beings, which themselves have a “when” and can thus date the “then.” (205) “This indicator”, he concludes, “must bring uttered time along with it from out of

“primarily out of the *for-the-sake-of*”.⁶¹ Abridged here in the interests of clarity and brevity, the argument runs as follows:

Expectance means to understand oneself from out of one’s own capacity-for-being. [...] This approaching oneself in advance, from one’s own possibility, is the primary ecstatic concept of the future. [...] But this coming-to-oneself does not, as such, stretch over a momentary present of my own; it stretches over the whole of my having-been. More precisely—and here is our claim—this having-been-ness temporalizes itself only from out of and in the future. The having been is not a remnant of myself that has stayed behind and has been left behind by itself. [...] Rather, my having-been only “is”, in each case, according to the mode of the temporalization of the future, and only in the temporalization. [...] The having-been-ness of what has-been becomes the having-been, first of all and constantly, in the respective future. [...] What we find here expressed regarding the essence of temporality is that the future ecstasis, as a coming-towards, stretches out immediately, constantly, and primarily into the having-been. [...] And the making-present first temporalizes itself in the ecstatic unity of future and having-been-ness.⁶²

With the motivating insight of his understanding of temporality in view, Heidegger turns to clarifying the key difference between his “ecstatic” interpretation and “traditional” accounts that take “uttered time” as their starting point. For the latter, he explains, the present is “the most proximate”, while the “no-longer now” and the “not-yet-now” are akin to “two arms which extend time, as the now, into the respective directions of non-being”.⁶³ In the ecstatic interpretation, by contrast, there is no such unecstatically “present on hand” center that would “initiate and unfold” the ecstases (as though they “flow[ed] together somehow in one substance”), nor is there “smuggled in”

primordial temporality”, i.e., from the unity of expectance, retention, and making-present which is “the very origin of the then, the formerly, and the now”. (203)

⁶¹Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 211.

⁶²Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 206-207.

⁶³Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 207. Indeed, Heidegger goes so far as to claim that “[t]his image, and the time analysis derived from it, become unavoidable as soon as one overlooks the ecstatic character of temporality and does not inquire into the unity of temporality as that which temporalizes itself ecstatically.”

any subjective surrogate (such as “internal time consciousness” or a personal “I-nucleus”) that would displace this lack of an “objective” center.⁶⁴ On the contrary, the ecstatic interpretation of time dispenses entirely with the notion that something “thingly” is somehow extant “between” the having-been and the future. Rather, Heidegger tells us, “the unity of the ecstases is itself ecstatic”—“it needs no support and pillars, as does the arch of a bridge”—and thus “if we may speak at all about the “being” of [this unity], we must say that its being lies directly in the free ecstatic momentum”.⁶⁵ In short, “temporality “is” not, but rather “temporalizes” itself”:

Temporalization is the free oscillation of the whole of primordial temporality; time reaches and contracts itself. (And only because of momentum is there throw, facticity, *thrownness*; and only because of oscillation is there *projection*.)⁶⁶

If nothing determinate (i.e., present on hand) is given in free oscillation, however, this being-carried-away nonetheless gives something, if only “just something futural as such, futurity as such”—indeed, “possibility pure and simple.” But precisely here we find ourselves back on familiar ground. For in giving “the horizon of possibility in general, within which a definite possible can be expected”,⁶⁷ this oscillation of the self-

⁶⁴Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 207-208. See page 204 for Heidegger’s specific remarks on Husserl’s failure to grasp the ecstatic character of temporality in his account of internal time consciousness.

⁶⁵Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 207-208.

⁶⁶Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 204, 208.

⁶⁷“We understand “horizon””, Heidegger explains, “to be the circumference of the field of vision. But horizon is not at all primarily related to looking and intuiting, but by itself means simply that which delimits, encloses, the *enclosure*”. As we shall see, this understanding of horizon as “enclosure”—the limit of possible experience—will be important for understanding Derrida’s attempt to distinguish his own orientation toward metaphysics (as thinking at the “closure” of metaphysics) from Heidegger’s (later) attempts to “overcome metaphysics” (and horizontal thinking along with it). It is worth noting, finally, that “enclosure” translates the German “*Umschluß*”, which is also a legal term denoting “limited freedom of association” as pertaining to prisoners awaiting trial.

temporalizing ecstases *just is* the swinging-beyond all actual beings toward their possibility as world; in short, “this ecstematic unity of the horizon of temporality is nothing other than the temporal condition for the possibility of *world* and of world’s essential belonging to *transcendence*”.⁶⁸ And in this discovery, finally, we glean a new (if not yet altogether clear) sense of what Heidegger means in characterizing world as “nothing”. Far from a *nihil negativum* (which is “the simple, pure, empty negation of something”), world is the *nihil originarium*: “the nothing which temporalizes itself primordially, that which simply arises in and with temporalization”.⁶⁹

Upon conclusion of the temporality analysis, thus, we find ourselves confronted again with the question of how beings come to presence from out of this “nothing” of possibility. For though the elements of “retention” and “making present” are given their due as essential (indeed, “equiprimordial”) constituents of transcendence, the overwhelming emphasis remains squarely on “expectance”—on “possibility pure and simple”. As a result, the specific character of the relation to beings exemplified in the respective ecstases of “retention” and “making present” remains as yet obscure. To give a “more concrete” interpretation of transcendence, Heidegger acknowledges, “we would have to show how facticity and individuation are grounded in temporality, which as temporalization, unifies itself in itself and individuates in the metaphysical sense as *principium individuationis*”.⁷⁰

Whether or not Heidegger intended to invoke this sense of the term, the shoe seems to fit. Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 208; *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik*, 269.

⁶⁸Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 208-209.

⁶⁹Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 210.

⁷⁰Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 209.

In the interest of making this interpretation of transcendence more concrete, then, we must now turn to the treatise “On the Essence of Ground”. But first a word of warning about the path ahead: as we follow this text toward a clearer understanding of how transcendence individuates the beings of factual experience (and thus grounds the possibility of “ontic truth”), *the problem of the “nothing” will only loom larger*. For as we shall see, if transcendence is essentially “ontological truth”—the “grounding of all ground” (and, quite literally, the metaphysical foundation of logic)—then transcendence is simultaneously the “abyss of ground”.⁷¹ It is precisely the revelation of this “non-essence” at “the heart of Dasein” that will soon provoke Heidegger to venture a leap beyond the “making-present” of “being-there”—indeed, beyond metaphysics—into the “clearing” of being itself.

III. “Being-in-the-world” as Freedom and Abyss: “On the Essence of Ground”

In the opening sentence of what is perhaps the only extended commentary on this treatise offered in English, William Richardson writes that “*The Essence of Ground* is one of the hardest diamonds in all of Heidegger’s ample treasury.”⁷² The dearth of literature on this pivotal treatise suggests that Richardson’s assessment of its difficulty is

⁷¹Though these issues are addressed briefly in the final eight pages of *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* (211-219), we will seek their clarification in the more in-depth (and better organized) treatment offered in “On the Essence of Ground”.

⁷²William Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963, 161. This text is widely regarded as the *locus classicus* of Heidegger studies in English. Chapter III is devoted solely to “On the Essence of Ground” (161-193).

well taken.⁷³ The good news, however, is that upon making this assessment, Richardson did not have recourse, as we do now, to *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, the text of which this treatise is an explicit appropriation and amplification.⁷⁴ Our familiarity with the former text, thus, gives us a distinct advantage for making sense of the latter.

An introductory survey of the text's structure and content will help to clarify our specific purposes for consulting it. The treatise is divided into three main sections. Section one establishes transcendence as the "domain" within which the problem of ground must be investigated by demonstrating the transcendent provenance of "giving reasons": the truth of predication ("propositional truth"), we are shown, springs from the "pre-predicative manifestness of beings" ("ontic truth"), which springs, in turn, from the "unveiledness [*Enthülltheit*] of being" opened in the event of Dasein's surpassing ("ontological truth").⁷⁵ With the priority of this "ontic-ontological" domain of transcendence in view, section two develops the "main features" of this domain in terms of the phenomenon of world—in short, along precisely the same lines as the interpretation of transcendence advanced in *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*.⁷⁶ Section three,

⁷³In addition to Richardson's offering, my search for commentary on this text (in English and in German) repaid a mere four titles, only two of which deal with the text in any significant detail, and none of which provides more than a precursory overview. The two that merit mention are John Caputo's "The Principle of Sufficient Reason: A Study of Heideggerian Self-criticism", in *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, Winter 1975, 13, 419-426 (especially 420-422) (incidentally, this treatment reappears more or less unchanged in 1986 in Caputo's monograph, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*, 89-96); and Markus Enders' "Das Transzendenz-Verständnis Heideggers im philosophiegeschichtlichen Kontext", in *Theologie und Philosophie*, Band 73 (3), 383-404 (especially 394-402).

⁷⁴*Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik* first appeared in 1978, a full fifteen years after the publication of Richardson's *magnum opus*.

⁷⁵Heidegger, "On the Essence of Ground", 100-107.

⁷⁶Heidegger, "On the Essence of Ground", 107-125.

finally, aims “to illuminate the essence of ground from out of the transcendence of Dasein” such that “transcendence itself is determined more originally and more comprehensively via the problem of ground”.⁷⁷ Taken as a whole, thus, the structure of the text itself illustrates the movement of hermeneutic logic at work: we proceed from a *reduction* of a problem concerning beings (ground) to its essence as a problem concerning the meaning of being (transcendence), through a *construction* of the essential insights that motivate this reduction, toward a *destruction* (and subsequent re-evaluation) of the reduction from which we began.

As if the prospect of following this movement weren’t already daunting enough, our task is complicated by the fact that the main text of the treatise is perforated throughout by a decidedly disruptive subtext—a series of footnotes written after the fact and appended to the first edition in 1929—in which Heidegger comments extensively on the “complete overturning” of fundamental ontology that is “prepared” in this text, but “not yet thought”. To be sure, these interruptions are a mixed blessing. On the one hand, they conjure in the reader the exhilarating sense of having a front-row seat for the turning of the fabled “turn”. Commenting, for example, on the reversal of section one indicated in section three of the treatise, Heidegger tells us:

In III, an approach to the destructuring [*Destruktion*] of I, i.e., of the ontological difference; ontic-ontological truth. In III the step into a realm that compels the destruction [*Zerstörung*] of what has gone before and makes a complete overturning necessary.⁷⁸

⁷⁷Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 125-135.

⁷⁸Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 125, note a; Heidegger, “Vom Wesen des Grundes”, 163, note a.

But if “one path toward overcoming “ontology” is broached [here] (cf. Part III),” Heidegger warns, “the overcoming is not accomplished or constructed in an originary manner from out of what has been attained”; rather, thinking is still carried out “in categorial-metaphysical terms” and thus “everything is still mixed and confused; contorted into phenomenological-existential and transcendental “research””.⁷⁹

What is exciting about these provocative marginal notes, of course, is that they grant us special access to a pivotal happening in the treatise that the text itself, at least according to Heidegger, fails to make explicit. From a historical standpoint, moreover, they allow us to pinpoint the timing of the “turn” with considerable accuracy: sometime between the fall of 1928 (when Heidegger wrested the treatise from his summer 1928 lecture notes on *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*) and April 1929 (when he prepared the treatise for publication in a *Festschrift* honoring Husserl’s 70th birthday), Heidegger came to see fundamental ontology in a new light. And from a philosophical standpoint, finally, these notes lend credibility to our thesis that the overturning of fundamental ontology is best understood as a “fruition” rather than a “rejection”—as an event *within* fundamental ontology that is spurred by its own movement rather than a severance that is provoked by Heidegger’s adoption of some alternative “position” *outside* fundamental ontology.

But if the “special access” given in these notes is exhilarating, it is equally exasperating. For though we glean from them a sense that something monumental is afoot—that we are on the verge of penetrating to a region beyond even the pre-theoretical

⁷⁹Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 100, note a; 104, note a; 104, note c; 123, note b.

problem sphere opened by transcendence—these notes provide very little guidance as to what exactly we are *turning toward* in turning away from (or “overcoming”) ontology. We are flummoxed, for instance, when—without even the merest explanation—“being” begins to turn up as “beyng” [*Seyn*], as in the following cryptic description of “overcoming”:

Here [in “On the Essence of Ground”] the essence of truth is conceived as “forked” in terms of the “distinction” [ontic-ontological difference] as a fixed reference point, instead of the contrary approach of *overcoming* the “distinction” from out of the essence of the truth of beyng, or of first thinking the “distinction” as beyng itself and therein the *beyngs of beyng* [*das Seyende des Seyns*]*—no longer as the being of beings.*⁸⁰

We are similarly at sea when, one by one, the touchstones of our investigation are taken over into “beyng” by this subtext (even as their fundamental ontological senses are being painstakingly clarified and employed in the main text). Factual experience, we find, is opened not simply in willing, but more primordially in the “clearing [*Lichtung*] of the Da” by “beyng”.⁸¹ Accordingly, “the understanding of being that guides and illuminates in advance all comportment toward beings” must be reappropriated “in a quite different manner” as “projection of the essential prevailing [*Walten*] of the truth of beyng [*Warheit des Seyns*]”.⁸² And this means, furthermore, that “Dasein belongs to beyng itself as the simple onefold of beings and being”, and that the essence of this “occurrence” in Dasein—“the temporalizing of Temporality”—is therefore only a “preliminary name for the truth of beyng” which “comes into its own in the event of appropriation” [*Er-eignet im*

⁸⁰Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 105, note c.

⁸¹Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 103, note b.

⁸²Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 104, note c; Heidegger, “Vom Wesen des Grundes”, 132, note c.

Ereignis].⁸³ On the penultimate page of the treatise, finally, Heidegger rebuts his own concluding summary of the findings therein with a single, scanty sentence fragment: “Still the futile attempt to think Da-sein while shielding the truth of being in its turning”.⁸⁴ So it is, then, that the most “original” and “comprehensive” determination of transcendence that Heidegger has advanced so far is unraveled in the fine print of the very text in which it is developed!⁸⁵

Our present concern, however, is not yet that of understanding “the truth of being” or the “turn” from fundamental ontology that it provokes. We undertook this preliminary survey, rather, to help us glean a better sense of where to focus our attention in dealing with this pivotal and profoundly difficult text. Given this overview of the terrain, then, it is now clear that our principal interests lie in the as yet uncharted territory of the first and third sections, and in the reversal of the former that is “indicated” (if “unthought”) in the latter (and “thought” (if only provisionally) in the appended subtext of 1929). “On the Essence of Ground” thus presents us with three tasks. Section one provides an occasion to observe how “truth”—a concept about which we’ve heard surprisingly little thus far—is transformed when its essential connection to “ground” is investigated within the problem

⁸³Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 123, notes a and b; Heidegger, “Vom Wesen des Grundes”, 159, notes a and b.

⁸⁴Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 134, note a.

⁸⁵In this respect, “On the Essence of Ground” is one of the best examples we have seen so far of what thinking looks like when it is “on the way”—when it puts the demand for “arrival” aside and allows the matter for thinking to lead it along uncharted paths and into unexpected places. Here, Heidegger’s prefatory remarks to the volume (*Wegmarken*) in which this treatise has most recently appeared are apropos:

“Whoever sets out on the path of thinking knows least of all concerning the matter that—behind and over beyond him, as it were—determines his vocation and moves him toward it. Whoever lets himself enter upon the way toward an abode in the oldest of the

sphere of fundamental ontology (transcendence). Section three, then, allows us to observe how illuminating the essence of ground from out of the transcendence of Dasein in fact provokes a more original (and more concrete) interpretation of transcendence itself. And the subtext of 1929, finally, provides an opportunity to make good on our promise (from earlier on) to clarify the preparatory status of fundamental ontology and to indicate the direction of its overturning.

Let us begin, then, with the connection between truth, ground, and transcendence established in section one. Having observed the transformational effects of fundamental ontology on traditional philosophical concepts such as “being”, “essence”, “transcendence”, “freedom”, and “time”, we should not be at all surprised to discover that “truth” too (and perhaps above all) has a decidedly different (and indeed, more original) meaning within this primordial problem sphere. As ever, the task of penetrating to this more original meaning demands that we dismantle the traditional conception of truth and reduce it, thereby, to its essence as a “how” of Dasein’s being-in-the-world. The task of section one, thus, is to show that “the essence of truth must be sought more originally than the traditional characterization of truth in the sense of a property of assertions would admit”.⁸⁶

Heidegger’s first order of business is to establish a “guideline” for understanding the link between truth and ground within the very the conception of truth that is slated here for dismantling. As in *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, Leibniz serves as the

old will bow to the necessity of later being understood differently than he thought he understood himself.” Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, xiii.

⁸⁶Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 106.

exemplar. In the Leibnizian account, Heidegger maintains, the essence of truth resides in the “*connexio* of subject and predicate”:

Leibniz conceives of truth from the outset—explicitly, though not entirely legitimately, appealing to Aristotle—as truth of assertion (proposition). He determines the *nexus* [of this *connexio*] as the “*in esse*” of P in S, and the “*in esse*” as “*idem esse*.” Identity as the essence of propositional truth does not mean the empty sameness of something with itself, but unity in the sense of the original unitary agreement of that which belongs together. Truth thus means a unitary accord [*Einstimmigkeit*] which for its part can be such only as an overarching accordance [*Übereinstimmung*] with whatever is announced as unitary in the identity. In keeping with their nature, “truths”—true assertions—assume a relation to something *on whose grounds* they are able to be in accord. [...] In its very essence, *truth* thus houses a relation to something like “*ground*”.⁸⁷

But if the essential connection between truth and ground is indicated here, the determination of the essence of truth as assertion is “nevertheless derivative” insofar as beings—the very ground of predicative determination—“must already be manifest *before* such predication and *for* it”; to be possible, in short, “predication must be able to establish itself in a making-manifest [*Offenbarmachen*] that is not predicative in character”.⁸⁸

Though this pre-predicative “making-manifest” is new to us as it pertains explicitly to the essence of truth, the ensuing demonstration of its ontic-ontological provenance in Dasein’s being-in-the-world will no doubt ring familiar. The argument unfolds in three basic steps, made succinct here in view of the following three crucial passages. First, Heidegger establishes the dependence of propositional truth upon the “manifestness” [*Offenbarkeit*] of *beings* (“ontic truth”):

⁸⁷Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 102.

⁸⁸Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 103; Heidegger, “Vom Wesen des Grundes”, 130: Prädikation muß, um möglich zu werden, sich in einem Offenbarmachen ansiedeln können, das *nicht prädikativen* Charakter hat.”

Propositional truth is rooted in a *more originary* truth (unconcealment [*Unverborgenheit*]), in the pre-predicative manifestness of beings, which may be called *ontic truth*. [...] Ontic manifestation, however, occurs in our finding ourselves [*Sichbefinden*], in accordance with our attunement and drives, in the midst of beings and in those ways of comporting ourselves toward beings in accordance with our striving and willing that are also grounded therein.⁸⁹

Second, he establishes that the possibility of ontic truth is grounded in the “unveiledness” [*Enthülltheit*] of being (“ontological truth”):

Yet even such kinds of comportment...would be incapable of making beings accessible in themselves if their making manifest were not always illuminated and guided in advance by an understanding of the being (the ontological constitution: what-being and how-being) of beings. *Unveiledness of being first makes possible the manifestness of beings*. This unveiledness, as the truth concerning being, is termed *ontological truth*.⁹⁰

And third, he shows that the possibility of this distinction between being and beings (in which the ontic-ontological essence of truth is grasped) is grounded in the transcendence of Dasein:

Ontic and ontological truth...belong essentially together on the grounds of their relation to the *distinction between being and beings* (ontological difference). The essence of truth in general, which is thus necessarily forked in terms of the ontic and the ontological, is possible only together with the eruption of this distinction. And if what is distinctive about Dasein indeed lies in the fact that in understanding being it comports itself toward beings, then *that* potential for distinguishing in which the ontological difference becomes factual must have sunk the roots of its own possibility in the ground of the essence of Dasein. By way of anticipation, we shall call this ground of the ontological difference the transcendence of Dasein.⁹¹

Though Heidegger’s naming of transcendence as the ground of truth is still “anticipatory” in this context (anticipating, in particular, the account of transcendence in

⁸⁹Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 103; Heidegger, “Vom Wesen des Grundes”, 131.

⁹⁰Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 103; Heidegger, “Vom Wesen des Grundes”, 131.

⁹¹Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 105-106.

terms of world advanced in section two of the treatise), the sense of this claim should already be sufficiently clear given our familiarity with the parallel account developed in *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*. As we have seen, the unveiledness of being (associated here with “ontological truth”) is made possible in the surpassing of beings toward their possibility as world, a surpassing from out of which Dasein, as free, always already finds itself attuned by beings and therefore able to comport itself toward them. With the essential connection between truth, ground, and transcendence established, and with a thorough interpretation of transcendence already up and running, thus, we are now prepared to tackle Heidegger’s attempt in section three to “illuminate the essence of ground from out of transcendence”.

How, then, is the intrinsic possibility of ground to be understood as residing in transcendence? Heidegger’s initial reply is a welcome summary of the steps through which transcendence is determined as Dasein’s “free” surpassing toward “world”. World, we are reminded, is the whole of Dasein’s “for-the-sake-of” (*Umwillen*): the totality of its “equiprimordial” possibilities for being-among beings, being-with other Daseins, and being-toward itself. In being-for-the-sake-of-itself as being-in-the-world, Dasein thus surpasses itself (and all other beings) *as actual* in a “willing” (*Willen*) that projects itself upon its *possibilities*, thereby giving itself “clearance space” for choice and simultaneously binding itself to the responsibility of choosing. Surpassing toward world is therefore primordial freedom itself: the original “obligating” of Dasein to its own capacity for being through which all forms of comportment toward beings are opened (including, first and foremost, Dasein’s ability to relate to itself *as a self*). This interpretation of freedom in terms of transcendence is thus “more originary” than the

traditional determination of freedom as self-initiating spontaneity (“i.e., as a kind of causality”) insofar as it provides for the very coming-to-selfhood of the “self” that is simply stipulated in the traditional account as “already [lying] at the grounds of all spontaneity”.⁹² If Heidegger has moved beyond this traditional understanding of freedom, however, it is nonetheless an instructive counterpoint to the radical interpretation of ground he wishes to attempt:

Only because transcendence consists in freedom can freedom make itself known as a distinctive kind of causality in existing Dasein. Yet the interpretation of freedom as “causality” above all already moves within a particular understanding of ground. Freedom as transcendence, however, is not only a unique “kind” of ground, but the *origin of ground in general. Freedom is freedom for ground.*⁹³

Heidegger’s name for this “originary relation of freedom to ground” is “grounding” [*das Gründen*].⁹⁴ The guiding insight, once again, is that the subject matter [*die Sache*] at issue is not a “thing”, but an event—a “how” of Dasein’s being-in-the-world. Thus, just as the essence of time is “temporalizing”, and the essence of freedom is “willing”, the essence of ground is named in the gerund so as to indicate its character as a “carrying on”. Heidegger’s interest, as ever, is to follow the movement of this event, and insofar as grounding is “rooted in transcendence”, it will hardly come as a surprise that the movement at issue is “strewn into manifold ways” that correspond precisely to the three ecstases of primordial temporality: (1) “grounding as establishing [*Stiften*]” (which is “nothing other than *the projection of the “for the sake of”*”); (2) “grounding as taking up a basis [*Bodennehmen*]” (which is the “*absorption*” of “that which projects” by the

⁹²Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 127.

⁹³Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 127.

⁹⁴Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 127; Heidegger, “Vom Wesen des Grundes”, 165.

beings surpassed in projection (thrownness)); and (3) “grounding as the grounding of something [Begründen]” (which “*mak[es] possible the why-question in general*”).⁹⁵

But if Heidegger is “saying the same” here, his aim is to say it differently. For in interpreting transcendence thus far, he has placed a heavy emphasis on the priority of projection—an emphasis that, as we have observed (and as Heidegger himself has acknowledged) results in an underdetermined interpretation of the other two elements and of their relation to projection in the unity of this movement as a whole. In the present context, however, Heidegger speaks explicitly from the very outset of the need to rectify this imbalance. “If such freely letting world prevail was determined as transcendence, and if the other ways of grounding also necessarily belong to the projection of world as grounding”, he concedes, “then this implies that neither transcendence nor freedom has as yet been fully determined”.⁹⁶

There are two insights in Heidegger’s opening discussion of this reorientation toward projection that merit our careful attention. The first instructs us on how to understand the “priority” of projection (“grounding as establishing”) by telling us just what this priority is *not*:

As the “first” of these ways we deliberately cite “establishing,” though not because the others derive from it. Nor is it that manner of grounding initially familiar to us, or that we come to know first.⁹⁷

⁹⁵Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 127, 128, 129.

⁹⁶Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 127.

⁹⁷Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 127.

Though Heidegger does not elaborate on this claim, we need only consult the development of our progress so far to see just what he means. We did not meet with the phenomenon of world-projection immediately, after all, but only upon traversing a lengthy path that led through the question ‘Is there something?’ into the sphere of environmental experience and on, finally, to being-in-the-world. In terms of phenomenological access, thus, we encountered the three ways of grounding in an order precisely the reverse of that submitted above: we moved from “grounding as grounding of something” (making-present) to “grounding as taking up a basis” (retention) to “grounding as establishing” (projection), further clarifying each on the basis of the next. The crucial insight here, then, is that the “priority” of projection resides in its *hermeneutic potency* as the deepest penetration into a unitary understanding-of-being that is indicated at each stage along the way, but apprehended authentically as a whole only in view of projection.

The order of grounding that Heidegger establishes above, therefore, is determined in descending order of hermeneutic priority: as we move backward from the given phenomenologically, we move forward hermeneutically in that each element of our appropriation of the understanding-of-being becomes increasingly intelligible in light of the next. Once illuminated by the phenomenon of projection, moreover, the phenomena of retention and making-present may be brought back to bear on projection itself, eliciting thereby a more original determination of the unity of transcendence *as a whole*.

The need for this further determination of transcendence is made more concrete in a second insight that speaks explicitly to our chief lingering concern from *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, viz., the insufficiency of projection, on its own, to

account for the gap between the “revealability” (or “unveilability” [*Enthüllbarkeit*]) of beings *as a whole* and their “manifestness” [*Offenbarkeit*] *in themselves*:

The “for the sake of” that is projectively cast before us points back to the entirety of those beings that can be unveiled within this horizon of world. [...] Yet in the projection of world, such beings are not yet manifest in themselves. Indeed, they would have to remain concealed, were it not for the fact that Dasein in its projecting is, *as projecting*, also already *in the midst* of such beings.⁹⁸

To see what Heidegger is getting at in this passage, it is absolutely critical to understand that “being in the midst of” [*Inmitten-sein von*] beings and “being among” [*Unter-sein von*] beings are two distinct phenomena that are under no circumstances to be conflated.⁹⁹ Being “among” beings, for Heidegger, means already being in an intentional relation to them: as “among” beings, Dasein *comports itself* to beings as *manifest*—that is, as *available* for its specific, *concrete* purposes. As “in the midst of” beings, however, Dasein is not yet “among” beings, but is, as it were, “between” their revealability—the projection of their possibilities as a whole—and their manifestness in themselves.

The question of the “how” of this “in the midst” refers us directly to the “second” form of grounding:

Yet this “in the midst of...” [*Inmitten von...*] refers neither to a cropping up among other beings, nor even to a specific self-directedness *toward* this particular being in *comporting* oneself *toward* it. Rather, this being in the midst of... belongs to transcendence. That which surpasses, in *passing over and beyond* and thus elevating itself, must *find itself* [*sich befinden*] as such among beings. As finding itself, Dasein is already *absorbed* by beings in such a way that, in its belonging to beings, it is *thoroughly attuned* by them. *Transcendence means projection of world in such a way that those beings that are surpassed also already pervade and attune that which projects.* With this *absorption* by beings that belongs to transcendence, Dasein has taken up a basis within beings, gained “ground”.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 127.

⁹⁹Heidegger, “Vom Wesen des Grundes”, 166.

¹⁰⁰Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 128.

This “second” form of grounding, Heidegger continues, is not derivative of the “first”, but “simultaneous” with it, and the key to understanding this unity is to see the way in which the “exceeding and withdrawing” of Dasein’s possibilities that correspond to these two forms of grounding are “transcendentally attuned to one another” herein.¹⁰¹ In projecting possibilities of itself, more specifically, Dasein necessarily *exceeds* itself [*sich...überschwingt*: literally, “swings beyond” itself] insofar as this projection of possibilities “is in each case richer than the possession of them by the one projecting”.¹⁰² At the same time, however, this excess is intelligible *as an excess* only because Dasein, as projecting, finds itself in the midst of beings such that certain possibilities are already *withdrawn* from it; as factually situated amidst beings, in other words, Dasein’s possibilities are limited *in advance* by its facticity. It is precisely this *withdrawal* of certain possibilities, Heidegger maintains, that “first brings those possibilities of world-projection that can “actually” be seized upon *toward* Dasein as its world”: “the ever-excessive projection of world”, in short, “attains its power and becomes our possession only in such withdrawal”.¹⁰³ In the simultaneous exceeding and withdrawing of

¹⁰¹Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 128, 129. We have seen this unity of “establishing” and “absorption” before, of course, in the analysis of temporality, to which Heidegger directly appeals here: “This does not mean to say that the two are present at hand within the same “now”; rather, projection of world and absorption by beings, as ways of grounding, belong in each case to a *single* temporality insofar as they co-constitute its temporalizing. Yet just as the future precedes “in” time, yet temporalizes only insofar as having-been and present also—as intrinsic to time—temporalize in the specific unity of time, so too those ways of grounding that spring from transcendence display this connection. Such correspondence is to be found, however, because transcendence is rooted in the *essence* of time, i.e., in its ecstatic-horizonal constitution.” (128)

¹⁰²Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 128; Heidegger, “Vom Wesen des Grundes”, 167.

¹⁰³Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 129.

transcendence, thus, we find a “transcendental testimony” to the *finitude* of Dasein’s freedom.

But if “establishing” and “taking up a basis” address the how of Dasein’s projecting and narrowing down of the possibilities opened for it in transcendence (finite freedom), neither of these forms of grounding, Heidegger maintains, is as yet a *comportment* toward beings. And yet, as we have seen, Dasein, as existing, not only finds itself *amidst* beings *as a whole*, but also *with* and *among* beings *in themselves*—beings, including itself, toward which it may comport itself in a variety of ways. For reasons we have already considered at length,¹⁰⁴ furthermore, this “intentional” comportment toward beings is “at first and for the most part even equated with”—and hence mistaken for—transcendence as such, and thus it is all the more important, “if intentionality is indeed distinctive of the constitution of Dasein’s essence”, to demonstrate its rootedness in transcendence proper.¹⁰⁵

So it is that we are referred back to the unity of “establishing” and “taking up a basis”: though neither is, as such, a comportment of Dasein toward beings,

presumably *both*—in their unity as characterized—make intentionality possible transcendently, and in such a way that, as ways of grounding, they co-temporalize a *third* manner of grounding: *grounding as the grounding of something*. In this form of grounding, the transcendence of Dasein assumes the role of making possible the manifestation of beings in themselves, the possibility of ontic truth.¹⁰⁶

This third form of grounding as “the grounding of something”, however, is not to be taken in the derivative sense of “proving ontic or theoretical propositions”, but in the

¹⁰⁴See Heidegger’s destruction of the “traditional” transcendence problem in *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 159-165.

¹⁰⁵Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 129.

¹⁰⁶Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 129.

“fundamentally originary” sense of “making possible the why-question in general”.¹⁰⁷ In asking about the origin of the “why”, moreover, our concern is not with the occasional irruption of this question in factual circumstances (such as in “Why did the shuttle explode?”), but rather with the transcendental possibility of the “why” in general as the grounding through which beings can become manifest in themselves.

