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Wayne M. Martin (2005)

HEIDEGGER, MARTIN

(1889–1976)

Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) was born in Messkirch, a small town in the hills of southwestern Germany. The environment of his modest, middle class upbringing was that of a Catholic agrarian village where his father was the sexton of the local church. When Heidegger was fourteen he entered the Catholic seminary at Constance and began an education that appeared to be directed toward a vocation in the priesthood. He entered a novitiate with the Jesuits in 1909 but left that track after a short time and shifted out of clerical training altogether in 1911. He intensified his studies in philosophy, literature, and sci-

ence, and for a time concentrated on mathematics. During this period (through 1915) he developed a conservative approach to neo-scholastic thought and published articles in conservative Catholic journals. He also read intensely the emerging phenomenological literature and neo-Kantian philosophy.

Heidegger's doctoral dissertation in 1913 had the title, "The Doctrine of Judgment in Psychologism: A Critical-Positive Contribution to Logic." He completed his habilitation dissertation in 1915, "Duns Scotus's Doctrine of Categories and Meaning."

With the emergence of a strong interest in historical development and in Edmund Husserl's thought, a significant counterforce to his Christian, transcendently oriented convictions began to form. On the one hand he understood the basic structures of truth and meaning to have changeless validity. On the other, he saw that an act of mind requires time for syntheses and connections and that philosophical thought bears describable histories within it. Although academics identified him as a rising Catholic thinker, he was increasingly influenced by G. F. W. Hegel's historical, dialectical thought as well as by the "life-philosophy" of Friedrich Nietzsche, Wilhelm Dilthey, Henri Bergson, and Max Scheler. Søren Kierkegaard's and Martin Luther's writings also had a strong effect on his thought. The transcendental orientations of Thomistic, Husserlian, and neo-Kantian philosophy were increasingly challenged in Heidegger's thought as he devoured the art and philosophy—both religious and nonreligious—that influenced his moods and feelings as well as his thinking at least as powerfully as rational argument influenced them.

Heidegger's attention turned increasingly to issues of time, history, suffering, and unresolvable ambiguity. The regions of pure logic and transcendently oriented morality and epistemology began to appear to him as desertlike and abstract. Metaphysical thought, if it is to count as important, must give clarity to and insight into lives and histories. Issues connecting phenomenology with time, history, and life formed a new horizon for the young philosopher. Whereas in his 1913 dissertation atemporal logic and its categories provided the way to understanding being, by 1915 the *question* of being, not being's static availability for conceptual grasp, began to take shape. Hegel and especially Husserl began to emerge as major transitional figures as Heidegger moved away from Thomism and neo-Kantian philosophy and toward a phenomenological approach that valorized description over speculation and practical life over categorical analysis.

When he married Elfride Petri in 1917 his departure from Catholicism, which became explicit in 1919, was well underway. Heidegger was in the process of a turn the momentum of which helped to define both his creativity and the movement of his thinking.

In 1918 he became, as a *Privatdozent*, an assistant to Husserl in Freiburg. The University of Marburg appointed him associate professor in 1923, and in 1928 he succeeded Husserl as Professor at Freiburg.

EARLY THOUGHT

Two of Heidegger's early insights are that thought takes place only within the particularities of cultural and communal lives and that particular lives are saturated with histories. This emphasis on temporal, historical particularity means that he began to place a primary importance on the situatedness of thought in the history of philosophy. This emphasis is particularly noteworthy because the historical emphasis added a dimension to phenomenological thought that was not clearly pronounced in Husserl's work and because it showed the particularity of Heidegger's own way: his early and deep engagement with ancient and medieval texts and the personal import of his traditional, historically oriented education. Even though he turned away from metaphysical theology, he did not turn away from the central importance for thought of the metaphysical tradition. It provided the site for philosophical transformation and departure.

