Martin Heidegger

Being and Time

An Annotated Translation

Cyril Welch
This translation was prepared in the expectation that Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit* (1927) would enter into the (United States) public domain on January 1, 2003. However, on October 27, 1998, the so-called Sonny Bono Copyright Extension Act was signed into law. Despite the valiant efforts of the Stanford Law Professor Lawrence Lessig, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Act in a decision handed down on January 15, 2003. The result is that works such as Heidegger’s *Being and Time* and Walt Disney’s Mickey Mouse will not enter the public domain for another twenty years. Thus the publication of this translation in the U.S. must wait until January 1, 2023 (four years later in Canada, where “life of the author plus fifty years” prevails).

The delay has allowed me to notice and to correct a small number of typographical errors (insignificant for the understanding of the text but aesthetically displeasing), to rectify some infelicities of expression, to uniformize some of the terminology, and to insert additional annotations in my master copy.

Of the ninety-nine copies prematurely printed and bound, I submit a few to the critical review of students and scholars—on two conditions: that they make use of their copies for private study only, and that they communicate to me their suggestions for improving the text and the translation for the subsequent publications in 2023 and 2027.

Cyril Welch
Box 6052
Sackville, N.B.
Canada E4L 1G6

Acknowledgements

I hereby extend a special thanks to Rainer A. Bast for the help he generously offered me in my efforts to interpret various passages in Heidegger’s work. In addition, his *Handbuch zum Textstudium von Martin Heidegger’s ‘Sein und Zeit’* (co-authored with Heinrich P. Delfosse, 1979) proved to be an invaluable aid in my efforts to interpret thoughts recurring in the work.

Liliane Welch performed a service most writers only dream of: she scoured the entire manuscript on the lookout for inelegacies and downright errors. As a result, the translation reads much more accurately and coherently than it otherwise would have.

Two former students of mine at Mount Allison University, Carolyn Richardson and Paul Miller, test-read the translation, supplying helpful suggestions for improving its readability.

Finally, another student of mine, Michaela Beder, and also an anonymous reader for Yale University Press, have called my attention to isolated passages deserving refinements; the fruits of this attention do not appear in the present version but will appear in the eventual publication.
Translator’s Preface

The chief challenge has been to provide a reading that remains close by the spirit of Heidegger’s work — and that proceeds as smoothly as possible, given the bumpy road. The chief temptation, avoided every time, has been to insert the original German in order to explain the interconnections of the original text, or the inadequacies of the English version.

Accuracy too, of course. But accuracy in regard to what? The letter or the spirit? In the case of great works, the only literal accuracy is that provided by the original text. All else is interpretation, and, if the translator shrinks from interpreting, the result will be . . . an interpretation, namely of how to transpose one set of letters into another.

Any translation of a norm-resetting work requires interpretation in a special sense, the one we easily recognize in the work of conductors and musicians: they must get the score to work.

Interpretation lurks everywhere in a translation: in the punctuation, in the choice or omission of articles, in the pursuit or not of metaphors, in the layout of the pages.

And in the location of the notes: since I interpret the whole of \textit{Being and Time} as instituting a dialogue with the entire tradition of philosophy, I place the references to this tradition right where they address the reader — at the foot of the page.

Also, since more than seventy-five years have passed since the original publication of the book, not only are many of the unspoken references fading from memory, but many new voices from later works now have a say as well in the reading of the text. These I have only begun to suggest in the multitudinous annotations.

Many of these voices Heidegger himself has indicated in his own marginalia. These often consist of keywords only, recalling later texts. These I have annotated with a view to what they would suggest to a reader of the originals.
There is some confusion about the original text of *Being and Time*. To the seventh edition (1953), Heidegger added a note that begins:

The treatise *Being and Time* first appeared in the spring of 1927 in Volume VIII of the *Yearbook for Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, edited by E. Husserl, and simultaneously as a special edition. Volume VIII also contained an entire treatise by another author. It is primarily as the “special edition” that *Being and Time* is available to us, in its many reprintings. (Still, several footnotes in the text refer to works as appearing “in this Yearbook,” i.e. in previous volumes of the series.) Then in 1977 the work appeared as Volume 2 in the on-going publication of the *Gesamtausgabe* (which I refer to as his *Collected Works*). This edition includes Heidegger’s marginalia.

In all, there are three sorts of footnotes in the present translation:
- Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, . . .) for Heidegger’s own.
- Lower-case letters (a, b, c, . . .) for Heidegger’s marginalia.
- Characters (†, ‡, . . .) for my annotations.

Throughout, square brackets, [ . . . ], also contain my annotations. And the page numbers I cite (both in the annotations and in the margins of the translation) are those of the original “special” edition.

Cyril Welch
November 2003

---

1. Plato’s *Sophist*, 244A. [The “you” here refers to Parmenides and all those who have undertaken to delimit the number of things counting as being: each tells a tale rather than considering the question thoroughly and including others in the discussion. Cf. especially the Stranger’s comments from 241D through 244B.]

* Throughout *Being and Time*, Heidegger will talk about provisional tasks, interpretations, indications, characterizations, manners, analyses. Although occasionally having the sense of “temporary” or “for the time being,” the term “provisional” evolves into a stronger sense of “anticipative” or “moving forward.” In his 1962 *On Time and Being* (p. 35), Heidegger remarks on this double meaning. One of the questions of *Being and Time* will be how we can ready ourselves for this kind of pro-vision; e.g., p. 302:

What if resoluteness, as the *authentic* truth of being-there, reached the certainty authentically belonging to it only in readying for death? What if only in readying for death every “provisionality” of resolve were authentically understood, i.e. existentially recovered?
Introduction

Exposition of the Question of the Meaning of Being

Chapter One

Necessity, Structure, and Primacy of the Question of Being

§1. The necessity of an explicit repetition of the question of being
This question has today fallen into oblivion, even though our age considers itself progressive in that it once again affirms “metaphysics.” But then it also considers itself exempt from the exertions required to kindle anew any γιγαντομαχία περὶ τῆς οὐσίας. Yet the question here touched upon is not just one among others. It kept the inquiries of Plato and Aristotle in an aura of suspense, only to subside from then on into silence as a thematic question of actual investigation. What those two achieved held up, throughout manifold displacements and “retouchings,” on into Hegel’s Logic. And what at one time was wrested from the phenomena with the utmost effort of thought, although fragmentary and roughly incipient, has long since become trivialized.

Not only that. On the basis of the Greek approaches to the interpretation of being, there has evolved a dogma that not only declares...

§2. The formal structure of the question of being
§3. The ontological primacy of the question of being
§4. The ontical primacy of the question of being

Chapter Two

The Double Task in the Elaboration of the Question of Being

The Method of the Investigation, and its Outline

§5. The ontological analysis of being—there as the exposure of the horizon for an interpretation of the meaning of being in general
§6. The task of destructuring the history of ontology
§7. The phenomenological method of investigation
§8. Outline of the treatise

* In his On the Way to Language (Harper & Row, 1971), Heidegger comments:
  The talk of “repetition” on the first page of Being and Time is deliberate.
  It does not mean uniform continuation of the same; rather, it means:
  fetching, retrieving, gathering of what lies concealed in the old. (English, p. 36; translated from original: Unterwegs zur Sprache, 1959, p. 131)
Cf. his Introduction to Metaphysics (Yale University Press, 1959, 2000), p. 39, p. 41: the question is whether we can “again get hold of” our spiritual-historical beginning—to transform it into “the other [forgotten] beginning.”
Any “battle of giants over being” (or “over our estate”; Sophist, 246A): the Stranger is referring to conflicting accounts proposed by the early thinkers in Greece. In his Republic (at 378C) Plato has Socrates forbid children from hearing tales of any “battle of giants” (i.e. of gods, as in the Homeric stories), or even viewing pictures of such battle.
superfluous the question about the meaning of being but also sanctions the neglect of the question. It is said that “being” is the most universal and the most empty concept. As such, it resists every attempt to define it. Moreover, this most universal and therefore indefinable concept needs no definition. Everyone uses it constantly, and also understands what it is thereby meant. Thus that which, as concealed, drove ancient philosophizing into restlessness, and kept it so, has become perfectly obvious, clear as day, such that anyone who even continues to pose the question is charged with committing a methodological error.

At the beginning of this investigation it is not possible to discuss thoroughly the prejudices ever again planting and cultivating the confidence that there is no need for the question about being. These prejudices have their root in ancient ontology itself. This ontology can in turn only be interpreted adequately with the guidance of the question of being — the very question that we must first clarify and answer: and here we must look to the soil from which the fundamental concepts grew, and ask about the appropriateness with which the categories were certified, and about their completeness. We therefore intend to discuss these prejudices only to the extent that the necessity of a repetition of the question about the meaning of being becomes clear. There are three such prejudices:

1. “Being” is the “most universal” concept: τὸ δὲ ἐστι καθολὸν μᾶλλον πάντων.1 Illud quod primo cadit sub apprehensione est ens, cuius intellectus includitur in omnibus, quaecumque quis apprehendit. “An understanding of being is in each instance already included in everything one apprehends about a being.”2 Yet the “universality” of “being” is not

---

1 Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, 998 b 22. [“... neither is what-is a genus”: a horse trainer does not get closer to his horse (its being fast, lame, or small) by discovering that it is an animal.]
On ne peut entreprendre de définir l’être sans tomber dans cette absurdité: car on ne peut définir un mot sans commencer par celui-ci, c’est, soit qu’on l’exprime ou qu’on le sous-entend. Donc, pour définir l’être, il faudrait dire c’est, et ainsi employer le mot défini dans sa définition.

[“One cannot undertake to define being without falling into this absurdity: for one cannot define a word without beginning with this, it is, whether expressly or implicitly. Thus, to define being it would be necessary to say it is, and thereby to use the defined word in its definition.”]
conceptualized as a being; enti non additur aliqua natura: “being” cannot become determinate by our attributing something to it. Being cannot be derived definitionally from higher concepts, and cannot be presented by lower concepts. But does it then follow that “being” can offer no further problem? Hardly. It can only be inferred that “being” is not anything like a being. Thus the way one determines beings (justified within certain limits) — the “definition” of traditional logic, itself grounded in ancient ontology — is not applicable. The indefinability of being does not dispense with the question of its meaning; rather, it makes it all the more urgent.

3. “Being” is the one self-evident concept. In every cognizing, every stating, every relating to beings, in every relation to oneself, “being” is used, and the expression is immediately intelligible. Everyone understands such utterances as “The sky is blue” and “I am happy.” Yet this average intelligibility only demonstrates its unintelligibility. It makes manifest that in every comportment, every being toward beings as beings, there lies an enigma. That each of us already lives in an understanding of being, while the meaning of being also remains shrouded in darkness, proves the foundational necessity of repeating the question about the meaning of being.