Heidegger’s ensuing discussion of the “why” is perhaps the most dense and difficult series of passages in the treatise. As fate would have it, unfortunately, it is also the lynchpin of the “more concrete” interpretation of transcendence we are seeking (i.e., the account which shows us, finally, how the individuation and manifestation of beings in themselves is rooted in transcendence), as well as the key for understanding why transcendence, as the essence of ground, is simultaneously an “abyss of ground” that forces a “complete overturning” of the very ontico-ontological understanding of being it underwrites. Our only recourse, then, is to batten down the hatches and stay as close to the text as possible, keeping in mind that we are making crucial headway toward smoother sailing ahead.

How, then, does transcendence ground the “why”, and how does the “why”, thus grounded, propel us out of possibility into comportments toward beings in themselves?

Let us follow the text.¹⁰⁸

In the projection of world an excess of possibility is given with respect to which, in Dasein’s being pervaded by those (actual) beings that press around it as it finds itself, the “why” springs forth.

¹⁰⁷Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 129.

¹⁰⁸Unless otherwise indicated, the following citations are drawn from Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 130. In certain cases, I have modified McNeill’s translation in view of the original German in Heidegger, “Vom Wesen des Grundes”, 169.

The “why” is thus Dasein’s original response to being accosted by the possibilities of its finite freedom and to finding itself obligated, thereby, to its own capacity for being. As a response to obligation, however, the “why” is simultaneously Dasein’s original demand *of itself to account for itself* in the midst of those beings with which, because of transcendence, it finds itself already concerned. The “springing forth” of the “why” in Dasein is thus a calling-to-account of beings (including itself) which explodes the whole of possibilities into factually appropriable parts. In asking “why”, in other words, Dasein inaugurates an event of appropriation through which beings in themselves are summoned forth from the whole and differentiated from one another.

This individuating, differentiating power of the “why”, Heidegger continues, is evidenced in the fact that

[t]he “why” even becomes manifold at its very origin. Its fundamental forms are: Why this and not that? Why *in this way* and not otherwise? *Why something at all and not nothing?*

Each of these forms, moreover, testifies to the transcendent provenance of the “why”:

In this “why,” in whatever manner it is expressed, there also lies already a preunderstanding, albeit a preconceptual one, of what-being, how-being, and being (nothing) in general. This understanding of being first makes possible the “why”.

In summoning forth an individual being or beings as questionable (and thus as “to be accounted for”), in short, Dasein is always already guided in advance by finite freedom: the “why” directs itself to beings that are intelligible as such only in reference to the understanding of being, and thus the “why” announces the illumination in Dasein of the difference between beings and being in light of which “beings can become manifest in themselves (i.e., as the beings they are and in the way they are)”. What Heidegger surmises from this insight is at first perhaps surprising:

This means, however, that [the understanding of being] already contains the first and last *primal answer* [*erst-letzte Urantwort*] to all questioning. As the most quintessentially antecedent *answer*, the understanding of being provides the first and last *grounding of things* [*erst-letzte Begründung*]. In such understanding of being, transcendence as such grounds things. Because being and the constitution of being are unveiled therein, the transcendental grounding of something may be called *ontological truth*.

But if Heidegger associates transcendence (and the ontological truth unveiled therein) with “the first and last *primal answer*”, his intent is by no means to suggest that this “answer” is somehow “on hand” in transcendence—static, unchanging, and “there” for the taking, as though it were a “first” or “highest” principle; far from it, indeed. The insight is rather that transcendence “contains” the first and last primal answer to all questioning as the horizon of intelligibility from out of which all answers to inquiries concerning beings (ontic truth) first arise and to which they ultimately return. He puts the point in more pedestrian terms as follows:

Every accounting for things must move within a sphere of what is *possible*, because as a manner of intentional comportment toward beings with respect to their possibility it is already compliant with the explicit or implicit (ontological) grounding of something.¹⁰⁹

In addition to bringing the somewhat high-flown notion of a “first and last primal answer” back down to earth, this passage tells us something else significant, *viz.* that the grounding of something happens in Dasein’s transcendence whether or not Dasein explicitly grasps it as such. That Dasein *can* (and usually does) overlook its status as the grounding of all grounds, moreover, only testifies again to its transcendental freedom.

¹⁰⁹Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 133.

For it is precisely because of Dasein's status as "the origin of grounding things and thus also of accounting for them" that "it is in each case left to the freedom in Dasein how far to extend such grounding and whether indeed it understands how to attain an authentic grounding of things"; in factually accounting for itself, in short, Dasein remains free to "cast "grounds" aside, suppress any demand for them, pervert them, and cover them over".¹¹⁰ But if it is possible in this respect for transcendence to remain concealed *as such*, it nonetheless unveils itself, if only indirectly, in that it "lets there be" [sie...sein läßt] the beings that have always already "irrupted with the fundamental constitution of being-in-the-world".¹¹¹

Though transcendence thus unveils itself implicitly in any case, Heidegger's concern has been to make this unveiling explicit, and upon the conclusion of his interrogation of the threefold essence of ground his findings are as follows:

Transcendence explicitly unveils itself as the origin of grounding when such grounding is brought to *spring forth* in its threefold character. In accordance with this, ground means: *possibility, basis, account*. Strewn in this threefold manner, the grounding that is transcendence first brings about in an originarily unifying manner that whole within which a Dasein must be able to exist in each case. Freedom in this threefold manner is freedom for ground. The occurrence of transcendence as grounding is the forming of a leeway into which there can irrupt the factual *self-maintaining* of factual Dasein in each case in the midst of beings as a whole.¹¹²

¹¹⁰Heidegger, "On the Essence of Ground", 131.

¹¹¹Heidegger, "On the Essence of Ground", 131; Heidegger, "Vom Wesen des Grundes", 170.

¹¹²Heidegger, "On the Essence of Ground", 131. The parallel summary of this connection between transcendence, freedom and ground offered in *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* is helpful: "Freedom is the *origin of anything like ground*. We can make this pithy by saying freedom is the metaphysical essence of transcending, existing Dasein. But freedom is qua transcendental freedom toward ground. To be free is to understand oneself from out of one's own capacity-to-be; but "oneself" and "one's own" are not understood individually or egoistically, but metaphysically. They are understood in the basic possibilities of transcending Dasein, in the capacity-to-be-with others, in the

But just when it would seem that we have transcendence by the tail, the problem of the “nothing” comes back to roost on the nether-side of freedom. For as the grounding in which every proffering of factual “grounds” ultimately rests, freedom itself is an “abyss of ground” in that it “places Dasein, as potentiality for being, in possibilities that gape open before its finite choice”.¹¹³ The point here, Heidegger is careful to add, is certainly not that Dasein’s free comportments to beings are groundless; as he has just shown, these factual comportments and their “results” (“ontic truth”) are indeed grounded, and precisely in freedom. The problem, rather, is with freedom itself: as the abyss of possibility at “the ground of ground”, freedom is that for which “there is” no “prior” ground insofar as the very possibility of the “there is” (and, thus, of grounding “priorities” within the ontic sphere of *what* “there is”) is opened by freedom itself (transcendence). Heidegger’s conclusion, thus, is that while this “non-essence of ground” at the “heart of Dasein” can be “overcome” in “factual existing”—while Dasein is free, in other words, to fill this void by understanding itself and ordering its existence through the giving and taking of ontic grounds—the abyssal ground of freedom itself stands beyond Dasein’s control and can never be “eliminated”:

The fact *that* it has the possibility of being a self, and has this factually in keeping with its freedom in each case; the fact *that* transcendence temporalizes itself as a primordial occurrence, does not stand in the power of this freedom itself. Yet such impotence [*Ohnmacht*] (thrownness) is not first the result of beings forcing themselves upon Dasein, but rather determines Dasein’s being as such.¹¹⁴

capacity-to-be by extant things, in the factic existentiell capacity to be in each case toward oneself. To understand oneself out of the for-the-sake-of means to understand oneself from out of ground.” (214)

¹¹³Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 134.

¹¹⁴Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 135; “Vom Wesen des Grundes”, 175. A parallel passage from *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* provides a helpful gloss on Dasein’s “impotence”: “The powerlessness [*Ohnmacht*] is metaphysical, i.e., to be

Upon the conclusion to the main text of “On the Essence of Ground”, then, we can already glimpse a new problem on the horizon of the interpretation of transcendence at stake within it, for though this account sheds light on the question of how beings become manifest as such, the question of the abyss from which this possibility “springs” is still shrouded in darkness and would remain so for some time to come. As Heidegger puts the question (nearly a decade later) in the *Beiträge*, “there is in the occurrence [of transcendence] a definite opening up of beings as such...[b]ut what opens up this opening up of beings?”¹¹⁵ Even at the end of his career, after grappling with this question for some forty years under numerous rubrics (“abyss” [*Abgrund*], “nothing” [*Nichts*], “mystery” [*Geheimnis*], “clearing” [*Lichtung*], “that-which-regions” [*Gegnet*]),¹¹⁶

understood as essential; it cannot be removed by reference to the conquest of nature, to technology, which rages about in the “world” today like an unshackled beast; for this domination of nature is the real proof for the metaphysical powerlessness of Dasein, which can only attain freedom in its history. [...] Because, as factically existing, transcending already, in each case, encounters beings, and because, with transcendence and world-entry, the powerlessness (understood metaphysically), is manifest, for this reason Dasein, which can be powerless (metaphysically) only as free, must hold itself to the condition of the possibility of its powerlessness, to the freedom to ground. And it is for this reason that we essentially place every being, as being, into question regarding ground.” (215, 216)

¹¹⁵Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (vom Ereignis)*, Gesamtausgabe, Band 65, Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989, 175.

¹¹⁶As we have seen, the “abyss” and the “nothing” show up throughout *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* and “On the Essence of Ground” (1928), as well as throughout “What is Metaphysics?” (1929). The “mystery” is a central theme, among other places, in “On the Essence of Truth” (1930; *Pathmarks*, 136-154) and “Gelassenheit” (1955; in Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. Anderson and Freund, New York: Harper and Row, 1966, 43-57). The best-known appearance of the “clearing” is in “The Letter on Humanism” (1947; *Pathmarks*, 239-276), but it also receives substantial attention in the *Beiträge* (1936-1938), in *Basic Questions of Philosophy* (a course of lectures given over the 1937-38 academic year (trans. Rojcewicz and Schuwer, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994)), and in *On Time and Being* (1962), to name just a few. It is also worth noting an early appearance of “clearing” in *Being and Time*, which crops up (conveniently, given our purposes) on the outset of section 69,

Heidegger is still asking it, and indeed, commending this questioning to us as *the* “task of thinking” at the “end” of metaphysics: “But where”, he queries in 1967, “does the clearing come from and how is it given? What speaks in the *Es gibt?*”.¹¹⁷

If this path of questioning is routinely associated with Heidegger’s “later” work, however, we need not leap ahead to 1967 (nor even as far as 1936) to get a clearer sense of what is at issue in this “turning” from the opening of beings in the transcendence of Dasein to the opening of this opening itself. As we noted earlier, rather, many of the key insights of this “turning” are already available to us in 1929 (albeit in an abbreviated and provisional form) in the footnotes appended to the first edition of “On the Essence of Ground”. Thus, though a detailed engagement with Heidegger’s “later” thinking is beyond the scope of our inquiry, we can clarify the question that will discipline these later efforts by briefly revisiting its emergence (or at least its prefiguring) in these footnotes.

The general thrust of the notes, if we recall our preliminary survey of the treatise, is that the insight into transcendence as an “abyss of ground” attained at the end of section three marks “a step into a realm that compels the destruction” of the ontological difference (“ontic-ontological truth”) elaborated in section one—indeed, a step that “makes a complete overturning necessary” and, as quickly becomes apparent, a new

where the “Problem of the Transcendence of the World” is first explicitly discussed, 401 ff. The questioning of “That-which-regions”, finally, is to be found in “Conversation on a Country Path” (1945) in *Discourse on Thinking*, 65 ff.

¹¹⁷Heidegger, “Das Ende der Philosophie und die Aufgabe des Denkens”, in *Zur Sache des Denkens*, Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1969, 80. In translation see Heidegger, “The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking”, in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell, New York: Harper Collins, 1977, 431-449; and in Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, New York: Harper and Row, 1972, 55-73.

vocabulary of “beyng” as well.¹¹⁸ What is proposed here, as we saw, is not only a reappropriation of the question of being itself in view of what Heidegger now calls “the truth of beyng”, but also—since this question ultimately concerns the being of the questioner—a reappropriation of Dasein’s relation to being (i.e., transcendence, the temporalizing of temporality, the “free ek-static projection” of being “that illuminates in advance all comportment towards beings”) as a “projection of the essential prevailing of the truth of beyng” itself.¹¹⁹ Of the many fragmentary formulations of this task ventured in these notes, the most comprehensive of the lot puts the point as follows:

Here [in section one] the essence of truth is conceived as “forked” in terms of the [ontic-ontological] “distinction” as a fixed reference point, instead of the contrary approach of *overcoming* the “distinction” from out of the essence of the truth of beyng, or of first thinking the “distinction” as beyng itself and therein the *beyngs of beyng* [das Seyende des Seyns]—no longer the being of *beings*.¹²⁰

What this means for Dasein, we discover in another fragment, is that

Da-sein belongs to beyng itself as the simple onefold of beings and being; the essence of the “occurrence”—temporalizing of Temporality as a preliminary name for the truth of beyng.¹²¹

The problem, as we noted in our preliminary survey, is that while Heidegger clearly has at least a fledgling sense of what he is reaching for in words and phrases such as “beyng” and “the truth of beyng”, he doesn’t share it with us. Indeed, though he continues to ruminate on these issues in lecture courses and unpublished writings throughout the thirties, the matter for thinking at stake in these locutions will not see the

¹¹⁸Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 125, note a.

¹¹⁹Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 104, note c.

¹²⁰Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 105, note c.

¹²¹Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 123, note a.

light of day in print until the publication of “On the Essence of Truth” in 1943,¹²² and will not receive widespread attention until the appearance in 1947 of the “Letter on Humanism”, the first publication in which the “turning” from *Being and Time* is addressed explicitly and at length.¹²³

But if Heidegger neglects to unpack what he has in mind when he appeals to “beyng” and “the truth of beyng” here in 1929, we can glean important clues to their meaning by attending to two notes in which the limitations of the ontological difference come more clearly to the fore, thus calling our attention to the need for a reappropriation of that toward which this distinction can only gesture in its present “categorical-metaphysical” form:

This distinction between “ontic and ontological truth” is only a doubling of unconcealment and initially remains ensconced within the Platonic approach. Thus what has been said hitherto only points the direction of an overcoming, but no overcoming is accomplished or grounded in terms of its own proper ground.¹²⁴

The ambiguous nature of this distinction: in terms of what has gone before, a step toward its overcoming, and yet a fateful link back to it that obstructs every path toward the originary “unity” and hence also to the truth of the distinction.¹²⁵

The first clue is to be found in Heidegger’s suggestion that the ontological difference is “only a doubling of unconcealment”. What this “doubling” means in the context of the

¹²²Heidegger, “On the Essence of Truth”, in *Pathmarks*, 136-154. Heidegger wrote this essay in 1930, and added a series of supplementary notes for its publication in 1943. A second series of notes was added for the publication of the third edition in 1954.

¹²³Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism”, in *Pathmarks*, 239-276. Even here, almost twenty years after his initial venturing of the vocabulary of the “turning” in the notes of “On the Essence of Ground”, Heidegger is tentative about deploying this language. In the notes appended to the first edition, he admits that “The letter continues to speak in the language of metaphysics, and does so knowingly. The other language remains in the background.” (239)

¹²⁴Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 104, note a.

¹²⁵Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 105.

our foregoing discussion should already be clear, *viz.*, that the phenomenologically prior manifestness [*Offenbarkeit*] of beings in themselves must be understood in view of the hermeneutically prior revealedness [*Enthülltheit*] of beings as a whole.¹²⁶ The problem, Heidegger tells us, is that this distinction is “only” a doubling of unconcealment, the implication being that there is more to the essence of truth than unconcealment on its own can provide for. What, then, does this “doubling” leave out?

What is missing, according to Heidegger, is the concealing from which the unconcealing achieved in the temporalizing of temporality (transcendence) is granted. A passage from “On the Essence of Truth” can help us here:

The concealment of beings as a whole does not first show up subsequently as consequence of the fact that knowledge of beings is always fragmentary. The concealment of beings as a whole, un-truth proper, is older than every manifestness [*Offenbarkeit*] of this or that being. It is older even than letting-be [*Seinlassen*] itself, which in disclosing already holds concealed and comports itself toward concealing. What conserves letting-be in this relatedness to concealing? Nothing less than the concealing of what is concealed as a whole, of beings as such, *i.e.*, the mystery; not a particular mystery regarding this or that, but rather the one mystery—that, in general, mystery (the concealing of what is concealed) as such holds sway throughout the *Da-sein* of human beings. [...] Insofar as it *ek-sists*, *Da-sein* conserves the first and broadest undisclosedness, un-truth proper. The proper non-essence of truth is the mystery. Here non-essence does not yet have the sense of inferiority to essence in the sense of what is general, its *possibilitas* and the ground of its possibility. Non-essence is here what in such a sense would be a pre-essential essence. [...] Indeed, in each of these significations the non-essence remains always in its own way essential to the essence and never becomes unessential in the sense of irrelevant.¹²⁷

¹²⁶See above, 138-141, 162.

¹²⁷Heidegger, “On the Essence of Truth”, in *Pathmarks*, 148. “Letting-be” is another name here for the way in which the revealedness (*Enthülltheit*) of beings as a whole comes to the fore in freedom: “As letting beings be, freedom is intrinsically the resolutely open bearing that does not close up in itself. All comportment is grounded in this bearing and receives from it directedness toward beings and disclosure of them.” (149) In this passage, then, we see how both “moments” in the doubling of unconcealment (*i.e.*, the revealedness of beings as a whole and the manifestness of beings in themselves) are outstripped by, and yet simultaneously inscribed within, the mystery of concealment.

Rather than “holding fast” to the beings made “readily available” in the doubling of unconcealment, then, thinking must relinquish the drive for mastery over beings and acknowledge that “the disclosure of beings as such is simultaneously and intrinsically the concealing of beings as a whole”; the task of “letting beings be”, in other words, is not exhausted in unconcealing beings, but requires that Dasein preserve the mystery that remains concealed at the heart of every “available” being, including and especially itself:

Because the full essence of truth contains the nonessence and above all holds sway as concealing, philosophy as a questioning into this truth is intrinsically discordant. Philosophical thinking is gentle releasement [*Gelassenheit*] that does not renounce the concealment of beings as a whole. Philosophical thinking is especially the stern and resolute openness that does not disrupt the concealing but entreats its unbroken essence into the open region of understanding and thus into its own truth.¹²⁸

In light of these passages, we can understand Heidegger’s usage of the word “beyng” as an attempt to distinguish primordial concealment (“the mystery”) from the “doubling of unconcealment” thought in the distinction between “being” (the revealedness of beings as a whole) and “beings” (the manifestness of beings as such).¹²⁹ In distinguishing “beyng” from the “being of beings”, however, Heidegger’s intent is not to drive a wedge

¹²⁸Heidegger, “On the Essence of Truth”, 151-152; “Vom Wesen der Wahrheit”, 198-199. This insight that “letting beings be” is ultimately a matter of “Gelassenheit” or remaining “open to the mystery” (and thus, to what remains “preserved” or “concealed” in every seemingly “available” being) will remain a guiding theme of Heidegger’s work until the end of his career. See, for example, in Heidegger, *Gelassenheit*, Stuttgart: Verlag Günter Neske, 1959 (in English as “Discourse on Thinking”, trans., Anderson and Freund, New York: Harper and Row, 1969).

¹²⁹Heidegger’s decision to express this matter for thinking in the word “beyng” [*Seyn*]—an archaic spelling of “being” [*Sein*] intended to reinvigorate the demystified metaphysical concept as well as to suggest a certain anteriority to it—is influenced largely by the poetry of Hölderlin, wherein this word (and its relation to the mystery) are of paramount importance. For an in-depth study of Heidegger’s lectures on Hölderlin, see Susanne Ziegler, *Heidegger, Hölderlin und die Alethea: Heideggers Geschichtsdenken in seinen Vorlesungen 1934/35 bis 1944*, Berlin: Dunker & Humblot, 1991.

between these two locutions (so as to posit, as it were, yet another “level” of being); on the contrary, his interest is to reappropriate the latter in terms of the former—to think more primordially as “beyng” what has heretofore been thought provisionally as the “being of beings”. In saying that the “temporalizing of temporality” must now be thought from out of “the essential prevailing of the truth of beyng”, then, Heidegger means to suggest that the non-essence of concealing (beyng) and the essence of unconcealing (the irruption in Dasein of the being of beings, now understood as the “beyngs of beyng”) fundamentally belong together—so much so, in fact, that any notion of a “relation” between them only serves to obscure their essential complementarity. As he puts the point in the *Beiträge*,

[S]trictly speaking, talk of a relation of Da-sein to beyng is misleading, insofar as this suggests that beyng holds sway “for itself” and that Da-sein takes up the relating to beyng. The relation of Da-sein to beyng belongs in the essencing of beyng [*Wesung des Seyns*] itself. This can also be said as follows: Beyng needs Da-sein and does not hold sway at all without this appropriating [*Ereignung*].¹³⁰

But if the “essencing” of the “truth” of “beyng” (the unfolding of the unconcealing of beyngs from out of the self-concealing mystery) only happens in Dasein’s appropriation of its “there-being”, this is not to say—and Heidegger will insist on this in the “Letter on “Humanism””—that beyng “is the product of Dasein”, or that Dasein “creates” beyng in ecstatically projecting it; rather, he maintains, “the essence of ek-sistence is destined [*geschicklich*]...from out of the truth of [beyng]”:¹³¹

¹³⁰Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, 254; *Contributions*, 179.

¹³¹Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism”, 256, 257, 253; “Brief über den “Humanismus””, in *Wegmarken*, Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1967, 336, 337, 332. That Heidegger is still tentative as to how best to formulate the matter for thinking at issue here is evidenced by the fact that he intentionally refrains from speaking of “beyng” [*Seyn*] or “essencing” [*Wesung*] throughout this essay, even though the context in which he is writing and the locutions he is using (“truth of being” [*Wahrheit des Seins*], “essence of being” [*Wesen des Seins*], “destiny of being” [*Geschick des Seins*], etc.) first come to expression well before this essay (1929 and following) explicitly in terms of

What throws in such projection is not the human being but [beyng] itself, which sends [*schickt*] the human being into the ek-sistence of Da-sein that is his essence. This destiny [*Geschick*] appropriates itself [*ereignet sich*] as the clearing [*Lichtung*] of [beyng], which it is. The clearing grants nearness to [beyng]. In this nearness, in the clearing of the *Da*, the human being dwells as the ek-sisting one without yet being able properly to experience and take over this dwelling today.¹³²

Though Heidegger will never come to rest on the questions of if, when, or how we can expect to arrive within this “destiny”, he devotes the remainder of his career to preparing the *possibility* of its onset. Given the concerns of our study, the most important of these preparations is “beyng-historical thinking” [*Das seyns-geschichtliche Denken*]: the task of overcoming metaphysics not by “reversing” [*Umkehrung*] it,¹³³ but by reappropriating the history of this “first beginning” (which has always and only questioned the truth of *beings*) in view of its concealed dependence upon the “other beginning”—the prevailing of the mystery of *beyng* in light of whose truth the abyssal ground of metaphysics,

“beyng” and “essencing” (as “truth of beyng” [*Wahrheit des Seyns*], “essencing of beyng” [*Wesung des Seyns*], and “destiny of beyng” [*Geschick des Seyns*] (see, of course, in the 1929 footnotes to “On the Essence of Ground”, as well as throughout the *Beiträge*). That Heidegger has “truth of beyng” in mind when he says “truth of being” is fairly clear, however, given that he admits this indirectly in the first edition footnotes (“The letter continues to speak in the language of metaphysics and does so knowingly. The other language remains in the background” (239)). Since Heidegger’s intention is clear, and since I am citing this text in the context of the “truth of beyng” (as it is written in “On the Essence of Ground” in 1929 and the *Beiträge* in 1936), I have placed “beyng” in brackets in the above citations in order to maintain continuity.

¹³²Heidegger, “Letter on “Humanism””, 253. I have altered Capuzzi’s translation slightly in view of the German, Heidegger, “Brief über den “Humanismus””, 337.

¹³³On this point, Heidegger is adamant: “Philosophy in the other beginning questions in the manner of inquiring into the truth of *beyng*. Seen from within the horizon of what has explicitly become differentiation of beings and being and reckoned within a historical [*historisch*] comparison to metaphysics and its proceeding from *beings*, questioning within the other beginning (questioning as beyng-historical thinking) may seem to be a simple—and that means here a crude—*reversing* [*Umkehrung*]. But it is precisely beyng-historical thinking which knows what is ownmost to mere reversing, knows that in reversing the most ruthless and insidious enslaving prevails; that reversing overcomes nothing but merely empowers the reversed and provides it with what it hitherto lacked, namely, consolidation and completion.” Heidegger, *Contributions*, 307.

heretofore forgotten, may “shine forth”.¹³⁴ What is prepared in this “crossing” from the “guiding question” of the truth of *beings* to the “grounding question” of the truth of *beyng* is the transformation of history [*Historie*] (the “historiography” of what “we think up”) into history [*Geschichte*] (the unfolding of what is “destined” [*geschicklich*] to thinking by *beyng* itself):

The result of these discussions consists—if it must consist in something—in a *transformation* of perspectives, norms, and claims, a transformation which at the same time is nothing other than a *leap* into a more original and more simple course of essential occurrences in the history of Western thinking, a history we ourselves *are*. Only after our thinking has undergone this transformation of attitude by means of historical reflection, will we surmise, in an auspicious moment [*Augenblick*], that already in our discussions another essence of truth, and perhaps indeed only that, was at issue.¹³⁵

As we shall see, this hope of bringing metaphysics to an “end” by gathering the history of philosophy into its singular, “proper” destiny will come under serious scrutiny in the work of Jacques Derrida.

With these later developments in view, finally, we are now in a better position to understand what Heidegger is reaching for in 1929 when he suggests that the ontological difference is “ambiguous”—that it is at once “a step toward overcoming” what has gone before, and yet “a fateful link back to it that obstructs every path toward the originary “unity” and hence also to the truth of the distinction.” Projected into the language of the thirties and forties, the insight here is that *Dasein* (as the ek-static projection of beings as

¹³⁴The task of “beyng-historical thinking” and its aim of “crossing” from the “first beginning” (metaphysics) to the “other beginning” (history of beyng) are discussed in great detail in the work of the mid-to-late thirties. See throughout *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, especially 167-224, 424-441 (*Contributions*, 117-157, 299-310); and throughout the lecture course of the same period, *Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected “Problems” of “Logic”*, trans Rojcewicz and Schuwer, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.

¹³⁵Heidegger, *Basic Questions of Philosophy*, 162.

a whole) is opened up in two directions such that it stands in the “crossing” from the “first beginning” to the “other beginning”: as the “ground of all grounding”, it opens into *beings* with and among which it can maintain its factual existence; as the “abyss of ground”, on the other hand, it opens into the mystery of *beyng* wherein its proper essence remains withheld from it, “preserved” in primordial concealment. Because beings are readily available and the mystery is not, however, the temptation is strong for Dasein to forget *beyng* and retreat into beings. Once in retreat, if Dasein experiences the “lack” at the heart of its essence at all, it does so only in contradistinction to beings, and therefore only as a mere “privation” that must be compensated for, filled up, and covered over by beings. In forgetting the mystery at the heart of its own essence, then, Dasein simultaneously forgets the provenance of beings in *beyng*, and reduces beings, thereby, to their ontic availability for achieving its own factual ends; instead of “letting beings be”, Dasein sinks into manipulating and dominating beings, and thus, into being dominated by them.

Accordingly, insofar as the interpretation of ontological transcendence leads us, at its limit, to the “grounding question” of the mystery from which transcendence is “thrown”, it marks an important step toward overcoming metaphysics. But insofar as it takes its departure from the givenness of beings, and works back to an account of how such beings become available, it nonetheless remains disciplined by and directed toward the “guiding question” of metaphysics. In order to carry out the overcoming that is prepared here, thus, Dasein must turn away from the “guiding question” (why are beings such that being is proper to them?) and begin again from within the “grounding question” (why is *beyng* such that *beyngs* are proper to it?).

In working through *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* and the treatise “On the Essence of Ground”, in summary, we have made crucial headway on several important fronts: in addition to clarifying the preparatory status of fundamental ontology and forecasting the “turning” that is prepared at its limit, we have provided compelling support for our suggestion that the problem of transcendence plays a catalytic role in provoking this transition. Before moving on to Derrida, our final task is to return briefly to *Being and Time* in order to observe how our readings of its “past” and “future” trajectories serve to clarify the problem of transcendence within it.

IV. “Retrieving” *Being and Time*

The suggestion that this final task involves a “return” to *Being and Time* perhaps requires further explanation. From a certain standpoint, after all, it might well appear that we have yet to say a single word about Heidegger’s *magnum opus*—that, in fact, the entirety of our investigation thus far has been a lengthy detour around it. For if it is indeed the case that, as Heidegger suggests, “*Being and Time* has no other task than that of a concrete projection unveiling transcendence”, then one might wonder why we didn’t simply look to “the text itself” and spare the effort of trudging through the secondary works at its margins.¹³⁶

To be sure, if the above suggestion were a thesis statement of the readily available “results” secured between the covers of *Being and Time*, then the concern that our approach has been needlessly indirect or even superfluous might be troubling. But if, as we have argued from the beginning, this engagement with transcendence is a “movement

¹³⁶Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 125, note 66.

of showing” in which the intelligibility of what is shown resides in its ecstatic relation to its past and future possibilities, and if, moreover, our grasping of the hermeneutic priority of its future possibilities is what first enables an understanding of this showing “as a whole”, then not only have we been within the orbit of *Being and Time* all along, but we have also opened up a more expansive—or as Heidegger would put it, a more “authentic”—understanding of its possibilities than any isolated reading of “the text itself” could have. In returning to *Being and Time* in view of its past and (especially) its future possibilities, in short, we are aiming at what Heidegger would call a “retrieval” [*Wiederholung*] of the problem of transcendence within it:

By the retrieval of a basic problem, we understand the opening-up of its original, long-concealed possibilities, through the working-out of which it is transformed. In this way it first comes to be preserved in its capacity as a problem. To preserve a problem, however, means to free and keep watch over those inner forces which make it possible, on the basis of its essence, as a problem.¹³⁷

How, then, has our inquiry succeeded in “freeing and keeping watch over” the “inner forces” that motivate and shape the development of the *Transzendenzproblem* in *Being and Time*? To put the question differently, how is our understanding of this text transformed by our attunement in the foregoing study to the genesis and overturning of fundamental ontological transcendence? Without aspiring to a detailed analysis of Heidegger’s *magnum opus*, the following two-fold strategy will allow us to sketch the proposed retrieval in broad strokes. First, we will provide an abbreviated survey of the two introductions to *Being and Time* in order to locate footholds therein for understanding fundamental ontology as a preparatory investigation of the transcendence of Dasein—an investigation whose projected “end” is conceived from the very beginning

¹³⁷Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 143.

as merely “on the way” to the meaning of being, i.e., as provisionally delimitative of the purposive horizon within which the question of being may be asked. With these introductory indications in view, second, we will briefly take stock of the two central tasks carried out respectively in divisions one and two, taking care to show how our foregoing study has prepared us to think them together as comprising a hermeneutic whole.

