

HEIDEGGER'S "QUESTION OF BEING": A CRITICAL INTERPRETATION

Whenever we reflect on the relation between "European Philosophy and the American Academy", we find ourselves backstage contending with Martin Heidegger.¹ This happens because Heidegger so decisively influenced the manner and matter of modern continental philosophy, particularly post-war French and German thought.

But discussing Heidegger is difficult. The very "question of being" that he wanted to raise is hard to grasp, because, as he repeatedly stressed, "being" is as yet not understood. Thus it is that we live in "oblivion of being".²

My argument in this paper is that Heidegger's question of being appears to defy interpretation mainly because it is not one single question. Borrowing an expression from musical theory, I hold that at least five leitmotifs are interwoven in the question of being. Much of what Heidegger says will sound obscure as long as the question is considered in the light of one such leading motive only. We have to put the leading motives together in order to grasp the full significance of Heidegger's texts, because in this respect, his works are like Wagnerian overtures. The reader may be captivated by their spell without being able to recognize the interplay of leitmotifs—that is, without fully understanding what Heidegger wants to say. I shall thus call the view of the question of being to be defended in what follows the Wagnerian interpretation.

In Section 1, five leitmotifs are listed and elucidated. Next, their interplay is sketched (Section 2). Because there is no compelling reason why they should be rolled into one, I shall evaluate Heidegger's question of being by evaluating the leading motives separately (Section 3). Finally, in (Section 4), I shall discuss some philosophical stratagems based on two leitmotifs which prevail in the later Heidegger, leaving it to the reader to reflect upon the ways in which philosophers influenced by Heidegger, such as Jacques Derrida, use similar stratagems.

I. ANALYSIS

In the order in which they appear in *Being and Time* and in Heidegger's later works, the five leitmotifs of the question of being are the following:

A. *The meta-Aristotelian theme.*

According to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, 'being' is said in many ways (*pollachōs*), and always in relation to one thing or nature (*pros hen*).³ As a consequence,

Aristotle's question of being has two opposite poles, a pole of differentiation and a pole of unification. The pole of differentiation (*pollachôs*) motivates the programme of developing the different ways in which 'being' is used. It embraces the system of categories, the notion of truth, the distinction between actual and potential being, and that between matter and form. Unification (*proshen*), on the other hand, consists in showing how the different ways of using 'to be' are interrelated, and how they depend on one fundamental sense of 'being'. According to Aristotle, this fundamental sense is that of being as a substance, and, in the final analysis, being as the deity.⁴

I call Heidegger's question of being meta-Aristotelian because Heidegger is more radical than Aristotle regarding both differentiation and unity.⁵ As far as differentiation is concerned, he holds that Aristotle tried to understand the many different types of being on the model of one type only, which Heidegger names a "present thing" (*das Vorhandene*). This is what Heidegger calls Aristotle's "ontology of presence" (*Ontologie der Vorhandenheit*), which he articulated in his system of categories, and in which 'being' is construed as "constant presence". According to Heidegger, it is impossible to understand in terms of the ontology of presence our own being, or the way tools exist, for example. This is why we have to "destroy" or deconstruct the ontology of presence and elaborate a proper system of "existential categories" for human existence (i.e. a system of what Heidegger calls existentials). The published part of *Being and Time* is mainly devoted to this task.⁶

As far as the pole of unification is concerned, Heidegger holds that the most fundamental sense of 'being', to which all the other senses are related, cannot be being-as-a-substance or being-as-deity.⁷ According to Heidegger, one should acknowledge a radical difference between the totality of beings (*Seiendes*) on the one hand, to which substances and gods belong, and being itself, being in the sense of the verb 'to be' (*das Sein*) on the other hand. I shall indicate this second sense by an upper-case initial: 'Being'. Heidegger calls the difference between beings and Being the "ontological difference".⁸ He holds that Aristotle, and with him the entire metaphysical tradition of the West, has thought about the totality of beings only, so that Being has been "forgotten". This is the famous oblivion of Being (*Seinsvergessenheit*). Heidegger's question of being in the sense of the pole of unification is concerned with Being, not with beings.

B. *The phenomenological theme.*

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger seems to equate Being with the manner of being (*Seinsweise*) of types of beings. This is why Being is called a phenomenon, although not a phenomenon in the "vulgar sense".⁹ Because we usually concen-

trate on beings and their properties, the manner of being of these beings is concealed. We rarely reflect, for instance, on the difference between our own manner of being, which Heidegger calls existence, and the manner of being of inanimate things. This explains the predominance of the ontology of presence, which seeks to understand human existence on the model of things (e.g., the Cartesian *res cogitans* and *res extensa*).¹⁰ It is the aim of phenomenological ontology to elucidate the ontological status of types of being by analyzing their manner of being. Because there "are" many manners of being, the phenomenological leitmotiv seems to have dissolved the unity of Being. Unity is restored, however, via themes C, D, and E below, albeit in different ways.

C. *The transcendental theme.*

According to Kant and Husserl, the sciences are "founded in" synthetic *a priori* ontologies, and these ontologies are founded in turn in a science of the transcendental subject. In §§3–4 of *Being and Time*, Heidegger endorses this tripartite structure of knowledge.¹¹ He argues that the phenomenological ontology of our existence or *Dasein* is *fundamental* ontology. This implies that it is impossible to understand ontologically non-human types of being except by interpreting them in the light of the ontology of *Dasein*. The world, for example, is primarily a meaningful structure that is revealed or opened up in human moods (*Stimmungen*) and understanding (*Verstehen*). It is the world of daily life, the world in which we must live our lives, in which we use tools, attend conferences, etc. The scientific understanding of the world as a multiplicity of in themselves meaningless events is a secondary and impoverished kind of understanding which, according to Heidegger, is derived from our primary understanding, and which is, therefore, *also secondary in the ontological sense*.¹²

D. *The neo-Hegelian theme.*

Hegel says in the preface to his *Philosophy of Right* that philosophy should express the essence of its epoch in thought.¹³ Notably in the works after *Being and Time*, Heidegger assumes in a Hegelian vein that each epoch has a fundamental structure (*Grundstellung*),¹⁴ which manifests itself in *all* aspects of that epoch.¹⁵ The sequence of these structures is "real history". Traditional metaphysics would have been an articulation of such fundamental structures, in which the whole of being is conceived of in a certain way,¹⁶ even though metaphysics did not dwell upon the sense of Being which is fundamental to each epoch and which constitutes its unity.¹⁷ This is why the metaphysical tradition excludes an "experience of the truth of Being" and has been oblivious of Being.¹⁸ Heidegger's post-metaphysical "thinking" aims at grasping the fundamental structure of the present epoch in such a way that we may question it and

become free for a new experience of Being.¹⁹ Thinking in this sense would be more fundamental than the investigation of our culture by history, economics, or the social sciences, so that it would not depend on these disciplines.²⁰