Recourse to self-evidence is a dubious procedure in the realm of basic philosophical concepts, all the more so in regard to the concept “being” — assuming that precisely what appears “self-evident” (what Kant calls “the covert judgements of common reason”) is to become and remain our explicit theme of analysis (“the business of philosophers”).

The consideration of these prejudices has also made it clear that not only is the answer to the question about being lacking, but even the question itself is obscure and without direction. Thus to repeat the question of being means first of all to work out adequately the way to position the question.

The meaning of being must therefore already be available in

§2. The Formal Structure of the Question

The question about the meaning of being must be positioned. If it is a — or even the — fundamental question, such questioning stands in need of a transparency suitable to it. Thus we must briefly discuss what in general belongs to any question, in order then to make the question of being discernible as a pre-eminent one.

Every questioning is a seeking. Every seeking takes its initial direction from what is sought. Questioning is a knowledgeable searching of beings, a sifting through their that and their how. Knowledgeable searching can become “investigation,” i.e. a determining of what the question aims at, a determining that lays it bare for [theoretical] inspection. As a questioning about..., questioning has something pressing about which it asks. Every questioning about... is a questioning in the nearness of.... Besides what presses in any questioning, questioning also engages something to be examined. In an investigative, i.e. specifically theoretical question, what presses in must be determined and conceptualized. Thus within the pressing there lies, as what is uppermost intended and toward which the questioning aims, something to be ascertained. Questioning itself, as a comportment of a being, of the questioner, has its own character of being. A given question might unfold as a “just asking” or as an explicit interrogative stance. Special about this latter stance is that questioning here becomes transparent to itself, in all three named constitutive elements.*

The question about the meaning of being must be positioned. Thus we are confronted with the necessity of discussing the question of being in regard to the structural moments just cited.

As a seeking, questioning needs precedental guidance from what it seeks.† The meaning of being must therefore already be available in

---

* I can’t find my car key, and I ask where it is. The key itself is the pressing issue: what is asked for. But the question invokes the circumstances in which I might look for it: what is then examined. Then, too, an answer is envisioned, as when I find the key I can record where exactly it was: what might be “theoretically” ascertained.—Heidegger here structures the question of his work as a whole: what presses = being; what will be examined = being-there; and what is to be ascertained = the meaning of being.

† In a marginalium on p. 85, Heidegger comments extensively on the word “precedental”: this neologism corresponds to Aristotle’s sense of “prior by nature” and to Kant’s sense of “a priori.” It does not mean prior in time.
Introduction: The Question of Being

Plato’s *Sophist*, 242C. [Cf. his *Republic*, 396C to 398B, on telling tales.]

This much was intimated: we always already move within an understanding of being. Out of this understanding there grows the explicit question about the meaning of being, and the drive toward conceptualizing it. We don’t know what [the word] “being” means. But already when we ask what “being” is we move within an understanding of the “is”—even without being able to fix conceptually what the “is” signifies. We don’t even know the horizon within which we might get hold of and fix its meaning. *This average and vague understanding of being is a factum.*

This understanding of being may ever so much waver and fade and border on mere verbal familiarity. Yet this very indeterminateness of the understanding of being, in each instance already available, is itself a positive phenomenon that stands in need of clarification. However, an investigation of the meaning of being cannot hope to provide this clarification at the outset. The interpretation of ... and what sorts of obfuscation or hindrance of an explicit elucidation of the meaning of being are possible and necessary.

More: the average and vague understanding of being can be permeated by traditional theories and opinions about being, and in such a way that these theories, as the sources of prevailing understanding, remain hidden. — What is sought in the question of being is not something entirely unfamiliar, but it is something at first totally incomprehensible.

What presses us into elaborating the question is being—that which determines things to be as they are; that from which things, however they are discussed, are in each instance already understood. The being of beings “is” not itself a being. The first philosophical step in the understanding of being consists in not “telling a tale”—μυθον τινα διηγεισθαι—i.e. in not determining the provenance of things as the things they are by recurring to something else that is, as though being had the character of some determinate being. As what presses in on us, being thereby requires its own manner of display, one essentially different from

§2. The Formal Structure of the Question

that of discovering beings. Accordingly, what we aim to ascertain, the meaning of being, will require its own conceptuality, one that again stands in contrast to those concepts in which beings attain their significant determinateness.

Inasmuch as being constitutes what presses (being means the being of something that is), it turns out that what the question of being asks us to examine is something that is. This it is that gets tested, so to speak—tested in regard to its being. If, however, it is to yield the characteristics of its being without falsification, it must in turn have become accessible in advance as the being it is in itself. In regard to what it examines, the question of being must achieve, secure at the outset, a proper manner of access to something that is. But we say of many things that they are, and we do so in many different ways. Everything we talk about “is,” everything we believe in, everything to which we relate in whatever way; what and how we ourselves are—this too “is.” Being lies in each that and in each how, in reality, on-hand-ness, inventory, prevalence, being-there, and in each “there is.” From which thing that is should we read off the meaning of being, which should we take as the point of departure for the disclosure of being? Is the point of departure incidental, or does some one being have primacy in our elaboration of the question of being? Which one is this exemplary being, and in what sense does it have primacy?

If the question about being is to be explicitly posed, and brought to full transparency of itself, then the elaboration of this question requires (according to what we have just elucidated) an explication of [1] the manner in which we view being, [2] the understanding and conceptual comprehension of its meaning, [3] the preparation for the possibility of properly choosing an exemplary being, [4] the elaboration of an intrinsic manner of accessing this being. Viewing, understanding and conceptualizing, choice and access—these are constitutive comportments of questioning, and thus are themselves modes of being of a determinate

---

1 Plato’s *Sophist*, 242C. [Cf. his *Republic*, 396C to 398B, on telling tales.]
2 still in the ordinary sense [i.e., existence], not yet any other. [Heidegger will soon introduce the special sense of “being-there.”]
3 Two quite different questions are here strung together; misleading, above all in relation to the role of being-there [as remarked in the previous note].
4 Misleading. Being-there is exemplary [only] because in its nature as being-there (upholding the truth of being) it is a co-player playing up to and along with being as such—bringing being into the play of resonance.
being, namely of that being that we ourselves, each of us engaged in the questioning, are. Accordingly, to elaborate the question of being means this: to make this one being — the one who questions — transparent in its being. The very asking of this question is itself, as one being’s mode of being, essentially determined from what is pressing within this one being — from being. This one being, one that each of us is and that has, among other things, the essential possibility of questioning, we formulate terminologically as being-there. The very positioning of the question about the meaning of being, posing it explicitly and transparently, requires a precedential and appropriate explication of one being (being-there) regarding its being.

But is not such an undertaking obviously circular? To have to determine beforehand one being in its being, and then on the basis of this determination to want to pose the question about being: What else is this but to run in a circle? Do we not here already “presuppose” for the elaboration of the question something that only the answer to the question can provide? Such formal objections as this one — arguing about the “circularity” of a “proof,” invariably easy to do in areas where we are searching out principles — are always sterile when we are considering concrete paths of investigation. They contribute nothing to understanding the matter at hand, and inhibit advancement into the field of investigation.

Factically, however, there is no circularity at all in the manner in which we are positioning the question. A being can get determined in its being apart from any need for an explicit concept of the meaning of being to be already available. If that were not the case, there could not ever have been any ontological cognition, the factual stock of which we can hardly deny. Indeed, “being” gets “presupposed” in all previous ontology, but not as an available concept — not as that which defines what is sought. The “presupposition” of being has the character of a precedential vista opening onto being, and in such a way that from this vista beings that are already available in their being get provisionally articulated. This guiding vista onto being emerges from the average manner in which being is intelligible, an intelligibility within which we always already move and which belongs in the end to the essential constitution of being-there. Such “presupposing” has nothing to do with positing a principle from which one deductively derives a series of propositions. In posing the question about the meaning of being there can never be a “circularity in the proof” because in answering the question it is not a matter of deriving anything from a ground, but rather of laying bare the ground, showing it.

In the question about the meaning of being, there is no “circularity in the proof,” but there is indeed a remarkable “back and forth relation” between what presses for the question (being) and the questioning itself — as a mode in which this one being [i.e., being-there] is. The way what is pressing engages our questioning belongs to the innermost meaning of the question of being. But that only says: a being bearing the character of being-there has a relation — perhaps even a distinctive one — to this question of being. Have we not thereby proved a determinate being to have a primacy [for the question] of being, and displayed the exemplary being that can serve as what we examine in the question of being? Our discussions hitherto have neither proved the primacy of being-there, nor decided upon its possible, let alone necessary, service as the being to be primarily examined. Yet something like a primacy of being-there has suggested itself.

§3. The ontological primacy of the question of being
The characterization of the question of being, under the guidance of the formal structure of the question as such, has clarified the question as a special one, special in that its elaboration, not to speak of its solution, requires a series of fundamental reflections. However, what is distinctive

---

a Being-there: being held out into the nothingness of being, held up as relation. [Heidegger here qualifies in advance this present concern to examine “ourselves”: what is distinctive about ourselves is precisely our relation to the being of things other than ourselves. The image of “being held out into nothingness” is elaborated in his lecture “What is Metaphysics?” (1929). That the self of human being is a relation, and finds its support in this relation, Heidegger states below (p. 12); it is a thought developed explicitly by Kierkegaard in his Sickness unto Death.]

b But the meaning of being does not get read off this one being. [Heidegger here contradicts his remark on the top of p. 7.]
about the question of being will fully come to light only when the question gets sufficiently delimited in regard to its function, its intention, and its motive.

Hitherto the necessity of a repetition of the question has been motivated partly by its venerable provenance, but above all by the lack of a determinate answer, even by the want of an adequate manner of positioning the question at all. One can therefore wonder what purpose the question might serve. Does it remain, or is it in fact, only the business of a free-floating speculation about the most universal generalities— or is it the question that at once aims at the most basic principles and at what is most concrete?

Being is in each instance the being of some being. In reference to its various domains, the totality of beings can become a field in which we can lay bare and delimit determinate areas of inquiry. These areas—e.g. history, nature, space, life, being-there, language, and the like— can in turn become thematized as objects of scientific investigations. Scientific research brings these areas into relief roughly and naïvely, providing their initial demarcation. The elaboration of a given area in its basic structures is, in a way, already accomplished by the pre-scientific experience and interpretation of the domain of being in which the given area of inquiry confines itself. The resulting “basic concepts” initially serve as guidelines for the first concrete disclosure of the area. Even if the thrust of research continues to lie in such positivity, its real progress comes about not so much in collecting results and storing them in “handbooks” as in the questioning of the basic constitution of the area itself— a questioning to which one is generally driven retroactively by the increasing knowledge of the matters at issue in the area.

The real “evolution” of the sciences takes place in the more or less radical revision of the basic concepts, a revision transparent to itself. The level to which a science is developed gets determined by the extent to which it is capable of a crisis in its basic concepts. In such immanent crises in the sciences the relation of positive investigative questioning to the matters being examined becomes shaky.* Everywhere today in the various disciplines there are drives to shift research onto new foundations.

