

VERITAS

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# 15. Heidegger, Dilthey, and 'the Being-Question': Towards a Critical Appraisal of Heidegger's Use of Hermeneutic Phenomenology<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

In his 1925 lecture course *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, Heidegger tells his students:

As superior as his analyses in the particular certainly are [in *Ideen I* and *II*], Husserl does not advance beyond Dilthey. However, at least as I [Heidegger] see it, my guess is that even though Dilthey did not raise the question of being and did not even have the means to do so, the tendency to do so was alive in him. (*HCT* 125)<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This essay is a revised and extended version of a paper, under the title 'Dilthey, Heidegger, and Levinas', delivered at a Conference on 'Phenomenology and Transcendence' in Nottingham University (2 September 2005). I wish to thank the participants of that conference, in particular Branko Klun, Felix O'Murchadh, James McGuirk and Regina Swartz, for their interest in and kind reception of that paper.

<sup>2</sup> M. Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, tr. T. Kisiel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985); M. Heidegger, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs, Gesamtausgabe (GA)* vol. 20, ed. P. Jaeger (1979); M. Heidegger, *Lecture Course, Marburg 1925*. Henceforth abbreviated as *HCT*.

## Heidegger, Dilthey and 'the Being-Question'

In this paper, I want to take seriously Heidegger's *disclaimer* to his students that he is doing something new with the tradition of phenomenology and phenomenological research inaugurated by Husserl, and deal with his claim that *he is doing something new* with the tradition of hermeneutic-phenomenological research inaugurated by Dilthey.<sup>3</sup> I intend to demonstrate that if we follow Heidegger *philosophically* down the path of his appropriation of Dilthey's manner of thinking, then it becomes quite clear that it is Dilthey (and not Husserl, nor Aristotle) who is Heidegger's real philosophical mentor in Heidegger's so-called 'phenomenological decade' of 1917–27.<sup>4</sup> This paper in fact makes a stronger claim; it argues that Heidegger uses *implicitly* central features of Dilthey's hermeneutic-phenomenological method of enquiry, in particular Dilthey's interest in the experience of language, in order to *correct* Husserl's manner of phenomenological reflection: that is to say, Heidegger uses Dilthey to read Husserl *against* Husserl. This is why Husserl could see and did see (much to his disappointment) both overt and covert attacks on his own particular position in philosophy and phenomenological research in the unfinished text of Heidegger's *Being and Time*,<sup>5</sup> whether that author inscribed

<sup>3</sup> Assessing the extent to which Heidegger develops Husserl's position in phenomenology, or the extent to which Husserl either accurately or inaccurately understands Heidegger's position in phenomenology, therefore, will not be of primary interest in this article. Others have attempted this. Cf. Burt C. Hopkins, 'The Husserl–Heidegger Confrontation and the Essential Possibility of Phenomenology: Edmund Husserl, *Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology and the Confrontation with Heidegger*', *Husserl Studies* 17 (2001), pp. 125–48.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. T. Sheehan, 'General Introduction. Husserl and Heidegger: The Making and Unmaking of a Relationship', in E. Husserl, *Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology and the Confrontation with Heidegger (1927–1931): The 'Encyclopaedia Britannica' Article, The Amsterdam Lectures, 'Phenomenology and Anthropology' and Husserl's Marginal Notes in 'Being and Time' and 'Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics'*, tr. and ed. T. Sheehan and R. E. Palmer (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Press, 1997), pp. 1–32.

<sup>5</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, tr. J. Maquarrie and E. Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962, 2000). Henceforth abbreviated as *BT*.

such attacks there wittingly, or not.<sup>6</sup> The phenomenological manner of thinking advanced by Heidegger in *Being and Time*, therefore, is both better read and better evaluated in terms of its appropriation of Dilthey's manner of thinking than in terms of a result of any philosophical engagement with Husserl in *Auseinandersetzung*, as several commentators and critics, including Heidegger himself, profess.

There are three sections in this paper. The first section outlines Heidegger's general appropriation of some tenets of Dilthey's expansive thought that are most relevant to an evaluation of Heidegger's overall 'path of thinking' about 'the Being-Question'. The second section reconstructs Heidegger's specific deployment of Dilthey's hermeneutic method in the formulation of 'the Being-question' and its relation to *Dasein* in *Being and Time*.<sup>7</sup> The final section contains an evaluation, *pace* Levinas, of Heidegger's partial and highly selective use of Dilthey's idea

<sup>6</sup> 'In order to come to a clear-headed and definitive position on Heideggerian philosophy, I devoted two months to studying *Being and Time*, as well as his more recent writings. I arrived at the distressing conclusion that philosophically I have nothing to do with this Heideggerian profundity, with this brilliant unscientific genius; that Heidegger's criticism [of my work], both open and veiled, is based upon a gross misunderstanding [of my work]; that he may be involved in the formation of a philosophical system of the kind which I have always considered my life's work to make forever impossible. Everyone except me has realised this for a long time.' E. Husserl, 'Letter to Alexander Pfänder, January 6, 1931', tr. B. Hopkins, in Husserl, *Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology and the Confrontation with Heidegger (1917-1931)*, Appendix 2, p. 482.

