

## Heidegger's What Is Metaphysics?



If you are going to understand Heidegger's life-changing thought and benefit from it changing you, it's required you first understand every detail of the idea in question. This is some transformative reading. Here is how he closes: "that we release ourselves into the nothing, which is to say, that we liberate ourselves from those idols everyone has and to which they are wont to go cringing; and finally, that we let the sweep of our suspense take its full course, so that it swings back into the basic question of metaphysics which the nothing itself compels: Why are there beings at all, and why not rather nothing?" Beautiful...but only if you understand what he means by "the nothing"

Proper kind of thinking (of Being) Heidegger wants to announce by himself. Nevertheless, metaphysics of the past has been mocked and denied by modern sciences and Heidegger tries to defend dignity of that kind of free thinking, meanwhile defending his own prospect of thinking which is overcoming of both metaphysics and strict scientific approach. Even if he is overcoming it, he regards old metaphysics with some dignity over self-confident science, as the latter can't see it is fully attached and immersed into so much hated metaphysics (and Heideggerianism, as they take it as metaphysics, too). Metaphysics is root and sciences are branches of the same tree. As both of them think beings as beings (substances) (and being as a whole) and not Being itself (which they forget), they want to know nothing about Nothing (nonbeing). Nothing is nothing for them (negation, at best), but for Heidegger it's "something". Nothing is "part" of Being, the same with Being. This richness of possible reality reduced by science is nothing only from subject-object, nihilistic, scientific perspective. Further, one way to access Nothing/Being is through anxiety when everything withdraws from the world in front of the truth of Being.

According to Heidegger, the word "phenomenon" comes from the Greek term "to show itself." A phenomenon, then, is that which shows itself, that which is manifest. An appearance is not necessarily the thing itself, since appearances are merely referential to the underlying thing. For instance, a disease is the phenomenon itself, but we normally only recognize it through its appearance, that is, its symptoms. To know things, then, we must get beyond mere appearance. To do this, we must, in part, suspend our illusions that we truly "know" the thing (or "essence," as it is referred to in "An Introduction to Metaphysics" [trans. Ralph Manheim:]).

The opposite of a phenomenon is "covered-upness." This is when the essence of a phenomenon is hidden from us. This can come about in three ways: (1) it is as yet undiscovered; (2) it can be buried over or forgotten--it was once discovered but has since deteriorated, either by losing sight of the thing or by forgetting it; (3) it can be disguised (this is the most frequent and the most dangerous route). The third possibility can come about through deception or misleading.

We must beware of reifying concepts, treating them without questioning, without trying to get at their essence. Heidegger says:

"Whenever a phenomenological concept is drawn from primordial sources, there is the possibility that it may degenerate if communicated in the form of an assertion. It gets understood in an empty way and is thus passed on, losing its indigenous character, and becoming a free-floating thesis. Even in the concrete work of phenomenology itself there lurks the possibility that what has been primordially 'within our grasp' may become hardened so that we can no longer grasp it. And the difficulty of this kind of research lies in making it self-critical in a positive sense."

Again, we must not reify phenomena and lose sight of their primordial character. We must continue to question what we observe and not "take it for granted." He emphasizes in another work that we must "...push our questioning to

the very end.\" He contends that, simplistically put, we should \"challenge everything\" or \"question everything.\" We must not \". . . be led astray by overhasty theories, but to experience things as they are on the basis of the first thing that comes to mind.\"

He concludes by noting that \"The true problem is what we do not know and what, insofar as we know it authentically, namely as a problem, we know only questioningly.\" That is, we are closest to knowing the essence of something when we recognize that that sense of knowledge is itself a problem, that is, that we cannot be sure that we really know it. If we come to think that we know something, we tend to do so theoretically and, in the process, distance ourselves from the thing itself and its being.

Key points at which these thoughts challenge the dominant liberal tradition of which Americans are a part: skepticism about the power of human reason or logic to uncover what is and apprehend what should be (contra the ability of humans to divine natural law through the exercise of reason), avoidance of reifying concepts and theories (those in the liberal tradition, once more, believe that we can uncover the essence of reality and develop theories to explain what is), question those ideas that one develops and continue questioning one's understanding of what is. Finally, the subject and object are linked with one another; we cannot step back and understand objectively that which is around us, as Enlightenment thinkers believe.

Third, the work is crucial since in certain passages Heidegger reveals his revulsion against the Americanization of the Occident. In essence, he fulminates against technology and modern man – viewing them as distorted and horrible ways of understand both man and world. He explicitly claims the truth and grandeur of the Nazi movement lies in its confrontation with technology and modern man. Although he also explicitly states the Nazi philosophy is a base nihilism and as such is as deluded as any modern philosophy can be. And finally, the work is crucial as philosophical food for thought.

In his lectures, Heidegger wants to answer the question \"Why is there being and not nothing?\" In part I he analyses this question and comes to the conclusion that it reveals a more fundamental question: \"What is being?\" It is this question which is the fundamental question in philosophy and Heidegger sets out to develop this question in the following pages.

In part II he starts by analyzing being linguistically. That is, he looks at the word being both from a grammatical and etymological perspective. Basically, his conclusion is that we understand being as something substantive, something which exists as such. In this way, it is an empty and ambiguous term for us.

This leads Heidegger in part III to ask the essential question of being - What is the essence of being? His conclusion here is that being is a fundamental characteristic of Dasein (human being, being-there). It is the orientation of our understanding of being against the horizon against which it appears to us.

In the final part, Heidegger sets out his theory of the fall of being in the western tradition. According to him, we moderns view being as a thing, set apart from contrasting things. For Heidegger, being is opposed to becoming, appearance, thinking and belonging. Being is permanent, as opposed to all the becoming. Being is real, as opposed to how things appear to us. Being is available for our minds, waiting there to be grasped, thought about, judged about in logic. And finally, being exists so it has to have its ground in something else – it has to belong to something more fundamental. In short: we view being as determined by its boundaries (i.e. what it is, is defined by what it isn't).

