

which differs from any “normative ought” expressible by an imperative, and which does not imply “can.”

See also Max Scheler (Chapter 3); Moral philosophy (Chapter 38); The social sciences (Chapter 57).

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Further reading

For more recent treatments sympathetic to some aspects of Scheler’s general approach, see T. L. S. Sprigge, *The Rational Foundations of Ethics* (London: Routledge, 1988); M. Johnston, “The Authority of Affect,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 63 (2001): 181–214; and P. Poellner, “Affect, Value, and Objectivity,” in B. Leiter and N. Sinhababu (eds) *Nietzsche and Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Some important or historically influential criticisms of that approach – from very different perspectives – can be found in M. Heidegger, “Letter on ‘Humanism’,” in *Basic Writings*, ed. D. F. Krell (London: Routledge, 1949/1993); J.-P. Sartre, *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions* (London: Routledge, 1939/2002); R. Wedgwood, “Sensing Values?” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 63 (2001): 215–23. An excellent discussion of Husserl’s idea, shared by Scheler among others, that intentional experiences as “lived through” cannot be intentional objects, can be found in D. Zahavi, *Self-Awareness and Alterity* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1999), especially chs 4 and 6.

THE MEANING OF BEING

Thomas Schwarz Wentzer

Ontology from a hermeneutical point of view

It is safe to say that throughout his whole philosophical career, Heidegger was concerned with this one single issue: Being. What is more, Heidegger even declares the question concerning Being the “proper and sole theme of philosophy” as such (Heidegger 1988: 11). True philosophy is or should be ontology, i.e. an enquiry revisiting the Aristotelian project of a first philosophy by investigating what is with regard to its very Being (2001: 46; 1992a: 368). (Following Macquarrie and Robinson, the translators of *Sein und Zeit*, I will distinguish between “being” as gerund [alternatively the infinitive “to be”] when referring to the verb to be [*sein*] and “Being” [capitalized] when referring to the substantive form [*Sein*]. I will use “entity” or “entities” when referring to things that are.) However, it is far from clear how we are supposed to understand this notion of Being to begin with. Not because “Being” and “to be” are unknown foreign phenomena or highly sophisticated subjects only available to the specialists of advanced philosophical research. On the contrary, “we” (i.e. every human being living her life) have already proved to possess some understanding of Being merely by being what and who we are. We have no trouble in grasping the meaning of linguistic expressions that either imply or are formed in sentences containing “to be” and its conjugations. And yet “we” (i.e. philosophy and philosophers in the tradition of Western thinking since Plato) do not have a sufficient philosophical theory that could offer a comprehensive account of Being. As human beings we are always already acquainted and familiar with being; but as philosophers we do not even understand the significance of its question without further ado. A first step to overcome this ontological lacuna would be to explicitly articulate our practical or pre-ontological understanding of Being in philosophical terms, thus paving a way into ontology not by means of interrogating formal aspects of what there is and can be demonstrated to exist, but by questioning the very meaning of “to be” in the first place. Heidegger’s contribution to ontology consists in tirelessly advocating the need for a sufficient understanding of this question, often put forward by uncovering implicit ontological presuppositions in previous Western thinking, and mostly articulated in a way that departs from the tradition and traditional philosophical language.

The outlined asymmetry between the pre-ontological and ontological understanding performed by “us” marks the hermeneutical approach of Heidegger’s early thinking.

For once, the pronoun “we” does not merely serve as a rhetorical expression that attempts to address the reader where other options would have been more elegant. Heidegger makes a point of methodological significance out of the fact that philosophical activity is an accomplishment of human practice (Heidegger 1962: 33; 2008: 3). As human beings cannot just be described as entities occurring in the world alongside others, but must be seen as creatures that are occupied with the way they perform their individual being, the ontological perspective is already inherent in the daily pursuits of human life and does not come along as a sophisticated additive. Ontology in Heidegger’s hermeneutical sense provides an interpretative explication of the occupancy with being that humans have already proven to have mastered. Thus understood, ontology is a “hermeneutic of facticity” (2008) that, growing from factual life itself, interprets the ways in which humans exercise their understanding of being. This peculiar circularity legitimizes the priority of the human being as *Dasein*, conceived as “that entity which in principle is to be *interrogated* beforehand as to its Being” (1962: 35). Exploring the meaning of Being – arguably a fundamental endeavor for ontological analysis – must thus start out questioning the way human beings are as to their capability of being.