<sup>7</sup> Heidegger's use of hermeneutics in *Being and Time* continues to baffle commentators. According to one commentator: 'It is noteworthy then, that *Being and Time* does so little to clarify the nature of hermeneutics, so little to explain to the puzzled reader how ontology could be a matter of hermeneutic interpretation.' W. Blattner, 'Ontology, the A Priori, and the Primacy of Practice' in S. G. Crowell and J. Malpas (eds), *Transcendental Heidegger* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), pp. 10-27 (p. 24). Once Heidegger's appropriation of Dilthey's hermeneutic manner of thinking is understood, however, this part of Heidegger's hermeneutic philosophy is less puzzling.

of hermeneutic phenomenology in the elaboration of 'the Being-Question'.

### Heidegger's General Appropriation of Dilthey's Manner of Thinking

It is well known that Heidegger's development of Dilthey's historical-hermeneutic approach in the direction 'the Being-question' (*die Seinsfrage*) and its relation to *Dasein* in the 1920s usurped, most controversially, Husserl's entire idea of transcendental phenomenology.<sup>8</sup> Heidegger, however, was not entirely committed in his own retrieval of 'the question of the meaning of Being' to continuing into the early decades of the twentieth century in philosophy all of the essential elements or features initiated in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century by the Historical School of Thought.<sup>9</sup> On the contrary, it is arguably the case, as Philip Rosemann has shown, that Heidegger's philosophical position is so decidedly against our ability to take, or to reach the question of the meaning of Being as a genuinely historically conditioned question at all, that his 'path of thinking' (*Denkweg*) about 'the Being-question' displays a

<sup>8</sup> I. M. Fehér, 'Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, *Lebensphilosophie*: Heidegger's Confrontation with Husserl, Dilthey, and Jaspers' in T. J. Kisiel and J. van Buren (eds), *Reading Heidegger from the Start: Essays in His Earliest Thought* (New York: State University of New York, 1994), pp. 73-89 (pp. 87-8). Cf., also, C. R. Bambach, *Heidegger, Dilthey, and the Crisis of Historicism* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1995). Cf., also, Heidegger's remarks on the 'lack of history' that characterizes Husserl's phenomenology and the task of 'activating' and retrieving 'the genuine sense of the past' in phenomenology in his 'Wilhelm Dilthey's Research and the Struggle for a Historical Worldview (1925)', tr. C. Bambach, in M. Heidegger, *Supplements: From the Earliest Essays to 'Being and Time' and Beyond*, ed. J. van Buren (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), pp. 147-76, esp. p. 175.

<sup>9</sup> W. Brock, *An Introduction to Contemporary German Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), pp. 20-3.

profoundly ahistorical understanding of history.<sup>10</sup> Heidegger was not quite interested in developing all of the features of Dilthey's particularly expansive philosophy of life (*Lebensphilosophie*) either.<sup>11</sup> According to Dilthey, 'the religious thinker, the artist, and the philosopher create on the basis of lived experience.'<sup>12</sup> Heidegger, *qua* philosopher, however, appears to be interested only in those (lived) experiences that say something to him about the question of the meaning of Being itself and its relation to *Dasein*, by which Heidegger means, the awareness of the 'there' (*Da*) of 'Being' (*Sein*), and in which I find myself implicated as a being in Being and as a being who has some implicit 'understanding of Being' (*Seinsverständnis*). This 'understanding of Being', Heidegger notes in *Being and Time*, extends not only to oneself and the world but also to one's fellow human being.<sup>13</sup> It is, nevertheless, an intrinsic feature of our experience of being a being in Being that such an experience, like all of our experiences (*Erlebnisse*), as Dilthey argued and as Heidegger agrees, cannot but be lived (*er-lebt*) and somewhat understood. Thus Heidegger concludes, pushing Dilthey's manner of thinking towards a topic that Dilthey himself did not address, that '[the meaning of] Being can be something unconceptualised [*unbegriffen*], but it never completely fails to be understood [*es ist nie völlig unverstanden*]' (BT 228).

The centrality of what Heidegger calls 'the hermeneutic of the facticity of *Dasein*' in the formulation and elaboration of 'the question of the meaning of Being' in *Being and Time*, then,

<sup>10</sup> P. W. Rosemann, 'Heidegger's Transcendental History', *Journal of History of Philosophy* 40:4 (2002), pp. 501–23. Cf., also, Heidegger, *HCT* p. 138, as clear evidence that 'historical research' is not and *cannot*, according to Heidegger himself, be his concern in his 'genuine repetition' of the question of the meaning of Being.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Heidegger's remarks on Dilthey's philosophy of 'life' in *Being and Time*, § 10, pp. 72–3.

<sup>12</sup> W. Dilthey, *Poetry and Experience: Selected Works*, vol. 5 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 225.