According to Heidegger this modern conception of being is a deluded one and it originated with Plato and Aristotle. For him, Heraclitus and Parmenides were the ones who asked the original question of Being, and this got covered up in the western tradition. Nowadays, when we read the remaining fragments of both of them, we project our own notion of being into them. And subsequently we view them as antagonistic philosophers: Heraclitus' \"all is flux\" and \"chaos\" as opposed to Parmenides' \"all is one\" and \"order\". We simply fail to see their project for what it was.

So, Heidegger sets out on a tour de force, in which he interprets both Parmenides and Heraclitus in a highly original but also a highly dangerous way. According to him, there are no essential differences to what they said: both philosophers viewed being as the unity of physis and logos. Both are inseparable (so lose the subject-object distinction when reading this!) and are fundamentally one. Their relationship is polemos, strife. Physis is being as it appears and logos is the collecting of appearances, as in ordering them. Truth is nothing but the revelation of being

as it shows itself. And this is what Parmenides means when he says that "thinking and being are one and the same." How did the western tradition spiral so out of control, culminating in Hegel's radicalization of Parmenidean idealism?

Well, that's because of Plato. And Aristotle. Plato split the logos from the physis, and put it in opposition to being. With Plato, logos changed its meaning: it now meant grasping intellectually the ideas, which were themselves existing things and cut loose from the physical world. Since they existed as (ideal) things, they had to be grounded. Plato's Idea of the Good is the ground of all ideas, which are the ground for all the (imperfect) physical things.

Then came Aristotle who, rejecting his master's idealism, changed the meaning of logos again. For Aristotle, logos is reason – man is a rational animal – and logic is the study of reasoning and the formulation of rule of thought. For Aristotle, logos meant judgement – we judge about being and truth has now become the correctness or incorrectness of our judgements. As a criterion to evaluate judgements, Aristotle developed his logic, which is grounded in his theory of categories. What this all meant for being? From now on, being is *ousia*, i.e. that and what something is. It is a thing and exists as such and in way that makes a thing that thing.

What this all boils down to is this. We moderns look at the world and at ourselves in a technical way. We understand being as a collection of things, all to be understood technically. (Technical in the Greek sense of 'knowing' – this can be understanding something through art, science, technology, etc.). We have subjugated being, which is now the slave of our thinking. Our thinking is what drives us, is what drives the world, is all there is. We are obsessed by scientific and technological developments, we look at ourselves as things to be managed, ordered, controlled. And, most of all, we have forgotten that this is only a secondary way of looking at being.

The original way of looking at being, according to Heidegger, is what is needed to save the Occident from her doom. He sees the task of the philosopher (meaning, of course, himself) as asking the question of being. In this lies the salvation of European civilization – and Heidegger is here to lead the way. As a true prophet he preaches how we should stop living in "Seinsvergessenheit" – our forgetfulness about being. To be able to do this, we have to destroy the western tradition up to (going backwards) Plato.

What I also admire is how he returns to the way the Greeks understand Being as being the totality of what there is without differentiating between different phenomena nor between the observer or observed. Everything is taken into account. Such makes Heidegger a very challenging philosopher because, it's a lot easier to just read Locke, Descartes or Hume who have slices of reality which they manipulate either to argue for a deductive truth- Descartes- or an inductive one- Locke. Heidegger digresses from that tradition, and doing so puts them to shame. Heidegger deserves more attention than he's given.

What he ultimately gives you are the tools or *techne* to communicate Being without scientific or philosophical context, this is something much closer to an authentic "presence" in the world than materialism and existentialism could conceive of. Really looking at the direction Heidegger takes metaphysics it comes to resemble more spirit than form, spirit that finds unity in all beings, conscious or otherwise, within historicity. This was a long read for me and I ended up reading certain pages and paragraphs dozens of times, however it is rewarding and offers insight into virtually everything metaphysical.

Heidegger frequently attempts to defend the validity and relevance of this question -- What is the meaning of Being? What *is* the "is"? -- against his detractors (i.e. against people who think it's a stupid question, really, one not worth bothering about). "Being" seems to be an indefinite word, a universal term that means everything and nothing. We apply it to everything all the time, but we don't really know what the word means definitively, and most of us aren't even aware that we stand always and ever in the midst of a contradiction: confidently using a word that means we-know-not-what. It is this contradiction that Heidegger seeks to use to awaken a concern with Being, to awaken humans to their human Being, our Being-ness, because *Dasein* [Heidegger's word for the human way of being in the world, a Being-(t)here] is unique in that we who wonder what the deal is with this funny little word, "Being." And if you aren't yet intrigued by the task Heidegger sets before us (a task that he thinks is always before us, surrounding us and always already pervading us, which we cannot outrun or ignore without denying ourselves, because we *are*, that is, we *always already are in Being*), you can be sure that he will try to unsettle you, to wake you up to the uncanniness of your own Being. This he tries to do in this work by posing the question: "Why are there beings at all rather than just nothing?"

He takes up the question of the meaning of Being, of course. Evidently, Heidegger thought that this particular work of essays, more than other publications, provided ideal commentary on his magnum opus, *Being and Time*. In a way,

Heidegger's main attempt in this work, and in his entire corpus, is to awaken a re-investigation about the meaning of Being. Of course, we use the word "being" (and its derivations) all the time. I "am" sad; today "is" Monday; I "am" at the store; it "is" raining; I "am" a pianist, ad infinitum.

And the rest of the book is an analysis into this question and what this question causes the questioner to question and discover (dis-cover) as a result. Heidegger meanders through ancient Greek philosophy into the etymology of strange Greek words and their genealogy through history, with each passing linguistic translation from making more and more hidden and concealed the originary meaning of Being which the great Greek philosophers sought to uncover during the Pre-Socratic era of Parmenides and Heraclitus.

If you stick with Heidegger, which takes time and patience, and an eagerness to learn an entirely new language with strange (yet profound) meanings, and a willingness to leave behind the urge to have meanings obviously apparent and easy-to-see, and common-sensical, then you will be changed in the process, unsettled, as you experience the discovering of your Being, your Being-here in the world. For a human not to be interested in their own Being is absurd, since it is our Being itself that makes us human. It is our Being-here that allows us to see the world, relate to it, live in it, dwell alongside it (like when we walk on the earth, or stare at a sunset, or shake somebody's hand, or hammer with a hammer, or dwell inside of a house). Our essence as humans cannot be grasped apart from our Being which is always a Being-here, a Being-in-the-world. We exist as we relate to the Being of beings. We are the site of the Being of beings as we dis-close worlds, open up worlds, like the way the genre of Jazz was once opened up by musicians, or a marriage was opened up by lovers. Dasein is the site of this opening, we are world-dis-closures.