In other words, Heidegger’s hermeneutical version of phenomenology wants to trace ontology back to its very origin, which does not involve a timeless conception of nature or of the divine but concerns actual human life in its being-in-the-world, i.e. in concrete and situated existence. It is the task of philosophy as phenomenology to uncover this origin and thus question the very meaning of Being. In so doing, Heidegger’s approach does not only claim to recall the need to deal with a forgotten or overseen subject that is otherwise lacking in ontological investigations. Questioning the meaning of Being via an analytic of human life or *Dasein* just is “fundamental ontology” (Heidegger 1962: 34, 61–62), i.e. a philosophical investigation prior to any other philosophical discipline. Heidegger thus outlines his approach in *Being and Time* with regard to its method, subject matter and systematic function in the following passage: “Philosophy is universal phenomenological ontology, and takes its departure from the hermeneutic of *Dasein*, which, as an analytic of *existence*, has made fast the guiding-line for all philosophical inquiry at the point where it *arises* and to which it *returns*” (62).

This chapter attempts to present the core of Heidegger’s concern with the meaning of Being as it has been worked out in *Being and Time* and related texts. In simplifying the matter for reasons of clarity I will distinguish three different senses of Being, namely *categorial*, *existential* and *temporal being*, that taken together provide an account of the meaning of Being, according to Heidegger. As I believe that one cannot underestimate the significance of Aristotle in Heidegger’s project I will use Aristotle’s ontology as a contrast that might highlight the innovative peculiarities of Heidegger’s approach to questioning the meaning of Being.

Categoriality

Aristotle saw the innovative potential of formal ontology that the later Plato’s *Sophist* had indicated. The question of being is to be followed up by an analysis of language

(*logos*) as the “clue for obtaining access to that which really is” (Heidegger 1962: 196), which leads to a set of *categories* rather than a cosmographic hierarchy of forms. The word “category” goes back to the Greek *katēgoreîn*, meaning to state or to predicate, hence our use of propositional language for disclosing. Propositional language (i.e. the speech act of assertion (*logos apophantikos*)) seems to deserve the primary function in a corresponding analysis because it contains a truth claim (Aristotle 1950–52: *On Interpretation*, ch. 4, 17a 4–5). Hence Aristotle can express the straightforward connection between an analysis of language and a theory about being: “the kinds of essential being are precisely those that are indicated by the figures of predication; for the senses of ‘being’ are just as many as these figures” (Aristotle 1950–52: *Metaphysics*, bk 5, ch. 7, 1017a 22–23). Categories classify the range of possible entities according to the most general and simple kinds, rendering the formal genera of anything that can be asserted in predicative sentences or assertions. According to Aristotle, anything that *is* is either a substance or a quantity, quality, relation, etc. (Aristotle 1950–52: *Categories*, ch. 4, 1b 25–27). The *Categories* encompasses ten of those kinds, but it does not seem to be of the utmost importance to Aristotle whether or not this list is exhaustive. The distinction between the first category and all the other categories, however, is of central importance; it is *ousia*, traditionally translated as *substance* that *is* in a strict sense, whereas anything classified under the other categories only *is* because of the being of substance, as those categories denote properties that ultimately have to be thought of as being properties of a substance. In his *Metaphysics* Aristotle explains this point with regard to the semantics of the very word “being,” as there are “many senses in which a thing may be said to ‘be’” (Aristotle 1950–52: *Metaphysics*, bk 4, ch. 2, 1003a 33). These different senses of “being” can neither be reduced to each other nor subsumed under a single universal kind of Being that would entail these senses as its specifications, but they do not seem to be purely equivocal or homonymous either as they are all said with regard to a “focal meaning” (Owen 1986) of being, to which all the other senses are somehow analogous. Aristotle is not clear about just *how* this analogous unity (*analogia entis* in medieval terminology), which is neither generic nor purely nominal, can be explained, though he is nonetheless certain about the focal point of any understanding and verbal articulation of what is, namely substance (*ousia*). Hence, Aristotelian ontology by and large is *ousiology*, i.e. an investigation of *substance*.

