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The Overturning of Heidegger's Fundamental Ontology

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Abstract: In this paper I argue that the central issue in Heidegger's path of thought from *Being and Time* to *Contributions* and beyond is what he will later call "the matter itself": neither the meaning of being nor the analysis of Dasein but a transformational encounter in the margins of fundamental ontology. Heidegger's account of temporality and transcendence from the late 1920s is a clue to the transformation, but it is not until the completion of fundamental ontology in the naming of ontological difference that he arrives at a crisis which performs the transformation and announces the "overturning." This interpretation revolves around a reading of Heidegger's 1929 treatise "On the Essence of Ground" in which the text and subsequent marginal notes prepare the transition from *Being and Time* to *Contributions*, from *Sein* to *Seyn*, and from ontological difference to its appropriation. Thus we find that the language of *Ereignis* beginning in the 1930s and whatever we might call the "turn" signal the doing of justice to the original task from *Being and Time*.

I would say that [*Being and Time*] is not an advertisement for a new panacea which one could or should try out, but is the name for a task, for a way of *working* whereby we can perhaps once again become worthy of venturing a confrontation with *real* philosophy in its core. This does not mean negating philosophy, but rather affirming its greatness by *actually understanding* it.

Heidegger, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*¹

I. INTRODUCTION

What was the “task” of *Being and Time* such that, despite all the discussion of the “turn” or “reversal” in his thought, even despite the supposed “failure” of fundamental ontology, Heidegger is able to say in 1946 that *die Kehre* “is not a change in standpoint from *Being and Time*, but in it the thinking that was sought first arrives at the locality of that dimension out of which *Being and Time* is experienced”?² Simply put, the task was to do justice to the full dimensionality of the matter for thought. But, as Heidegger would struggle to communicate from the 1930s on, this is no mere reorientation of the knowing subject toward a new object of knowledge. This is first and foremost a transformation in *die Sache selbst* in which Dasein is implicated. Further, this task has the double character of a transition—“the attempt to grasp ‘metaphysics’ more originally in order thereby to overcome it at the same time”—which “is altogether distinctive of the ‘fundamental ontology’ of *Being and Time*.” In this transition of fundamental ontology, the matter for thought is “no longer beings and beingness, but being; no longer ‘thinking,’ but ‘time’; the priority no longer given to *thinking* [as reason, *ratio*], but to being. ‘Time’ as a name for the ‘truth’ of being; and all this as task, as ‘*still on the way*,’ not as ‘doctrine’ and dogma.”³ Thus the stage is set: a task and a transition that shape the path of Heidegger’s thought.

In this paper I will elaborate an interpretation of the shift in Heidegger’s thought as a necessity born of the crisis at which fundamental ontology arrived in 1929 and as a performance of the transition latent in *Being and Time*. This will not be a matter of diminishing what Heidegger calls the “overcoming” of all metaphysics by seeing it predicted in a previous metaphysics. On the contrary, I will suggest that the radicality of this transition lies not in a new conceptualization of what came before but in an “existential-ontological” crisis in which the truth as task is appropriated for the first time. The task, the crisis, and the transition are all ways of naming the foremost issue: the overturning of the ontological difference. But the naming, as we will see, is exactly the problem.

Our investigation locates itself in the “margins” of fundamental ontology, and this for two reasons. First, the insight driving my interpretation of Heidegger is that the relationship between *Being and Time* and *Contributions*, between the earlier and later works, as well as all that is often described as the “turn,” is best understood as the appropriation and carrying out of something already “there,” rather than as abandonment or turning away. That is, this transition is latent in fundamental ontology’s account of the basic constitution of Dasein, and thus in tracing the “marginal” features of this account we get at both what was essential in *Being and Time* and what necessitated these transitions in Heidegger’s path of thought. Second, the fulcrum around

which the early and later parts of this paper revolve is an interpretation of the marginal notes to Heidegger's 1929 treatise "On the Essence of Ground." Indeed, we will see how this text is the locus of the shift in Heidegger's own thought from fundamental ontology to the themes of *Seyn* and *Ereignis* as they are elaborated in *Contributions* and beyond.⁴

Toward this task, three guiding themes will serve throughout to define the contours of these margins through which Heidegger transitions. *Temporality* is the original goal of fundamental ontology, because it is the basic constitution, understood as transcendence, of the one who poses the question of being, and moreover it operates as a clue to the transition at issue. *Ontological difference* is what is named in the 1929 treatise where, I will claim, fundamental ontology comes to completion and Heidegger brings the reader to an encounter with the crisis of being. *Justice* is the working through of the innermost demand of ontological difference at the limits of metaphysics, but developing any idea of justice in Heidegger's work will require us to face what I call "Caputo's challenge." Through the guiding themes of temporality, ontological difference, and justice we will connect *Being and Time* to *Contributions* in a unique way, and we will encounter the "event" of appropriation of the difference between beings and being in our interpretation of "On the Essence of Ground." That is, we will see how *Ereignis* was always there, "in play" in the margins of fundamental ontology.

II. TEMPORALITY

We begin at the beginning, the introduction to *Being and Time* and the peculiar character of the temporality at the heart of fundamental ontology. After raising the central question of the work, namely, the question of the meaning of being, and indicating the "ontico-ontological" priority of Dasein as that being which is both to seek ground for being in general and to be interrogated as to its own being,⁵ Heidegger establishes temporality as essential to Dasein's understanding and thus to the ontological project:

we shall show that whenever Dasein tacitly understands and interprets something like Being, it does so with *time* as its standpoint. Time must be brought to light—and genuinely conceived—as the horizon for all understanding of Being and for any way of interpreting it. In order for us to discern this, *time* needs to be *explicated primordially as the horizon for the understanding of Being, and in terms of temporality as the Being of Dasein, which understands Being.*⁶

There are three points I would like to draw from this passage. (1) Time, according to Heidegger, is so essential to Dasein's being that any attempt to understand or interpret is always temporally determined and will itself show the temporality at the core of the being who understands and interprets. (2) Consequently, time is the horizon or domain within which any primordial investigation of being must progress. (3) Temporality is from the beginning of fundamental ontology bifurcated, relating to both Dasein and being in general. In attempting to think primordially about the meaning of being, Heidegger names temporality as the essence of Dasein's being, that through which Dasein understands being, and the key to both existential analysis and ontology.

Though the driving question of *Being and Time* concerns the meaning of being in general, its content is largely an analysis of the basic structures and constitution of Dasein because Dasein

is that unique being for whom the meaning of being is an issue. As such, the essence of Dasein must be essentially related to the meaning of being, for the latter is not such objectively but only for the being who questions and understands in this way. Heidegger indicates this relation when he says,

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.⁷

Accordingly, if temporality is the essence of Dasein, as we have seen it is for Heidegger here, Dasein’s understanding must be temporally determined, and thus temporality becomes not only an imperative theme for investigation but also the very way in which Dasein, as that being who understands, questions, and exists, is. Temporality, thus, is the condition of possibility for any understanding whatsoever and the “ground” or space in which primordial investigation proceeds. The implications for philosophy are made clear: “*the central problematic of all ontology is rooted in the phenomenon of time,*” and “Being cannot be grasped except by taking time into consideration.”⁸ In other words, attempts to account for the character of being and existence can only progress through explicit reinterpretation of these accounts in terms of the essence, temporality, of that being who seeks to give account, Dasein.

At this point Heidegger introduces an important linguistic distinction in the concept of temporality, which will serve as a clue to the transition that we said is at stake in fundamental ontology. Up to now, in the passages cited above, the word for temporality has been *Zeitlichkeit*, and this will be the word used most often. Throughout the existential-ontological texts of the late twenties,⁹ Heidegger will use *Zeitlichkeit* to mean both temporality in general, referring to the characteristic of relatedness to time, and in the more specific context of *original* or primordial—that is, ontologically a priori—temporality as the ontological constitution of Dasein, as the being of beings, which in turn makes possible the derivative, common conceptions of time. The problem is that *Zeitlichkeit* as a derivative of *Zeit* unavoidably carries with it these common, everyday conceptions of time, and thus the attempts to describe a more original time as the being of Dasein—which as we’ve seen is the necessary step on the path to the question of the meaning of being in general—are pre-empted by the common conceptions that invariably crop up in the use of this word. This cropping up of traditional concepts of time and being creates the methodological necessity of Heidegger’s “destruction” of the history of ontology, the purpose of which is not to abandon those concepts but to return to them in such a way that the possibility of a more original interpretation is revealed. To facilitate this destruction of the concept of time and the transition from an ontic theory of time, time as a measurable thing or as a container, to an ontological interpretation, temporality as being, Heidegger will at times use *Temporalität* to refer specifically to the temporality of being and to temporality as the condition of possibility of the understanding of being, setting temporality apart from the traditional concepts of time in the history of philosophy.

When Heidegger employs *Temporalität* it is at crucial moments when the discussion hinges on understanding temporality in terms of being rather than in terms of beings, that is,

those moments when the traditional concept of time as thing risks blocking our way toward the truth of time in original temporality, temporality as being properly understood. So it is at this moment in *Being and Time*, between the demonstration of the importance of temporality to the question of being and the introduction of the method of destruction as the way toward a more original ontological interpretation, that Heidegger introduces *Temporalität*: “the fundamental ontological task of Interpreting Being as such includes working out the *Temporality* [*Temporalität*] of Being. In the exposition of the problematic of Temporality [*Temporalität*] the question of the meaning of Being will first be concretely answered.”¹⁰ What is at stake here is temporality *as being* in the mode of understanding, as the way in which Dasein exists as the possibility of an understanding of being in general, which Heidegger wants to distinguish from concepts of temporality in terms of extant things. What is at stake, in other words, is the ontological difference and how this difference creates a methodological problem with respect to interpretations of temporality, a problem which I will return to later in this paper. Through the existential-ontological texts surrounding *Being and Time* and up until *Contributions*, Heidegger’s use of *Temporalität* functions as a “clue” to the interpretation of original temporality and to the distinction between beings and being, and as a hedge against the cropping up of traditional concepts of time which threaten to hide the relation between original temporality and being.¹¹

Another way to understand this linguistic distinction in temporality is to say that *Zeitlichkeit* belongs to the analysis of Dasein, while *Temporalität* belongs to the analysis of being as such. We have seen that the question of the meaning of being must pass through the question of the meaning of Dasein as that being for whom being is a question, and so Heidegger’s fundamental ontology always has two aspects: “1) the analysis of Dasein, and 2) the analysis of the temporality [*Temporalität*] of being.”¹² Since temporality is the original constitution of Dasein, the analysis of Dasein becomes an exposition of the basic structure of temporality. In this context of temporality as the existence of Dasein, Heidegger uses *Zeitlichkeit*. But Dasein, as existing, also always has an understanding of being, because “to exist is essentially, even if not only, to understand.” Existing and understanding are two ways of talking about the same temporal constitution of Dasein, and the fulcrum about which Heidegger’s fundamental ontology transitions from existing to understanding is Dasein’s *transcendence*. Heidegger lays out the transition: “If transcendence makes possible the understanding of being and if transcendence is founded on the ecstatic-horizonal constitution of temporality, then temporality is the condition of the possibility of the understanding of being.”¹³ Temporality as this original possibility of understanding is the *Temporalität* of being, and it enters the picture at just that point when Heidegger’s investigation transitions from an analysis of Dasein in the mode of existing to the interpretation of being in the mode of understanding. This distinction becomes even more explicit in *Contributions*, where the few times *Temporalität* is used it appears only in the context of the question of “beyng,” and is associated with “the transition from the guiding question, grasped as such, to the basic question.”¹⁴ Thus, my interpretation of the linguistic distinction within “temporality” in Heidegger’s texts from 1927 to 1938 comes to this: while *Zeitlichkeit* is the general term and, depending on context, can refer to any of the above senses of temporality, *Temporalität* appears at critical moments and exclusively to facilitate a displacement of the traditional interpretations of time and to act out the transition from the analysis of Dasein’s being to the possibility of any such analysis to begin with, that is, the original possibility of ontology and the understanding of being itself. This transition (*Übergang*), as we will see later, is the ontological difference. *Temporalität*, as the temporality that makes possible any understanding of

being at all, is Heidegger's attempt at an answer to the basic ontological question of the meaning of being.

Though there is much more that could be said about the various senses of temporality in Heidegger,¹⁵ for our purposes here it is enough to see that temporality plays this dual role in the existential-ontological texts: temporality is the ontological constitution of Dasein, and temporality is the condition of possibility of the understanding of being.¹⁶ Throughout this paper, I will use the single term to refer to both of these senses, as Heidegger often uses *Zeitlichkeit* as a general term which is then given a specific sense by its context. However, I will return to the distinction later at a critical moment in the discussion when everything hinges on the ontological difference and the meaning of being itself.

We have thus far seen that the centrality of temporality to Heidegger's thought beginning with *Being and Time* implies a dual task: the basic question of being requires an interpretation of the one who questions, i.e., Dasein's existence is wrapped up with its understanding of being. Because temporality has this character and inextricably links understanding and existence, it is clear that it is no longer sufficient to think of time as metaphysics traditionally has, e.g., as a container, as a series of disjunct and isolated segments, as the consciousness of the subject, or in opposition to eternity.¹⁷ These concepts of time are not able to grasp temporality as the being of Dasein. For this reason Heidegger is occupied, in *Being and Time* and further in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* and *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, with understanding these traditional concepts in order to move beyond them. We will not get into the intricacies of these concepts here, but it was necessary that we recognize why the question of the meaning of being leads to temporality as the domain of the question, and why Heidegger must offer an original account of temporality specifically with respect to being as such. This dual existential-ontological task will characterize Heidegger's thought in the late 20s and is what leads him to Dasein's peculiar kind of transcendence and, later, to the "overcoming" of ontology.