I leave you with this section toward the end of this text that captures the unique and oh so intimate relationship Heidegger thinks humans have to Being: "The question about human Being is now determined in its direction and scope *solely* on the basis of the question about *Being*. Within the question of Being, the human essence is to be grasped and grounded, according to the concealed directive of the inception, as *the site* that Being necessitates for its opening up. Humanity is the Here that is open in itself. Being stands within this Here and are set to work in it. We therefore say: the Being of humanity is, in the strict sense of the word, "*Being-here*" ("Da-sein"). The perspective for the opening up of Being must be grounded originally in the essence of the Being-here as such a site for the opening up of Being" (157).

Mysteriously, *Being and Time* was a best seller in Germany when it was published but it's nearly indecipherable on this side of the ocean. I suggest reading *Introduction to Metaphysics* to see some of the more controversial things he's written, and as a way to avoid seeing the word "being" used in so many ways so often, though it will still be used a lot.

It's ontology. Think of someone expanding on Parmenides's monist writings with influence from Kant, Nietzsche, and Husserl. Take "this worldliness" from Nietzsche, toss out any notions of dualist spirit, develop a method to narrate consciousness and conscious experience as objective subjects instead of subjective, in the way that state of mind is an effect of existence instead of state of mind affecting existence. This is not Husserl's, the elements of existence are states of consciousness. Consciousness is an emergent state, like the behavior of a colony of ants that emerges from many ants. One ant will not act to build a dike to protect against flood waters, but a colony will. Likewise, one cannot separate the nerve cell from the brain or the brain from the body, or the individual from society. This is not Sartre's radical freedom.

It's a book that will alter one's world view. After my immersion in Heidegger, I believe that existentialism is western philosophy approaching eastern thought. You're teased into living in the present. He brings to your attention the uniquely human ability to imagine a future that leads to telic activity. There's the perspective given to communities and society. I perceive Trump's success as an outcome that emerged from our society, not as a campaign that successfully affected the wills of the voters. The terrible conclusion, it's not so much that it's Trump, it's collectively us. That's why, as collectively as possible, we should resist this.

Heidegger concludes, "Being is the basic happening which first makes possible historical Dasein amid the disclosure of the essent as a whole" (Heidegger 201).

So what is "being?" It is permanence, already-thereness, given--enduring presence (202). When we ask "why is there essents rather than nothing," our questioning is itself placed midway between being and nonbeing (29).

Whenever being is delimited, it is determined. There are four basic delimitations (becoming, appearance, thinking, ought). This constitutes the longest and most difficult chapter of the book. Simply put, being is permanent presence, becoming is emerging appearing, thinking is The breaking out, the agon, opens essent as sea, earth. It happens as language is mastered in violence (157). Knowledge: *techne*, putting into work the being of any particular essent. Truth is unconcealment. Unconcealment is the space created for the appearing of essent.

Reading Heidegger is like listening to a slow, burning incantation. Take this surge of a passage, for example:

"The one who is violence-doing, the creative one, who sets out into the un-said, who breaks into the un-thought, who compels what has never happened and makes appear what is unseen, this violence-doing one stands at all times in daring. Insofar as he dares the surmounting of Being, he must risk the assault of un-beings, the *mē kalon*, disintegration, un-constancy, un-structure, and unfittingness" (172).

Most of the passages, surprisingly, make sense, or to put it more accurately, have an appeal that's hard to name. The strange word choice definitely contributes to the mood of what he is saying, imbues it with a kind of mystery that's hard to resist, even though the exact meaning slips through your fingers. But that's okay. You're okay in the midst of half-comprehension, as if under a spell.

Then there are some poetic passages, like: "But here, 'sea' is said as if for the first time..." (164). Or "Language is the primal poetry in which a people poetizes Being" (183). How beautiful.

And grandiose-philosophical: "Humanity first comes to itself and is a self only as questioning-historical. The selfhood of humanity means this: it has to transform the Being that opens itself up to it into history, and thus bring itself to a stand" (153). "Philosophy is a happening that must at all times work out Being for itself anew" (90). "The only one who knows is the one who understands that he must always learn again, and who above all, on the basis of this understanding, has brought himself to the point of where he continually can learn" (23). And one of the finest: "The passion of knowing is questioning" (170).

Reading these passages and many more, you get the feeling that he is either 1) completely bullshitting and none of it really matters; or 2) there's some deep, very deep, meaning behind all his strange utterances. That is, he is either a magician who doesn't give away his secrets or a real sorcerer working a real miracle. Or maybe he's both. I personally don't know why I even make myself go through passages like, "But this gathering, which is still a turning away, can be carried out only by virtue of the gathering that, as a turning toward, pulls beings together into the gatheredness of their Being" (180) or even better, "We first press forward fully to the happening of uncanniness when we experience the power of seeming together with the struggle against seeming in its essential belonging to *Dasein*" (161-162) and still not be bored to death or feel hopelessly lost. Heidegger talks about "lostness" (124): "Our ... lostness in the prior view and insight that sustains and guides all our understanding of Being is all the more powerful..." Maybe he's enacting *deinon*, "the terrible" in the peculiar sense he uses it: "the overwhelming sway, which induces panicked fear, true anxiety, as well as collected, inwardly reverberating, reticent awe" (159). His language, that "breakaway into Being," con-fronts us (as he would have it) with this mystery, this puzzlement, maybe not so much panicked fear, but puzzlement, and certainly all those strange, foreign-sounding hyphenations recall Old English, something ancient, primal. A kind of violence that shakes us out of our at-homeness of everyday concepts and understanding, rips us from know-it-all complacency. We are almost overwhelmed in all this surge of strange words and concepts and way of thinking. He is laying a path for us ("the violent act of laying out the paths into the beings that envelop humanity in their sway" (168)) so we can follow him in forgoing preconceived notions and see the world in a different way and maybe, just maybe, con-front this mysterious Being he keeps mentioning without defining (if that's possible at all) or that recedes just out of reach every time he tries to get close to it so that the only thing he can do is really point at it because as soon as he names it, as soon as he pegs it down with words, with language, it's gone. Like life, when preserved in chloroform, or pinned down as a specimen.