In view of what we learned in chapter two, the ground covered in the introductions to *Being and Time* is already familiar terrain. In the first introduction, Heidegger’s interest is to show up the “necessity of an explicit retrieval” [*ausdrücklichen Wiederholung*] of the question of the meaning of being by means of an investigation of the “ontico-ontological” priority of the being of the questioner.¹³⁸ Insofar as the argument here proceeds along similar lines to those offered in the Scotus dissertation and the lectures of 1919 and 1923, we needn’t reprise the premises to grasp the conclusion:

Dasein accordingly takes priority over all other beings in several ways. The first priority is an *ontical* one: Dasein is a being [*Seiende*] whose being [*Sein*] has the determinate character of existence. The second priority is an *ontological* one: Dasein is in itself ‘ontological’, because existence is thus determinative for it. But with equal primordially Dasein also possesses—as constitutive for its understanding of existence—an understanding of the being of all beings of a character other than its own. Dasein has therefore a third priority as providing the ontico-ontological condition for the possibility of any ontologies. Thus Dasein has turned out to be, more than any other being, the one which must first be interrogated ontologically.¹³⁹

¹³⁸Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 21 ff.; *Sein und Zeit*, 2 ff.

¹³⁹Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 34, 35; *Sein und Zeit*, 13, 15. Macquarrie and Robinson translate “*Sein*” as “Being” and “*Seiende*” as “entity”. In order to maintain continuity with the other English translations we have cited, however, we will consistently substitute “a being” for “an entity”, “beings” for “entities”, and “being” for “Being”.

A few sentences later, on the penultimate page of the first introduction—in short, just at the point where Heidegger is seeking to crystallize the motivating insight of the project—he parses the ontico-ontological priority of Dasein’s understanding-of-being explicitly in terms of Dasein’s transcendence, and in such a way that the task of articulating this transcendence is shown to demand, at once, an engagement with and a surpassing of the metaphysical tradition:

Dasein’s ontico-ontological priority was seen quite early, though Dasein itself was not grasped in its genuine ontological structure, and did not even become a problem in which this structure was sought. Aristotle says: “Man’s soul is, in a certain way, beings.” [...] Aristotle’s principle, which points back to the ontological thesis of Parmenides, is one which Thomas Aquinas has taken up in a characteristic discussion. Thomas is engaged in the task of deriving the ‘*transcendentia*’—those characteristics of being which lie beyond every possible way in which a being may be classified as coming under some generic kind of subject-matter, and which belong necessarily to anything, whatever it may be. Thomas has to demonstrate that the *verum* is such a *transcendens*. He does this by invoking a being which, in accordance with its very manner of being, is properly suited to ‘come together with’ beings of any sort whatever. This distinctive being, the *ens quod natum est convenire cum omni ente*, is the soul (*anima*). Here the priority of ‘Dasein’ over all other beings emerges, although it has not been ontologically clarified.¹⁴⁰

Having shown up the necessity for an ontological clarification of Dasein’s transcendence in the first introduction, Heidegger devotes the second to elucidating the method through which this clarification is to be carried out, *viz.*, that of “phenomenological ontology” which “takes its departure from the hermeneutic of Dasein”—an approach whose general contours are once again familiar to us in view of Heidegger’s appropriation of phenomenology in 1919 as the “primal habitus” of “hermeneutical intuition”, and again in 1923 as the “hermeneutics of facticity”.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 34.

¹⁴¹Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 62.

Here again, as ever, the aim is to follow the movement of what shows itself (phenomenon) toward an unveiling of what remains hidden therein, a task that unfolds in *Being and Time* as a movement “back and forth” with which we are well acquainted: it begins with the phenomenon of Dasein as it shows itself “proximally and for the most part” in its “average everydayness”, works backward from these “ontic possibilities” of “factual existence” to the “essential” (i.e., “existential-ontological”) structures that are “determinative” of them, and then moves forward from these “equiprimordial existentialia” to the “horizon” in which they are unified as an ecstatic whole—“primordial temporality”.¹⁴²

Given the concerns of our inquiry, the crucial insight to grasp here is that the *entirety* of the task set forth above—not just the Dasein analysis in division one, but also its retrieval in terms of temporality in division two—is conceived *from the outset* as wholly preparatory in character:

Our analysis of Dasein...merely brings out the being of this being, without interpreting its meaning. It is rather a preparatory procedure by which the horizon for the most primordial way of interpreting being may be laid bare. Once we have arrived at that horizon, this preparatory analysis of Dasein will have to be repeated on a higher and authentically ontological basis. We shall point to temporality as the meaning of the being of that entity which we call “Dasein”. If this is to be demonstrated, those structures of Dasein which we shall provisionally exhibit must be interpreted over again as modes of temporality. In thus interpreting Dasein as temporality, however, we shall not give the answer to our leading question as to the meaning of being in general. But the ground will have been prepared for obtaining such an answer.¹⁴³

¹⁴²Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 38.

¹⁴³Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 38.

Because the task of fundamental ontology is wholly preparatory, furthermore, the risk that its “results” may be called into question or even overturned by unforeseen developments provoked in the course of its progress is an occupational hazard that it must anticipate and even embrace. Later in the second introduction, in a passage that presages the irruption of the problem of “beyng” in the wake of *Being and Time*, Heidegger writes:

In any investigation in this field, where ‘the thing itself is deeply veiled’ one must take pains not to overestimate the results. For in such an inquiry one is constantly compelled to face the possibility of disclosing an even more primordial and more universal horizon from which we may draw the answer to the question, “What is ‘being’?” We can discuss such possibilities seriously and with positive results only if the question of being has been reawakened and we have arrived at a field where we can come to terms with it in a way that can be controlled.¹⁴⁴

To be sure, this question of what “results” from fundamental ontology is as undecided at the end of the investigation as it is at the beginning, a fact to which the concluding sentences of *Being and Time* clearly attest:

*How is this disclosive understanding of being at all possible for Dasein? Can this question be answered by going back to the primordial constitution-of-being of that Dasein by which being is understood? The existential-ontological constitution of Dasein’s totality is grounded in temporality. Hence the ecstatic projection of Being must be made possible by some primordial way in which ecstatic temporality temporalizes. How is this mode of the temporalizing of temporality to be interpreted? Is there a way which leads from primordial time to the meaning of being? Does time itself manifest itself as the horizon of being?*¹⁴⁵

The question remains open. And as the second introduction draws to a close, we receive an essential clue as to why it must: because “*being is the transcendens pure and simple*”.

Being, as the basic theme of philosophy, is no class or genus of beings; yet it pertains to every being. Its ‘universality’ is to be sought higher up. Being and the structure of being lie beyond every being and every possible character which a being may possess. *Being is the transcendens pure and simple*. And the transcendence of Dasein’s being is distinctive in that it implies the possibility and the necessity of the most radical *individuation*. Every disclosure of being as the

¹⁴⁴Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 49.

¹⁴⁵Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 488.

transcendens is *transcendental* knowledge. Phenomenological truth (the disclosedness of being) is *veritas transcendentalis*.¹⁴⁶

In reading passages like this one, the advantage of our foregoing study comes clearly to light. For in view of what we know about the course the *Transzendenzproblem* will take after *Being and Time*, we are in the unique position of being able to see that the problem of the mystery—the “nothing” on the netherside of Dasein’s transcendence—is already on the horizon of the language in the above passage. For if “being is beyond every being”(i.e., beyond the manifestness of beings in themselves) and also beyond “every possible character which a being may possess” (i.e., beyond the revealedness of beings as a whole), then the transcendence of Dasein in which this doubling of unconcealment (the understanding of the “being of beings”) comes to pass is as yet at a remove from “being” itself, i.e., from what Heidegger will come to call “beyng”—the concealment of beings as a whole.

Our foregoing inquiry is equally advantageous for understanding the respective tasks of divisions one and two as comprising what Heidegger characterized in 1928 as a “progressive elaboration” of transcendence. To bring this advantage to clarity, we must briefly review the three forms of grounding that are unified in the movement of transcendence (the “understanding-of-being”) remembering as we do so that the order of priority among them inverts itself as we shift our emphasis from the question of phenomenological access to that of hermeneutic access.

In “On the Essence of Ground”, as we observed, the three forms of grounding (which correspond, let us recall, to the three ecstases of primordial temporality) are submitted in descending order of hermeneutic priority: “grounding as establishing” is the *projection* of

¹⁴⁶Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 62.

the “for the sake of” (toward-which); “grounding as taking up a basis” is the *absorption* of that which projects by the beings surpassed in projection (having-been, retention); and “grounding as the grounding of something” is the irruption of the “why” question in answer to which Dasein’s intentional comportments toward beings first arise (making-present). As we previously observed, however, this order of priority is reversed when we attend to the way in which we first *encountered* these phenomena: we began with the given simply as it showed itself (making-present), worked backward to reveal the environing world from out of which every “present” given is shown (having-been), and discovered finally that Dasein’s absorption within these factual possibilities indicates, in its turn, a prior projection of a purposive horizon as such—an openness to world “as the totality of the essential intrinsic possibilities of Dasein as transcending” (toward-which).¹⁴⁷ The important insight here, or so we argued, is that as we move backward from the given phenomenologically, we move forward hermeneutically insofar as each element of our appropriation of Dasein’s transcendence becomes increasingly intelligible on the ground of the next; the “hermeneutic priority” of the “toward-which”—as we put the point earlier—is owed to its status as the deepest penetration into a unitary understanding-of-being that is indicated at each stage along the way, but apprehended explicitly as a whole only in view of projection.

In this light, then, what we would expect to find in a hermeneutic-phenomenology aimed at a progressive elaboration of transcendence is a progression from the “making-present” to the “having-been” to the “toward-which” through which our understanding of each respective phenomenon is deepened (or “retrieved”) in the subsequent discovery and

¹⁴⁷Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 192.

appropriation of the next. Accordingly, we may characterize such an elaboration as directed toward eliciting two essential “retrievals”: first, our understanding of the phenomenon of “making-present” is transformed in view of our hermeneutically prior absorption in the totality of “environmental” involvements (having-been); and second, our understanding of the phenomenon of “having-been” (which has been shown, in the first “retrieval”, to encompass the phenomenon of “making-present”) is transformed in view of our hermeneutically prior projection of a purposive horizon as such (“toward-which”).

So what exactly does this insight have to do with our retrieval of *Being and Time*? The point is just this: if a progressive elaboration of transcendence proceeds according to the aforementioned movement, and if *Being and Time* is indeed, as Heidegger claims in 1928, a progressive elaboration of transcendence, then we should expect the argument of *Being and Time* to unfold in accordance with this movement. My suggestion is that it does, and that, more specifically, divisions one and two can be profitably understood as aimed, respectively, at accomplishing the two “retrievals” discussed above: division one shows us that “making present” requires an understanding-of-being that “is” as always already “having-been”; and division two shows us that this “factual” absorption of the understanding-of-being in its received possibilities requires, in its turn, an openness to “possibility as such” in view of which the understanding-of-being may be appropriated for the first time “as a whole”.

A thumbnail sketch of the details of this development should help to make our case. In view of the phenomenological priority of the initial givens of everyday experience, division one is concerned, as are the Scotus dissertation and the lectures of 1919 and

1923, to work backward from these givens to their basis in Dasein's prior absorption in the "envirning world" or—in the idiom of *Being and Time*—"the totality of involvements" (*Bewandtnisganzheit*) from out of which beings in themselves may become "available for use", or more famously, "ready-to-hand" (*zuhanden*).¹⁴⁸ For the purposes of division one, then, "being-in-the-world" is approached provisionally as the "spatiality" (*Räumlichkeit*) within which Dasein is always already factually involved with beings, or again as the "wherein of being-already" (*das Worin des Schon-seins*).¹⁴⁹

As in the "Ontology" lectures of 1923, the question of how this factual involvement occurs is addressed to the phenomenon of "care" (*Sorge*). Here in *Being and Time*, however, "care" is developed in much greater depth in view of two "equiprimordial" modes of being-in-the-world through which (or better, *as* which) Dasein relates to beings: "concernful circumspection" (*besorgenden Umsicht*) and "solicitude" (*Fürsorge*). While the former relates to beings of an "equipmental character" and the latter to other Daseins, each exhibits "care" as its basis in that each "allows beings to be involved" (i.e., to become "ready-to-hand" or "Dasein-with" respectively) by "directing" itself to beings on the basis of its own prior understanding of their significance within the totality of involvements.¹⁵⁰ For our purposes, the complexities of this analysis are less important than the structural articulation of "care" to which they lead—an articulation whose three-fold structure and whose expression of "care" as indicated in a "willing" that "lets beings be" will no doubt ring familiar:

¹⁴⁸Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 95 ff.; *Sein und Zeit*, 67 ff.

¹⁴⁹Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 145 ff.; *Sein und Zeit*, 110 ff; and *Being and Time*, 238; *Sein und Zeit*, 194.

¹⁵⁰Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 146; *Sein und Zeit*, 111.

In willing, a being which is understood—that is, one which has been projected upon its possibility—gets seized upon, either as something with which one may concern oneself, or as something which is to be brought into its being through solicitude...If willing is to be possible ontologically, the following items are constitutive of it: (1) the prior disclosedness of the “for-the-sake-of-which” in general (being-ahead-of-itself); (2) the disclosedness of something with which one can concern oneself (the world as the “wherein” of being-already); (3) Dasein’s projection of itself understandingly upon a potentiality-for-being towards a possibility of the entity ‘willed’. In the phenomenon of willing, the underlying totality of care shows through.¹⁵¹

What is even more significant here, given our agenda, is Heidegger’s acknowledgement in the very next paragraph that Dasein’s movement between (2) and (3) above—which has been the primary emphasis of the analysis of “being-in-the-world” thus far—has the effect of concealing from itself its own prior projection of (1), “the “for-the-sake-of-which” in general” or, as he calls it below, “the possible as such”. Conveniently, the following passage also serves as a pithy summary of the famed “*das Man*” analysis of Dasein’s everyday “fallenness”—an analysis that, in the context of our reading, appears quite clearly to be aimed at showing up the necessity for a deeper understanding of transcendence than the current emphasis on the relation between (2) and (3) alone can provide:

As something factual, Dasein’s projection of itself understandingly is in each case already alongside a world that has been discovered. From this world it takes its possibilities, and it does so first in accordance with the way things have been interpreted by the “they”. This interpretation has already restricted the possible options of choice to what lies within the range of the familiar, the attainable, the respectable—that which is fitting and proper. This leveling off of Dasein’s possibilities to what is proximally at its everyday disposal also results in a dimming down of the possible as such. The average everydayness of concern becomes blind to its possibilities, and tranquillizes itself with that which is merely ‘actual’. This tranquillizing does not rule out a high degree of diligence in one’s concern, but arouses it. In this case no positive new possibilities are willed, but

¹⁵¹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 239.

that which is at one's disposal becomes 'tactically' altered in such a way that there is a semblance of something happening.¹⁵²

This passage has a two-fold importance for our proposed "retrieval" of *Being and Time*. On the one hand, it clearly demonstrates Heidegger's awareness that the understanding of "being-in-the-world" developed in division one remains incomplete. For though he has shown up the three-fold structure of "care", and uncovered the heretofore concealed hermeneutic dependence of "making present" upon "having been", he has yet to bring out the explicit character (and the hermeneutic priority) of the "toward which"—the projection of "the possible as such" that remains concealed in "fallenness", Dasein's inherent tendency to forget its projective character in favor of passively receiving the possibilities-for-being handed down to it from its "having-been". This insight into the character of division one's incompleteness provides crucial insight, as well, into the meaning of Heidegger's insistence throughout the first division that being-in-the-world, as fallen, is "inauthentic" (*uneigentlich*). Though it is tempting to understand Dasein's "inauthenticity" as a designation of *moral* or *ethical* degeneracy, it is clear in this context that the import of the term is in fact *ontological*, and that it refers, more specifically, to a mode of being-in-the-world in which Dasein has not yet grasped (i.e., has not made its "own" (*eigen*)) the three-fold movement of its understanding-of-being *as a whole*. As absorbed in the possibilities handed down to it, in other words, everyday Dasein is "inauthentic" in that it has yet to take responsibility for its freedom as the projection of "the possible as such"—the "purposive for-the-sake-of" or the "openness to world" from out of which its factual possibilities are drawn.

¹⁵²Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 239.

But if the above passage calls our attention, on the one hand, to the incompleteness of the first division (i.e., to the “dimming down” of “the possible as such” that occurs when we appropriate the relation of “making-present” to “having-been” without recourse to an explicit understanding of the “toward which”), this passage simultaneously testifies, on the other hand, to the hermeneutic fecundity of division one’s incompleteness. For though the account of “world” developed here is insufficient on its own to account explicitly for the three-fold movement of transcendence *as a whole*, its very insufficiency is at the same time indicative of what remains to be shown, insofar as it is precisely the diagnosis and appropriation of “fallenness” that leads Heidegger to see the concealment of “the possible as such” as a problem, and that prepares the task of unveiling its essential character in division two. Thus, when Heidegger claims upon the outset of the second division that the *Daseinanalysis* “never included more than the *inauthentic* being of Dasein, and of Dasein as *less* than a *whole*”, his interest is not to degrade or negate this analysis but rather to make explicit within it the indication of a heretofore concealed task, *viz.* that of “putting Dasein as a whole into our forehaving” in order to show up its potentiality for “authentic” (*eigentlich*) existence as being-in-the-world that grasps the three-fold character of its transcendent essence (the understanding-of-being), understands the priority (within this unity) of its free projection of “the possible as such” (being-ahead-of-itself), and—thus “released from the illusions of *das Man*”—takes responsibility for (indeed, gains “proprietaryship” (*Eigentum*) of) its future possibilities.¹⁵³

¹⁵³Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 276, 311.

Before attending to the development of this second task, it is worth noting the striking consonance of the reading we have proposed with Heidegger's own retrospective assessment (in 1928) of the account of "being-in-the-world" offered in division one:

If indeed one identifies the ontic contexture of items of utility or equipment, with world and interprets being-in-the-world as dealing with items of utility, then there is certainly no prospect of any understanding of transcendence as being-in-the-world in the sense of a "fundamental constitution of Dasein." [...] The ontological structure of beings in our "envirning world"—insofar as they are discovered as equipment—does, however, have the advantage, in terms of an *initial characterization* of the phenomenon of world, of leading over into an analysis of this phenomenon and of preparing the transcendental problem of world. And this is also the *sole* intent—an intent indicated clearly enough in the structuring and layout of sections 14-24 of *Being and Time*—of the analysis of the envirning world, an analysis that as a whole, and considered with regard to the leading goal, remains of subordinate significance.¹⁵⁴

In summary, division one's analysis of "being-in-the-world" is merely preparatory to the task of unveiling "the transcendental problem of world" in division two. We have suggested that this task is profitably understood as a "retrieval" of a "retrieval": division one reappropriates Dasein's "making present" in view of its "having-been", and division two reappropriates this first retrieval in light of the hermeneutic priority of Dasein's "toward-which"—a phenomenon that we have encountered variously over the course of our study as "being-ahead-of-itself", "projection of the for-the-sake-of", "the possible as such", "primordial freedom", the "future ekstasis", and "grounding as establishing". How then does this second "retrieval" unfold in division two, and how, moreover, has our foregoing study prepared us to encounter it as such?

By this point, the careful reader will surely have surmised our direction here. The claim, she will have guessed rightly, is that, just as the texts of 1915, 1919 and 1923 served to ready our understanding of division one, so will the texts of 1928 serve to

clarify the aims of division two. And at least initially, she'll allow, the case looks promising. Upon the conclusion of division one, all the indications of the task projected for division two seem to point in just the direction we'd expect given what we learned in *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* and "On the Essence of Ground": we find, first, that the analysis of the manifestness (*Offenbarkeit*) of beings within the world (as the "wherein-of-being-already") is inadequate, on its own, to bring the phenomenon of transcendence into view as a whole; second, that understanding this phenomenon as a whole will require the subordination of the previous account of the manifestness of *beings* to an account of the revealedness (*Enthülltheit*) of *being* in Dasein's projection of world as "the possible as such"; third, that this account of the hermeneutic priority of "the possible as such" will unfold in view of the phenomenon of Dasein's "openness to world" as "freedom"; and finally, fourth, that the intrinsic possibility of "freedom" ("being-ahead-of-itself") will show itself in the phenomenon of "primordial temporality". In the abstract, it would seem, the suggested parallels are persuasive.

But abstractions—the careful reader will remind us—can be deceiving. For no sooner do we turn to the particulars of division two than we are confronted by a host of phenomena that receive little to no thematic attention in the texts of 1928, most notably, "being-unto-death", "anxiety", "conscience", and "anticipatory resoluteness". To complicate matters further, these phenomena are exceedingly strange even by the standard set in division one, and to boot, the flow of the argument connecting them is less readily interpretable than that of the first division—a fact that has led some Heidegger scholars to maintain that the two divisions of *Being and Time* are addressed to different

¹⁵⁴Heidegger, "On the Essence of Ground", 121, note 59.

and perhaps ultimately irreconcilable ends. In his influential *Being-in-the-World*, for example, Hubert Dreyfus suggests that “the whole of Division II seem[s]...much less carefully worked out than Division I and, indeed, to have some errors so serious as to block any consistent reading.”¹⁵⁵ According to Dreyfus, “the most original and important” section of *Being and Time* is division one, insofar as it is here that Heidegger “works out his account of being-in-the-world and uses it to ground a profound critique of traditional ontology and epistemology.”¹⁵⁶ Division two, by contrast—or so it seems to Dreyfus—“divides into two somewhat independent enterprises”: first, there is “the “existentialist” side of Heidegger’s thought, which focuses on anxiety, death, guilt, and resoluteness” (and which, Dreyfus adds, “was, for good reasons, later abandoned by Heidegger”); and second, there is the account of “originary temporality”, which in Dreyfus’s view “leads [Heidegger] so far from the phenomenon of everyday temporality that I did not feel I could give a satisfactory interpretation of the material”.¹⁵⁷

Before proceeding any further, we must be clear that our intent here is neither to get mired in an engagement with Dreyfus, nor to quibble with the general (and no doubt legitimate) claim that *Being and Time*’s second division is on balance the less well-developed of the two. Our aim, rather, is to show that—despite the unfamiliarity and obscurity of division two—our readings of the 1928 texts nonetheless provide a vantagepoint from which the two divisions of *Being and Time* can be reconciled as comprising a progressive elaboration of transcendence. In this context, however, a brief

¹⁵⁵Hubert Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger’s Being and Time, Division I*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991, viii.

¹⁵⁶Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, vii.

¹⁵⁷Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, vii-viii.

look at Dreyfus's approach (and one of its untoward implications) has strategic merits: against the foil of this approach, we can bring the advantages of our reading into sharper relief, while providing at the same time an instructive example of the difference noted on the outset of our investigation between reading Heidegger with the intent to "construct and defend a position", and reading him, as we have, with the aim of "following the movement of showing". Our interest, then, is not to cast aspersions on Dreyfus, but to mark the important difference between the motivations of our respective readings in the interest of showing up the advantages of our approach in this particular context.

One needn't read far into *Being-in-the-World* to see that Dreyfus's motivations are quite different from our own. Contra Husserl and Searle, Dreyfus wants to construct a "nonmentalistic approach to intentionality", and his interest in Heidegger is to find resources for doing so.¹⁵⁸ In view of this guiding aim, then, it is not difficult to see how Dreyfus arrives at the taxonomy of *Being and Time* noted above: given that division one's account of Dasein's pre-subjective absorption in "everyday temporality" provides ample resources for defending the position at issue, and given, moreover, that division two not only takes us far afield from this concern, but seems in addition to have "errors so serious as to block any consistent reading", it stands to reason that Dreyfus would

¹⁵⁸ Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, ix. A more suspicious reader might be moved to add that this taxonomy is also particularly convenient for Dreyfus's purposes, given that—serious errors notwithstanding—division two is replete with pesky cautionary tales about the insufficiency of division one. But whether Dreyfus offers this taxonomy in a spirit of sincerity, surreptitiousness, or some combination of both, the point is simply that the case he brings makes perfect sense given his concerns.

locate “the most original and important” contribution of *Being and Time* squarely in division one.¹⁵⁹

But however successful Dreyfus may be in allying Heidegger to the case against “mentalistic” accounts of intentionality, his occlusion of the import of division two has substantial costs in regard to the prospect of understanding Heidegger’s broader project. Chief among these costs, given our interests, is a truncated interpretation of transcendence in which the hermeneutic priority of Dasein’s projection of “the possible as such” over its “absorption” in the world of received involvements remains utterly concealed. This problem comes clearly to the fore in “Heidegger’s Critique of the Husserl/Searle Account of Intentionality”, where Dreyfus repeatedly characterizes transcendence as if division one were the end of the story:

For Heidegger...the sort of background familiarity that functions when I take in a room as a whole and deal with what is in it is neither a set of specific goal-directed actions nor merely a capacity that must be activated by a self-referential intentional state. Rather, what Heidegger calls *the background* consists in a continual intentional activity that he calls *ontological transcendence*.¹⁶⁰

“So pervasive and constant” is this transcendence, Dreyfus continues, that “[Heidegger] simply calls it being-in-the-world: “Being-in-the-world...amounts to a non-thematic circumspective absorption in...an equipmental whole.” [*Being and Time*, p. 107]”.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, viii. For a succinct and approachable account of Dreyfus’s general approach to Heidegger, see Hubert Dreyfus, “Heidegger’s Critique of the Husserl/Searle Account of Intentionality”, in *Social Research*, Vol. 60, No. 1, Spring 1993, 17-38 (reprinted in *Heidegger Reexamined, Volume One: Dasein, Authenticity and Death*, Hubert Dreyfus and Mark Wrathall, eds., New York: Routledge, 2002, 135-156).

¹⁶⁰Dreyfus, “Heidegger’s Critique of the Husserl/Searle Account of Intentionality”, 36.

¹⁶¹Dreyfus, “Heidegger’s Critique of the Husserl/Searle Account of Intentionality”, 37.

What Dreyfus leaves out in inserting the first ellipsis, however, is telling indeed. For as written, the passage actually reads (my emphasis) “Being-in-the-world, *according to our interpretation hitherto*, amounts to a non-thematic circumspective absorption...”. While this omission is innocuous enough in the context of Dreyfus’s *particular* concerns, his failure to acknowledge the provisional standing of division one’s interpretation of transcendence comes back to roost in his decidedly misleading concluding assessment of the import of Heidegger’s thinking *as a whole*:

Our general background coping, our familiarity with the world, what Heidegger calls originary transcendence, turns out to be what Heidegger means by our understanding of being. [...] It is the discovery of the primacy of this understanding of being...that Heidegger rightly holds to be his unique contribution to Western philosophy.¹⁶²

We don’t need to guess how Heidegger would receive this suggestion, given our citation just a few pages back of his explicit statement that the analysis of Dasein’s absorption in the environing world (which Dreyfus aligns here with transcendence) is of “subordinate significance” in regard to the “leading goal” of posing the “transcendental problem of world” in division two.

Dreyfus’s guiding aim of distilling *Being and Time* into a “nonmentalist” account of intentionality thus creates problems for him at the level of understanding the work as a whole. How, then, does our aim of “following the movement of showing” differ from this approach, and how, more importantly, can foregrounding this difference aid us in making our case that the 1928 texts have prepared us to reconcile the two divisions of *Being and*

¹⁶²Dreyfus, “Heidegger’ Critique of the Husserl/Searle Account of Intentionality”, 38.

Time, notwithstanding the fact that these texts lack thematic discussions of key phenomena in division two?

In following the movement of the transcendence problem through Heidegger's thinking, our aim has been to bracket the traditional philosophical responsibility of constructing and defending a "position" in favor of exploring the question of what the persistence of this problem (in various formulations) throughout Heidegger's *corpus* can teach us about his project as a whole. In attempting this approach, we have followed a parallel strategy to the one we've suggested that Heidegger employs in following the movement of transcendence through Dasein's understanding-of-being: we assumed in our readers a general familiarity with Heidegger's *magnum opus*, worked backward to uncover the motivations of this project in earlier texts, leapt forward to reveal its "unthought" positive possibilities as they came to light in later texts, and we are now in the process of "retrieving" *Being and Time* in view of these past and future trajectories.

With the essential difference between Dreyfus's approach and our own in focus, the suggestion we wish to develop here is that our approach allows us to save the appearances of Dreyfus's concerns without having to undermine the hermeneutic unity of *Being and Time* and thereby compromise our understanding of the project as a whole. How so? First, we can wholeheartedly agree with Dreyfus that the account of everyday temporality in division one provides compelling insight into certain Husserlian oversights. In view of Heidegger's dealings with Husserl in the lectures of 1919 and 1923, however, our reading will account for this insight not as a free-standing refutation of "mentalistic" intentionality (upon which to confer the title of "Heidegger's most original contribution"), but rather as a *retrieval of the formally indicated but undeveloped*

positive possibilities in Husserl—a retrieval, moreover, that must re-submit itself to destruction in order to uncover its own positive possibilities (hence, division two).

Second, we can unreservedly affirm Dreyfus’s general suggestion that division two is “much less carefully worked out” than division one without concluding from this discrepancy (as he seems to) that the integrity of the whole is thereby compromised. On our reading, in fact, this discrepancy makes perfect sense. The project of division one had been simmering since 1915, after all, and had already reached a high level of sophistication in the “Ontology” lectures of 1923. To expect the same level of coherence from Heidegger’s first effort (division two) to follow the indications of this well-trodden path onto a heretofore uncharted path would be uncharitable indeed, especially since the primary indication of the first path is that already “having-been” is a hermeneutic necessity for seeing the way forward. Thus, because Heidegger is essentially generating the “having-been” of the path he is attempting to chart in division two *precisely in attempting to chart it*, the intelligibility of the effort is, quite literally, *not what it could be*. In short, the realization of the positive possibilities of this second path will require the hermeneutic distance of a “having been” that has come into its own.

It is this essential insight that can help us to make our case that the 1928 texts show up the positive possibilities of division two, even if they lack a “phenomenon-for-phenomenon” account of its progress. For if we can show that the unfamiliar phenomena of division two (which, as we’ve suggested, are unfamiliar because of the as yet underdetermined character of their “having-been”) are formal indications of undeveloped positive possibilities that come to fruition in the texts of 1928, we will have made our case. More concretely, if it turns out that the interpretation of the transcendence problem

developed in 1928 (which focused primarily on the phenomenon of freedom) expresses more intelligibly what Heidegger was attempting to express in following the phenomena of death, anxiety, conscience, and resoluteness, then we needn't be concerned that these phenomena are no longer emphasized in the later texts; we can simply understand this lack of emphasis as a function of the unveiling of their positive possibilities in the phenomena that *are* emphasized.

Given the ample resources at our disposal, this task is considerably less complicated than it sounds. For one thing, we have Heidegger's own endorsements of this general interpretation to work from (we cited these on the outset of the chapter, but it will be helpful to reprise them here). In *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, he writes:

The analysis of *Angst* (section 40), the problems of Dasein, worldhood, and reality, as well as the interpretation of conscience and the concept of death—all serve the progressive elaboration of transcendence, until the latter is finally taken up anew and expressly (section 69) as a problem, “The Temporality of Being-in-the-world and the Problem of Transcendence of World.”¹⁶³

And in “On the Essence of Ground”, we find:

Here we may be permitted to point out that what has been published so far of the investigations on “Being and Time” has no other task than that of a concrete projection unveiling *transcendence* (cf. sections 12-83; especially 69). This in turn occurs for the purpose of enabling the *sole* guiding intention, clearly indicated in the title of the whole of Part I, of attaining the “*transcendental* horizon of the *question* concerning being”.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 168.