III. TRANSCENDENCE

We now turn to the 1928 lecture course *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* (MFL), where logic and metaphysical truth are traced to the being of Dasein as transcendence. But before seeing how this transcendence is key to the task of fundamental ontology, we need to briefly sketch the features of original temporality according to Heidegger in this period. As constitutive of "the metaphysical continuity of Dasein," this temporality is distinguished from the traditional concept by its "ecstatic" and "horizontal" character.¹⁸ As the very being of Dasein, "we do not come across the now, then, and formerly [*i.e.*, time] as we do extant things." Rather, "we utter 'then' from out of a *mode of existence* in which we are *expectant* of a thing to come," while "the 'formerly' always pronounces a *retention* of something previous," and "the 'now' accordingly pronounces being toward what presences. . . or. . . *making present*."¹⁹ That Heidegger interprets time as a "mode of existence," constituted by ecstatic movements of expectancy, retention, and making present, is made possible and necessary by his commitment to temporality as *Dasein's very being* and not merely a theoretical concept or property attached to Dasein. "Temporality," then, far from being any "is" or concept, "temporalizes itself" as "the primordially self-unifying unity of expectancy, retention, and making-present."²⁰

Though "the metaphysical continuity of Dasein" is the unity of the ecstatic movements of temporality, expectancy is the ecstasis that directs Dasein's understanding. In the following

passage, Heidegger points to the priority of expectancy as that out of which Dasein understands itself as a being whose essence is to transcend in temporality:

Expectance means to understand oneself from out of one's own capacity-for-being; one's own capacity-for-being is in turn understood in the essential metaphysical breadth to which belong being-with and being-by. Expecting one's own capability-for-being as mine, I have also come toward myself already and precisely through expecting. This approaching oneself in advance, from one's own possibility, is the primary ecstatic concept of the *future*.²¹

Expectancy is decisive as the “futural as such, futurity as such, i.e., possibility pure and simple. Of itself the ecstasis does not produce a definite possible, but it does produce the horizon of possibility in general, within which a definite possibility can be expected.”²² Dasein's temporal ecstasis of expectancy opens up the horizon of possibility which awakens Dasein to its transcendence as “approaching oneself in advance” and “understanding oneself from out of one's own capacity-for-being,” rather than merely out of one's retention of having been and making present of what is now.

It was important that we emphasize that, for Heidegger, “temporality temporalizes itself primarily out of the future. . . . out of the *for-the-sake-of*”²³ because it is this orientation of temporality that links the basic constitution of Dasein to ground and the understanding of being. Says Heidegger,

The for-the-sake-of is not something adrift, but it temporalizes itself in *freedom*. As ecstatic self-projection on its own capacity-for-being, freedom understands itself from out of this capacity and at the same time holds this capacity before itself as responsibility. Freedom is consequently the *origin of anything like ground*. . . . freedom is qua transcendental freedom toward ground. To be free is to understand oneself from out of one's own capacity-to-be.²⁴

Freedom here refers to the fact that Dasein's transcendence is its ecstatic temporality directed by “self-projection on its own capacity-for-being,” and it is precisely Dasein's freedom toward this capacity that constitutes its “responsibility.” If freedom is the understanding of being as temporality, then it must include a commitment to *following* being's “capacity-for-being,” for it understands that the meaning of the having-been of something present is complete only in the “horizon of possibility” through which it will become what it is yet to be. Responsibility, then, is this following of temporality as existing out of possibility, or, to put it another way, responsibility is the explicit understanding of being, ontology. Here Heidegger also hints at what will be our key to reading “On the Essence of Ground,” namely, that because it is free in this way of the understanding of being and finite transcendence, Dasein finds itself between ground and groundlessness in the ontological difference.

In MFL, we see that temporality and understanding come together in Dasein's transcendental freedom and responsibility, which is to say that temporality and understanding are linked through the futural priority of the transcendence of Dasein. Indeed, as we mentioned earlier, in Heidegger's existential-ontological texts Dasein's transcendence is something like a fulcrum about which the two aspects of fundamental ontology move, a transition between the

analysis of Dasein and the understanding of being. This relationship between temporality, transcendence, and ontological understanding is articulated more clearly in the lecture course *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, where the problem is “negotiating the passage from the ontical consideration of beings to the ontological thematization of being,” that is, the problem of ontological difference as the original possibility of ontology.²⁵ Here Heidegger says that “the [act of] understanding is an original determination of the Dasein’s existence,” because Dasein, as existent, “is occupied with its own being . . . occupied with its own *ability to be*.” It is an analytic judgment to say that, for Dasein, to exist is to understand. Understanding happens because of the peculiar way in which Dasein in its being is, a peculiarity that has to do with temporality. So Heidegger says that “the Dasein understands itself by way of its own most peculiar capacity to be, of which it is expectant. In thus comporting toward its own most peculiar capacity to be, *it is ahead of itself*. . . . the Dasein is *futural* in an original sense.” This way of being that is peculiar to Dasein is transcendence, because “transcendence means to understand oneself from a world,” which is to say, to understand oneself on the basis of the “toward-itself” and “for-the-sake-of itself . . . on the basis of the future.”²⁶ So understanding in general is always the understanding of something on the basis of some possibility, because it is grounded in transcendence which has the futural priority of Dasein’s temporal constitution.

But although an understanding of itself and thus of being always already accompanies Dasein in its existence, it is only through the explicit projection of being “that the basic act constitutive of ontology” is performed. Heidegger continues:

If being is to become objectified—if the understanding of being is to be possible as a science in the sense of ontology—if there is to be philosophy at all, then that upon which the understanding of being, qua understanding, has already pre-conceptually projected being must become unveiled in an explicit projection.²⁷

So what makes it possible for ontology, and thus Heidegger’s project here in the existential-ontological texts, to get going at all is the transcendence of Dasein in the mode of understanding being explicitly *as being*, i.e., in light of that which makes such an understanding of being possible: temporality.

Through transcendence existing and understanding are brought together in Dasein, and through an account of transcendence as the way in which Dasein understands itself and thus has some notion of being, Heidegger moves from the destruction of the traditional concept of time and an analysis of temporality as the original constitution of Dasein, to the understanding of being which makes any ontology possible. Heidegger summarizes the relationship thus:

If transcendence makes possible the understanding of being and if transcendence is founded on the ecstatic-horizonal constitution of temporality, then temporality is the condition of the possibility of the understanding of being.²⁸

Therefore, transcendence, grounded in temporality, is the way in which Dasein both exists and understands, and, as such, it is the possibility of the transition from the existential analysis of Dasein to the understanding of being in Heidegger’s fundamental ontology. If Dasein, as existing, is always already understanding out of ecstatic-horizonal temporality, and since the understanding of being requires that being be comprehended as such, then Dasein, as the being

that transcends in the way described, must be what makes possible the distinction between beings and being. This distinction must then be central to any ontological questioning, and so the existential-ontological analysis of Dasein now requires an account of ontological difference.

IV. ONTOLOGICAL DIFFERENCE

The dual task of the question of being from *Being and Time*, the distinction in temporality and the peculiar character of transcendence, lead Heidegger to the heart of the matter in the 1929 treatise “On the Essence of Ground” (EG). While in the previously discussed existential-ontological texts Heidegger intently analyzes the ways in which temporality constitutes Dasein’s transcendence and freedom, and thus its understanding, in this treatise he takes up the temporality account as the basis of his reformulation of the problem of ground. We will follow Heidegger’s discussion of this problem from two angles, toward elucidating two important points. First, through the course of the treatise, Heidegger reformulates the problem of ground from its original incarnation in the metaphysical tradition through two steps. This reformulation in two steps is central to Heidegger’s purpose. Second, the result of this reformulation is that ontological difference is explicitly made a theme of investigation, its importance for the problem of ground is shown, and its indispensability for Heidegger’s thought in general is suggested in the marginal notes to the main text. Through our interpretation of this treatise that has received sparse attention in the scholarly literature, we will follow Heidegger to the limits of fundamental ontology where the original task faces a crisis and a transition becomes necessary.²⁹

As we have seen, Heidegger commits himself to the importance of temporality for the analysis of Dasein and the question of being in general in the existential-ontological texts. But the relation of temporality to the problem of ground requires further clarification. The problem has to do with the task of giving account of or reasons for things central to traditional philosophical investigation, and thus a clarification of this problem with respect to temporality will help ground the fundamental ontological project. Heidegger begins with the problem as it is received from tradition, represented by Aristotle’s account of beginning and cause. But this traditional account of ground is incomplete, for it attempts merely to infer the commonality among different instances of ground, “and there must be some doubt as to whether the essence of ground can be found by way of characterizing what is ‘common’ to the ‘kinds’ of ground, even though there is [in Aristotle] an unmistakable orientation toward illuminating ground in general in an originary manner.”³⁰ With this doubt serving to justify further investigation of the essence of ground, Heidegger moves to a discussion of Leibniz’s principle of reason, which will in turn demonstrate, as Heidegger aims to show, the relation of temporality to the essence of ground.³¹

In the principle of reason—“nothing is without reason”—the essence of reason itself (ground) is presupposed. What the principle more specifically deals with is predicative truth, the essence of which lies in the connection of predicate with subject, or effect with cause. Such predication is made not arbitrarily but according to the principle of identity: effect and predicate are always a priori contained in cause and subject. Thus, the ground of predicative truth is the subject, or being, to which something is connected on the basis of the identity of that very being. What Leibniz has illuminated for us, says Heidegger, is that

“truths”—true assertions—assume a relation to something *on whose grounds* they are able to be in accord. That linking which is a taking apart within every truth in each case

always is what it is on the grounds of . . . that is, as self-“grounding.” In its very essence, truth thus houses a relation to something like “ground.”³²

The principle of reason, then, is the principle upon which the essence of truth is built. Predicative truth in turn reveals the centrality of ground and grounding for Western metaphysics. And it is clear to Heidegger, from thinking through the principle of reason, that an investigation of the meaning of ground has the potential to shed light on the essence of the metaphysical tradition in general and, more specifically, on the possibility of retrieving that tradition in a fundamental ontology.

Thus far in this treatise, Heidegger has demonstrated (1) that the traditional account of ground has merely described the uses and effects of ground, failing to penetrate to that which makes ground possible, and (2) that the principle of reason shows the essence of truth to be ground—that on the basis of which truth is accorded—and ground to be that subject or being that is there available to us in reasoning. The final transition needed, namely, from ground to the peculiar character of Dasein, is indicated in the following passage:

The overarching accordance of the *nexus with* beings, and their consequent accord, do not *as such* primarily make beings accessible. Rather beings, as the concern of any predicative determination, must already be manifest *before* such predication and *for* it. For it to be possible, predication must be able to take up residence in a making-manifest that is *not predicative* in character. Propositional truth is rooted in a *more originary* truth (unconcealment), in the pre-predicative manifestness of *beings*, which may be called *ontic truth*.³³

In seeking out the essence of ground, then, we have arrived at beings that are already present there as ground, and our inquiry into the essence of ground translates into the question of the essence of beings that are already there. What we must investigate, says Heidegger, is *how* beings come to serve as ground, *how* beings become manifest, and what is the condition of possibility for their to be anything like ground. And for Heidegger such manifestation of beings is rooted in an understanding of being:

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 will that are also grounded therein. Yet even such kinds of comportment, whether they are interpreted as pre-predicative or as predicative, 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.³⁴

And the understanding of being is, as we’ve seen from the existential-ontological texts, the peculiar way in which the being whose basic constitution is temporality exists and finds itself “open” and “there” among beings—it is the transcendence of Da-sein.

Since Heidegger has followed the concept of ground to the transcendence of that being which grounds, it should come as no surprise that Heidegger characterizes Dasein’s “freedom for

ground” on the basis of the three ecstases of temporality, which, as we saw developed in MFL, are key to the meaning of Dasein’s transcendence.³⁵ The expectant, projective surpassing of Dasein’s grounding is called “establishing.” Corresponding to absorption in an enviroing world and retention of a having-been, Dasein is also “taking up a basis” in its freedom for ground. The unity of these two movements is the making present moment of Dasein’s transcending as “the grounding of something.”³⁶ It is only through the unity of these three ecstases that there can be something like ground which the principle of reason refers to and on which predicative truth depends. And because Dasein is that being for whom something can be grounded and thus for whom the principle of reason applies, the essence of Dasein, temporality and the ecstases of grounding transcendence, is the domain in which the question of the meaning or essence of ground itself can be investigated.

