Heidegger at 100, in America

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The year 1989 marked the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Martin Heidegger. What has happened to his thought in America? This essay offers a perspective on what I take to be the main trends and some representative works in Heidegger studies on the American side of the Atlantic (with perforce some simplifications both within and among the trends I mention).

Heidegger does keep attracting more attention, at least as measured by the number of articles or books prominently mentioning him. A computer search of the Philosopher's Index found 1,924 mentions of Heidegger in either the title or the abstract of items indexed since the 1940 starting date of the index. Mentions of Heidegger have increased in each five-year period since World War II, and out of all the indexed items mentioning Heidegger, 27% (527 items) have been published in the last five years.®FN1. The Philosopher's Index does not cover all the relevant periodicals, but its figures are revealing nonetheless. Heidegger's 1,924 mentions (in titles, abstracts, or descriptors) divide as follows: 1940-4, 8; 1945-9, 2; 1950-4, 13; 1955-9, 36; 1960-4, 55; 1965-9, 139; 1970-4, 342; 1975-9, 366 (Heidegger died in 1976); 1980-4, 435; 1985-9, 527. For comparison, in the entire period after 1940 Hegel receives 2,968 mentions, Husserl 1,434, Habermas 413, Derrida 284, Deleuze 28, Bataille 15, and Blanchot 10. In the last five years, Heidegger is coupled with the German names on this list 89 times, and 53 times with the French names or with the word "deconstruction" (which is mentioned 361 times overall). The MLA Bibliography lists Heidegger in 195 items during the past five years, 36% of all his references. In both the Social Scisearch data base and the Religion Index data base, 25% of the references to Heidegger occur in the past five years.¯

To commemorate the centennial, a number of major conferences were held. At Loyola University in Chicago, speakers from many nations concentrated on Heidegger's central ideas, often using contemporary French thought to help explicate Heidegger. At Berkeley, a conference discussed "applying" Heidegger. Psychologists and social workers were among the intended audience, as well as analytic philosophers. At Yale Heidegger's politics and his Nazi connections were the focus. At Memphis State University, many ways of interpreting Heidegger were present, and conversation between them was at times difficult. All claim to be appropriating Heidegger's unique contribution. But there are disagreements as to what that contribution might be.

The diverse conferences are emblematic of the divided state of Heidegger studies today. Heidegger has become common intellectual property. Thinkers approach him with different agendas; they find his thought useful for purposes he might not have approved of, and they do not necessarily accept his overall program.

Is there anything surprising in this? We do not expect that all who study Spinoza or Plato will meet together or share a common point of view. But more unity may prevail when a thinker establishes (or is used to establish) an oppositional stance. Despite differences of opinion about how their texts are to be read, the texts of Aquinas or Kierkegaard unify groups that stand

somewhat apart from the mainstream. For a time, Heidegger functioned this way. But his texts no longer sustain a unified agenda opposed to the dominant trends of American philosophy. Most of the ways Heidegger is now read still involve opposition, but they no longer quite agree on what is to be opposed. Nor do they agree that Heidegger's unique vocabulary must be respected at all costs.

As interpreters feel freer to relate Heidegger's thought to other philosophical problematics, there is a danger: if Heidegger's thought is truly radical, will it be weakened if it is translated into someone else's pre-established terms, or if it is located on maps it did not draw? And yet without such interpretation and location, Heideggerian thinkers can only remain isolated fundamentalists seeking converts.

As writers have come to think with Heidegger rather than convert to him, there have been new readings of Heidegger that go beyond repetition. In the end this can only be a healthy development. It is not important who wins the gold star for being the most authentic Heideggerian, but we should hope for continual confrontation with the novelty of his texts, and not quickly assimilate his questioning to some already familiar move. After all, Heidegger made claims about the end of philosophy and the thinking that came after that end. Is Heidegger now being included and domesticated by the philosophical tradition he struggled to overcome?

Over twenty-five years ago, eminent scholars and translators founded the Heidegger Circle. Some members had known Heidegger personally; most had not, but the members shared a common project of interpreting his texts and advancing his ideas. While spirited controversies were frequent, his texts remained the last court of appeal. Over time the founding members developed their own circles of graduate students, whose interpretations diverged, and as interest in Heidegger spread, new members arrived with new aims. With a larger membership the name was changed to the Heidegger Conference. Divisions appeared; there was never a revolt, but it became clear that some members had begun to use Derrida, Lvinas, and others to probe Heidegger and to question him. The missionary period of Heidegger studies was over.