<sup>13</sup> Scant treatment of one's own fellow human being is given in *Being and Time*, or in other works after that, by Heidegger.

clearly indicates that Heidegger employs *some version* of Dilthey's manner of thinking in his own philosophical researches into 'the question of the meaning of Being'. It also indicates, it seems to me, some direct influence of Dilthey's manner of thinking on Heidegger's own effort to find new words and new meanings of words that Dilthey was unaware of, such as, for instance, the very term *Dasein* itself.<sup>14</sup> In Dilthey's well-known triad, human experience (*Erlebnis*) contains implicitly some form of understanding (*Verstehen*) and that understanding is completed, and raised to a higher level of meaning in expression (*Ausdruck*). 'Each of these consequent phases', therefore, 'is a step in a creative process', but what remains in this process, as de Boer notes, is 'the orientation to the individual, which is not 'crossed out', but 'raised' and 'intensified' [in its meaning].'<sup>15</sup> This, of course, occurs in the interpretation of any thing, for, it 'too, is tuned to the individual, whether this be a psychical experience, an act, a literary work or an object of culture'.<sup>16</sup> Heidegger, however, seems to apply this general triadic-hermeneutic model of understanding to his own *methodological* use of the very term *Dasein* itself – whether hyphenated as *Da-Sein*, or not – for, in *Heidegger's interpretation* of that term, *Dasein* expresses the meaning of its own experience and its own '(pre-)understanding of Being', even though this new meaning that Heidegger gives to and sees in (t)his term '*Dasein*' never featured, hitherto, in the German language.<sup>17</sup> From all of this, therefore, I think that we can conclude, and conclude in fairness to Heidegger, that Heidegger is only interested in those tenets and themes that he found in Dilthey's expansive writings (or in anybody else's

<sup>14</sup> BT § 7c, 'The Preliminary Conception of Phenomenology', pp. 58–63.

<sup>15</sup> T. de Boer, *The Rationality of Transcendence: Studies in the Philosophy of Emmanuel Lévinas* (Amsterdam: Giegen, 1997), p. 174.

<sup>16</sup> De Boer, *The Rationality of Transcendence*, p. 174.

<sup>17</sup> Schelling, for example, does talk about God as *als reines Dass* and Brentano wrote a book *Vom Dasein des Gottes* but such would be unintelligible in the context of Heidegger's meaning and use of such terms in his philosophy of *die Seinsfrage* and its relation to *Dasein*.

writings for that matter that he happened either to encounter or to choose to read) that would help him *methodologically* 'to raise anew the question of the meaning of Being' and its relation to *Dasein*, his topic in philosophy, his task in phenomenology and phenomenological research, and his contribution to hermeneutic phenomenology. If this is the case, however, then Heidegger's famous retort in the Introduction to *Being and Time* about *Husserlian* 'phenomenology', that 'higher than actuality stands possibility' – reiterated in his 1969 Supplement to 'My Way to Phenomenology (1962)'<sup>18</sup> – is really being directed *against* Husserl's concept of phenomenology, as the latter excludes any such possibility, and in favour of a possibility inherent within *Dilthey's* concept of phenomenology, though this is not explicitly stated as such by Heidegger.

There is, then, a general but nonetheless definite conceptual ambiguity, to which I would like to draw attention, in Heidegger's use of the terms 'phenomenology' and 'descriptive psychology' in *Being and Time*, 'My Way to Phenomenology', and especially in his 1925 lectures on *The History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena* where Heidegger portrays a more intimate philosophical connection between Dilthey's 'Descriptive Psychology' and Husserl's 'Descriptive Psychology', and speaks of an 'an inner kinship' between Husserl's manner of thinking in the *Logical Investigations* (1900–01) and Dilthey's manner of thinking in his 1894 Academy essay 'Ideas towards a Descriptive and Analytic Psychology' (HCT 24).<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> M. Heidegger, 'My Way to Phenomenology' in Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, tr. J. Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1972; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 74–82 (p. 82).

<sup>19</sup> Heidegger even *stresses*, almost in the same breath, the point that 'the decisive move' towards the 'idea of a *descriptive psychology*' that begins in Franz Brentano's *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* (1874) not only 'had a profound impact on Dilthey [in the 1894 Academy essay]' but also that 'the truly decisive aspect of Brentano's way of questioning is to be seen in the fact that Brentano became the teacher of Husserl, the subsequent founder of phenomenological research' (HCT 20–3).