Having demonstrated that an account of ground necessarily refers us to the being of that being for which something can be grounded and thus to the temporality of Dasein, Heidegger has made the first of two steps toward reformulating the problem of ground. The second step, which we have claimed brings ontological difference to the fore, is shown most clearly when Heidegger returns to the beginning of the treatise and asks how his account of ground stands in relation to Aristotle and Leibniz. The following passage gives us a glimpse of this self-evaluation of Heidegger as he sees himself vis-à-vis the metaphysical tradition:

Are we then restricting to three the four grounds discovered by the tradition, or are these three ways of grounding equivalent to the three kinds of *πρῶτον ὄθεν* in Aristotle? The comparison cannot be made in such a superficial manner; for what is peculiar to the first discovery of the “four grounds” is that it does not yet distinguish in principle between transcendental grounds and specifically ontic causes. The transcendental grounds appear merely as the “more universal” in relation to the ontic. The originary character of transcendental grounds and their specific character of *ground* remain covered over beneath the formal characterization of “first” and “highest” beginnings. And for this reason they also lack unity. Such unity can consist only in the equioriginary character of the transcendental origin of the threefold grounding. The essence “of” ground cannot even be sought, let alone found, by asking after a universal genus that is supposed to result by way of an “abstraction.”³⁷

We may notice a similarity between Aristotle’s account of “beginning” as “the First, starting from which” something exists, comes into being, or becomes known,³⁸ and the threefold strewnness of grounding as possibility, basis, and account. But Heidegger here insists that his initial evaluation of Aristotle’s account, his “doubt as to whether the essence of ground can be found by way of characterizing what is ‘common’ to the ‘kinds’ of ground,” has been demonstrated through the course of this treatise. That which Aristotle has failed to account for, according to Heidegger, is the difference between “transcendental grounds” and “specifically ontic causes.” At best, Aristotle tries to abstract from the various kinds or manifestations of ground in search of a “universal” character of grounding, a “first” or “highest” form of ground. These “abstractions” only obscure the way toward the “transcendental origin” of all grounds, which lies in the transcendental character of that being which grounds. In other words, the essence of ground can only be sought in the being of Dasein, for whom alone grounding is an issue and possibility.

Through this self-evaluation, we have shown why Heidegger says that this treatise “names the ontological difference.”³⁹ Only through the ontological difference, the difference between the transcendental “ground” of grounds and ontic causes, is a path opened up from everything that is, for which Dasein seeks ground, to the meaning or essence of ground, which itself cannot be an “is” or “ground,” but rather being itself which makes both the “is” and grounding possible. Without the opening up of this difference, according to Heidegger, Aristotle’s account of ground remains in “abstractions,” and the metaphysical tradition encloses itself by an infinite recursion in the principle of reason, failing to grasp its “transcendental,” and thus temporal, meaning. Because it traces things, causes, and beings in general always to their being, the ontological difference acts for Heidegger as an interpretive key which continually shows up the centrality of temporality and the question of being itself. Heidegger has demonstrated, through both the method and content of this treatise, that “this difference in general, this possibility of distinction, insures an understanding-of-being. . . . It is this distinction that makes anything like an ontology possible in the first place.”⁴⁰

To understand the importance of this treatise for Heidegger’s thought, we must see how the explication of the essence of ground in terms of ontological difference has, in a certain sense, brought Heidegger’s fundamental ontology to completion. For this purpose, we will need to recapitulate our interpretation of Heidegger thus far. (1) We began with the central fundamental ontological insight that temporality is the being of that being, Dasein, who makes the meaning of being a question for itself, and thus “Being cannot be grasped except by taking time into consideration.” We also took note of how, in key moments throughout the existential-ontological texts, Heidegger uses a linguistic distinction in “temporality” to signal a transition to being itself. (2) Next, the existential analysis of Dasein reveals how the threefold ecstatic unity of temporality makes possible transcendence, which in turn brings together Dasein’s existing and understanding, making the essential connection between the being of Dasein and being in general. (3) Finally, in looking for the very possibility of giving an account of being (ontology), we find that the essence of ground leads back to the being that grounds, Dasein, and the understanding of the difference between beings and being makes possible the transition from ontic to ontological grounds, this transition being nothing other than the possibility of the founding of ontology.

When we talk about the “essence of ground,” we are talking about the essence of the reasons and accounts we give in philosophical investigation. Heidegger recognizes that in order for the philosophical investigation of being as such to be possible, a distinction must be made between the “ontic” and the “ontological,” between understanding in terms of beings and understanding in terms of being. Dasein, as the being that understands being, must somehow essentially hold the possibility of this distinction in itself. The way of this essential holding of the possibility of the distinction which opens up the ground for ontology is transcendence interpreted through temporality. In this way, EG traces grounding and reason-giving to the being that understands being in its comportment toward beings, and it ends with the naming of the ontological difference as the “ground” of grounds. Only through this difference can the essence of ground be discovered and can philosophy as ontology get going.

But if the account of the possibility of fundamental ontology is complete, and having the answer to the guiding question of the existential-ontological texts, temporality, what then is the answer to the basic ontological question of the meaning of being in general? Is it *Temporalität*? Is the working out of the double character of temporality the task at stake since *Being and Time*?

It seems that the ontological difference holds the key to these questions, but the naming of this difference at the limits of fundamental ontology in EG proves to complicate matters further.

V. THE TRANSITION

We can see Heidegger dealing with these difficulties in the marginalia that he wrote in his own copy of EG.⁴¹ There he seems unsatisfied with his treatment of the problem of ground, especially the ontological difference which he calls a “doubling of unconcealment,” and he casts doubt on the previous discourse about being with disorienting references to “*Seyn*.” What is doubly unconcealed is the truth of the difference. This truth, which Heidegger calls “beyng,” is the “originary unity” of beings and being, but the ontological difference explicitly forks “beyng” into a “distinction,” and thus does not grasp its truth.⁴² While Heidegger’s treatment of the problem of ground has gone some way to accounting for beings and their being (temporality) through onto-ontological difference, “beyng” itself, which is the “originary unity” and “truth” of this difference, has not been grasped, and Heidegger doubts that this truth is something that can be grasped, accounted for, or questioned at all.⁴³

What should we make of this sudden appearance of “beyng” (*Seyn*) that will later take center stage in *Contributions* but that here occurs along the boundary of the discourse about the “being” (*Sein*) of “beings” of fundamental ontology? Why is “beyng” the truth of the ontological difference? The reader that comes to this text as we have, from the perspective of *Sein und Zeit* and the existential analysis of *Dasein*, should find this change in tone surprising, if not disturbing. The effect of the encounter between *Seyn* of the margins and *Sein* of fundamental ontology is certainly one of disorientation, as a host of new questions come swelling up, with no clear ground from which to begin to formulate answers.

I would like to suggest that a preliminary interpretation of *Seyn* in its function in the margins of EG has already been suggested in our previous interpretation of *Temporalität*.⁴⁴ First, just as temporality was taken to be the interpretive center from which fundamental ontology would develop, and for that reason *Temporalität* was introduced as a destructive key to make possible an original interpretation of temporality out of the traditional concepts of time, so *Seyn* is introduced here to serve as a clue in a new destruction. The destruction of what? Clearly Heidegger intends to separate himself in some sense from *Sein*, from “being” as it has been used and developed throughout the fundamental ontological project, but there is more at work here than a modified concept of being or an attempt to see the question of being again with fresh eyes. François Jaran, in one of the few extensive commentaries on EG, argues that the text as a whole marks Heidegger’s abandonment of his attempt to build a “metaphysics of *Dasein*,” noting that it is here that Heidegger transitions “from the fundamental ontology to a new approach to the question of being, one that distances itself from the objectification of being that was part of the project elaborated in *Sein und Zeit*.”⁴⁵ That is, Heidegger sees the existential-ontological project falling back into the same type of metaphysics that the project was supposed to avoid through *Destruktion*, phenomenology, and the interpretation of temporality. So Heidegger notes in the margins of this treatise:

The approach in terms of the truth of beyng is undertaken here still entirely within the framework of traditional metaphysics.

Here the erroneous procedure of merely extending ontological-metaphysical thinking to the question concerning the truth of being.⁴⁶

The sense is that with the investigation into the essence of ground, the discourse about being has fallen back into the wrong type of thinking, and “being” is the clue to Heidegger’s self-“destruction,” the shaking-up and displacement of the entire project begun in *Being and Time*. In other words, “being” keys a type of primordial destruction of the whole tradition of metaphysics and the question of being up to and including Heidegger’s own fundamental ontology.

Second, and more importantly, as *Temporalität* served to facilitate the conceptual transition from the temporality of Dasein to the temporality of being as such, so here *Seyn* is meant to signal a transition. Like *Temporalität*, *Seyn* is related to the transition from the guiding question to the basic question, from being objectified, conceived of in terms of beings, to thinking *being itself*, on its own terms. As such, it is what was implicitly at work in the introduction to *Being and Time*, where the idea of an original investigation of the traditional question of being was divided into two: the analysis of the being of Dasein which then, facilitated by the interpretation of original temporality, transitions to the question of the meaning of being as such. However, what was not understood at that time was that the very nature of this transition would necessitate the overturning of the project as it would be developed up to the transition. So *Seyn* is a clue to the radical nature of the transition at stake in the later Heidegger’s reinterpretation of this treatise and in whatever it is that we call the “turn” in his thought.

Although Jaran rightly identifies “On the Essence of Ground” as a turning point between *Being and Time* and *Contributions*, he misunderstands the nature of the transition signaled by “being” when he concludes that “the development of the concept of freedom toward ground not only accomplished the demolition of the fundamental ontology, but also set Heidegger free from his metaphysical path of thinking,” and that this concept “gives us the answer to why Heidegger abandoned metaphysics.”⁴⁷ (1) By interpreting the transition through the concept of freedom as abandonment, he passes over that which is essential in this treatise, captured in Heidegger’s contention twenty years later that this text “names the ontological difference.” For Heidegger, still here in 1929, freedom has nothing to do with abandonment as leaving behind but is essentially related to Dasein’s peculiar *finitude*, whether as temporality, transcendence, or freedom toward ground. The critical insight driving the entire treatise, and especially section III where Jaran focuses his attention, is that “the ground of ground,” freedom, means “the abyss of ground,” which must be understood within the opening up of the ontological difference in Dasein. Elsewhere in the same year, Heidegger says that the “profoundest finitude of transcendence” is that this distinction, which first makes possible an understanding of being as such, is an “event which underlies all instances of finding oneself” and in which “in the ground of its essence the Dasein holds itself into the Nothing.”⁴⁸ Freedom, then, as the “abyss of ground,” is essentially related to the “event” in which the groundlessness of ground is revealed to Dasein. If freedom plays any role in Heidegger’s overcoming of metaphysics at this stage, it must be understood in terms of the occurrence of what I will call the *nether side* of difference in Dasein. The transition is not properly understood, much less accomplished, through freedom as abandonment. (2) Furthermore, the tone of the marginal notes and the criticisms they make do not suggest an abandonment of what has come before, nor a desire for freedom from philosophical rigor; rather, they suggest an arrival at an understanding that entails an existential

overturning, an appropriative event (*Ereignis*) which, as such, precisely *saves* that which in the foregoing was most essential. This would align with the warning from 1936-38 to avoid “the temptation to simply leave behind” the “end of metaphysics.” Although there is a distancing from the metaphysical thinking that objectifies being, philosophy must not think itself to be “done” with metaphysics nor “reacting against” it. Instead, the task in the transition—the task of the question of being itself from *Being and Time*, insists Heidegger—is to “for the first time comprehend [metaphysics] in its essence and allow it to be integrated in altered form into the truth of being.”⁴⁹ Therefore, following Heidegger’s claim in 1930 that the “way of reading” that is “demanded by every *philosophical* work” is thoroughly hermeneutic and appropriative, I contend that we must see “being” as “precisely that which is there *from the first continuously to the end*, waiting to be unfolded.”⁵⁰ So whereas Jaran asks why Heidegger *abandons* fundamental ontology, our interpretation here is guided by the question of how the margins of EG are foretold by the success of the treatise in bringing fundamental ontology to completion. Said another way, *why does the naming of the ontological difference necessitate the occurrence of being?*

Our interpretation of this treatise in terms of ontological difference and of the marginal notes as a clue to a transitional event now bears fruit. “Being” is Heidegger’s attempt to deal with the *existential-ontological crisis* which inheres in the explication of ontological difference to which fundamental ontology has arrived in “On the Essence of Ground.” The crisis carries the double character of fundamental ontology: ontological, because it is “the crisis of the question of being”; existential, because it necessitates a transformation in Dasein’s existence, a “leap” from “the already established direction of questioning” into the “essence of being itself.”⁵¹ The crisis is as follows. The positing of “being” alongside “beings” in the same two-dimensional plane in order to produce an understanding of being as distinct from beings does exactly the opposite: being is reduced to a being among beings (even if an imagined line is drawn between them). The gravity of the crisis cannot be grasped as a rule violation in something like a Habermasian discourse ethics, though there is certainly something of a performative contradiction at stake. The self-contradiction of the ontological difference is a Dasein-*contra*-diction, a split between Dasein’s understanding and existence, a fissure (*Zerklüftung*) in the understanding of being. In saying the ontological difference, one attempts to *ground* that which severs all ground, and Dasein thus contradicts its own basic constitution which, as transcendence, in turn overcomes the objectification of ontological difference. The transition at stake—from the guiding question to the basic question, from fundamental ontology to the thinking of being as such—does not primarily consist in inventing new word meanings or abandoning one project for another but, rather, is “the transformation of human beings themselves.”⁵² Dasein itself *is* “the *crisis* between the first and other beginning.”⁵³

The appearance of the language of “being” in the margins of EG is meant to prepare a way for the transition from the concept of ontological difference as the original possibility of freedom toward ground, and thus as the completion of fundamental ontology, to the performance of the truth of the concept. The nature of this transition as the task of carrying out or performing (*vollziehen*) what is announced in ontological difference is evident in several notes:

This distinction between “ontic and ontological truth” is only a doubling of unconcealment . . . Thus what has been said hitherto only points the direction of an overcoming, but no overcoming is accomplished [*vollzogen*].