E. *The post-monotheist theme.*

Between Hegel and Heidegger stands Nietzsche, who became the greatest challenge for Heidegger's thought. Whereas Hegel's history of Being is progressive and culminates in a unification of our soul with the Absolute, Heidegger's history of Being is one of decline or fall (*Verfall, Verfallen*), in which Being becomes ever more concealed.²¹ Heidegger endorses the Nietzschean dictum that God is dead. That is, that the idea of a transcendent realm has lost its force, which is why the world now manifests itself merely as a meaningless field for technical domination, exploitation, and consumption by man's will to power (*das Wesen der Technik*).²² Nonetheless Heidegger does not resign himself to this situation. I suggest that just as Luther blamed the influence of Greek philosophy on Christian theology for the crisis of faith in his time,²³ so Heidegger thought that the eclipse of Being ("nihilism") was due to the Greek ontology of presence, from which the fundamental structure of our epoch is derived.²⁴ Because, in the ontology of presence, Being is represented as an eternal and immutable substance (God), the sudden and unexpected coming (*Ankunft, Ereignis*) or advent of Being in our life is precluded. Therefore, in order to prepare for such an advent, we have to "destroy" or deconstruct the tradition of metaphysics, which conceals Being. But of course we cannot force Being to come,²⁵ and in fact Being has concealed or withdrawn *itself* in the history of metaphysics (the *Deus absconditus* theme).²⁶ Therefore, we have to ask for Being (to ask the question of Being) with resignation (*Gelassenheit*),²⁷ in order to *prepare* for a future advent of Being (the John the Baptist theme),²⁸ in which Being will manifest itself to us (the theme of grace).²⁹ It belongs to the logic of the post-monotheist leading motive that Heidegger on the one hand dismisses all assimilations of his question of Being to traditional (onto)theology, which is held responsible for our abandonment by Being,³⁰ whereas on the other hand there is a strong structural and terminological similarity between his discourse on Being and the very theology he rejects. By substituting 'God' for 'Being' in Heidegger's later texts, one quite often obtains traditional statements of monotheist theology.

II. SYNTHESIS

How are these five leitmotifs connected together in *the* question of being? Heidegger introduces the question (A) in *Being and Time* as what do we mean

by the word 'being'.³¹ But then he immediately drops the quotation marks and asserts that we have to ask the question about the sense of being (*die Frage nach dem Sinn von Sein*). And indeed, in *Being and Time* Heidegger asks both for the sense of 'being' and for the sense of being.³²

This apparent ambiguity in the question of being may be understood against the background of Husserl's *Logical Investigations*.³³ According to Husserl, all meaningful expressions have both meaning and referent. Husserl assumes that in order to elucidate an expression's meaning, acquaintance with its referent(s) is crucial. Because he applies this view to logical constants such as 'to be', we have to look for the ("categorical") *phenomenon* of Being if we want to clarify the sense of the verb 'to be'.³⁴ That is, a search for the meaning of 'being' has to be a quest for Being. This Husserlian assumption links the meta-Aristotelian theme (A) to the phenomenological theme (B): to elucidate the sense(s) of 'being', Heidegger has to analyze a phenomenon: the Being of beings (*Seinsweisen*).³⁵

In sections 2 and 4 of *Being and Time*, Heidegger argues that there is a primacy of one particular being in the developing question of Being: the being that we humans are, because we already have an understanding of (')Being(').³⁶ This links the phenomenological theme (B) to the transcendental theme (C). Interpreting our existence ontologically, Heidegger discovers that the ontological sense (*Sinn*) of our existence resides in what he calls concern (*Sorge*), and that the sense of, or the condition of the inner possibility of, concern is authentic time, that is, time as it unfolds itself in our authentic being-to-death. Time in this sense, then, is the sense of our being-there (*Dasein*). This notion of time is very different from and allegedly more fundamental than our usual concept of time as a measurable quantity.

Because in *Being and Time* Heidegger holds that the ontology of *Dasein* is fundamental or transcendental, the sense of Being revealed by this ontology should point to the fundamental sense of Being tout court, from which the other senses are somehow derived. This is why the original scheme of the book contained a turn or reversal (*Kehre*), which is announced in section 83: after having interpreted the sense of Being from the point of view of our human understanding of Being (*Seinsverständnis*), Heidegger planned to interpret *Dasein* and all the other modes of being from the point of view of the temporality of Being itself. This notion of a turn is crucial for understanding Heidegger's development, and, indeed, for understanding how themes A, B, and C are linked to themes D and E. However, the notion of a turn in Heidegger is a complex one, and perhaps the turn as planned in *Being and Time* was never realized.³⁷

In the first place, there is a turn after *Being and Time* from the transcendental theme (C) to the neo-Hegelian theme (D), a turn which may be compared with Hegel's reaction to Kant. According to *Being and Time*, the fundamental

ontology of *Dasein* articulates the essence of human existence, which underlies all ontic or factual manifestations of human life.³⁸ This implies that the ontology of *Being and Time* claims to be universally valid for all times and cultures. However, the “historicity” of human existence belongs to the essence of *Dasein*, and the ontological concepts Heidegger uses in *Being and Time* are rooted in the Christian and philosophical tradition of the West. Should one not conclude that a universally valid analysis of human existence is impossible, because human existence is entirely determined by the historically variable fundamental structures of the relevant epoch, a conclusion that turns one from C to D? If so, then it comes as no surprise that French structuralists such as Michel Foucault were so deeply influenced by the later Heidegger.

Heidegger seems to construe the turn from C to D in yet another way. The fundamental ontology of *Dasein* (C) is impossible unless we are able to deconstruct our inherited common sense or self-understanding derived from the ontology of presence, because the ontology of presence conceals the real nature of human existence by conceptualizing it on the model of a present thing. In the later writings, however, Heidegger seems to claim that the fundamental structure of our epoch has become such that it is now impossible to break through the ontology of presence. We are dominated by a way of understanding the world and ourselves which Heidegger calls “the reign of technology” (*das Wesen der Technik*).³⁹ As a consequence, we understand everything in the world as a matter for calculation and exploitation, so that the way to authentic Being is barred.

On this point, theme D is connected with E, the post-monotheist leitmotiv. According to Heidegger, the technical and scientific understanding of the world, which is due to the reign of technology, and which dominates our era, is the climax of the oblivion of Being. However, he holds out the hope that by meditating on this climax, we may prepare for a new advent (*Ankunft*) of Being. This is the aim of Heidegger’s later “thinking” or “questioning”.⁴⁰ The post-monotheist theme (E) is also connected with (C) via yet another kind of “turn”. At this point, comparing Heidegger with Pascal is instructive. In the *Pensées*, which were meant to be an *apologia* for Christianity, Pascal first showed, by an analysis of human existence, that man is miserable and incomprehensible to himself. Crucial to Pascal’s analysis is his notion of diversion (*divertissement*), because he tried to convince us that *everything* we do is diversion except meditation on our mortality, which will make us miserable. He then argued that Christianity offers the consolation and understanding we need, provided that it is liberated from its contamination by Greek ontology. Similarly, Heidegger’s analysis of human existence in *Being and Time* purports to show that we are “inauthentic” unless we consciously confront our death. The time-structure of such a confrontation is called *Augenblick* (instant, moment), and some commentators sup-

pose that Heidegger modeled this notion on the Christian idea of *kairos* (the supreme moment of the advent of God).⁴¹ If so, the interpretation of human existence in *Being and Time* may be seen as a preparation for a "turn": by showing the finiteness of human existence, Heidegger would incite us to a resolute openness (*Entschlossenheit*) for Being in the post-monotheist sense. Because we cannot force Being to come, what we experience in resolute openness for Being is *Angst* and nothingness.⁴² Having realized this first turn, we will hope for a second one: that Being will turn itself to us again. And indeed Heidegger says that the turn (*Kehre*) should be seen as a turn *of Being itself*.⁴³ This interpretation of the Heideggerian turn by analogy with Pascal's *apologia* for Christianity has the advantage that it accounts for the unity of Heidegger's *Denkweg*, a unity on which Heidegger often insisted.⁴⁴

What the example of Heidegger's notion of a turn shows is the amazing polyvalence of his key expressions,⁴⁵ a polyvalence which corroborates our Wagnerian interpretation of the question of being. It is responsible for the characteristic combination of darkness and richness in Heidegger's texts.⁴⁶ In particular, the polyvalence of key expressions enables Heidegger to make smooth transitions between the different leitmotifs of the question of being, and indeed to conceal to the reader that there is a plurality of such leitmotifs. Polyvalence makes interpretation difficult especially when the various meanings of a key expression are incompatible. And in fact they often are. If, for instance, one takes Being phenomenologically (theme B) as the Being (*Seinsweise*) of types of beings, 'oblivion of Being' means that we usually do not notice different manners of Being. We can cancel this oblivion of Being by doing phenomenological ontology. But if Being is taken post-monotheistically (E), oblivion of Being is a "fate" Being itself bestows on us, and which Being alone can undo.⁴⁷ Whereas Being in the second sense is radically transcendent to the totality of beings, Being in the first sense may be elucidated by investigating beings.⁴⁸

III. CRITICISMS

There is no compelling reason to interweave the five leitmotifs into the symphony of the question of being. The post-monotheist attempt to rescue the essence of religion in an age of atheism and technology can do without neo-Hegelian structuralism; a phenomenological analysis of the Being of beings is not necessarily tied up with transcendentalism; and in fact none of the five leitmotifs requires any of the other four. Because they are often even in conflict, as I showed at the end of section II, we may just as well evaluate each of the themes separately.