Mathematics, the science apparently the most strict and the most secure in its structure, has been experiencing a “foundational crisis.” The battle between formalism and intuitionism centers on obtaining and securing the primary mode of access to what can serve as the object of this science. In physics, relativity theory grew out of the drive to expose nature’s own coherence as this coherence subsists “in itself.” As a theory of the conditions of access to nature herself, physics is seeking to preserve, by determining all relativities, the immutability of the laws of motion; it is thus confronted by the question of the structure of its pre-given area of inquiry, i.e. by the problem of matter. In biology the drive has awakened to get behind the determinations that both mechanism and vitalism have given to organism and to life, and to determine anew the way living beings as such are. In the historiographical humanities the thirst has grown for historical actuality itself, by way of tradition and its portrayal: the history of literature tends to become the history of problems. Theology is searching for a more original interpretation of man’s being toward God, an interpretation prefigured by the meaning of faith itself and remaining within that faith. It is slowly beginning to understand again Luther’s insight that its [present] doctrinal system rests on a “foundation” that does not grow from a questioning wherein faith is primary, a “foundation” whose conceptuality is not only insufficient for the range of problems proper to theology, but even covers over this range and distorts it.

Basic concepts are determinations in which the area of inquiry underlying all the thematic objects of a science acquires a precedental intelligibility guiding every positive investigation. These concepts are thus identified and “justified” only in a correspondingly precedential research into the area of inquiry itself. However, inasmuch as each of these areas arises from the domain of beings themselves, this precedential research excavating the basic concepts entails nothing less than interpretation of these beings in reference to the basic constitution of their being. Such research must precede the positive sciences; and it can do so. The labors of Plato and Aristotle prove the point. This manner of

* About these terms “positive” and “positivity”: whatever we can record (whether data or patterns) counts as “positive,” and the achievement of the manner of doing this is called “positivity.” In contrast, thoughts about the relation between the efforts to record and the matters addressed: these thoughts have traditionally been called “philosophical.” Positivism (whether in law or in science) is the belief that positivities suffice by themselves, and that philosophy can only help clarify them in their self-sufficiency. Cf. the end of §10, p. 50.
laying the foundations of the sciences differs in principle from the kind of “logic” that limps along behind, investigating some current condition of a science for its “method.” It is a productive logic—productive in the sense that it leaps ahead, as it were, into a determinate area of being, discloses this area in its essential constitution for the first time, and makes available to the positive sciences the structures thereby acquired, these structures then supplying the transparent directives of questioning. Thus what is philosophically primary is not, for example, a theory of concept-formation in historiography; neither is it the theory of historiographical cognition nor the theory of history as the object of historiography; it is rather the interpretation of what is authentically historical with a view to its historicity. Then, too, the positive outcome of Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason consists in its approach to working out what belongs to any nature whatsoever, and not in a “theory” of cognition. His transcendental logic is an a priori, a material [not just formal] logic of the area of being we call nature.

Yet such questioning—ontology, taken in the broadest sense, without leaning on ontological movements or drives—itself still stands in need of guidance. To be sure, in comparison with the ontological questioning of the positive sciences, ontological questioning is more primordial. But by itself it remains naïve and opaque if its investigations into the being of beings leave the meaning of being undiscussed. And precisely the ontological task of a genealogy that does not construe deductively the various possible manners of being—this task requires an initial agreement about “what we then really have in mind with this word ‘being’.”

Thus the question of being aims at an a priori condition of possibility—not just of the sciences, which investigate beings as determined to be such-and-such and which thereby already in each instance move within an understanding of being, but rather [also] of those ontologies that precede and found the ontic sciences. All ontology, no matter how rich and tightly knit the categorial system at its disposal, remains fundamentally blind, and distorts its innermost intent, if it has not sufficiently clarified at the outset the meaning of being and understood this clarification as its fundamental task.

Correctly understood, ontological research itself bestows upon the question of being its ontological priority over the mere resumption of a venerable tradition and the promotion of an hitherto opaque problem. But this primacy in regard to the material sciences is not the only one.

§4. The ontical primacy of the question of being

Science in general can be defined as the whole of interconnected and justified propositions. This definition is not complete, nor does it get at the meaning of science. As human comportments, sciences are in the manner of this one being, human being. This being we have terminologically formulated as being-there. Scientific research is not the sole and not the most intimate way this being is. Moreover, being-there itself differs distinctively from other beings. It is our provisional task to make this distinctive difference visible. Here the discussion must anticipate subsequent analyses that only later really show the matter.

Being-there is not simply one being that occurs among others. Rather, it is ontically distinguished inasmuch as, in its being, its being is at issue for it. But then, to this essential constitution of being-there belongs, in its very being, a relation to being. And this again means: in its being, being-there understands itself in some manner and with some explicitness. It is proper to this one being that it be disclosed to itself with and through its being. Understanding of being is itself a determination of the being of being-there.\(^a\) What distinguishes being-there ontically is that it is ontologically.

To be ontological does not yet mean to study ontology. Thus if we reserve the term “ontology” for the explicit theoretical questioning about the meaning of beings, then what is intended by calling being-there “ontological” should be designated as “pre-ontological.” But this signifies nothing so simple as being in an ontic manner, but rather being within some understanding of being.

\(^a\) But here being not only as the being of human being (ex-sistence). This becomes clear from what follows. Being-in-world includes in itself a bearing of ex-sistence upon being as a whole: understanding of being. [Heidegger repeatedly recognizes that his formulations at this point might mislead readers, and emphasizes here (as in the note on p. 8 regarding being-there as relation) that the concern of being-there for its own being spills over into the concern for the being of whatever arises within the “horizon” of being-there.]
The being to which being-there can, and always somehow does relate itself, in various ways, we call ex-sistence.* And because the determination of the nature of this being cannot be accomplished by proffering a “what” specifying its factual content — its nature lying much rather in the task of each to be its own being — the term “being-there” has been chosen to designate this being, this term expressing its being purely.

Being-there understands itself always in reference to its ex-sistence, to a possibility of its own: the possibility of being itself or not being itself. Being-there has either itself chosen these possibilities, or it has stumbled into them, or it has long grown up within them. Only each instance of being-there decides ex-sistence, either in the manner of seizing or in the manner of neglecting. Only through ex-sisting can the question of ex-sistence be settled. We call this latter self-understanding existentiell understanding. The question of ex-sistence is an ontic “concern” of being-there. There is here no need for the theoretical transparency of the ontological structure of ex-sistence. The question about this latter aims for a dissection of what constitutes ex-sistence.\(^c\) The interconnectedness of these structures we call existentiality. The analysis of existentiality has the character, not of an existentiell, but rather of an existential understanding. The task of an existential analysis of being-there is, so far as its possibility and necessity go, prefigured in the ontic constitution of being-there.

Now, inasmuch as ex-sistence defines being-there, the ontological analysis of this being will in any case always stand in need of a

---

\(^a\) That very [Heidegger adds a restrictive emphasis: not being as such.]

\(^b\) as its own [Heidegger again emphasizes the restriction.]

* I shall hyphenate this word, in keeping with Heidegger’s “Letter on Humanism” (1946-1947: available in Pathmarks), where the hyphenation brings out the root of the word: ex-stasis, standing out. “The standing in the clearing of being I call the ex-sistence of human being.” Later, Heidegger will talk about the “three ectacies of temporality,” i.e. the threefold way we are drawn out of ourselves (into the clearing).

\(^c\) Thus [there is here] no philosophy of existence [Heidegger wishes to distinguish his own work from that of Karl Jaspers (who, along with Jean-Paul Sartre, analyzes the “existentiell” understandings open to us); still, later Heidegger repeatedly acknowledges Jaspers’ contribution on the question of “boundary situations.”]

---

§4. The Ontical Primacy of the Question

Scientific disciplines are ways in which being-there is, and therewith ways of relating to beings that it itself need not be. However, one thing belongs essentially to being-there: being in a world. Thus the understanding of being belonging to being-there bears equi-primordially on the understanding of something like “world” and on the understanding of the being of those beings becoming accessible within that world. Those ontologies that take as their theme beings not taking the measure of their nature from being-there are on this account grounded in and motivated by the ontic structure of being-there itself, a structure that includes the determinateness of a pre-ontological understanding of being.

It follows that fundamental ontology, out of which all other ontologies spring, must be sought in the existential analysis of being-there.

So, then, being-there has a multiple primacy over all other beings. The first primacy is an ontical one: this one being is determined in its being by ex-sistence. The second primacy is an ontological one: being-there, given its determinateness to ex-sist, in itself “ontological.” But then this also belongs to being-there equi-primordially — as a constituent of the understanding of ex-sistence: an understanding of the being of all beings not taking their measure from being-there.\(^*\) Thus being-there has a third primacy as the ontic-ontological condition of the possibility of all ontologies. So being-there has proved to be what, prior to all other beings, deserves to be examined first of all.

\(^*\) Throughout Being and Time Heidegger refers to “beings not taking their measure from being-there.” Since the analyses themselves concentrate precisely on what does take its measure from being-there, the reference is elusive. There are at least three exemplifications: (1) the things that modern science investigates (Galileo’s concern about the material of the moon, the present-day concern about the elements and energies at the origin of our solar system); (2) the things at issue in ancient ontology (the horsesness of horses, the divinity of nature); and (3) things as Heidegger understands them to emerge through, but not as measured by, being-there (contemplated in his later works: see my annotation on p. 333).
Still, the existential analysis itself is and remains existentially, i.e. ontically rooted. Only when philosophically investigative questioning is itself understood existentially as a possible way for a given ex-sisting being-there to be — only then does the possibility arise of a disclosure of the existentiality of ex-sistence, and thereby of a firm hold on any sufficiently grounded ontological problematic. This consideration also makes clear the ontic primacy of the question of being.

The ontic-ontological primacy of being-there was already seen early on, without being-there itself getting formulated in its intrinsic ontological structure, or even becoming a problem aiming at such a structure. Aristotle says: ἡ ψυχή τὰ ὄντα πώς εστιν,1 “the soul (of man) is in some way the beings [known]”; the “soul,” which constitutes the being of human being, uncovers, in the manners of its own being, i.e. in ἀισθήσεις and νοησίς, everything that is — in regard to its that-ness and its how-ness, but also always in regard to its being. Itself deriving from the ontological thesis of Parmenides, this statement Thomas Aquinas resumed in a discussion characteristic of his own work. In the course of undertaking to derive the “transcendents,” i.e. those characteristics of being that lie out beyond everything that can possibly be determined as confined to any one being (determined by way of the thing’s material and generic content), out beyond every modus specialis entis — characters that bear upon every “thing” whatsoever — he aspires to show how the verum also counts as one of these transcendents. He proceeds by appealing to the one being that, in accordance with its own manner of being, has the aptitude to “come together with” anything that in any way is. This pre-eminent being, this ens, quod naturum est convenire cum omni ente, is the soul (anima).2 Although ontologically unclarified, the primacy of being-there that emerges in these passages obviously has nothing in common with the vapid subjectification of the totality of beings. —

The proof that the question of being is ontically and ontologically pre-eminent is grounded in the provisional indication of the ontic-ontological primacy of being-there. But the analysis of the structure of the question of being as a question (§2) came up against a pre-eminent function of this one being within the positioning of the question itself. —

1 On the Soul, 431 b 21; cf. also 430 a 14 ff.
2 Quaestiones de veritate, question 1, a. 1c; cf. the “deduction” of the transcendents in the short work de natura generis, a deduction that proceeds in some ways more rigorously and differently than the one just cited.