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.

Here the essence of truth is conceived as “forked” in terms of the “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 *beyings of beyng* [das Seyende des Seyns] – no longer as the being of *beings*.

It is essential that the *differentiation of being and beings* come to light expressly as the *unity* of the differentiation. The *emergence of this differentiating* is sought.⁵⁴

Heidegger weaves together the three threads of our interpretation of EG: “*beyng*” as a clue to a transition in which the ontological difference is at stake. The transition has the nature of an “overcoming” of the “distinction” in the direction of “*beyng*.” But why is the task not yet “accomplished”? Any lingering questions are answered in a paragraph—the key passage in the whole treatise—that acts as a fulcrum in the transition between the main text and the notes, because it speaks of the fulcrum of ontological difference, transcendence, as the “occurrence” (*Geschehen*) of “entry into world,” i.e., the event of *Dasein*’s appropriation of this difference. At this paragraph Heidegger writes the following in the margins:

Here the preparation of the quite other commencement; everything still mixed and confused; contorted into phenomenological-existential and transcendental “research”; occurrence not as “leap,” and the latter? Comes into its own in the event of appropriation.

Da-sein belongs to *beyng* itself as the simple onefold of beings and being; the essence of the “occurrence” – temporalizing of Temporality [*Temporalität*] as a preliminary name for the truth of *beyng*.⁵⁵

In the explication of the “occurrence” of *Dasein*’s transcendence, the “other beginning” necessitated by the existential-ontological “crisis of the question of being” lies dormant, and it is clear that the key to the transition through the crisis is an “event” (*Ereignis*) in which ontological difference is “appropriated” as occurrence and task. Thus, it is *Dasein*’s existence itself, as the opening up of the ontological difference, that must be made explicit in such a way that being is no longer objectified by the difference, but rather the truth of *beyng* is projected upon the difference in the differentiating act.⁵⁶ These notes also indicate that Heidegger sees *Temporalität*, i.e., temporality no longer objectified but understood as being itself, now “*beyng*,” as an aid or clue to this non-objectifying projection. We have transitioned, then, from temporality (*Zeitlichkeit*) as the basic constitution of *Dasein* to temporality (*Temporalität*) as the truth of *beyng* understood as the appropriating event of the grounding of *Dasein* in the differentiation of beings and being.⁵⁷ We have transitioned, that is, to *Dasein*’s existence as the explicit *performance of the ontological difference*. The truth of this difference as performance or carrying out (*Vollzug*) of the differentiation was already suggested in 1927, but not until Heidegger’s reinterpretation of his 1929 treatise was it made explicit and, as it were, acted out through the

experience of “beyng” in the margins.⁵⁸ In a passage from 1936-38 that pulls together our interpretation of “On the Essence of Ground,” Heidegger leaves no doubt about what is at stake when he recasts the transition, from fundamental ontology to thinking being as such, in terms of the performance of the difference: “the naming of the ontological difference” must be *experienced* “if the very question of being is to be awakened as a question,” and as “belonging to Da-sein,” this difference “will assume the form of a, indeed *the*, ‘basic structure’ of Da-sein itself.”⁵⁹

Insofar as fundamental ontology had arrived in 1929 at its proper completion in ontological difference as the possibility of all ontological thought, it itself prepared the transition to beyng. But insofar as this difference was taken as a metaphysical doctrine in which being is objectified alongside beings, fundamental ontology had to be “overcome.” The task of the “overcoming” is “to carry out this differentiation in a non-representational way” which, for Heidegger, necessitates the *turning over* of this difference in Dasein such that what was previously seen as a positing of beings and being on the same conceptual plane is now flipped over entirely to reveal the plane of beyng as event.⁶⁰ As the *nether side* of the ontological difference, beyng is neither one side nor the other but at once the truth of the distinction and the event of its *overturning*, both its saying and its occurrence. The treatise that brought fundamental ontology to completion in naming the ontological difference as the essence of ground presupposed all along the occurrence of “beyng” in the margins, because only through the thinking of beyng, through an appropriative performance of differentiation that overturns the foregoing precisely in order to preserve its truth, could the truth of the distinction as event be given to thought. In this way, the ontological difference is a “passageway” through the crisis of the objectification of being toward the truth of being as such, which can unfold only in Da-sein’s carrying out of the difference in a differentiating event that overcomes objectification: the projection of the nether side of the ontological difference, beyng.⁶¹ Only in the experience of the nether side of difference can one be open to the “abyss of ground” that Heidegger says is Dasein’s finitude, whether as temporality, transcendence, or freedom toward ground.

We could say that the performance of the ontological difference means doing justice to the truth of fundamental ontology, namely, the two senses of temporality, Dasein’s transcendence as the relation of its existence and understanding, and the essence of ground. By “justice” we do not mean true statements about something, rather it is a truth that takes place as the peculiar transcendence of Dasein wherein ontological difference is encountered and appropriated. The ontological difference, properly understood, is not a conceptual grasping of an opposition, but it is a carrying out of the distinction in the unity of beyng. It happens at exactly the moment when the reader experiences the disorienting occurrence of “beyng” in the margins of “On the Essence of Ground.” This disorientation places the reader over the “abyss” of metaphysics for a second time, face to face with the nether side of ontological difference and the meaning of Dasein’s transcendence. The first time was, of course, when Heidegger first raised the problem of the distinction and the task of the transition from beings to being in the introduction to *Being and Time*. The fact that fundamental ontology ends this way, requiring an overturning and a disorienting leap into the language of “beyng,” does not necessarily make it a failure if, as I have argued here, the completion of fundamental ontology is a way of bringing about this transition.⁶²

In this way, “On the Essence of Ground,” its discourse on ontological difference and the recognition of what has been left unsaid—or, rather, *undone*—in the existential-ontological texts, brings Heidegger full circle back to the initial wonderment that launched *Being and Time*: “For

manifestly you have long been aware of what you mean when you use the expression ‘*being*.’ We, however, who used to think we understood it, have now become perplexed.”⁶³

VI. CAPUTO’S CHALLENGE

We now find ourselves within the transition from *Sein* to *Seyn*, from the concept to its eventful overturning, within the margins of Heidegger’s 1929 treatise on ground, and the issue at stake is the performance of justice to the task of *Being and Time*. It is at this exact point and on this issue that I want to bring in Derrida, for it is here in these margins of fundamental ontology that Derrida can help us clarify the type of justice that we might find in Heidegger. But what kind of transition is it that goes from Heidegger to Derrida? Certainly not a straightforward succession. There are many good reasons to believe that a transition between these two is not possible, or at least not wise, for there are well-known objections, from Derrida himself as well as from others, to the idea of tracing a line of influence coming from Heidegger’s question of being and his destruction of the history of ontology toward Derrida and deconstruction.

The most formidable challenge that our transition faces has been expressed by John Caputo, who definitively marked the greatest point of contention between Heidegger and Derrida in his *Demythologizing Heidegger*. Concluding his discussion of the divide between them, Caputo writes, “Whatever debt Derrida owes to Heidegger—and this debt is considerable and it is not wise to understate it—on this point at least, . . . ‘deconstruction’ and the ‘thought of Being’ could not be more deeply at odds.”⁶⁴ The point that divides these two thinkers is what Caputo calls “jewgreek” thinking, referring to a synthesis of the philosophical, Greek tradition with a set of experiences, narratives, and concerns connected to the Jewish and biblical traditions that explicitly deal with the pain and suffering of humans in their everyday lives. Heidegger, he says, excludes this tradition from his thinking and, for this reason, never develops an explicit ethics nor concern for responsibility to others. Despite having made concrete, everyday human experience relevant to philosophy through his early phenomenological works and the existential analysis of Dasein, Heidegger’s later “gigantic metanarrative about the march of Being through History . . . leaves factual life in the dust” and “drowns out the ‘call of the other.’”⁶⁵ Heidegger’s thought, he says, suffers from a lack of *kardia* and leaves “the issue of the flesh,” of pain and suffering, of victims of injustices, “outside the pale of ‘fundamental ontology’ or the ‘thought of Being.’”⁶⁶ What the exclusion of “jewgreek” thinking comes down to is justice, says Caputo, “for it is justice that is missing from Being, justice that is mystified and mythologized by Being, justice that is abandoned by Being.”⁶⁷ Thus, through his project of “demythologizing” Heidegger, Caputo seeks “to expose the myth of Being to the shock of a jewgreek myth of justice, to oppose a jewgreek myth and a jewgreek imagination to a pure Greek myth.”⁶⁸

To Heidegger’s “myth of Being” Caputo opposes the “jewgreek myth,” a myth of justice. In developing his account of justice to counteract the later Heidegger’s neglect of the question of ethical responsibility, Caputo looks to Levinas and, more importantly, Derrida and deconstruction. But in Caputo’s reading of Derrida’s “Force of Law: The ‘Mystical Foundation of Authority’” (FL) something interesting happens, something that points to a possible reconciliation between Heidegger and Derrida on the same point of difference that divides them. For in his interpretation of Derrida’s claim that “deconstruction is justice,” Caputo unwittingly ends up sounding much like a certain Heidegger—the Heidegger we have come to know through the existential-ontological texts and in the margins of EG. Indeed, there are not only casual

similarities between Heidegger, Derrida, and Caputo on this matter, but, as we will see, Derrida's correlation of deconstruction and justice appropriates a key moment in Heidegger's thought. Caputo is not able to fully separate Heidegger and Derrida on the point of justice because his own deconstructive hermeneutic takes the Heideggerian fundamental ontology and overcoming of metaphysics as its starting point, such that in his transition from Heidegger to Derrida, Caputo makes a Heideggerian transition, in his "leap" from Heidegger's ontological responsibility to a responsibility to the other, Caputo makes a Heideggerian "leap," and in their "stepping back" from law to create a space for justice, Caputo and Derrida appropriate the Heideggerian "step back" from metaphysics in order to be true to being as such and the limits of language. All three of these movements—the transition, the leap, and the step back—refer to the same moment: a performance of the ontological difference wherein transcending Dasein appropriates truth in a non-representational way. Thus even accepting all the difficulties raised by Caputo's challenge to Heidegger, the transition to Derrida is best thought of as a move "beyond Heidegger but by way of Heidegger."⁶⁹

What I want to suggest is that the reason Caputo's justice has this resonance of a Heideggerian note is because Derrida, in bringing the discussion of justice to the realm of the founding of law, to what precedes and exceeds law, is drawing on an essential moment in Heidegger's thought. This moment is what we found above in Heidegger's account of temporality as Dasein's transcendence and of the performance of ontological difference as the truth of the essence of ground. For this reason, we will interpret Derrida in the direction of the possibility of a reconciliation with Heidegger on exactly the point at which Caputo sees them irreconcilably at odds.

The goal of this transition to Derrida is not to eliminate their differences in both approach and answers to the basic philosophical questions that occupy them. My contention is not that Heidegger developed an explicit concept of justice as we will here or that he would approve of Derrida's account. Nor am I dismissing the difficult biographical and political problems presented by Heidegger's life, his support for the Nazi Party, his refusal to offer a clear retraction of that support in his later years, and the anti-Semitism that has become all the more disturbing with the release of his notebooks from the 30s and 40s. Instead, as a reconciliation, the task is to interpret these thinkers again in a joint effort destructive-deconstructive retrieval of unthought possibilities in their texts, so that they might work together on exactly that point which previously divided them. Through this reconciliation we will see how justice relates to temporality, ontological difference, and the task at stake.

VII. ON THE ESSENCE OF LAW

We turn, then, to Derrida, looking to our evaluation of Heidegger's fundamental ontology as a guide to the transition. We will focus on FL, in which Derrida is concerned with the problem of juridical grounding and the relation between deconstruction and justice. After a brief summary to orient our reading, I will focus on two ways in which Derrida's discussion can be read within the margins of Heidegger. First, I will propose reading Derrida's account of "the mystical foundation of authority" as an application of Heidegger's account of the essence of ground to the problem of the foundation of law. Second, we will look at Derrida's claim, "deconstruction is justice," and attempt to illuminate it along with Heidegger's claim that temporality is the ontological essence of Dasein.

In FL Derrida is addressing a discussion on the problem of “deconstruction and the possibility of justice,” and he begins by questioning the very formulation of this problem. While some say that deconstruction “does . . . insure, permit, authorize the possibility of justice. . . . make[s] justice possible, or a discourse of consequence on justice and the conditions of its possibility,” others claim that there is no such positive relation between deconstruction and justice but, rather, “deconstruction doesn’t in itself permit any just action, any just discourse on justice but instead constitutes a threat to *droit*, to law or right, and ruins the condition of the very possibility of justice.”⁷⁰ The two conventional interpretations of the relationship are: either deconstruction makes justice or a discourse on justice possible, or deconstruction complicates justice by threatening law. But this “either/or” evaluation of deconstruction as “just” or “unjust” is unsatisfactory, because both views trade on a confusion between law and justice. Derrida is concerned that the issues at stake—justice, law, and “the mystical foundation of authority”—cannot receive adequate treatment under the imposed rubric of an “either/or” evaluation of deconstruction and justice. Thus, the key to Derrida’s discussion on justice is in his reformulation of the original problem “deconstruction and the possibility of justice” as “deconstruction is justice.” Further, it is the transformation of the relation between deconstruction and justice that is the locus of a possible reconciliation between Derrida and Heidegger.