¹⁶⁴Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 125, note 66. Heidegger insists that his usage of “transcendental” here is not to be understood in its ordinary epistemological or critical sense, but rather in relation to the transcendence of Dasein's being-in-the-world: “World co-constitutes the unitary structure of transcendence; as belonging to this structure, the concept of world may be called transcendental. This term names all that belongs essentially to transcendence and bears its intrinsic possibility thanks to such transcendence. And it is for this reason that an elucidation and interpretation of transcendence may be called a “transcendental” exposition...What transcendental means, however, is not to be taken from a philosophy to which one attributes a standpoint of the

Insofar as section 69 is singled out in both texts as the culminating moment of the interpretation of transcendence that Heidegger wishes to retrieve, we will begin with his summary of the “transcendence of world” in this section. Conveniently, this account is so strikingly similar to the 1928 interpretation that we scarcely need to gloss it:

The world is already presupposed in one’s being alongside the ready-to-hand concernfully and factically, in one’s thematizing of the present-at-hand, and in one’s discovering of this latter being by objectification; that is to say, all these are possible only as ways of being-in-the-world. Having its grounding [*gründend*] in the horizontal unity of ecstatical temporality, the world is transcendent. It must already have been ecstatically disclosed so that in terms of it intraworldly beings can be encountered. Temporality already maintains itself ecstatically within the horizons of its ecstases; and in temporalizing itself, it comes back to those beings which are encountered in the “there”. With Dasein’s factual existence, intraworldly beings are already encountered too. The fact that such beings are discovered along with Dasein’s own “there” of existence, is not left to Dasein’s discretion. Only *what* it discovers and discloses on occasion, in *what* direction it does so, *how* and *how far* it does so—only these are matters for Dasein’s freedom, even if always within the limitations of its thrownness.¹⁶⁵

Indeed, all of the essential features we’d expect to find are clearly indicated here. The first sentence shows up the hermeneutic priority of the projection of world “as such” over the environing world as the “wherein” of factual absorption. The second indicates that this priority of world “as such” is to be identified with the future ecstasis, insofar as the “horizontal unity of ecstatical temporality” in which it is grounded “temporalizes itself primarily in terms of the *future*”.¹⁶⁶ In the third and fifth sentences, we get early glimpses of what Heidegger will come to call “the doubling of unconcealment” (*Enthülltheit* and *Offenbarkeit*). From the fourth, we can glean the order of hermeneutic priority among the

transcendental or even of being epistemological.” Heidegger, “The Essence of Ground”, 109-110.

¹⁶⁵Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 417.

¹⁶⁶Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 479.

three ecstases of temporality (and the three corresponding forms of grounding): “in temporalizing itself [future, “establishing”], it comes back [having-been, “taking up a basis”] to those beings which are encountered in the “there” [making-present, “grounding something”]. And in the sixth and seventh sentences, most importantly, we find transcendence interpreted in terms of finite freedom, and, indeed, parsed in such a way that the parallels to Heidegger’s interpretation of transcendence as “abyss of ground” in 1928 are undeniable.¹⁶⁷

On the basis of Heidegger’s treatment of the “transcendence of world” in section 69, then, it would appear that we have strong reasons for thinking that the texts of 1928 have indeed prepared us well to clarify the aims of the second division, and to understand the two divisions of *Being and Time*, thereby, as comprising a progressive elaboration of transcendence. Lest we depart from division two without the slightest exposure to the path through which Heidegger arrived at section 69, however, we will conclude with a rough sketch of his progression through the phenomena of being-towards-death, anxiety, conscience, and anticipatory resoluteness. Since our aim is merely to show that these phenomena can be understood as formally indicative of an interpretation of transcendence that comes more explicitly to the fore in 1928 (and *not* to attempt an

¹⁶⁷The following two pivotal passages from “On the Essence of Ground” spring to mind: “As a consequence of this origin of grounding things and thus also of accounting for them, it is in each case left to the freedom in Dasein how far to extend such grounding and whether indeed it understands how to attain an authentic grounding of things, i.e., an unveiling of the transcendental possibility of such grounding.” (131); “Dasein—although finding itself in the midst of beings and pervasively attuned by them—is, *as free* potentiality for being, *thrown* among beings. The fact *that* it has the possibility of being a self, and has this factually in keeping with its freedom in each case; the fact *that* transcendence temporalizes itself as a primordial occurrence, does not stand in the power of this freedom itself.” (134).

interpretation of them on their own terms), it will suffice to attend briefly to a few carefully-selected citations.

By the outset of division two, let us recall, Heidegger has diagnosed the insufficiency of the analysis of being-in-the-world in division one. His task is to find a way to bring the three-fold understanding-of-being to expression *as a whole*, and to do so explicitly in view of the priority of Dasein's projection of "the possible as such"—the facet of the understanding-of-being that, though indicated in division one, remained concealed by the problem of "fallenness". To accomplish this end, he appropriates "being-towards-death" [*Seins zum Tode*], a phenomenon whose "showing" is clearly moving in the direction of the 1928 "freedom" account, as the following two passages indicate (the second in bold print, no less):

Being-toward-death, as anticipation of possibility, is what first makes this possibility possible, and sets it free as possibility.¹⁶⁸

We may now summarize our characterization of authentic being-toward-death as we have projected it existentially: *anticipation reveals to Dasein its lostness in the they-self, and brings it face to face with the possibility of being itself, primarily unsupported by concerned solicitude, but of being itself, rather, in an impassioned **freedom towards death**—a freedom which has been released from the illusions of the "they", and which is factual, certain of itself, and anxious.*¹⁶⁹

Taking himself to have disclosed the ontological possibility of Dasein's authentic existence as being-towards-death, Heidegger turns to showing how this ontological possibility can become a *concrete* possibility for everyday, factual Dasein. Because everyday Dasein is inauthentic, however, and thus "lost" in the 'world' of its received involvements, it must first "*find* itself" before it can take on this possibility, and "in order

¹⁶⁸Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 307.

¹⁶⁹Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 311.

to find itself at all, it must be ‘shown’ to itself in its possible authenticity”.¹⁷⁰ Accordingly, Heidegger must locate phenomena common to Dasein’s everyday, fallen experience that can (1) show up for Dasein the inadequacy of a self-understanding determined solely by its received possibilities; and then (2) prepare it to “call” itself back from its absorption in everyday concerns, and to accept responsibility for its potential as free projection. Enter “anxiety” [*Angst*] and “conscience” [*Gewissen*], two phenomena whose combined effect is to confront Dasein with the fact that it is never fully “at home” in the world of involvements, and then to convict Dasein that this *Unheimlichkeit* is owed to its freedom: as “being-free” for choosing its factual possibilities, Dasein is always already ahead of itself, and as ahead of itself, its being is never exhausted in its received possibilities. Once again, the intonations of transcendence as “freedom for ground” are unmistakable.

But in addition to advancing us along the “freedom” trajectory, and perhaps more importantly, these phenomena raise, for the first time, the problem of world as “nothing” (the very problem that will come to dominate the 1928 texts and eventually lead Heidegger to venture beyond ontological transcendence in the 1929 footnotes to “On the Essence of Ground”):

Uncanniness [*Unheimlichkeit*] reveals itself authentically in the basic state-of-mind of anxiety; and, as the most elemental way in which thrown Dasein is disclosed, it puts Dasein’s being-in-the-world face to face with the “nothing” of the world; in the face of this “nothing”, Dasein is anxious with anxiety about its ownmost potentiality-for-being.¹⁷¹

In its “who”, the caller [of conscience] is definable in a ‘worldly’ way by *nothing* at all. The caller is Dasein in its uncanniness: primordial, thrown being-in-the-world as the “not-at-home”—the bare “that-it-is” in the “nothing” of the world.

¹⁷⁰Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 313.

¹⁷¹Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 321.

The caller is unfamiliar to the everyday they-self; it is something like an *alien* voice. What could be more alien to the “they”, lost in the manifold ‘world’ of its concern, than the self which has been individualized down to itself in uncanniness and has been thrown into the “nothing”. [...] How else is ‘it’ to call than by summoning Dasein towards this potentiality-for-being, which alone is the issue?¹⁷²

Thus summoned out of fallenness to its ownmost potentiality-for-being (“ahead of itself”, “for-the-sake-of”), Dasein may follow the call of conscience and choose this responsibility as “anticipatory resoluteness” [*vorlaufende Entschlossenheit*]:

In light of the “for the sake of which” of one’s self-chosen potentiality-for-being, resolute Dasein frees itself for its world.¹⁷³

Anticipatory resoluteness is not a way of escape, fabricated for the ‘overcoming’ of death; it is rather that understanding which follows the call of conscience and which frees for death the possibility of acquiring *power* over Dasein’s *existence* and of basically dispersing all fugitive self-concealments.¹⁷⁴

Near the end of division two, finally—and it is here that we reach our goal—this “power over existence” that is achieved in anticipatory resoluteness is glossed in terms of “fate” [*Schicksal*] in a passage that, in one breathtaking swoop, both retrieves the project of *Being and Time* as a whole and indicates the future retrieval of *Entschlossenheit* as *Gelassenheit*: the transformation through which the authentic “willing” of Dasein’s possibilities in fundamental ontology gives way to the “letting be” of the *destiny of being* in being-historical thinking:

Fate is that powerless superior power which puts itself in readiness for adversities—the power of projecting oneself upon one’s own being-guilty, and of doing so reticently, with readiness for anxiety. As such, fate requires as the ontological condition for its possibility, the state of being of care—that is to say, temporality. Only if death, guilt, conscience, freedom, and finitude reside together equiprimordially in the being of a being as they do in care, can that being exist in

¹⁷²Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 322.

¹⁷³Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 344.

¹⁷⁴Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 357.

the mode of fate: that is to say, only then can it be historical in the very depths of its existence.

Only a being which, in its being, is essentially **futural** so that it is free for its death and can let itself be thrown back upon its factual “there” by shattering itself against death—that is to say, only a being which, as futural, is equiprimordially in the process of **having-been**, can, by handing down to itself the possibility it has inherited, take over its own thrownness and be in **the moment of vision** [*Augenblick*] for ‘its time’. Only authentic temporality which is at the same time finite, makes possible something like fate—that is to say, authentic historicity.¹⁷⁵

What we shall see in the blink of an eye (and indeed we have already seen it) is that “authentic historicity”, Dasein’s potentiality for standing-out in originary temporality—in a word, *transcendence*—is at once the end of the “first beginning” (metaphysics) and the “crossing” into the possibility of an “other beginning”.

How is this mode of the temporalizing of temporality to be interpreted? Is there a way which leads from primordial *time* to the meaning of *being*? Does time itself manifest itself as the horizon of *being*?¹⁷⁶

Having followed the movement of the transcendence problem through Heidegger’s *Denkweg*, we can already hear in these final questions of the published divisions of *Being and Time* what Heidegger implicitly admitted in withholding “Part One, Division Three” and in abandoning “Part Two”, and what he would go on to say explicitly in, among other places, the marginalia of “On the Essence of Ground” (1929), the *Beiträge* (1936), and for the first time in wide circulation, the “Letter on Humanism” (1946), *viz.* that we must understand the “temporalizing of temporality as a preliminary name for the truth of

¹⁷⁵Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 437.

¹⁷⁶Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 488.

beyng” which “comes into its own in the event of appropriation” [*Er-eignet im Ereignis*].¹⁷⁷

In this indication of the “clearing” of beyng in Dasein, our “retrieval” of *Being and Time* is accomplished, and our engagement with Heidegger is finally at its end. The path has been long and arduous, but the journey has been profitable. Insofar as our “retrieval” of *Being and Time* has doubled as a serviceable review of our progress in chapters two and three, and given that our engagement with Derrida will put these issues before us again directly, we may now turn, without further ado, to the task of assessing Derrida’s contribution to the development of the transcendence problem.

¹⁷⁷Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”, 123, notes a and b; “Vom Wesen des Grundes”, 159, notes a and b. A passage from the “Letter On Humanism” is worth citing here as well: “Forgetting the truth of being in favor of the pressing throng of beings unthought in their essence is what “falling” [*Verfallen*] means in *Being and Time*. This word does not signify the Fall of Man understood in a “moral-philosophical” and at the same time secularized way; rather, it designates the essential relationship of humans to being within being’s relation to the essence of the human being. Accordingly, the terms “authenticity” and “inauthenticity,” which are used in a provisional fashion, do not imply a moral-existential or an “anthropological” distinction but rather a relation that, because it has been hitherto concealed from philosophy, has yet to be thought for the first time, an “ecstatic” relation of the essence of the human being to the truth of being. But this relation is as it is not by reason of ek-sistence; on the contrary, the essence of ek-sistence is destined existentially-ecstatically from the essence of the truth of being.” (253)

CHAPTER FOUR

DERRIDA

Every naming of the grounding-attunement with a single word rests on a false notion. Every word is in each case taken from tradition. The fact that the grounding-attunement of another beginning has to have many names does not argue against its onefoldness but rather confirms its richness and strangeness.

–Martin Heidegger¹

One must therefore *go by way of* the question of being as it is directed by Heidegger and by him alone, at and beyond onto-theology, in order to reach the rigorous thought of that strange nondifference and in order to determine it correctly.

–Jacques Derrida²

I. Introduction

Chapter four is devoted to an investigation of Jacques Derrida's engagement with the problem of transcendence. Before we set off in this new direction, however, a brief review of our rationale for reading Heidegger and Derrida together will aid us in reestablishing our bearings after a lengthy journey along Heidegger's path in chapters two and three. Our interest in juxtaposing these two thinkers in particular was first kindled in the context of our survey (in chapter one) of the importance of the transcendence problem within the broader continental tradition. Though a detailed reprise of the argument of chapter one will be in order before our study's end, we will reserve

¹Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy: From Enowning*, trans. Emad and Maly, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999, 16.

²Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974, 23.

that task for our conclusion, and pause here merely to give a rough sketch of what led us to draw these thinkers together, and of what we suggested might stand to be gained in so doing. In brief, we looked at three highly-visible secondary narratives on the import of the transcendence problem for the continental tradition, and though each differed substantially in its assessment of the problem's character and continuing relevance, all three testified to the pervasive importance of Heidegger and Derrida for current debates over transcendence, as well as to a productive tension between their respective interpretations of the problem. We went on to suggest, then, that an exploration of the problem of transcendence in Heidegger and Derrida might be valuable in at least two respects: first, as an investigation of an important continental legacy (transcendence) as it is manifest in the work of two highly influential twentieth-century thinkers; and second, as groundwork for further discussion of how to mediate and/or adjudicate the various possibilities for doing "post-metaphysical" philosophy in the continental tradition.

With these general concerns in mind, our principal aims in chapter four are, first and foremost, to establish a textual basis for understanding Derrida's engagement with transcendence as a critical appropriation of Heidegger's orientation to the problem; and second, to follow the movement of Derrida's own thinking from his admittedly Heideggerian point of departure toward certain "ethical" and "religious" possibilities for "thinking the closure" of metaphysics—possibilities which, if opened by Heidegger's engagement with transcendence, remain—at least according to Derrida—underdetermined or even "unthought" within it.

In pursuit of these aims, we will undertake two central tasks. First, we will survey the landscape of Derrida's direct textual engagements with Heidegger in order to specify the

particular points of concurrence and contention in terms of which he characterizes his relationship to Heidegger. Given the complexity of this relationship (and the multiplicity of questions and problems it involves), we will keep our commitments modest and restrict our attention to four points of contact (two debts and two departures) that pertain explicitly to the guiding threads of our study: the problem of transcendence and its implications for philosophy's relation to the metaphysical tradition.

In brief, Derrida will follow Heidegger in (1) thinking transcendence from a "difference" beyond the hylomorphic oppositions of metaphysics that is indicated (i.e., simultaneously revealed and concealed) in the (2) "deconstruction" of this conceptual apparatus to the limits of its intelligibility. Though Derrida will agree with Heidegger, as well, that the advent of this transcendence obliges us to acknowledge the fundamental finitude of all that comes to light ("presence") within it and to interrogate ceaselessly that which remains necessarily concealed thereby ("absence", "withdrawal"), he will take exception to what he suspects is a "hidden teleology" in Heidegger's appropriation of our becoming thus responsible as (3) an attainment to "authenticity" that allows us to glimpse (4) the "end of metaphysics" as "the destiny of Being".

In following this "difference" through a dismantling of "authenticity" into "vigilance" and toward a destruction of the "end of metaphysics" into its "closure", Derrida will thus part ways with Heidegger. Yet as we shall see—and this insight will be crucial for understanding the relationship at stake here in terms of "critical appropriation"—Derrida's *departures from* Heidegger indicate simultaneously his *ongoing commitment to* Heidegger insofar as he undertakes them precisely in order to keep what is still viable in

Heidegger's thinking—those “unthought” possibilities toward which, as factual, his situated understanding could only gesture—alive and open for questioning.

Once we have clarified this provisional assessment of Heidegger's legacy to Derrida, we will turn, second, to following the trajectory of Derrida's own engagement with transcendence, taking care to show how his earliest discussions of the “infinite play” that underwrites metaphysics (*différance*) have led him, more recently, to associate this movement of deconstruction with “infinite justice” that demands our “absolute responsibility” before it. In following this trajectory, more specifically, we will focus primarily on four texts: “*Différance*”³ will aid us in clarifying the broader aims and sources of Derrida's account of “infinite play”; “Violence and Metaphysics”⁴ will establish the link between the opening of “infinite play” and the possibility of perpetrating (or protecting against) ethical violence; and, finally, “Force of Law”⁵ and *The Gift of Death*⁶—two texts of more recent provenance—will together provide an excellent framework for understanding more concretely how the “ethical” import of deconstruction (as a movement against violence) resides in its relation to the idea of “absolute responsibility”, and why this responsibility must be conceived as akin to a “religious” commitment.

³Derrida, “Différance”, in Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982, 3-27.

⁴Derrida, “Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas”, in Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978, 79-153.

⁵Derrida, “Force of Law: The Mystical Foundations of Authority”, trans. Mary Quaintance, in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, ed. Drucilla Cornell, New York: Routledge, 1992.

⁶Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Willis, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

With our itinerary in view, the last order of business before departure is to draw more explicit attention to an insight that we have already implicitly observed in outlining the tasks of this chapter, *viz.*, that Derrida's very *approach* to reading Heidegger already indicates a fundamental resonance with Heidegger's thinking on transcendence even before the *content* of these readings is considered. In short, Derrida reads Heidegger in just the way that Heidegger, prompted by the problem of transcendence, reads (and suggests that we must read) the history of philosophy: because transcendence always already prevails *in* thinking, the matter *for* thinking is not a position to be seized upon and then embraced or cast aside, but an event as yet unfolding to be taken up and developed as a task. Before unpacking the specifics of Derrida's readings of Heidegger and attending then to the development of his "original" contributions from out of these debts and departures, it will be instructive to observe an example of this general orientation to Heidegger at work. In addition to making Derrida an ally of (and thus lending support to) the hermeneutic reading of Heidegger we advanced in chapters two and three, the example we have chosen to consider will allow us to glimpse the politically charged character of the milieu in which Derrida is writing, providing thus an illuminating backdrop against which the "ethical" motivations of his more recent offerings can come into sharper relief.

While Derrida's academic works on Heidegger typically unfold in intricate, narrowly focused readings of specific texts, his many public interviews with the French popular media offer an abundance of more accessible "second-order" discussions of the general orientation to Heidegger we wish to clarify. The interview best suited to our present purposes first appeared in 1987 in *Le Nouvel Observateur* and was subsequently

published in English as “Heidegger, the Philosophers’ Hell”.⁷ At stake in this interview, as its provocative title suggests, is Heidegger’s controversial legacy to contemporary French philosophy, a legacy at once tarnished by his infamous entanglement with Nazism, and yet indispensable to the development of the philosophical (and even political) discourses of leading French thinkers including Levinas, Foucault, Blanchot, Nancy, Lacoue-Labarthe, and, of course, Derrida himself.⁸

The chief aim of Derrida’s comments here is to clarify his own standing in respect to this problematic legacy—a standing that, at the time of the interview, was itself a subject of considerable controversy in France. To understand why this is so, we must briefly note the significance of two important events in the French academy whose combined impact had the effect, in certain circles, not only of casting suspicion on Derrida, but of discrediting any and all thinkers who took Heidegger seriously: first, the publication in

⁷Derrida, “Heidegger, the Philosophers’ Hell”, trans. Peggy Kamuf, in Derrida, *Points...Interviews 1974-1994*, ed. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995. It is worth mentioning here that this translation is not the first to appear, but was retranslated for this volume following its unauthorized translation and publication by Richard Wolin in his own edited volume entitled *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991)—a volume whose publication prompted Derrida to demand that his text, which he deemed (and rightfully so) to have been poorly translated (and published without his permission at that!), to be removed from subsequent editions of the book. Derrida’s request was publicly criticized by Tom Sheehan in an article published in the *New York Review of Books*, to which Derrida responded in kind in a letter to the editor. Derrida discusses this controversy within a controversy in a separate interview (published in *Points*) entitled “The Work of Intellectuals and the Press (The Bad Example: How the *New York Review of Books* and Company Do Business), 422-454.

⁸Derrida, “Heidegger, the Philosophers’ Hell”, 182.

1985 of Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut's *La Pensée 68: Essai sur l'anti-humanisme contemporain*,⁹ a polemic against, among other things, Heidegger's pervasive influence on contemporary French philosophy; and second, the appearance in 1987 of Victor Farías's *Heidegger et le nazisme*,¹⁰ an investigation of the alarming scope and depth of Heidegger's involvement with National Socialism whose reception in Paris stirred a controversy so sensational as to merit its own proper name: "The Farías Affair".¹¹

While a studied analysis of these events would no doubt be profitable, we must hold fast to our modest "introductory" purposes: our intent is neither to exposit these texts in any significant detail, nor to affirm or criticize their assumptions, nor even to "defend" Derrida against whatever legitimate or illegitimate concerns they might elicit about his project;¹² our aim, rather, is merely to provide a context for understanding Derrida's

⁹Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut, *La Pensée 68: Essai sur l'anti-humanisme contemporain*, Paris: Gallimard, 1985. The English translation appeared in 1990 under the title *French Philosophy of the 1960's: An Essay on Antihumanism*, trans. Mary H.S. Cattani, Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1990.

¹⁰Victor Farías, *Heidegger et le nazisme*, Paris: Verdier, 1987. This text is available in English as *Heidegger and Nazism*, trans. Paul Burrell and Gabriel R. Ricci, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989.

¹¹Though the controversy over Heidegger (and by extension, Derrida's relationship to Heidegger) reached a fever pitch in the mid-eighties in the wake of these two events, such worries were in the air about Derrida from the very beginning. In an interview with Jean-Louis Houdebine and Guy Scarpetta given in 1971, Derrida addresses this fact explicitly and provides citations for the relevant literature. See in Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981, 55-56. The interview was originally published in French in *Promesse*, Number 30-31, Autumn and Winter 1971.

¹²For a brief and helpful defense of Derrida against these charges, see Geoffrey Bennington, *Jacques Derrida*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993, 273-276. Particularly helpful is Bennington's discussion of Derrida's work in terms of what we have called "critical appropriation": "Quite apart from the fact that Derrida's readings are never simply confirmations or simply critiques, if we wanted to establish Derrida's

instructive assessment (in the interview in question) of the motivation for his continued interest in Heidegger—an assessment offered in response to the climate of suspicion and hostility toward Heidegger (and his French readers) precipitated in large part by these two events.¹³

To say the least, Ferry and Renault’s account of Derrida’s relationship to Heidegger provides an intriguing counterpoint to the story developing simultaneously on the other side of the Atlantic. As we observed in chapter one, Derrida’s stateside reputation during the mid-eighties was that of a radical critic of Heidegger—a critic described in various (but commensurable) turns as an “ironist” shrugging off Heidegger’s metaphysical “nostalgia” (Rorty), as a “vigilant witness” to the plight of the unwashed masses disenfranchised by Heidegger’s vision of the “Greco-Germanic destiny of Being”

originality with respect to Heidegger we should have *already* to be in possession of the truth about Heidegger, or think we were, which would be difficult to do without passing through the readings carried out by Derrida himself. Heidegger’s originality would thus be in part produced by Derrida, who would be in turn one of Heidegger’s originalities.” (275-276)

¹³Conveniently, Ferry and Renault’s preface to the English edition of *La Pensée 68* includes a brief retrospective sketch of how the Farías controversy inadvertently served to advance their cause, thus allowing us to draw these two events together without rehashing the whole “Affair”. This connection is discussed in more extensive detail in Ferry and Renault’s *Heidegger and Modernity*, a follow-up to *French Philosophy of the 1960’s* that first appeared in France in 1988 (less than a year after the publication of Farías’s book). The stated purpose of *Heidegger and Modernity*, in fact, is to make sense of why Farías’s text set off such a firestorm, and to clarify what this response indicates about the contemporary French milieu: “What we need to understand is why such a large number of French intellectuals, not just the coterie of Beaufret’s disciples, felt themselves touched by the scandal and were unwilling to admit that Heidegger’s compromise by Nazism was as extensive as Farías revealed or had the meaning that Farías gave it by forging indissoluble links between the thought of Being and the Nazi involvement, links not imputable to a half-year deviation. In this book our intention is to clarify this agitation among French intellectuals and to reveal its logic and significance.” *Heidegger and Modernity*, trans. Franklin Philip, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990, 8.

(Caputo), and as the “foil” of the great Hegelian hall of mirrors from which Heidegger, despite his best efforts, failed to escape (Gasché).

In striking contrast to these accounts, Ferry and Renault argue that, notwithstanding Derrida’s “incessant” claims to the contrary, “there is nothing intelligible or sayable in the contents of Derrida’s work that is not, purely and simply, a recapitulation of the Heideggerian problematics of ontological difference.”¹⁴ Exposing Derrida’s lack of originality, however, is merely a tactical operation within Ferry and Renault’s broader campaign of liberating French intellectuals from their “surreptitious” domination since 1945 by a “critique of the modern world and of the values of formal democracy” inspired “successively, and sometimes simultaneously” by Marx and Heidegger.¹⁵ Though the Marxian strain of this critique is wielded “in the name of an ideal future”, and the Heideggerian strain is leveled in pursuit of a “neoconservative” recovery of pre-modern traditions, Ferry and Renault maintain that these “two great deconstructive models” share a common motivation that saddles them with a common fate: in seeking to put a definitive end to the metaphysics of the modern subject and to the naive confidence in human rationality it assured, each could only culminate in an “antihumanism” bereft of the requisite resources to bestow even “a minimum of legitimacy” to the idea of the subject “inherent in any democratic thought”.¹⁶ Little wonder then, the authors observe,

¹⁴Ferry and Renault, *French Philosophy of the 1960’s*, 124. The argument for this surprising claim is developed in chapter four, “French Heideggerianism” (Derrida), 122-152. For an account of how Derrida’s alleged “Heideggerianism” allegedly compromises his ability to advance an original and adequately critical interpretation of Heidegger’s Nazism, see Ferry and Renault, *Heidegger and Modernity*, 43-54.

¹⁵Ferry and Renault, *French Philosophy of the 1960’s*, xi.

¹⁶Ferry and Renault, *French Philosophy of the 1960’s*, xv, 4, xvi.

that these “two major critiques of modern humanism have proven to be linked with totalitarian adventures”:

Whether conducted in the name of a radiant future or a traditionalist reaction, the total critique of the modern world, because it is necessarily an antihumanism that leads inevitably to seeing in the democratic project, for example in human rights, the prototype of ideology or of the metaphysical illusion, is structurally incapable of taking up, except insincerely and seemingly in spite of itself, the promises that are also those of modernity.¹⁷

In view of Ferry and Renault’s broader agenda and the historical context in which it is prosecuted, both the strategic importance of reducing Derrida to Heidegger and the timely utility of “The Farías Affair” for promoting this reduction begin to come more clearly into focus. For in the wake of the “death of Marxism” in the 1970’s, Ferry and Renault claim, the Heideggerian critique of the subject simply “took over” for its failed Marxian counterpart and became “without further ado” the “most powerful critical position” in contemporary French philosophy.¹⁸ So it was, then, that Derrida’s “French Heideggerianism”—pitched here as a “politically purifying” yet ultimately unoriginal and untenable “translation” of Heidegger’s thought “into a “leftist” intellectual context”—came to stand among the last obstacles to Ferry and Renault’s proposed liberation of the French intellectual scene from “endless deconstruction”.¹⁹ And what better than Farías’s dossier of indisputable historical facts to forge “indissoluble links between the thought

¹⁷Ferry and Renault, *French Philosophy of the 1960’s*, xvi.

¹⁸Ferry and Renault, *French Philosophy of the 1960’s*, xiv, xv.

¹⁹Derrida’s “French Heideggerianism” is not the only obstacle, however, insofar as the Heideggerian stamp is equally apparent, if less openly celebrated, in Foucault’s “French Nietzscheanism” (68-121) and Lacan’s “French Freudianism” (185-207). As if to mock the deconstructive tradition’s suspicion of tidy formulas, Ferry and Renault submit these three respective “-isms” in the form of equations: “*Derrida = Heidegger + Derrida’s Style*”; “*Foucault = Heidegger + Nietzsche*”; “*Lacan = Heidegger + Freud*”. Ferry and Renault, *French Philosophy of the 1960’s*, 123.

of Being and the Nazi involvement”, and to discredit, thereby, the work of those still attempting, at best futilely and at worst insincerely, to appropriate Heidegger’s thinking otherwise?²⁰ Indeed, Ferry and Renault proclaim, “[t]he scenario is already known: what happened to Marxism in the 1970’s is happening to Heidegger today”; that Farías’s book could create such an “unprecedented scandal” and inspire such desperate “defensive strategies” among Heidegger’s French minions only confirms the diagnosis.²¹

It is in response to this unmitigated rebuke that Derrida directs his comments in “Heidegger, the Philosophers’ Hell”. His principal concern is that this rebuke is predicated on a total restriction of the possibilities of Heidegger’s thinking to a “position” whose content and legitimacy have already been decided in advance without the least regard for the moments in Heidegger’s “text” that defy being reduced to straightforwardly determinable effects of the “facts” pertaining to his involvement with Nazism. While Derrida is adamant that the “facts” require us to be on guard against certain treacherous tendencies in Heidegger’s thinking, and that these “motifs of worry” are indicated clearly in “*all* [his] references to Heidegger, as far back as they go”, he is equally insistent that we must “continue to recognize a certain necessity of [Heidegger’s] thinking” in the name of “what remains to come for us in its deciphering”.²² The problem

²⁰Ferry and Renault, *Heidegger and Modernity*, 8.

²¹Ferry and Renault, *French Philosophy of the 1960’s*, xv.