1. According to Heidegger there are two historical beginnings, philosophically speaking. The first was the original unveiling of being in Greek philosophy, which then immediately misunderstood being in terms of a determinate being. The second beginning is the beginning which Heidegger's philosophy announces, which takes its cue from Nietzsche's visionary work, although Nietzsche himself was not able to emancipate himself from metaphysics (the first beginning) (pp.124-27). The theme of the two beginnings is essential to understand the progression of the six joinings.
  1. Echo—"The *echo* of be-ing as not-granting" (7). The echo refers to the call of being, which is subtle and difficult to perceive, primarily because being occurs as refusal or not-granting. Being refuses

human attempts at manipulation. Human science and technology goes hand in hand with classical metaphysics, and its goal is the manipulation of beings in order to capture being itself. Paradoxically, however, the more beings are manipulated in a calculative technological grasping, the more being recedes, or refuses to show itself to human efforts.

2. Playing-forth—"The playing-forth is initially the playing forth of the first beginning, so that the first beginning brings the other beginning into play ..."(7). The thinker who discerns the echo of being also hears the playing forth of the other or second beginning as a minor key underneath the predominant or major key of the first beginning. The tension of the playing-forth accumulates, gathering strength in preparation for the leap.
  3. Leap—"The *leap* into be-ing" (7). The leap is the transition from the first beginning to the other beginning. The leap away from the first beginning (metaphysics) initially takes the form of an "abgrund," or an abyss, as the solid ground of the first beginning disappears under one's feet, prompting intense disorientation. The goal of the leap, however, is the other beginning, which is a grounding of the truth of being.
  4. Grounding—"The grounding of truth as the truth of be-ing [is] (Da-sein)" (7). Here is the central section of the *Beiträge*, because we see that the turning is from the first beginning to the other beginning, and the grounding of the truth of being in the other beginning is accomplished in *Dasein*. Even in *Being and Time*, Heidegger was never primarily interested in human being as such, but only insofar as it provided as opening towards being itself. This is the mistake Sartre and other French existentialists make when they read Heidegger as a humanist. On the other hand, the turn away from *Dasein* is neither as radical nor as thorough as readers of the later Heidegger assume, because *Dasein* grounds the truth of being. The grounding of the other beginning is *Dasein*, which is the essence, or sway (*wesen*) of truth. The structure of truth is an essential swaying, or a projecting-open of being. "But since truth must be grounded in *Da-sein*, the essential swaying of be-ing can only be achieved in the steadfastness which the t/here [Da] sustains in the knowing awareness that is so determined" (202).
  5. The Ones to Come—"The ones to come are in that grounding-attunement; and as so attuned, they are destined by the last god" (278). Heidegger mentions Hölderlin in this section as the most futural of the ones to come, but he also has Nietzsche in mind when he refers to the "going-under" necessary for the anticipation of the ones to come. The thinkers, philosophers or poets of the future are those who are attuned to the other beginning, and "those who go-under are the ones who constantly question" (278). The ones to come ground *Da-sein* by attending to the other beginning and awaiting the last god.
  6. The Last God—"The last is that which not only needs the longest fore-runnership but also itself *is*: not the ceasing, but the deepest beginning ..." (285). Heidegger reads Nietzsche's "twilight of the idols" (*Götzen-dämmerung*) as "twilight of (the) god(s)" (*Götterdämmerung*), or what Nietzsche calls the death of God, and "with the death of this god, all theisms collapse" (289). Here the twilight or passing is the condition for a new beginning, in which attending to the passing of the last god and attuning oneself to the ground of being goes hand in hand. Humanity and divinity are intimately interrelated, and both are related to being: "god overpowers man, and man surpasses god—in immediacy, as it were, and yet both only in enowning, which is what the truth of what be-ing itself is" (292).
1. Is Heidegger simply recapitulating Nietzsche in announcing the death of God? And what is the relationship here between God and being? Much contemporary theological debate on Heidegger takes its cue from Jean-Luc Marion's *God Without Being*, which reads Heidegger against Heidegger in order to displace the ontological difference as primary, so that God crosses being, but does not have to be. That is, God is not determined by being, and being is not the fundamental name of God, but rather the good. Being is a gift of God bestowed upon beings. In developing a theology that opposes the primacy of Heideggerian being, Marion follows Heidegger's explicit separation of philosophy and theology and his assertions that faith has no need of a philosophical discourse concerning being in his 1953 Zurich seminar. Marion claims, following Heidegger, that "the word Being must not intervene in a theological discourse," which emancipates theology from its metaphysical tutelage to philosophy and frees it to envision a free God who acts out of love and gives being in revelation.<sup>[1]</sup>
  2. In his celebrated essay, "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials," Derrida responds indirectly to Marion by