Even wider conflicts of interpretation were found at the meetings of the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, which also moved from an initial concentration on textual studies to divergent interpretations and applications. In recent years, as the American Philosophical Association became more broad-minded, all versions of Heidegger have come to be found on its programs, but that does not mean that the different approaches fit easily with one another.

Heidegger's earliest impact in America was perhaps more in religious than in philosophical circles. Two theologians did the first English translation of UL¯UL¯Being and TimeNM¯NM¯. Heidegger appeared to offer theology a way of talking about fundamental human concerns that could speak to a secular world, while providing a new way of approaching originary Being. But as Heidegger's later writings appeared, such direct theological appropriation became more and more difficult. It became clear that Heidegger's "Being" did not relate easily to talk about God. Nor did Heidegger's critique of metaphysics and his cryptic "history of Being" lend themselves well to religious existentialism. Now such interpretations have faded, but in their place Heidegger's hermeneutical ideas, and his discussions of Western

metaphysics and technology, have offered some religious thinkers resources for non-metaphysical approaches to theology and the history of doctrine. Much of Heidegger's recent impact on religious studies and theology has been through his appropriation by the widely influential thought of Paul Ricoeur.®FN1. There have also been influences from Heidegger through deconstruction, as in Mark Taylor, UL¯Erring: a Postmodern A/theologyNM¯ (University of Chicago Press, 1984); and UL¯AltarityNM¯ (University of Chicago Press, 1987). Heidegger's later work has contributed towards another oppositional stance with religious antecedents. Heidegger's writings on technology and UL¯GelassenheitNM¯ are invoked in many writings critiquing the modern world on the themes of place, the environment, and technology. Cf., for instance, the writings of Christian Norberg-Schulz, and the bibliography in David Seamon, "Phenomenology and Environment-Behavior Research," in UL¯Advances in Environment, Behavior, and DesignNM¯, (New York: Plenum, 1987).¯

Outside religious circles, Heidegger was at first often classified with Sartre and Nietzsche as a philosophical existentialist. Sartre often appears now as a foil to presentations of Heidegger that emphasize how far apart the two thinkers really are. Heidegger's later writings make it difficult to pigeonhole him as an existentialist, but in many popular presentations he still appears as a nihilist who turned mystic in his later years. This picture has been untenable for a long time.®FN1. Such a simplified picture was disproved by, among others, Otto Pggeler (UL¯Der Denkweg Martin HeideggersNM¯ [Neske, 1963] and William Richardson (UL¯Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to ThoughtNM¯ [Nijhoff, 1963]).¯

Recent work on Heidegger has been enriched by the UL¯GesamtausgabeNM¯, the new edition of Heidegger's works, published by Vittorio Klostermann in Frankfurt. When complete, the series will include all Heidegger's published works, plus massive amounts of new material, mostly Heidegger's course lectures, but including at least one unpublished book manuscript, the important UL¯Beitrge zur PhilosophieNM¯ of the mid-1930's.

While the new materials are extremely valuable, the edition has not markedly improved the philological side of Heidegger studies. When Heidegger arranged for the UL¯GesamtausgabeNM¯, he insisted that it UL¯notNM¯ be a critical edition. It was to be an edition from the author's hand at the end of his life. Heidegger claimed that he wanted to stimulate thought about the topics that concerned him, rather than scholarly debate over textual minutiae. Limiting the new edition in this way can be seen as fidelity to his path of thinking, but also as an attempt to control the readings of his texts. The editors of the new edition have remained faithful to Heidegger's intent, though doubts have been raised about the competence of the editing even within these limits. In any case, the new edition is a necessary tool for further study of Heidegger, though it would be better if it were a critical edition.®FN1. The sheer amount of new material included in the new edition raises the difficult problem of how the interpreter is to balance this material with the texts Heidegger himself revised and published during his lifetime.¯

Since Heidegger proclaimed a new type of thinking, beyond philosophy, it is tempting to stay within the confines of his vocabulary in order to be sure one is not falling back into the old ways. Many who concentrate on Heidegger do not position themselves as textual scholars, but

as forwarding the question of Being by reiterating his ideas. This means staying with his basic words and assertions, since other vocabularies and problematics are taken to be contaminated by the errors and forgetfulness that Heidegger tried to overcome. The best such treatments stay close to Heidegger's text and deal with it in its own terms, trying to make more precise what Heidegger meant, though without accepting everything uncritically. In UL¯On the Truth of BeingNM¯, Joseph Kockelmans explicates and organizes topically the later Heidegger's scattered treatments. He also draws conclusions Heidegger did not explicitly draw (about religion, for example, or about politics), and he chooses among different interpretations of obscure Heideggerian themes such as the fourfold, the earth, and his major theme, the ontological difference.®FN1. Joseph Kockelmans, UL¯On the Truth of Being: Reflections on Heidegger's Later PhilosophyNM¯ (Indiana University Press, 1984).¯ Books of this type can be quite helpful, though they seldom lead to massive enlightenment.