Here, being-there revealed itself as the one being that must be elaborated in an ontologically sufficient manner if the question is to become transparent. But now it has become clear that the ontological analysis of being-there precisely constitutes fundamental ontology — that, in this vein, being-there serves as the being that we must examine in its fundament and in advance, with an eye to its being.

If the interpretation of the meaning of being becomes the task, being-there is not only the primary being to be examined, it is even more the one being that in each case already relates itself to what is pressing in the question. Hence the question of being is nothing other than the radicalization of a drive belonging essentially to the being of being-there itself — the radicalization of the pre-ontological understanding of being.*

Chapter Two

The Double Task in the Elaboration of the Question of Being
The Method of the Investigation and its Outline

§5. The ontological analysis of being-there as the exposure of the horizon for an interpretation of the meaning of being in general

When characterizing the tasks lying within the “positioning” of the question of being we showed not only that we need to establish the one being that is to serve as the focus of our examination, but also that it is necessary explicitly to appropriate and secure a proper access to this being. Which being assumes the preferred role within the question of being, this we have discussed. But how might this being, being-there, become accessible — and, during our interpretation and understanding, how can we “take aim” at it?

* Several times already Heidegger has talked of “drive,” and throughout the text he will continue to do so, without ever talking about it. The term is best understood in its verbal form: being-there drives at various things and in various ways, but all the while it also drives at its own fulfillment (cf. Plato’s account of ἔρως in his Symposium and Phaedrus as complementing those passages from Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas on the soul being the “convening” of things). Abstractly, we might say: being-there is “tendentious,” i.e. in-sistent as well as ex-sistent. Later, Heidegger will use the noun to express a feature of any literary work: it drives at something, and our task is to become attuned to what it is driving at.
The ontic-ontological primacy we have displayed for being-there might wrongly lead one to believe that this one being would also have to be what is primarily given for ontic-ontological consideration — in the sense that not only it itself would be “immediately” graspable but also the manner in which it is in this “immediate” pre-givenness. To be sure, being-there is ontically not only nearby or even the nearest thing: we are this being, each of us. Nevertheless, or precisely thereby, this being is ontologically the farthest away. To be sure, it belongs to its ownmost being to have an understanding of its being and to comport itself in each instance within a certain interpretedness of its being. But this does not at all mean that such pre-ontological interpretation of [its own] being can be adopted as an adequate guide, as though this understanding of its being would have to spring from a thematically ontological reflection on one’s ownmost essential constitution. Much to the contrary, and in accordance with a manner of being belonging to it, being-there has the drive to understand its own being in reference to those beings to which it essentially relates itself, constantly and most closely — in reference to its “world.”

In being-there itself, and therewith in its own understanding of being, there lies what we will show to be an ontological reflection cast back from the understanding of world onto the interpretation of being-there.

The ontic-ontological primacy of being-there is therefore the reason why the essential constitution specifically belonging to being-there — this constitution understood as its “categorial” structure — remains hidden from it. To itself, being-there is ontically “nearest,” ontologically farthest, and yet pre-ontologically not at all foreign.

With these considerations we have only shown, in a provisional manner, that the interpretation of this one being is confronted with peculiar difficulties rooted both in the way our thematized object itself is and in the way our own thematizing comportment is — and not rooted in some shortcoming of our cognitive powers, or in an apparently remediable deficiency in our conceptual apparatus.

Now, because not only an understanding of being belongs to being-there, but also because this understanding develops or degenerates in keeping with the variable ways being-there is, it has a wealth of fixed interpretations available to it. Philosophical psychology, anthropology, ethics, “politics,” poetry, biography, historiography: all these have carefully studied the bearings, faculties, powers, possibilities, and destinies of being-there, and done this in differing ways and to varying extents. However, the question remains whether these interpretations have been as existentially primordial in their development as they have been existentially primordial in themselves. These two do not necessarily proceed together, although they do not exclude one another. Existential interpretation can lead to existential analysis, provided we grasp philosophical cognition in its possibility and necessity. Only once we have sufficiently elaborated the basic structures of being-there in an explicit orientation toward the problem of being itself will all those earlier attainments in the interpretation of being-there receive their existential justification.

So the first concern in the question of being must remain an analysis of being-there. But then the problem of attaining and securing a guiding manner of access to being-there becomes really crucial. Negatively formulated: we cannot afford to let just any arbitrary idea of being and actuality, no matter how “self-evident,” be applied to this one being by way of dogmatic constructions, nor to let any “categories” prefigured in such an idea be impressed upon being-there without ontological consideration. Very much to the contrary, our manner of access and interpretation must be chosen in such a way that this one being can show itself from itself and as itself. And the manner should show this being as it initially and mostly is — in its average everydayness. Not arbitrary and incidental, but essential structures of this everydayness should be brought out into the open, structures persevering throughout each and every manner of factual being-there, and its different manners of being, as determinate of its being. In the purview of the basic constitution of the everydayness of being-there, the being of this one being will come into relief in a preparatory way.

Thus construed, the analysis of being-there remains wholly oriented toward the one guiding task of elaborating the question of being. Its limits get thereby determined. The analysis cannot hope to provide a complete ontology of being-there, something that must be built out if anything like a “philosophical anthropology” is ever to rest upon a philosophically adequate foundation. With a view to a possible anthropology, or to its ontological fundament, the following interpretation...
Introduction: The Question of Being

Heidegger recalls two key phrases in Plato and Aristotle: “regarding the whole” (= “universal”) and “regarding itself” (= “in itself”): these qualify the meaning of being. The analysis of being-there is, however, not only incomplete, it is at first also provisional. It initially only brings the being of this one being into relief, without interpreting its meaning. It intends rather to prepare for exposing the horizon for the most primordial interpretation of being. Once this horizon is attained, the preparatory analysis of being-there requires repetition on a higher, an authentic ontological basis.

The meaning of the being of the one being we call being-there proves to be temporality. The proof of this must sustain itself in the repeated interpretation of the (earlier only provisionally displayed) structures of being-there as modes of temporality. But this interpretation of being-there as temporality does not already provide the answer to the guiding question, the question intent upon the meaning of being in general. Yet the ground has been prepared for the attainment of this answer.

This much has been partly shown: a pre-ontological being belongs to being-there in its ontic constitution. Being-there is in such a manner that, inasmuch as it is, it understands something like being. Holding fast to this connection, we intend to show that time is what serves being-there in its inexplicit understanding and interpretation of anything like being. Time we must bring to light and intrinsically conceptualize as the horizon of every understanding of being and of each interpretation of being. In order to become clear about this, we stand in need of a primordial explication of time as the horizon of the understanding of being, an explication deriving from temporality as the being of being-there — of the being that understands being. In the entire scope of this task there lies also the requirement that we distinguish this concept of time from the ordinary understanding of it, an understanding that has become explicit in one interpretation of time reflecting the traditional concept that has persisted since Aristotle down to Bergson and beyond. Then, too, we must make it clear that and how this concept of time, and the ordinary understanding of time, spring from temporality at all. We thereby restore to the ordinary concept of time its own rightful place — in contrast to Bergson’s thesis that time construed in the ordinary manner is space.

“Time” has long served as the ontological, or rather the ontic, criterion for naively distinguishing the different regions of beings. One separates off things that are “temporally” (natural processes and historical events) from things that are “atemporally” (spatial and numerical relations). It is customary to distinguish the “timeless” meaning of propositions from the “temporal” course of propositional assertions. Then too, one discovers a “gap” between “temporal” beings and “super-temporal” eternal beings, and one tries to bridge the two. In each of these cases, “temporal” means as much as being “within time,” a determination that is of course still rather obscure. But the factum remains: time, in the sense of “being in time,” serves as a criterion for separating regions of being. How time comes to have this pre-eminent function, and even with what right precisely something like time serves as such a criterion, and more importantly whether in this naively ontological application of time its genuinely possible ontological relevance is expressed — none of this has hitherto been questioned or investigated. “Time,” especially within the horizon of the ordinary understanding of it, has just taken on this “self-evident” function — “on its own,” as it were — and has ever since been stuck in it.

In contrast, the task is to show, on the basis of the elaborated question about the meaning of being, that and how the central problematic of every ontology is rooted in the phenomenon of time — this phenomenon as rightly viewed and explicated.

If being is to be conceived on the basis of time, and if the various modes and derivatives of being (within their modifications and derivations) are in fact to become intelligible in reference to time, then being itself — and not only beings as “within time” — gets made visible in its “temporal” character. But then “temporal” can no longer mean merely “being in time.” Even things “non-temporal” or “super-temporal” are, in regard to their being, “temporal.” And this again not only by way of privation when compared to something “temporal,” i.e. “within time,” but in a positive sense — one that remains to be clarified, of course. Because the expression “temporal” has been expatiated in its meaning by reference to pre-philosophical and philosophical usage, and because in the following investigations the expression will lay claim to yet another meaning, we call the primordial determinateness of the meaning of being, as well as its various characters and modes based on time, its time-bound determinateness. The fundamental ontological task of interpreting being as such includes, then, the elaboration of the time-boundedness of being.
In the exposition of the problematic of time-boundedness is found the first concrete answer to the question about the meaning of being.*

Because being in each instance only becomes comprehensible in regard to time, the answer to the question of being cannot lie in an isolated and self-enclosed proposition. The answer is not grasped in the recitation of what it asserts in propositional form, especially when it is transmitted as a free-floating result, so that we merely take note of a “standpoint” which perhaps deviates from the way things have previously been treated. Whether the answer is “new” has no bearing and remains an external consideration. What is positive about the answer must lie in its being old enough that, from it, we can learn to conceive the possibilities the “Ancients” set up for us. By its very meaning, the answer provides a directive for concrete ontological research to begin questioning investigatively within the exposed horizon — and this is all the answer provides.

If in this way the answer to the question of being becomes the guiding directive for research, it follows that it is only adequately given when it leads to insight into the specific manner of previous ontology — the destinies of its questioning, discovering, and failing — as something necessary to being-there itself.