Heidegger’s project of *Being and Time* was initially supposed to be a book on Aristotle; a book that would present Aristotle from a phenomenological perspective as a phenomenologist *avant la lettre*. Heidegger concedes that “*ousia* is the expression for the basic concept per se of Aristotelian philosophy” (Heidegger 2009: 17). But what does that *mean*? What exactly do we understand when we claim substantial being to be prior to or the focus of any other being? What was Aristotle’s phenomenal basis when coining this particular terminology? How are we to understand it? How can the analogous unity of being be explained? And in light of these questions, is “substance” an appropriate translation of “*ousia*” anyway? As our introductory remarks have indicated, these questions are not just of historical interest. They reflect basic philosophical concepts (like “substance,” “truth,” “subject,” etc.) by tracing their meaning back to their original experiential background in a

concrete lifeworld. Heidegger is very attentive to this kind of conceptual historical analysis, and at times claims it to be of pivotal methodological importance under the heading of a “destruction of the traditional content of ancient ontology” (Heidegger 1962: 44; 1998: 3; 2008: 59–60). In no less than six lecture courses between 1921 and 1925, which are now all published in separate books, Heidegger works through these questions before finally presenting the systematic outcome of his encounter with Aristotle in the analysis of Dasein’s being-in-the-world in the first part of *Being and Time* (see Volpi 1984, 1994; Sheehan 1988; Taminiaux 1989; Brogan 1994, 2005). The upshot with regard to categorial being and its focus on the concept of *ousia* are the following points:

- (1) Propositional language and assertion (*logos apophantikos*) facilitate the pointing out of something *as* something. Its subject–predicate-structure isolates a particular fact or circumstance and thus brings it forth as such, as something that has come into view and may be the object of theoretical attention. However, it would be wrong to claim that we gain cognitive access to the stated fact via our assertiveness. This is not because we need epistemic contact with an object prior to a subsequent assertion referring to this object, and it is not because we have to see a particular color of a car before we are able to state its color correctly, or, to use an example of Heidegger’s, to weigh a hammer before we are entitled to state that it is too heavy. It is because any particular circumstance is part of an environment that we already have to understand to begin with, which makes it possible for us to interpret a colored car as a case of a perceivable object or a piece of equipment as being inappropriate for the relevant task. Assertion is “not capable of disclosing entities in general in a primary way: on the contrary it always maintains itself on the basis of Being-in-the world” (Heidegger 1962: 199). Prior to the level of propositional language is the “fore-structure” of understanding (194) and its concrete situational interpretation (*Auslegung*); prior to the predicative or “apophantic as” (something stated *as* something) is the “hermeneutic as” (something interpreted as something in light of its relevant environment (Heidegger 2010: 120; 1962: 199–200)). Heidegger is not always clear concerning the sense in which the hermeneutic as-structure of interpretation relates to language (see Okrent 1991; Lafont 2000). But his point is that an ontology built on propositional language or assertions must fail, as it misconstrues Dasein’s primordial holistic disclosure of its being-in-the-world (see Dreyfus 1991; critically Brandom 1983; Tugendhat 1982). Categories understood as the most general formal classifications of that which is must be founded on our pre-predicative understanding of the world.
- (2) The “clue for obtaining access to that which really is” has to be found in Dasein’s practical comportment and agency in everydayness. Heidegger’s famous phenomenological analysis of the worldliness of Dasein (Heidegger 1962: §§15–18) shows the disclosedness of the world in understanding, urging a rethinking of intentionality that is not concerned with a subject’s conscious directedness to an isolated object, but with Dasein’s projecting and holistic transcendence in terms of *care*. This revision implies a different take on how