Heidegger's recognition of the importance of temporal particularity for thought set in motion a conflict of values that would help to shape his thought for over a decade. He launched a task of learning to think with the traditions that formed his particularity in such a way that he could turn through their senses of timelessness by the temporal movement of his own thought: The temporal dimension of his thought began to define the meaning of claims to timelessness. To carry out such a project he needed to work through metaphysical thought, finding in it what overturns its predisposition toward unchanging truths, formal logic, and the priority of the knowing subject. "Temporal-historical occurrence" names the overturning element. "Phenomenology" names the approach by which Heidegger formulated the transforming power of time in European sensibility. Together, temporal-historical occurrence and phenomenology provided Heidegger with the elements that allowed him to reconsider the specificity and temporal palpability of life that he finds misconceived in his philosophical lineage and that takes the shape of the question of being.

This kind of turning also applies to his religious background. His movement from pretheology student to theology student, to religiousness without church or theology, to phenomenology, to a thinker of the question of being and of truth in the Greek sense of *aletheia*: this movement engaged a metamorphic turning through theology and religion. Within a few years of his appointment to Freiburg as a *Privatdozent* he would attempt to rethink such Christian words as "fall," "guilt," "word," "conversion," and "conscience," turning them out of contexts of faith and theological meaning to a contextual meaning without religious significance. Heidegger emphasized as his work progressed that such turning composes the way thought unfolds: A turning movement through and beyond a body of thoughts manifests the very life of thought. Without such turning thinking comes to its end. Further, a person cannot engage Heidegger's thought without encountering its metamorphic movement. In such movement claims about universal and timeless realities undergo for him a transformation specific to a particular engagement, and such engagement is defined by the singularity of its metamorphosis. Thought in its temporal-historical happening takes place as a living, particular, and self-transforming event. This orientation would mean that Heidegger was ill-disposed toward philosophical schools. When he was one of the leading philosophers in Europe, he did not encourage the formation of a Heideggerian school of thought. He believed that thinkers must find their own ways in their own settings and in their own life-worlds. Such thinking takes place in dialogue with the values, ideas, and beliefs that people find in other ways of thinking and living.

Heidegger experienced the beginning of transformative insights that distanced him from Thomistic and neo-Kantian thought in the late teens and early twenties, but he did not have an adequate way of bringing the insights to full thought. A "hermeneutics of facticity" names an early and landmark term for Heidegger. "Facticity" in this context refers to the irreducibility of things in their living events, and "hermeneutics" means interpretive explication. People recognize and interpret given things before they develop theoretical concepts about them. Interpretations arise as people live practically with things, encounter them in different contexts, use them, and feel their impacts. Prior to the distance invoked by theoretical reflection, people are enmeshed in their environments, and people's environments are filled with things that appear in their living, usually practical specificity. The ways in which things appear in those nontheoretical situations compose pretheoretical interpretations, and things in their appearing and facticity are nothing other than

their own events. How might philosophers think in and from a living situation that is filled with everyday and unconsidered interpretations and bring both those interpretations and themselves to conceptual elaborations that hold in mind the concreteness of things? What kind of language would be required? How would such thought transpire?

ARISTOTLE AND BEYOND

Heidegger came to the idea of a hermeneutics of facticity, that is, interpretations based on practical life, through his work on Aristotle and Husserl. His sympathy with Luther's attacks on scholasticism was consistent with his rejection of the scholastic interpretations of Aristotle that he learned as a student. Heidegger wanted to understand by intense reconsideration of many of his texts Aristotle's thought prior to Christian appropriations of it, the Aristotle whose concepts arose from his own Greek world. A radical departure from the Christianized Aristotle was required, Heidegger thought, in order to engage Aristotle's work in its vastly different manner of living when compared to that of later thinkers.

Heidegger's groundbreaking and influential interpretations of Aristotle provided him with a forceful return to European philosophy's Greek heritage. It also provided the occasion to rethink that heritage by means of an approach and vocabulary that he learned from Husserl. As he took away the Christian superstructure that encased the Aristotle he first studied, Heidegger reformulated Aristotle's thought with the eyes of a phenomenologist, eyes, he said, that he received from Husserl: he began to turn Aristotle's seemingly metaphysical thinking out of itself and into a way of thinking that moved decisively away from metaphysical formulation. In order to engage Aristotle well, Heidegger must preserve the vast difference between his own and Aristotle's spiritual environments. He would not overcome the difference; he would preserve it as he took his careful departure from Aristotle's way of thought by intense encounters with his texts.