It is true that both Dilthey and Husserl (and Brentano of the Vienna period) called their work 'descriptive psychology', but identity in terms is not equivalent to identity in concepts. There is no 'inner kinship', whatsoever, between Dilthey's manner of thinking adopted in the Academy essay of 1894 and Husserl's manner of thinking adopted in the *Logical Investigations*. Any 'inner kinship' between both forms of analyses is, at most, negative in character; that is to say, both Dilthey and Husserl's forms of analyses do not avow the applicability of the method of the natural sciences in the study of the meaning of experiences that are characteristically lived by humans – the experiences of human normative acts of logical reasoning *as such* being Husserl's selected topic of investigation, the whole of 'life' being Dilthey's topic of investigation. Such 'an inner kinship' between Dilthey's analysis of (lived) experiences from the point of view of their structural totality and inherent historical (and linguistic) depth-dimension in 'Ideas towards a Descriptive and Analytic Psychology' and Husserl's analysis of the (lived) experiences of a normative logical consciousness *as such* from a descriptive-eidetic psychological point of view, as presented in the second volume of the *Logical Investigations*, is 'an inner kinship' that is entirely fabricated by Heidegger. This is why Dilthey was particularly impressed by the first volume of the *Logical Investigations*, the *Prolegomena*, wherein 'naturalism in the particular form of *psychologism*, specifically psychologism in the particular field of logic' (HCT 116) is refuted, and yet less than impressed by the descriptive-eidetic-psychological analysis of the experiences of (abstract, ahistorical) *logical consciousness as such* in the second volume, comprising, in two parts, the Six Logical Investigations, and which, as Heidegger notes in 'My Way to Phenomenology', are 'three times as long' as volume one.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, this is why Dilthey is correct to compare in his letter to Husserl, alluded to and quoted by Heidegger in his 1925 lectures, 'their [Husserl–Dilthey] work to boring into a mountain from opposite sides until they break through and

<sup>20</sup> Heidegger, 'My Way to Phenomenology', p. 76.

meet each other' (HCT 24). But their work bore into the same mountain (=Erlebnisse) from opposite sides, and when they meet each other, it is Husserl who must break through to Dilthey, not Dilthey to Husserl.

Dilthey begins with what Husserl leaves out, namely, with the lived nature of experiences themselves in all their particularity and totality as founded and rooted in historical, linguistic, social, personal, temporal and mundane existence. Meaning is to be found within those experiences themselves, and not by way of either factual inner perception or eidetic intuitive inspection of intentional consciousness and its contents in inner reflection, as advocated by the Brentanean–Husserlian school of descriptive a priori psychology from about the mid-1870s onwards.

Dilthey's starting point is a simple starting point, but it is important to note that it is a standpoint that resides *outside* of 'the natural standpoint' (*die natürliche Einstellung*) as depicted by Husserl. According to Dilthey, human experiences are characterized by a desire to understand such experiences, and when we understand the meaning of such experiences we endeavour to express that meaning in language, which itself is a product of human activity and human interactivity. Things (*Dinge*), from Dilthey's point of view, therefore, cannot be regarded simply as lying-there-in-stock (*vorhanden*) with an existential and essential meaning, whether attention is directed towards them, or not, as fostered in the thesis of the natural standpoint because the very meaning of those things presented to our experiences necessarily depends upon the particular way in which the meaning of such things is interpreted and articulated *in* our experiences of them. The chair at the top of the wedding table facing the bride, the electric chair awaiting the condemned man, the wheelchair presented to the patient recovering from an operation, are never 'initially' seen as chairs that are somehow first given as things given to acts of outer perceptual-sense experience, and which later obtain their meaning via the achievements of the sense-bestowing activity of one's own actual intentional consciousness (as Husserl's analysis of

'thing-perception' in *Ideas I* demonstrates). This is 'an *unnatural*' way for a human being to experience the world, even through identifiable acts of outer perceptual-sense experience, as Heidegger stresses in *The History of the Concept of Time*, following Dilthey. The (hypo)thesis of the natural standpoint, nevertheless, is *a* way of looking at the world, and *a* way of interpreting the world of things given to outer perceptual-sense experience from a decidedly non-human point of view, no more and no less; and it is a way that depends upon the linguistic expressions and historical evolution of the natural-scientific community, as well as metaphysical hypotheses about the nature of the human being in that world of things. Our actual experiences – and experiences are things that cannot but be lived – however, are simply not things given to acts of outer perceptual-sense experience (*Sein als Ding*) or reducible to (conscious) experience immanently perceived (*Sein als Erlebnis*), the twin poles of Husserl's 'Being-talk' (*Seinsrede*) in the transcendental reduction (*Ideas I*, §46). This is exactly what Heidegger is alluding to, without mentioning Husserl's *Ideas I* by name, when he concludes in *Being and Time*:

Our everyday environmental experiencing [*Erfahren*], which remains directed ontically and ontologically towards entities within the world, is not the sort of thing that can present [the lived experiences of] Dasein in an ontically primordial manner for ontological analysis. Similarly our immanent perception of experiences [*Erlebnissen*] fails to provide a leading-clue [*Leitfaden*] which is ontologically adequate. (BT 226)

A different way of addressing and explicating the meaning of experiences – and not just the reflective consciousness of experiences – therefore, is needed in phenomenology and phenomenological research.<sup>21</sup> This is Heidegger's critical conclusion against Husserl, as it had been Dilthey's too, and before

21 Cf. Heidegger, 'My Way to Phenomenology', p. 77.

Heidegger. A different leading clue is needed, if we are to go back to the things themselves of experiences (*zu den Sachen selbst*). And just as Dilthey had found before Heidegger, Heidegger too finds in our actual experience of language and hermeneutics a much more reliable 'rod and staff' (*Stab und Stecken*)<sup>22</sup> – though Heidegger says this of his reading of Brentano's 1862 doctoral thesis on Aristotle's metaphysics – in the reading of any text in philosophy, including his reading of 'the master's' [Husserl's] texts.