Because the new edition includes Heidegger's earliest writings and lectures, Heidegger scholarship can now do more on the development of his thought and its relation to his early intellectual milieu. For example, Jeffrey Barash has studied the connections between Heidegger and the German debates on relativism and the coherence of history, both in the UL¯MethodenstreitNM¯ and in the rebirth of historicist reactions after World War I, thus putting Heidegger's rhetoric of "destruction" in its context. He also discusses the continuing and underestimated influence of Catholic and Protestant theological debates on Heidegger.®FN1. Jeffrey Barash, UL¯Martin Heidegger and the Problem of Historical MeaningNM¯ (Nijhoff, 1988). Barash deals briefly with the later Heidegger as well, and asks, without trying to fully answer, "Does the later Heidegger's attempt to reconcile human freedom with the movement of a history whose source is not itself human, nor derivable from a finite ontology of Dasein, not in the end identify historical meaning with an over-arching principle of historical coherence? Does this reconciliation not in some measure represent a concession to the resolution of the problem of historical meaning in traditional philosophies of history which UL¯Being and TimeNM¯ had sought to undermine?" (286).¯ Barash's treatment of Heidegger's relations with his teacher Heinrich Rickert will, I hope, encourage more studies that relate Heidegger to the neo-Kantians, who are much more important to understanding the origins of contemporary philosophy (on both sides of the Atlantic) than their current neglect would suggest.

As Heidegger's unique vocabulary is no longer taken as the only way in which he can be talked about, there have been more critical and comparative studies focussing on specific issues, or comparing Heidegger and other thinkers, without adopting Heidegger's views on those issues and thinkers. Heidegger's interpretations of historical philosophers, especially of Plato, Hegel, and Nietzsche, are unusually challenging and original; for a time it was hard to find a book on Heidegger and Hegel that did not work from within Heidegger's interpretation. Now Heidegger's interpretations are themselves critically appropriated without wholesale acceptance or rejection. This happened somewhat earlier with his interpretations of Plato, and it has begun to happen, more slowly, with his analysis of modernity in terms of subjectivity and "the essence of technology," which was for a long time taken as gospel by anyone writing about it.®FN1. For Plato, cf. John Sallis, UL¯Being and Logos: The Way of Platonic DialogueNM¯ (Duquesne University Press, 1975). For Hegel, and the nature of the modern age, cf. Michael Gillespie,

UL¯Hegel, Heidegger, and the Ground of HistoryNM¯ (University of Chicago Press, 1984); David Kolb, UL¯The Critique of Pure Modernity: Hegel, Heidegger, and AfterNM¯ (University of Chicago Press, 1986); Dennis Schmidt, UL¯The Ubiquity of the Finite: Hegel, Heidegger, and the Entitlements of PhilosophyNM¯ (MIT Press, 1988); John McCumber, UL¯Poetic Interaction: Language, Freedom, ReasonNM¯ (University of Chicago Press, 1989); Michael Zimmerman, UL¯Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity: Technology, Politics, and ArtNM¯ (Indiana University Press, 1990).¯

Given Heidegger's interpretations of other thinkers; it is not surprising that his own texts have been subject to strong readings. The most interesting developments that relate Heidegger to other problematics seem to me to fall into two groups, which I will discuss in the remainder of this essay. Both groups go beyond organizing Heidegger's ideas and repeating his vocabulary, but they do so in different ways. I will call these groups of interpreters "the new ontologists" and "the para-ontologists." The names refer to Heidegger's "fundamental ontology" announced in UL¯Being and TimeNM¯, although at least some of the new ontologists have subversive views about the enterprise of ontology, and the para-ontologists may continue the work of fundamental ontology in order to undermine it. In large measure, the first group is influenced by analytic philosophy, the second by current French thought.®FN1. The term "postmodern thought" has become popular to name a variety of movements influenced by Nietzsche, Heidegger, and recent French thought. (The word "postmodern" has a complex history, and this philosophical adaptation comes late in the game; cf. Alan Megill, "What Does the Term 'Postmodern' Mean?" UL¯Annals of ScholarshipNM¯, 6 (1989), 129-152.) Though more often used by deconstructivist thinkers than by commentators on Heidegger, the term could fairly name the para-ontologists, but the word has also been applied to the new-ontological efforts to develop a non-Cartesian view of the person. Like "anti-foundationalist," "postmodern" is now in danger of becoming a generic adjective for supposedly new thinking. The difficulty is to define what it means to be "modern" or to be a "foundationalist."¯

Most of the new ontologists tend to start from the current matrix of alternatives in analytic philosophy. In company with many current philosophers of mind, these writers are dissatisfied with the standard ways of discussing just what mind or language "are," so they look to Heidegger's fundamental ontology for new interpretations of the mode of being of consciousness or intentionality.