The path that arrives at this transformation begins with the complexities surrounding the relation between force and law, indicated in the following passage:

Gewalt, then, is both violence and legitimate power, justified authority. How are we to distinguish between the force of law of a legitimate power and the supposedly originary violence that must have established this authority and that could not itself have been authorized by any anterior legitimacy, so that, in this initial moment, it is neither legal nor illegal—or, others would quickly say, neither just nor unjust?⁷¹

In posing this question, Derrida alters the landscape of the problematic relation between deconstruction and justice. There are three points in this passage that we should highlight. (1) *Gewalt* serves the purpose, for Derrida, of introducing a key distinction between the grounded violence of authority or law and the violence that establishes authority but, consequently, is not itself grounded as authority. (2) Law is justified authority or legitimate power, that is, law is grounded. (3) What grounds law, then, is the “originary violence” which establishes law’s authority and “that could not itself have been authorized by any anterior legitimacy.” In order to understand “legitimate power, justified authority,” we must raise the question of the meaning of law. Law is founded or justified in the founding act. Hence, the essence of law lies in the “originary violence” from out of which it is legitimated and constituted as law. And since this “initial moment” of foundation precedes law, it can be neither legal nor illegal. The recognition of this distinction is essentially Montaigne’s insight that “laws were not in themselves just but rather were just only because they were laws.”⁷² Law, according to this insight, is not self-grounding but has its essence in a more primordial sphere or event, namely, the “originary violence” that establishes law. In the above passage, then, Derrida shifts the focus from law itself, the domain in which the opposing categories of legal and illegal apply, to the founding act which grounds law and precedes juridical categorization. We could say that Derrida steps back from the “ontic,” the sphere of laws and norms, in order to think the “ontological,” the essence of law, and this move brings the discussion into the domain of the “originary” act that constitutes

law.

Derrida's first step in the reformulation of the question of justice is his movement out of the sphere of law itself and into its origins, the founding act and the one who founds. The second step is the recognition of the limits of this domain of the founding act. But if the domain of founding is the condition of possibility for law to be grounded, then that which makes *founding itself* possible cannot be anything like founding or foundation. To indicate the limits of the founding act, Derrida quotes Montaigne: "And so laws keep up their good standing, not because they are just, but because they are laws: that is the mystical foundation of their authority," to which Derrida responds, "*Here Montaigne is clearly distinguishing laws, that is to say droit, from justice. The justice of law, justice as law is not justice.*"⁷³ The essence of law, its founding act, is delimited through the separation of law and justice. That which is founded in the founding act is not justice itself, but law, and Pascal's interpretation clarifies the point. Says Pascal, "simple reason tells us that nothing is just in itself; everything crumbles with time. Custom is the sole basis for equity, for the simple reason that it is received; it is the mystical foundation of authority."⁷⁴ Law is the result of the contextual, historical act of founding. Justice itself, the other side of the domain of founding, cannot be any particular law, but is in fact "nothing." For Derrida this means that justice, as opposed to law, is incalculable, indeterminate, and not deconstructible.⁷⁵ Thus, the founding act grounds law on the basis of "an infinite idea of justice."⁷⁶

In discovering the importance of the difference between law and infinite justice for Derrida's discussion, we find a clear homologue for ontological difference. Founding and the one who founds constitute the space that opens up between law, which we might provisionally call "ontic" justice, and justice itself. Thus the essence of law, like the essence of ground in Heidegger, is discovered in the opening up of the difference between "ontic" and "ontological," the domain of things grounded and the other side of ground. Further, we have followed Derrida making the two movements toward "the essence of law" that Heidegger makes. First, Derrida traces law to its origin in the founding act. Then, he recognizes the nether side of this domain of founding as "nothing" at all but "infinite," "incalculable" justice. It is this "ontological" difference, the distinction between "ontic" manifestations of justice, called law, and infinite justice that constantly recedes from law, which the original problem of "deconstruction and the possibility of justice" failed to recognize. The "either/or" of the relation between deconstruction and justice is unsatisfactory because this formulation of the problem commits "equivocal slippages between law (*droit*) and justice."⁷⁷ This essential distinction between law and justice is precisely the insight that Derrida gets from Montaigne's "mystical foundation of authority." The "mystical foundation of authority" indicates, for Derrida, the obligation to "consistently try to distinguish [law] from justice,"⁷⁸ and consequently opens up a "primordial" difference through which justice can be adequately treated.

Having brought the question of the essence of law to the domain of founding, we can now see how Derrida arrives at the reformulation of the relation between deconstruction and justice, and how our interpretation of Heidegger brings clarity to Derrida's central claim in FL, which is found in the following passage:

But the paradox I'd like to submit for discussion is the following: it 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. No more than deconstruction itself, if such a thing exists. Deconstruction is justice.⁷⁹

Derrida's claim that deconstruction is justice results from the recognition of the paradox that an incalculable, infinite idea of justice must be calculated in a particular law. The only way to be just toward justice in this paradox is to *follow* infinite justice by ceaselessly refounding law, which requires the deconstruction of existing law. Derrida continues,

(1) The deconstructibility of law (*droit*), of legality, legitimacy or legitimation (for example) 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*.⁸⁰

The paradox, (1) and (2), results in a separation (3), which is the interval or spacing that opens between calculable law and incalculable justice and is characterized by the task of founding, instituting, or grounding law. Deconstruction, which means to be in this paradox, is temporally determined and strewn across three ecstases. In relation to beings for whom justice is an issue, infinite justice always “remains, is yet, to come.” Justice “opens up . . . the recasting or refounding of law” because of this “to come” ecstasis of deconstruction.⁸¹ But deconstruction is also always already taking up a basis in the tradition of law. Says Derrida, “the sense of a responsibility without limits . . . before memory; and so the task of recalling the history, the origin and subsequent direction, thus the limits, of concepts of justice. . . . the task of a historical and interpretive memory is at the heart of deconstruction.”⁸² These past and future ecstases of deconstruction are summarized as follows: “for a decision to be just and responsible, it must, in its proper moment if there is one, be both regulated and without regulation: it must conserve the law and also destroy it.”⁸³ Past law and justice “yet to come” come together in the founding act of law, even while justice recedes from law. Justice, as the temporally determined task, is following or being true to infinite justice rather than juridical or ethical calculation. Deconstruction shakes loose past law that disguises the excessiveness of justice; justice continual founds and re-founds law out of the well of infinite justice. For Derrida, deconstruction *is* justice because both name the temporally determined grounding of something in the name of “something” groundless—“nothing,” the nether side of ground—and both mean doing justice to the singular, which compared to traditional legal distinctions is the nether side of law.

Heidegger's account of temporality and ontological difference as a task illuminate Derrida's account of law as deconstructible and justice as deconstruction. Justice for Derrida is not merely the movement of law through history, nor is it conformity to a universal. As we showed in our reading of EG, thinking the ontological difference was the crucial insight that brought Heidegger from abstractions to the essence of ground in the being that grounds, so for Derrida the thinking of the aporia of calculable law and incalculable justice makes possible the space in which we trace justice to the nether side of all legal concepts. The question of the essence of law appears now as the corollary of the question of the essence of ground, and the relation of justice to deconstruction is, for Derrida, no more a relation between two entities than is the relation of temporality to transcendence or existence to understanding in Heidegger.

In reading FL through Derrida's claim, “deconstruction is justice,” we first saw that law

is grounded in the founding act which, in turn, is itself groundless. The groundlessness of founding is the “infinite” justice which itself withdraws from calculation, but, precisely for this reason, requires its calculation into law. The founding act is, then, the commitment to following justice through continual recalculation of its manifestation in law, and this recalculation requires deconstruction of law toward re-founding. In other words, through the “ontico-ontological difference” between law and justice, the “mystical foundation of authority” is traced to justice itself. The doing of justice is precisely this difference, which requires both the founding of law out of the unfoundedness of justice and a commitment to temporality, to what is always left “to come” and remains incalculable. If, as Derrida claims, deconstruction is the temporally determined essence of the founding that does justice and the activity of the difference between law and justice, then deconstruction means the doing of justice to justice itself. For the being between law and justice, deconstruction is justice.

VIII. LANGUAGE AND THE “EVENT” OF JUSTICE

With this reading of Derrida’s “Force of Law” under our belt, we are now prepared to answer Caputo’s challenge to Heidegger. I have said that in his reading of Derrida on justice Caputo’s language strikes a certain Heideggerian note, and we can now see why. To accomplish his reformulation of the relationship between deconstruction and justice, Derrida keys his language to temporality and ontological difference, and Caputo’s reading confirms this. First, far from residing with the universal, with laws, norms, and principles, justice is “a projection upon the possible, not a remodeling of the world according to a model or *archē*.” It is the impossible with respect to the already established possibilities, for justice “cultivates the possible as possible” out of an incalculable future, “an unforeseeable *avenir*.” Justice “calls from a past that was never present toward a future that is open and indeterminate, which is only ‘to come.’” For Caputo, as for Derrida, the transcendence of justice beyond law has a futural priority, and this should remind us, he says, of temporality and transcendence from Heidegger’s existential-ontological texts, where “being-toward-the-future is a matter of holding oneself open to an indefinite, open-ended future, not the calculated expectation of a more or less foreseeable future actuality.”⁸⁴ Yet despite this shared desire to be true to temporality, to do justice to the limits of law, he says, Heidegger makes the fatal mistake of wanting to instantiate the originally open future of being (early writings) as the specific future of the Germans and of the Greek beginning (later writings), and ultimately Caputo does not want to let Heidegger join the conversation on justice for reasons that we will get to in a moment.

Second, for Caputo as for us here, a just account of justice must appropriate the language of an essential difference as task. On his reading of Derrida, deconstruction seeks “to inhabit the gap between ethico-political philosophy and the frailty of action. . . . to operate within the difference,” i.e., between justice as ethical theory or law and justice in an existential-ontological sense. Deconstruction is related to justice as the task of “traversing the space between the universal and the singular, between the law and justice, between the calculable and the incalculable, to keep the lines of communication open between them.”⁸⁵ Further, Caputo hints at my contention above that the meaning of justice is found in Derrida’s reformulation of the “either/or.” If deconstruction *is* justice, then it cannot be such as a term in opposition to law, something “outside the economy *différance*” and immune to its opposite.⁸⁶ But Caputo stops short of the radical reformulation of the problem of justice in Derrida when he continues to

separate deconstruction and justice into two terms, two distinct acts. It is not enough, as Derrida warns from the outset of FL, to say that deconstruction does the work of opening this essential difference, preparing the way for subsequent acts of justice. Rather, justice must *be* this difference itself—it must open the gap between law and the remainder left over by ethical calculation in order to be true to that which exceeds the domain of established norms and universals. Justice, Derrida wants to say, is another name for what Caputo calls deconstruction: that which “swings across the abyss that opens up between the impossible universal and the singular that steals away,”⁸⁷ this abyss being the interval between law and that which exceeds it. The performance of ontological difference is thus, in this sense of encounter with the nether side of law and metaphysics, an “event” of justice.

What is at the heart of justice, then, for Caputo and Derrida? Why must we talk about justice in this way of difference and temporal transcendence along the border between law and justice, ground and abyss? Here again Caputo is on point and in key with Heidegger in the margins of 1929, for what it comes down to is an issue of language, what can and cannot be said, what metaphysics tries to say and what it must leave unsaid, and of the performance of the difference between ground and groundlessness. Caputo proposes to locate the heart of justice “in a grammatical operation, a rhetorical trope, a work of grammar and linguistic invention, which arise by way of a response to the demands that are placed upon us by the singularity of the Other.” Justice is “hyperbolic” justice for Caputo because it refers to “the excess of a linguistic performance,” to the language of the difference between the universal and the singular, to the watching over of what remains outside the law and the universal, and to the “saying” of what is left unsaid—indeed, what cannot be said—by metaphysics. Since the singularity with which justice is concerned “lies on the extreme limits of language,” justice entails a responsibility to watch over language and its limits.⁸⁸ Metaphysics—whether it be political philosophy that speaks of action and law, ethics that deals with individual responsibility, or ontology—is a certain type of saying and grounding. Justice is the task of a responsibility to the unnamed and unsayable remains of metaphysics. But here again, even as he brings us to the limits of language and the edge of metaphysics, mirroring the way in which the Heidegger from the 30s wrote in the margins of the Heidegger of 1929, Caputo stops short of a reconciliation with Heidegger and insists that “the name of justice is not the name of propriety and appropriation itself, of *Ereignis*, not the name of Being’s appropriating event, but the myth of the smallest singularities.”⁸⁹

In developing his myth of justice to atone for the absence of justice in Heidegger’s texts, Caputo has unwittingly arrived at the language of ontological difference and the idea of a justice that performs the difference at the limits of language, yet he insists throughout that this justice is not a point of reconciliation between Heidegger and Derrida but the greatest divide between them. How can this be explained? Why does Caputo see only a separation between Heidegger and Derrida on the point of justice, even while he appropriates the Heideggerian moment to develop his myth of justice? Why does he not, as I do here, locate his “linguistic performance” of doing justice to the other of metaphysics in the occurrence of “beyng” in the margins of fundamental ontology? The root of this disaccord can be traced to Caputo’s interpretation of EG, which goes back to his 1975 “Study of Heideggerian Self-Criticism.” Here Caputo reads Heidegger’s 1929 treatise in light of the 1955-56 lecture course *The Principle of Reason*, and thus interprets the former solely within the horizon of “the history and mission of being.”⁹⁰ This interpretation of the later Heidegger’s “self-criticism” is decisive for Caputo’s subsequent work. It is “the point of departure” for his mostly positive appraisal of Heidegger in *The Mystical*

Element, while it also holds the key to his break with Heidegger and turn toward Derrida on the point of justice in *Demythologizing Heidegger*, as we have seen above.⁹¹ Due to his interpretive starting point, Caputo sees a turn to the “gigantic metanarrative about the march of Being through History” already in 1929, and he locates his critique of Heidegger—that Heidegger’s “myth of Being” does not permit justice—in this turn to being itself.