Heidegger was arrested by, among other things, Aristotle's account of practical wisdom (*phronesis*). It described a kind of situational knowing that did not propose completion by reference to unchanging objects; it was intrinsically open to future development, and it functioned to open up future developments. Husserl's account of internal time consciousness also had, for Heidegger, the virtue of making impossible a *complete*, objective grasp of any thing. Heidegger found, however, in both Aristotle and Husserl an unquestioned prioritization of

present time. This prioritization meant that neither saw clearly that futurity—coming to pass and yet to be—defined a nonobjectifiable dimension of presence or that presence is strangely modified—put in question—by its opening to futurity. This openness means that futurity defines presence, not as a categorical abstraction but as a constitutive indefiniteness and indeterminability in the lives of whatever happens. Time and its concept appeared to be the issues over which both Aristotle and Husserl stumbled—time and, for Husserl, the question of subjectivity.

THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH

The sense of phenomenology, as Heidegger began to think of it during his years in Marburg, comes from the ancient Greek deponent, *phainesthai*, a middle voice form that means, "to show itself." A phenomenon is an event that shows itself. *Phainesthai* is formed from *phaino*, and that word means to bring something to light. The stem of the word is *pha—phos*, the light or shining whereby something is manifest. To give an account (*logos*) of phenomena meant for Heidegger to describe beings in their self-showing, to so speak and think that one is brought to things in their self-showing, and to give an account of the shining (the "light") that allows their manifestness. Self-showing composes the lives of individual beings.

Heidegger makes a sharp distinction between the specificity of a self-showing being and the enactment of that self-showing. Philosophers can give accounts of the ways beings show themselves, but they can also give accounts of the way the enactment of self-showing happens. This latter account addresses the being of beings and must not be confused with description of a highest being: being is not a being. This ontological difference between being (the occurrence of self-showing) and beings (a specific instance of self-showing) is basic in Heidegger's thought and persists in several forms throughout his career. It is a difference that characterizes the happening of phenomena: a phenomenon is a specific self-showing thing, and its being happens as the enactment of self-showing. Heidegger calls "ontic" the way a thing shows itself in its particularity. He calls "ontological" the happening of disclosiveness that is common for all phenomena.

The self-disclosive happening of phenomena, not a subjective state or action, thus becomes Heidegger's primary area for descriptive thought. Husserl too gave priority to the manifestness of phenomena and to ways things are manifest, and for him an intention may be

described as the direction of an appearing (manifest) event. “Direction” for Husserl suggested an unfulfilled, open-ended process of appearing that constitutes an event of transcendental subjectivity. It is located in transcendental, subjective acts of consciousness. Heidegger’s way of engaging facticity, history, and time, however, turned him away from consciousness and toward the world. The unfulfilled directions of beings are not found in a proposed and lively structure of transcendental subjectivity but in the self-disclosive happening of beings-in-the-world. His thought turned through a characteristic modern priority given to subjective enactment and toward worldly structures that do not originate in human consciousness. He moved away from an epistemological orientation in his accounts of meaning, signification, and thought, and from a consequent emphasis on the subjects and objects of knowledge. He moved toward a way of thinking that is oriented by the disclosive, nonsubjective, and nonobjective enactments of things in the world. His aim was to show how those enactments do not begin with conceptual grasp or subjective appropriation, how the enactments are definitively historical and temporal, and how they happen self-disclosively in the world.

BEING AND TIME (1927)

Being and Time, one of the most influential books in the twentieth century, marks the culmination of Heidegger’s years in Marburg. He had worked during this time especially on the history of the concept of time and brought together and honed ideas and preoccupations that began to form definitively as early as 1915. In lectures he elaborated his understanding of phenomenology and his departure from Husserl, as well as provided the conceptual scaffolding for *Being and Time* and many of its key terms. The availability in his Collected Works (*Gesamtausgabe*) of many of the lectures that he gave from 1923 through 1927 now allows scholars to follow the formations of *Being and Time*’s leading ideas and questions, a formation that this short discussion cannot pursue.