- distancing himself from negative theology. Derrida also quotes from Heidegger in his 1953 Zurich seminar: "Faith has no need for the thinking of Being."<sup>[2]</sup> Many thinkers interested in negative theology follow Marion's lead and ignore Derrida's later complication of Heidegger's explicit statements. Derrida draws attention to the complexity of the word *without* (*sans*) in "God without being," suggesting that God is always with and without being, because a pure differentiation of the two is impossible. Derrida claims:
3. Hasn't Heidegger written what he says he would have liked to write, a theology *without* the word *being*? But didn't he also write what he says should not be written, namely a theology that is open, dominated, and invaded by the word *being*? <sup>[3]</sup>
  4. The central issue here is the entanglement of God (or god) and being (or be-ing) at the core of the Heidegger's thought, as Derrida suggests. This is most explicitly visible in the *Beiträge*, which complicates Heidegger's later expressed desire to separate philosophy from theology, faith from the thinking of being. Here Heidegger discusses the last god in explicitly theological terms:
    5. But the *last* god, is that not debasing god, nay *the* greatest blasphemy? But what if the last god has to be so named because in the end the decision about gods brings under and among gods and thus makes what is own most to the uniqueness of the divine being most prominent? (286).
    6. Of course, the fact that Heidegger uses the term God (or god) does not make his philosophy a theology, nor does it necessarily delineate an intimate relationship between god and being. In some ways, being remains the key term here, and god is seen as complementary with Dasein, because both god and humanity need being, which recedes or refuses to captured and/or contained. On the other hand, the flight or passing of the last god structurally repeats the receding of being, such that god passes by humanity in order to follow being, and it is this movement that calls for human response. Both being and god are defined in terms of refusal:
      7. What if that domain of decision as a whole, flight or arrival of gods, were itself the end? What if, beyond that, be-ing in its truth would have to be grasped for the first time as enownment, as that which enowns what we call *refusal*? (285).
      8. The flight or passing of the last god testifies to the radical refusal of being, and demands the turning away from the first beginning toward the other beginning. It is this turning (*Kehre*) which fundamentally expresses *Ereignis* or enownment: "enowning has its innermost occurrence and its widest reach in the turning" (286). By following the refusal of being in its flight, the last god "awaits the grounding of the truth of be-ing and thus awaits man's leaping into Da-sein" (293).
    9. However one ultimately understands the situation Heidegger describes, any viability or credibility it possesses pertains to the enormous effort Heidegger makes to comprehend the difficulty of understanding being, humanity and God. These concepts are both elusive and historical, and resist being pinned down. One important question implied is how to respond to such a condition. That is, if being and God have refused human attempts to grasp them, and have withdrawn or passed us by, what response is called for? This is the trajectory of *Gelassenheit*, or "letting the being of beings be" that Heidegger develops in his later thought. Despite, and possibly even because of, his entanglements with National Socialism, Heidegger's notion of *Gelassenheit* is a profoundly ethical response, even though it may appear antinomian from the standpoint of conventional morality. Heidegger counsels attending to the withdrawal of being and the flight of god while not impressing our own intentionality upon them, opening ourselves up to/for the other beginning, which is a true revelation of being. Marion draws out the theological consequences in a more conventional religious context, but he fails to move beyond the orbit of Heidegger's thinking on this point.
  10. A logic of *Gelassenheit* is a logic of surrender, an opening up of thought which is a freeing of thought, which is a cure for subjective distortions of desire which impose conditions on being and the divine. However, perhaps the situation calls for a more desperate response. What if being and God are beyond our reach, not merely our control? The problem is one of forgetting, where Heidegger diagnoses the forgetting of the question of being, and/or in theological terms, forgetting the death of God. Is there a human response that refuses either to forget the question or to cling single-mindedly to God in its flight and being in its refusal? Would such a response consist of a *rejection* of being and/or God? Rejection would have to be understood in terms of Julia Kristeva's notion of rejection, which she develops in *Revolution in Poetic Language*. A rejection of God and/or being perhaps would be psychotic in a general sense, but again it is Kristeva who reminds us that "psychosis is the crisis of truth in language."<sup>[4]</sup> Rather than using the terms God and being, Kristeva in her essay on "*Le vrée*" focuses on the conjunction of truth and the real, which both recede or withdraw from Western intellectual inquiry. This refusal of humanity on the part of the true/real echoes the refusal of being and the flight of the last god in Heidegger's thought, but Kristeva articulates a more desperate response, which involves rejection of the true/real by (re)creating it under specific conditions in artistic discourse as an icon. The icon is an instance of a revolutionary poetic language that reinscribes the semiotic into the symbolic. The production of an icon foreshadows Marion's distinction between idol and icon in *God Without Being*, but Kristeva's icon is produced rather than revealed. A progression from Heidegger to Kristeva concerning these issues is less obvious but perhaps more productive than the more

conventional theological move from Heidegger to Marion and/or Derrida.

11. Heidegger's *Beiträge* is a powerful and visionary work of philosophy with many complexities and difficulties. I have ignored important issues, such as the chronological placement of this work in relation to Heidegger's political and ethical thought and the circumstances surrounding his Nazism. I have attempted to provide a sense of the core structure of the work, and also to establish two conclusions. A careful reading of the *Contributions to Philosophy* shows, (1) that it is more accurate and useful to attend to the turning within Heidegger's thought than to simply assert a 'turn' away from *Dasein* and towards being which essentially did not occur, except in terms of certain emphases; (2) that the contemporary discussions concerning Heidegger and negative theology are one-sided and rely too much on Marion's radical separation of God and being, whereas the *Beiträge* shows their profound entanglement in Heidegger's thought. I suggest an alternative relation between Heidegger and Kristeva surrounding the notion of refusal/rejection. Attention to these entanglements is imperative for any current theological thinking influenced by continental philosophy.

Heidegger highlights elements of human being that have been overlooked traditionally or are currently misunderstood. He emphasizes the fact that we first exist in worlds or contexts in which we uncover things' meaning and characteristics in terms of their use. For example, consider a hammer. The hammer's being is its readiness to hand. Its true weight is its being too light or heavy to use effectively, not a neutral one or two pounds, and its true place is the fact that it is too near or too far away to use well, not a point or number on a geometric grid. Such practical time, space, and utility *are* just as much as the neutral times and spaces of physics and mathematics, and cannot be reduced to them. Indeed, theoretical observing and measuring occurs only as a narrowing or reducing of practical action.

Heidegger concentrates on practical activities when he first develops the elements that characterize human beings because what is useful comes to light only in terms of something that is a possibility for humans. One central characteristic of our being is that we "fall" into the things with which we deal. We thus tend to (mis)understand our own being as equivalent to the being of objects. Moreover, the possibilities we understand, and for the sake of which we are, are those whose meaning we share with everyone else. We are thus not usually our authentic selves but, rather, merely instances of what "we" are and "they" choose and believe. Furthermore, it is not only our understanding of possibilities and our falling into everyday entities that reveal matters meaningfully. Our moods or states of mind also do this. Fear, for example, reveals entities—terrifying or dreadful things, say—that are just as fully real as what causes them chemically or biologically.

Certain moods—radical anxiety, most clearly—can wrench us from our fallen misunderstanding of ourselves and bring us face to face with our own responsibility for being or meaning. When anxiety comes together with my seeing the unity of all my possibilities in my anticipation of dying—the potential impossibility of all my possibilities—and with how my always being thrown into one tradition negates other options, it becomes possible for me to resolve upon my human being as it truly is: the ways that I am responsible for meaning or being and am not a tool or thing. I become authentic; I become my own.