A. No one will object to the pole of differentiation in the *meta-Aristotelian theme*. Logicians teach us that 'to be' as a logical expression is used in at least three senses, identity, predication, and existence. Moreover, there are many non-logical uses of 'to be', 'to exist', and 'being', for instance when we speak of 'human existence', or use 'Being' as a post-monotheist substitute for 'God'. As far as the pole of unity is concerned, however, I suggest that we should have strong reservations concerning Heidegger's question of being. To begin with, it is a mistake to think that 'to be' in the logical sense is used as a referring expression. Moreover, the logical uses of 'to be' are not internally related to the non-logical uses. In particular, it is erroneous to think that a notion of time is essential to the logical uses, and that this notion of time is derived either from the ontology of presence or from human "understanding of Being".⁴⁹ Consequently, an ontology of human existence or a post-monotheist discourse on Being will throw no light upon our ordinary logical uses of 'to be' and 'to exist', so that the unity of the meta-Aristotelian question of being is an illusion.⁵⁰

B. On the other hand, the importance of Heidegger's *phenomenology of human existence* cannot be overestimated. Heidegger convincingly showed in *Being and Time* that we tend to misinterpret the ontological "sense" of our existence under the influence of metaphysical and scientific conceptions. The rich and detailed ontology of *Dasein* is a remedy against superficial reductionisms and eliminative materialisms which abound in the modern philosophical tradition. It seems impossible, at least in the light of our present scientific knowledge, either to *reduce* our existence and the world as meaningful phenomena to "meaningless" material systems, or to *eliminate* the ordinary "meaningfulness" of our world and human life in favour of a purely scientific world-view.⁵¹

C. However, it does not follow from the phenomenology of *Dasein* that human existence is ontologically more fundamental than nature as science understands it. This anti-naturalist thesis is as essential to Heidegger's transcendental theme, as to the neo-Hegelian and the post-monotheist leitmotifs. I think that we should reject Heidegger's anti-naturalism, whether it is motivated by the transcendental, the neo-Hegelian, or the post-monotheist theme. We also should dismiss Heidegger's dogma that science is based on *a priori* ontologies, on a "scheme" (*Entwurf*) which cannot be empirically justified, or on a particular neo-Hegelian fundamental structure, a dogma which is instrumental in Heidegger's argument for the non-binding nature of scientific knowledge.⁵² In short, we should try to reconcile naturalism to anti-reductionism concerning human life.⁵³

D. It cannot be denied that technology more and more dominates our culture and it is certain that, in conjunction with overpopulation, technology tends to destroy the ecosystem of the Earth. But this does not entail that we should accept Heidegger's neo-Hegelian thesis of the *reign* of technology (*das Wesen der Technik*). According to this thesis, the domination of technology is due to the dominance of a specific fundamental structure which would manifest itself in all aspects of our epoch, and which makes us consider everything in the world merely as a matter for calculation, exploitation, and consumption. According to Heidegger, this structure itself can be explained by studying the "logic" of Western metaphysics,⁵⁴ and can be known or experienced in specific "moods" (*Grundstimmungen*), such as boredom.⁵⁵ This experiential knowledge of the reigning fundamental structure would be independent of, and indeed *a priori* in relation to, empirical investigation of modern culture by the social sciences, for instance.

I suggest that we reject this neo-Hegelian theme for at least three reasons. First, Heidegger's thesis that the fundamental structure of the "reign of technology" governs *all* manifestations of our epoch lands him in a dilemma. If we take in their usual sense terms like 'technology', 'exploitation', 'consumption', 'calculation', and the other terms used by Heidegger to characterize the way beings manifest themselves in the era of technology, then it is empirically false that in our epoch we always regard everything as a matter for exploitation, consumption, etc.⁵⁶ Or, Heidegger stretches the meaning of these terms indefinitely, until their extension embraces everything. But if he does this, then the terms will lose their significance. In short, like all universal theses of this kind, Heidegger's thesis of the essence of technology is either false or meaningless.⁵⁷

This semantic objection is related to a second, moral, objection. Heidegger's neo-Hegelian theme may be called "totalitarian" in that Heidegger pretends to know in advance what the manifestations of his fellow human beings mean ultimately: they all express the reign of technology. For instance, in "The Question of Technology" Heidegger claims that the tourist who enjoys the landscape of the Rhine, or the forester who loves the woods as his ancestors did, are entirely dominated by the tourist or timber industry "whether they know it or not".⁵⁸ This totalitarian feature of the neo-Hegelian motive is most irritating, because it means that Heideggerians will never take at face value what their critical interlocutors are saying, and will never pay proper respect to the declared intentions of others. For a Heideggerian, a champion of human rights will be just another marginal manifestation of the all-embracing technological will to power.⁵⁹

Finally, there is a crucial epistemological objection to the neo-Hegelian theme. If one pretends that one may somehow experience the fundamental structure of our epoch by means of privileged moods (*Grundstimmungen*), inde-

pendently of empirical research, one will uncritically trust one's own preconceptions and hypostatize them into privileged objective insights. This explains the extraordinary self-confidence with which Heidegger professed his reactionary stance on technology and his anti-democratic stance in politics.⁶⁰ But of course there "are" no unified fundamental structures to be "experienced" in fundamental moods. Modern culture is complex and pluralistic, and only those longing for a simplistic world-view will be attracted by the idea of neo-Hegelian fundamental structures, whether Marxist, Foucauldian, or Heideggerian. A philosophical critique of modern culture is perhaps more urgent than ever, but it should be developed in interaction with the empirical sciences.

E. Heidegger's later writings will appeal in particular to those who have forsworn traditional Christianity but somehow preserved a religious attitude.⁶¹ If specific moods (*Stimmungen*) are fundamental epistemic sources, as Heidegger suggests, the post-monotheist theme may be indisputable. If, on the other hand, rational argument should prevail in philosophy,⁶² the post-monotheist leading motive must be rejected for many reasons. Let me state two of them.