Being and Time appeared as a work in progress in the sense that its publication was hurried due to Heidegger’s candidacy for Husserl’s chair in Freiburg. It was projected as part of a much larger, multivolume series that Heidegger did not complete. The book made a huge cultural impact nonetheless, often due to interpretations of it that Heidegger found mistaken and at times offensive. Especially off the mark were those readings that turned *Being and Time* into a study in philosophical anthropology, existential humanism, or Husserlean phenomenology. The book’s reception, in addition to Heidegger’s own dis-

satisfactions with it, provided an occasion for Heidegger to see that he would have to turn through *Being and Time*’s concepts toward a different way of thinking if he were to carry out the book’s mandate. He later understood *Being and Time* as an occasion in which he intensified a radical turn through his metaphysical inheritance toward a way of thinking that is based on that turn.

The book’s mandate is found in reawakening the question of the meaning of being. Heidegger was persuaded that that question gave rise to European philosophical thought, although most traditions in European philosophy have obscured it. This question emerged for Heidegger when he was eighteen years old and read Franz Brentano’s *On the Manifold Meaning of Being According to Aristotle*. Although Brentano’s intentions were in part theological, Heidegger found through Brentano his entry into Husserl’s *Logical Investigations*. This entry was in the context of the question of the meaning of being; and that question as well as a phenomenological way of thinking intensified for him and emerged together at the center of *Being and Time*.

Heidegger locates the question of being in the occurrence of *Dasein*. This word, *Dasein*, which has become a standard term in English among those who work within Heidegger’s influence, names the located and disclosive occurrence of being in the world. It is not synonymous with “human being” but names the disclosive site of human lives. *Dasein*’s way of occurring is the way things happen in their manifest availability for reference, recognition, and use. *Dasein* thus happens as the worldly region of disclosiveness. *Being and Time* provides a descriptive account of *Dasein* and shows that the being of worldly things is formed in their phenomenal quality, in their self-showing, not in any kind of creative or underlying substance. He further shows that the life, the being, of self-showing happens as temporal enactment and that its continuation is continuously in question: *Dasein*’s being is able not to be. The question of the meaning of being thus arises in the prereflective occurrence of *Dasein*’s mortality, not in a theoretical action by reflective subjects.

In his approach to this question Heidegger begins with what he calls the average, everyday understanding of being, that is, of the way beings happen in their practical lives. Usually we relate with things in terms of their usefulness and their standard identities in our environments. We have an operative, inchoate sense of what “to exist” means as we live with things. When we investigate something to know it better, we usually consider it as an object and work to make our statements and definitions appropriate to what we can find out about it. That means that

we usually do not question the meaning of nonobjective living occurrences and that we expect to discover something about the existence of things by treating them primarily as objects of use or knowledge. Their meaning and truth are found in our knowledge of them or in the appropriateness of the uses we find for them. A being is usually understood by reference to definitions of its objective presence; and if that presence is to be grounded in some way, philosophers usually look for a defining and continuously present reality that persists through the lives of changing and passing things. Such persistent and grounding presence might be found, for example, in such beings as God, Nature, Reason, or Transcendental Subjectivity. Transcendent beings such as these seem to provide a foundational meaning for finite things, and they embody the priority of presence for understanding the meaning of temporal passage: they are always present regardless of the changes and passage that beings undergo. The question of the meaning of being appears thus to be resolved by a presence that does not come to pass and that gives abiding meaning to passing beings.

Heidegger's account of Dasein, on the other hand, shows that temporality without a priority of presence defines the way beings are. In Part One of *Being and Time* he shows, first, that Dasein is intrinsically a caring occurrence. It is a way of being whose continuation is always in question, and consequently Dasein reverts to itself in the sense that it is always concerned with the preservation and continuation of beings and of itself. Being in the world is a passing occurrence, always situated in given histories and settings, always coping with uncertainties and transitions, always moving in the indetermination of the upcoming. The meaning of Dasein's being is care, Heidegger says—care, the inevitability of concern for whatever matters. Neither life nor world appears as guaranteed. Neither shows itself as supported by continuous presence. The disclosive happening of being in the world, in its *happening*, is always passing away. The meaning of care is thus found as the inevitability of losing presence, the inevitability of coming to pass, and the associated inevitability of taking care of whatever matters.