the givenness of the world and its entities must be conceived of ontologically. Items given in practical comportment are merged in the context of significance that organizes their use in functional structures (“toward-which,” “in-order-to” of a piece of equipment ultimately pointing to a “for-the-sake-of” that refers to Dasein’s own existence; Heidegger 1962: 120; see Okrent 1991), which only appear as singular entities or objects on the basis of a primary practical involvement. Those items are characterized not as occurring or “present-at-hand” (*vorhanden*), but as “ready-to-hand” (*zuhanden*). Heidegger concludes this analysis with regard to categorial being by claiming that “readiness-to-hand is the way in which entities as they are ‘in themselves’ are defined ontologico-categorially” (Heidegger 1962: 101). Talking about things in terms of objects that may have practical use in specific situations due to their distinctive properties proves to be a derivative way of presenting the ontological phenomenon, as it implies the priority of a theoretical givenness of things. It is rather the other way around – the theoretical perspective that allows the singling out of objects and their properties relies on a pre-theoretical and non-thematic givenness of worldly entities in practical circumspection. As Heidegger translates *ousia* with *presence* (*Anwesenheit*) or *presence-at-hand* (*Vorhandenheit*), this argument attacks the Aristotelian claim of *ousia* as being the primary focus of all ontological concern. Heideggerian phenomenology thus designates *readiness-to-hand* (or availability (Dreyfus 1991)) as the primary sense of being of those entities that are not Dasein. The category of *presence-at-hand* (occurrence) denotes a derivative, secondary sense of being. Against Aristotle and the priority of substance to accident, Heidegger thus conceives of categoriality in terms of *availability* prior to *occurrence*.

Existentiality

Whereas categorial being relates to the sense of being that determines our understanding of the world and its entities, existential being refers to the way we are, i.e. to the sense of our own being. After the philosophy of Descartes, the arrival of psychology (including such different attempts as the Neo-Kantianism of Natorp and the existentialist approach of Jaspers), Dilthey’s philosophy of life (despite its criticism of scientific objectivism (Heidegger 1962: 252)), Husserl’s analysis of personality deposited in the manuscripts of *Ideas II* (to which Heidegger had access (1962: 73n)) and even Scheler’s elaborated ethics of personhood (Heidegger 1992b: 126–28), modern epistemology simply underestimates the necessity of posing the question as to the very being of a subject or a person *from the first-person perspective*. They have more or less adopted the traditional ontology of reality (i.e. categorial being) as the blueprint for existence. Heidegger raises reservations on several occasions against epistemological approaches like Descartes’, who “left undetermined ... the kind of Being which belongs to the *res cogitans*, or – more precisely – the *meaning of the Being of the ‘sum’*” (Heidegger 1962: 46), or Kant, who “failed to give a preliminary ontological analytic of the subjectivity of the subject” (45). His scruples even apply to Husserl, who according to Heidegger neglects to reflect on the

meaning of being of intentionality in a proper analysis (Heidegger 1992b: 129) and follows Descartes in his conception of *certitudo* instead, taking Being as such to mean “being a possible object for science in general” (Heidegger 2005a: 203).

According to Heidegger, what is needed is an ontology of the first person, a way of conceiving a philosophy of existence that can genuinely cope with its subject (i.e. existence) with phenomenological adequacy. This task, however, cannot draw on a rich ontological tradition, let alone a corresponding terminology; it has been partly anticipated but not systematically elaborated in branches of the Platonist religious tradition from St Paul and St Augustine, through Master Eckhart and Luther, to Kierkegaard. A proper ontology of existence has not been developed, as Heidegger complains early on: “Existence ... can be understood as a certain manner of being and thus as a particular sense of ‘is’ that ‘is,’ i.e. has the essential sense of the (I) ‘am.’ And we have this (I) ‘am’ in a genuine sense, not through thinking about it in a theoretical manner, but rather by enacting the ‘am,’ which is a way of being that belongs to the being of the ‘I.’ ... Living in this kind of experience, and gearing myself to its very sense, I am able to question after the sense of my ‘I am’” (Heidegger 1998: 25). This passage expresses what existential being is about: The meaning of Being rendered in “I am.” Note that Heidegger highlights the “am,” not the “I”; his focus is on what being a subject means, which does not involve an explicit understanding of an ego or an “I” to begin with (Heidegger 1962: 367–68; 1988: 158–59).