²²Derrida, “Heidegger, The Philosophers’ Hell”, 183-184. Among the “motifs of worry” Derrida briefly recites here are “questions of the proper [*eigentlich*, *Ereignis*]...and the fatherland [*Heimat*], of technics and science, of animality or sexual difference, of the epoch[ality of the destiny of Being], and especially the question of the question, which is almost constantly privileged by Heidegger as “the piety of thinking.”” (183) Derrida offers this recitation as a summary of the themes addressed at length in his *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question* (trans. Bennington and Bowlby, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), a text that appeared in French just a few days after

with the approach to Heidegger encouraged by the likes of Ferry, Renault, and Farías, then, is that it abdicates the responsibility of this latter “task of thinking” in order to exploit the “reassuring schemas” of “the conformist opinion of “good conscience””: since Nazism is evil, and Heidegger was a Nazi, we can safely expunge him from the ranks of those thinkers whose work has a continuing claim on we non-Nazis.²³ In contrasting this “ludicrous and alarming” reading to the “vigilant but open” approach he wishes to attempt, Derrida pulls no punches:

There are those who seize upon the pretext of [Heidegger’s “Nazism”] in order to exclaim: (1) “It is shameful to read Heidegger.” (2) “Let’s draw the following conclusion—and then pull up the ladder: everything that, especially in France, refers to Heidegger in one way or another, even what is called ‘deconstruction’, is part of Heideggerianism!” The second conclusion is silly and dishonest. In the first, one reads the political irresponsibility and renunciation of thinking. On the contrary, by setting out from a certain deconstruction, at least the one that interests me, one can pose, it seems to me, new questions to Heidegger, decipher his discourse, situate in it the political risks, and recognize at times the limits of his own deconstruction.²⁴

If the “transcendence-wary” tenor of Derrida’s orientation to Heidegger is already clearly discernable in this general warning against over-hasty dismissals, we find it writ larger still in his ensuing repudiation of this “bustling confusion” as it is exemplified more specifically in Christian Jambet’s preface to *Heidegger et le nazisme*, a preface upon which the stamp of the Ferry-Renaut thesis is all too manifest. Says Derrida,

At the end of a harangue clearly meant for domestic consumption (it is once again *la France* that is speaking!), one reads this: “For numerous scholars, [Heidegger’s] thinking has *an effect of the obvious* [un effect d’évidence] that no

this interview and within a few weeks of Farías’s “Heidegger and Nazism”. We will return to several of these “motifs of worry” in section two below.

²³Derrida, “Heidegger, The Philosophers’ Hell, 184, 186.

²⁴Derrida, “Heidegger, The Philosophers’ Hell”, 186-187. Derrida’s characterization of his approach as “vigilant but open” was offered in another 1987 interview entitled “How to Concede, with Reasons?” in Derrida, *Points...Interviews 1974-1994*, 191-195, 194.

other philosophy has been able to achieve in France, with the exception of Marxism. Ontology culminates in a methodical deconstruction of metaphysics as such.” The devil! If there is some *effect of the obvious*, it must be for the author of this hodgepodge. There has never been *an effect of the obvious* in Heidegger’s text, neither for me nor for those I mentioned a moment ago. If there were, we would have stopped reading. And one can no more speak of an “ontology” with regard to the deconstruction that I try to put to work than one can speak, if one has read a little, of “Heidegger’s ontology” or even “Heidegger’s philosophy.” And “deconstruction”—which does not “culminate”—is certainly not a “method.” It even develops a rather complicated discourse on the concept of method that Mr. Jambet would be well advised to meditate on a little.²⁵

While this deconstructive discourse on method may well be lost on Jambet, its general contours and transcendent provenance are by no means unfamiliar to us. As we observed in chapters two and three, destruction takes its departure from the problem of the transcendence of hermeneutic intuition: because “givenness” itself is arrested from a movement of excess and withdrawal that is always already underway, what is given to thinking is always already a restriction of possibilities (“having-been”) whose intelligibility appeals implicitly to future possibilities (“toward-which”) that remain to be solicited through (and thus constantly renewed by) the dismantling of this restriction in an ongoing event of appropriation. Thus, just as the transcendence of the thinking of Plato, Scotus, and Leibniz (among others) led Heidegger to interrogate the factual predispositions and exclusions of each in the name of retrieving their “unthought” possibilities, so too does the transcendence of Heidegger’s thinking lead Derrida to treat him accordingly. Just when it would seem, then, that the possibilities of Heidegger’s thinking are exhausted in the rejection of modern discourses of emancipation, Derrida sees in deconstruction the possibility for a “thinking of affirmation” aimed at doing

²⁵Derrida, “Heidegger, The Philosophers’ Hell”, 187.

justice to philosophy's inevitable transcendence of its factual circumstances.²⁶ Far from a discourse of "nihilism", "antihumanism", and "totalitarianism", Derrida will later suggest, "deconstruction is justice".²⁷

Though Derrida's concern in this particular case is to debunk the reduction of Heidegger's thinking to an "antihumanism" necessarily consonant with Nazism, it is worth mentioning in conclusion that the hermeneutic orientation toward Heidegger exemplified here has consistently led him, in other contexts and throughout his career, to resist *any reading* that would approach the event of Heidegger's thinking as though it could be captured in a "position", an "-ism", or a "philosophy of *x*". When we are tempted to accord too much weight to name of "fundamental ontology", for example, Derrida reminds us that

the sense of being [for Heidegger] is literally neither "primary", nor "fundamental" nor transcendental, whether understood in the scholastic, Kantian or Husserlian senses. The restoration of being as "transcending" the categories of the entity, the opening of fundamental ontology, are nothing but necessary yet provisional moments.²⁸

And when the sea-changes that propel us into the next provisional moment threaten to lure us into forgetting the continuing importance of the last one, Derrida advises us to proceed with caution:

Now, as we know, this movement that consisted in interrogating the question of Being within the transcendental horizon of time was not interrupted (even though *Sein und Zeit* was halted after the first half and even though Heidegger attributed this interruption to certain difficulties linked to the language and grammar of metaphysics), but rather led off toward a further turn or turning (*Kehre*). After this turning...it will not be a matter of subordinating, through a purely logical

²⁶Derrida, "Heidegger, The Philosophers' Hell", 186.

²⁷Derrida, "Force of Law", 15.

²⁸Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974, 22.

inversion, the question of Being to that of *Ereignis*, but of conditioning them otherwise one by the other, one with the other.²⁹

Even when the dead-ends and dangers of this path compel Derrida to blaze new trails, he undertakes these departures with the transcendent possibilities of Heidegger's thinking well in mind:

What I have attempted to do would not have been possible without the opening of Heidegger's questions. [...] But despite this debt to Heidegger's thought, *or rather because of it*, I attempt to locate in Heidegger's text—which no more than any other, is not homogeneous, continuous, everywhere equal to the greatest force and to all the consequences of its questions—the signs of a belonging to metaphysics.³⁰

In summary, Derrida's very disposition to Heidegger (and to philosophy in general) already indicates a shared concern over the problem of transcendence, which is to say a

²⁹Derrida, *Given Time I: Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, 19. In addressing the significance of the "turn" in Heidegger's work, Derrida typically emphasizes the continuity of this development with its preparation in *Being and Time*. For two other good examples, see "Ousia and Gramme" in *Margins of Philosophy*, 64: "It is not in closing but in interrupting *Being and Time* that Heidegger wonders whether "primordial temporality" leads to the meaning of Being. And this is not a programmatic articulation but a question and a suspension. The displacement, a certain lateralization, if not a simple erasure of the theme of time and of everything that goes along with it in *Being and Time* lead one to think that Heidegger, without putting back into question the necessity of a certain point of departure in metaphysics, and even less the efficacy of the "destruction" operated by the analytic of Dasein, for essential reasons had to go at it otherwise and, it may be said literally, to *change horizons*. Henceforth, along with the theme of time, all the themes that are dependent upon it (and, par excellence, those of Dasein, of finitude, of historicity) will no longer constitute the transcendental horizon of the question of Being, but in transition will be reconstituted on the basis of the theme of the epochality of Being."; and *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*, trans. Barbara Harlow, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979, 115-117: "Each time that Heidegger refers the question of being to the question of the proper-ty (*propre*), of propi-ate, of prop-riation (*eigen, eignen, ereignen, Ereignis* especially) this dishiscence bursts forth anew. Its irruption here though does not mark a rupture or turning point in the order of Heidegger's thought. For already in *Sein und Zeit* the opposition of *Eigentlichkeit* and *Uneigentlichkeit* was organizing the essential analytic."

³⁰Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981, 10. The italics are my emphasis.

shared commitment to its ongoing interrogation. As we turn to the two central tasks of our inquiry, then, there is already modest progress to report: we have garnered support for the hermeneutic reading of Heidegger offered in chapters two and three, we have situated Derrida in respect to the problem that motivates this reading, and we have indicated a reserve of resources in Derrida for critically appropriating and advancing it.

II. Debts and Departures: Derrida in the Trace of Heidegger

Our first task is to survey the landscape of Derrida's direct textual engagements with Heidegger in order to foreground the debts and departures that discipline the development of his broader engagement with the problem of transcendence. In so doing, we must keep two strategic considerations in mind. First and foremost, we must acknowledge from the outset that the purpose of this exercise is merely to advance one among many profitable approaches to appropriating Derrida on transcendence. While there is no doubt that Heidegger is among the most important sources of Derrida's thinking on this matter, it is equally certain that Hegel, Nietzsche, Husserl, Freud, Blanchot, and Levinas (to name just a few) are also significant archives here, and that reading Derrida in view of these thinkers would in each case be fruitful. The fact that we have elected to bracket these legacies, in short, is a necessary concession to the limits of this inquiry, and is not to be taken as an implicit suggestion that, *ceteris paribus*, the importance of Heidegger's influence should eclipse that of these other significant sources.

The second point of strategy to bear in mind is that, even by itself, Derrida's *corpus* on Heidegger is simply too extensive (and, beyond that, too convoluted) to address at all without first acknowledging the practical necessity of narrowing the field in advance. To

say the least, this archive is daunting: it encompasses more than a dozen books, articles, public addresses, and interviews offered over the course of nearly four decades; it blankets the development of Heidegger's thinking from early to late, moving effortlessly from the great themes of difference, time, authenticity, death, and humanism,³¹ to the smallest etymological details of lesser known lectures,³² to issues as marginal as the import of Heidegger's discussion of "animality" for vegetarianism;³³ and it even cuts across philosophical and literary genres, venturing, in moments, into epistolary and poetic discourse.³⁴ In light of all this, it should go without saying that our approach will not be systematic. The strategy, rather, will be to access this archive in view of four points of contact (each pertaining explicitly to the problem of transcendence) that we provisionally characterized in the introduction as the "debts" of "difference" and "deconstruction" on the one hand, and as the "departures" from "authenticity" (to "vigilance") and from the "end" of metaphysics (to its "closure") on the other. Let us begin, then, with difference.

³¹On difference, see for example in *Of Grammatology*, 18-24; *Positions*, 7, 9-14, 47-57, 94 ff; and "Différance" in *Margins of Philosophy*, especially 22-27. On time, see for example in "Ousia and Grammé: A Note on a Note from Being and Time" in *Margins of Philosophy*, 31-67; and in *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, 18-22. On authenticity, see for example in "Ousia and Grammé", 63-67; throughout *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*; and *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*, 115-121. On death, see for example in "Awaiting at the Arrival" in *Aporias*, trans. Thomas Dutoit, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993, 43-81; and *The Gift of Death*, 10-13, 32-34, 37-49. And on humanism, see for example in "The Ends of Man" in *Margins of Philosophy*, especially 123-134; "Heidegger, the Philosophers' Hell" in *Points*; and "How to Concede, with Reasons?" also in *Points*.

³²See for instance in *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*, specifically in Derrida's discussions of *Ereignis* and the "*es gibt*" in the context of Heidegger's Nietzsche lectures, 115 ff.; and throughout *Of Spirit* in Derrida's lengthy discussion of the implications of Heidegger's attempts to distinguish among certain forms of the word "spirit" (*Geist*, *geistlich*, *geistig*, *geistigkeit* etc.) in various contexts over the course of his career.

³³Derrida, "Eating Well, or the Calculation of the Subject", in *Points*, 255-287.

³⁴Derrida, *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans. Alan Bass, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

It is hardly a trade secret that Heidegger's appropriation of transcendence as the origin and limit of ontological difference has had a formative impact on Derrida's approach to the problem. Derrida himself has been anything but reticent about this fact, proclaiming often (and from the very beginning) that Heidegger's "opening" of the question of this difference "constitutes a novel, irreversible advance"—indeed, an "uncircumventable meditation"—without which "what I have attempted to do would not have been possible".³⁵ If one wants to follow Derrida, then—and his emphatic language here seems to suggest the even stronger thesis that if one wants to advance the interrogation of transcendence, period—the passage *through* Heidegger is one of "incessant necessity":³⁶

One must therefore *go by way of* the question of being as it is directed by Heidegger and by him alone, at and beyond onto-theology, in order to reach the rigorous thought of that strange nondifference and in order to determine it correctly.³⁷

It is no accident, of course, that Derrida characterizes this debt to Heidegger as the "opening" of a "way", a "path", and a "passage". For assuming such a debt, as Derrida understands it, is not a matter of adopting Heidegger's position, but of following his path to the point whereupon the possibility of seeing the way ahead becomes as questionable for Heidegger himself as for those following his lead. In order to locate the decisive point along this path at which Derrida sees his debt to Heidegger giving way to a departure,

³⁵Derrida, *Positions*, 54, 47, 9. These admissions (and others of a similar ilk) have drawn a great deal of attention from Derrida's boosters and detractors alike. See for example in Geoffrey Bennington's *Jacques Derrida* (a book written in collaboration with Derrida himself), 271-276; and in Ferry and Renaut, *French Philosophy of the 1960's*, especially under the subheading of "From Difference to *Différance*", 125-134. Though the conclusions Ferry and Renaut draw from this analysis have a decidedly uncharitable bent (as we have seen), their detailed coverage of the textual evidence of this debt is helpful.

³⁶Derrida, "Différance", 22.

³⁷Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 23.

and in order to understand why he characterizes this point as being simultaneously “at and beyond onto-theology”, we must briefly recall the stages along Heidegger’s way as they unfolded in chapters two and three.

In the simplest possible terms, this path traversed two essential transitions across three heuristically distinguishable problem spheres: it traced the movement of the theoretical attitude across the subject-object sphere to its ground in ontological difference, followed the movement of this difference through the sphere of fundamental ontology to its ground in the transcendence of Dasein, and then opened onto an “abyss” that seemed to indicate, at least to Heidegger, a “clearing” beyond even the unveiling of being opened by transcendence. As we saw, the very suggestion of this beyond of transcendence presents an intractable problem for thinking: because “clearing” is indicated precisely at the limit of unveiling, and because unveiling has a hermeneutic (if not a phenomenological) priority over manifestation, “clearing” can be neither unveiled nor made manifest, except as an irreducible “withdrawal” from unveiling. It is no solution, furthermore, to dub this withdrawal the “ground” or “origin” of transcendence, since transcendence itself is the ontological grounding of ground from which the metaphysical “grounds” of onto-theology (God, Reason, Will, etc.) derive their intelligibility. To make matters still more difficult, our philosophical resources even for thinking unveiling as such (let alone “clearing”) are always already manifest—i.e., mediated through our “having been” (the metaphysical tradition)—and are thus always “borrowed”, to a significant extent, from the very discourse they seek to push beyond. Accordingly, as our epigraph from Heidegger at the head of this chapter observes, every attempt to name the “grounding-attunement”—this “clearing” or “abyss” or “reserve” or “withdrawal” that sets off the grounding movement

of unveiling itself—is taken from tradition and must thus fall short of the mark. The upshot, then, is that Heidegger’s path through ontological difference traverses the razor’s edge between presence and abyss, and it is in just this respect that his path is, as Derrida remarks, both “at and beyond onto-theology”.

In view of this rough sketch of the terrain, we may characterize Derrida’s path as beginning on the ledge of the abyss, as it were—at the point, in other words, whereupon ontological difference announces the abyssal withdrawal precisely by vanishing into it. In the opening chapter of his first monograph (*Of Grammatology*, 1967), Derrida sets the scene as follows, venturing a new (and, of course, supplementary) name for this erasure of ontological difference:

To come to recognize, on the horizon of the Heideggerian paths, and yet in them, that the sense of being is not a transcendental or trans-epochal signified (even if it was always dissimulated within the epoch) but already, in a truly *unheard of* sense, a determined signifying trace, is to affirm that within the decisive concept of ontico-ontological difference, *all is not to be thought at one go*; entity and being, ontic and ontological, “ontico-ontological,” are, in an original style, *derivative* with regard to difference; and with respect to what I shall later call *différance*, an economic concept designating the production of differing/deferring. The ontico-ontological difference and its ground (*Grund*) in the “transcendence of Dasein” (*Vom Wesen des Grundes* [Frankfurt am Main, 1955], p. 16 [p. 29]) are not absolutely originary. *Différance* by itself would be more “originary,” but one would no longer be able to call it “origin” or “ground,” those notions belonging essentially to the history of onto-theology, to the system functioning as the effacing of difference. It can, however, be thought of in the closest proximity to itself only on one condition: that one begins by determining it as the ontico-ontological difference before erasing that determination. The necessity of passing through that erased determination, the necessity of that *trick of writing* is irreducible.³⁸

With this debt to Heidegger’s understanding of difference in focus, it is not difficult to see why Derrida is committed to the task of deconstruction as well. For if transcendence itself is but a trace of *différance* (a word that, as we shall see, is just one among many

³⁸Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 23-24.

“supplements” that Derrida submits in the name of the “unnameable” withdrawal), and if presence is but a trace of transcendence, then all the great systems of western metaphysics that have built on the ground of presence are in fact constructed from “the trace of the trace” of this withdrawal.³⁹ The deconstruction of this tradition is necessary, however, not only because much is inevitably left unthought within it, but also because our access to the unthought is limited to the traces of it that remain sheltered in what *has* been thought. In making this point explicit near the end of his flagship essay “Differánce”, Derrida cites a passage from Heidegger’s “Anaximander Fragment”:

[T]he distinction between Being and beings, as something forgotten, can invade our experience only if it has already unveiled itself with the presencing of what is present (*mit dem Anwesen des Anwesenden*); only if it has left a trace (*eine Spur geprägt hat*) which remains preserved (*gewahrt bleibt*) in the language to which Being comes”.⁴⁰

For Derrida as for Heidegger, then, the task of deconstruction is aimed at *anything but* a clean cut severance from the metaphysical tradition that would be leveled from some height above (or depth below) presence. On the contrary, deconstruction must always begin with presence and within it, and is therefore constantly susceptible to the very vicissitudes it sets out to uncover. As Derrida explains,

The movements of deconstruction do not destroy structures from the outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can they take accurate aim, except by inhabiting those structures. Inhabiting them *in a certain way*, because one always inhabits, and all the more when one does not suspect it. Operating necessarily from the inside, borrowing all the strategic and economic resources of subversion from the old structure, borrowing them structurally, that is to say without being

³⁹Derrida, “Différance”, 24. See also Jacques Derrida, “Ousia and Gramme”, 66.

⁴⁰Derrida, “Différance”, 25, citing Martin Heidegger, “Der Spruch des Anaximander” in *Holzwege*, Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1957. Derrida also cites this passage to the same end in “Ousia and Gramme”, *Margins of Philosophy*, 66. The English translation cited here is “The Anaximander Fragment” in Martin Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking*, trans. David Farrell Krell and Frank Capuzzi, New York: Harper and Row, 1975, 51.

able to isolate their elements and atoms, the enterprise of deconstruction always in a certain way falls prey to its own work.⁴¹

If deconstruction aims thus to mark the finitude of its predecessor discourses and to indicate their indebtedness to an unacknowledged pre-conceptual reserve, it does so in full awareness of its own finitude and indebtedness in respect to these discourses, and without any ambition to reject or ultimately supplant the conceptual resources that allow it, however tentatively, to indicate this reserve.

Since these concepts are indispensable for unsettling the heritage to which they belong, we should be even less prone to renounce them. Within the closure, by an oblique and always perilous movement, constantly risking falling back within what is being deconstructed, it is necessary to surround the critical concepts with a careful and thorough discourse—to mark the conditions, the medium and the limits of their effectiveness and to designate rigorously their intimate relationship to the machine whose deconstruction they permit; and, in the same process, designate the crevice through which the yet unnameable glimmer beyond the closure can be glimpsed.⁴²

The crucial insight to grasp here is that the task of deconstruction—both for Derrida and for Heidegger before him—is motivated by the acknowledgement of a fundamental connection between finitude and transcendence: the task is not to mortify finitude from on high by exposing and lamenting its inevitable failures, but rather to reveal the fecundity of finitude from within by indicating the irreducible reserve of possibilities it puts into play precisely in overreaching itself. As we saw in tracing Heidegger's path, one of the most pressing obligations of this orientation to thinking is that of incessantly resubmitting (even and especially) the "results" of deconstruction to further deconstruction. The implication here, interestingly, is that in assuming this inheritance,

⁴¹Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 24.

⁴²Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 14.

Derrida must commit to deconstructing it; his debts, in other words, consign him to certain departures.

While these departures are too many and too subtle to give a complete account of them here, we can approach their general tenor through an examination of Derrida's sustained concern over the emphasis on "authenticity" in Heidegger—an emphasis which, on Derrida's reading, betrays a surreptitious metaphysical doubling (authenticity-inauthenticity) in the Heideggerian *corpus* that is leveraged (despite its own warnings against such leveraging) to provide an all too privileged view of the "proper" history of metaphysics as it unfolds toward its "end" in the "destiny of Being". In order to understand Derrida's reservations regarding authenticity and the as yet metaphysical declaration of the "end of metaphysics" he takes it to authorize for Heidegger, we must briefly review the provenance of Heidegger's discourse on authenticity in view of its intimate relation to the issues of ontological difference and destruction.

Though we did not come upon a thematic study of "authenticity" (*Eigentlichkeit*) until division two of *Being and Time*, the traces of this issue (and its status as a designation for the resolutely hermeneutic disposition to thinking that Heidegger wishes to advance) are already legible at the very inception of his *Denkweg*—indeed, even as early as 1915 in the opening paragraph of his conclusion to the Scotus dissertation:

The authentic goal [*eigentliche Abzweckung*] of this investigation as an investigation into the history of a problem requires with *systematic* necessity as a conclusion—in addition to a look back at the main points having resulted and an overview of them in which they are reworked and evaluated—a look forward at the systematic structure of the problem of categories. However, what we are able to deal with here is not much more than bringing into relief *essential potencies of this problem and their contexts*, the fundamental setting in motion and actualization of which has not yet been realized in the treatment of the problem up to this point. This is also the reason why the systems of categories having been

attempted until now have been unable to avoid the impression of a certain deathly emptiness.⁴³

From the very beginning, thus, Heidegger sees authenticity in philosophical inquiry as a matter of grasping the necessity of understanding the present intelligibility of thinking as opened by and sustained through its past and future possibilities.

This emphasis on authenticity is taken up and amplified, then, in the lectures of the late-teens and early-twenties, in which we learn that the above-described “necessity” of philosophy’s unfolding as a “movement back and forth” is in fact rooted in Dasein’s unique capacity for being, and more specifically, in its pre-conceptual understanding-of-being as enabled by the occurrence of ontological difference in Dasein, and as brought to light in the phenomena of “environmental” and “factual” experience: since such experience has the character of an event of appropriation (*Ereignis*), and since philosophy itself is a mode of this experience, it follows that philosophy too is an *Ereignis*. Accordingly, if philosophy is to achieve authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*)—that is, if it is to grasp its “ownmost possibility” (*eigenst Möglichkeit*) as an *Ereignis*—it must proceed as a hermeneutics of facticity, which is to say, as a destruction of its past in the name of its future:

Hermeneutics carries out its tasks only on the path of destruction. [...] Destruction is the *authentic* path upon which the present needs to encounter itself in its own basic movements, doing this in such a way that what springs forth for it from its history is the permanent question of the extent to which it itself is worried about appropriating radical possibilities of founding experiences and of their interpretation.⁴⁴

⁴³Heidegger, “Conclusion: The Problem of Categories”, trans. Roderick M. Stewart and John van Buren, in *Supplements: From the Earliest Essays to Being and Time and Beyond*, 62; Martin Heidegger, *Die Kategorien- und Bedeutungslehre des Duns Scotus*, 341.

⁴⁴Heidegger, “Phenomenological Interpretations in Connection with Aristotle” in *Supplements*, 124.

As we have seen, this “authentic path” of destruction maps precisely onto the itinerary of *Being and Time*, wherein Heidegger appropriates the “presencing” of the present from out of the two “basic movements” proper to Dasein’s understanding-of-being: division one shows up the rootedness of “everyday” Dasein in its “having-been” as thrown among (and thus attuned by) beings; and this movement back propels us forward into division two’s authentic retrieval of Dasein’s “having-been” in view of the hermeneutic priority of its “toward-which”—the projection of its possibilities onto its understanding-of-being as a whole.

In the texts of the late-twenties, then, it becomes increasingly explicit that taking up the task of authentic projection is a matter of grasping the transcendence of Dasein—a prospect that leads (in the thirties and beyond) to the destruction of authenticity from a disposition of Dasein toward its own “being-there” into a disposition of Dasein toward being’s appropriation of itself as mediated through the historical “epochs” of Dasein’s thinking. But if authenticity is transformed in this “turning” from a task of Dasein’s resolutely *willing* its own possibilities into a task of Dasein’s meditatively *awaiting* the “gifts” sent from the “destiny of being” itself, there is a terminological and thematic continuity—indeed, a complementarity—in this transition that Heidegger clearly recognized and that we may readily discern even in his latest offerings. In the 1962 lecture on “Time and Being”, for instance, we read:

Insofar as being and time are given only in appropriating [*Ereignen*], the peculiar property [*das Eigentümliche*] belongs to appropriating that it brings man into his own [*in sein Eigenes bringt*] as he who hears [*vernimmt*] [the call of] being by

standing within authentic [*eigentlichen*] time. Appropriated thus, man belongs to appropriation [*Ereignis*].⁴⁵

From its earliest to its latest intonations, in summary, “*Eigentlichkeit*” and its associates (*eigen*, *eigenheit*, *eigenst Möglichkeit*, *eigentlich*, *Ereignis*, *Eigentum*, etc.) indicate for Heidegger the unique possibility in Dasein—opened through its essential “belonging” or “nearness” to being—of sheltering, preserving, and commending to future thinking that which withdraws from presence in the event of presencing.

As Derrida sees it, this emphasis on authenticity “is perhaps the most continuous and the most difficult thread of Heidegger’s thought”, and its importance for understanding and deconstructing Heidegger is therefore difficult to overstate.⁴⁶ Indeed, he observes, this “thinking of the proper of man is inseparable from the question or the truth of Being” for Heidegger, and it “occurs along the Heideggerian pathways by means of what we may call a kind of magnetic attraction”.⁴⁷ So pervasive is this “magnetism”, in fact, that it regulates the trajectory of the *corpus* from beginning to end:

In the effort to disclose it at the continuous depth at which it operates, the distinction between the given periods of Heidegger’s thought, between the texts before and after the so-called *Kehre*, has less pertinence than ever. For, on the one hand, the existential analytic had already overflowed the horizon of a philosophical anthropology: Dasein is not simply the man of metaphysics. On the

⁴⁵Heidegger, “*Zeit und Sein*”, in Heidegger, *Zur Sache des Denkens*, Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1969, 24. Joan Stambaugh’s English translation (“Time and Being”, in *On Time and Being*, New York: Harper and Row, 1972, 23) is more streamlined: “Because Being and time are there only in appropriating, appropriating has the peculiar property of bringing man into his own as the being who perceives Being by standing within true time. Thus Appropriated, man belongs to appropriation.” In being less literal, however, it replaces resonances we wish to keep (such as the belonging-together of *hearing* (*vernehmen*) Being and authenticity) with terms (e.g. “perception” and “true”) that are incompatible with Heidegger’s meaning here.

⁴⁶Derrida, *Positions*, 54.

⁴⁷Derrida, “*Ousia and Gramme*”, 124.

other hand, conversely, in the *Letter on Humanism* and beyond, the attraction of the “proper of man” will not cease to direct all the itineraries of thought.⁴⁸

The problem with this dominant emphasis on authenticity, according to Derrida, is that it is too sanguine about the sheltering power of appropriation. For even when the possibility of Dasein’s authentic self-choice vanishes into the abyss of irreducible difference, this possibility is *aufgehoben* in Dasein’s promotion to “proprietor” of being’s abyssal “destiny”, and as such, it threatens to absorb the excess of difference indicated at the limit of transcendence back into the very “saying of the same” (and thus, the forgetting of difference) that it sets out to upend.

What is interesting here, as we have already noted in passing, is that Derrida announces his intent to depart from this “nostalgia” for the “proper of man” (and from the “hope” of authentic appropriation sustained by this nostalgia) in the very texts in which he insists most strenuously upon the “incessant necessity” of appropriating Heidegger. In *Of Grammatology*, for example, not three pages after he claims that “one must *go by way*” of the ontological difference “as it is directed by Heidegger alone”, he turns around and implicates Heidegger’s thinking on this very issue in the Hegelian drive for “absolute knowledge” that effaces difference in “the reappropriation of difference, the accomplishment of...the *metaphysics of the proper* [*le propre*—self-possession, propriety, property, cleanliness].⁴⁹ In “Différance”, similarly, he approximates *différance* by following the movement of ontological difference through its withdraw into *Ereignis*, only to double back in a footnote and rescind the association, claiming that the movement of *différance* is “other” than that of appropriation:

⁴⁸Derrida, “Ousia and Gramme”, 124.

⁴⁹Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 26.

Différance is not a “species” of the genus *ontological difference*. If the “gift of presence is the property of Appropriating” [as Heidegger observes in *On Time and Being*], *différance* is not a process of appropriation in any sense whatsoever. It is neither position (appropriation) nor negation (expropriation), but rather other. Hence it seems—but here, rather, we are marking the necessity of a future itinerary—that *différance* would be no more a species of the genus *Ereignis* than being.⁵⁰

As confusing as this “double gesture” may seem, it tells us something important about where Derrida locates the difference between his own approach to difference and deconstruction and the approach he understands Heidegger to have taken. As we have already established, Derrida follows Heidegger in seeing deconstruction as compelled, to put the point simply, by an unnameable difference that engenders presence in withdrawing from it. In the Heideggerian “text”, however, the notion of deconstruction is closely associated with appropriation, and thus (or so Derrida sees it), with the promise that what is unveiled in deconstruction (i.e., appropriated from it), though admittedly still provisional, is somehow more primordial, more original, more authentic than the raw material with which it began, and therefore “nearer” to the withdrawal whose movement set it in motion. Though Derrida agrees with Heidegger that deconstruction is “positive” and “productive”—that it opens new questions and problems that can recontextualize and even reinvigorate the old ones—he is hesitant to make the leap, as he thinks Heidegger does, from what I’ll call the “productivity” to the “propriety” of deconstruction, i.e., from the insight that this transmission productively transforms its matter for thinking to the presumption that its transformed commerce is more “authentic” by comparison.

The reasoning that motivates Derrida’s hesitation here, strangely enough, is borrowed, once again, from Heidegger: if *différance* (which is a supplement here for the “abyss” or

⁵⁰Derrida, “Différance”, 26.

“withdrawal” that sets presencing in motion) can never be made present *as such*—a point upon which Heidegger insists—then the question arises as to how one could ever rigorously adjudicate an “authentic” from an “inauthentic” appropriation of its trace; without access to the *as such*, in short, any such valuation would have to be indefinitely deferred. As Derrida puts the point,

There is no essence of *différance*; it (is) that which not only could never be appropriated in the *as such* of its name or its appearing, but also that which threatens the authority of the *as such* in general, of the presence of the thing itself in its essence.⁵¹

What is sheltered in deconstruction, then, Derrida suggests, is not the “destiny” of being, but the “dissimulation” of *différance*:

But if this sheltering of the dissimulation of *différance* displaces the “propriety” of Heideggerian appropriation, the philosophical responsibility that Heidegger attaches to deconstruction under the name of authentic appropriation does not simply vanish from Derrida’s text without leaving a trace. Indeed, Derrida calls authenticity into question precisely to charge deconstruction with what he takes to be a new, more radical (if somehow still familiar) obligation, *viz.*, the responsibility to monitor a two-fold risk posed by the lure of a “proper” deconstruction: first, that such a deconstruction would forget its inevitable debts to the allegedly “vulgar” resources it purports to dismantle; and

⁵¹Derrida, “Différance”, 26.