Heidegger, therefore, had solved his 'main difficulty' (*eine Hauptschwierigkeit*) concerning how the manner of reflection that called itself 'phenomenology' is to be conducted, and with which he struggled for many years, as he recalls in 'My Way to Phenomenology', when reading and rereading Husserl's texts in phenomenology, both the *Logical Investigations* and *Ideen I* and later *Ideen II*.<sup>23</sup> The way to do phenomenology is to hear what is expressed in the words themselves. In Heidegger's way of doing phenomenology, then, 'hearing' what is expressed in the written word must re-place, and so, dis-place 'seeing' that which is deposited in actual intentional consciousness and its objectivities. This includes a fortiori, 'seeing' that which is retrievable in and through consciousness's reflection upon itself, as Husserl had stipulated in his way of doing phenomenology.<sup>24</sup> Or, perhaps more accurately speaking, for Heidegger, it is only through hearing what is expressed in the written words that seeing what is talked about is made present, in an analogous manner to the way in which the apostles recognized Jesus *only after he spoke*, i.e. upon hearing his words they saw him (though the analogy cannot be pressed too far here in

22 Heidegger, 'My Way to Phenomenology', p. 74; English translation 'chief help and guide' modified.

23 Heidegger, 'My Way to Phenomenology', p. 76.

24 Heidegger, of course, will give this 'living now' of *Ideen I*, § 77 a distinctively Kierkegaardian temporal interpretation on top of his appropriated Diltheyan-historical interpretation, with the net result of overriding 'historicality' by 'temporality' in Division Two of *Being and Time*.

Heidegger's method for the authority of the text itself is the final court of appeal, not the author of the text). Here, then, Heidegger's alignment to Dilthey's hermeneutic starting point overwrites *methodologically* the Husserlian starting point in phenomenology and phenomenological research, with Husserl's and Brentano's idea of 'descriptive psychology', as a matter of fact, 'losing in competition' (*Besiegtwerden im Wettstreit*), if I may borrow a phrase from Brentano's Vienna lectures in *Descriptive Psychology*.<sup>25</sup> All of this, therefore, both confirms and advances Dilthey's conclusion that 'because our mental life finds its fullest and most complete expression only through language, explication finds completion and fullness only in the interpretation of the written testimonies of human life'.<sup>26</sup>

The following commentary that Heidegger makes in his 1925 lectures, purportedly, on Husserl's theory of expression and perception in the Sixth Logical Investigation, '§37 The Fulfilling Function of Perception: The Ideal of Ultimate Fulfilment' (*Logical Investigations*, 761–64) bears testimony to the extent to which Heidegger has already incorporated and internalized this methodological switch and leap (*Sprung*) in his critical reading of Husserl's texts, for, as Heidegger explains to his students:

It is . . . a matter of fact that our simplest perceptions and constitutive states are already *expressed*, even more, are *interpreted* in a certain way. What is primary and originary here? [Heidegger rhetorically asks, and he answers.] It is not so much that we see the object and things . . . but rather the reverse, we see what *one says* about the matter. (*HCT* 56)

25 F. Brentano, *Descriptive Psychology*, tr. and ed. B. Müller (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 5–6.

26 W. Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. III, p. 217; 'The Hermeneutics of the Human Sciences' in K. Mueller-Vollmer (ed.), *The Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present* (New York: Continuum, 1985; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 148–64.

Because Heidegger situates the above commentary as being a commentary on Husserl's theory of expression, some commentators have been led to believe – wrongly, in my opinion – that here Heidegger is unearthing something that is embryonic in Husserl's thought (in particular in the Sixth Logical Investigation).<sup>27</sup> Such is clearly not the case. Rather, what Heidegger is defending above is a version of Dilthey's views on the priority of the way linguistic acts of meaning contain the highest step in the expression of meaning in human experience – including the expression of meaning that is contained and present in, at the most basic and simplest level of meaningful acts of perception, the perception of things given to outer perceptual-sense experience – and not Husserl's position in the Sixth Logical Investigation, for whom 'Signitive acts constitute

27 Cf. T. Kisiel, 'On the Way to *Being and Time*: Introduction to the translation of Heidegger's *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitsbegriffs*' in T. Kisiel, *Heidegger's Way of Thought: Critical and Interpretative Signposts* (London & New York: Continuum, 2002), pp. 36–63 (p. 38). Cf., also, D. Moran, 'Heidegger's Critique of Husserl's and Brentano's Accounts of Intentionality', *Inquiry* 43 (2000), pp. 39–66 (p. 58). Kisiel does recognize in his earlier study *Genesis* (1993), nevertheless, that 'It is well known that the [Husserlian] phenomenological "principle of all principles" gives the primacy to intuition [over expression]. Less noted [by Husserl?] in this context is the inseparable intentional relation between intuition and expression, that is, between intuitive fulfilment and *empty* intending. All of our experiences, beginning with our most direct perceptions, are from the start already expressed, indeed interpreted [as in Heidegger's Diltheyan inspired reading of Husserl]. This Diltheyan emphasis of the intentional structures described by Husserl in the *Logical Investigations* is the seminal insight of Heidegger's hermeneutic breakthrough in 1919' (*Genesis*, p. 49). This Diltheyan emphasis, however, on the way 'immediate experience . . . is already contextured like a language' (*Genesis*, p. 49) is precisely one that is *not described by Husserl at all* in the *Logical Investigations*, nor could he or does he describe it so because of Husserl's unphenomenological theory of language (e.g. animating marks on a page) and his assertion of the way the description (the linguistic sign) of the intended object gives away to the intended object itself *and drops out* in the immediacy of intuitive fulfilment in consciousness in Husserl's theory.