In *Being and Time* the distinction between the “is” and the “am” sense of being is ontologically conceptualized as the distinction between categorial and existential being, i.e. between basic characterization of the being of worldly entities expressed in *categories* vs. the basic characterization of the being of Dasein expressed as *existentials* or *existentialia* (Heidegger 1962: 70). Existentials (notably “understanding,” “state-of-mind” and “falling,” which constitute the three-part structure of *care* (Heidegger 1962: 235–41)) are characters of being-in-the-first-person that hence cannot be extracted from categorial being. They articulate the structural aspects of Dasein’s disclosing being in its practical comportment in everydayness and are thus gained from the phenomenological analysis of Dasein’s being-in-the-world. But why is it that one must distinguish between categorial and existential being in the first place?

Heidegger’s argument unfolds the peculiar logic of human individuation from an ontological perspective: “We are ourselves the entities to be analyzed. The Being of any such entity is *in each case mine*. These entities, in their Being, comport themselves towards their Being. As entities with such Being, they are delivered over to their own Being. *Being* is that which is an issue for every such entity” (Heidegger 1962: 67). Things ontologically classified by categorial distinctions are what they are according to their essence or species, or rather, according to their purposefulness and function in practical dealings. Existing beings (plainly: human beings), however, are never just tokens of a certain type. A person does not experience her being as a particular item of a natural or functional kind, though a physician or an anthropologist might see her in just this third-person perspective. The Being of existence is distributed individually and irrevocably; it is characterized by its individual moment and its individual address, something that Heidegger describes in somewhat artificial language as *Jeweiligkeit* (“particular whileness”) (see Kisiel 1993: 500) and *Jemeinigkeit* (“in each case mineness” or just “mineness”) (Heidegger 1962: 68). Although its

actual beginning is not at our individual disposal – this characterizes our “thrownness” or “facticity” – we are nonetheless occupied with it as our own project, which characterizes it as “projection” or “existentiality” in a narrower sense (235). “Factual existence” thus marks the mode of being of Dasein (236).

Hence “existence” serves not as another word for “reality,” as it does not refer to the actuality of a specified entity but to the project of an individualized being, Dasein, whose being is an issue for it. This means that its being is something that has to be accomplished or achieved, although it cannot be paused or undone. Its reality is its being-possible, as existence is never to be thought of as a process of mere realization, but as an ongoing openness without a fixed telos. Dasein understands itself qua its being-possible (Heidegger 1962: 183). This possibility is not of a lower ontological status than actuality, as it has usually been considered in Western metaphysics from Aristotle to Hegel. On the contrary, “possibility as an *existential* is the most primordial and ultimate positive way in which Dasein is characterized ontologically” (183). Existential being thus urges ontology to think of possibility as being-possible, not as being-not-yet-actualized. It introduces possible-being as a primary ontological mode in its own right that does justice to the way human beings qua Dasein are.

Existential being implies an individual responsibility of the existing entity for the way it is. This responsibility is not ethical in the sense that it applies to other persons, to moral or legal obligations towards other people, or towards social or religious institutions. It is rather ontological, as it responds to the open project and the fact of being one’s own individual being that must be prior to any “ontic” responsibility. Notice that the phenomenological analysis is neither interested in nor capable of elaborating particular individual or collective life forms that would serve as role models in order to exist “the right way” or “the most authentic way,” as if there was a pre-established individual life plan one could succeed or fail to live up to. Although it makes sense to talk about “authentic being”—being aware of the “mineness” of each case of being a human being—one cannot merely choose to be or become authentic in this ontological sense, as one, given certain conditions, can choose to become a carpenter or a mother. The claim put forward with the notion of “authentic being” is simply that Dasein in all its comportment—no matter how selfish or altruistic, focused or chaotic, rebellious or anonymous—is ultimately concerned with its own being. Heidegger’s phenomenological analysis of *conscience* (Heidegger 1962: §§55–59) is designed to give evidence to this claim, presenting *conscience* as the very phenomenon that discloses the responsiveness of any individual Dasein towards its own being to itself. What the “call of conscience” reveals is thus not a personal guilt towards a system of normatively sanctioned preferences, but the formal condition for being capable of taking responsibility for any such system in the first place (Crowell 2001).