In the first place, there is a semantic objection. Talking about Gods in polytheistic religions may be or have been empirically meaningful, although scientific advance has shown in many cases that what was said, for instance that Apollo causes the plague, is false. However, the competition between religions led to the invention of ever more powerful Gods. In the end it gave rise to the idea of an infinitely powerful God who would tolerate no other Gods, that is, it led to monotheism. Because the monotheist God is infinite, he is wholly transcendent, and our language ceases to be applicable to him. God becomes the *Deus absconditus*. One may try to say something meaningful about the infinite God by analogy, but if he is really infinite, analogies with finite beings will break down. Monotheist theology, therefore, is infected by (empirical) meaninglessness. Heidegger's post-monotheist Being is even more transcendent than the monotheist God, because Heidegger says that Being transcends the sphere of beings as a whole. Being is *das transcendens schlechthin*.⁶³ Moreover, 'Being' should be understood in the verbal sense; it does not refer to an entity or to an agent. If this is so, how can Heidegger say that we have to let Being address us again,⁶⁴ that Being is waiting until we humans will deem it worthy of our attention,⁶⁵ that Being conceals itself,⁶⁶ etc.? These predicates can be meaningfully applied to (finite) agents only. We must conclude that Heidegger's post-monotheist discourse on Being can have no meaning.⁶⁷

Secondly, the post-monotheist discourse on Being confronts Heidegger with a dilemma, a dilemma which infects all absolute and non-empirical epistemic claims. Let me call it the *sectarians'* dilemma, the one that arises as soon as one's own absolute epistemic claim is contradicted by another equally abso-

lute epistemic claim. For instance, one religiously inspired politician pretends that God prohibits abortion in all cases, and another retorts that God sometimes allows abortion. In such a situation, either we have to admit that both absolute claims are equally valid, which means that they are both invalid and useless because they destroy each other, or we may pretend that one of them (usually the claim one shares) is somehow more valid than the other. But this second option is dogmatic, and it cannot be justified by argument. Heidegger chose the second option.⁶⁸ This explains why he could never say that his former convictions had been mistaken and why he had to account for changes in his philosophy by postulating changes in Being itself. For the possibility of a mistake by the private person Martin Heidegger would invalidate his absolutist epistemology, according to which Heidegger's discourse of Being somehow expresses the voice of Being itself. The sectarian's dilemma also explains why Heidegger refused to discuss his political past in public, although there may be other explanations for this fact also. Heidegger's absolutist epistemology, according to which he had privileged access to the reigning fundamental structure and to Being itself, is inseparable from his anti-democratic and authoritarian attitude. A commitment to rational argument in philosophy and to democracy in politics is incompatible with the essence of Heidegger's later thought.

IV. STRATAGEMS

Even if we reject the leitmotifs in Heidegger's question of being, with the exception of the pole of differentiation in the meta-Aristotelian theme (A), and the phenomenological theme (B), as I suggest we should, we may still be mesmerized by the extraordinary expressiveness and rhetorical power of his works. The spell will be broken only by an explicit analysis of Heidegger's rhetorical stratagems, which are rooted mainly in the neo-Hegelian and the post-monotheist theme. At least seven characteristic stratagems may be distinguished.

1. *The Stratagem of the Fall.*

Heidegger often suggests, as indeed the neo-Hegelian theme and post-monotheist oblivion of Being imply, that modern man is somehow fated to "err" (*Irren*), because everything he says or does is governed by the fundamental structure of the reign of technology.⁶⁹ Of course this is not a sound argument. Its premiss is either false or meaningless, as I argued above. But it is a powerful rhetorical device, since it will be used to transform each and every critical observation into a confirmation of Heidegger's views, by unmasking or deconstructing it as a typical expression of "the reign of technology", "information", "logocentrism", or whatever other all-embracing depreciation one prefers. Logically

speaking, the stratagem of the Fall is an instance of the informal fallacy called "poisoning the well".

2. *The Stratagem of the Radical Alternative.*

If everything we think and do is contaminated by the Fall, redemption must consist in an alternative which is *radically* different from anything we are able to conceive of. The conjunction of stratagems (1) and (2) puts the Heideggerian in a comfortable, because unassailable, "position": he may condemn all other philosophical movements and conceptions in the name of an alternative which is ineffable because it is *radical*. But then, because an ineffable alternative cannot be criticized, he is able to criticize while being himself immune against criticism.

In Continental universities, undergraduates are greatly charmed by this powerful non-position, until they discover that it is obtained at the price of emptiness. As there are no compelling *reasons* to be convinced by stratagems (1) and (2), one is tempted to give a psychological explanation for their astonishing rhetorical success. Clearly, the unassailable "position" obtained by these stratagems will appeal to weak or immature personalities, who are longing to feel both superior to others and safe against criticism. If conditions are favourable, teachers craving for power may use Heidegger's writings to reinforce their irrational authority over students and to form a Heideggerian sect.

The stratagem of the radical alternative is particularly pernicious in relation to the problem of technology. It is vital for mankind to develop new types of technology which are ecologically stable, so that in, say, fifty years time mankind will have found a sustainable mode of life which offers a reasonable level of prosperity. Heideggerians will tend to condemn and depreciate all attempts to find such solutions to the problem of technology for being not sufficiently radical and for remaining within the "reign of technology". I would say, therefore, that Heideggerian thought may corrupt juvenile minds in our universities, because it tends to divert their intellectual energy from constructive approaches to urgent problems mankind has to solve.

3. *The Stratagem of Indifferentiating Abstraction.*⁷⁰

We have seen how Heidegger tries to characterize the fundamental structure of our epoch by stretching indefinitely the extension of nouns such as 'technology', 'information' and 'exploitation'. These nouns thereby become so abstract that they lose their meaning, though Heidegger simultaneously suggests that they keep the senses they usually have. I call this kind of abstraction "indifferentiating", because Heidegger also suggests that the fundamental structure is the only thing that counts, so that all differences *within* the framework of the

alleged fundamental structure of the present epoch become a matter of indifference. Accordingly, Heidegger did not acknowledge any interesting difference between, for instance, Stalin's totalitarian regime and Roosevelt's democratic America.⁷¹ In other words, the neo-Hegelian theme implies a repulsive degree of moral indifference or unconcern.

4. *Strategies of Immunization.*

Apart from the conjunction of stratagems (1) and (2), Heidegger uses two other stratagems in order to immunize his thought against criticism. One is the claim *that criticism is due to misunderstanding*. Of course this may be true in many cases, but it cannot be always true unless Heidegger were infallible. Heidegger repeatedly said that the question of being is not (yet) understood. One thing he might mean is that modern man is not attempting to hear the voice of Being, because man is preoccupied with the world of beings and technology. Or perhaps Heidegger meant that Being itself does not yet respond to our questioning and that it withdraws itself from us. But surely both of these claims presuppose that Heidegger's question of being has the post-monotheist meaning I attributed to it. If one says that this interpretation is based on a misunderstanding, one must offer another interpretation of the many passages which so strongly suggest it. Secondly, Heidegger often poured explicit calumny upon the very ideas of criticism and discussion.⁷² Both stratagems, the notion that criticism is a symptom of misunderstanding and the straightforward calumnies against discussion and criticism are inherent in the (post)monotheist tradition. For if God or Being is infallible, criticism of his Word is sinful and must be due to incomprehension.

5. *Stratagem of the Obedient Ear.*

Heidegger's post-monotheist thinking would be inspired by the voice of Being. This is why Heidegger as a private person is not responsible for his thought, and why Heideggerians usually eschew discussion. Changes in Heidegger's philosophy are said to be due to changes in Being itself. They should not be explained by saying that Heidegger changed his mind for such and such reasons. According to Heidegger, this irresponsibility is the highest form of responsibility, because it is supposed to be a responsiveness to Being. Kant and Sartre would reply that such a radical heteronomy is a form of self-deception. For each ear is responsible at least for its choice of what or whom to obey.