This year at the University of California at Santa Cruz a NEH Summer Institute studied the similarities between the ideas of Heidegger and of Donald Davidson. The idea is not so strange as it may appear. In his early years Heidegger attacked the reigning philosophies of his day: neo-Kantianism and positivism, as well as the Cartesian assumptions of Husserl's phenomenology. He proposed new ways to think about human beings without Kantian or Cartesian dichotomies. In recent years analytic philosophers looking for allies in their own battles against Cartesian and logical positivist assumptions about mind and meaning have made common cause with Americans interested in Heidegger and seeking bridges to psychology and ethics.®FN1. For example, cf. John Haugeland, "Heidegger on Being a Person" (UL¯NousNM¯, 16 [1982], 16-26); Robert Brandom, "Heidegger's Categories in UL¯Being and TimeNM¯" (UL¯The MonistNM¯, 55 [1983], 387-409); Frederick Olafson, UL¯Heidegger and

the Philosophy of MindNM⁻ (Yale University Press, 1987); Mark Okrent, UL⁻Heidegger's PragmatismNM⁻ (Cornell University Press, 1988); Hubert Dreyfus, UL⁻Being-in-the-world: a Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division OneNM⁻ (MIT Press, 1990). While these writers share the general orientation I describe, they differ strongly on many important issues. There are other writers on Heidegger who are well-informed about analytic philosophy, but without the emphasis on fundamental ontology found in the above group; cf., for instance, Charles Guignon, UL⁻Heidegger and the Problem of KnowledgeNM⁻ (Hackett, 1983), or the appropriation of Heidegger by Richard Rorty.⁻

The new ontologist's project can be seen, for example, in works by Frederick Olafson and Mark Okrent. In their attempt to reconceptualize mind and intentionality, Olafson and Okrent both make use of Heidegger's distinction between UL⁻ZuhandenheitNM⁻ and UL⁻VorhandenheitNM⁻, and of Heidegger's discussions of understanding and the "as"-structure of propositions. These can be correlated with themes in analytic philosophy. But the writers are not just mapping Heidegger onto accepted terms and doctrines. It is true that the new ontologists are quite willing to tell Heidegger what he ought to have said on issues current in analytic debates.®FN1. Cf., for example, Olafson, chapter 10, or Okrent, pages 276ff.⁻ But overall they are using Heidegger to develop new ideas that critique received alternatives in the philosophy of mind and language.

In UL⁻Heidegger and the Philosophy of MindNM⁻, Olafson argues that if one grants Heidegger the priority of understanding (UL⁻VerstehenNM⁻ in Heidegger's special sense) over assertion and explicit behavior, one finds that the way language exists in the world "is not compatible with all ontologies" (124). It leads us to deny any identity theory of the mind-body relation, but also to deny any theory that gives subjectivity a transcendental role. Understanding is a social, pre-logical openness (whose nature Olafson leaves somewhat mysterious) in which entities come to be taken UL⁻asNM⁻ being of this or that type. In critiquing Heidegger, Olafson worries about issues concerning the degree of activity and dependence or independence in the relation of Being and Dasein. He faults Heidegger for not resolving issues relating to the social character of openness, and suggests ways of overcoming the difficulties he finds to be caused by the singularity of Being and the plurality of Dasein.

In his book, UL⁻Heidegger's PragmatismNM⁻, Okrent too insists on the priority of understanding over assertion, but he gives a more elaborate interpretation of the conditions of understanding in terms of practical activity. Okrent examines the conditions Heidegger puts on the activity of assertion, and concludes that Heidegger is committed to a general verifi~cationism with surprising Husserlian antecedents. "Understanding" can be attributed to a being if and only if it can be seen as working for goals. In the first half of his book Okrent develops out of Heidegger's text a detailed argument for these and other conclusions about what makes possible our ascriptions of intentional activity.

Having discovered in UL⁻Being and TimeNM⁻ elements for a new ontology of intentionality, both Okrent and Olafson go on to consider the later Heidegger's complaints that his own earlier thought was too metaphysical and subjectivistic. Did Heidegger renounce the project they are trying to develop? Olafson, distinguishing what Heidegger attacks from what he earlier said (and from what he earlier attacked), sees Heidegger's "turn" as a reversal of emphasis

in the relation of Being and Dasein, but still within the overall project of working out the mode of being appropriate to conscious persons.