§6. The task of destructuring the history of ontology

All research — and not least research moving within the sphere of the central question of being — is an ontic possibility of being-there. The being of being-there finds its meaning in temporality. But temporality is also the condition of the possibility of historicity as a temporal manner in which being-there itself is, quite apart from whether and how it is something “in time.” What we [will] determine as historicity precedes what is called history (world-historical happening). Historicity means the essential constitution of the “happening” of being-there as such; only on the ground of this happening can there be anything like [disciplines of] “world-history,” and can [these] historically belong to world-history. In

---

* After the Introduction, Heidegger makes no use of this distinction between “temporality” and “time-bounded-ness.” Perhaps Heidegger planned to make use of the second expression in Division Three. On p. 39, when describing Part Two, he employs the term; and again on p. 147: “the time-bound interpretation of being.”
must therefore detect, in the innermost sense of its own questioning, as itself historical, the directive to track down its own history, i.e. to become historiographical — and this in order to enact, while in full possession of its ownmost possibilities of inquiry, a positive appropriation of the past. The question about the meaning of being is of itself brought to understand itself as historiographical — in accordance with the manner in which this question gets enacted, i.e. as a precedential explication of being-there in its temporality and historicity.

Yet the preparatory interpretation of the fundamental structures of being-there with regard to its initial and average manner of being — wherein it is initially historical as well — will make it manifest that being-there not only has the inclination to collapse into the world in which it finds itself, and to interpret itself in the reflection of this world; in unison with all this, being-there also gets caught in its tradition, more or less explicitly comprehending it. Tradition then divests being-there of its own leadership, its questioning and its choosing. This holds not least for that understanding and its possible formation which is rooted in the innermost being of being-there — ontological understanding.

The tradition thereby gaining dominance makes what it “transmits” so little accessible that, instead, it initially and mostly covers it up. It entrusts to self-evidence what has been transmitted, it dislocates the access to the primordial “wellsprings” from which the traditional categories and concepts were in part genuinely drawn. Tradition even makes us forget such provenance altogether. Indeed, it even undoes our capacity to understand the necessity of returning to such wellsprings. Tradition uproots the historicity of being-there to such an extent that all being-there can do is take an interest in the phantasamagoria of possible types, movements, and standpoints of philosophizing, and in the remotest and strangest cultures — and with this interest it seeks to veil its own groundlessness. As a result, for all the historiographical interest and zeal for a philologically “objective” interpretation, being-there no longer understands the most elemental conditions that alone make possible a positive return to the past, i.e. a productive appropriation of it.

At the outset (§1) it was shown that the question about the meaning of being was not only unresolved, not only inadequately positioned, but has also, for all the interest in “metaphysics,” fallen into oblivion. Greek ontology and its history, which throughout its many filiations and contortions still determines the conceptuality of philosophy, is proof that

being-there understands both itself and being in general in terms of the “world,” and that the ontology that has emerged in this way is trapped in its own tradition — letting this tradition sink to self-evidence and mere material to be reworked (as in Hegel). Thus uprooted, Greek ontology becomes, in the Middle Ages, a fixed body of doctrine. Its systematics is anything but a joining together of inherited pieces into a single construction. Within the limits of its dogmatic adoption of the fundamental conceptions of being, this systematics contains much unpretentious work that does make advances. In its Scholastic mould, Greek ontology makes the essential transition, by way of Suarez’s *disputationes metaphysicae*, into the “metaphysics” and transcendental philosophy of the modern period, and still determines the fundamentals and the goals of Hegel’s *Logic*. Insofar as, in the course of this history, certain pre-eminent domains of being loom into view and continue to guide the problematic (*ego cogito* of Descartes, subject, I, reason, spirit, person), these domains remain unexamined in regard to being, and in regard to their own being — in keeping with the thorough neglect of the question of being. Instead, the body of categories embedded within traditional ontology gets transferred to this one being [*ego cogito*, subject, . . .], with corresponding formalizations and merely negative restrictions — or else dialectic is called upon to help in the effort to provide an ontological interpretation of the substantiality of the subject.

If the question of being is to attain to a transparency of its own history, there is a need to loosen up our hardened tradition, to dissolve the cover-ups that our tradition has fructified.* This task we understand as the *destructuring* of the inherited body of ancient ontology, one returning us to the primordial experiences in which the first, and from then on the guiding determinations of being were obtained. Such destructuring proceeds under the guidance of the question of being.

As an investigation displaying their “birth certificate,” this proof of the provenance of the basic concepts of ontology has nothing to do with the pernicious relativizing of ontological standpoints. Just as little does destructuring have the negative meaning of shaking off the ontological tradition. On the contrary, it intends to stake out this tradition in its positive possibilities — and this always means to stake out the limits factically given in the positioning of the question and the encircling of the possible field of investigation. This destructuring does not relate

---

* On the crucial metaphor of “fructifying,” see my annotation on p. 328.
itself negatively to the past; its critique bears on the “current day,” on the currently dominant manner of treating the history of ontology, whether inclined toward the history of opinions, ideas, or problems. Destructuring does not aim to bury the past in nothingness; it has a positive intention, and its negative function remains tacit and indirect.

Within the scope of this treatise, which aims at a fundamental elaboration of the question of being, we can carry out the destructuring of the history of ontology (which belongs essentially to the positioning of the question, and is only possible within this positioning) only in regard to the fundamentally decisive stations of this history.

In accordance with the positive drive of destructuring, the question we need first ask is whether and to what extent, in the course of the history of ontology, the interpretation of being has at all been thematically connected with the phenomenon of time, and then whether the necessary problematic of time-boundedness was or could be elaborated in its fundamentals. The first and the only one who traversed a stretch of the path toward investigating the dimension of time-boundedness—or allowed himself to be driven there by the compelling force of the phenomena themselves—is Kant. Only once we achieve a focus on the problematic of time-boundedness can we succeed in casting light on the obscurity of his doctrine of the schematism. Along the way we will also be able to show why this area had to remain closed to Kant in its authentic dimensions and central ontological function. Kant himself was aware that he was venturing into an obscure area:

This schematism of our understanding, in its application to appearances and their mere form, is an art concealed in the depths of the human soul, whose true modes of activity we will likely never extract from nature and lay open to our gaze.1

That from which Kant here shrinks, so to speak, must be brought to light in a thematic and fundamental way—if the expression “being” is ever to have a certifiable meaning. In the end, those phenomena that the following analysis will unfurl under the title “time-boundedness” are the most covert judgements of “common reason,” the analysis of which Kant defines as the “business of philosophers.”

While pursuing the task of destructuring under the guidance of the problematic of time-boundedness, the following treatise attempts to interpret Kant’s chapter on the schematism, and from there the Kantian doctrine of time. It will also show why Kant could not succeed in gaining insight into the problematic of time-boundedness. Two things prevented this insight: for one, the total neglect of the question of being and, in connection with this neglect, the lack of a thematic ontology of being-there—in Kantian language, the lack of a provisional ontological analytic of the subject’s subjectivity. Instead, for all his essential improvements, Kant dogmatically adopted Descartes’ position. As a result, his analysis of time still takes its orientation from the traditional and ordinary understanding of time, despite his reinvention of this phenomenon into the [human] subject; and this is ultimately what prevents Kant from elaborating the phenomenon of a “transcendental role for time” in its own structure and function. As a consequence of this double after-effect of the tradition, the decisive connection between time and the “I think” remains entirely shrouded in obscurity; it does not even become a problem.

By taking over Descartes’ ontological position, Kant neglects something essential: an ontology of being-there. This neglect is a decisive one, given Descartes’ ownmost drive. With the cogito sum [I think therefore I am], Descartes claims to prepare a new and secure foundation for philosophy. However, what he leaves undetermined in this “radical” beginning is the being of the res cogitans, the way this [thinking thing] is, more exactly the meaning of the sum, the way it [the “am”] is. The elaboration of the tacit ontological foundations of the cogito sum occupies the second station on the path of the destructural return to the history of ontology. The interpretation not only presents evidence that Descartes had to neglect the question of being altogether, but also shows why he came to the opinion that the absolute “certainty” of the cogito exempted him from the question of the meaning of this one being, how it is.

However, with Descartes it is not just a matter of this one neglect, and thus of a thorough ontological indeterminateness of the res cogitans sive mens sive animus [. . .whether mind or soul]. Descartes effects the fundamental reflections of his Meditations by transferring medieval ontology onto this one being he takes to be the fundamentum inconcussum [unshakable foundation]. He ontologically defines the res cogitans as ens, and for medieval ontology the meaning of ens, the way

1 Critique of Pure Reason, A141, B180 f.
something is, is geared to an understanding of ens as ens creatum [created being, creature]. As the ens infinitum, God is the ens increatum. Now, createdness—in the broadest sense of having been produced—is an essential structural moment of the ancient concept of being. The apparently new beginning of philosophizing proves to be the implantation of a disastrous prejudice. And it is this prejudice that allows posterity to dispense with a thematic ontological analysis of the “mind,” one guided by the question of being and simultaneously serving as a critical confrontation with the inherited ancient ontology.

That Descartes is “dependent” on medieval Scholasticism, and that he uses its terminology—this anyone sees who is familiar with the Middle Ages. But with this “discovery” nothing is gained philosophically so long as it remains obscure to what profound extent medieval ontology influences the way posterity determines (or does not determine) the res cogitans ontologically. The extent of this influence cannot be estimated until the meaning and limits of ancient ontology have been shown by an orientation toward the question of being. In other words, destructuring finds itself faced with the task of interpreting the soil of ancient ontology in the light of the problematic of time-boundedness. It then becomes manifest that the ancient interpretation of the being of beings is oriented toward the “world,” or toward “nature” in the broadest sense, and that it in fact takes its understanding of being from “time.” An external testimony of this—but of course it is only external—is the determination of the meaning of being as παρουσία, or οὐσία—which means, ontologically-temporally, “presentness.”* Each being is comprehended in its being as “presentness,” i.e. it is understood with an eye to a determinate mode of time, the “present.”

The problematic of Greek ontology must, like any other ontology,

* The common Greek word for “the present” is par-ousia, while ousia has the ordinary meaning of “estate.” In the first Book of Plato’s Republic the latter word can be translated as “wealth,” whereas later in that work, and in his Sophist, it seems to take on the meaning of “essence.” In Aristotle’s Metaphysics, “substance” seems appropriate and, in his Politics, “property.” Both thinkers assume that what makes things intelligible is what gives them presence—starting with the thought that each item on an estate “makes sense” only against the background presence of the whole estate. Heidegger himself raises the question of how, where and when an “estate” can become our own—or, rather, come into its own as we learn to “take” it as our own.