⁵²Derrida, “Différance”, 26.

second, that this very forgetting would dull its insight into that which remains (not only provisionally, but inexorably) yet to come in the dissimulation of *différance*. So, though Derrida seeks to dismantle Heidegger's call for authentic appropriation, his approach to deconstruction remains an injunction to philosophical responsibility before the past in the name of the future. Thus stripped of the promises of propriety and authority, then, authenticity is transformed into what Derrida will call "vigilance".⁵³

The general strategy here is to "bear witness" to the places in Heidegger's text where his purportedly "authentic" appropriations of particular problems or concepts betray a continuing complicity with (or even a hidden dependence upon) the allegedly "inauthentic" discourses he submits to destruction. To be sure, there is no shortage of opportunities to observe this vigilance at work in Derrida's readings of Heidegger. Indeed, virtually all of Heidegger's attempts to maintain the appearances of propriety are subjected to uncompromising scrutiny at some point along the course of Derrida's path: the notion of "authentic temporality", he tells us, is in fact "constructed" from "ontotheological predicates";⁵⁴ by the same token, the delimitation of "humanism and metaphysics" in the name of a proper "thinking of Being" remains, in spite of itself, a "revalorization of the essence and dignity of man";⁵⁵ and even the task of thinking "the *Überwindung* of metaphysics" as "that of the eschatology inseparable from it" is undertaken, nonetheless, "in the name of another eschatology" that operates here as a

⁵³The traces of this theme of "vigilance" are pervasive throughout Derrida's writings. Several good examples include, as we have seen, "Heidegger, The Philosopher's Hell", and as we shall soon see, "On a Newly Arisen Apocalyptic Tone in Philosophy" (in *Raising the Tone of Philosophy*, ed. Peter Fenves, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993, 117-171, esp. 144-150), and "Force of Law".

⁵⁴Derrida, "Ousia and Gramme", 63 (first published in 1968).

⁵⁵Derrida, "The Ends of Man", 128 (1968).

“hidden teleology”.⁵⁶ And the list goes on: despite its injunctions to openness, Heidegger’s “dogmatic” assertion of the priority of ontological over sexual and animal difference imposes an “absolute oppositional limit” that “effaces these differences and leads back, following the most resistant metaphysico-dialectical tradition, to the homogenous”;⁵⁷ similarly, his attempt to define the proper essence of thinking as “nothing technological” turns out to be “contaminated” at its very inception by a certain “technics”;⁵⁸ and finally, his “concern to think the death proper to Dasein” draws on the resources of metaphysics, anthropology, and biology even as it “rigorously subordinates” them within an “order structured by [allegedly] *uncrossable* edges”.⁵⁹

If the purview of this vigilance is vast, however, we can get an adequate sense of the big picture by attending to several key passages pertaining to the first three examples listed above, *viz.*, Derrida’s deconstructions of (1) authentic temporality, (2) the “proper of man” as “proximity to being”, and (3) the proper history of metaphysics as the unfolding of the “destiny” of being. In addition to concretizing our understanding of the operation of “vigilance” in Derrida’s texts, these examples will serve as an instructive prelude to our concluding discussion on the issue of why this vigilance leads Derrida to distinguish rigorously between the “end” and the “closure” of metaphysics.

⁵⁶Derrida, “On a Newly Arisen Apocalyptic Tone in Philosophy”, 146 (1981); *Of Spirit*, 12 (1987). See also in *Spurs: Nietzsche’s Styles*, 109-123 (1978); and *The Post Card*, 61-67 (1980).

⁵⁷Derrida, “*Geschlecht* II: Heidegger’s Hand”, trans. John P. Leavey, Jr., in *Deconstruction and Philosophy: The texts of Jacques Derrida*, ed. John Sallis, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987, 173-174 (first presented in 1985). On sexual difference, see Jacques Derrida, “*Geschlecht*: sexual difference, ontological difference”, *Research in Phenomenology* 13, 1983, 65-83.

⁵⁸Derrida, *Of Spirit*, 10. See also in “*Geschlecht* II: Heidegger’s Hand”.

⁵⁹Derrida, *Aporias: Dying–Awaiting (One Another) at the “Limits of Truth”*, trans. Thomas Dutoit, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993, 29, 75.

The principal site of Derrida's deconstruction of authentic temporality is his essay entitled "Ousia and Gramme: Note on a Note from *Being and Time*". As the title indicates, the principal text at issue here is not *Being and Time* proper, but a footnote within it that Derrida believes to have decidedly disruptive implications for Heidegger's central thesis that "the "destruction" of classical ontology first had to shake the "vulgar concept" of time" in order to pose, authentically, the question of the meaning of being.⁶⁰ Heidegger's concern in this note, which appears in the penultimate section of *Being and Time*'s last chapter, is to sketch in broad strokes the provenance of the "vulgar" concept of time he is setting out to dismantle—a conception that understands time on the basis of "ousia as parousia" (i.e., as the "now" or the "present"), and that, according to Heidegger, has dominated the Western tradition from Aristotle to Hegel (as corroborated by the fact that Hegel's conception of time "has been drawn directly from the 'physics' of Aristotle").⁶¹

In commenting on this note, Derrida's task is to take up the cues indicated by Heidegger and discern whether they are borne out by a closer reading of the two central texts in question, Aristotle's *Physics IV* and Hegel's *Jena Logic*. The upshot of this reading is one of Derrida's signature "double gestures": while Heidegger is right that the history of the concept of time is that of the domination of presence, his delimitation of this history, precisely as a delimitation, remains complicit with this history, suggesting thus "that perhaps there is no "vulgar concept of time"" but that instead, "the concept of time, in all its aspects, belongs to metaphysics, and it names the domination of

⁶⁰Derrida, "Ousia and Gramme", 31.

⁶¹Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 500, note xxx.

presence”.⁶² As the following excerpt from Derrida’s concluding summary suggests, the implications of this reading for the prospect of retrieving an authentic temporality are unsettling:

Therefore we can only conclude that the entire system of metaphysical concepts, throughout its history, develops the so-called “vulgarity” of the concept of time (which Heidegger, doubtless, would not contest), but also that an *other* concept of time cannot be opposed to it, since time in general belongs to metaphysical conceptuality. In attempting to produce this *other* concept, one rapidly would come to see that it is constructed out of other metaphysical and ontotheological predicates. Was this not Heidegger’s experience in *Being and Time*? The extraordinary trembling to which classical ontology is subjected in *Sein und Zeit* still remains within the grammar and lexicon of metaphysics. And all the conceptual pairs of opposites which serve the destruction of ontology are ordered around one fundamental axis: that which separates the authentic from the inauthentic and, in the very last analysis, primordial from fallen temporality. [...] Now, is not the opposition of the *primordial* to the *derivative* still metaphysical? Is not the quest for an *archia* in general, no matter with what precautions one surrounds the concept, still the “essential” operation of metaphysics? [...] Why determine as *fall* the passage from one temporality to another? And why qualify temporality as authentic—or proper (*eigentlich*)—and as inauthentic—or improper—when every ethical preoccupation has been suspended?⁶³

We find a parallel logic at work in “The Ends of Man”, where Derrida deconstructs Heidegger’s accordance to Dasein of a privileged “proximity to Being” in which the possibility of authenticity—and thus, of seizing man’s proper end—is grounded. His broader concern in this essay is to show up the remnants of anthropocentrism in the critiques of anthropology developed by Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger—a task that he claims is complicated *vis a vis* the contemporary French scene by the fact that the postwar reception of these thinkers in France (spearheaded by Sartre in particular) largely neglected their criticisms of anthropology (and thus, the phenomenological and transcendental aspects of their projects) in order to use them for the purposes of

⁶²Derrida, “Ousia and Gramme”, 63.

⁶³Derrida, “Ousia and Gramme”, 63.

anthropological description.⁶⁴ The unfortunate result, on Derrida's reading, is that when philosophical anthropology fell out of favor in France in the 1960's, the emerging French critique of anthropologism—instead of “rediscovering” the neglected resources in Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger for criticizing the same—proceeded, on the contrary, “to amalgamate” these thinkers “with the old metaphysical humanism”.⁶⁵ Once again, thus, Derrida has set us up for a double gesture: on the one hand, he wants to reclaim for the contemporary French critique of humanism the critical reserve in Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger that has gone unacknowledged therein; on the other hand, in reclaiming these resources, he wants to locate in them the remaining traces of metaphysics that could not come into view apart from a more nuanced account than has previously been available of their substantial departures from traditional metaphysical humanism.⁶⁶

It is in this context, then, that we can come to appreciate Heidegger's account of the *Unheimlichkeit* of Dasein as a powerful critique of the matter for thinking traditionally understood as “rational animal” or “*imago dei*”, while recognizing at the same time that his effort to take Dasein from *Unheimlichkeit* to *Eigentlichkeit* nevertheless bears the traces of a metaphysical heritage that has never ceased to locate the “proper of man” in the play of his “two ends”: *telos* and death.⁶⁷ Insofar as Heidegger's discourse remains complicit with this play, Derrida maintains, it is susceptible to the very “trembling” it solicits from the discourses it dismantles:

Man is [for Heidegger] the proper of Being, which right near to him whispers in his ear; Being is the proper of man, such is the truth that speaks, such is the

⁶⁴Derrida, “The Ends of Man”, 114-117.

⁶⁵Derrida, “The Ends of Man”, 119.

⁶⁶Derrida, “The Ends of Man”, 119-123.

⁶⁷Derrida, “The Ends of Man”, 124 ff.

proposition which gives the there of the truth of Being and the truth of man. [...] The proper of man, his *Eigenheit*, his “authenticity” is to be related to the meaning of Being; he is to hear and to question it in ek-sistence, to stand straight in the proximity of its light. [...] Is not this security of the near what is trembling today, that is, the co-belonging and co-propriety of the name of man and the name of Being, such as this co-propriety inhabits, and is inhabited by, the language of the West...such as it is inscribed and forgotten according to the history of metaphysics, and such as it is awakened also by the destruction of ontotheology? But this trembling—which can only come from a certain outside—was already requisite within the very structure that it solicits. Its margin was marked in its own (*propre*) body. In the thinking and the language of Being, the end of man has been prescribed, since always, and this prescription has never done anything but modulate the equivocality of the *end*, in the play of *telos* and death.⁶⁸

If the traces of a “hidden teleology” in Heidegger’s discourse on authenticity are clearly legible here, they are writ especially large in what Derrida has called the “kerygmatic”, “eschatological”, indeed even “apocalyptic” tone of Heidegger’s thought on the history of metaphysics.⁶⁹ From his earliest offerings onward, Derrida has strenuously opposed Heidegger’s “proclamation of the “end” of metaphysics”, and has sought to undermine, in numerous texts, “the massive and crudely typecast form of the metaphysico-Platonic tradition” on the basis of which this alleged “end” is declared.⁷⁰ In addition to challenging Heidegger directly in texts that are explicitly critical of his general approach to this history,⁷¹ Derrida has cast suspicion on this archive indirectly by reading the texts of certain key figures (including Plato, Plotinus, and Nietzsche) against

⁶⁸Derrida, “The Ends of Man”, 133.

⁶⁹Derrida, “Différance,” 27; Jacques Derrida, “On a Newly Arisen Apocalyptic Tone in Philosophy”, 146, 149.

⁷⁰Derrida, *Of Spirit*, 95.

⁷¹See, for example, in “Différance”, 25-27; *Positions*, 56-57; *The Post Card*, 61-67; “On a Newly Arisen Apocalyptic Tone in Philosophy”, 144-150; *Of Spirit*, 12, 91-95.

the grain of Heidegger's "typecasting", thus indicating their resistance to being contained within a single, "proper" historiography.⁷²

Of the many examples we could cite of this vigilance against the threat of a Heideggerian reduction of the philosophical tradition, Derrida's deconstruction of the thought of the "destiny of Being" in the "Envois" section of *The Post Card* is among the most intriguing. As we can glean from these titles, Derrida's aim here is to examine the problem of "sending" (*envoyer, schicken*) (and thus of "going astray") that resides within any thought of an arrival, destination, or destiny (*Geschick*)—a problem for which the postal system, with all its inevitable delays, relays, and dead letter offices, is an apt metaphor. Always eager to push a metaphor to its limits (even and especially at the risk of abusing it), Derrida fashions his text as a series of *envois*—"the remainders of a recently destroyed correspondence"—whose author(s), recipient(s), and content(s) remain undecideable, thus offering us (at least in theory) a textual performance of the very problem at issue.⁷³ But if the text reads more like a private correspondence than an academic essay, the insight that motivates it is as consonant with his more traditional treatments of the dissimulation of *différance* as it could be: the possibility of "sending" or

⁷²The quintessential examples of this approach to Plato are "Plato's Pharmacy", in *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981; and "Khora", trans. Ian McLeod, in *On the Name*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995, 89-127. Though there is no single text in which Plotinus receives a comparably extensive treatment, his *Enneads* is referenced perpetually throughout Derrida's *corpus* as the paradigm example of a text within "Western metaphysics" that simultaneously "transgresses" it, and thus sits ill with the standard historiography. See, for example, in "Form and Meaning: A Note on the Phenomenology of Language", in *Margins*, 157 (note 1), 172 (note 16); "Ousia and Gramme", 66 (note 41); throughout *Sauf le nom*, in *On the Name*, 35-85; and in "Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of Religion at the Limits of Reason Alone", trans. Samuel Weber, in *Religion*, ed. Derrida and Vattimo, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998, 19. As for Nietzsche, see *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*, esp. 71-85, 109-123.

⁷³Derrida, *The Post Card*, 3.

“transmission” (as the play of revelation and concealment) is at the same time the impossibility of a proper “end” or an authentic “destiny”, and thus thinking (in the present) must forever “await its arrival” between the sending (future) and the sent (past). The strategy, thus, is to implicate Heidegger’s discourse on destiny in the postal metaphor, and then to show that his discourse is consequently vulnerable to all the vicissitudes that follow from this implication. The complexity of the argument here warrants a lengthy citation:

This is where things are most difficult [for Heidegger]: because the very idea of the retreat (proper to destination), the idea of the halt, and the idea of the epoch in which Being holds itself back, suspends, withdraws, etc., all these ideas are immediately homogeneous with postal discourse. [...] This is serious because it upsets perhaps Heidegger’s still “derivative” schema (perhaps), upsets by giving one to think that technology, the position, let us say even metaphysics, do not overtake, do not come *to determine* and to dissimulate an “*envoi*” of Being (which would not yet be postal), but would belong to the “first” *envoi*—which obviously is never “first” in any order whatsoever, for example a chronological or logical order, nor even the order of *logos*. [...] If the post (technology, position, “metaphysics”) is announced at the “first” *envoi*, then there is no longer A metaphysics, etc., nor even AN *envoi*, but *envois* without destination. For to coordinate the different epochs, halts, determinations, in a word, the entire history of Being with a destination of Being is perhaps the most outlandish postal lure. There is not even the post or the *envoi*, there are *posts* and *envois*. And this movement (which seems to me simultaneously very far from and very near to Heidegger’s, but no matter) avoids submerging all the differences, mutations, scansions, structures of postal regimes into one and the same great central post office. In a word, as soon as there is, there is *différance* (and this does not await language, especially human language, and the language of Being, only the mark and the visible trait), and there is postal maneuvering, relays, delay, anticipation, destination, telecommunicating network, the possibility, and therefore the fatal necessity of going astray, etc.⁷⁴

What these examples of vigilance teach us, in summary, is that Derrida sees a fundamental incompatibility between the task of deconstruction and the achievement of a “proper” end from which we could then leverage a “new” beginning—a discourse that

⁷⁴Derrida, *The Post Card*, 66.

would finally expel the contaminants of metaphysics from its system and behold the unthought commerce of the tradition in light of its authentic fruition. Once again, however (and precisely because the conceit of such a severance from predecessor discourses is what vigilance undertakes to guard against), the matter for thinking that Heidegger thought as the “end” of metaphysics is not simply put to its end, but is taken up as what Derrida calls the “closure” (*cloture*) of metaphysics:⁷⁵

Because it has always already begun, [metaphysics] therefore has no end. But one can conceive of the closure of that which is without end. Closure is the circular limit within which the repetition of difference infinitely repeats itself. That is to say, closure is its *playing* space. This movement is the movement of the world as play.⁷⁶

Since this infinite repetition of difference “within” the closure is simultaneously the tracing of what withdrawals from it, however, neither its “inside” nor its “outside” can be constituted as a “homogeneous” field; rather, the “outside” is always already inscribed “within” the closure as traces.⁷⁷ Accordingly, vigilance “within” the closure must first of

⁷⁵Derrida states his commitment to this distinction between “end” and “closure” early and often. See, for example, in *Of Grammatology*, 4, 14; “The Supplement of Origin”, in Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, trans. David B. Allison, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973, 102; “The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation”, in Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 250; *Positions*, 13, 57; “On a Newly Arisen Apocalyptic Tone in Philosophy”, 167-168.

⁷⁶Derrida, “The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation”, 250.

⁷⁷Geoffrey Bennington’s gloss on this difficult notion of “closure” may be helpful here: “And we shall also insist on the complexity of the idea of “closure,” which should not be imagined as a circular limit surrounding a homogeneous field: that would be metaphysical thinking of the closure, which would on this view separate an inside from an outside, and would facilitate the analogical transfer of this inside/outside onto before/after, which is none other than the confusion we are trying to avoid here: the closure is rather to be thought as an invaginated form that brings the outside back inside and on the contrary facilitates the understanding of the Derridean always-already.” Geoffrey Bennington, *Jacques Derrida*, 287-288. Derrida himself has used the vaginal metaphor to approach this phenomenon of “the inside that is always already outside” in the analysis of “the medium of the hymen” offered in “The Double Session”: “What

all be cautious of any hierarchical or progressive ordering of these traces that would homogenize the field in hopes of drawing “nearer” to its “outside”. As Derrida explains,

What we must be wary of...is the metaphysical concept of history. This is the concept of history as the history of meaning: the history of meaning developing itself, producing itself, fulfilling itself. And doing so linearly, as you recall: in a straight or circular line. This is why, moreover, the “closure of metaphysics” cannot have the form of a line, that is, the form in which philosophy recognizes itself. The closure of metaphysics, above all, is not a circle surrounding a homogeneous field, a field homogeneous with itself on its inside, whose outside then would be homogeneous also. The limit has the form of always different faults, of fissures whose mark or scar is borne by all the texts of philosophy.⁷⁸

If “all the texts of philosophy” thus bear witness to the closure of metaphysics, and if this closure is inscribed in them along “always different faults”, then the history of metaphysics is not a continuous progression of a single monolithic tradition that, upon the onset of authentic time (in keeping with its destiny), suddenly discovers its unthought, but is rather a *diasporá* of traditions whose thoughts and unthoughts penetrate, inseminate, and thus, disseminate one another to such an extent that their causes and effects, origins and ends, insides and outsides, are ultimately undecideable. As Derrida reads this history, then, the thought of the unthought of thinking that irrupts at the closure of metaphysics is not the exclusive commerce of our “epoch”—the age of the late “prophets of the apocalypse of metaphysics” (Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, and

holds for “hymen” also holds, *mutatis mutandis*, for all other signs which, like *pharmakon*, *supplément*, *différance*, and others, have a double, contradictory, undecideable value that always derives from their syntax, whether the latter is in a sense “internal,” articulating and combining under the same yoke, *huph’ hen*, two incompatible meanings, or “external,” dependent on the code in which the word is made to function.” Jacques Derrida, “The Double Session”, in *Dissemination*, 221.

⁷⁸Derrida, *Positions*, 57.

Heidegger)⁷⁹—but is rather in play from the very inception of this history, and often in the very texts that these prophets would have us believe are the least likely places to find it.

As a means of illustrating this “infinite and infinitely surprising reading” of the history of metaphysics, and in service of bringing closure, at the same time, to our discussion of Derrida’s debts to and departures from Heidegger, we will consult one last passage in which all four of the debts and departures we’ve considered are clearly inscribed, and in such a way that their interrelations are quite helpfully apparent. What we are looking for, let us recall, is (1) the thought of a difference beyond the hylomorphic distinction that compels (2) the deconstruction of metaphysics, and yet (3) vigilantly resists the notion of an authentic deconstruction that could leverage a reading of the end of metaphysics, opting instead (4) to mark its closure (and to mark it, in this particular case, in the text of a thinker (Plotinus) whom Heidegger, by contrast, had consigned—in little more than a few scant references—to the deepest reaches of onto-theological oblivion: “theosophy”). With all of this in mind, then, we may approach the passage:

Form (presence, evidence) would not be the final recourse, the last instance, to which every possible sign would refer—the *arche* or the *telos*; but rather, in a perhaps unheard-of way, the *morphe*, *arche*, and *telos* would still turn out to be signs. In a sense—or a non-sense—that metaphysics would have excluded from its field, while nonetheless being secretly and incessantly related to it, the form would already and in itself be the *trace* (*ichnos*) of a certain non-presence, the vestige of the formless, announcing and recalling its other to the whole of metaphysics—as Plotinus perhaps said. The trace would not be the mixture or passage between form and the amorphous, between presence and absence, etc., but that which, in escaping this opposition, renders it possible because of its irreducible excess. Then the closure of metaphysics, which certain bold statements of the *Enneads* seem to have indicated by transgressing metaphysical thought (but other texts, too, could be cited), would not move *around* the homogenous and continuous field of metaphysics. The closure of metaphysics would crack the structure and history of this field, by *organically* inscribing and systematically *articulating* from within the traces of the *before*, the *after*, and the

⁷⁹Derrida, “On the Newly Arisen Apocalyptic Tone in Philosophy”, 149.

outside of metaphysics. In this way we are offered an infinite and infinitely surprising reading of this structure and history. An irreducible rupture and excess may always occur within a given epoch, at a certain point in its text (for example in the “Platonic” fabric of “Neo-platonism”) and, no doubt, already in Plato’s text.⁸⁰

With the character of Derrida’s relation to Heidegger in focus, we may now turn to tracing the development of his broader approach to the problem of transcendence as it unfolds from out of these debts and departures.

III. Transcendence: From “Infinite Play” to “Absolute Responsibility”

As we observed in our introduction, the trajectory of this development is somewhat curious: it begins with what might seem at first to be a Dionysian aestheticism—a Nietzschean celebration of infinite play for its own sake—only to veer sharply in what would appear to be precisely the opposite direction of a Levinasian ethics of absolute responsibility. In examining this trajectory, then, our task is to show up this tension in Derrida’s thinking and to discern, without denying a certain incompatibility of emphasis from early to late, the sense in which these two perhaps radically opposed gestures in fact enable and sustain one another over the course of a continuous interrogation of the transcendence problem.

In carrying out this task, we will consult four texts that will allow us to sketch, in broad strokes, the key moments of this development: “*Différance*” will bring the problem of the production of “infinite play” into view; “Violence and Metaphysics” will clarify

⁸⁰Derrida, “Form and Meaning: A Note on the Phenomenology of Language”, in *Speech and Phenomena*, 127-128, note 14. For a more detailed treatment of this passage and its implications for Derrida’s approach to the metaphysical tradition, see my “On the Problematic Origin of the Forms: Plotinus, Derrida, and the Neoplatonic Subtext of Deconstruction’s Critique of Ontology”, in *Studies in Neoplatonism, Ancient and Modern*, ed. Jay Bregman, Albany: State University of New York Press, forthcoming.

the possibility of violence opened by this production; “Force of Law” will articulate deconstruction as an injunction to absolute responsibility in the face of this violence; and *The Gift of Death* will elucidate the structural kinship between absolute responsibility and “religious” commitment. Our first order of business, then, is to trace the movement of “Différance”.

A. The Production of “Infinite Play”: “Différance”

Though the general thrust of this movement is already familiar to us on the basis of the foregoing survey, there is more at stake in “Différance” than a critical appropriation of Heidegger. In particular, this essay is a helpful introduction to the broader sources and aims of Derrida’s early project as a movement, with (and against) Saussure, from “general semiology” (the study of signs) to “grammatology” (the study of the “mute” spaces and graphic structures that silently constitute and regulate the meaning of the play of signifiers), as well as a movement, with (and against) Nietzsche, Freud, and, of course, Heidegger, from an account of meaning dominated by “presence” to the “closure” of this account in a delimitation of the unacknowledged play of differences that underwrites it.

If “Différance” is the closest Derrida ever comes to providing a summary of the sources and aims of his project, however, he admits that the task at hand is nevertheless exceedingly complicated, and warns us on the outset that the “assemblage” proposed here “has the complex structure of a weaving [*tissage*], an interlacing [*croisement*] which permits the different threads [*files*] and different lines of meaning—or of force—to go off again in different directions, just as it is always ready to tie itself up with others.”⁸¹ The

⁸¹Derrida, “Différance”, 3; Jacques Derrida, “la différence”, in *Marges de la philosophie*, Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 4.

lesson here is that the task of expositing Derrida, even in his most summary mode, is a wholly different enterprise than that of expositing Heidegger; while Heidegger's texts lend themselves to a hermeneutic trudging-through in which the matter for thinking becomes increasingly explicit, Derrida's texts are fashioned explicitly to resist this kind of treatment, and to illustrate, in so doing, the resistance of the matter for thinking to any claim of mastery over it, "provisional" or otherwise. Thus, in order to avoid the frayed knot of loose ends that would result from an attempt to follow Derrida page for page, we will approach the text as a fabric of four distinguishable yet interwoven threads:

- (1) The delimitation of *différance*—an overview of the manifold indications of *différance* as a "double movement" of deferral ("temporization": *temporisation*) and differentiation ("spacing": *espacement*). (1-9)
- (2) The structuralist metaphor—a discussion of the "strategic convenience" of Saussure's structuralism for clarifying "the framework, if not the content" of *différance* as "the movement according to which...any system of referral is constituted "historically" as a weave of differences". (9-12)
- (3) The "chain of substitutions"—an extension of the problematic of *différance* over a series of "nonsynonomous" supplements (trace, spacing, archi-writing, hymen, etc.) that differ from *différance* and yet contribute to (or "supplement") our understanding of the movement in question. (12-14)
- (4) The epoch of "delimiting presence"—a survey of the movement of *différance* as it is indicated in the attempts of Nietzsche, Freud, and especially Heidegger to deconstruct the self-present subject of consciousness and to delimit, thereby, "the closure of ontology". (14-27)

Upon reading the opening pages of the essay, it is hard to resist the thought that Derrida's *différance* might well be the most overdetermined signifier of the necessarily underdetermined character of signification ever ventured: on the one hand, virtually every conceivable resonance of this neologism is meticulously engineered and explicated, right down to its deliberate grammatic and graphic intonations; on the other hand, this painstakingly fabricated weave of differences within difference itself is designed

precisely to develop an insight that shows up the instability of its contrivance, *viz.* that the difference at the “origin” of language irreducibly and irretrievably withdraws itself from our attempts to constitute it. Preferring, as ever, to bite bullets rather than dodge them, Derrida embraces this glaring discontinuity and puts it to work, admitting that his forthcoming attempt to “reassemble” the “different directions” in which he has “utilized” *différance* is “in principle and in the last analysis...impossible, and impossible for essential reasons”, albeit for reasons that can come into view only in attempting the impossible.⁸²

Notwithstanding the impossibility of his task, thus, Derrida delimits no fewer than seven indications of *différance*, each of which is intended to multiply the differences in play within it, and to underscore, thereby, its resistance to being constituted as a “nominal unity” upon which the status of a “foundation” or an “origin” could be unequivocally conferred. First, in keeping with the two “quite distinct” meanings of the French verb “*différer*”, *différance* is simultaneously “deferral” (or “temporization”: the “putting off until later” of what is presently denied) and “differentiation” (or “spacing”: the production of a distance or interval that serves as the “between” through which particulars are rendered discernable, non-identical, distinct, unequal, etc.).⁸³ Second, since this “double movement” produces the oppositions and inequalities from which concepts are constructed, *différance* is not a concept in any traditional sense, but announces, rather, an “order which resists [conceptual] opposition, and resists it because

⁸²Derrida, “Différance”, 3.

⁸³Derrida, “Différance”, 7-8.

it transports it”.⁸⁴ Third, because “*différance*” is written with an “a” that “is not heard” (in French “*différence*” and “*différance*” are phonetically identical), it indicates a reversal of the traditional subordination of writing to speech, necessitating that we constantly refer to the grapheme in order to grasp the difference between “*différence*” and “*différance*”.⁸⁵ This substitution of the “a” for the “e” also indicates, fourth, that *différance* “is not a word” (insofar as “a kind of gross spelling mistake” expels it from the order that governs “proper” words); and fifth, that the movement it designates is “neither simply active nor simply passive” (insofar as the French ending ‘-ance’ “remains undecided *between* the active and the passive”, expressing rather—“in something like the middle voice”—“an operation that cannot be conceived either as passion or as the action of a subject on an object”).⁸⁶

As if this proliferation of differences under the particular name of *différance* weren’t sufficient on its own to persuade us of the complexity of the problematic, we are told, sixth, that this name itself has no privileged “efficacy” here, but is, after all, just a single link in a “chain” of non-synonymous substitutes (trace, spacing, arche-writing, etc.) within which each of the others is already “enmeshed” and of which each is but an indeterminate trace.⁸⁷ Seventh and finally, *différance* is a tentative strategy for thinking “what is most irreducible about our “era”” (the attempt to delimit the “closure” of presence), and is merely tentative, of course, since “it is only on the basis of *différance*

⁸⁴Derrida, “Différance”, 5.

⁸⁵Derrida, “Différance”, 3-4, 8.

⁸⁶Derrida, “Différance”, 3,7; 8-9. Translator’s notes 8, 9, and 10 offer helpful glosses on the complexities of the French grammar that Derrida is exploiting here.

⁸⁷Derrida, “Différance”, 7.

and its “history” that we can allegedly know who and where “we” are, and what the limits of an “era” might be”.⁸⁸

With the manifold indications of *différance* in view, Derrida turns to weaving in the second major thread of the essay, a discussion of Saussure’s structuralism as it differs from classical semiology. In bringing Saussure into play, however, Derrida admits to being far less concerned with providing a close reading of structuralism than with exploiting its “strategic convenience” for illustrating the correlativity of the “arbitrary” and “differential” characteristics of the sign—a connection that can aid him in elucidating the parallel necessity of the conjunction of deferral and differentiation in *différance* and its unsettling consequences for traditional attempts to think the meaning of signs in terms of their proximity to presence.⁸⁹

To facilitate this comparison, Derrida offers a brief synopsis of the “classically determined structure of the sign”.⁹⁰ On the traditional understanding, he claims, signs are given and taken to represent the thing itself in its absence, i.e., they stand in for presence until it can arrive in its fullness. As a stand-in for the verbal sign, accordingly, writing is even farther removed from presence since there is no voice to transmit the presence of its own thought as speech. What this structure presupposes, in short, is that “the sign, which defers presence, is conceivable only on the *basis* of the presence that it defers and *moving*

⁸⁸Derrida, “Différance”, 7.

⁸⁹Derrida, “Différance”, 12, 10.