6. *Stratagem of the Forest Trails (Holzwege).*⁷³

A post-monotheist thinker should always deny that his thought is post-monotheist, for otherwise he will be classified as belonging to the very tradition he

wants to overcome, the tradition of monotheism. This is why the post-monotheist thinker has to fight a spiritual guerilla war against the intellectual establishment, and can never reveal where he really stands. He should on the one hand use forms and locutions of the monotheist tradition, but on the other hand disguise them beyond recognition. Instead of 'religion', he should say '*Bezug*'; instead of 'revelation' he should say '*Lichtung*' or '*Eröffnung*'; instead of 'Fall' he uses '*Verfallen*' or '*Irre*'; instead of 'advent' '*Ankunft*', '*Angang*', or '*Ereignis*'; instead of 'conversion' he says '*Wende*', '*Wandlung*',⁷⁴ or '*Wandel*'; and at best he uses all these expressions in a polyvalent way, so that in some contexts they do not have their post-monotheist significance. These contexts may then be used to "refute" the post-monotheist interpretation.⁷⁵

7. *Stratagem of the Elect.*

Where we are all caught up in the fundamental structure of technology, so that our thinking is wholly perverted, Heidegger seems to have gained access to the impenetrable Place from where he is able to experience the Truth of Being, a Truth which remains concealed from ordinary mortals.⁷⁶ If so, why should we not blindly believe him, after all?

Herman Philipse

*Leiden University,
Postbus 9515,
NL-2300 RA Leiden,
Netherlands*

NOTES

1. I am grateful to Joop Doorman (Delft Technical University), to Han Adriaanse, Arent Baron van Haersolte, Don Kwast and James McAllister (Leiden University), and to Barry Smith (Buffalo) and Eloise Segal (New York), for comments on an earlier draft. For references, see the list at the end of the paper.

2. E.g. Heidegger, *Was ist Metaphysik?*, pp. 18-19; Neske, Kettering (eds.), *Antwort*, pp. 23-24; Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, p. 30.

3. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* VI.2, 1026^{a-b}, and IV.1, 1003^a, respectively.

4. This is why traditional metaphysics may be called onto-theology. Cf. Heidegger, "Die onto-theologische Verfassung der Metaphysik", in Heidegger, *Identität und Differenz*, pp. 56-57 and 66-69.

5. At the end of *Sein und Zeit*, §1.1, Heidegger reproaches Hegel for having neglected the Aristotelian problem of the unity of being in relation to the plurality of cat-

egories. I am suggesting that Heidegger wanted to solve this Aristotelian problem in a radically new way.

6. There is some analogy between Heidegger's radicalization of the pole of differentiation, coupled to the destruction of the ontology of presence, and the later Wittgenstein's analysis of a multiplicity of language-games, coupled to a critique of the "Augustinian picture of language". See my "Heidegger's Question of Being and the 'Augustinian Picture' of Language".

7. Heidegger frequently identifies the question of being with the pole of unification, that is, with the question regarding the "guiding fundamental meaning" of 'to be'. See Heidegger, "Mein Weg in die Phänomenologie", in Heidegger, *Zur Sache des Denkens*, p. 81; Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 17; Heidegger, Letter to Richardson, p. xi.

8. See, for example, Heidegger, "Vom Wesen des Grundes", in Heidegger, *Wegmarken*, pp. 21, 30.

9. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* §7. Cf. "Seinssinn", for instance in *Phänomenologische Interpretation/Einführung*, pp. 58-61.

10. Because we are usually preoccupied with (things in) the world, it is "natural" that we try to understand ourselves by analogy with such things (animals, machines, computers). In *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger calls this tendency *Verfallen* (the term 'Verfallen' echoes the Christian doctrine that being preoccupied with the world is the human predicament since the Fall: see my leitmotiv E, and also Heidegger, "Vom Wesen des Grundes", in Heidegger, *Wegmarken*, p. 40). Heidegger would hold that modern cognitive science is dominated in its entirety by the ontology of presence, and that it therefore fundamentally misunderstands human existence. His critique of the Aristotelian and Cartesian tradition applies *mutatis mutandis* to much contemporary philosophical psychology.

11. Cf. Heidegger, "Vom Wesen des Grundes", in Heidegger, *Wegmarken*, pp. 29-30.

12. Heidegger objects to the modern epistemological tradition that it is implicitly based on this secondary ontology, which dominated Western philosophy since the scientific revolution. He therefore claims that his question of being is more fundamental than epistemology, which had been considered as "first philosophy" at the end of the nineteenth century.

13. Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts*, pp. xxi-xxii: "so ist auch die Philosophie, ihre Zeit in Gedanken erfasst".

14. See, for example, Heidegger, *Die Frage nach dem Ding*, pp. 33, 52, and *passim*; Heidegger, "Die Zeit des Weltbildes", in Heidegger, *Holzwege*, p. 96.

15. See, for example, Heidegger, "Die Zeit des Weltbildes", in Heidegger, *Holzwege*, p. 69: "Dieser Grund durchherrscht alle Erscheinungen, die das Zeitalter auszeichnen", and p. 101: "kann sich nichts entziehen". Cf. "Wozu Dichter?", in Heidegger, *Holzwege*, p. 272; Heidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik", in Heidegger, *Vortraege und Aufsätze*, pp. 19-21, 31 ("Wo dieses herrscht, vertreibt es jede andere Möglichkeit der Entbergung"), and *passim* in the later works. This is why the neo-Hegelian theme also brings about a unity in the plurality of "manners of being".

16. See, for example, Heidegger, *Die Frage nach dem Ding*, pp. 38, 50, 74ff.; Heid-

egger, "Die Zeit des Weltbildes", in Heidegger, *Holzwege*, p. 69.

17. Taking the traditional periodization of Western history as unproblematic, Heidegger says that 'Being' in Ancient Greece was understood as *alêtheia* and *physis*, in the Roman era as being the product of an operation, in Medieval times as being created, and in the modern epoch as being represented by a subject. What all these senses of Being have in common is the ontology of presence. Because the Greek ontological model was in fact derived from artefacts (a substance is a form impressed on matter), the era of technology, in which everything is regarded as a matter for exploitation, calculation, and consumption, is only the logical outcome of the history of Western metaphysics. The era of technology is the "reign" of the "end" of metaphysics, the final consummation of the metaphysical tradition. See Heidegger, "Überwindung der Metaphysik" in Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, and *passim* in the later works.

18. See, for example, Heidegger, "Nietzsche's Wort 'Gott ist tot'", in Heidegger, *Holzwege*, pp. 195–196, 243; Heidegger, "Überwindung der Metaphysik", in Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, p. 67, and *passim* in the later works.

19. Heidegger, *Die Frage nach dem Ding*, pp. 8, 30–34, 37–38, 73–74. This is "geschichtliches Fragen", which prepares a decision (*Entscheidung*). Cf. Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, pp. 33–39, 153.

20. See Heidegger "Wer ist Nietzsches Zarathustra?", in Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, p. 115:

Wir Heutigen sind durch die eigentümliche Vorherrschaft der neuzeitlichen Wissenschaften in den seltsamen Irrtum verstrickt, der meint, das Wissen lasse sich aus der Wissenschaft gewinnen und das Denken unterstehe der Gerichtsbarkeit der Wissenschaft. Aber das Einzige, was jeweils ein Denker zu sagen vermag, lässt sich logisch oder empirisch weder beweisen noch widerlegen.

21. See Heidegger, "Das Ende der Philosophie und die Aufgabe des Denkens", in Heidegger, *Zur Sache des Denkens*, p. 66; the seminar on "Zeit und Sein", in *Zur Sache des Denkens*, p. 56; *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, pp. 11, 28–29. Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, contains particularly clear expressions of the post-monotheist theme.

22. Heidegger, "Nietzsches Wort 'Got ist tot'", in Heidegger, *Holzwege*, pp. 193–247; "Überwindung der Metaphysik", in *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, pp. 67–95; "Wer ist Nietzsches Zarathustra?", in *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, pp. 97–122; "Die Frage nach der Technik", in *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, pp. 9–66; and *Nietzsche*. Heidegger took the idea that the "reign of technology" is connected to the metaphysics of the Will to Power from Ernst Jünger's *Der Arbeiter*. Cf. Heidegger, "Zur Seinsfrage", in *Wegmarken*, pp. 217–219. Whereas Jünger seemed to applaud the reign of the Will to Power, Heidegger saw it as the climax of the Fall, and tried to overcome it by preparing for a new advent of Being.