Okrent, however, sees the later Heidegger as reassessing the possibility of ontology. In his view, Heidegger realizes that the conditions for the possibility of language and intentionality do not (as in the abortive project of UL-Being and TimeNM-) provide a foundation for the particular ontologies of the special sciences. Okrent's Heidegger is thoroughly pragmatic about the status of any particular ontological scheme. Though he recognizes (as "the truth of being") some necessary conditions for any ontology, these conditions do not follow Kant's "highest principle" that the conditions of the possibility of experience are also the conditions of possibility for the objects of experience. Having a vocabulary at all is subject to certain conditions, but our choices of vocabulary are to be defended purely on their success in fulfilling our purposes. Among other things this means (and Heidegger should have concluded) that there can be no privileged ontological description of the essence of human reality. The conditions of the possibility of having any ontology do involve the activity of Dasein described as a purposive agent, but those very conditions also imply that other ontological descriptions of Dasein cannot be ruled out.®FN1. The similarities to some of Richard Rorty's ideas should be clear; Okrent brings out their common ancestry in Quine and Davidson in a long footnote on pages 293-4. This is one of the issues on which the new ontologists divide. Some use Heidegger to defend the special status of intentional language and to deny that natural science descriptions can get at the uniqueness of human reality. Others, like Okrent, see no problem in allowing human reality to be described both as an intentional system and a causally determined system.-

The new ontologists are not particularly sympathetic to Heidegger's later terminology, and tend to use the early Heidegger as a key to the later. The para-ontologists, on the other hand, find significant advances in the later Heidegger.

In UL-Identity and DifferenceNM- Heidegger declared that "the matter of thinking is difference as difference" (47). In his later works, Heidegger pondered the dominance of the "metaphysics" of unity and presence (with its forgetfulness of the ontological difference between Being and beings), and the growth of subjectivity and the will to power. It was the thinker's task to meditate on that primary differing that is the condition of the possibility of all presence and meaning, and to deconstruct metaphysical versions of this condition, without reducing it to some new unity. In our iron age the philosopher was to examine the texts of past thinkers and poets, showing how they were dominated by unity and presence, but also how they always revealed hints of that event of difference that made presence possible. In so doing the thinker could retrieve unthought possibilities which, if they could not bring us into a new age, could at least free us from defining ourselves and our possibilities totally in the terms given us by the technological society of efficiency and consumption. Heidegger felt that the poets dwelt with these themes better than the philosophers.

It is this side of Heidegger, the emphasis on difference, poetizing, and the history of Being, which has been taken up so strongly in recent French thought, and which has rebounded upon many studies of Heidegger. Rather than Quine, Ryle, indexicals, and supervenience, we hear about Deleuze, Derrida, dispersions, and traces.

The incestuous union of Heidegger's own ideas with French thought inspired by Heidegger has given birth to the studies I have called para-ontology. Deconstructive themes descended from Heidegger's union with Bataille, Deleuze, Althusser, and others, are used to find new dimensions in Heidegger's texts, and sometimes to criticize Heidegger as he criticized Nietzsche, for remaining within the metaphysics of presence.®FN1. Cf., for example, the interpretative essays David Krell appended to the four volumes of his translations of Heidegger's Nietzsche lectures (Harper and Row), and Krell's UL¯Intimations of Mortality: Time, Truth, and Finitude in Heidegger's Thinking of BeingNM¯ (Penn State Press, 1986), and UL¯Postponements: Woman, Sensuality, and Death in NietzscheNM¯ (Indiana University Press, 1986), and UL¯Of Memory, Reminiscence, and Writing: On the VergeNM¯ (Indiana University Press, 1990), especially chapter 6. Also, cf. Robert Bernasconi, UL¯The Question of Language in Heidegger's History of BeingNM¯ (Humanities Press, 1985); John Caputo, UL¯Radical HermeneuticsNM¯, (Indiana University Press, 1987); John Sallis, UL¯Delimitations: Phenomenology and the End of Meta~physicsNM¯ (Indiana University Press, 1986), and UL¯Spacings of Reason and ImaginationNM¯ (University of Chicago Press, 1987); Charles Scott, UL¯The Language of DifferenceNM¯ (Humanities Press, 1987). Although not all centered on Heidegger, these books show the blending of Heideggerian thought with French ideas turned back to illuminate Heidegger's texts.¯

In David Krell's essays collected as UL¯Intimations of MortalityNM¯ Heidegger's texts are reaffirmed as more radical than they appear. Krell tries to show that even Heidegger's early attempts to construct a fundamental ontology were subverting themselves by the categories they introduced; the "turn" in Heidegger's later thinking is already happening from the beginning. The impossibility of completing the turn to Being afflicts even the discussions of temporality in UL¯Being and TimeNM¯.