It should be added that even though existential being refers to the way Being is distributed to the individual Dasein, it is not conceived of as individualistic. Dasein is essentially together with other Dasein, a togetherness that cannot be captured in terms of either occurrentness or availableness and must be thought of as “*Being-with*” (Heidegger 1962: 154). This means that Heidegger acknowledges sociality as an *existential*, a dimension that primordially determines any understanding of one’s

being even before actually acting or communicating with other people; "The world of Dasein is a *with-world*" (155). However, as sociality thus becomes a part of "my," understood as our common, in fact mostly anonymously shared being-in-the-world, it becomes difficult to conceive of the Other *as* the Other. Heidegger's approach incorporates a dimension of intersubjectivity in terms of sociality (enabling the thinking of collective historical identities in terms of "the They" ("*das Man*"), "a people," "a generation," "destiny," etc. (Heidegger 1962: 437–38); (see Dreyfus and Rabinow 1993)), but not in terms of ethics (Levinas 1969). To put this point differently by drawing further on the syntax of being: The meaning of Being according to Heidegger can be phenomenologically described in third-person and first-person perspectives, respectively, presented here as categorial and existential being. What is lacking in this approach is the sense of ("you") *are*, i.e. the second-person perspective that is pivotal in ethical thinking from Buber to Levinas.

Temporality

"In contrast to all this, our treatment of the question of the meaning of Being must enable us to show that *the central problematic of all ontology is rooted in the phenomenon of time* In the exposition of the problematic of Temporality the question of the meaning of Being will first be concretely answered" (Heidegger 1962: 40). What Aristotle had suggested he had found in the notion of *ousia*, Heidegger obviously claims to present in the proper problematic of *time*, namely the ground or the soil in which the unity of the different senses of Being are rooted. However, the claim that Being itself has a temporal character does not refer to the fact that anything that happens in time and is subjected to change and decay. Such a "vulgar" conception only extends the ontology of occurrentness to a temporal dimension that itself proves to be derivative in origin. Heidegger wants to show that any understanding of Being is in fact founded in Dasein's prior understanding of its own temporal being (cf. Blattner 2005). If this foundationalist claim of the meaning of Being as rooted in temporal being is true, then one must be able to trace an understanding of temporality as a basic condition for the understanding of Being in the ontological theories of Western metaphysics. Heidegger therefore sees the need for a revision or "destruction" of Western ontological thinking with regard to its (implicit or explicit) understanding of time on the basis of the phenomenological analytic of Dasein's temporality. These two steps – (a) uncovering temporal being as the ultimate ground of Dasein's understanding of Being; and (b) uncovering temporality as the actual origin of Western thinking about Being hitherto – represent the two parts of the *project of Being and Time*; a project that Heidegger never brought to completion.

Heidegger's interpretation of Aristotle and categorial being shows precisely on what grounds the destructive interpretation should have been performed. As it was argued above, for Aristotle the analysis of propositional language provides the guiding line and method for ontological analysis. The conceptual background, however, in Heidegger's terminology the "fore-having" (predetermining the relevant sense of Being) along with the "pre-conception" (predetermining the relevant terminology) of Aristotle's ontology (Heidegger 1992a: 367), stems from the realm of practical doing:

"the object-field which provides the primordial sense of Being is the object-field of those objects which are *produced* and used in dealings. ... Being means *being-produced*" (374–75). Heidegger thus claims the implicit conceptual background of Aristotelian ontology to be *poiesis* (production, manufacture). It is no coincidence, therefore, that the "guiding example" to explain the becoming of natural entities in the *Physics* and *Metaphysics* is the "coming-to-be of a statue from bronze" (390). Following a pre-conception of Being in terms of *poiesis*, what really is has come to its end or ultimate destination in its process of manufacturing, just as the building of a house is finished when its plan (its *eidos* in the sense of Aristotle) is accomplished. It is then present as what it is and can hence be identified as a definite entity that is able to persist on its own. Categorial being understood in light of the paradigm of *poiesis* thus means "1. primarily *being present, presence*; 2. *being-complete, completeness*" (2009: 26).