I do not contend that his reading of this important text is wrong, for indeed it does illuminate a certain path that Heidegger’s thought takes in the later writings and the dangers that it holds in relation to pressing political and ethical questions. Rather, what I have attempted to show here is that by overemphasizing the “myth of Being” Caputo has passed over the marginal moment of 1929 that puts thought on another path, the path of, as Caputo likes to say, a Heidegger against Heidegger, a path which has the potential to reconcile, if even just for a moment, Derrida and Heidegger on justice.

Quite other than anything like a “mission,” “march,” or “metanarrative” of being that excludes justice and the concern for the singular, the occurrence of “beyng” in the margins of EG is an “event” of justice itself, a linguistic performance necessitated by a responsibility to the full dimensionality of being and to that which is excluded in metaphysics’s attempt to bring everything into account in the manner of grounding and naming. What we find in EG is the performance of a transition from the existential analysis of Dasein, being as law, structure, and metaphysics, to that which exceeds and precedes law, the possibility of something other than metaphysics and the language of the universal which threatens to march past all difference. This marginal “event” is the transitional moment of thought when an “originary appropriation” of what came before—metaphysics and the completion of fundamental ontology—necessitates a leap into the other of metaphysics, the nether side of ground.⁹² Insofar as it is Heidegger’s attempt to be true to the task of *Being and Time* and to the meaning of ontological difference as the “step back” from the totalizing and objectifying machinery of metaphysics, we can call it an *event of justice* and, as such, the appropriate starting point for a reconciliation between Heidegger, Caputo, and Derrida. Our confrontation with Caputo has shown that the language that seeks the essence of law, the language of that which exceeds, precedes, and deconstructs law for the sake of the singular (which, compared to the *rules* of law and the *things* of metaphysics, is indeed *nothing*), this language of justice is not incompatible with Heidegger’s thought. On the contrary, as a language in the margins, always in transition between beginnings and eluding a universal saying, it indicates the performance of ontological difference.

IX. *EREIGNIS* AND THE PERFORMANCE OF DIFFERENCE

The insight driving my interpretation of Heidegger has been that since at least *Being and Time* the idea of a transition from thinking in terms of beings to thinking being, from metaphysics to its other, has been at the heart of Heidegger’s thought, that this led to a crisis between naming and performance which he dealt with in the margins of “On the Essence of Ground,” and further that we can consider this performance a type of justice to the issue at stake in fundamental ontology. Before concluding, we need finally to address the question of the nature of this performance to which we have been referring throughout, and this will serve to bring together the key themes of our investigation.

In what does the eventfulness of the “event” of *Seyn* consist, and in what way is the “occurrence” of “beyng” in the margins a performance of ontological difference? In a passage of

EG where the question of Dasein's transcendence as "occurrence" and the possibility of ontological difference are at stake, Heidegger writes in the margin, *das Geschehen nicht als "Sprung," und dieser? Er-eignet im Ereignis*, by which he means: these questions can only be done justice through thinking this essential "occurrence" as *Ereignis*.⁹³ How, then, does *Ereignis* relate to the current investigation? On the one hand, I agree with Thomas Sheehan that the "event" cannot refer to an event or occurrence in the conventional sense. This would be inconsistent with the existentiell-existential and ontic-ontological distinctions which are decisive for Heidegger's thought in the texts that we have looked at here, and, anyway, Heidegger has insisted against such an interpretation of *Ereignis*, as Sheehan shows.⁹⁴ On the other hand, Heidegger's eventful introduction of *Sein* in the margins of EG, contemporaneous with his development of *Ereignis* in *Contributions*, resists being reduced to a new language about being, which, as such, would reduce in the end to another proposition of metaphysics and representational thought—exactly what these terms were introduced to displace. Staying with Sheehan for a moment, we can say that *Ereignis* is the "fact" of appropriation, of Dasein's being in the peculiar way that it is. It is not what happens, not this or that event, but that "without which there are no other facts, events, or happenings in the human realm. This Fact . . . both determines and is coterminous with ex-sistence, without being supervenient to or separable from it. . . . It is always already operative wherever there is ex-sistence." *Ereignis* as the "fact" of existence is the always already operative *Da* of *Sein*, that Dasein exists in the way of being in the clearing of being, what Heidegger later calls *die Lichtung*, the always already operative open space that makes possible Dasein's existing-understanding.⁹⁵ Further, says Sheehan, this "fact" of existence is nothing other than a reappropriation of the meaning of Dasein from *Being and Time*: the peculiar way of Dasein's existing as thrown, thrown-open, the openness of being that allows beings to be present. Thus the central issue of fundamental ontology, temporality, has an essential connection to *Ereignis*, for *Temporalität* was for Heidegger "only *ein Vorname*, a preliminary and halting attempt to articulate" what is later called the clearing.⁹⁶

Sheehan has helped clarify what we claimed in section I, namely, that in the existential-ontological texts *Temporalität* is a clue to the question of the meaning of being itself, and later, in section IV, that it helps Heidegger perform the transition at stake from fundamental ontology to *Contributions*, where *Temporalität* becomes "the occurrence of the opening and grounding of the 'there' and thus of the essence of truth," as "the truth of beyng."⁹⁷ Taken in its connection to Dasein's basic constitution, temporality and its truth in *Temporalität*, then, *Ereignis* is not so much a new concept that Heidegger employs in order to distance himself from an earlier project, nor does it cue the "abandonment" of the question of being from *Being and Time*. Rather, *Ereignis* is the "event" hinted at in these transitional keywords that we have found in the margins of fundamental ontology—temporality, ontological difference, and justice. Textually, the "event" is the transition from the guiding question to the basic question. Existentially, it is the fact of Dasein's perennial crisis between metaphysics and its other, between naming and transformative encounter, from ground to the "leap" into its turning, the nether side. This *Ereignis*, this "fact," is what Heidegger had in view when, appropriating his 1929 claim that Dasein's "entry into world" was not an ontic event but the "occurrence" of transcendence, he wrote in the margins: "the essence of the 'occurrence' [*Geschehen*] – temporalizing of Temporality [*Temporalität*] as the preliminary name for the truth of beyng."⁹⁸ With this note Heidegger inscribes *Ereignis* in the margins of fundamental ontology.

We have clarified the meaning of the "event" as the marginal moment in Heidegger's

thought that correlates both to a textual transition in his works (what some Heidegger scholars call the “turn”) and to a transformation inherent to Dasein’s existence, and we thus connect *Ereignis* to the truth of ontological difference as appropriation. In the same way that Sheehan argues that *Ereignis* is not a discrete historical fact but the *da* of *Sein*, so with “performance” we refer not to any single intentional “act” but to the appropriation of the full dimensionality of ontological difference. That and how this performance entails a transformative encounter for Dasein is elucidated well in the work of David Wood. In his *Thinking After Heidegger*, Wood has made a convincing case that a critical issue at stake throughout Heidegger’s thought, and specifically in *Contributions*, is the working out of certain initial discoveries in an eventful and performative way that, in order to be true to the nature of those discoveries, seeks a transformative encounter for both thinker and reader. This would coincide with and provide a wider context for our discovery here that what is at stake in the margins of EG is precisely such an “event” that brings the thinker and reader together in a crisis that creates the conditions necessary for a disruption of metaphysical interpretations of fundamental ontology. Wood contends that the thrust of Heidegger’s philosophical practice is “the dramatic staging of the question of performativity in many simultaneous dimensions.”⁹⁹ Heidegger’s turn toward performativity in *Contributions* is not so much a change in topic or leaving behind of one intellectual project for another, but rather a necessity grown out of Heidegger’s prior working out of philosophical problems in an original way, and this necessary performativity has historical parallels in the works of Hegel, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche. What is really at stake for Heidegger and these others is the arrival at certain philosophical ideas whose very content resists elaboration through the forms of representational thinking and intellectual objectification, because these ideas point to what Wood describes as the double-character of philosophical truth. Performativity, says Wood, is a case of the “resistance to the distinction between theory and practice,” and it becomes an issue for the philosopher in those moments when “philosophy discovers that the shape and modes of engagement of its own practice is the hidden locus of what needs to change.”¹⁰⁰

Specifically in the case of Heidegger, *Contributions* can be seen as the announcement of a “double crisis” which brings the author to grapple with “the performative imperative.” The double crisis is the crisis in philosophy which entails “a crisis in the human spirit.”¹⁰¹ In the same way that the question of the meaning of being must pass through the question of the meaning of Dasein in *Being and Time*, the crisis at which the question of being arrives—the completion of fundamental ontology at the limits of metaphysics that we have described here—requires not merely a further elaboration of what has gone before nor a change in concept, but rather a change in the thinker and the way of approaching the question. Overcoming the model of representational thinking that has created the crisis in philosophy is not simply a matter of replacing it with a new model of thinking, which would always reduce in the end to a new type of representation. The key to the performative imperative that the double crisis indicates is that we can only twist free from representation, *Machenschaft*, calculative thinking, etc., if our fundamental philosophemes are “reinscribed in a dimensionality in which their own mastery is shown to be conditioned.”¹⁰² *Contributions*, says Wood, is Heidegger’s attempt “to mark the moment of thinking as the moment at which a break with representation occurs, at which we cease to speak about, and begin to speak, we cease to write about, and begin to write.”¹⁰³ Wood’s point is that the very theme of *Contributions*, the crisis of being, compels Heidegger to speak, write, and engage the reader from out of the unique dimensionality of *Seyn* and *Ereignis* in order

to displace and decenter our fundamental orientation—as philosophers and, more importantly, as readers and human beings. Finally, then, what Heidegger’s performative imperative is about is “enacting self-transformation,” which requires an “interruption on selfhood” in which the human being is displaced out of representational meanings of self and into Dasein. And for Heidegger in *Contributions*, such a displacement into Dasein means a transition from the naming and analysis of Dasein (*Being and Time*) to achieving the standpoint of Dasein as “the ‘between’ between being and a being,” which, as such, provides the possibility of “thinking from eventuation, thinking from the standpoint of being.”¹⁰⁴

Wood’s account of performativity in Heidegger’s *Contributions* picks up where Sheehan’s account of *Ereignis* leaves off: while Sheehan has shown the “event” to be the “fact” of the matter in Heidegger’s thought, Wood turns that “fact” over into its proper dimension as a performance and thus demonstrates why *Contributions* is structured the way it is, why the introduction of a new, uncanny vocabulary is necessitated by the matter being thought, and why Heidegger speaks not *about* but *from Ereignis*. Bringing Sheehan and Wood together, we could say that the fact of appropriation latent in fundamental ontology, Dasein’s thrownness and the understanding of being, leads Heidegger to *Er-eignet im Ereignis*, the *appropriation of appropriation* and the performance of the question of being through the enactment of its truth as transformational encounter. Or, to put it in the language of transcendence from the existential-ontological texts (section II above), Dasein’s understanding entails an appropriation in Dasein’s existence, because Dasein is that being whose peculiar way of being is to comport itself toward beings in light of its understanding of being. Dasein’s mark of identification, as it were, is the double crisis and transition between understanding and existence, between naming and performance, beings and being. Philosophy, to reinvent Marx’s saying, has brought being under the pacifying control of its propositions; the point, however, is to enact the displacement of the philosopher back into the full dimensionality of the crisis, into the space of *Ereignis* and the “between” of ontological difference.

It is no coincidence that through Sheehan and Wood, *Ereignis* and performativity, we arrive at the imperative of a transformation into Dasein as the “between” between beings and being, for we have said all along that the ontological difference is at the center of the transformation necessitated by the arrival of fundamental ontology at its limits. In section IV, we saw how the naming of ontological difference in EG created an existential-ontological crisis, for what was being named was the very difference between what can and cannot be named, between what can be said and what exceeds every saying. This crisis necessitated, for Heidegger, a shift to performativity in *Contributions*, as Wood has shown, which is demonstrated in a uniquely eventful way in the margins of EG, as we have argued here. The transition to the question of the meaning of being itself, which fundamental ontology hinted at but could not complete with the resources available to it, entails the transformation of the one who questions because it entails the truth of the difference between being and beings, *Ereignis*. Heidegger’s insistence, in the introduction to *Being and Time*, that “every seeking gets guided beforehand by what is sought” is played out in the opening paragraphs of *Contributions*: the “transition from metaphysics to the thinking of beyng” is “in its most proper character” an “event,” *Ereignis*, in which the “essential occurrence of beyng” is “traversed,” “appropriated over into the appropriating event,” and this is all equivalent to “an essential transformation of the human being” into Da-sein, now understood as the truth of the ontological difference as the carrying out the differentiation.¹⁰⁵

In his later private writings published posthumously as *Zum Ereignis-Denken*, Heidegger

laments that the naming of the ontological difference in EG had been misconstrued as something like a foundational principle or “magic formula” with which anything can be done, when the naming “only points to the occasion for a question concerning that which is to-be-thought: the truth of being.” He continues:

With the talk of “being” and “being itself,” this “being itself” never means being as the beingness of beings, but rather as the *truth of being* (in short, *beyng*). “Being itself” is no longer “the being” (of beings); it is the difference as the carrying out [*Austrag*]. . . . People talk of the ontological difference in the same way that a chemist refers to a virus in terms of its virulence, as if they finally had a grasp on the innermost workings of the matter. They do not consider that their grasping is not yet *thinking*.¹⁰⁶

Therefore, we must be careful here not to think this carrying out of ontological difference as anything like a correct concept or intellectual grasping of the difference between beings and being, though there must always be a moment of such grasping in transitional thinking. For this reason, I have suggested the language of the “overturning” of difference as a clue.¹⁰⁷ If the *naming* of ontological difference was the completion of fundamental ontology in the clarification of the difference between beings and being as the essence of ground, then the *performance* of ontological difference, in which the understanding is appropriated into existence such that Dasein becomes this difference in its most basic constitution, is the *turning over* of the difference between beings and being into its third dimension which, as such, “overcomes” the difference precisely by becoming the truth of the difference. This third dimension of truth Heidegger calls *Ereignis*, that which he later refers to as the very matter for thinking.¹⁰⁸ The *overturning* of the difference indicates that its naming necessitates a transformation in Dasein, that the two-dimensional plane of representational truth and binary opposition is being uprooted, and that this truth is not that of a subject comprehending its object but truth as appropriative “event” and encounter with *Sein* as *Seyn*. This sheds new light on why Heidegger consistently describes the transition at stake in his thought with the language of turning and going over (*Kehre*, *Umschlag*, *Übergang*, *Überwindung*): the turning over of the concept of ontological difference into *Seyn* is an image-turned-performance signaling the doing of justice to the full dimensionality of the task latent in *Being and Time*.