Though the new ontologists and the para-ontologists share many common affirmations, and attack common enemies, they remain apart on central issues. The theme of temporality is a good example. Where Okrent interprets temporalization in UL¯Being and TimeNM¯ as the necessary temporal unity of practical actions organized towards goals, Krell argues that Heidegger's early attempt to find a unified origin for the three temporal ecstasies fails in a way that foreshadows (and darkens) the later discussions. Krell also contends that the early themes of death and authenticity (themes mostly ignored by the new ontologists) reappear in the later work, while the late themes of difference disrupt the early texts. He also emphasizes the importance of the images of withdrawal and concealment, which in the new-ontologists are translated into discussions of the plurality of possible social forms of life. The new ontologists concentrate on the notion of being as presence, while the para-ontologists insist on the primacy of clearing over presence. And it is in the 'poetic' texts of the late Heidegger, which the new ontologists tend to dismiss as personal foibles or as arguments in fancy dress, that Krell and others find the least anthropocentric ideas, and a way of thought which steps beyond the argumentative discourse of standard philosophic debate.

The central divide between the two groups of interpreters concerns the nature of the conditions that make possible language and meaning, and the kind of discourse that might reveal those conditions.

The new ontologists' anti-Cartesian Heidegger may not seem radical enough. Is this pragmatist the thinker who said that he was approaching "not a traditional problem, already posed, but what has always remained unasked throughout the history of thinking"?®FN1. UL¯IdentityNM¯ UL¯andNM¯ UL¯DifferenceNM¯ (Harper and Row, 1969), 116 (German) / 50 (English).¯ Is there a level of commitment to unity and presence that is not questioned by the new ontological discussion of holism, functionalism, and social practice? In what dimension are we to seek the conditions of the possibility of meaning and presence?

Further, what kind of language can we use to discuss that which opens the space for statements and arguments? The para-ontologists demand (and sometimes practice) an extreme stylistic play that is to show limits and conditions that cannot be stated, while the new ontologists write in an argumentative style offering theses and arguments that can be evaluated by standard methods. To decide what style is appropriate is to decide how far the language of debate, argument, and counter-thesis is inherently "metaphysical." What kind of demands is Heidegger trying to make on the language of thought? The issue is complicated, because by and large analytic philosophy takes seriously only those challenges to its map of options which are argued for using methods recognized on that map. One has to work from the accepted state of the question. Whereas in European-influenced philosophy many of the disputes are about who has the right to define the state of the question, and stay on that level.

My own view is that there "are" in some sense deeper and prior conditions of meaning and presence that cannot be captured by argumentative theses, or by discussions of forms of life and pragmatic meaning-relations. But, on the other hand, it is a real question how such conditions are re-connected to the everyday issues of life in an aspiring democratic and scientific age.

What would be the projection of the para-ontological discussions of difference onto current debates in the analytic philosophy of mind, language, and society? Would it perhaps be more or less what the new ontologists are talking about? Or would there be some new alternative to be debated (and this without reifying difference into an originary principle)? Or are the philosophical debates to be somehow avoided, or ended? This seems the conclusion one would expect, but what could it mean in practice?

Are we then to give up the way of talking about knowledge which leads us to, for example, claims about science being the one true description of reality, or social contract the basis of morality? But to suggest this seems already to have entered into the philosophical debates that were to be ended or avoided. The issue is one Heidegger worried for many years; it has been well expressed by Derrida.®FN1. Cf. especially UL¯Margins of PhilosophyNM¯ (in French, from Minuit, 1972; in English, University of Chicago Press, 1982).¯ Can debates 'within' philosophy and against philosophical opponents carry the kind of questioning of the philosophical enterprise itself that Heidegger wanted? Can there be an 'other' to philosophy that is not defined in advance by philosophy? It cannot be a fixed site of questioning, a perspective or a theory. But then we must ask whether radical questioning and otherness can have any effects on our thinking if they are not somehow carried within philosophy or other intellectual industries.®FN1. There are activities and means of communication that are identifiable in

sociological or anthropological terms as "philosophy," but do these activities embody some "the" philosophical enterprise with a fixed essence, an interior and an exterior?¯

On this, Heidegger would protest that he was not out "to have an effect,"®FN1. Cf. the comments in his interview with UL¯Der SpiegelNM¯, translated as "Only a God Can Save Us," in UL¯Heidegger: The Man and His ThoughtNM¯ (Precedent, 1981).¯ but this protest seems to express a meta-philosophical view about the nature and place of thought, and meta-philosophy is philosophical debate. Such debate cannot be abolished by the para-ontologists; to demolish an opponent is to partake in the violent certainty of the metaphysical gesture. And despite the way it is used by some epigones, deconstruction is meant to be liberated from resentment and the repressed desire for positive or negative unities. But the question remains how this might relate to the debates occasioned by our daily theoretical and practical perplexities.