§6. The Task of a Destructuring

take its guideline from being-there itself. Being-there, i.e. the being of human being, is, both in the ordinary and in the philosophical “definition,” delimited as ζώον λόγον έχον, the living being whose being is essentially determined by its ability to talk. It is λέγειν (cf. §7 b) that supplies the guideline for attaining to the essential structures of that one being encountered in the addressing and discussing of beings arising for encounter. That is why the ancient ontology taking shape in Plato becomes “dialectic.” Once we progress in the elaboration of the guideline itself, i.e. of an “hermeneutics” of λόγος, there emerges the possibility of a more radical version of the problem of being. Then “dialectic,” which has been a veritable philosophical embarrassment, becomes superfluous. The reason Aristotle “no longer had any understanding” of dialectic was that he placed it, raised it, onto a more radical plane. Then λέγειν itself, or νοεῖν (the direct [intellectual] perception of something on hand in its pure on-hand-ness, what Parmenides already took as the guiding thread of his interpretation of being) has the temporal structure of a pure “finding present” of something. Beings—those that show themselves in and for this “finding present,” and that are then understood as what really is—are accordingly interpreted with an eye to . . . the present. That is, they are conceptualized as presentness (οὐσία).

Yet this Greek interpretation of being unfolds without any explicit awareness of the guideline serving it, without knowledge or understanding of the fundamental ontological function of time, without inspection of the ground of the possibility of this function. On the contrary: time itself is taken as one being among others, and the attempt is made to comprehend it, in its essential structure, from within the horizon of an understanding of being that is tacitly and naïvely oriented toward time itself.

Within the framework of the following fundamental elaboration of the question of being, we cannot offer a thorough interpretation of the time-bound foundations of ancient ontology—especially not of its intellectually highest and purest level in Aristotle. Instead, the elaboration offers an interpretation of Aristotle’s treatise on time,¹ which can be taken as the discrimen [decisive point] revealing the basis and limits of the ancient science of being.

Aristotle’s treatise on time is the first thorough interpretation of this phenomenon that has come down to us. It set the essential course for all

¹ Physics, Δ 10-14, 217 b 29 through 224 a 17.
Introduction: The Question of Being

In his 1955 lecture “The Question of Being” Heidegger comments:

The “destructuring” discussed in Being and Time has only one intent: by dismantling current and empty conceptions, to win back the primordial experience of being lurking in metaphysics. Headings such as “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth” will always have a double meaning: the inherited conception and the lurking possibility.

Only once we have completed the destructuring of our ontological tradition does the question of being attain its veritable concretion. In doing so we obtain solid evidence that we cannot avoid the question about the meaning of being, and in this way we demonstrate the meaning of talking about the “repetition” of this question.*

In this field, where “the matter itself is profoundly veiled,” every investigation should refrain from overestimating its results. For this kind of questioning constantly forces itself to face the possibility of the disclosure of a still more primordial, still more universal horizon from which one might draw the answer to the question: What does “being” mean? We can only debate such possibilities seriously, and with positive outcome, when once again the question of being is awakened and a field has been opened where thoughts can compete in a verifiable manner.

§7. The phenomenological method of investigation

With the provisional characterization of the thematic object of our investigation (the being of beings, or just the meaning of being), its method also seems already to be prefigured. The task of ontology is to bring the being of beings into relief and to explicate being itself. And the method of ontology remains highly questionable so long as we wish merely to consult historically transmitted ontologies or similar efforts. Since in our investigation the term “ontology” is used in a formally broad sense, the approach of clarifying its method by tracing its history is automatically precluded.

In using the term “ontology” we do not refer to some one determine philosophical discipline standing in relation to others. It should not at all be our task to satisfy the demands of any pre-given discipline. On the contrary: a discipline inevitably takes shape from the in-built necessities of determinate questions, and from a style of handling them that “the matters themselves” demand.

With the guiding question of the meaning of being, the investigation stands within the fundamental question of philosophy itself. The style of handling this question is the phenomenological one. This treatise does not thereby subscribe to any “standpoint,” nor to any “movement”— because, so long as it understands itself, phenomenology neither is nor can become any such thing. The expression “phenomenology” signifies primarily a concept of method. It does not characterize what the objects of philosophical research are, what it bears on, but rather its how. The more genuinely a concept of method unfolds itself, and the more comprehensively it determines the fundamental flow of a discipline, the more primordially it is rooted in the struggle with the matters themselves and the more it distances itself from what we call technical manipulation, the likes of which are also legion in theoretical disciplines.

The term “phenomenology” expresses a maxim, one that can be formulated: “To the things themselves!”— as opposed to all free-floating constructions and incidental discoveries, as opposed to taking over concepts only apparently demonstrated, and as opposed to those pseudo-questions that often spread through whole generations as “problems.” But, one might object, this maxim is abundantly self-evident, and, moreover, is an expression of the principle of all scientific knowledge. It is not clear why this self-evident commonplace should be explicitly inserted into the name designating an investigation. Indeed, at stake here is a “self-evidence,” one we want to bring in closer to ourselves, insofar as it helps to illuminate the procedure of this treatise. We shall explicate only the initial concept of phenomenology.

The expression has two components: phenomenon and logos. Both go back to Greek terms: φαινόμενον and λόγος. Viewed from the outside, the word phenomenology is formed like those of theology, biology, and sociology, names we translate as science of God, of life, and of community. Accordingly, phenomenology would be the science of phenomena. The initial concept of phenomenology we shall unfurl by

---

* In his 1955 lecture “The Question of Being” Heidegger comments:

The “destructuring” discussed in Being and Time has only one intent: by dismantling current and empty conceptions, to win back the primordial experience of being lurking in metaphysics. Headings such as “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth” will always have a double meaning: the inherited conception and the lurking possibility.

† Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason, A88, B121. [N. K. Smith translates very loosely: “the inevitable difficulty of the undertaking.”]
characterizing the meaning of each component, “phenomenon” and “logos” and by getting a focus on the meaning of the compounded name. The history of the word itself, which seems to have originated in the Wolffian school, is here without any significance.

A. The concept of phenomenon

The Greek expression φαινόμενον, from which the term “phenomenon” derives, stems from the verb φαινείσθαι, meaning “to show itself.” Thus φαινόμενον means: what it is that shows itself, the self-showing, the manifest. As for φαινείσθαι itself, it is a middle voice form of φαινω, to bring to the light of day, to place into the light; and φαινω has the root φως, light, i.e. that wherein something can become manifest, visible in itself. To be born in mind as the meaning of the expression “phenomenon” is this: what shows itself in itself, what is manifest. The φαινόμενα, the “phenomena,” then comprise the totality of what lies in the light of day, or can be brought to light — what the Greeks sometimes identified with τὰ ὄντα (beings). Yet beings can show themselves in various ways, depending on our manner of access to them. There is even the possibility that beings show themselves as something they are not. In this kind of self-showing a being “looks like . . .” Such self-showing we call seeming. And so in Greek the expression φαινόμενον, phenomenon, also has the meaning: what looks like, what seems to be, “seeming”; φαινόμενον ἐχαράθον means a good that looks like, but is not “in reality” what it gives itself out to be. For any further understanding of the concept of phenomenon everything depends on seeing how what is named in these two meanings of φαινόμενον (“phenomenon” as what shows itself and “phenomenon” as seeming) coalesces in its structure. Only inasmuch as something strives to show itself, i.e. to be a phenomenon, can it show itself as something that it is not — can it “only look like . . .” Already in the one meaning of φαινόμενον (“seeming”) there lies the primordial meaning (phenomenon: the manifest) as founding the other. We assign the term “phenomenon” to the positive and primordial meaning of φαινόμενον, and distinguish both this from seeming as its privative modification. What the terms express has from the start nothing whatsoever to do with what is called “appearance,” let alone “mere appearance.”

As in the talk of “appearances of illness”: what is meant are occurrences in the body that show themselves and in this self-showing, as the self-showing, “indicate” something that does not show itself. The emergence of such occurrences, their self-showing, coincides with on-hand disturbances that do not show themselves. Accordingly, appearance as appearance “of something” means precisely not “showing itself” but rather the reporting, by way of something that does show itself, of something that does not show itself. Appearing is a not showing itself. This “not” we should under no circumstances confound with the primitive one figuring in the structure of seeming. What does not show itself — as in the manner of something appearing — can also never seem. All indications, depictions, symptoms, and symbols have this basic formal structure of appearing, even though these do differ among themselves.

Although “appearing” is not, and is never, a self-showing in the way a phenomenon is, appearing is still possible only on the basis of a self-showing of something. But this self-showing enabling appearance is not itself the appearing. The appearing is a self-reporting by way of something that shows itself. If it is now said that with the word “appearance” we are referring to something within which something appears without itself being an appearance, such talk fails to encompass — but rather presupposes — the concept of phenomenon. This presupposition remains concealed because in such talk of “appearance” the expression “to appear” takes on two meanings: that wherein something “appears” means that wherein something reports itself, i.e. does not show itself; and in the phrase “without being itself ‘appearance,’” appearance means the showing of itself. Yet this self-showing belongs essentially to that “wherein” in which something reports itself. On this account, phenomena are never appearances, but every appearance is dependent upon phenomena. If one defines “phenomenon” with the help of the concept of “appearance” (a concept which is, moreover, incompletely defined), there is the danger of everything being turned upside down — and a “critique” of phenomenology on this basis is surely a remarkable undertaking.

The expression “appearance” can itself mean two things: for one, appearing in the sense of reporting itself as not showing itself, and then also the reporting itself, a self-showing indicating that there is something not showing itself. And of course one can use “appearance” as a name for phenomenon in the genuine sense, the self-showing. If one designates these three different conditions as “appearance,” confusion is inevitable.

Yet “appearance” can assume still another meaning, and this only

---

34 Introduction: The Question of Being

35 §7. The Phenomenological Method
increases the confusion. Taking the reporting that, in its self-showing, indicates something non-manifest — taking this sense of appearance as what it is about the non-manifest itself that comes to the fore — as what radiates from the non-manifest, and in such a way that the non-manifest gets thought as what is by its own nature never manifest: then “appearance” means as much as producing, or even what is produced (this latter, though, not constituting the authentic being of what does the producing: appearance in the sense of “mere appearance”). What reports itself (as itself produced) does show itself, and in such a way that, as the radiation of what it reports, it constantly veils what it reports. But this not-showing, this veiling, is not yet seeming. Kant employs the term appearance in this connection. In his use, appearances are the “objects of empirical intuition” — what shows itself in such intuition. This self-showing (phenomenon, in the genuine primordial sense) is also “appearance” as the radiation reporting something that conceals itself in the appearance.

Inasmuch as there is a phenomenon even when something “appears” in the sense of reporting itself by way of a self-showing, and inasmuch as this phenomenon can then transform itself privatively into seeming, appearance can become mere seeming — illusion. Under certain lighting conditions someone can look as if he were flushed: the self-showing redness of his cheeks can then be taken as reporting the presence of a fever, which in turn indicates a disturbance in the organism.

Phenomenon — the showing of itself as itself — signifies a distinctive manner in which something gets encountered. In contrast, appearance means an indicational relation within a being such that what does the indicating (the reporting) can only perform its function when it shows itself, and does this showing as itself: is “phenomenal.” In different ways, both appearance and illusion are founded in phenomenon. The confusing multiplicity of “phenomena” — carrying the names “phenomenon,” “seeming,” “appearance,” and “mere appearance” — can only be disentangled if right from the start we understand the concept of phenomenon, namely as what shows itself by itself.