If before we might have wondered why Heidegger would direct the editor of *Wegmarken* to include the marginal notes in the main body of the original texts that make up that volume, texts that certainly stand on their own, we may now see this decision as preparation for an encounter with the marginal moment in Heidegger’s path of thought by creating, as Wood says of *Contributions*, “a stage for the development of transformational possibilities” in which “the reader is projected as a party to this text.”¹⁰⁹ The “occurrence” of *Seyn* in the margins of EG brings the reader to an encounter and crisis wherein a transformation of Dasein is at stake, allowing for the overturning of ontological difference into its truth which cannot be named, said, or represented in the manner of an objectifying metaphysics but can only be appropriated and performed. We arrive, then, at *Ereignis* as the doing of justice to the original insight that launched *Being and Time*: that the question of being, taken in its full dimensionality, will displace the detached knowing subject into temporality, into appropriation as task, into the transition between the concept of difference and its being carried out at the limits of metaphysical language.

X. CONCLUSION

We have pointed to the occurrence of *Seyn* in the margins of EG, along with the reader's appropriation of the meaning of ontological difference, as the performance of a task at stake since *Being and Time*. Have we found, then, at the heart of Heidegger's thought, a prescription for action in accord with the correct concept of difference? We should remember that the one for whom these questions are an issue, Dasein, is that *peculiar* being who as such is already "in the performance of the distinction," and thus the difference is the operative "fact" in existence (*der Unterschied ist da*). This would seem to suggest that the performance is no performance at all, that the task is no task, for if the difference is always already operative, and if so long as there are beings like Dasein truth will occur, then there is nothing to do. Furthermore, our discussion of Heidegger's thought has employed two apparently contradictory concepts, namely, performance and occurrence—the transitive, agent-centered act and the intransitive, impersonal happening—the being of Dasein and the truth of being. We have identified a task to be carried out (*vollziehen*), in one sense a performance inherent to Dasein, and yet it already comes to pass (*geschehen*), in another sense the occurrence of being. Where is the action located, then? Who is the real actor behind this *Ereignis*? Is it a being or is it being?

This is pre-transition thinking that has forgotten the clue to being itself in *Temporalität*, the truth of ontological difference as overturning difference, and the meaning of justice as being true to the marginal remains of metaphysical ordering. The Heidegger of the 1920s may have attempted to answer the above "performative" contradiction through the rigorous projection of being across the field of philosophical problems, and indeed in 1928 he envisioned a new investigation that would "think being as the being of beings" so radically and universally that it would "bring ontology to its latent overturning [Umschlag]" through which a "turn-around [Kehre]" is carried out and fundamental ontology would come into conversation with questions of "the metaphysics of existence."¹¹⁰ But by the mid-1930s it had become clear that such a forceful objectification of being and ordering of beings in fact blocked the way toward being as such by entrenching thought further in a flat, metaphysical distinction. In order to do justice to the meaning of ontological difference, the task would have to take a radically different form: the *letting be* of being in the full dimensionality of truth, or, *das Seinlassen des Seins als Ereignis*.¹¹¹ This "letting be" is the bridge (*Übergang*) between performance and occurrence in Heidegger's thought from the 1930s on. Not to be confused with non-action, it is a responsiveness to and watching out for the truth of being and precisely the meaning of justice that I have proposed be applied to the transition in Heidegger's thought that has been our focus here. Caputo came close to this interpretation, but, compelled to separate himself and Derrida from Heidegger on the issue of justice, and in a great feat of irony, he came to see in Heidegger's *Sein* only the "Being" that lords itself over beings, missing the meaning of ontological difference in *Seyn* of the margins, where truth occurs outside the totalizing language of metaphysics. As justice, the letting be is what allows the performance of difference to be its overturning rather than merely an ontological naming or a pre-scripted act—and it is indistinguishable from the essential occurrence of being itself (*die Wesung des Seyns*). Since for Heidegger it is within this letting occur of the truth of being as *Ereignis* that the difference comes into its own, justice could not be done to such truth through its objectification in an explicit ontology. It would have to be pointed out in the margins of fundamental ontology as a language *vom Ereignis* and as a crisis between *Sein* and *Seyn*.

Historically, Heidegger's first use of *Sein* is likely during the 1934-35 lectures on Hölderlin.¹¹² But textually and philosophically, for the reader working through Heidegger's texts, the encounter with *Sein* is likely in the margins of the 1929 "On the Essence of Ground," as the reader is transitioning from *Being and Time* to *Contributions*.¹¹³ Heidegger's writing of "beyng" into these margins prepares the way for an encounter with the existential-ontological crisis through which the meaning of ontological difference is *appropriated* for the first time. That is, what was at first only cognized as a concept of the difference between two terms, beings and being, in this treatise that "names the ontological difference," now becomes an existential issue for the reader as he or she is cast over the abyss of ground and wonder-struck with regard to the meaning of "being" as it has been developed in fundamental ontology. This crisis does not represent a failure of *Being and Time* but rather a leap into its margins, out of which justice is done to the original.

All the discussion about the "turn," reversal, or shift in Heidegger's thought can leave one seasick from being tossed between the two shores of the earlier and later writings. Some, as we have seen Jaran do above, go so far as to talk about the later Heidegger's abandonment of the earlier, "failed" works. Others, like Caputo, would cling to the safety of the early 1920s. Sheehan and Wood provide clues to the *Ereignis*-character of the turn, but unless *Dasein* becomes itself the performance of the differentiation we fall short of what Heidegger calls the "leap" that overturns the separation.

What I have tried to show here is that the text of "On the Essence of Ground" points to the meaning of the turn by enacting it, and that this meaning is neither a logical conclusion from nor a leaving behind of the existential-ontological analysis of the 1920s but can only be appropriated in the experience of a crisis and the task of a transition in the margins of fundamental ontology. This is not to deny the difficulties that Heidegger's later writings present and the radicality with which they sometimes seem to diverge from the simple task set forth in *Being and Time*, or the political problems posed by Heidegger's biography. EG suggests a way to think Heidegger's path along the margins of fundamental ontology, where it is possible to hold together both a positive retrieval of the existential-ontological project and the performance of a critique of its limits. We have located this critical moment in the notes that the Heidegger of *Contributions* wrote to himself in the text from 1929, but the moment can be seen throughout his thought as a repetition of the problem of the difference between beings and being and the attempt to overturn that difference through the eventful performance of *Ereignis* and *Sein*. This interpretation of the margins of fundamental ontology, with the linguistic cues of temporality, ontological difference, and justice, is consistent with Heidegger's contention that although there was certainly a shift in his thought—from being to beyng, from fundamental ontology to *Ereignis*—the fundamental issue was never abandoned, for "the reversal is in play within the matter itself," and so "the question of *Being and Time* is decisively fulfilled in the thinking of the reversal."¹¹⁴ The translation of *die Kehre* as "reversal" is unfortunate, as it brings to mind exactly the types of reversals and distinctions that keep the metaphysician's mind turning but are not themselves the thing itself, the issue at stake. We can now understand this "reversal" as the overturning (the performance "in play" along the margins of the concept) of difference itself, and though the "ontological" was dropped for its ties to a language of metaphysics, the playing out of the difference remained decisive in Heidegger's later thought.¹¹⁵ In other words, what we have called here the overturning of ontological difference (into its *Ereignis*-dimensionality) is, in fact, *the turning, die Kehre*.

There is a recurring debate among Heidegger scholars about whether the foremost issue is thinking being in terms of Dasein or thinking Dasein in terms of being, whether the emphasis falls on “meaning” or “being” in the question of the meaning of being. Our interpretation here takes no side in this debate, for the truth is that in metaphysical debates, as in the ontological difference, each side is bound to the other while both have the same stance with respect to the abyss over which they precariously hang. Nor even could our interpretation be considered a middle way, if such a way conjures up images of the line that separates or synthesizes beings and being on the two-dimensional plane of representation. What is operative here in the performance of difference is not the *Aufhebung* that sees two terms in their progressively higher unity. The overturning produces no such result, but rather it is *die Sache selbst*, that which was “there” in the task of *Being and Time*, in the question of being that passes through the clue of temporality, in the peculiar character of transcendence, in the occurrence of Da-sein, and finally, in being itself, *Seyn*. But where is the “there” of *Seyn*? *Er-eignet im Ereignis*. It comes into its own in the margins of fundamental ontology, where what is at stake in Heidegger’s thought is neither being nor a being but the overcoming of the difference through its appropriation.

In concluding his 1931-32 lecture course on Hegel, Heidegger asks, “What should man do as an existing being? *Where* does he stand, that he should or should not make the leap and so become something other than man?” “Or,” he continues, “perhaps man does not stand at all and is rather a transition? And is man as such a transition wholly incomparable, so that he would be driven *before being*, in order to comport himself, as the one who exists, toward beings as beings?” What is important here—as in *Being and Time*, *Contributions*, and wherever the issue is philosophy as *task*—is not maxims about the status of the human being, nor formulas for the ordering of being, but that we carry out the matter to be thought, even and especially when being itself is to be transformed. And so Heidegger concludes:

The first and proper indication that you have understood something of what was essentially unspoken but constantly at issue here, can only take the form of awakening in you a will to do justice to the work in its innermost demand—each for his part and according to his ability and measure.¹¹⁶

ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-----|---|
| BPP | Heidegger, <i>The Basic Problems of Phenomenology</i> |
| BT | Heidegger, <i>Being and Time</i> |
| CP | Heidegger, <i>Contributions</i> |
| EG | Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground” |
| FL | Derrida, “Force of Law” |
| KPM | Heidegger, <i>Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics</i> |
| MFL | Heidegger, <i>The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic</i> |

HEIDEGGER’S TEXTS

The Basic Problems of Phenomenology. Trans. Albert Hofstadter. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988;
Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie. Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1975.
Being and Time. Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. San Francisco: Harper-Collins, 1962; *Sein und Zeit*.
 Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2006.

- Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*. Trans. Richard Rojcewicz and Daniela Vallega-Neu. Bloomington: Indiana University, 2012; *Gesamtausgabe*, Band 65, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*. Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1989.
- Das Ereignis*, *Gesamtausgabe*, Band 71. Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2009.
- Zum Ereignis-Denken*, *Gesamtausgabe*, Band 73.2. Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2013.
- Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly. Bloomington: Indiana University, 1988; *Gesamtausgabe*, Band 32, *Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes*. Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1997.
- Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. Trans. Richard Taft. Bloomington: Indiana University, 1990.
- "Letter on Humanism," Trans. Frank A. Capuzzi, in *Pathmarks*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*. Trans. Michael Heim. Bloomington: Indiana University, 1984; *Gesamtausgabe*, Band 26, *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik im Ausgang von Leibniz*. Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2007.
- "On the Essence of Ground." Trans. William McNeill. In *Pathmarks*. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1998;
- "Vom Wesen des Grundes." In *Gesamtausgabe*, Band 9, *Wegmarken*. Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1976.
- "The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics." Trans. Joan Stambaugh. In *Identity and Difference*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Heidegger, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, 147.
- ² Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," 250.
- ³ CP, 143.
- ⁴ The idea that the marginal notes of "On the Essence of Ground" could point to a larger "marginal" moment in Heidegger's path of thought, requiring in this way a reading of Heidegger along those margins, has been significantly explored only, as far as I know, in the work of Matthew C. Halteman. See his *The Problem of Transcendence in Heidegger and Derrida* (doctoral dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 2004), particularly chapter 3 where Halteman offers a novel reading of transcendence in Heidegger by "retrieving" BT precisely through going beyond it in the later MFL and EG texts.
- ⁵ BT, 34-35.
- ⁶ BT, 39.
- ⁷ BT, 38.
- ⁸ BT, 40.
- ⁹ With "existential-ontological texts" I refer to BT plus the lectures and texts that continue the project of existential analysis and fundamental ontology, principally BPP, MFL, and KPM.
- ¹⁰ BT, 40 and 45.
- ¹¹ In BT, Heidegger says he will pursue the "task of destruction with the problematic of Temporality as our clue" (45), and he gives the plan for Part Two of BT as "a phenomenological destruction of the history of ontology, with the problematic of Temporality as our clue" (63). This task is taken up in Part Two of the BPP lecture, where the destruction of the Aristotelian concept of time leads to Dasein's temporality, and *Temporalität* takes center stage as the clue for interpreting ontological difference. In CP, *Temporalität* is then transferred to the language of *Seyn* and *Ereignis* and is the "tacit presentiment of," or hinting at, "the event": "the occurrence of the opening and grounding of the 'there' and thus of the essence of truth" (59).
- ¹² MFL, 158.
- ¹³ This whole sketch of the transition from existing to understanding is drawn from BPP, section 20. In KPM, Heidegger associates the relation between existing and understanding to human finitude: "And yet, *if the understanding of being did not occur*, man could never be as the being which he is, . . . Existence is only possible on the grounds of the understanding of Being" (159).
- ¹⁴ CP, 59.
- ¹⁵ I refer the reader looking for an extended analysis of temporality in Heidegger to David Wood's *Time After Time* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), Part II, where the *Zeitlichkeit-Temporalität* distinction is discussed within the broader context of the various roles of time in Heidegger's thought.
- ¹⁶ These definitions are drawn from BPP, 274.
- ¹⁷ See MFL, 197 for more.
- ¹⁸ MFL, 198. As "ecstatic," temporality is movement and activity, like a "stepping out itself," "traversing" through an "open path," or "rapture," rather than an object or property (205). Heidegger characterizes temporality in this

- way because it is the very being of Dasein “on-the-way, as the stepping-over, as *transcendence*” (202).
 19 MFL, 201-202.
 20 MFL, 204.
 21 MFL, 205-206.
 22 MFL, 208.
 23 MFL, 211.
 24 MFL, 213-214.
 25 BPP, 227.
 26 This sketch of the relation between existing and understanding is taken from BPP, 275-276, 265, 300-302.
 27 BPP, 281-282.
 28 BPP, 302.
 29 In his classic *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* (The Hague: Marinus Nijhoff, 1963), William J. Richardson devotes a chapter to EG, though because his work was published before the first *Wegmarken* edition of EG, he apparently did not have the marginal notes which, along with other self-interpretative comments by Heidegger, will be critical to my interpretation here. Other notable commentaries on EG are: John D. Caputo, “The Principle of Sufficient Reason: A Study of Heideggerian Self-Criticism” (*Southern Journal of Philosophy* 13 (Winter 1975): 419-426); and François Jaran, “Toward a Metaphysical Freedom: Heidegger’s Project of a Metaphysics of Dasein” (*International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 18, no. 2 (2010): 205-227). Both of these focus on EG as signaling a turn away from BT and fundamental ontology. Caputo reads EG from the perspective of the later Heidegger’s “mission” or history of Being. Jaran reads EG as one of Heidegger’s last attempts at a “metaphysics of Dasein,” a project he would try to overcome in the 30s. My reading here, while accepting both Caputo’s and Jaran’s reading of EG in light of a certain later Heidegger, goes in the opposite direction by finding the necessity of Heidegger’s self-critique of EG latent in BT. This interpretation takes its starting point from Matthew C. Halteman’s hermeneutic approach of reading the “two tiers of interpretative engagement” latent in EG (“Overcoming Ontological Transcendence: The Hermeneutic Significance of Heidegger’s ‘On the Essence of Ground’” (unpublished manuscript), p. 3). While Halteman demonstrates the centrality of the transcendence issue in Heidegger’s transition, my aim will be to show how the ontological difference is in play in all these issues.
 30 EG, 98.
 31 EG, 99.
 32 EG, 102.
 33 EG, 103.
 34 EG, 103.
 35 Heidegger makes this connection between grounding, transcendence, and temporality in EG, 128.
 36 EG, 127.
 37 EG, 131.
 38 EG, 98.
 39 EG, 97.
 40 MFL, 152.
 41 EG was written in 1928 and first published in 1929. Though it is tempting to date the thoughts in the first edition marginalia to as early as 1929, this would be a mistake for reasons that the editor of *Wegmarken* states (see *Pathmarks*, 384). Rather, it is likely that these notes were written in Heidegger’s 1929 edition of the treatise during the 1934-1938 period, when “beyng” begins to appear in lectures and private writings and Heidegger is writing his *Anmerkungen zu Vom Wesen des Grundes* (1936), looking back to this treatise and seeing hints of what would later be made explicit in *Contributions*. Nevertheless, that Heidegger writes these notes, so crucial to understanding the “turn,” in this 1929 treatise is an indication that an important transition occurs here and that “beyng” must be seen in the margins of this text (see CP, 355).
 42 EG, 104 and 105.
 43 “The relation of being, as being, to the human essence. The extent to which the proper thinking of beyng is *not a questioning*” (EG, 130).
 44 Heidegger himself makes this connection between “beyng” and “Temporalität” as we will see further below.
 45 Jaran, 217.
 46 EG, 100 and 104.
 47 Jaran, 219.

- ⁴⁸ KPM, 167.
- ⁴⁹ CP, 136.
- ⁵⁰ Heidegger, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, 36-37. Heidegger warns against interpreting *die Kehre* in terms of rejection, abandonment, leaving behind, or reversal of opinion in too many passages to list here. A few more examples will suffice to support my claim that “beyng” must be interpreted via an existential-appropriative transition launched from within the problematic of *Being and Time* and fundamental ontology. See CP 67, 136; *Pathmarks*, 249-250, 279, 313-315 and 376 (translator’s note 6); Heidegger’s preface to *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought*; the opening and closing quotes to this paper.
- ⁵¹ CP, 355.
- ⁵² CP, 5, 66-67.
- ⁵³ CP, 233.
- ⁵⁴ EG, 104 and 105. Lastly, *Zum Ereignis-Denken*, 1067 (my translation).
- ⁵⁵ EG, 123. See also *Zum Ereignis-Denken*, 1067: “The way of approach is not determined as a leap to be carried out [*vollzogen*] and as such risked” (my translation).
- ⁵⁶ Or as Heidegger says in *Zum Ereignis-Denken*, 1067: “Dasein *is* as such *the* differentiation – and the question of the origin of the differentiation points beyond into Ereignis. The differentiation grasped as *going beyond differentiation*” (my translation).
- ⁵⁷ This interpretation, suggested in section I, of *Temporalität* as another name for the truth of beyng as event is supported in CP 59, 184, 232.
- ⁵⁸ In 1927 Heidegger says: “The distinction *is there, ist da* [i.e. exists]; that is to say, it has the mode of being of the Dasein: it belongs to existence. Existence means, as it were, ‘to be in the performance [*Vollzug*] of this distinction” (BPP, 319).
- ⁵⁹ CP, 369.
- ⁶⁰ CP, 368.
- ⁶¹ CP, 367.
- ⁶² I disagree with Jaran that “we can easily speak of *Sein und Zeit* as a failure” (Jaran, 218). The wonderment with which the question of the meaning of being is first posed and the doubt and disorientation with which the question ends are inseparable from the project of fundamental ontology developed in BT. The same groundwork for the “turn” that Jaran sees in EG, I see implicit in the existential-ontological texts, as shown above. Heidegger says as much when he reflects on the importance of BT, in a statement with which Jaran would no doubt agree: “the road it has taken remains even today a necessary one, if our Dasein is to be stirred by the question of Being” (BT, Author’s Preface).
- ⁶³ BT, 1. Heidegger is quoting from Plato’s *Sophist*.
- ⁶⁴ John Caputo, *Demythologizing Heidegger* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 209.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 74.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 70.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 186-187.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 6-7.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 100. In Heidegger’s own thought, says Caputo, “a space opens up” for going beyond Heidegger. For Caputo, Heidegger’s great contribution to the history of philosophy is the hermeneutic-destructive moment of the “leap” and the “step back” as transitional methods between ontic and ontological considerations, e.g., between propositional truth and existential-ontological truth, or between traditional metaphysical questions and thinking the ground of metaphysics. It is interesting, then, that Caputo does not recognize the Heideggerian moment in Derrida’s account of justice, indeed, that he sees no possibility of a transition between Heidegger and questions of ethical responsibility (see *The Mystical Element in Heidegger’s Thought* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986), 254-261).
- ⁷⁰ Jacques Derrida, “Force of Law: The ‘Mystical Foundation of Authority’,” in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, ed. Drucilla Cornell (New York: Routledge, 1992), 3-4.
- ⁷¹ FL, 6.
- ⁷² FL, 11.
- ⁷³ FL, 12.
- ⁷⁴ FL, 12.
- ⁷⁵ For example, “justice in itself, if such a thing exists, outside or beyond law, is not deconstructible” (14), and “law is the element of calculation, and it is just that there be law, but justice is incalculable, it requires us to

- calculate with the incalculable. . . . the decision between just and unjust is never insured by a rule” (16). The result of such an “infinite idea of justice” is that “there is never a moment that we can say *in the present* that a decision *is* just” (23), because “nothing is just in itself” and *no thing* is justice (12).
- 76 FL, 24.
 77 FL, 4.
 78 FL, 15.
 79 FL, 15.
 80 FL, 15.
 81 FL, 27.
 82 FL, 19.
 83 FL, 23.
 84 Caputo, *Demythologizing Heidegger*, 207.
 85 *Ibid.*, 189, 194-195.
 86 *Ibid.*, 197.
 87 *Ibid.*, 205.
 88 *Ibid.*, 200.
 89 *Ibid.*
 90 Caputo, “The Principle of Sufficient Reason,” 424.
 91 Caputo, *The Mystical Element*, 47.
 92 “The originary appropriation of the first beginning means gaining a foothold in the other beginning” (CP, 135).
 93 Heidegger, “Vom Wesen des Grundes,” 159. The standard English translation is: “occurrence not as ‘leap,’ and the latter? Comes into its own in the event of appropriation” (EG, 123). Heidegger says here that Dasein’s occurring was not yet, in 1929, considered in relation to *Ereignis*, though this occurring itself—transcendence—is what makes possible the transition to thinking *Ereignis*.
 94 Sheehan, “What, after all, was Heidegger about?” *Continental Philosophy Review*, 47, Online Version (2014): 19-20.
 95 *Ibid.*, 18-20.
 96 *Ibid.*, 15-18.
 97 CP, 59.
 98 EG, 123.
 99 David Wood, *Thinking After Heidegger* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), 153-154.
 100 *Ibid.*, 156-158.
 101 *Ibid.*, 160.
 102 *Ibid.*, 169.
 103 *Ibid.*, 170-171.
 104 *Ibid.*, 182-184.
 105 BT, 24; CP, 5. See also CP 233 and 369.
 106 *Zum Ereignis-Denken*, 1054 (my translation).
 107 What is under discussion here is precisely *not* the “mere turning around” of *Umwendung* which Heidegger uses, e.g., in *Das Ereignis*, §297, to designate the two-dimensional concept of ontological difference that plays one side against another in a metaphysical battle in which neither side achieves an essential change in stance—neither turns its ground over into the truth of beyng. What I am calling *the overturning* is closer to Heidegger’s *Überwindung* and *Übergang*, though it is closest to *Ereignis* itself. Halteman hints at this when he says that the overturning is an event spurred by Heidegger’s “progressive elaboration of transcendence” (“Overcoming Ontological Transcendence,” 42), though we would have to question how his transcendence might relate to what I call the overturning of ontological difference.
 108 Thus in *Zum Ereignis-Denken*, Heidegger talks of “the occasion for a question concerning that which is to-be-thought [*Zu-Denkenden*]: the truth of beyng” (1054, my translation).
 109 Wood, *Thinking After Heidegger*, 185-186.
 110 MFL, 157-158.
 111 *Beiträge*, 118.
 112 It would take another paper to discuss the interesting parallels between our investigation here and Heidegger’s use of *Seyn* in the transition from “Germania” to “The Rhine” as a “poetic saying of the mystery” that is “not supposed to express anything, but to leave the unsayable unsaid, and to do so in and through its saying.” See

Hölderlin's Hymns: "Germania" and "The Rhine," trans. William McNeill and Julia Ireland (Bloomington: Indiana University, 2014), pp. 108 and 122.

¹¹³ See note 41 above. It is true that posthumous editions of *Sein und Zeit* include marginal notes which reference *Seyn*. My opinion is that such notes are not yet helpful for the reader still working through BT, where *Seyn* is likely to become consumed by the conceptual distinction just introduced in that text. Only once the reader has arrived at the completion of fundamental ontology in 1929 can *Seyn* become, not just a historically interesting footnote, but the overturning into its truth.

¹¹⁴ Richardson, xvi-xvii.

¹¹⁵ For example, in "The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics" (1957) Heidegger differentiates his thought from Hegel's by comparing the *Aufhebung*, the totalizing and all-encompassing movement of metaphysics, to the "step back" from metaphysics cued by the difference between beings and being (*Identity and Difference*, 50-51). And volume 2 of *Zum Ereignis-Denken* is dedicated to the relation between *Ereignis* and difference in Heidegger's thought from the 1930s on.

¹¹⁶ *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, 149. In conclusion, I want to thank the editor for his patience and the three anonymous reviewers who provided helpful comments. My deepest gratitude, finally, goes to my teacher and friend, Matt Halteman, for his seminar in which the difference first became a crisis and for our conversations over the years.