Heidegger did, however, try to affect our situation through his global diagnosis of the modern condition and the technological world. It has been disputed where that diagnosis placed Heidegger in relation to other critiques of modernity, and what practical effects, if any, he expected from his thought. His earlier rhetoric of resolution and decision gave way to one of letting be and alert waiting; much has been made of this change in connection with his Nazi activities. Others have emphasized his themes of retrieve, deconstruction, and overcoming, which are present both early and late.

Interpretations of the political implications of Heidegger's thought range from ultraconservative to extremely radical. In America, the implications have generally been taken as a conservative affirmation of roots and folk; this has been challenged, among others, by Reiner Schrmann, who has argued that Heidegger's ideas imply an escape from unified governing principles and imposed frameworks, but without thereby affirming liberal individualism.®FN1. Reiner Schrmann, UL¯Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to AnarchyNM¯ (Indiana University Press, 1987).¯ While he is influenced by French thought, Schrmann's interpretation of Heidegger does not fit easily into the general trends I have described; his interpretation shares many strengths with deconstructive and Marxist discussions of Heidegger, but stands apart from both.

The old reading of Heidegger as an existentialist has imprinted conservative opposition to Heidegger, which finds new fuel in his later writings on technology. Taking Heidegger at his word as an opponent of the metaphysical tradition of unity and rationality, writers who believe that tradition to be the core of Western values attack Heidegger's thought as symptomatic of the problems of our age.®FN1. Stanley Rosen's work contains perhaps the most sophisticated discussions of this type. Cf. UL¯Nihilism: A Philosophical EssayNM¯, (Yale University Press, 1969); UL¯Hermeneutics as PoliticsNM¯, (Oxford University Press, 1987); UL¯The Ancients and the Moderns: Rethinking ModernityNM¯, (Yale University Press, 1989).¯

Heidegger himself addressed the question of nihilism in the course of interpreting Nietzsche, and the relation between Heidegger and Nietzsche continues to be a vital area of discussion; indeed, it can serve as a test case for the various trends in Heidegger studies. Conservative thinkers fail to see much difference between Heidegger and Nietzsche, and find both guilty of rejecting any possible basis for morality and political community. Orthodox

Heideggerians accept Heidegger's picture of Nietzsche and see Heidegger as offering a decisive advance over a Nietzsche who completes the metaphysical tradition while remaining caught within it. Para-ontologists and other French-influenced Heideggerians tend to disagree with Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche, and see the earlier thinker as anticipating and in some cases going beyond Heidegger. The new ontologists and others influenced by analytic philosophy tend to ignore Nietzsche when discussing Heidegger (and to ignore Heidegger's interpretation when discussing Nietzsche in other contexts).

Heidegger's reaction to modernity has become more controversial since the renewed debate over his Nazi activities. After the latest revelations, no one can accept Heidegger's limited story of his Nazi engagement.®FN1. Cf. Victor Farias, UL¯Heidegger et le NazismeNM¯ (Paris: Verdier, 1987); Hugo Ott, UL¯Martin Heidegger: Unterwegs zur seiner BiographieNM¯ (Frankfurt: Campus, 1988); Thomas Sheehan, "Heidegger and the Nazis," (UL¯New York Review of BooksNM¯ 25 [June 16, 1988], 38-48), and the articles and statements collected in UL¯Critical InquiryNM¯, 15 (1989). For a sample of the French polemics, cf. Luc Ferry and Alain Renault, UL¯Heidegger and ModernityNM¯ (University of Chicago Press, 1990).¯ Heidegger's appalling acts and words cannot be excused. Still, despite the heinous deeds of the National Socialist movement, it does not follow that all ideas connected to it in any way are UL¯ipsoNM¯ UL¯factoNM¯ to be condemned. Invoking the Nazis can too easily become a tool for cutting off debate. The issue is not Heidegger's character or his ignoble personal motives, but how the Nazi commitments relate to his philosophy. It is clear that Heidegger believed that the Nazi movement represented a chance for Germany to live up to its destiny as the nation that would somehow confront the decline of the West. It is clear that he embraced a good part of the Nazi rhetoric (though not its biological racism), and also that he was trying to reinterpret Nazi doctrine, to some extent, in terms derived from his own thought. The extent of that reinterpretation is not clear, and how much this ideology hangs over in his later thought is highly disputed.