In the process of describing Dasein's temporality, Heidegger gives accounts in Part One of *Being and Time* of worldliness, relevance, spatiality, everyday superficiality, identity, worldly commonality, attunement, interpretation, and language. These accounts culminate with a section entitled, "Care as The Being of Dasein," and another, "Da-sein, Disclosedness, and Truth." In this part of the book he shows that our historical, situated, future-oriented being—our very life—is not at all like objective

presence. Dasein happens as yet to be, as possibility to be. Individuals live in such possibility as in a "not yet" that is a dimension of any present moment. The completion that is sometimes attributed to definitive objects or identities is not a quality of living, worldly events. This constitutive, temporal incompleteness describes at once Dasein's ontological disclosiveness and ontic worldly events in their specificity and concreteness.

Part Two of *Being and Time* intensifies the study of temporality around the axis of the question of the meaning of being. Whereas Part One began with accounts of the ways Dasein exists in an everyday way, Part Two shows that Dasein's existence is constituted fundamentally by a unifying structure of mortal temporality. The question of the meaning of being and of Dasein is founded in this structure. The guiding questions for this part address, on the one hand, the temporal, ontological unity of Dasein. On the other, they raise the possibility of living in fundamental and positive attunement with Dasein's ontological structure and of bringing together appropriately that structure and the specific way a person exists. He calls such living accord "authenticity." The possibility of authenticity is one of living in ways that affirm the unifying structure of mortal temporality. When such affirmation is achieved, people find a unity in their lives that is defined by finiteness, that is, by incompleteness, indeterminateness, and being toward death.

In Part Two, Heidegger addresses such phenomena as the present occurrence of futurity, the draw of being for people and hindrances to alertness to that draw, ontological guilt, the ability for authenticity that is intrinsic to Dasein, and historicity. In that process he turns such words as "conscience," "call," and "guilt" out of their theological and religious heritage to an ontological and non-theological context. This part reconsiders the major phenomena addressed in Part One by what Heidegger calls a "primordial existential interpretation," that is, an interpretation that describes an ontological structure that is definitive for the occurrence of those phenomena. It develops the descriptive claim that temporality grounds care and is thus the meaning of care. The reader confronts again the thought that ontological grounding lacks substantial identity, presence, or necessity. The study ends with recognition of its own incompleteness.

THE ESSENCE OF TRUTH, TURNING OUT OF BEING AND TIME

The incompleteness of *Being and Time* was not due solely to the pressing circumstances under which it was submitted for publication. It was due also to Heidegger's con-

frontation with the inability of the book's language to say what needed to be said and with the limited range of his thought before the phenomena he addressed. Heidegger confronted the force of the metaphysical tradition in the way he used such words and phrases as "horizon," "structure," "the ontological condition for the possibility of something," "being," and even "Dasein." The book's manner of self-regulation and structure, its seemingly explanatory purpose, its conception of origin and history, and its inadequately conceived account of truth: these elements dissatisfied the author. He could see how the text could lead people to misunderstand his thought and its intentions. He also experienced the force of the movement of thought that had begun to uproot his metaphysical moorings. It was a force that he found turning him out of his own book toward a new beginning and in directions far more radical than he had foreseen.

The essay that most strikingly embodies the turning of his thought in the years shortly after the publication of *Being and Time* is *On the Essence of Truth*, which he wrote in 1933 and to which he returned over a period of nine years before publishing it. After *Being and Time* and prior to this essay he had lectured and written especially on Kant, Hegel, Schelling, and on basic concepts and problems in metaphysical thought. He turned down a professorship in Berlin, and enjoyed wide and growing recognition as a creative, leading philosopher.

In spite of his dissatisfactions with *Being and Time*, Heidegger had opened up the question of the meaning of being—or that question began to open up to him. It could be stated in several ways. Classically: Why are there beings instead of nothing at all? In terms of appearing: How is it that things appear, are present and manifest, and show themselves rather than not appearing at all? In terms of finitude: How does being happen in the passing presence of things? In general, the question of the meaning of being is at once a question of fundamental uncertainty in life, presence and passage, and of disclosure and closure in the occurrence of phenomena. Temporality is found in Dasein's having been now yet to be, a "structure" that seems to defy the meaning of "structure." At every turn as we consider this question we encounter the happening of manifest beings, and this—the happening of manifest beings—for Heidegger is essentially a question of truth. The question of being (of manifest happening or eventuation) is at once the question of truth. How is it that the temporality and disclosure of being inevitably raise the question of truth for him?