Authenticity, thrownness, resolve and other phenomena that Heidegger made intellectually famous are, he claims, not meant morally. Indeed, the content of an authentic action would vary with time and place. Authenticity at most illuminates the world freshly; it does not offer guidance. Still, no one who reads Heidegger would rather fall into inauthentic understanding than be authentic.

In the course of Heidegger's discussion of the elements of human being (which, collectively, he calls "care") he argues that we always understand our being in terms of time. We project our possibilities by expecting or anticipating them; we illuminate what has been as we reach forward toward our possibilities; and we deal with things practically and scientifically in their presence. Heidegger here is opposing his understanding of human being with the dominating traditional meaning of being, which has been what is purely and never-endingly present.

Another characteristic of Heidegger's thought is his deep understanding of other thinkers. Because we are essentially temporal we always understand our possibilities in terms of views that we have inherited. Studying past thinkers, therefore, is not merely a scholarly occupation but necessary for grasping our own philosophical activities. Heidegger primarily examined other thinkers by "deconstructing" their understanding to the realm of human being and our openness to being that he had discovered and that he believed they had overlooked. His attempt to situate Descartes' (and all modern philosophy's) understanding of consciousness, certainty, and the importance of the ego or subject within his own broader view of *Dasein*, truth, and being changed fundamentally much scholarly understanding of the supposed priority of consciousness. His fresh look at [Aristotle](#) liberated Aristotle from time-worn views of him, and enabled Heidegger to use Aristotle's view of practical activity, truth, rhetoric, and metaphysical categories to develop his own arguments. Students of [Plato](#), [Aristotle](#), Descartes, [Kant](#), Leibniz, [Nietzsche](#), and others have much to learn from Heidegger's analyses of these thinkers.

Heidegger was concerned that philosophy should be capable of telling us the meaning of Being, of the where and

what Dasein is. Heidegger postulated that, the world 'is', and that this fact is naturally the primordial phenomenon and the basis of all ontological inquiry. For Heidegger the world is here, now and everywhere around us. We are totally immersed in it, and after all, how could we be anywhere 'else'? Husserl had previously spoken of a 'Lebenswelt' (life-world) to stress the solidness of the human encapsulation within reality, but Heidegger's 'grounding' was more complete. Heidegger articulated this entrenchment with the composite, In-der-welt-sein (a 'Being-in-the-world', a 'to-be-in-the-world') (Steiner 1978).

For Heidegger, "Dasein is an entity which, in its very Being, comports itself understandingly towards that Being." And further,

"Dasein exists. Furthermore, Dasein is an entity which in each case I myself am. Mineness belongs to any existent Dasein, and belongs to it as the condition which makes authenticity and inauthenticity possible." (1)

For Heidegger, Dasein may exist in either one of two modes, (authenticity or inauthenticity), or it is modally undistinguished, but Dasein's character needs to be understood a-priori as being 'grounded' in the state of Being that he called 'Being-in-the-world' (Heidegger 1962).

'Being-in-the-world', for Heidegger stood for a unitary phenomenon and needed to be seen as a whole. However, Heidegger was aware that the expression had several components to its structure. There was the duty to examine the ontological structure of the 'world' and define its 'in-the-world-ness'. Also, the identity of the 'Who' that is within the mode of Dasein's average everydayness needs to be sought out, and, the ontological establishment of 'Being-in' needs to be proposed (Heidegger 1962).

Heidegger was concerned with Dasein's distinctive method of being-in, which is at variance with the manner in which one object can be in another (Dreyfus 1991). In *Being and Time* Heidegger wrote;

"What is meant by 'Being-in'? Our proximal reaction is to round out this expression to 'Being-in' 'in the world', and we are inclined to understand this Being-in as 'Being in something' ... as the water is 'in' the glass, or the garment is 'in' the cupboard. By this 'in' we mean the relationship of Being which two entities extended 'in' space have to each other with regard to their location in that space. .... Being-present-at-hand-along-with in the sense of a definite location-relationship with something else which has the same kind of Being, are ontological characteristics which we call 'categorical' "

For Heidegger, these types of 'categorical' Beings belong to entities whose kind of Being is not Dasein. Heidegger continued that, on the other hand, Being-in is an existentially state of Dasein's Being and it cannot be thought of in terms of the Being-present-at-hand of a corporeal Thing 'in' an entity which is present at hand. Heidegger went on to say, " 'Being-in' is thus the formal existential expression for the Being of Dasein, which has its Being-in-the-world as its essential state." According to Steiner (1978), "Heidegger is saying that the notion of existential identity and that of world are completely wedded. To be at all is to be worldly. The everyday is the enveloping wholeness of being."

It is the convening of 'Dasein' and the 'world' which gives definition to both, and the solidness of these terms is covered thinly by the English word 'facticity' (Steiner 1978). Heidegger wrote;

"Dasein's facticity is such that its Being-in-the-world has always dispersed [zerstreut] or even split itself up into definite ways of Being-in. The multiplicity of these is indicated by the following examples: having to do with something, producing something, attending to something and looking after it, making use of something, giving something up and letting it go, undertaking, accomplishing, evincing, interrogating, considering, discussing, determining. .... All these kind ways of Being-in have concern ('Bersorgen') as their kind of Being."

Heidegger (1962) used the term 'concern' as an ontological term for an existentially to select the Being of a possible way of Being-in-the-world because he felt that the Being of Dasein itself was to be revealed as 'care' (Sorge) and that because Being-in-the-world fundamentally belongs to Dasein, its Being concerning the world is fundamentally concern. Concern is the temporal meaning which Being-in-the-world has for human beings and it is the time configuration of human life which is the identical concern which human beings have for the world. If human beings had no concept of time they would have no reason to be engaged or implicated in the world in a human way. It is the awareness of temporality which establishes that the relationship that human beings have with the world is through concern (Warnock 1970).