After the war, Heidegger claimed that true thought must step back to consider only the conditions of the possibility of action, that it brings no political results, that it must escape the sphere of efficiency and production. It is this distance from politics which may be the most enduringly suspect, seen in relation to his activities on behalf of the Nazis.®FN1. This has been argued by Jrgen Habermas, UL¯Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne: Zwlf VorlesungenNM¯ (Suhrkamp, 1985); translated as UL¯The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve LecturesNM¯ (MIT Press, 1988). But that distance can be interpreted in other ways; cf. the book by Schrmann mentioned above.¯

The various trends in Heidegger studies have reacted to the Nazi issue in fairly predictable ways. Conservative attacks on Heidegger found new ammunition, and his sins have become one more weapon against radical questioning. Orthodox Heideggerians, and the new ontologists, generally respond by dissociating the man's personal life from the thinker's ideas, but the orthodox do worry about the practical implications of his concern for place and roots. Some, but not all, French-influenced interpreters blame the Nazi excesses on lingering metaphysical contaminations in Heidegger's thought. In some ways, the Nazi question is most problematic for the para-ontologists, since it raises the formidable issue of how to discern ways of acting and find

ways of protesting oppression, if the rhetoric of human rights and freedom relies too much on the suspect metaphysics of human subjectivity.®FN1. Derrida expresses this worry in his study of Heidegger's ambivalences with the fateful notion of UL¯GeistNM¯ throughout his career, cf. UL¯De l'Esprit: Heidegger et la questionNM¯ (Galile, 1987).¯

This essay has concerned Heidegger in America. The Heidegger scene in Europe contains analogous trends, but the balance is different. The Nazi controversy has been more violent in Europe, particularly in France, where Heidegger had been a dominant figure. Now, orthodox Heideggerians are in retreat there, though his ideas continue to be influential through the use others have made of them. In Germany, debates over updating or abandoning Marxist critiques had already assimilated some aspects of Heidegger's analyses and dismissed the rest. Attacked from many sides, and with his major students retiring, Heidegger was being removed from the center of attention in Germany even before the Nazi controversy.

It may seem that the American scene, with its flourishing Heidegger industry and a less violent reaction to the Nazi question, is once again suffering from naivet and a time-lag in importing European intellectual products. But I think there are other explanations as well. Heidegger has never been center-stage in American philosophy, so he can be a thinker one can use critically rather than a dominant figure to be dethroned. Also, for better or worse, American academia tends to separate intellectual activity from politics, and to be amazed at European political passions. And our native critiques of society do not depend much on Marxism, so Americans have been less anxious about its recent fate or its relation to Heidegger. At the same time, Heidegger's diagnosis of modernity has been thought to challenge both liberal and conservative American social philosophy in useful ways, even as his treatment of subjectivity fits with changes underway in analytic philosophy.

Perhaps the Nazi issue has reemphasized the kind of questioning found in the early years, when Heidegger was seen as a prophet who might show a way out of modernity's dilemmas. His way looks suspicious now, and his prophetic mantle is in tatters, but his questions continue to resonate. And this is appropriate, since thought was for Heidegger above all else an activity of questioning. At the same time, however, one can find in Heidegger ideas that contribute to debates based on other people's questions.

If there is any common agenda to Heidegger studies in America today, I would suggest that it involves the questions I mentioned earlier, about the conditions that make possible language and meaning, and the kind of discourse that might reveal those conditions, and where such discourse situates us in relation to tradition. Puzzling over our own self-definition, we are struggling to define what it means to "overcome" and "deconstruct" a tradition, if it does not mean to bleach it into a commodified hobby-horse.

Our struggles on the margins may seem new. But just as there have been successive philosophical revolutions claiming to anchor thought in some new way, so successive challengers have sought open space on the margins where thought can be loosened and freed, while avoiding both impotent tantrums and surrender to the powers that be. Hegel was the last great figure who inspired such rival attempts to consolidate and to open thought. If the trends I have described could be sorted out as varieties of Left and Right Heideggerianism, that is another

indication that the thinker who strove to step back is being escorted into closer dialogue.®FN1. I am grateful to John McCumber, David Krell, and William Richardson for comments on an earlier version of this essay.¯

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