*the lowest step: they possess no fullness whatever*' (§ 37, 761, my emphasis).<sup>28</sup> It is this very fact of our linguistic experience – and language is an experience – whereupon meaning is expressed in and through the words we use and where meaning is 'fulfilled' and 'completed', however not fully articulated or fully capable of articulation, such meaning is therein, that Dilthey uses against Husserl's phenomenological manner of proceeding. It is not a phenomenological fact, as Husserl leads us to believe in the Sixth Logical Investigation, that linguistic acts of meaning in themselves are 'empty' intending acts requiring 'intended objects' – whatever ontological status the latter objects may have – to complete their meaning. (Nor is it a phenomenological fact of linguistic experience that words *qua* marks on a page are animated by a sense-bestowing intentional consciousness, as Husserl suggests in his theory of language, and which he transfers over to his theory of perception in his objection to Brentano's understanding of 'physical phenomena' as 'immanent sense data' e.g. as 'reds' rather than as the red of the rose, or as 'sounds' rather than as the song of the singer, i.e. as sensations actively interpreted through objectivating acts.)<sup>29</sup>

28 If Heidegger had actually provided this passage from the *Logical Investigations*, in addition to his 'gloss' or 'interpretation' of that passage, his students would have been more able to see that Heidegger is merely 'alluding' to Husserl's position and 'critiquing' that position as well. It is worth remembering what Schleiermacher writes about the literary device of 'allusions'. He notes: 'Allusions always involve a second meaning, and if a reader does not catch the second meaning along with the first, he misses one of the intended meanings, even though he may be able to follow the literal one. At the same time, to claim that there is an allusion where there actually is none is also an error. An allusion occurs when an additional meaning is so entwined with the main train of thought that the author believes it would be easily recognised by another person.' F. Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics and Criticism*, tr. A. Bowie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 23.

29 'I hear a *barrel organ* – the tones sensed are interpreted *as those of a barrel organ*' (Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, p. 860). 'I do not see colour sensations but coloured things; I do not hear sound sensations but the song of the singer' (Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, p. 569). Husserl's view on the sense-bestowing (*Sinngebung*) function of the



In the above passage from the Sixth Logical Investigation that Heidegger is alluding to in his 1925 lecture course, therefore, Heidegger is really 'correcting', rather than 'elucidating' (for his students) Husserl's theory of expression and perception. And Heidegger is correcting Husserl's position on phenomenological grounds, or, more precisely stated, on grounds that are based upon our very own experience of language itself – just as Dilthey had corrected Husserl beforehand (but of which Husserl appears to have taken no notice). Heidegger is certainly not 'developing' *philosophically* prefigured possibilities inherent in Husserl's Sixth Logical Investigation. Heidegger, after all, is not an authority on the interpretation of anybody else's text, or, for that matter, his own texts, even if, as commentators have noted, 'Heidegger himself has been at pains to point this out, [ . . . that] his hermeneutical phenomenology already finds its foundation in Husserl's Sixth Investigation Section 37' and that he is engaging 'in *Auseinandersetzung* with Husserl, his mentor in the phenomenological decade 1917–1927.'<sup>30</sup> If Heidegger is

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intentional activity of consciousness in the constitution of the meaning of objects presented *via* acts of outer perceptual-sense experience, however, is *Husserl's theory* (and not Brentano's), and it is a theory which Husserl derives from his view of the way in which consciousness animates and interprets the meaning of a word ('marks' on a page), which he transposes onto his analysis and understanding of the meaning of perception. Cf. de Boer, *The Development of Husserl's Thought*, tr. T. Plantinga (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978), p. 163, and D. Moran, *Edmund Husserl: Founder of Phenomenology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), p. 128. Dilthey, as was well known at the time, was highly critical of just such a theory because it is based upon an *unphenomenological* understanding of the experience of language (as Dilthey argues *against* Husserl).