To sum up, categoriality displays its conceptual origin in human life (ontologically understood) in light of the paradigm of *poiesis* as the "basic category that dominates throughout the Aristotelian ontology" (Heidegger 1992a: 390; translation modified according to 2005b: 394). This implies *actuality* (*energeia*, the movement that has come to an end in completeness) and *presence* (*parousia* as synonymous with *ousia*, as Heidegger frequently adds) (2009: 25; 1962: 47).

It now becomes evident why it is of pivotal importance to interrogate the phenomenological background for Aristotle's conceptuality. It is due to the paradigm of *poiesis* that Aristotelian ontology and hence Western ontological thinking as a whole has come to identify being with *actuality* in terms of *being-present*. The critical or "destructive" interpretation of Aristotle takes its point of departure in the simple question of whether this paradigm is appropriate. Given that any ontology must originate in Dasein's understanding of its temporal being, is it convincing to think of the being of Dasein in terms of *poiesis*? As our considerations regarding existential being have already indicated, it is not. Simply put, Heidegger believes that this first beginning of Western metaphysics in Aristotelian ontology went awry, as it was founded on a paradigm that *was not* extracted from a proper articulation of human existence after all, leading to the ontological hegemony of presence and actuality.

Aristotle's own description of the openness of human *agency* and *praxis* in the *Nicomachean Ethics* already pointed towards a different direction, as *praxis* cannot be said to have a final result of completeness compatible with artifacts and products as its utmost goal; rather, its *ergon* is the good life (*eudaimonia*). Heidegger's own phenomenological analytic of Dasein highlights the "fore-structure" of understanding, the "projection" towards one's own possibilities, the "Being-towards-death," and ultimately the formal moment of "ahead-of-itself-Being" in *care* (1962: 237). These projective phenomena all indicate a primacy of the dimension of *future* rather than *presence*. While Dasein's temporality is characterized by an intricate jointure of all three dimensions of time, it is the future tense, Dasein's projective being-ahead of itself, which is primary in relation to presence and past tense; "the primary meaning of existentiality is the future" (376).

As summary of the discussion so far, Table 28.1 contrasts Aristotle's and Heidegger's projects.

As indicated above, Heidegger claims there is a foundational hierarchy between what I have called temporal, existential and categorial being. This foundationalism

Table 28.1 Aristotle's and Heidegger's ontologies

	Aristotle's ontology	Heidegger's fundamental ontology
Guiding clue	Propositional language	Dasein's dealings in everyday praxis
Type of investigation	Theory of predication	Analytic of existence
Basic conceptions	Categories	Existentials and categories
Constitutive focus	<i>Ousia</i>	Temporality
Worldly objects primarily taken as	Occurrent	Available
Conceptual background (fore-having and pre-conception)	<i>Poiesis</i> , movement terminating in a product (<i>ergon</i>)	<i>Praxis</i> , movement centered in the openness of human finitude
Primary temporal mode	Present	Future
Ontological modality	Actuality	Possibility

allows for an explanation of Aristotelian ontology in terms of fundamental ontology. In *Being and Time* this foundational hierarchy is articulated in terms of Kantian transcendentalism, enabling Heidegger to speak of temporal being as the condition of possibility or the "transcendental horizon" for our understanding of existential being and categorial being. Heidegger thus does not present a different conception that competes with the Aristotelian approach; he rather claims to have explained what Aristotle's ontological theory is really about and where it gets its phenomenological basis. Since this basis proves to be derivative, Aristotelian ontology must be revisited and repeated, but now under the guidance of an authentic basis provided by the analytic of existence. And as Aristotle's ontological thinking has to be regarded as the implicit and unquestioned paradigm of Western philosophy up until Husserl, this tradition has to undergo what Heidegger terms "phenomenological destruction." Questioning the meaning of Being is thus a way to think of philosophy all over again – from its very first beginning.

See also Martin Heidegger (Chapter 4); Truth (Chapter 14); The subject and the self (Chapter 15); Time (Chapter 17); The world (Chapter 19); History (Chapter 21); Methods in phenomenology after Husserl (Chapter 25); Art and aesthetics (Chapter 26); Dasein (Chapter 29); Philosophy of language (Chapter 37); Philosophy of science (Chapter 42); Existentialism (Chapter 44); Hermeneutics (Chapter 45); Literary criticism (Chapter 58).

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