

Heidegger, Will to Power and Gestell

A dominant reading of Heidegger conceives of temporality, Ereignis, the copula, via an interpenetrating of fact and value, the in-between of performativity. Between beings and being or ontological and ontic for them means between form (representation) and content, subject and object, theory and practice, stasis and change.

According to John Caputo, to radicalize the thinking of experience is to avoid the temptation to preempt the play of history by reifying it into formalisms. He cites many ways in which philosophy has attempted to force experience into such ungroundable universals, such as the Cartesian idea of truth as correspondence with an independent reality, with language acting as the pure vehicle of communication or mediation between an autonomous subject and an environment. Even as the more recent efforts of semiological structuralists (Saussure, Lacan, Chomsky, Levi-Strauss) broke away from this atomistic tradition by positing language as a system of signs regulated by the unity of a schematic center, Caputo recognizes that these writers failed to address the historical genesis of such structures. He re-iterates the poststructuralist realization that larger structures and conventions of language are as ungroundable and contingent as the particulars which they presumably regulate.

Against these tendencies, Caputo argues there would be no infinite which steers or commands all things, no center or origin which is the key to a system of signs. Instead, there would be a differential system of signifiers without signified. Caputo says "Repetition and representation cut into the very essence of signs, and it is never possible to separate out an original and a representative element within them" (RH133). Caputo affirms that language transforms what it embraces; in representing thought it always represents differently-disruptively.

There would be no metavocabulary to arrive at, only a continual re-contextualization of language conventions and practices. If we create the world through speech rather than approximate it, this is not a unidirectional endeavor. We don't invent words for our purposes, we are invented and reinvented, along with our purposes, by the contingent vocabularies that we participate in as cultural beings, and these vocabularies are transient. Not the autonomous self-conscious subject intimate with her goals, but the heteronymous subject always at a distance from herself, losing and gaining her identity differently through history. Caputo refers to this repetition of becoming as flux, and also as an ethics of dissemination, borrowing the term from Derrida. For Caputo, the conventions of language and culture which lay claim to us as individuals are utterly without permanence. The very basis of experience in its radical contingency guarantees the inevitable dispersal of all power structures (Radical Hermeneutics 288) which would try to persist in their self-sameness; to understand this is to actively and endlessly participate in a critical emancipation from certainties. Caputo says that the instability in personal experience that this implies requires a jettisoning of a notion of 'self' in favor of a site of 'non-identity, difference' (RH289), flux, a place of "disruption, irruption, solicitation" (RH289).

James Osborn associates Gestell (enframing, schema, theory) with "the problem of the theoretical reduction of being (enframing, schematization, etc.)", "the schematization of subjectivity-objectivity", "concept, theory, object of knowledge", "terms of a formula", 'mechanical arrangement and technical know-how'. The topic of Ereignis enters his discussions of Heidegger via the thematics of transformation. He writes "Sein cannot be a fixed structure or static nature but must also have a transformative activity, movement, and relation in its

nature." 'Being itself is transformation', "transformation as praxis "goes beyond being a concept, theory, object of knowledge, etc. It somehow concerns the wholeness of beings in their multi-dimensionality."

"Transformation is inherently something that happens to and with beings in the whole of their being." "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."

We might be tempted to assume that, by making non-dialectical movement and becoming the central ethic of experience, the hold of foundational metaphysics has been broken, and that this primordial transitivity of Being drives the movement of Heideggerian temporality, the ontological difference and Ereignis.

But if we examine Heidegger's treatment of Nietzsche's Will to Power in 'The Word of Nietzsche: "God Is Dead"', (located in The Question Concerning Technology), it seems that Heidegger identified Nietzsche's thinking of self-transformation of values-structures as the last stand of metaphysics.

Heidegger argues "The will to power is the ground of the necessity of value-positing and of the origin of the possibility of value judgment." "The principle of value-positing" comes out of the ground of Being as Will to Power. According to Heidegger's reading, particular value-structures become stabilized by the Will, and present themselves to the subject. This "constant reserve"(William Lovitt's translation, seemingly closely allied with 'standing reserve') belongs to the sphere from out of which the will to power wills itself.

Heidegger concludes that Will to Power, as the principle of value positing, remains within metaphysics. But what is of particular interest to me is how Heidegger treats the nature of Nietzschean value-structures. He appears to derive them via his analysis of present-to-hand interpretation in Being and Time. How so? He says, as valuative perspective, point-of-view "has set before itself and thus posited what is sighted". "This that is steadily constant, however, is transformed into the fixedly constant, i.e., becomes that which stands steadily at something's disposal, only in being brought to a stand through a setting in place. That setting in place has the character of a producing that sets before. That which is steadily constant in this way is that which remains."

What Heidegger seems to be doing here is showing how Nietzsche modifies interpretation into theoretical statement. What is sighted is what is posited, via a levelling down of the circumspensive 'as' structure into mere subject-predicate 'pointing to'. It is in this way made 'fixedly constant' as present-to-hand Being in a classical metaphysical sense. Heidegger writes "Often Nietzsche calls that which is steadily constant-again remaining true to the manner of speaking of metaphysical thinking-"Being."". Like Caputo's 'tentative schemes', "structures which evolve, linger for a while and pass"(RH198), "contingent arrangements of signs"(p.220), Nietzschean beings, as values, linger, 'remain', are 'constant' within a contingent time-frame.

Let's compare this to Heidegger's discussion of the statement, or assertion, in Being and Time. My aim in revisiting what is well-trodden ground for most Heideggerians is to show how the interpretation of Kehre and Ereignis is shaped by the way one reads Heidegger's ontological grounding of theory, perspective, Gestell, science in Being and Time.