⁹⁰Though Derrida does not mention Husserl by name in this rough sketch of “classical semiology”, it is Husserl’s theory of signs that he has in mind here. This sketch is filled out in painstaking detail in *Speech and Phenomena*, where Derrida seeks to show up the complicity of Husserl’s theory of signs with the metaphysics of presence: “Husserl had, in a most traditional manner, determined the essence of language by taking the logical as its telos or norm. That this telos is that of being as presence is what we here wish to suggest.” Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, 8.

toward the deferred presence that it aims to reappropriate.”⁹¹ Within classical semiology, then, the substitution of the sign is both secondary and provisional: “secondary due to an original and lost presence from which the sign thus derives; provisional as concerns this final and missing presence toward which the sign in this sense is a movement of mediation.”⁹²

On Saussure’s account, by contrast, the meaning of a sign is not fixed in terms of its secondary and provisional proximity to presence, but is rather a function of its being in play within an “arbitrary and differential” system of other signs that is “constituted solely by the differences in terms, and not by their plenitude”.⁹³ What interests Derrida most here, as we noted above, is not “structuralism” *per se*, but rather the general strategy of thinking a difference that conditions signification without recourse to a prior presence. In lieu of launching into a detailed engagement, thus, he elects to glean what he needs from Saussure by citing a single pivotal passage from the *Course on General Linguistics* in which the trace of *différance* is clearly inscribed:

Everything that has been said up to this point boils down to this: in language there are only differences. Even more important: a difference generally implies positive terms between which the difference is set up; but in language there are only differences *without positive terms*. Whether we take the signified or the signifier, language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system. The idea or phonic substance that a sign contains is of less importance than the other signs that surround it.⁹⁴

⁹¹Derrida, “Différance”, 9.

⁹²Derrida, “Différance”, 9.

⁹³Derrida, “Différance”, 10.

⁹⁴Derrida, “Différance”, 11, citing Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin, New York: Philosophical Library, 1959, 120.

Since every concept is thus constituted through its relation to other concepts within this systematic play of differences, the play itself—*différance*—is “no longer simply a concept, but rather the possibility of conceptuality, of a conceptual process and system in general”.⁹⁵ But if *différance* as the possibility of structure provides a means for undertaking “the systematic, statistical, and classificatory inventory of a language”, it is “no more static than it is genetic, no more structural than historical”, insofar as the differences in play within it “have not fallen from the sky fully formed”, but are “produced effects” that are thus “historical” from the outset.⁹⁶

The upshot, Derrida concedes, is that we find ourselves enclosed within an all too familiar circle: on the one hand, *différance* is necessary in order for the words and concepts of historical language to be intelligible and to produce their effects; on the other hand, these historically produced words and concepts are necessary in order to think the movement of *différance* and to mark its effacement at their limit. The trick here—if we may supplement Derrida’s analysis by reference to another of his early texts—is to avoid constituting *différance* exclusively in terms of either form/structure/stasis or meaning/history/genesis in favor of “meditat[ing] upon the circularity which makes them pass into one another indefinitely” and then “rigorously repeating this *circle* in its proper historical possibility, perhaps to let some *elliptical* displacement be produced in the difference of repetition”.⁹⁷

With the double movement of *différance* and its relation to structuralism clarified, the two remaining threads of the essay illustrate this production of “displacement through

⁹⁵Derrida, “Différance”, 11.

⁹⁶Derrida, “Différance”, 11.

⁹⁷Derrida, “Form and Meaning”, 173.

repetition” as it functions, first, in Derrida’s own texts, and second, in the critique of the self-present subject of consciousness that is repeated, in various iterations, in the texts of Nietzsche, Freud, and Heidegger. In Derrida’s own work, this displacement is produced as a “chain” of “non-synonymous substitutions” in which *différance* defers and differentiates itself differently in accordance with the (con)textual situation in which its movement is solicited: in reading Plato, for instance, Derrida finds the trace of *différance* inscribed in the thought of writing as *pharmakon* (meaning both “poison” and “cure”); in Rousseau, it appears as “the supplement” (meaning both “the missing piece and the extra piece”); in Mallarmé, as “the hymen” (indicating both “inside and outside”, “virginity and consummation”); and even when he explicates *différance* under its “own” name, this explication is carried out only through its dissimulation into other names (“reserve”, “trace”, “archi-trace”, and “archi-writing”, etc.), each of which may stand in for this movement in a given context, but none of which—including “*différance*” itself—may claim authority over the open system in which it plays and through which its effects are produced and dispersed.⁹⁸

The texts of Nietzsche, Freud, and Heidegger, Derrida continues, provide an opportunity to observe this movement of “displacement through repetition” on two different levels. Taken individually, each is the site of a deconstruction of self-present consciousness “on the basis of the motif of *différance*”—a motif that, according to Derrida, “appears almost by name in their texts, and in those places where everything is at stake”.⁹⁹ In Nietzsche, we find a diagnosis of “the detour or ruse of an agency

⁹⁸Derrida, “Différance”, 12-13. Translator’s note 14 provides references and brief contextual information on each of these.

⁹⁹Derrida, “Différance”, 17.

disguised in its *différance*”—a “moving discord of different forces, and of differences of forces” that produces the effect of consciousness, but whose “essence, byways, and modalities are not proper to it”.¹⁰⁰ Played against the system of metaphysics, the view to this discord allows Nietzsche to “reconsider all the pairs of opposites on which philosophy is constructed, not in order to see opposition erase itself but to see what indicates that each of the terms must appear as the other different and deferred in the economy of the same” (e.g., “the intelligible as the sensible, different and deferred”, “the concept as different and deferred intuition”, “culture as nature, different and deferred”, etc.).¹⁰¹ In Freud, similarly, we find *différance* inscribed in the analysis of consciousness as constituted and maintained by deferring threats to its unity through the “detour” of the “unconscious”—a “reserve” of different and deferred traces of a “past that has never been present” and whose “future will never be a *production* or a reproduction in the form of presence”.¹⁰² As for Heidegger, suffice it to say that our basis for comparison is already well established.¹⁰³

But if the movement of *différance* is inscribed in the work of each of these thinkers individually, it is also legible at the historical level in the play of differences *between* and *among* these different traces of *différance*—the very play that allows us, if tentatively and in deference to the impossibility of unequivocally deciding among them, to think these “names of authors” together as mere “indices” within an authorless network “which

¹⁰⁰Derrida, “Différance”, 18, 17.

¹⁰¹Derrida, “Différance”, 17.

¹⁰²Derrida, “Différance”, 18, 21.

¹⁰³In surveying Derrida’s relation to Heidegger, we have already covered the relevant passages in “Différance” (pages 23-27) in some detail.

reassembles and traverses our “era” as the delimitation of the ontology of presence”.¹⁰⁴ It is under this tentative rubric of the “closure of presence” that Derrida summarizes the rationale, the range, and the risks of the thought of *différance*:

It is the domination of beings that *différance* everywhere comes to solicit, in the sense that *sollicitare*, in old Latin, means to shake as a whole, to make tremble in totality. Therefore, it is the determination of Being as presence or as beingness that is interrogated by the thought of *différance*. Such a question could not emerge and be understood unless the difference between Being and beings were somewhere to be broached. First consequence: *différance* is not. It is not a present being, however excellent, unique, principal, or transcendent one desires it to be. It governs nothing, reigns over nothing, and nowhere exercises any authority. It is not announced by any capital letter. Not only is there no kingdom of *différance*, but *différance* instigates the subversion of every kingdom. Which makes it obviously threatening and infallibly dreaded by everything within us that desires a kingdom, the past or future presence of a kingdom. And it is always in the name of a kingdom that one may reproach *différance* with wishing to reign, believing that one sees it aggrandize itself with a capital letter.¹⁰⁵

In thinking this “unnameable play”, thus, we must resist, above all, the urge to constitute it as a “master-name”. Instead, Derrida maintains, we must affirm without “nostalgia” (in short, without “the myth of a lost native country of thought”) that “in the delineation of *différance* everything is strategic and adventurous”.¹⁰⁶ It is strategic, more specifically, in that it forgoes the appeal to a transcendent presence *outside* the play in favor of venturing piecemeal, experimental tactics *within* the play whose aims and results differ from context to context and thereby resist reconciliation into a master argument or metanarrative of *différance*. For this very reason, thinking *différance* is always adventurous: without recourse to a presence that could “theologically govern” its tactics by orienting them (teleologically, eschatologically) toward mastery *over* the play, it must

¹⁰⁴Derrida, “Différance”, 21.

¹⁰⁵Derrida, “Différance”, 22. I have modified Bass’s translation slightly in view of the original French, “La différence”, 22.

¹⁰⁶Derrida, “Différance”, 27, 7.

commit to a certain “blind tactics”—a “wandering” *within* the play that cannot know in advance how to begin, where to leave off, or when its strategies will conflict with one another or even suddenly reverse themselves.¹⁰⁷ To risk this approach to thinking in the open play, Derrida concludes, is to “affirm” the play (in the Nietzschean sense) with “a certain laughter and a certain step of the dance”.¹⁰⁸

Derrida’s interest here, as we have repeatedly observed, is hardly to suggest that thinking at the closure of metaphysics must give itself over to fun and games. Even so, there is no denying that Derrida’s general tenor in “Différance” (with his repeated rebukes of eschatological desire and his endorsements of adventure, laughter, and the dance) exposes him to being interpreted as largely unconcerned with (or even predisposed against) ethical and religious questioning. Thus, before proceeding to the later texts in which these issues will become paramount, we must locate a foothold in the early work that will allow us to draw together (if not finally to reconcile) the affirmation of “infinite play” with the injunction to “absolute responsibility”. To put the point in Heidegger’s idiom, we want to show up in Derrida’s early work a “formal indication”—that is, a glimmer of future possibilities yet to be actualized—of the matter for thinking that will come to fruition in his later work. We can find these traces of the latter in the former in “Violence and Metaphysics”.

B. Infinite Play and Ethical Violence: “Violence and Metaphysics”

If we approached “Différance” with an eye toward providing a summary of the text as a whole, our intention in consulting “Violence and Metaphysics” is wholly strategic: the

¹⁰⁷Derrida, “Différance”, 7.

¹⁰⁸Derrida, “Différance”, 27.

sole aim of this engagement is to isolate the connection between “infinite play” and the possibility of ethical violence so as to provide an indication in Derrida’s early work of a strategy that will become more explicit later on—the alignment of deconstruction with “justice” as an emancipatory movement against ethical violence. Accordingly, our reading of this essay will be highly selective and comparatively brief: we will provide the minimum contextual background necessary to elucidate this connection, and then zero in on a single, pivotal passage in which the “ethical” possibilities of deconstruction may be glimpsed.

Derrida’s task in “Violence and Metaphysics” is to engage the thought of Emmanuel Levinas in view of his debts to and departures from Husserl and Heidegger. The aspect of the essay that interests us, in particular, is Derrida’s concern over what he takes to be a Levinasian reduction of Heidegger’s thought to a “philosophy of violence”, indeed, to “a ruse of war” that precludes the possibility of an ethical relation to the other.¹⁰⁹ According to Levinas, as Derrida reads him, Heidegger’s account of the pre-understanding of being (ontological transcendence) “make[s] common cause with oppression and with the totalitarianism of the same” in that it fails to “respect the Being and meaning of the other” by violently assuming that “everything given to me within light appears as given to myself by myself.”¹¹⁰ For a non-violent relation to the other to be possible, Levinas argues, the original relation to the other must be constituted on the other’s terms, and thus seated in the other’s irreducible “ethical transcendence” over the same—a transcendence that precedes the economy of violence opened by the reduction of the other to the same in ontological transcendence.

¹⁰⁹Derrida, “Violence and Metaphysics”, 91, 141.

¹¹⁰Derrida, “Violence and Metaphysics”, 91, 92.

In keeping with a strategy we have seen many times before, Derrida's interest here is to show up the hidden debts that invariably accrue to positing a clean severance from predecessor discourses. In this particular case, the problem arises as to how Levinas could constitute an alterity (and discern what would count as "violence" toward it) without prior recourse to an ontological transcendence that would open the play within which alterity could make its claim upon the same. Indeed, Derrida argues, in order to get the notion of "ethical transcendence" off the ground, Levinas must presuppose ontological transcendence at the very moment he presumes to transgress it:

Not only is the thought of Being not ethical violence, but it seems that no ethics—in Levinas's sense—can be opened without it. Thought—or at least the pre-understanding of Being [*pré-compréhension de l'être*]-conditions (in its own fashion, which excludes every ontic conditionality: principles, causes, premises, etc.) the recognition of the essence of beings [*l'étant*] (for example someone, being *as* other, *as* other self, etc.). It conditions the respect for the other *as what it is*: other. Without this acknowledgement, which is not a knowledge, or let us say without this "letting-be" [*laisser-être*] of a being (Other) [*étant (autrui)*] as something existing outside me in the essence of what it is (first in its alterity), no ethics would be possible. "To let be" is an expression of Heidegger's which does not mean, as Levinas seems to think, to let be as an "object of comprehension first," and in the case of the Other, as "interlocutor afterward." The "letting-be" concerns all possible forms of beings, and even those which, *by essence*, cannot be transformed into "objects of comprehension".¹¹¹

Though Derrida puts the point here in Heideggerian terms, we can transpose the insight into Derrida's idiom by saying that is only through the affirmation of the "infinite play of the same that is not identical" (*différance*) that the other can appear, stake its claim, and assert its resistance against the same *precisely as* irreducible to it. If the irreducibility of the other is thus a function of its status as a trace inscribed within an

¹¹¹Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics", 137-138; "Violence et Métaphysique", 202. I have modified Bass's translation slightly, rendering "pré-compréhension" as "pre-understanding" (rather than pre-comprehension) in order to reflect that fact that Derrida's French is intended as a translation of Heidegger's "*Vorverständnis vom Sein*".

infinite and unnameable play, then the most promising means of guarding against “ethical violence”—the reduction of the other to the same—is to *affirm* the play and to keep it open by incessantly interrogating any and every attempt to arrest it, whether by reifying it into a system of order, or by reducing it to a meaningless disorder:

The best liberation from violence is a certain putting into question, which makes the search for an archia tremble. Only the thought of Being can do so, and not traditional “philosophy” or “metaphysics”. The latter are therefore “politics” which can escape ethical violence only by economy: by battling violently against the violences of an-archy whose possibility, in history, is still the accomplice of archism.¹¹²

In this light, then, the affirmation of infinite play that Derrida commends to us in “Différance” looks far rather more like a call to vigilance against ethical violence than it does like an aesthetic celebration of play for its own sake. That Derrida has just such an injunction in mind becomes very clear in “Force of Law”.

C. Violence, Justice, Responsibility: “Force of Law”

Though we can read the ethics of deconstruction between the lines of his early work, and though Derrida claims in retrospect that a commitment to radical responsibility before the other has been the driving force of deconstruction from the beginning, recent texts like “Force of Law,” *The Gift of Death*, *Specters of Marx*,¹¹³ *Politics of Friendship*,¹¹⁴ and “Faith and Knowledge,”¹¹⁵ take up the ethical, political, and religious

¹¹²Derrida, “Violence and Metaphysics”, 141.

¹¹³Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, New York: Routledge, 1994.

¹¹⁴Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins, London: Verso, 1997.

¹¹⁵Derrida, “Faith and Knowledge: the Two Sources of ‘Religion’ at the limits of Reason Alone,” in *Religion*, eds. Derrida and Vattimo, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1998. This volume includes five other essays by leading “Continental” philosophers, including Gianni Vattimo’s “The Trace of the Trace,” Eugeio Trias’

significance of this commitment more explicitly than ever before. Of these five texts, “Force of Law” and *The Gift of Death* together provide an excellent framework for understanding (1) how deconstruction is related to the idea of infinite responsibility, and (2) why this responsibility is conceived as involving a “religious” commitment to the other.

Derrida’s principal concern in “Force of Law” is to establish an explicit link between deconstruction and the demand for absolute responsibility before an infinite idea of justice.¹¹⁶ Because he realizes that this association is perhaps surprising in view of his apparent reticence regarding justice in earlier works, he begins the essay with an explanation of why this reticence has in fact been an indirect discourse on justice all along. The temptation, Derrida admits, is to view deconstruction’s alleged silence on matters of ethics and justice as an abdication of responsibility in the perceived absence of an unshakable standard of judgment. He insists, however, that this obliqueness regarding justice is a not a sign of indifference but one of deference, an indication of deconstruction’s sensitivity to the fact that one cannot thematize or objectify justice without immediately betraying it.¹¹⁷ Deconstruction has deferred speaking directly of

“Thinking Religion: The Symbol and the Sacred,” and Vincenzo Vittiello’s “Desert Ethos, Abandonment: Towards a Topology of the Religious.” As its essay titles indicate, this volume is an excellent primer on the problem of “Non-dogmatic” Faith.

¹¹⁶The text of “Force of Law” is divided evenly into two more or less self-contained parts; part I consists in Derrida’s central argument for associating justice with deconstruction (pp. 1-28), while part II gives a related but supplementary reading of Walter Benjamin’s *Zur Kritik der Gewalt* (pp. 29-63). We will be focusing exclusively on part I.

¹¹⁷Derrida, “Force of Law”, 10.

justice, Derrida explains, out of respect for “a possibility of justice that cannot be rendered present in any law.”¹¹⁸

As one might expect, Derrida’s account of this curious possibility takes shape as an account of what justice is not, *viz.*, law. Drawing on the work of Montaigne and Pascal, he attacks the traditional association of justice with law by calling the authority of law (*droit*) into question. The relevance of Montaigne and Pascal to this endeavor lies in their recognition of “the mystical foundation of authority”, or in plain English, the fact that the authority of law is always conditional (and thus contestable) insofar as law can be ultimately (i.e., strictly or unproblematically) grounded in nothing more than the revisable interpretive preferences and decisions of the dominant forces of society. Derrida’s aim here, we must recognize, is certainly not to suggest that the ontic preferences we legislate into laws are necessarily devoid of justification or that all ontic justifications are fundamentally flawed such that none is any better or worse than the next; the insight, rather, is that all ontic justifications presuppose a context (and, moreover, specific aims therein), and that, as such, no justification is unconditional.

The problem with conceiving justice in terms of law, then, is that the authority of law, while *conditionally* justifiable, is *ultimately* unjustifiable: law derives its authority from enforceability, enforceability is made possible by force, and force is essentially self-authorizing in that it founds the very standard that legitimates judgment, *viz.*, law. On this view, the act of instituting law consists of a “performative and therefore interpretive violence that in itself is neither just nor unjust and that no justice and no previous law

¹¹⁸Derrida, “Force of Law”, 5-6.

with its founding anterior moment could guarantee or contradict or invalidate”.¹¹⁹ In short, since *every* law has self-authorizing violence at its origin, *no* law can serve as the standard of justification for any other, and thus the foundation of law is ultimately, in this sense, a violence without ground. Since there is no clear criterion for strictly distinguishing the *arbitrary* violence that founds law from the allegedly *justified* violence that enforces it, any attempt to explain how the latter is justified must run up against the conditional limit of the former, and therefore the justice of law is never fully (i.e., unconditionally) just.

It follows, Derrida argues, that law is essentially deconstructible, for insofar as law is “constructed” on unfounded and therefore “infinitely transformable textual strata,” it is always open to interpretation and revision. So, while law is a poor substitute for justice, the fact that it is open to revision (and thus to the demand for further justification) is actually *good* news given the many injustices that arise in legislating and upholding laws. In fact, Derrida maintains, this curious serendipity concealed in the structure of law is nothing less than a paradox through which the possibility of justice can be glimpsed, perhaps surprisingly, in deconstruction itself:

[I]t is this deconstructible structure of law (*droit*), or if you prefer of justice as *droit*, that also insures the possibility of deconstruction. Justice in itself, if such a thing exists, outside or beyond law, is not deconstructible. Deconstruction is justice.¹²⁰

In an effort to clarify this difficult passage, Derrida restates the paradox in the following three points:

¹¹⁹Derrida, “Force of Law”, 13.

¹²⁰Derrida, “Force of Law”, 14-15.

- (1) The deconstructibility of law (*droit*), of legality, legitimacy or legitimation makes deconstruction possible.
- (2) The undeconstructibility of justice also makes deconstruction possible, indeed is inseparable from it.
- (3) The result: Deconstruction takes place in the interval that separates the undeconstructibility of justice from the deconstructibility of *droit* (authority, legitimacy, etc.).¹²¹

The lesson of this paradox, Derrida claims, is that justice can never be realized in the present (but is always still “to come”), and it is precisely this insight that illuminates the unlikely kinship between justice and deconstruction. For Derrida, as for Heidegger, deconstruction is first and foremost an activity that defers definitive pronouncements in the present in the name of what is still to come, not because all such pronouncements are *necessarily* pernicious or false, but rather because their very intelligibility in the present always already appeals to a future that is presently uncircumscribable. This activity is essentially “undeconstructible” because its motion is perpetual and its reserves are infinite: the deferral of the present is simultaneous with the arrival of a future-present that must be deferred in the name of future future-present, and so on.

In saying that “deconstruction is justice”, then, Derrida is suggesting that the movement of deconstruction (i.e., the infinite task of deferring the present in the name of what remains to come) is *solicited* by the infinite demand of justice that is reasserted at every moment, and brought to our attention, especially, in those moments in which a law is founded or enforced in pursuit of justice. Our ongoing attempts to calculate the incalculable demands of justice involve us, thus, in an infinite task: law is constructed in pursuit of justice, dismantled in the name of justice, reappropriated in pursuit of justice,

¹²¹Derrida, “Force of Law”, 15.

only to be dismantled again upon falling short. It is precisely this task that Derrida describes in (3) above when he maintains that “[d]econstruction takes place in the interval that separates the undeconstructibility of justice from the deconstructibility of *droit*.”¹²² If we experience justice at all, in summary, we experience it only in the interval of indecision that separates the revision of one unjust law from its recalculation into another.

Derrida calls this experience “aporia”—the “experience of the impossible” in which “the decision between just and unjust is never insured by a rule”.¹²³ To illustrate the character of aporia and its pertinence to the experience of justice, Derrida offers two examples.¹²⁴ In the first (“the epoche of the rule”), he describes the experience of justice in terms of an obligation to make a decision that is at once “both regulated and without regulation”.¹²⁵ For a decision to be just, Derrida explains, it must walk the tightrope between conforming to law to such a degree that it becomes a programmed application of a rule, and suspending law to the point of irresponsible improvisation. The upshot of this quandary, as we have already mentioned in passing, is that no decision can ever be called just in the present.

¹²²Derrida, “Force of Law”, 15. It is worth mentioning that the infinite task described here makes sense of Derrida’s initial reservation of the possibility of a justice that “not only exceeds law, but also maintains such a strange relation to it that it may just as well command the “*droit*” that excludes it.” (4)

¹²³Derrida, “Force of Law”, 16.

¹²⁴Though Derrida actually discusses three examples of aporia (“epokhe of the rule”, “the ghost of the undecideable”, and “the urgency that obstructs the horizon of knowledge”), he admits that the first two are but slight variations of the same aporia. Thus, we will discuss the central problem of the first two examples without distinguishing their specific nuances. To examine the details, consult pages 22-29.

¹²⁵Derrida, “Force of Law”, 23.

The fact that justice is irreducibly yet to come, however, saddles us with a second pressing aporia which Derrida calls “the urgency that obstructs the horizon of knowledge”: as unrepresentable as justice may be in the present, its demands are nevertheless always urgent *right now* and may not be deferred for want of an impassible standard of judgment. On this point Derrida is adamant: the impossibility of justice is no alibi for inaction, especially because justice left to itself can “always be reappropriated by the most perverse calculation.”¹²⁶ Thus, though justice is incalculable and beyond law, it demands that we calculate first and with the greatest care that which we most closely associate with justice, *viz.*, law.

What these “experiences of the impossible” impress upon us, Derrida claims, is a sense of infinite responsibility before an infinite idea of justice:

This “idea of justice” seems to be irreducible in its affirmative character, in its demand of gift without exchange, without circulation, without recognition or gratitude, without economic circularity, without calculation and without rules, without reason and without rationality.¹²⁷

It is in the name of this incalculable justice, Derrida concludes, that deconstruction must constantly calculate, disrupt, and re-evaluate the dominant network of concepts that determines the possibilities and the limits, the inclusions and the exclusions, of present discourse.¹²⁸ More specifically, this vigilance against unjust exclusion must take shape as “a responsibility before the very concept of responsibility that regulates the justice and appropriateness of our behavior, of our theoretical, practical, and ethico-political

¹²⁶Derrida, “Force of Law”, 28.

¹²⁷Derrida, “Force of Law”, 25.

¹²⁸Derrida, “Force of Law”, 19-20.

decisions.”¹²⁹ In other words, Derrida is suggesting that one of our most pressing responsibilities is to continually re-evaluate the commonsense notions of what it means to be “responsible” that discipline our everyday decisions. Derrida’s worry here is that our common conceptions of responsibility are all too often irresponsible in that they demand far too little of us and give us a false sense of duty-discharged. Thus, at the very moment that deconstruction’s interrogation of the present boundaries of responsibility appears to be a move toward irresponsibility, it is in fact a hyperbolic raising of the stakes of responsibility that is nothing short of what Derrida calls “a mad desire” for justice.¹³⁰

D. “Absolute Responsibility” as “Non-dogmatic Faith”: *The Gift of Death*

It is precisely this concept of a responsibility that verges on madness that Derrida will associate with “the religious” in *The Gift of Death*. His task in this text is to re-inscribe within the concept of responsibility a chain of conceptual associations (secrecy, irresponsibility, irrationality, madness) that the concept’s Platonic and Christian heritages have respectively subordinated and repressed. Derrida’s primary vehicle for accomplishing this task is a reading of Kierkegaard’s interpretation in *Fear and Trembling* of the famous Biblical story of Abraham and the binding of Isaac. By juxtaposing Kierkegaard’s account of religious responsibility with Levinas’s religious ethics, Derrida hopes to convince us that Abraham’s radical responsibility before God parallels that of each person before every other.

His point of departure in *The Gift of Death* is an essay from Jan Patočka’s *Heretical Essays on the Philosophy of History* in which Patočka gives a genealogical account of

¹²⁹Derrida, “Force of Law”, 20.

¹³⁰Derrida, “Force of Law”, 25.

responsibility that locates this concept as a uniquely Christian, indeed uniquely European, invention.¹³¹ Derrida situates Patocka within a tradition that problematizes religion by “proposing a nondogmatic doublet of dogma, a philosophical and metaphysical doublet, in any case a thinking that “repeats” the possibility of religion without religion.”¹³² The upshot of this classification is that Patocka (like Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Levinas and others) thematizes religion into a logic of concepts (infinite love, responsibility, sin and salvation, repentance and sacrifice) that can be studied in abstraction from (and therefore does not necessarily require) the specific events and doctrines of the religious tradition at issue. Though Derrida is interested in exploring the logic of the “nondogmatic doublet,” he criticizes Patocka’s particular version of this logic for its complicity with the Christian insistence on synthesis, the guarantee that every sacrifice will be reborn in a higher unity. As we have seen in “Force of Law”, it is exactly this guarantee of a return on every investment that Derrida wants to disassociate from responsibility in order to imagine a responsibility that will give and give again without expectation of reward or gratitude.

In search of a “nondogmatic doublet” that comprehends a responsibility beyond the promise of synthesis, Derrida turns to Kierkegaard’s *Fear and Trembling*. He begins his analysis with this very title, a phrase that calls to mind the Apostle Paul’s charge to the disciples to work toward their salvation not in the presence but in the *absence* of their master.¹³³ This foregrounding of the theme of “absence” sets the tone for a meditation on the experience of a God who is hidden, silent, separate, and mysterious, a God whose

¹³¹See specifically in Jan Patocka, “*La civilisation technique est-elle une civilisation de declin, et pourquoi?*” in *Essais heretiques sur la philosophie de l’histoire*, trans. Erika Abrams, Lagrasse: Verdier, 1981.

¹³²Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, 49.

¹³³Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, 56.

demands are made in secret, and whose reasons, deliberations, and decisions remain undisclosed *at the moment he must be obeyed*. That God is wholly other and that his demands set the standard for an impossible responsibility is illustrated all too terribly in his unspeakable demand of Abraham, *viz.*, that Isaac, the only son, the beloved gift, be bound, murdered, and burned in a mad act of sacrifice.

Derrida explicates Abraham's responsibility before God in terms of two central concepts: the secret, and the sacrifice (or gift of death). First, Abraham's responsibility binds him to a double secret: he must proceed without knowing why God has so charged him, and he must avoid disclosing his charge to Sarah and (most of all) to Isaac. That Abraham undertakes his obligation in secret is crucial not only because the secret is too horrible to be told or believed, but because telling the secret would immediately deliver him from the singularity that binds him to God. If Abraham speaks, he renounces at once both his liberty and his responsibility in that he no longer shoulders his burden alone. In this respect, Abraham's infinite responsibility lacks what common sense would deem the authenticating characteristic of ethical responsibility, *i.e.*, the offering of a public justification for one's actions. Herein, Derrida suggests, lies the *aporia* of responsibility,

[f]or it demands on the one hand an accounting, a general answering-for-oneself with respect to the general and before the generality, hence the idea of substitution, and on the other hand, uniqueness, absolute singularity, hence nonsubstitution, nonrepetition, silence and secrecy.¹³⁴

Paradoxically, then, the ethical demand of responsibility to his family is for Abraham a *temptation to irresponsibility*, an inviting consolation that would dissolve his singularity and bring him back into the friendly company of society. To remain faithful to his responsibility before God, Abraham must renounce his filial and civic duties in favor of

¹³⁴Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, 61.

sacrificing his beloved son and thereby becoming the most hated among men, a deceiver, a murderer, an infanticide.

“It is in this sense”, Derrida maintains, “that absolute duty (towards God and in the singularity of faith) implies a sort of gift or sacrifice”, a “gift of death” that functions beyond both ethical responsibility and the universal concept of duty, “beyond duty as a form of debt”.¹³⁵ The essence of this sacrificial gift is the gratuitous, unjustifiable expenditure, the excess that neither discharges a debt nor establishes credit, but rather surrenders (against all prudence and good counsel) a priceless and unsubstitutable treasure. That the ethical must be sacrificed in order to give such a gift, however, must not degrade or diminish the importance of the ethical in any way. On the contrary, the integrity of Abraham’s gift of death lies in the fact that he is willing to sacrifice the most precious, most irreplaceable of his ethical obligations by committing an act that is by all accounts the most heinous from the standpoint of ethics. Abraham stands everything to lose and nothing to gain because no magnitude of gain could ever recuperate his loss. In the instant that he betrays his son in the name of god, Abraham must mourn for Isaac and endure the full scandal of the paradox.¹³⁶ Thus, though his gift might be pleasing to God, Abraham is no less a murderer in the eyes of men; he remains (and must remain) one who rightly inspires “stupefied horror” and who justly deserves our scorn.¹³⁷

But *is* Abraham a murderer? At the very moment that the knife is raised, doesn’t God stay Abraham’s hand and return to him his beloved son? Derrida insists that this reprieve does not necessarily absolve Abraham of his crime or draw his gift back into an economy

¹³⁵Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, 63.

¹³⁶Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, 66.

¹³⁷Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, 79.

of risk and reward. While it is possible that Abraham “played his cards well”, that he called the bluff of the Almighty, knowing all the while that he would be rewarded for his obedience, it is also possible (and Derrida seems to think it probable) that God decides to give back only after “he is assured that a gift outside of any economy, the gift of death—and of the death of that which is priceless—has been accomplished without any hope of exchange, reward, circulation, or communication”.¹³⁸ On this reading, the staying of Abraham’s hand is the prevention of a murder that is *already in progress*, and that, for this reason, has *already been committed* as far as Abraham is concerned. The instant that God stays Abraham’s hand is the very instant at which it is too late to turn back, too late to hope for reprieve, too late to disown the madness of a decision that has already been executed. In this act of madness, Derrida concludes, Abraham suffers the paradox of responsibility: he is at once the “most moral and the most immoral”, the most responsible precisely because he is absolutely irresponsible.¹³⁹

The improbability of Abraham’s dilemma is undoubtedly its most impressive feature. Yet, as we have been warned, Derrida’s intention is to make the scandal universal, to get us to believe that every single one of us offers the gift of death every single day. That Derrida understands this experience of singular responsibility as remaining within the limits of reason alone is absolutely crucial here, given that, without this caveat, it is tempting to read the “scandal” he is proposing as a move toward irrationalism (or an equally untenable fideism) that would dispense completely with the ethical demands of calculation and justification. As we insisted in reading “Force of Law”, however, the claim is not that our ontic resources for calculating and justifying laws are bankrupt, but

¹³⁸Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, 96-97.