Not everything is possible for every human being. Every person's options are limited in one way or another and 'concern' is a way that humans can decide what decision could be the correct one in order to move from one condition to another. Choices are made in the world in which humans exist surrounded by other humans. Human beings are characterised by uniqueness, one from another, and this uniqueness gives rise to a set of possibilities for each individual. All human beings are continually oriented towards their own potential, among which are the possibilities of authentic and inauthentic existence. If, whilst moving forward, the standards and beliefs and prejudices of society are embraced, individuals may fail to differentiate themselves from the masses. This, Heidegger regarded as living an 'inauthentic' existence (Warnock 1970).

For Heidegger, Authentic existence can only come into being when individuals arrive at the realisation of who they are and grasp the fact that each human being is a distinctive entity. Once human beings realise that they have their own destiny to fulfill, then their concern with the world will no longer be the concern to do as the masses do, but can

become an 'authentic' concern to fulfill their real potentiality in the world (Warnock 1970).

Heidegger described the self of everyday Dasein as the 'they-self',

"which we distinguish from the authentic Self – that is, from the Self which has been taken hold of in its own way [eigens ergriffenen]. As they-self, the particular Dasein has been dispersed into the 'they', and must first find itself. And further "If Dasein discovers the world in its own way [eigens] and brings it close, if it discloses to itself its own authentic Being, then this discovery of the 'world' and this disclosure of Dasein are always accomplished as a clearing-away of concealments and obscurities, as a breaking up of the disguises with which Dasein bars its own way."

Heidegger (1962) said that deliberation on these matters have brought about a solid understanding of Dasein bringing the average everydayness of Being-in-the-world into view.

Heidegger felt that the all-determining focal point of our Being-in-the-world was going unnoticed because the daily realities of our existence are so trite and numerous but, for Heidegger, 'knowing' was a kind of Being and Dasein only discovers itself when it comprehends reality. Knowledge is not an inexplicable bound from subject to object and return (Steiner 1978),

"But no sooner was the 'phenomenon of knowing the world' grasped than it got interpreted in a 'superficial', formal manner. The evidence for this is the procedure (still customary today) of setting up knowing as a 'relation between subject and Object' – a procedure in which there lurks as much 'truth' as vacuity. But subject and Object do not coincide with Dasein and the world."

Heidegger (1962) said that a principle task was to reveal that knowing has a phenomenal character of a Being which is in and towards the world. Knowing is the possession of those human-Things which are able to know and is an internal characteristic of those entities. Heidegger expanded upon this by saying that knowing is a 'concern' and to know something, even with little interest, is a tangible kind of Being-in-the-world. In fact for Heidegger, even forgetting modifies the primordial Being-in and even as knowledge did not create the world nor forgetting destroy it, it follows that Dasein only realises itself when it grasps reality (Steiner 1978).

Heidegger proclaimed that we are 'thrown' into the world and that our Being-in-the-world is a 'thrownness' [Geworfenheit]. To Heidegger this concept is a primordial banality which had long been overlooked by metaphysical conjecture. Humans beings are thrown with neither prior knowledge nor individual option into a world that was there before and will remain there after they are gone (Steiner 1978). Heidegger wrote;

"This characteristic of Dasein's Being – this 'that it is' – is veiled in its 'whence' and 'whither', yet disclosed in itself all the more unveiledly; we call it the 'thrownness' of this entity into its 'there'; indeed, it is thrown in such a way that, as Being-in-the-world, it is the 'there'. The expression 'thrownness' is meant to suggest the *facticity of its being delivered over*."

No biology of parentage can answer the question of whence we came into Being. Neither do we know toward what end our existence has been projected, apart from our position in relation to death. Yet for Heidegger, it is this twofold mystery that makes the 'thrown' state of human life the more absolute and tangible. Human kind is 'delivered over' to a total, all-encompassing 'thereness' and Dasein must occupy this presentness and take it up into its own existence. Heidegger wished to emphasise the unmistakable 'thereness' of the world into which we are thrown (Steiner 1978).

The world into which our Dasein is thrown has others in it, and the existence of others is totally indispensable to its facticity of Being-there. Understanding of others in the world and the association of the ontological status of others with our own Dasein is, in itself, a form of Being. Heidegger said that Being-in-the-world is a being-with, and that the understanding of the presentness of others is to exist. However, being-with presents the possibility of comprehending our own Dasein as an everyday Being-with-one-another where we may come to exist not on our own terms, but only in reference to others. In so doing, we eventually come to not be ourselves, and surrender our existence to a formless 'Theyness' or alterity (Steiner 1978).

For Heidegger, the 'belonging to others' is a drastic irresponsibility because the 'they' deprives the particular Dasein of its own accountability by making every decision and judgement for it. The 'they' can do this most easily because it can always be said that 'they' were responsible for such and such. Heidegger said that this passivity creates the alienated self, the 'Man' who is fatally disburdened of moral autonomy and, therefore, of moral responsibility. This 'Man' can know no ethical guilt. Heidegger called this the 'self of everyday Dasein' or the 'they-self', the total opposite of the solid singularity of a Dasein which has grasped itself. This crucial distinction was important for Heidegger as it is the distinction between an authentic and an inauthentic human existence (Steiner 1978).

Inauthentic Dasein does not live as itself but as 'they' live. In fact, for Heidegger, it barely exists at all and it exists in a state of fear [Furcht](Steiner 1978). This fear is distinct from anxiety [Angst]. Fear could be experienced when a threat to our life, signifying our situation is recognised, but anxiety is experienced in the face of nothing in particular in our situation (Warnock 1970). According to Warnock (1970), anxiety is that which drives us to swamp ourselves in the insignificant, the common and in all of the elements of an inauthentic existence. However, Steiner (1978), wrote that fear is a part of a trite communal reaction whereas anxiety [Angst] is

"that which makes problematic, which makes worthy of our questioning, our Being-in-the-world. Angst is one of

the primary instruments through which the ontic character and context of everyday existence is made inescapably aware of, is rendered naked to, the pressures of the ontological. And further, Angst is a mark of authenticity, of the repudiation of the 'theyness'."