Heidegger considers the statement, as assertion, as the basis of theory, logic and the objectivity of the natural sciences. "Statement is tantamount to predication". A "predicate" is "stated" about a "subject," the latter is determined by the former." "Positing the subject, positing the predicate, and positing them together

are thoroughly "apophantic" in the strict sense of the word. "Like interpretation in general, the statement necessarily has its existential foundations in fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception. But how does the statement become a derivative mode of interpretation? What has been modified in it?" Heidegger says predication points something out in a way that we sheerly look at it. By transforming the circumspective 'something "as" something' into 'this subject "as" this object', the 'as' is forced back to the uniform level of what is merely objectively present. It "dwindles to the structure of just letting what is objectively present be seen by way of determination." "When we just stare at something, our just-having-it-before-us lies before us as a failure to understand it any more." Heidegger recognizes the theoretical as an impoverished, 'cut-off' modification of understanding. But because, ontologically, it originates from and never departs from heedful circumspective care, it is not in-itself devoid of transformation, such as to require supplementation by a notion of the transformative. Such supplementation was Nietzsche's gesture in the form of the Will to Power's value-positing.

If one begins from the thinking of value-perspective as fundamental to beings, then in order to express the contingency of these constructions, it is necessary to invoke an additional gesture. Even if one claims the event of transformation as a complex unity of same-difference; Ereignis functions as 'more than' structure, it is the happening of what happens to a being. James Osborn writes that transformation as praxis "goes beyond being a concept, theory, object of knowledge, etc". By contrast, the heedful circumspective 'as' structure of being-in-the-world determines such entities as concepts, schemes, etc, to be already internally split as fore-structuring temporality, transformed within their supposed lingering as 'this', before there would ever need to be a 'going beyond'. Transformation would not be what happens to a being, it would be to say that 'to be' is already a happening.

For Heidegger Nietzsche is the last metaphysician because he determines truth in relation to the establishment of value-scheme. "Despite all his overturnings and revaluings of metaphysics, Nietzsche remains in the unbroken line of the metaphysical tradition when he calls that which is established and made fast in the will to power for its own preservation purely and simply Being, or what is in being, or truth. Accordingly, truth is a condition posited in the essence of the will to power, namely, the condition of the preservation of power. Truth is, as this condition, a value." It is not that, for Heidegger, Nietzsche fails to overcome, to think 'more than' truth as value-structure, or as Osborn puts it, to bring "thought to a region beyond the schematization of subjectivity-objectivity", to the happening of Being. Heidegger says "moving out beyond itself", the "opening up and supplementing" of possibilities belongs to the essence of the Will to Power.

But beginning from schematism is starting too late ("But because the will can will only from out of its disposal over something steadily constant, truth is a necessary value precisely from out of the essence of the will to power, for that will"). Starting from beings as value-structures turns Will to Power itself into a value, the highest value. What Nietzsche fails to do is think from WITHIN, that is, AS the supposed self-presencing lingering of the schematism. The fore-structuring gesture of transcendence is not what goes beyond schematism, or before it as its condition of possibility, but what is 'built into' it, what happens IN the 'is', AS the 'is'.

Heidegger tells us that in the manner of positing as point of view, as pointing out, forming the thinking of theoretical proposition, one is at the same time "putting together and taking apart"(synthesis and diairesis). But this way of binding and separating externalizes and formalizes itself(via "the analysis of logos in an external "theory of judgment") as a "relating", a "system of coordinations" BETWEEN representations. Heidegger inquires: "what phenomenon is it then WITHIN(emphasis mine) the structure of the logos that allows and requires us to characterize every statement as synthesis and diairesis? What is to be got at

phenomenally with the formal structures of "binding" and "separating," more precisely, with the unity of the two, is the phenomenon of "something as something."

As an "ontologically insufficient interpretation of the logos", what the mode of interpretation of propositional statement doesn't understand about itself is that thinking of itself as external 'relating' makes the propositional 'is' an inert synthesis, and conceals its ontological basis as attuned, relevant taking of 'something AS something'. In accordance with this affected-affecting care structure, something is understood WITH REGARD TO something else. This means that it is taken together with it, but not in the manner of a synthesizing relating. Heidegger instead describes the 'as' as a "confrontation that understands, interprets, and articulates, [and] at the same time takes apart what has been put together." Transcendence locates itself in this way within the very heart of the theoretical concept. Simply determining something AS something is a transforming-performing. It "understands, interprets, and articulates", and thereby "takes apart" and changes what it affirms by merely pointing at it, by merely having it happen to 'BE' itself. Thus, the problem of the primordial grounding of the 'is', and the analysis of the logos are the same problem. "...if the formal characteristics of "relation" and "binding" cannot contribute anything phenomenally to the factual structural analysis of the logos, the phenomenon intended with the term copula finally has nothing to do with bond and binding."

Heidegger writes: "The "is" here speaks transitively, in transition. Being here becomes present in the manner of a transition to beings. But Being does not leave its own place and go over to beings, as though beings were first without Being and could be approached by Being subsequently. Being transits (that), comes unconcealingly over (that) which arrives as something of itself unconcealed only by that coming-over." "That differentiation alone grants and holds apart the "between," in which the overwhelming and the arrival are held toward one another, are borne away from and toward each other."(Identity and Difference.p.64)

If Gestell as understood undeconstructively as present-to-hand value-structure ("structures which evolve, linger for a while and pass"(RH198)), the notion of transformation becomes an external binding, and Heidegger's equi-primordial grounding modes of Being(care, discourse, attunement, temporality, the 'is') are forced into the role of value-structures.

(All citations from Being and Time are the Stambaugh translation, German pages 157-160)