23. Heidegger refers to Luther on crucial points, e.g. *Sein und Zeit* p. 10. In *Was ist Metaphysik*, p. 20, he refers to St. Paul's statement that God turned the wisdom of the world (i.e. Greek philosophy) into folly.

24. In "Brief über den 'Humanismus'", Heidegger calls the Nietzschean conception of God as the highest value, and thinking in terms of values in general, "die grösste Blasphemie, die sich dem Sein gegenüber denken lässt" (Heidegger, *Wegmarken*, pp. 179–180). In *Identität und Differenz*, pp. 70–71, Heidegger opposes the traditional con-

ception of God as *causa sui* to the "Göttlicher Gott".

25. See Heidegger, "Brief über den 'Humanismus'", *Wegmarken*, pp. 145, 154; *Was ist Metaphysik?*, pp. 49-50: "Das Opfer ist der Abschied vom Seienden auf dem Gang zur Wahrung der Gunst des Seins. Das Opfer kann durch das Werken und Leisten im Seienden zwar vorbereitet und bedient, aber durch solches nie erfüllt werden...", and *passim* in the later works.

26. See Neske, Kettering (eds.) *Antwort*, pp. 23-24; Heidegger, "Nietzsches Wort 'Gott ist tot'", in Heidegger, *Holzwege*, p. 244; Heidegger, "Wozu Dichter?", in Heidegger, *Holzwege*, p. 251, 254; Heidegger, "Was heisst Denken?", in Heidegger, *Vortraege und Aufsätze*, p. 133; Heidegger, "Zeit und Sein", in Heidegger, *Zur Sache des Denkens*, pp. 9, 31-32, 44; and *passim* in the later works. This is why Heidegger's Überwindung (overcoming) of metaphysics becomes a Verwindung (coping with, as one has to cope with the loss of one's father) of the oblivion of Being in metaphysics. Cf. Heidegger, "Zur Seinsfrage", *Wegmarken*, p. 243-244.

27. See Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, p. 157: "Fragen können heisst: warten können, sogar ein Leben lang"; "Wissenschaft und Besinnung", in *Vortraege und Aufsätze*, p. 64: "Besinnung ist Gelassenheit zum Fragwürdigen". Elsewhere Heidegger defines "Gelassenheit" as an attitude to the technical world in which we simultaneously accept and refuse technical artefacts, so that we will remain receptive to the hidden meaning of things ("Offenheit für das Geheimnis"): Heidegger, *Gelassenheit*, pp. 23-24.

28. See Neske, Kettering (eds.), *Antwort*, p. 28; Heidegger, "Die Zeit des Weltbildes", *Holzwege*, pp. 103-104; "Nietzsches Wort 'Gott ist tot'", in *Holzwege*, pp. 194-195; "Wissenschaft und Besinnung", in *Vortraege und Aufsätze*, p. 66; "Brief über den 'Humanismus'", in *Wegmarken*, p. 160; "Das Ende der Philosophie", in *Zur Sache des Denkens*, pp. 66-67; Seminar on "Zeit und Sein", in *Zur Sache des Denkens*, p. 38; "Vom Wesen der Wahrheit", in *Wegmarken*, p. 97; *Beitraege zur Philosophie*, p. 421.

29. Heidegger, "Brief über den 'Humanismus'", *Wegmarken*, p. 145, 155, 165-167 ("Schickung des Seins selbst"); *Was ist Metaphysik*, p. 49. ("Gunst des Seins")

30. Heidegger, *Identität und Differenz*, p. 51: "Wer die Theologie aus gewachsener Herkunft erfahren hat, zieht es heute vor, im Bereich des Denkens von Gott zu schweigen."

31. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 1. This text, which opens with a quotation from Plato's *Sophistes*, bears no title and does not occur in the table of contents.

32. This of course makes the word 'sense' (Sinn) ambiguous. It may refer to the meaning(s) of the expression 'to be', or to the ontological status of beings (Husserl used 'Sinn' in this sense in his *Ideas I*), or to transcendental structures, implicitly grasped in the *Seinsverständnis* of *Dasein*. Heidegger defines 'Sinn' in this latter sense as "das Woraufhin des primären Entwurfs des *Verstehens von Sein*". (Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, pp. 151-161, 323-325) The third meaning of 'Sinn' is the transcendentalized version of the second, which belongs to the phenomenological theme. In "Brief über den 'Humanismus'", Heidegger uses the word 'Sinn' in yet another, post-monotheist, sense, as an equivalent for 'truth of Being' (Heidegger, *Wegmarken*, pp. 168, 172; *Was ist Metaphysik?*, p. 18).

33. Heidegger says in “Mein Weg in die Phänomenologie” that he was greatly influenced by Husserl’s *Logical Investigations* in developing the question of being. See especially Heidegger, *Zur Sache des Denkens*, p. 86, and also Heidegger’s seminar at Zähringen, *Vier Seminare*, p. 116:

Um die Frage nach dem Sinn von Sein überhaupt entfalten zu können, musste das Sein gegeben sein, um bei ihm seinen Sinn zu erfragen. Husserl’s Leistung bestand in eben dieser Vergegenwärtigung des Seins, das in der Kategorie phänomenal anwesend ist. Durch diese Leistung, fährt Heidegger fort, hatte ich endlich einen Boden: ‘Sein’ ist kein blosser Begriff, ist keine reine Abstraktion, die sich auf dem Weg der Ableitung ergeben hat.

See also Heidegger, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs*, p. 93, and *Zur Sache des Denkens*, p. 47.

34. I have argued for this Husserlian connection in detail in my “Heidegger’s Question of Being”.

35. Husserl sharply distinguishes the logical uses of ‘to be’ or ‘being’, such as identity, existence, and predication, from non-logical uses, such as in ‘what is the sense of being?’ (meaning ‘what is the sense of life?’). In Heidegger’s thought, this fundamental distinction is often blurred. For instance, Heidegger assumes that logic is somehow connected to a specific “material” ontology, so that it should be disregarded by those who want to deconstruct this ontology. In developing the question of Being in *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger sometimes suggests that the question of being is concerned with logical uses of ‘to be’, and at other times he suggests that it is concerned with the “sense” of specific manners of being, which, from a logical point of view, belong to “matter” and not to logical form. Because Heidegger does not clearly maintain Husserl’s distinction between “sensual matter” and “categorical form” (Husserl, *Sixth Logical Investigation*, §§59–62), or between material and formal categories (Husserl, *Ideas I*, §13), the question of being seems in Heidegger’s work to be concerned with both. See Section IIIA below, and my “Heidegger’s Question of Being”, §V. Although Heidegger distinguishes in §7 of *Sein und Zeit* between phenomena in the “vulgar” sense and the phenomenological phenomenon of being, it is not clear at all that the latter is purely “categorical” in Husserl’s sense. Husserl would regard the fundamental ontology of *Dasein* in *Sein und Zeit* as a material ontology that is confined to one specific region.

36. This is the argument of *Sein und Zeit* §2, which is inconclusive, as Heidegger himself observes (*Sein und Zeit* §2, p. 8). But the argument of §4, in which Heidegger infers the *ontological* primacy of *Dasein* from the *ontic* fact that there would be no sciences and ontologies without *Dasein*, is equally invalid. The primacy of *Dasein* for the development of the question of Being can best be understood from the post-monotheist perspective. See the comparison with Pascal below.