Long before Brentano pointed out the connection in Aristotle's thought of "true" and "being," and long before

Aristotle himself, the word *aletheia*, usually translated as "truth," played a major role in ancient Greek civilization. The word, which Heidegger understands as combining the alpha privative with *lethe* (oblivion), names an occurrence when something is manifest, self-showing, and apparent. A being is exposed in its disclosiveness, is quite explicitly there where it happens. Its truth happens as its self-disclosure, as its own manifest presence. We have seen that for Heidegger the disclosiveness of something is not identical with what something shows itself to be, that there is a basic difference between *what* something is and disclosiveness as such. The disclosiveness (roughly, dis- = the alpha privative, and -clove = *lethe*) lets something be as it shows itself. Disclosiveness is, Heidegger says, an open region that, while apparent with manifest beings, is not limited to the specificity of what a being is, not limited to a being's time, place, and identity. "Truth" in this context means the free openness of disclosure, and a truth is found in the self-disclosure of a being. To know something in its truth is to engage it in a way appropriate to its "essence," to its own disclosive eventuation.

The factor of oblivion or complete lack of apparentness, however, elaborates what Heidegger considered in *Being and Time* as the mortality of phenomena: beings appear with nothing transcendent and specific to ground them or guarantee their lives; they are "grounded" in their disclosive eventuations. Their disclosure carries oblivion with it as a strange and pervasive mortal factor, one that makes impossible a complete grasp of any phenomenon. It is as though oblivion protects a being from complete exposure, gives something other to its truth, removes it from availability. *Lethe* suggests concealment, withdrawal of being (i.e., of disclosiveness), and untruth (a complete absence of disclosure).

Heidegger's account of essence in *On the Essence of Truth* no longer struggles with what appear to be quasitranscendental structures of existence as he locates essence clearly in both the eventuation of disclosure and the history of the thought of truth. The untruth, the "non-essence," of concealment—the oblivion of being—suggests the inadequacy of "finitude" as a descriptive term for Dasein's temporality. It suggests a new departure in which existential uncertainty is compounded by impenetrable closure to the manifestness and "light," of life. This departure includes a strong sense of mystery, not the mystery of Pure Light or of a hidden fullness of being, but mystery in the sense of unsayable oblivion in the midst of disclosive openness. As his thought turns to them, both oblivion and truth appear to happen for Heidegger when he attempts to speak with alertness to them. Is it possible,

he wonders, that the turning he is undergoing describes a movement of disclosure and oblivion that is definitive as well as obscure in the history of western thought? Is his transforming movement toward early senses of *aletheia* following a path to the early beginning of metaphysical thought, one that makes apparent an oblivious departure of western thought from the questionableness and uncertainty of truth?

POLITICAL CATASTROPHE

At the time that this turning gave him new directions and possibilities for thinking, Heidegger became embroiled in a politics that belied the most promising of those possibilities. Ever a German nationalist, long persuaded of the unjust consequences of the Treaty of Verdun, convinced that Germany must resist communism at all costs, and disappointed in the inefficiency of democratic procedures, he embraced Hitler's National Socialism as Germany's best political hope. By 1933 Heidegger saw this party as a force toward revival of German culture and restoration of Germany's leadership in the transforming of European, materialistic civilization.

In April of that year the faculty at the University of Freiburg elected him rector, and in that role he supported Nazi ideology for German resurgence and helped to form university policy according to party interests. Nazi authorities, however, criticized him strongly for his failure to support anti-Semitic rhetoric and policy. Heidegger was not a gifted administrator. Sharp political and educational controversies intensified, and he resigned his post ten months after assuming office. His dream that Hitler, as a man of destiny, would transcend the foolish people around him and become a heroic, spiritual leader allowed Heidegger to support Hitler long after he became disillusioned with the National Socialist party. He began to undercut party interpretations of Nietzsche, and by the mid-1930s his classes were audited by suspicious party appointees. The party also restricted his freedom of movement and publications, and he was punished by means of hard physical labor when the authorities drafted him into the People's Militia. Heidegger never used his international stature as a base to criticize National Socialism, and although he privately admitted his errors after the war, he never publicly addressed German atrocities. After the war the French occupational authorities prevented Heidegger from teaching in the university until 1951.