<sup>30</sup> Moran, 'Heidegger's Critique of Husserl's and Brentano's Accounts of Intentionality', p. 58. Commentators on the Husserl–Heidegger *philosophical* relationship should really take with a pinch of salt both the later and the early remarks conveyed in Heidegger's self-interpretation that Husserl is the one with whom he engages philosophically in *Auseinandersetzung*. If we take *Auseinandersetzung*, with Derrida, to mean 'a debate that harries and worries things so as to question them or call them into question, *most closely*, efficiently, and effectively, *in effect*,

correcting Husserl's position on *phenomenological* grounds of the experience of language, as Dilthey did before him, and if this is what Heidegger is doing with (Husserlian) phenomenology in his 1925 lectures, then is there not a case to be made for the argument that it is Dilthey, and not Husserl, contrary to the Heidegger's own self-interpretation and self-evaluation, who is Heidegger's real *philosophical* mentor during Heidegger's so-called phenomenological decade of 1917–27?<sup>31</sup>

It seems to me that this case can be made, and that this case can be made at two levels, first at a general level of discussion about Heidegger's philosophy and second at a very particular level of discussion of Heidegger's elaboration of 'the Being-Question' in *Being and Time*. At a general level, Heidegger's declared interest and explicit stress in *Being and Time*, and in many other earlier and later works, on what is *said* about Being and on what is *written* about Being as a matter that both contains and raises both the meaning and our understanding of life-experiences to a higher level of comprehension – however unnoticed such an 'understanding of Being' may be for some, or however actively forgotten such an issue may be for contemporary philosophers, such as Dilthey, Husserl, Scheler, Nietzsche and the likes – testifies to Heidegger's practical adherence to Dilthey's triadic-hermeneutic model of experience–understanding–expression in his methodological retrieval of the question of the meaning of Being in phenomenology and phenomenological research. The second case, which is to be made at a very particular level of interpretation, requires a more detailed

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*indeed*, starting from a comprehensive, understanding, patient, and tireless reading – a generous reading' (Jacques Derrida, *On Touching – Jean-Luc Nancy*, tr. Christine Irizarry (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 21), then this cannot be said of Heidegger's reading of Husserl's Sixth Logical Investigation in his 1925 Summer Semester lecture course, but it can be said of his 'generous' reading of Husserl's text *through* Diltheyan spectacles.

<sup>31</sup> Another prime contender for this mentoring, of course, is Aristotle, or at least Heidegger's hermeneutical-phenomenological reading of Aristotle. Cf. W. A. Brogan, *Heidegger and Aristotle: The Twofoldness of Being* (Albany: State University of New York, 2005).

philosophical reconstruction of Heidegger's *advancement* of Dilthey's manner of thinking in the actual formulation and elaboration of 'the Being-Question' and its relation to *Dasein* in *Being and Time*. The following section attempts this.

### Heidegger's Appropriation of Dilthey's Thought in the Elaboration of 'the Being-Question'

That the question of the meaning of Being must find its origins in 'ontic experiences', testifies to Heidegger's deference to Dilthey's general hermeneutical-phenomenological investigations into the meaning of life experiences. Though Heidegger begins his philosophizing with Dilthey's stance in hermeneutic phenomenology, he clearly does not end with Dilthey. It is of importance, therefore, to distinguish three things in Heidegger's appropriation of Dilthey's manner of thinking in the elaboration of 'the Being-Question', namely: (i) the influence of Dilthey on Heidegger's starting point in philosophy, (ii) the question of the meaning of Being that Heidegger discerns about our life experiences of the meaning of Being that Dilthey is oblivious to (as much as other thinkers are, from Parmenides to Husserl), and (iii) the precise nature and extent of the influence of Dilthey's manner of thinking in Heidegger's argument for the ontic-ontological priority of *Dasein* in the formulation of 'the Being-Question'.

#### Heidegger's starting point

Heidegger's starting point in *Being and Time* appears to be straightforward and innocuous, at least as it is presented by him. According to Heidegger, '(e)verybody understands 'the sky is blue,' "I *am* happy," and similar statements' (BT 23).<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> BT, p. 23, translation modified. Heidegger continues, however, to note that such average understanding of Being demonstrates that it is incomprehensible: 'Allein diese durchschnittliche Verständlichkeit demonstriert nur die Unverständlichkeit.'

Heidegger, therefore, starts with the meaningfulness of certain basic everyday linguistic experiences. Herein, Heidegger starts with Dilthey; or, perhaps more accurately speaking, Heidegger starts by drawing our attention to particular linguistic statements that already express meaning about things that are, about that-which-is (*das Seiende*). It now follows from this starting point – statements about that-which-is – that if everybody understands the emphasis that Heidegger puts on the verb to be in these statements, namely, that the sky 'is' blue and that I 'am' happy, then in addition to and in distinction from some understanding of that-which-is as referred to by such statements, in this instance, the sky and being in a happy mood, 'something like the Being of that-which-is [*das Sein des Seienden*]' is also understood in 'this expression', however implicitly. What Heidegger is not doing here, then, is giving an argument either for or against the existence (or continued existence) of the external world, or an argument either for or against the existence (or continued existence) of the inner world, the inner world of experiences that no-one else has direct access to. This is not his concern. That the sky *is* blue and that I *am* happy would lead Augustine, for example, to distinguish radically the outer and the inner world, and to develop, accordingly, an appropriate method of 'interiority' to examine the human condition. Heidegger, however, is not interested in following Augustine (completely) down this particular methodological line of existential-philosophical inquiry. Likewise, Heidegger is not concerned with the question of the 'exteriority' of the external world, as his (in)famous comment in *Being and Time* that 'the "scandal of philosophy" is not this proof [of the external world] has yet to be given, but that such proofs are expected and attempted again and again' (BT 249) makes crystal clear; as his equally famous retort makes clearer, that *Dasein*, unlike Leibniz's monads, does not need windows to look out onto the world since where else do I experience my being except from being-in-the-world (BT § 43).