37. See Grondin, *Le tournant dans la pensée de Martin Heidegger* for a scrupulous analysis. I should add that in fact there are two different “transcendental themes” in SZ. In a *Kantian* sense of ‘transcendental’, Heidegger’s analysis of *Dasein* is a transcendental philosophy, because he assumes that all ontologies are rooted in the ontology of *Dasein* (*Sein und Zeit*, §4). In §3 of *Sein und Zeit*, however, Heidegger’s argument is transcendental in a pre-Kantian and even scholastic sense: he argues that we should elucidate the meaning of ‘to be’ in order to develop (by means of a “not deductively constructive genealogy”) the various modes of being (“Weisen von Sein”). Being is the

transcendens schlechthin, as he says on p. 38. The turn planned in *Sein und Zeit* relates the first to the second transcendental theme.

38. *Sein und Zeit*, pp. 17 ("wesenhafte Strukturen...die in jeder Seinsart des faktischen Daseins sich als seinsbestimmende durchhalten"), p. 52 ("echte Wesenserkenntnis"), pp. 199-200, and p. 231 ("Wesen des Daseins"). Like Husserl's fundamental ontology, Heidegger's analysis of *Dasein* claims to exhibit timeless fundamental structures, even though time and historicity themselves are such structures.

39. The phrase 'Das Wesen der Technik' is difficult to translate. One of the reasons is that the noun 'Wesen' (essence) is used in an active sense, as an infinitive. This is why the French translate it by 'essance' (with an 'a'). Heidegger means by 'das Wesen der Technik' the alleged fact that in our time we are unable to understand or grasp anything whatsoever except as materials for possible exploitation and calculation.

40. See Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, p. 32, where he defines the objective of the question of Being as follows:

Es gilt, das geschichtliche Dasein des Menschen und d.h. immer zugleich unser eigenstes künftiges, im Ganzen der uns bestimmten Geschichte in die Macht des ursprünglich zu eröffnenden Seins zurückzufügen; all das freilich nur in den Grenzen, innerhalb deren das Vermögen der Philosophie etwas vermag.

41. See Pöggeler, "'Historicity' in Heidegger's Late Work", p. 56; see also Pöggeler, *Der Denkweg Martin Heideggers*, pp. 36-45, 189ff.; Karl Lehman, "Christliche Geschichtserfahrung"; Klaus Held, "Grundbestimmung und Zeitkritik bei Heidegger", pp. 32, 36-37. In *Beiträge*, Heidegger defines 'Augenblick' as "das Erblitzen des Seyns" (§255, p. 409). One should not forget that 'Augenblick' was Luther's translation of 'kairos'.

42. See Heidegger, *Was ist Metaphysik*. We then experience that man is "hineingehalten in das Nichts" (p. 35), and that we can liberate ourselves from idols only by letting ourselves go into nothingness (p. 42). According to the postscript to *Was ist Metaphysik*, man is called by the voice of Being, and the courage to experience essential *Angst* opens the possibility to experience Being:

Einzig der Mensch unter allem Seienden erfährt, angerufen von der Stimme des Seins, das Wunder aller Wunder: Dass Seiendes ist. Der also in seinem Wesen in die Wahrheit des Seins Gerufene ist daher stets in einer wesentlichen Weise gestimmt. Der klare Mut zur wesenhaften Angst verbürgt die geheimnisvolle Möglichkeit der Erfahrung des Seins. (pp. 46-47)

43. In his "Brief über den 'Humanismus'", Heidegger interprets *Sein und Zeit* from the point of view of the *Kehre: Wegmarken*, pp. 159ff., 180ff. On p. 181 he says that it was the aim of *Sein und Zeit* to develop an adequate conception of *Dasein* in relation to which one might inquire as to what is *Dasein's* ontological relation to God. Cf. Heidegger, "Vom Wesen des Grundes", *Wegmarken*, p. 55n. For the turn into Being itself, see "Zur Seinsfrage", *Wegmarken*, pp. 234, 239, and the seminar on "Zeit und Sein", *Zur Sache des Denkens*, pp. 56-57 ("Verwandlung des Seins ins Ereignis"). See also *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, especially §255, and the letter to Richardson, p. xix.

44. See the letter to Richardson, pp. xix-xxi; "Brief über den 'Humanismus'" in *Wegmarken*, and *Sein und Zeit*, p. v: "Deren Weg bleibt indessen auch heute noch ein notwendiger, wenn die Frage nach dem Sein unser Dasein bewegen soll."

45. Heidegger often stresses the "multiplicity" of his thought (See the letter to Richardson, p. xxiii). But this multiplicity should be understood in a strictly post-

monotheist sense: although Being is one and simple, its “behaving” (*Verhalten*) towards us is multiple, so that our attempt to express Being in words requires polysemic language (*ibid.*). As Heidegger calls Being the “*Sache des Denkens*”, this multiple behaving of Being is called the *mehrfältige Sachverhalt* (*ibid.*). (‘*Sachverhalt*’ usually means state of affairs. But here it means the *Verhalten* of the *Sache des Denkens*.) Heidegger’s notions of multiplicity and polysemy are very different from my *critical* notion of polyvalence.

46. Heidegger says that his texts cannot be translated. And this is true, for in coining his typical polyvalent neologisms, Heidegger is drawing heavily upon the contingent resources of the German language. To take one example, ‘*Entschlossenheit*’ means both openness or opening up and being firmly resolved. Both meanings are essential to Heidegger’s post-monotheist concept of *Augenblick* as *kairos*. In a translation, the typical polyvalence of the German text will be lost, or it will be retained at the price of an unacceptable degree of artificiality. This is why Heidegger scholars should be fluent in German, and why I refer to the German texts only.

47. See Heidegger, “*Zeit und Sein*”, in *Zur Sache des Denkens*, pp. 31–32.

48. In a third, neo-Hegelian sense, oblivion of Being means that the sense of ‘Being’ which unites the fundamental structure of an epoch remains implicit. Heidegger thought that we may experience the sense of Being in our times in specific moods, such as boredom. Oblivion of being in this sense can also be cancelled by us. But Heidegger connected the neo-Hegelian theme of the history of Being (*Seinsgeschichte*) to the post-monotheist theme of a *fate* which Being “sends” us, so that his *Seinsgeschichte* is also a *Seinsgeschick*. The word-play with ‘*Geschichte*’ (history, and *also* happening) and ‘*Geschick*’ (fate *and* something sent to us) is untranslatable.

49. Heidegger rejects the formal-logical tradition because he assumes that the uses of ‘is’ in logic are connected to the Aristotelian ontology of presence. See Heidegger, “*Zeit und Sein*”, in *Zur Sache des Denkens*, p. 19; *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, p. 19; *Was ist Metaphysik?*, pp. 27–28, 36–37, 47ff.

50. See my “Heidegger’s Question of Being” for detailed argument.

51. For a critique of Paul Churchland’s eliminative materialism, see my “Absolute Network Theory”.

52. This dogma is similar to constructivism, neo-Kantianism, or “internal realism” in contemporary Anglo-Saxon philosophy and sociology of science.

53. There are several ways of doing this. See for instance Fodor, “Special Sciences”.

54. See Heidegger, “Brief über den ‘Humanismus’”, *Wegmarken*, p. 171: “Als eine Gestalt der Wahrheit gründet die Technik in der Geschichte der Metaphysik.” If, however, the neo-Hegelian *Seinsgeschichte* is also a post-monotheist *Seinsgeschick*, its “logic” will be inscrutable, because it is the logic of a *Deus Absconditus*. Cf. “*Zeit und Sein*”, in *Zur Sache des Denkens*, pp. 6 and 56; *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, p. 11.