There is considerable controversy around the question of whether Heidegger's philosophy led to his political hope, error, and naivete. Some people see a profound

and causal linkage, while others see more distance and inconsistency between his thought and his politics of the 1930s. That decade, regardless of the way one assesses the controversy, constitutes a dreary segment in Heidegger's life. Responses to it have on occasion been ones of continuing outrage, whereas others find Heidegger's thought worthy of sustained and positive engagement. Perhaps the dangers of forgetting and those of a righteous condemnation should be foremost on our minds when we consider the importance of Heidegger's misjudgments.

SEARCHING FOR ANOTHER WAY TO THINK

During the 1930s Heidegger searched for language, conceptual movements, and rhythms of thought that could engage appropriately the disclosive happening of things. The systematic rationality of "onto-theology," that is, of traditional philosophy, seemed to constitute anxious attempts to overcome the questions of truth and of the meaning of being which gave European philosophy its inception. Approaches called materialistic, idealistic, empirical, and analytical seemed dedicated to forgetting those questions. Post-Cartesian thought gave forms of subjectivity and objectivity ontological priority, whether or not subjectivity was considered ahistorical or historical. In which writing and conceptuality might Heidegger find a degree of positive alertness to the questions that he found as the moving forces in European philosophy? This was a time of considerable isolation for Heidegger as he looked for alternative ways of thinking. He experienced disappointment in his own work, discouragement in its reception, political failure, and an uncertain future for himself and the kind of disciplined education that he thought necessary for the survival of western civilization. That would be an education in the classical origins of Europe and its many traditions, and it would be an education that recognized what he came to see as the devastation of instrumentally oriented culture and the desolation of contemporary spiritual accomplishment.

Heidegger had read widely in literature and especially in poetry since he was in his teens. The poetry of J. W. Goethe, Friedrich Hölderlin, Rainer Maria Rilke, Stephan Georg, and Georg Trakl, among others, helped to form his mind, and he turned to poetry, especially to Hölderlin's, with renewed intensity in the 1930s. He wanted to find ways to formulate and express what he sensed but could not say to his own satisfaction. He also read the ancient Greek tragedians with an emphasis on the two great questions that preoccupied him. He gave courses and lectures on Nietzsche's thought and found in

it a welcomed emphasis on the connections of art and thinking. In Nietzsche's thought he found as well a culminating and destructive fulfillment of that nihilism prepared by European metaphysics. It is a nihilism given partial expression by Hegel and carried out after Nietzsche by a technological society that is oriented around subjects and objects of use and knowledge.

His attention turned increasingly to thought and language as disclosive events. Truth, *aletheia*, names, as we have seen, the enactment of self-showing; the truth of thought and language is found as thought and language, in their occurrences, give place and occasion to self-showing phenomena. The life of thought and language is found in the ways they engage the manifest lives of things. Is the engagement defined by organizational structures? By the power of will? By categories of knowledge? By means of production? By patterns of trade? People's lives are normally carried out with such structures and activities. In addition to our normal ways of acting, however, we might also give attention to the self-showing dimension of anything that is present with us. We might learn to connect with things with a sense that their very happening addresses us, that our "hearing" is found in the ways we live with them. If our living provides ways to allow events prominence in their disclosive dimension, our thinking and speaking might well grant to them a dwelling place, not for their utility only, but also for their self-showing, for the essence of *their* lives. Although that manner of living is not forecast in language and thought dominated by the importance of subjectivity and objectivity, it does appear significantly in the work of some of the artists and poets Heidegger read. He explored and experimented for many years with possibilities for language and thought that are influenced by poetic rather than traditionally philosophical kinds of awareness. He intended to find areas of encounter between poetic and philosophical language, to enrich each in their engagements, and at best to occasion the emergence of a kind of mentation that finds its truth in allowing the truth—the self-disclosure—of whatever happens in its environment.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO PHILOSOPHY