If in this understanding of the concept of phenomenon it remains undetermined which being it is we are addressing as a phenomenon, and if it remains undecided whether what is showing itself in any given instance is a being or rather a characteristic of the being of this being, then one has simply obtained the formal concept of phenomenon. If, however, by what is showing itself we understand those beings accessible in empirical intuition (as in Kant), the formal concept of phenomenon takes on a legitimate application. This usage satisfies the ordinary concept of phenomenon. This ordinary concept, however, is not the phenomenological concept. Within the horizon of the Kantian problematic, we can illustrate what we shall conceptualize phenomenologically with the term “phenomenon” by saying this (disregarding other differences): what shows itself in appearances (in each case preceding and accompanying the phenomenon in the ordinary sense, yet still unthematic) can be brought thematically into self-showing, and this showing of itself as itself (in Kant, the “forms of intuition”) are the phenomena of phenomenology. For manifestly space and time must be able to show themselves in this way — they must be able to become phenomenon — if, when he says that space is the a priori “wherein” of an order, Kant is laying claim to a transcendental statement grounded in the matter itself.

Now, if the phenomenological concept of phenomenon is at all to be understood (apart from how we might determine more exactly what it is that shows itself), one unavoidable precondition is insight into the meaning of the formal concept of phenomenon, and into how it may be legitimately employed in one of its ordinary meanings. — Before getting a focus on the concept of phenomenology we must delimit the meaning of λόγος, so that it becomes clear in what sense phenomenology can ever be a “science of” phenomena.

B. The concept of logos

In Plato and Aristotle the concept of λόγος has many meanings, and in such a way that these meanings strain in divergent directions without positive guidance from any basic meaning. In fact this only seems to be the case; it’s an illusion that perseveres only so long as our interpretation of their works is unable to comprehend appropriately the basic meaning in its primary content. When we say that the basic meaning of λόγος is talk, this literal translation is fully valid only when we determine what talk itself means. Later developments in the meaning of λόγος, and above all the multiple and capricious interpretations of subsequent philosophy, constantly conceal the authentic meaning of talk, a meaning which is often plain enough. Increasingly, λόγος gets “translated,” i.e. always interpreted, as reason, judgement, concept, definition, ground, proportion. How might “talk” have this ability to modify itself, so that
λόγος means all these things, and this within scholarly usage? Even if λόγος is understood in the sense of assertion, and assertion as “judgement,” this apparently correct translation can still miss the fundamental meaning, especially if judgement is understood in the manner of some contemporary “theory of judgement”; λόγος does not mean judgement, in any case does not primarily mean this, if judgement is understood as “connecting” [a predicate with a subject] or as “taking a stand” (acknowledging or rejecting).

Much rather, λόγος as talk means δηλοῦν, making manifest what, in the talk, “the talk is all about.” Aristotle explicated this function of talk more precisely as ἀποφανεῖσθαι.  

And only because the function of λόγος (as ἀποφανσίς) lies in letting something be seen (in pointing it up), can it take the structural form of σύνθεσις, “synthesis.” Here, synthesis does not mean the associating or conjoining of representations, the tinkering with psychical occurrences, whereupon there arises the “problem” of how these associations, as inside, can agree with the physical conditions outside. Rather, the συν, the “with,” has a purely apophantical meaning, and says: letting something be seen as something—seen in its togetherness with something else.

§7. The Phenomenological Method

And then too, because λόγος is a letting be seen, it can therefore be true or false. Here everything depends on freeing oneself from any concept of truth construed as an “agreement” of some sort. In no way is this idea of agreement (or correspondence) the primary concept of ἀληθεύειν, “truth.” The “being true” of a λόγος means, as ἀληθεύειν: in λέγειν as ἀποφανεῖσθαι, while talking apophantically, to bring out of its concealment what the talk is coming from, to let it be seen as unconcealed (ἀληθές)—to uncover.* In the same manner “being false,” ψευδεσθαι, means as much as deceiving, this construed as covering up: to place something in front of something (by way of letting the one be seen) and thereby to pass it off as something it is not.

Because “truth” has this sense, and because λόγος is a determinate mode of letting be seen, we cannot rightly acclaim λόγος as the primary “location” of truth. When, as so often happens these days, truth gets determined as what “really” pertains to judgement, and Aristotle is invoked to support this thesis, not only is this invocation unjustified: more importantly, the Greek concept of truth is misunderstood. In the Greek sense, what counts as “true,” more primordially than does the λόγος we have discussed, is ἀἰσθησις: the straightforward sensible perception of something. Insofar as an instance of ἀἰσθησις is directed to what is proper to it (its ὅτι), namely to the being that in each case becomes intrinsically accessible by and for such perception (e.g. sight directed toward colors), perception is always true. Thus: seeing always uncovers colors, hearing always uncovers sounds. Still, in the most pure and most primordial sense of truth, it is pure ψωφίζω — the perception straightforwardly detecting the simplest determinations of how a being itself is—that is “true,” i.e., that only uncovers, so that it can never cover up anything. This ψωφίζω can never cover up, never be false, it can at most remain an imperception, ἄγως, not sufficing for straightforward and appropriate access.

What no longer takes active shape as a pure letting-see, but rather recurs, in its pointing up, to something else, and in this way lets something be seen as something: this, with its structure of synthesis,

---

1 Cf. On Interpretation, Chapters 1—6; also, Metaphysics, Book Seven, Chapter 4, and Nicomachean Ethics, Book Seven. [Heidegger’s commentary follows these texts very closely.]
takes on the possibility of covering things up. The “truth” belonging to a judgement is only the counter-movement to such cover-up — i.e., a *multiply founded* phenomenon of truth. Realism and idealism alike thoroughly miss the meaning of the Greek concept of truth, from which alone the possibility of anything like a “doctrine of ideas” can be understood as philosophical *cognition*.

And because the function of λόγος lies in its letting something be seen straightforwardly — in *letting* things be perceived, apprehended — it can mean *reason* in the sense of intellectual apprehension. And then again, because λόγος gets used not only in the meaning of λέγειν (“saying”) but also in the meaning of λεγόμενον (“what is said,” what is pointed up as such), and because this in turn is nothing other than the ἔποκειμενον (what in each instance lies always on hand as the *basis* for each incipient addressing and discussing), λόγος *qua* λεγόμενον means reason in the sense of ground, *ratio*. And, finally, because λόγος *qua* λεγόμενον can also mean what is addressed as something which has become visible in its bearing on something else, in its “relatedness,” λόγος takes on the meaning of *relationship* or *proportion*.

May this interpretation of “apophantic talk” suffice for the clarification of the primary function of λόγος.

C. The concept of phenomenology

If we think through concretely what has been exhibited in the interpretation of “phenomenon” and “logos,” we will be struck by how what is intended by each of these terms bears intimately on what is intended by the other. The expression “phenomenology” we may formulate in Greek: λέγειν τα ϕαινόμενα, “saying the phenomena”; but λέγειν means ἀποφαίνεσθαι. Phenomenology then means: ἀπο-φαίνεσθαι τα ϕαινόμενα: to let be seen, from itself, what shows itself, and in the way it shows itself from itself. Here is the formal meaning of the research that calls itself phenomenology. But this expresses nothing other than the maxim formulated above: “To the things themselves!”

Accordingly, the term “phenomenology” differs in its meaning from such designations as “theology” and the like. These name the objects of their respective sciences, each in regard to its content. “Phenomenology” names neither the object of its research, nor does the term characterize the content of the research. The word tells us only about *how* things are to be pointed up, *how* we are to treat whatever might be considered in this science. Science “of” phenomena means: getting hold of its objects in *such* a way that everything that gets discussed must be considered as it is directly shown and directly identified. The expression “descriptive phenomenology” (which is basically tautological) has the very same meaning. Here, description does not mean the kind of procedure one finds, say, in botanical morphology. Once again, the term introduces a prohibition: Keep away from every act of determining that does not draw something identifiable into view! The way this description works, the specific meaning of its λόγος, can only be stipulated in reference to, and out of, the “whatness” of what is to be “described,” i.e. brought into scientific determinateness while retaining the manner in which it is encountered as phenomenon. Formally speaking, the meaning of the formal and ordinary concept of phenomenon justifies us in calling “phenomenology” any manner of pointing up beings as they show themselves by themselves.*

What then must we take account of so that the formal concept of phenomenon will be formalized into the phenomenological one? And how does this one get distinguished from the ordinary one? What is it that phenomenology might “let us see”? What is it that should be called “phenomenology” in a distinguished sense? What is it, by its very nature, serves as the theme to be pointed up *explicitly*? [The answer:] Manifestly, a theme that initially and mostly does not show itself, one that, in contrast to what does initially and mostly show itself, remains *concealed* while also being something that essentially belongs to what initially and mostly does show itself, and in such a way that it constitutes the latter’s meaning and ground. *

---

* In short: this science “of” is really science “from.” In his later works, Heidegger more and more recurs to a thought implied in this account of phenomenology: fully thoughtful discourse incarnates primarily, if not exclusively, a response to what addresses us (“we only *discern* what *concerns* us”: Collected Works, Vol. 9, p. 100). He then recognizes that it is misleading to call such thinking “scientific,” since even the broadest meaning of “science” implies the priority of a pre-established framework — a promotion of it rather than of the encounter with phenomena addressing us.

* Truth of being. [In his later works, Heidegger repeatedly argues that traditional philosophy focuses on the truth of *beings*, i.e. on how we *know* phenomena. He then distinguishes this concern for truth from his own concern...}
Now, what in a special sense remains concealed — or falls back again under cover, or only shows itself “distortedly” — is not this or that being; rather, as the foregoing considerations have shown, it is the being of these beings. This can be covered up to such an extent that it is forgotten, that the question about it and about its meaning does not get raised. What phenomenology thematically “takes in hand” as its object is then this: what demands to become phenomenon — in a distinguished sense, where the demand issues from the matter itself.

Phenomenology is a manner of access to, and the revelatory manner of determining, whatever is to become the theme of ontology. Ontology is only possible as phenomenology. The phenomenological concept of phenomenon, of what shows itself, bears on the being of beings, its meaning, its modifications and derivations. And the self-showing is not just any self-showing, nor anything like appearing. Least of all can the being of beings ever be something “behind” which something else lurks, “something not appearing.”

“Behind” the phenomena of interest in phenomenology lurks, by their very nature, nothing at all. Still, what is to become phenomenon can be concealed. And precisely because phenomena are initially and mostly not given is there a need for phenomenology. The counter-concept to “phenomenon” is covered-up-ness.