¹³⁹Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, 72.

rather than their transcendent provenance (i.e., their necessarily futural character as effects or traces of ontological transcendence) requires us to acknowledge the limits (and thus the necessary deconstructibility) of ontic universals in the present.

With this caveat in mind, then, we may continue to follow Derrida following Kierkegaard to the thought of a “non-dogmatic faith” within the limits of reason alone. As we have seen, Kierkegaard conceptualizes the “religious” in terms of an absolute and singular responsibility before a wholly other God. In so doing, Derrida claims, he has shown (on a purely formal level) that the concepts of alterity and singularity (and the aporias that come with them) constitute the very concepts of responsibility and decision that inform our everyday dealings with others. Since this conceptual contamination makes it extremely difficult (if not impossible) to locate a determinate boundary between religious and ethical responsibility, it would seem that Kierkegaard has left the door ajar to the Levinasian possibility that “ethics is also the order of and respect for absolute singularity, and not only that of the generality or of the repetition of the same.”¹⁴⁰ Thus, the “nondogmatic doublet” (or “moral of morality”) that Derrida solicits from Kierkegaard (by way of Levinas) is that “every other is wholly other” and that, as a result, *all* responsibility has the structure of sacrifice. “As soon as I enter into a relation with the other,” says Derrida, “I know that I can respond only by sacrificing ethics, that is, by sacrificing whatever obliges me to also respond, in the same way, in the same instant, to all the others.”¹⁴¹

The “impossible” conclusion of this religious ethics is that *all* the commitments and decisions that bind one to various persons and communities—*conditionally* justifiable

¹⁴⁰Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, 84.

¹⁴¹Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, 68.

though they may be—must remain (like Abraham’s hyper-ethical sacrifice) *ultimately* unjustifiable.¹⁴² Accordingly, Derrida argues, the act of undertaking one’s daily responsibilities (notwithstanding their lack of unconditional justification) is akin, at least structurally and conceptually, to the radical act of faith undertaken by Abraham on Mt. Moriah. As Derrida has put the point more recently in “Faith and Knowledge”,

The act of faith demanded in bearing witness exceeds, through its structure, all intuition and all proof, all knowledge. [...] Even the slightest testimony concerning the most plausible, ordinary or everyday thing cannot do otherwise: it must still appeal to faith as would a miracle. [...] Implied in every ‘social bond’, however ordinary, [the experience of faith] also renders itself indispensable to Science no less than to Philosophy and Religion.¹⁴³

Given the fact that improbability, impossibility, and unjustifiability (at least in the “ultimate” sense) are the distinguishing features of Derrida’s non-dogmatic faith, it is easy enough to see how his account might appear, *prima facie*, to be of dubious importance for concrete decision-making in ethical or religious contexts. I have argued elsewhere that the merits of this account lie in its strategic utility as a hyperbolic corrective of the deliberate and systematic exclusion of religious experience (alterity, exteriority, the sacred) from continental reflection on religion leading up to Derrida (for example, in the discourses of Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, Marx, Freud, and even Heidegger).¹⁴⁴ In the context of our present discussion, however, it will suffice to observe

¹⁴²Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, 71.

¹⁴³Derrida, “Faith and Knowledge”, 63-64.

¹⁴⁴See my “Toward a “Continental” Philosophy of Religion: Derrida, Responsibility, and “Nondogmatic” Faith”, in *Rethinking Philosophy of Religion: Approaches from Continental Philosophy*, ed. Philip Goodchild, New York: Fordham University Press, 2002, 59-79, especially 73-79. The argument, in a nutshell, is that reflection on religion in the continental tradition has been conditioned by what I call “Kant’s mixed message”—the tension in his approach to religion between, on the one hand, a “faith-saving” aim (that of “defending religion and morality by demonstrating the

in conclusion that even Derrida's hyperbolic gestures toward "the experience of the impossible" (or "aporia") and "non-dogmatic faith" (or "vigilance") can be understood as remaining well within the trace of Heidegger. For though Derrida enjoins us to a "vigilance" prompted by "aporia" and Heidegger commends an "*Eigentlichkeit*" awakened by "*Angst*", both understand the transcendence problem as occasioning an experience of impasse or loss of meaning in the "present" that can provoke, in turn, an acknowledgement of the necessarily "futural" (and thus deconstructible) character of every decision rendered in the "here and now".

In following the trajectory of Derrida's engagement with transcendence from early to late, we have reached the end of the proposed itinerary for chapter four. Our progress may be summarized in terms of three essential moments. First, in an initial effort to draw

inability of speculative reason ever to disprove the articles of faith upon which they depend"); and, on the other hand, an "emancipatory" aim (that of delivering reason from the equally "injurious" flights of metaphysical fancy represented in religious "fanaticism" and "superstition"). After Kant, then, there are two acceptable attitudes that philosophers can take toward religion: they can strive to account for its significance practically or, in any case, without appeal to any genuine experience of exteriority; and they can strive to liberate existing faith narratives from any residual precritical tendencies toward fanaticism and superstition. Hegel, for instance, exhibits both attitudes in spades, distilling religion into a logic of practical concepts and reducing its history to a series of increasingly enlightened stages on reason's journey toward absolute self-awareness. Though Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud unequivocally reject Hegel's absolutist confidence in reason, their respective philological, anthropological, and psychological critiques of religion are not unlike Hegel's: each attempts to save the appearances of religion within the limits of reason alone, and liberate thinking, in so doing, from heretofore hidden obstacles.

In view of this history, then, it might seem that the emancipatory trajectory of Kant's project ultimately culminates in our liberation from the very faith-saving intuition that gave it rise. What Derrida reminds us, however, is that the idea of emancipation betrays at its limit a clandestine dependence on an idea of infinite justice, which presupposes, in turn, the possibility of a profound and dangerous faith, indeed, a faith through which an experience of exteriority can be glimpsed, if not fully undergone. The logic of reversal at work here is familiar: just when it appears that emancipation requires an abandonment of faith, we must undertake faith, more radically than ever before, in the name of emancipation.

Heidegger and Derrida together, we suggested in our introduction that, even before the *content* of Derrida's readings of Heidegger is considered, his very *approach* to reading Heidegger is already indicative of a fundamental resonance with Heidegger's orientation toward the transcendence problem. Our claim, in short, was that Derrida reads Heidegger as Heidegger reads the history of philosophy: since transcendence always already prevails *in* thinking, the matter *for* thinking is not a position to be seized upon and then affirmed or rejected, but an event as yet unfolding to be appropriated as a task. To make our suggestion more concrete, we observed this orientation at work in Derrida's defense of Heidegger against contemporary French reductions of his thinking to totalitarian antihumanism; and then we consulted several key passages from other contexts in order to show that this hermeneutic commitment to uncovering the "positive possibilities" of Heidegger's project is representative of Derrida's approach to Heidegger as a whole. The upshot, or so we argued, is that even when the blind alleys of Heidegger's path compel Derrida to blaze new trails, he undertakes these departures with the transcendent possibilities of Heidegger's thinking well in mind.

This introduction to Derrida's general orientation to Heidegger set the stage for the two central tasks of the chapter, which were to clarify, first, the "debts and departures" in terms of which Derrida characterizes his critical appropriation of Heidegger's understanding of the transcendence problem; and then to trace the trajectory, second, of Derrida's own engagement with the problem from his earliest affirmations of "infinite play" to his latest injunctions to "absolute responsibility". Our discovery in carrying out the first task was that it is precisely Derrida's debts to Heidegger's understanding of difference and deconstruction that consign him to departing from Heidegger in

deconstructing “authenticity” into “vigilance” and the “end of metaphysics” into its “closure”. As such, we maintained, these notions of “vigilance” and “closure” are not to be viewed as rejections of “authenticity” and “end”, but are better understood as “retrievals” of the unthought positive possibilities for thinking that are at once indicated and concealed in their Heideggerian formulations.

In carrying out the second task, finally, we widened the scope of our inquiry in order to observe how Derrida’s broader engagement with transcendence (disciplined by these debts and departures) plays out in the development of his project as a whole. On the outset, we found ourselves in a familiar quandary; for just as the prospect of thinking through Heidegger’s project had confronted us with the problem of how to understand several seemingly discrepant “Heideggers” as fellow travelers along a (more or less) continuous path, the prospect of following the arc of Derrida’s trajectory presented the challenge of drawing together the apparently opposed gestures of his early affirmations of “infinite play” and his later injunctions to “absolute responsibility”. What we discovered in traversing this path, in short, is that while the difference in emphasis from early to late is indeed significant, there are legible traces of the latter in the former that a sufficiently sharpened attunement to the development of the problem may reveal. So, though Derrida’s texts are (by design) perhaps less amenable than Heidegger’s to a hermeneutic “trudging-through”, our strategy of following the guiding thread of the transcendence problem toward a deeper understanding of his project as a whole nevertheless proved productive.

With these two paths through transcendence now behind us, our final task is to give a brief retrospective reprisal of our own path with an eye toward indicating the as yet uncharted possibilities on its horizon.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

OPEN QUESTIONS AT THE CLOSURE OF METAPHYSICS

The talk of the end of metaphysics should not mislead us into believing that philosophy is finished with “metaphysics”. On the contrary: In its essential impossibility metaphysics must now be played-forth into philosophy; and philosophy itself must be played over into its other beginning.

–Martin Heidegger¹

Something that I learned from the great figures in the history of philosophy is the necessity of posing transcendental questions in order not to be held within the fragility of an incompetent empiricist discourse, and thus it is in order to avoid empiricism, positivism and psychologism that it is endlessly necessary to renew transcendental questioning. But such questioning must be renewed in taking account of the possibility of...accidentality and contingency, thereby assuring that this new form of transcendental questioning only mimics the phantom of classical transcendental seriousness without renouncing that which, within this phantom, constitutes an essential heritage.

–Jacques Derrida²

I. Introduction

In prosecuting this thesis on the problem of transcendence in Heidegger and Derrida, I have attempted to remain resolutely hermeneutic in my assessments of the thinkers at issue and of the matters for thinking revealed in their work: the aim, quite simply, has been to provide attentive readings of a few carefully selected texts in hopes of indicating

¹Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, 122.

²Jacques Derrida, “Remarks on Deconstruction and Pragmatism”, trans. Simon Critchley, in *Deconstruction and Pragmatism*, ed. Chantal Mouffe, New York: Routledge, 1996, 81-82.

some positive possibilities for their future interpretation. In keeping with the spirit of the thesis, then, my concluding assessment of its “results” will be modest. I will reprise the project in a short retrospective summary of the argument as a whole, and then offer brief concluding remarks as to its efficacy in regard to the guiding aims established on the outset.

II. Looking Back: A Retrospective Reprisal

The purpose of chapter one was to motivate our study in the context of broader continental debates over the continuing significance of the transcendence problem for the question of how to do philosophy at the “end” of metaphysics. Our primary concern here was to make a plausible case for two modest claims: first, that the character of the problem and the question of its standing within the tradition remain in dispute; and second, that further investigation of the problem would contribute to a richer understanding of continental philosophy’s historical and contemporary possibilities.

In prosecuting our case for the first claim, we looked at three highly-visible secondary narratives on the import of this problem for the continental tradition, *viz.*, those of Richard Rorty and Charles Taylor, John D. Caputo, and Rodolphe Gasché. Since our motivation for engaging these accounts was not to adjudicate among them, but merely to show up the contentious standing of the problem, we needn’t revisit them here except to recall the upshot: though each narrative differed substantially in its assessment of the problem’s character and continuing relevance, all three testified to the pervasive importance of Heidegger and Derrida for current debates over transcendence, as well as to a productive tension between their respective interpretations of it.

Having made our case for the unresolved status of the problem, then, we turned to vindicating the second claim that the problem merits ongoing investigation. Such a claim might seem dubious, we suggested, to philosophers persuaded by objections (such as Rorty's "smug shrug" or Foucault's "silent laugh") which take the transcendence problem to be an irreducible feature of an outmoded philosophical framework that we'd do much better simply to jettison than to attempt resuscitating. Our reply was that these sorts of well-poisoning "external" objections needn't dissuade those of us still interested in the project from attempting the important task of clarifying the issues "internal" to the problem (and to its interpretation within the tradition). And even if the likes of Rorty and Foucault were right, we went on to argue, (appealing, let us recall, to Agamben's taxonomy of the tradition as divided along the transcendence/immanence fault line) there is a good case for thinking that there are indeed "external" merits to such an investigation from the vantage point of its potential utility for contextualizing and adjudicating the various thought experiments that make up the broader project of thinking at the "end" of metaphysics.

It seemed, thus, that a dissertation on the problem of transcendence in Heidegger and Derrida would be potentially valuable on at least two fronts: first, as an exploration and clarification of the issues internal to an important continental legacy (transcendence) as it is manifest in the work of two pervasively influential twentieth-century thinkers; and second, as groundwork for further discussion about how to mediate and/or adjudicate the legacies of transcendence and immanence on the question "Whither philosophy?". In this particular dissertation, we emphasized in conclusion, our aim would be restricted to attempting a few modest strides in the direction of the first possibility.

With the motivational context of our study in focus, and with our modest aim within this context delimited, we turned in chapters two, three, and four to the heart of the project: that of exploring and clarifying the import of the transcendence problem in the work of Heidegger and Derrida. At the most basic level, the guiding suggestion of our interpretations of both thinkers was that an investigation of their engagements with the problem of transcendence *in particular* would provide an instructive framework for understanding the broader aims of their approaches to philosophy *in general*. Our hypothesis, in short, was that tracing the movement of this problem through their respective projects would aid us in showing up an underlying continuity in each—a continuity in view of which their seemingly discrepant shifts in emphasis from early to late could be understood as moments of an ongoing hermeneutic task.

In chapters two and three, we attended to clarifying this continuity in Heidegger. Our approach was somewhat unorthodox: in “following the movement” of the transcendence problem through Heidegger’s *Denkweg*, our aim was to bracket the traditional philosophical demand to construct and defend a “position” in order to explore the question of what the persistence of this problem in various (and apparently conflicting) formulations throughout his *corpus* could teach us about the project as a whole. In attempting this approach, we adopted a parallel strategy to that we suggested Heidegger himself employs in tracing the movement of transcendence through Dasein’s understanding-of-being: we assumed in our readers a general familiarity with Heidegger’s *magnum opus* (“making-present”), worked backward to show up the motivations of this project in earlier texts (“having-been”), leapt forward to its “unthought” positive possibilities as they came to light in later texts (“toward-which”),

and finally “retrieved” *Being and Time* in view of these past and (especially) future trajectories (“moment of vision”).

In chapter two, we carried out this first “backward-looking” task in view of three early texts: the conclusion to the Scotus dissertation of 1915, the “Worldview” lectures of 1919, and the “Ontology” lectures of 1923. Heidegger’s chief concern in the first of these is to show that the problem of transcendence must be taken over from the epistemological and theological contexts in which it is traditionally conceived, and reappropriated in terms of situated, pre-theoretical human existence (“living mind”). In the 1919 “Worldview” lectures, then, we saw this insight into the importance of “living mind” distilled into a phenomenology of the “lived experience” of the “personal, historical I” through which the givens of said experience are traced back to their basis in the “hermeneutical intuition” of an “envirning world”. And in the “Ontology” lectures of 1923, finally, this pre-theoretical correlation of the “personal, historical I” and her “envirning world” was refined into its “fundamental ontological” expression as an account of Dasein’s “being-in-the-world”. By 1923, thus, the key methodological insights and the terminological apparatus that would make Heidegger famous in 1927 were already up and running, at least in their nascent form; the inkling of an investigation into the “transcendence” of “living mind” had crystallized into the project of fundamental ontology: an investigation of the “being-in-the-world” of “Dasein” through a “hermeneutics” of the “existentials” exhibited in its “facticity”.

The upshot of chapter two, then, was that Heidegger’s proposed reorientation of the aims and results of philosophy requires, first and foremost, a reappropriation of the transcendence problem; and that, in its turn, this reappropriation of transcendence

demands, first and foremost, an account of the pre-theoretical basis of so-called “subjective” experience (“intentional consciousness”, the “theoretical attitude”, etc.). In each of above three texts, this pre-theoretical basis is articulated in terms of the necessarily *situated* character of human existence; what “living mind”, the “personal, historical I” and “Dasein” all have in common is that they always already have a world. Because they carry their prior situations along with them, they experience the “present” precisely as “having-been”.

But if this hermeneutic breakthrough to the “envirning world” in Heidegger’s early project is indispensable to the development of his thinking as a whole, this breakthrough turned out, on our reading, to be less than half the story; the character of the “world as such” and its problematic relation to the “nothing”, after all, remained yet to be uncovered. As we argued, however, this insight is difficult to see in *Being and Time* itself, given that the retrieval of the facticity account in division two (for reasons that are now much clearer) is decidedly less explicit than it could have been about the fact that a progressive elaboration of transcendence is what is at stake. To make this insight clear was the aim of chapter three, where we undertook the second “forward-looking” task of leaping over *Being and Time* to the explicit appropriations of the transcendence problem within it that are carried out in the texts of 1928: *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, and “On the Essence of Ground”. Our two-fold purpose in so doing was to cultivate a heightened attunement in advance to the indications of this “progressive elaboration of transcendence” that would show themselves in our subsequent “retrieval” of *Being and Time*, as well as to clarify the preparatory status of fundamental ontology and to indicate the direction of its overturning. The goal, in short, was to clear the path for a reading of

Being and Time in which the progression from the *Daseinanalysis* (division one) through its reappropriation as primordial temporality (division two) is understood not as an attempt to articulate a closed system of Dasein's "being-there", but rather as the requisite preparation for the task that would come to dominate Heidegger's thinking after the "turn", viz., that of crossing over from thinking the "being-there" of Dasein as the "ground of all grounding" to thinking being itself in "the abyss of ground".

Our path through the texts of 1928 was by far the steepest leg of the journey. But the rewards of this path were indeed proportional to its difficulty. It was on this stretch of our travels, after all, that we witnessed what were perhaps the four most important events of the entire endeavor (though the finer points of these events simply defy a summary treatment, we can characterize their general import as follows). First, we encountered the interpretation of transcendent being-in-the-world as primordial freedom (which asserted the hermeneutic priority of Dasein's projection of "the possible as such" (for-the-sake-of) over its absorption in the environing world, and led us, eventually, to the problem of the "nothing"). Second, we undertook the appropriation of freedom (and the "nothing") in terms of the "*nihil originarium*" of ecstatic temporality (which further illuminated the three-fold unity of ontological transcendence and established the order of priority among its elements: "toward-which", "having-been", "making-present"). Third, we encountered the further appropriation of freedom as the "essence of ground" (which laid out, first, the corresponding three forms of Dasein's ontico-ontological "grounding" of truth ("establishing", "taking-up-a-basis", and "grounding something"), prompted, second, our insight into the inverse relation between phenomenological and hermeneutic priority, and ultimately showed up, finally, the ambiguity of Dasein's transcendence as simultaneously

“the grounding of all ground” and the “abyss of ground”). Fourth and perhaps most importantly, we witnessed the destruction of ontological transcendence in the 1929 footnotes to “On the Essence of Ground” (which associated the irruption of the onto-ontological difference in transcendence with a metaphysical “doubling of unconcealment” (*Enthülltheit* and *Offenbarkeit*: the being of beings), availing us in the process of a front row seat for the “turning” of the fabled “turn” in the inception of a new vocabulary of “beyng” (the concealment of “beyngs” as a whole).

After briefly projecting this fledgling indication of the “turning” into its fruition in the writings of the thirties and beyond, we returned to *Being and Time*—armed with these new insights—for the purpose of making explicit within it both the “progressive elaboration of transcendence” at stake in the transition between the two divisions, as well as the formal indications of the “turn” from fundamental ontology yet to come. The result, or so we argued, was a “retrieval” of *Being and Time* in view of its past and future possibilities that strongly confirmed our hypothesis regarding the catalytic role of the transcendence problem in the development of Heidegger’s *Denkweg*, and its importance for the prospect of understanding his thinking as a whole.

With the significance of the transcendence problem for Heidegger’s project clearly in focus, we turned in chapter four to the task of assessing Derrida’s contribution to the development of the problem. For readers relieved at the prospect of finally bidding good riddance to Heidegger, however, this transition was perhaps an unhappy one. What we encountered straight away, on the contrary, was an explicit acknowledgement on Derrida’s part of the pervasive influence of Heidegger’s thinking over his own efforts to think transcendence as the “strange nondifference” that forever upends our attempts to

grasp it. Even so, it became crystal clear almost as quickly that Derrida's very debts to Heidegger are simultaneously the seeds of certain significant departures that have had far-reaching implications for the appropriation of the transcendence problem in contemporary continental philosophy.

Given that the specifics of our engagement with Derrida are likely still vivid from our concluding synopsis of the endeavor just a short while back, we can limit our reprisal here to a bare-bones recap of the chapter's three sections. To set the stage for understanding Derrida's project as emerging out of broadly Heideggerian concerns, we began by marking an essential similarity between Derrida's approach to reading Heidegger and Heidegger's orientation to the transcendence problem. Our suggestion, once again, was that Derrida reads Heidegger as Heidegger reads the history of philosophy: insofar as transcendence always already prevails *in* thinking, the matter *for* thinking is not a position to be seized upon and then embraced or cast aside, but an event of appropriation that must be taken up as a task, and taken up, moreover, with an eye toward uncovering the unthought positive possibilities of the matter in question.

With Derrida's general orientation to Heidegger in view, we turned to the two central tasks of the chapter, which were, respectively, to clarify the "debts and departures" in terms of which Derrida situates his project in relation to Heidegger's; and then to trace the trajectory of Derrida's broader engagement with the problem from his early emphasis on "infinite play" to his later emphasis on "absolute responsibility". In accomplishing the first task, we argued that the debts of "difference" and "deconstruction" give rise to the departures from "authenticity" to "vigilance", and from "the end of metaphysics" to its "closure"—departures that, we suggested, are therefore not to be viewed as *rejections* of

“authenticity” and “end”, but rather as *retrievals* of the unthought positive possibilities at once indicated and concealed by their Heideggerian formulations. In attending to the second task, then, we argued that legible traces of the later concern over “absolute responsibility” in the earlier texts on “infinite play” suggest an underlying continuity (at least, that is, to an interpretation that is sufficiently attuned to the development of the problem). For Derrida, as for Heidegger, we concluded, the strategy of following the movement of the transcendence problem proved a fruitful one for understanding the trajectory of the project as a whole.

Where, then, have we arrived upon our investigation’s end, and where, more importantly, would it seem that that our path is leading?

II. Looking Forward: Open Questions, Positive Possibilities

Given that one of the principle concerns of this thesis was to call the very intelligibility of “present” philosophical “results” into question, it would be bad faith indeed to change voices just in time to laud those of our study. This dissertation was through and through a hermeneutic project, after all, and it is tempting, on that basis, simply to say that the value of the study was in the *doing*—that the *readings* of the texts we have offered (and the positive possibilities for future interpretation that they have indicated along the way) are the primary yield. Before we can take leave of the project and let the readings speak for themselves, however, a few concluding remarks are in order as to the ways in which our study has served to clarify the issues internal to the transcendence problem as taken up by Heidegger and Derrida. In closing, then, I will comment briefly on three such ways that pertain, respectively, to the questions of how

our investigation contributes to a richer understanding of (1) contemporary continental philosophy as a whole (and, more specifically, three of its guiding themes); (2) the relationship between Heidegger and Derrida in particular; and lastly, (3) the character of philosophical inquiry at the “end” or “closure” of so-called “Western metaphysics”. In keeping with the hermeneutic tenor of the thesis, finally, I will aim in discussing these “results” to weigh their value in terms of their fecundity as indications of important work that remains left to be done.

My first suggestion is that our interpretation of the three-fold “event-character” of ontological transcendence (and the order of hermeneutic priority among its three essential elements: “toward-which”, “having-been”, “making-present”) provides an instructive framework within which to understand the relationships among three dominant themes in contemporary continental philosophy, *viz.* the suspicion of “Western metaphysics” (or “the metaphysics of presence”), the emphasis on the pivotal importance of the history of philosophy, and the affirmation of the necessity (for seeing the way forward) of “dismantling” or “deconstructing” or “transgressing” this received history. The suggestion, in a nutshell, is that these three gestures (which correspond roughly to the moments of “making-present”, “having-been”, and “toward-which” respectively) can be thought together as comprising a hermeneutic strategy that is generally representative of the approach to philosophy taken by many of the most important contemporary continental thinkers.

The way in which this approach is implemented, furthermore, typically mirrors the progression we have noted in Heidegger and Derrida from an implicit recognition of the phenomenological priority of “making-present” to an explicit assertion of the

hermeneutic priority of the “toward-which”—those future possibilities that, though perhaps indicated in the “having-been”, remain as yet concealed within it. More concretely, this approach tends to begin with a complaint against the “present” terms of discussion surrounding a particular philosophical problem, *viz.*, that this discussion takes itself to be transparent on its own terms, when in fact its intelligibility betrays an unacknowledged dependence upon the contingent, historical development that motivated the problem in the first place. The second step, then, is to go back into this development in order to reveal its contingency (“having-been”), a task that simultaneously facilitates the third step of showing that the acknowledgment of this contingency is the basis upon which a novel “saving of the appearances” at stake in the problem may be articulated, this time in an idiom that is appropriate to the current historical situation (“toward-which”). The important thing to see here is that this continental resistance to the “present” (in view of the “past” and in the name of the “future”) is motivated not by a concern to reject the importance of the “present”, but rather by a concern to liberate us—precisely *in the present*—from a static understanding of the “present” which fails to acknowledge that the “present” *just is* the dynamic possibility of existing from out of an indeterminate “future” toward the realization (and transformation) of possibilities handed down from the “past”.

To be sure, we have already encountered numerous concrete examples of this approach to thinking in following the paths of Heidegger and Derrida, and I do not intend to recount them here. What is important to see in the present context, I want to suggest (and here I will simply drop the gauntlet and reserve the duel for another day), is that the general features of the “transcendence-motivated” understanding of philosophical inquiry that we have sketched here would seem, at least initially, to provide an equally apt

description of what is at stake in the work of many continental thinkers who situate themselves (or whom others have situated) along what we have called—following Agamben and Bataille—the “immanence” trajectory in continental philosophy. In the case of Nietzsche’s “revaluation of all values”, for instance, isn’t it precisely a destruction of the “present” by way of the “past” in the name of the “future” that Nietzsche has in mind? How could such a task unfold, if not through the event we have come to understand as “ontological transcendence”? Furthermore, how are we to interpret Foucault’s appropriation of the relation between the “historical *a priori*” and the possibility of “transgression” without recourse to the movement of transcendence? Can we read passages such as the following without acknowledging an appeal to this movement?

“To contest [transgress] is to proceed until one reaches the empty core where being achieves its limit and where the limit defines being. There, at the transgressed limit, the ‘yes’ of contestation reverberates, leaving without echo the hee-haw of Nietzsche’s braying ass.”³

Similarly, is it possible to understand Foucault’s engagement with Kant (in “What is Enlightenment”) without seeing therein something like what Heidegger would have called a “retrieval” of the transcendent positive possibilities of Kant’s project? Do we not hear clear echoes of transcendence (and of the responsibility with which it saddles finite human existence) when Foucault says:

Thinking back on Kant’s text, I wonder whether we may not envisage modernity rather as an attitude than a period of history. And by “attitude,” I mean a mode of relating to contemporary reality; a voluntary choice made by certain people; in the

³Michel Foucault, “A Preface to Transgression”, as cited in Gary Gutting, “Introduction: Michel Foucault, A User’s Manual”, in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, ed. Gutting, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, 22.

end, a way of thinking and feeling; a way, too, of acting and behaving that at one and the same time marks a relation of belonging and presents itself as a task.⁴

In this tentative voice, we might pose the same question to Deleuze's general project in *Difference and Repetition*, and, moreover, to his appropriation of Spinoza's understanding of "immanence".⁵ In the absence of a much deeper textual engagement with these thinkers, of course, we are entitled to assume very little. But at the very least, we have turned the shovel in some fertile ground for future digging, which is all we set out to accomplish here in any case.

In summary, the first suggestion is that our investigation provides an instructive, albeit provisional, framework for understanding the essential connections among continental philosophy's guiding emphases on the critique of metaphysics, the importance of the history of philosophy, and the necessity of "deconstructing" or "transgressing" the received tradition. In the picture we have painted, the aim of dismantling the tradition is not to negate the importance of what resides there, but rather to show up the positive future possibilities for thinking concealed therein. How, then, can this general picture of the tradition help us to sum up the "results" of our investigation for understanding what is at stake between Heidegger and Derrida, and for discerning the character of philosophical inquiry at the "end" or "closure" of metaphysics?

In respect to the former question, my suggestion is that our investigation has positioned us to understand Derrida not so much as the "radical" *critic* of Heidegger that

⁴Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment", trans. Catherine Porter, in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow, New York: Pantheon, 1984, 39.

⁵Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994; and Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, trans. Martin Joughin, New York: Zone Books, 1990.

we encountered in the accounts offered by Rorty, Caputo, and Gasche in chapter one, but rather as a particularly well-attuned *reader* of Heidegger—one who persistently subordinates the importance of taking a “position” on Heidegger to (what he takes to be) the more important task of showing up the positive possibilities for thinking that Heidegger’s factual circumstances prevented him from bringing to fruition. What is “radical” about Derrida’s reading of Heidegger, in my view, is not his departures from Heidegger as they might be weighed “in and of themselves”, but rather *the way in which Derrida commits himself to departing from Heidegger* precisely in the interest of doing justice to what remains vital about and viable within Heidegger’s project. Among the most important of the possibilities that Derrida uncovers here, I want to suggest, is what we might call (perhaps surprisingly) the “emancipatory” trajectory in Heidegger’s thought—the possibility that the emphasis on freedom that runs throughout fundamental ontology and beyond can be “retrieved” as a “thinking of affirmation” of the sort that comes to fruition in Derrida’s understanding of deconstruction as “justice” or as “non-dogmatic faith”. As we saw in reading “The Force of Law” and *The Gift of Death*, moreover, Derrida clearly suggests that the task for thinking given to us in contemporary emancipatory discourses is not exhausted in the administration of our ontic possibilities for liberation, but requires that we persistently return to the question of how the ontological possibility for grounding these ontic possibilities is first opened for us. In relentlessly returning to the question of the “wherefrom” of ontological transcendence, thus, Derrida keeps the possibilities of Heidegger’s thinking alive even in eclipsing Heidegger’s own attempts to understand the character of finite freedom.

In respect to the question of how this thesis illuminates the character of philosophical inquiry at the “end” or “closure” of metaphysics, finally, my suggestion is that the entire enterprise has been a humble attempt, taken from the pages of Heidegger and Derrida, to approach philosophical inquiry *in just this fashion* by putting aside the demand for philosophical “results” in the “present” in favor of providing engaged readings of the “past” with an eye toward uncovering its “future” possibilities.

No doubt there is much, much more we could say. But this fact perhaps serves to reinforce our case. My hope is that, at the very least, this investigation of the problem of transcendence in Heidegger and Derrida has served to deepen our understanding of why the task of thinking has always already and only just begun.

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