Heidegger's sense of failure in the language of *Being and Time* to say what needed to be said of the questions of the meaning of being and truth figured a large part of the turning in his thought during the 1930s and 1940s. His *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)* is a major work that emerged in that turning between 1936 and 1938. He wrote it in the impetus provided by his work on art and especially on poets, his rethinking of the incep-

tion and decline of European metaphysics, and his search for a new beginning for thinking. In its fuguelike formation, this series of meditations composes an effort to find ways to speak of what seems always to remain unsaid yet present in European philosophy. It is an effort to think in the obscure questions of being and truth, to speak in their modern wake, rather than to re-present them. Heidegger invites the reader to engage in strange and often wrenching movements of language as he attempts to let the questions emerge and turn thought and language from the tracks that move them inevitably away from what most threatens and yet impels the remarkable occurrence of European thinking. If he succeeds he reconceives *Being and Time* in a radical return to *Being and Time*'s issues and makes that return by the force of turning away from the book's structure and articulation. The lives and forces of the questions of truth and the meaning of being, not their resolution, guide this book's movements. It is a work that attempts to think the inconclusiveness of its major issues. Its success would be found in the emergence of a way of thinking that makes apparent what incited western thought and what western thought in its formation nonetheless virtually lost.

BEYOND HUMANISM

In 1946, Heidegger responded to questions raised by the French philosopher Jean Beaufret. Published in 1948 as "Letter on Humanism," Heidegger made explicit in his response not only his distance from "Existentialism," but also his reservations about "Humanism" as it is conceived in post-Enlightenment Europe and North America. Issues of human life and community are not best located in conceptions and images of human subjectivity. He developed his descriptive claim that humanistic values are often the source of destructive depreciations of human life. The essay comprises a sustained reflection on what is destructive and constructive for people and on basic assumptions regarding the essence of worldly life. It has had widespread influence on thinkers in the second half of the twentieth century who find in humanistic ideals elements that, contrary to their stated purposes, do harm to societies and individuals.

In the 1940s and 1950s, Heidegger also relentlessly pursued questions concerning the essence of technology. Technology for him constitutes a way of life that overrides the subtle and most important dimensions of the existence of things as well as of people. The word "technology" thus names the most dangerous form that European nihilism takes. Among the best known of his essays during this time are "The Question concerning Technology"

and “Building, Dwelling, Thinking.” One of the most far reaching and profound of his works in this context is *The Way to Language*, in which Heidegger brings to bear in a cumulative way his preoccupations with thought, language, technology, and dwelling

“Engagement,” “encounter,” and “way” are important words to hold in mind as a person reads Heidegger’s works. He often described thinking as made up of ways of letting things show themselves in the specificity of their contexts. Thinking composes engagements with all manner of manifest things—texts, behaviors, trees, bells, images, concepts. Manifest things are alive in their manifestness, and thinking properly allows their differences as they happen, engages them with alertness to *their* happening. At best, the engagement composes a dialogue, an encounter that no one individual produces. Thinking is what takes place in the dialogue. For Heidegger such an engagement is a social, historical, and communal event that cannot be reduced to the sum of its parts or generalized on the basis of universal meanings. Thinking is made up of engagements with living events in their happening, their eventuation. As he saw it, there are many ways, and the issue for thinking is not one of calculating the correctness of assertions but rather one of making evident or, in unfortunate instances, obscuring beings in their self-showing. Thinking, always opening to the differences of events, always coming to pass in its own life, always on the way to something else, remained at the center of Heidegger’s preoccupation with the questions of being and truth until his death in 1976.

See also Existentialism; Hermeneutics; Phenomenology.

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Charles E. Scott (2005)

HEIDELBERG SCHOOL

See Neo-Kantianism

HEIM, KARL

(1874–1958)

Karl Heim, the German theologian, was born at Frauenzimmern in Württemberg. He studied at Tübingen and was professor of theology at Münster (1914) and at Tübingen from 1920 until his death.

Heim’s work has philosophical interest insofar as he was concerned all of his life with the problem of restating