Upon close investigation, Steiner's interpretation is closer to Heidegger's meaning surrounding Angst than is Warnock's. Heidegger wrote that an understanding of Being belongs to the ontological structure of Dasein, and he proposed that there is an understanding state of mind in which Dasein is disclosed to itself. Heidegger sought a simplified way of disclosure to bring the structural totality of Being to light and he hypothesized that the state of mind that would satisfy his requirements, was the state of anxiety. Taking the phenomenon of falling as his departure point and distinguishing anxiety from fear, Heidegger wrote;

"As one of Dasein's possibilities of Being, anxiety – together with Dasein itself as disclosed in it – provides the phenomenal basis for explicitly grasping Dasein's primordial totality of Being."

Steiner (1978) offers a demarcation in that, a further aspect of Dasein, as argued by Heidegger, is that Dasein is grounded in language; Being-in-the-world expresses itself in discourse. Furthermore, he made a distinction between 'Rede', 'the speech of Dasein' and 'Gerede', 'talk'. He avoided the triteness of using the term 'idle chatter' for 'talk' because it was far too reassuring for what he wanted to say. For Heidegger, 'talk' had lost its primary relationship-of-being toward the talked about entity and all that 'talk' was doing was to 'pass words along' or, to 'gossip emptily', fostering illusions of understanding that have no real comprehension. Dasein-with-others takes place in an echo chamber of nonstop bogus interaction, with no cognition as to what is being communicated (Steiner 1978). The differences between authentic and inauthentic lives were contrasted by Heidegger through the agencies of fear set against anxiety, 'speech' contrasted with 'talk', genuine wonder opposed to mere novelty. Each disparate category comes about as an expected outcome of the complete antithesis between the self-possession of true Dasein and the collective lack of perception of an existence carried out in terms of 'oneness' and 'theyness'. Heidegger denoted this latter state as 'Verfall' ('a falling away from' 'a cadence into decline'). Heidegger was careful to point out that the condition of 'Verfallensein' (a fallen state) is not sinful, nor is the term meant to cast a moral value judgement. Heidegger wrote;

"Dasein has, in the first instance, fallen away [abgefallen] from itself as an authentic potentiality for Being its self, and has fallen into the 'world'. 'Falleness' into the world means an absorption in Being-with-one-another, in so far as the latter is guided by idle talk, curiosity and ambiguity. Through the Interpretation of falling, what we have called the 'inauthenticity' of Dasein may now be defined more precisely. On no account however do the terms 'inauthentic' and 'non-authentic' signify 'really not', as if in this mode of Being, Dasein were altogether to lose its Being. 'Inauthenticity' does not mean anything like Being-no-longer-in-the-world, but amounts rather to quite a distinctive kind of Being-in-the-world – the kind which is completely fascinated by the 'world' and by the Dasein-with of Others in the 'they'. Not-Being-its-self [Das Nicht-es-selbst-sein] functions as a positive possibility of that entity which, in its essential concern, is absorbed in a world. This kind of not-Being has to be conceived as that kind of Being which is closest to Dasein and in which Dasein maintains itself for the most part."

For Heidegger then, 'inauthenticity' and 'falleness' are not mere mishaps or erroneous options. Rather they are essential components of existence, because Dasein is always Dasein-with and a Being-in-the-world into which we have been thrown. Acceding to the enticement of living a mundane existence is simply a part of existing itself. 'Falleness' was a positive for Heidegger in the sense that there must be 'inauthenticity', 'theyness', and 'talk', for Dasein to become aware of its loss of self and strive for its return to authentic Being. 'Verfall' turns out to be the completely essential prerequisite towards the repossession of self, the struggle toward true Dasein (Steiner 1978). Dasein is committed to searching out the authentic via the inauthenticity of its Being-in-the-world and Heidegger said that authentic existence is not something which floats above everyday fallingness. He postulated that a proper instrument is needed for seizing the everydayness and he said that that instrument is 'care' [Sorge]. Because in the condition of inauthenticity we 'fall away from ourselves', Heidegger said that we simultaneously fall into a frenetic busyness and an emptiness that gives rise to a sense of the uncanny. As we flap about feeling 'homeless' our everyday familiarity is shattered (Steiner 1978).

It is uncanniness that declares the pivotal moments in which Angst brings Dasein face to face with the terrible freedom of deciding whether to remain in inauthenticity or to endeavor to attain self-possession. 'Sorge' is the means of transcendence beyond being Dasein-with and Dasein-in to become Dasein-for and Sorge must be a 'care for' many things. These things include a concern for others, a care for the ready-to-hand, but in principle Sorge is a caring for the presentness and obscurity of Being itself (Steiner 1978). Heidegger said;

"When Dasein 'understands' uncanniness in the everyday manner, it does so by turning away from it in falling; in this turning away, the 'not-at-home' gets 'dimmed down'. Yet the everydayness of this fleeing shows phenomenally that anxiety, as a basic state of mind, belongs to Dasein's essential state of Being-in-the-world, which, as one that is existential, is never present-at-hand but is itself always in a mode of factual Being-there – that is, in the mode of a state of mind."

For Heidegger, it is Sorge that signifies a man's existence and makes it meaningful. To be-in-the-world in an authentic existential pretext is to be 'careful'. Heidegger concluded that 'care' is the primordial state of Being as

Dasein strives towards authenticity (Steiner 1978).

Finally, Heidegger said that Angst reveals to Dasein the opportunity of fulfilling itself in a fervent 'freedom towards death'. This freedom has been released from the delusions of the 'they' to become accurate, certain of itself, and anxious. The temporality of Dasein is solidified by the awesome certainty that all Being is a Being-toward-death and that, "The 'end' of Being-in-the-world is death." Heidegger wrote;

"Death is a possibility-of-Being which Dasein itself has to take over in every case. With death, Dasein stands before itself in its ownmost potentiality-for-Being. This is a possibility in which the issue is nothing less than Dasein's Being-in-the-world. Its death is the possibility of no-longer being-able-to-be-there. If Dasein stands before itself as this possibility, it has been fully assigned to its ownmost potentiality-for-Being. When it stands before itself in this way, all its relations to any other Dasein have been undone. This ownmost non-relational possibility is at the same time the uttermost one."

In the first division of "Being and Time", Heidegger worked out his account of Being-in-the-world and used it to ground an insightful evaluation of long-established ontology and epistemology. For Heidegger, human beings are never directly in the world except by way of being in some particular circumstance; it is Dasein that is Being-in-the-world (Dreyfus 1991).