There are various ways in which phenomena are covered up. For one, a phenomenon can be covered up in the sense that it is still entirely undiscovered: there is neither information nor misinformation about it. Then, too, a phenomenon can be buried: here, the phenomenon was at some earlier time uncovered, but has since gone undercover. This latter can happen totally, but as a rule what has earlier been uncovered does remain visible, only now as seeming — illusion. However, where there is seeming there is “being.” This kind of covering up, i.e. “disguising,” is the most frequent and the most dangerous, since here the possibilities of deception and misguidance are especially persistent. Within a "system," the structures of being and their corresponding concepts can perhaps assert themselves rightly; they are after all available, just veiled in their rootedness. Constructively bolstered within a system, they take

for the truth of being, i.e. for the ways that the being of beings concerns us, takes us into its draw precisely in its withdrawal — this draw then “constituting” truth (so that our refusal to be drawn strands us with ghostly beings — in logical terms, with “predications” floating free of “subjects”).]

§7. The Phenomenological Method

Here and throughout, Heidegger invites us to dwell at the point of “conversion” from thinking “downwards” to thinking “upwards” — as first formulated by Plato in his Republic, 510B - 518D.

† In his later works, Heidegger reconsiders the appropriateness of “wresting.” Cf. the end of his essay on Aristotle’s concept of nature (available in Pathmarks) where, in reference to Heracleitus’ “nature loves to hide,” he remarks that what is called for is not that we overcome the hiding, rip something from it, but rather that we leave nature her hiding, in all its purity, as what belongs to her — a much more difficult task, as many myths suggest. On p. 222, Heidegger does associate the violence of “overcoming” and “ripping” more with discovery than with disclosure (a distinction only later worked out).
everything belonging to this manner of identification and explication, and everything constituting the conceptuality required in this research.

Because phenomenon understood phenomenologically is always just what constitutes being, and being is in each instance the being of some being, what we first of all need, in our intention to expose being, is that this one being become available. Moreover, this one being must show itself within the manner of access that intrinsically belongs to it. And so the ordinary concept of phenomenon does become phenomenologically relevant. The first task of “phenomenologically” securing the exemplary being [= being-there] as the departure-point for an authentic analysis is always already pre-figured in the goal of the analysis itself.*

Considered in reference to its content, phenomenology is the science of the being of beings—ontology. During the elucidation of the tasks of ontology the necessity of a fundamental ontology emerged, one having as its ontologically and ontically distinguished theme one being, being-there—and in such a way that this ontology is brought before the cardinal problem, the question about the meaning of being in general. In the course of the investigation itself this much will emerge: the method of phenomenological description proceeds as interpretation. The λόγος of the phenomenology of being-there takes the shape of ἔρμηνευειν: in and through the act of interpreting, the authentic meaning of being, and the basic structures of its own being, are divulged to the understanding of being that already belongs to being-there. Phenomenology of being-there is hermeneutics—in the original meaning of the word, according to which it designates the work of interpretation. But inasmuch as the uncovering of the meaning of being, and of the basic

* Heidegger distinguishes two kinds of “analysis”: (1) the descriptive taking-apart (e.g., of Aristotle’s concept of time) and (2) the projective account of the way things are “projectively” (viz. of being-there). This distinction is implicit in Being and Time, but stated explicitly in Collected Works, Vol. 67, p. 132.

Everything belonging to this manner of identification and explication, and everything constituting the conceptuality required in this research.

Because phenomenon understood phenomenologically is always just what constitutes being, and being is in each instance the being of some being, what we first of all need, in our intention to expose being, is that this one being become available. Moreover, this one being must show itself within the manner of access that intrinsically belongs to it. And so the ordinary concept of phenomenon does become phenomenologically relevant. The first task of “phenomenologically” securing the exemplary being [= being-there] as the departure-point for an authentic analysis is always already pre-figured in the goal of the analysis itself.*

Considered in reference to its content, phenomenology is the science of the being of beings—ontology. During the elucidation of the tasks of ontology the necessity of a fundamental ontology emerged, one having as its ontologically and ontically distinguished theme one being, being-there—and in such a way that this ontology is brought before the cardinal problem, the question about the meaning of being in general. In the course of the investigation itself this much will emerge: the method of phenomenological description proceeds as interpretation. The λόγος of the phenomenology of being-there takes the shape of ἔρμηνευειν: in and through the act of interpreting, the authentic meaning of being, and the basic structures of its own being, are divulged to the understanding of being that already belongs to being-there. Phenomenology of being-there is hermeneutics—in the original meaning of the word, according to which it designates the work of interpretation. But inasmuch as the uncovering of the meaning of being, and of the basic

§7. The Phenomenological Method

structures of being-there in general, establishes the horizon for all further ontological investigation of beings not taking their measure from being-there, this hermeneutics becomes “hermeneutics” in a second sense: the elaboration of the conditions of the possibility of any ontological investigation. And, finally, inasmuch as being-there has ontological primacy over every other being—since it is in its possibility of existence—hermeneutics, as interpretation of being-there, receives a specific, a third meaning (philosophically understood, the primary one): the analysis of the existentiality of ex-sistence. In this hermeneutics—inasmuch as it elaborates ontologically the historicity of being-there as the ontic condition of the possibility of historiography—lie the roots of what can be called “hermeneutics” only in a derivative sense: the methodology of those disciplines in the humanities that proceed historiographically.

Being, understood as the basic theme of philosophy, is no genus of beings, and yet it pertains to each and every being. Its “universality” is to be sought higher. Being and the structure of being lie beyond each and every being, beyond each and every possible determination we make about beings. Being is the transcendens pure and simple.α The transcendence of the being of being-there is a distinguished one, inasmuch as in it lies the possibility and necessity of the most radical individuation. Every disclosure of being as transcendens is transcendental cognition. Phenomenological truth (disclosure of being) is veritas transcendentalis.

Ontology and phenomenology are not two differing disciplines among others belonging to philosophy. The two terms characterize philosophy itself, the one its object and the other the way it proceeds. Philosophy is universal phenomenological ontology, taking its departure from the hermeneutics of being-there; as analysis of ex-sistence,β

of course, not transcendens—despite all the metaphysical resonance—in the scholastic and Greek-Platonic sense of κοινόν, “common”; rather, transcendence as what’s ek-static—temporality—time-boundedness; but [this happens within, or creates, an] “horizon”! Being “drives” thought beyond beings. Still, transcendence stems from the truth of being: the event of appropriation. [In his later works Heidegger increasingly speaks about—or, he says, from—the event of things, including ourselves, coming into their own: “appropriation” in this very special sense.]

β “ex-sistence” understood in the manner of fundamental ontology, i.e. as bearing down on the truth of being, and only in this manner!
In his “Letter on Humanism” Heidegger writes:

I say in Being and Time (p. 38) that all questioning of philosophy “pulls back into existence.” But existence is here not the actuality of the ego cogito. It is also not just the actuality of subjects coming to themselves by working for and with one another. Fundamentally distinct from all existentia and existence, “ex-sistence” is the ex-static dwelling in the nearness of being.

About the cumbersomeness, the “inelegance” of expression during the following analysis, this much may be said: it is one thing to tell stories about how beings are, another to lay hold of beings in their being. For this second task, not only are the words mostly lacking, but even more the “grammar.” If an allusion to earlier and (in their level of achievement) incomparable analyses of being be permitted, compare the ontological parts of Plato’s Parmenides or the fourth chapter of the seventh book of Aristotle’s Metaphysics with one of Thucydides’ stories: then one can see just how stunning the formulations were that the Greeks had to undergo from their philosophers. And where our powers are essentially less, and where in addition the domain of being to be disclosed is much more difficult than the one presented to the Greeks, the awkwardness of concept-formation and severity of expression will increase.

§8. Outline of the treatise

The question about the meaning of being is the most universal and the most empty; yet within this question there also lies the possibility of its ownmost acute individualization as it bears down on each instance of being-there. To attain to the basic concept of “being” and to prefigure the ontological conceptuality required by it as well as the necessary variations of this conceptuality, we need a concrete guideline. The “specialness” of the investigation—i.e., the penetration to the concept by way of a special interpretation of one determinate being, being-there, whereupon we should attain the horizon of understanding and of possible interpretation of being—does not conflict with the universality of the concept of being. This one being is in itself “historical,” so that the most proper ontological illumination of this one being necessarily becomes an “historiographical” interpretation.

The elaboration of the question of being branches into two tasks, corresponding to which the treatise falls into two parts:

First Part: The interpretation of being-there in view of temporality, and the explication of time as the transcendental horizon of the question about being.

Second Part: The basics of a phenomenological destructuring of the history of ontology, following the guidelines of the problematic of time-boundedness.

Part One consists of three Divisions:

1. The preparatory fundamental analysis of being-there.
2. Being-there and temporality.

a really: [the possibility of] enacting the urgency to stand within the there. [Heidegger emphasizes the difference between his earlier and his later thought: individuation merely prepares for participation. On “urgency to stand within,” see his marginalium on p. 223.]
Introduction: The Question of Being

3. Time and being.\(^b\)

Part Two likewise takes a three-fold form:

1. Kant’s doctrine of the schematism and of time as the initial stage of the problematic of time-boundedness.
2. The ontological foundation of Descartes’ *cogito sum* and the resumption of medieval ontology in the problematic of the *res cogitans*.
3. Aristotle’s treatise on time as the *discrimen* [decisive point] of the phenomenal basis of ancient ontology, and of its limits.\(^1\)

\(^a\) The transcendence-like difference.

  Overcoming of the horizon as such.
  Return into inheritance.
  Estate from inheritance.

[Heidegger later forbid himself to use the word “horizon”; cf. Georg Picht’s account in *Erinnerung an Martin Heidegger* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1977), p. 204. A central thesis in Heidegger’s later work is that we come into our *estate* (a “presence” where each thing comes into its own—not the present achieved by determining how things are) only as we learn to receive our *inheritance* (what our intellectual traditions answer to—not the answers themselves).]

\(^1\) Only the first two Divisions of Part One exist. To the 1953 edition of *Being and Time* Heidegger added a note regarding the plan of the treatise:

The designation “First Half” appended to previous editions has been dropped. After a quarter century the second half [Division Three of Part One, plus the whole of Part Two] could not be affixed without the first being reworked. This path remains still today a necessary one, if the question about being is to move our being-there.

For an elucidation of this question, the reader may refer to my *Introduction to Metaphysics*. It presents the text of lectures held in the summer semester of 1935.

Actually, much of Heidegger’s very late work can be read as a “replacement” of Division Three of Part One, or at least as intimating the reversal of thinking devoted to “beings not taking their measure from being-there.” Then, too, Heidegger has since analyzed to some extent each of the three “stations” he planned to destructure in Part Two: most obviously the first “station” in his *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (1929).

---

Part One

The Interpretation of Being-there in Reference to Temporality\(^a\)

and

the Explication of Time as the Transcendental Horizon of the Question about Being\(^b\)

\(^a\) Only this much in this published portion.

\(^b\) On this portion, see the Marburg lectures of the summer semester 1927 (*Basic Problems of Phenomenology* [Indiana U. Press, 1982]).