55. The German ‘*Stimmung*’ is related to ‘*Stimme*’ (voice) and ‘*abstimmen*’ (tuning in to, attuning). This connection is lost in the English ‘mood’. Whereas according to *Sein und Zeit*, “*Stimmung*” is a primordial disclosure of the world in *Dasein*, “*Stimmung*” becomes *both* our being tuned in to the voice of post-monotheist Being *and* our experience of neo-Hegelian fundamental structures in the later writings. See for the post-monotheist sense of ‘*Stimmung*’ e.g. the postscript to *Was ist Metaphysik?* (1943),

pp. 45–47.

56. See "Die Frage nach der Technik", *Vortraege und Aufsätze*, p. 31, where Heidegger says of the reign of technology (*das Wesen der Technik*): "Wo dieses herrscht, vertreibt es jede andere Möglichkeit der Entbergung." This is patently false, although it may require a specific form of vigilance in order to protect other ways of "revealing" beings. Although I reject Heidegger's neo-Hegelian theme, I suppose that his works may be fruitful if taken as an exhortation to such a form of vigilance.

57. Compare Nietzsche's thesis that everything is will to power, or Marx's thesis that everything human is an expression of class interests. In fact, Heidegger's neo-Hegelian stance may be seen as an alternative to that of Marx, which in the thirties was regarded as a great danger to German culture. There is much more of a discussion with Marxism in the later Heidegger than the surface of Heidegger's texts reveal. In 1932, for instance, Heidegger stressed the need to "transcend Marxism" (*Vom Wesen der Wahrheit*, p. 325).

58. Heidegger, "Die Frage der Technik", *Vortraege und Aufsätze*, pp. 19ff.

59. Totalitarianism in this sense is what Heidegger has in common with, in Paul Ricoeur's phrase, the "three masters of suspicion": Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. It is impossible to discuss with orthodox totalitarians, because their assumption of unconscious all-embracing fundamental structures (of our society, our age, or within our personalities) is immune to empirical falsification and because it implies that the real significance of what we say and do is globally (and not only locally) different from what we think it is.

60. Heidegger shared Nietzsche's contempt for democracy. He thought that democracy would "lead to a loss of human greatness". In his first lectures on Nietzsche (1937), Heidegger wrote that democracy would become "the historical death" of Europe (*Nietzsche: Der Wille zur Macht als Kunst*, p. 193).

61. Cf. Löwith, *Heidegger*, p. 233:

Was aber allem von Heidegger je Gesagten hintergründig zugrunde liegt und viele aufhorchen und hinhorchen lässt, ist ein Ungesagtes: das religiöse Motiv, das sich zwar vom christlichen Glauben abgelöst hat, aber gerade in seiner dogmatisch ungebundenen Unbestimmtheit um so mehr diejenigen anspricht, die nicht mehr gläubige Christen sind, aber doch religiös sein möchten.

62. According to many commentators, it is one of Heidegger's great "discoveries", in *Sein und Zeit*, that the theoretical attitude is not fundamental, and that the world is revealed to us primarily in moods and pre-theoretical understanding (see *Sein und Zeit* on *Befindlichkeit* and *Verstehen*). Now this discovery is a valid one if one merely claims that *de facto* the theoretical attitude is based on and has developed from something more "primordial". But Heidegger also seems to think that his discovery limits the *validity* of theoretical scientific claims, and that knowledge by means of "moods" is not only *de facto* more fundamental, but also *de iure* prior to and independent from discursive thought and scientific knowledge. However, this does not follow at all. The question whether one should acknowledge moods or rather rational argument as the final arbiter of one's philosophical convictions is a matter of decision, and the option one chooses has great moral and epistemic implications.

63. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 38.

64. Heidegger, "Brief über den 'Humanismus'", *Wegmarken*, pp. 150, 155.
65. Heidegger, "Brief über den 'Humanismus'", *Wegmarken*, p. 154.
66. E.g. Heidegger, "Zur Seinsfrage", *Wegmarken*, pp. 235, 243; *Zur Sache des Denkens*, p. 56; "Was heisst Denken?", *Vortraege und Aufsätze*, pp. 126, 128; "Nietzsches Wort 'Got ist tot'", *Holzwege*, p. 244; "Zur Seinsfrage", *Wegmarken*, p. 235.
67. Heidegger would reply: "the worse for our language", which allegedly is corrupted by the ontology of presence anyhow. See *Zur Sache des Denkens*, pp. 25, 27, 54. But what I am arguing is that there can be *no* language in which we might meaningfully celebrate Being, whereas Heidegger suggests that there can be such a language. See especially *Unterwegs zur Sprache* and "Brief über den 'Humanismus'" in *Wegmarken*. According to the letter to Richardson, p. xxiii, a "saying" which responds to Being does not require a new language, but only a changed relationship to the essence of the existing language ("ein gewandeltes Verhältnis zum Wesen der alten [Sprache]").
68. Although he very much stresses the "questioning" and non-propositional nature of his thinking, one cannot interpret Heidegger as making no "cognitive" claims at all. The same is true of traditional theology.
69. According to Heidegger, *Zur Sache des Denkens*, p. 54, all our language is "metaphysical". Cf. *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, p. 19.
70. The neologism in the section title is inspired by Jürgen Habermas's coinage of "nivellierende Abstraktion".
71. Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, p. 28: "Russland und Amerika sind beide, metaphysisch gesehen, dasselbe." Cf. pp. 34-35.
72. See, for instance, Heidegger, "Wer ist Nietzsches Zarathustra?", *Vortraege und Aufsätze*, p. 117: "Die Geschäftigkeit des Widerlegenwollens gelangt aber nie auf den Weg eines Denkers. Sie gehört in jene Kleingeisterei, deren Auslassungen die Öffentlichkeit zu ihrer Unterhaltung bedarf." Cf. Heidegger, "Brief über den 'Humanismus'", *Wegmarken*, p. 167: "Alles Widerlegen im Felde des wesentlichen Denkens ist töricht."
73. *Holzwege* are trails in the forest used by lumbermen or animals, trails which often do not lead anywhere. This is why the German 'Holzweg' also means *wrong track*. Heidegger used the word in order to describe the difficult "ways" of his thought and, perhaps, to suggest that a thinker should be at home in the labyrinth of thought as foresters and lumbermen are at home in the labyrinth of forest trails: *Holzwege*, p. 3. I am using the expression ironically, to designate the fact that the post-monotheist strategy must be hidden (it must use forest trails) in order to be successful.
74. In German, 'Wandlung' also refers to the moment of transsubstantiation in the Catholic Mass, provoked by the words of the consecration. Heidegger uses 'Wandlung' both in a neo-Hegelian and in a post-monotheist sense.
75. Heidegger himself draws an analogy with negative theology: *Zur Sache des Denkens*, p. 51.
76. It is common in philosophical theology and moral theory to claim that one possesses a special extra-perceptual organ which enables one to grasp and verify Higher Truths, which remain concealed from ordinary mortals. Heidegger seems to claim such an organ for himself and his followers:
 Wer für das Erblicken des Gebens einer solchen Gabe an den Menschen, für das Schicken eines so Geschickten keinen Sinn hat, wird die Rede vom Seinsgeschick nie verstehen, so

wenig wie der von Natur Blinde je erfahren kann, was Licht und Farbe sind". (Letter to Richardson, p. xxiii)

Of course, the analogy with (color-)blindness does not hold. For in the case of (color-)blindness we have been able to discover the physical causes for this deviation from normal perceptual abilities. There are, I suppose, no similar bodily causes for "religious blindness" or for blindness for Being. The stratagem of the *special organ for higher truths* (or of a privileged relation to a higher reality) is inherent in many religious traditions. One finds it in Plato and Luther. Husserl's doctrine of a special phenomenological "intuition" may have been another source of inspiration for Heidegger in this respect.

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