By starting with linguistic statements that already express meaning about that-which-is, whether that-which-is is of an

inner or outer nature, Heidegger's starting point in *Being and Time* actually evades any questions pertaining to the existence of the inner or outer world. This is not to imply that in this starting-point Heidegger is advocating some form of meditation on a platonic universal of Being, for, as he insists – and as he was to later correct himself in *Introduction to Metaphysics* – the meaning of Being must always be understood, and can only be understood, and is only understood in relation to actual experiences of 'that-which-is' (*das Seiende*), to 'ontic experiences' just as Dilthey had stressed.<sup>33</sup> Hermeneutic focus has to begin and return to 'ontic experiences' themselves. Indeed, Dilthey's stress to Husserl on this very point may well account for Husserl's rather enigmatic self-evaluation of the influence of conversations he had held with Dilthey in 1906 in the transition of his own thought from the descriptive-eidetic psychological analyses of the *Logical Investigations* (1900–01) to the position of transcendental idealism (that occurred around 1907–08), first documented in *Ideas I* (1913),<sup>34</sup> because in the reduction 'the meaning of Being as thing [*Sein als Ding*]' given to *actual acts of outer perceptual-sense experience* and 'the meaning of Being as (conscious) experience [*Sein als Erlebnis*]' given to *actual acts of immanent perception* is the focus of his meditation on the meaning of Being.<sup>35</sup>

33 Cf., also, *HCT*, pp. 90–1.

34 Dilthey died in 1911, and so could not have read Husserl's version of transcendental idealism in *Ideas I*. If he were alive, he no doubt would have pointed out the thoroughly ahistorical nature of that position too, just as he had to Husserl about the latter's earlier position in the *Logical Investigations*, in particular the second volume of descriptive-eidetic analyses of the experience of an ideally logical-normative consciousness *as such*.

35 Thus Heidegger's remarks in *HCT* about why 'a fundamental problem [the question of the meaning of Being] is left unposed and must remain unposed in it [he means, as is evident from the context, in 'the work of the two leading researchers in phenomenology today, Husserl and Scheler]' and why it must, what conditions must be fulfilled in order to pose it, and how this leads to a more radical definition of the task of phenomenological research. This problem is the *basic phenomenological*

Heidegger, however, is not concerned with the meaning of Being as thing given to outer perceptual-sense experience or with the meaning of Being as (conscious) experience immanently perceived, rather he is concerned with the linguistic fact that in understanding the meaning of statements about that-which-is – whether such statements refer to things given to outer sense perception, experiences immanently perceived, moods, dispositions, tools, God, Gods, or whatever – this understanding also presupposes some understanding of the meaning of Being itself. This is what I am calling Heidegger's starting point. It is a starting point that is clearly 'overlooked', 'pre-supposed', 'unthought', 'jumped over' by Husserl in his reduction – a reduction, it must be noted, as Husserl himself explicitly tells us, marks a return to 'genuine talk of Being [*Seinsrede*]' (whatever are the conclusions he arrives at in that return). This is why Heidegger can point out (correctly) to his students in his 1925 lectures that the question of the meaning of Being is not only raised in Husserl's philosophical position but also answered – the meaning of Being is to be (pre-)determined in and through an analysis of things given to outer sense perception and of (conscious) experience immanently perceived – and so, the question of the meaning of Being as a question (*als Frage*) itself *gets lost* precisely through the reduction. In other words, the question of the meaning of Being is left 'unthought' (implicit) and yet also 'unthought' (not thought by the author) and so in this double sense this issue is hermeneutically 'unreduced' in Husserl's philosophical 'reduction'. And yet the particular method of reductions, both the transcendental and the eidetic reduction, and the particular

*question of the sense of being*, a question which an ontology [such as Husserl's transcendental reduction in *Ideas*, for example,] can never pose but already constantly presupposes and thus uses in some sort of answer [to the question of the sense of Being], grounded or otherwise. The immanent critique of the natural trend of phenomenological research allows the question of being to arise. A partial answer to this question is in fact the real theme of this course' (pp. 90–1). See some critical evaluations of his answer on pp. 395–6 of this chapter.

manner of thinking (reflection) advocated by Husserl within these reductions, can never in principle tackle the question of the meaning of Being itself, the very thing (*die Sache selbst*) that grounds in the first place Husserl's meditation on Being in the *Seinsrede* of his reduction. The problem, as far as Heidegger can see, is not just with Husserl's 'talk of Being', however; it is a problem with anybody's explicit 'talk about the Being' of that which is (*Sein des Seienden*), and that problem has existed from time immemorial, i.e. from Parmenides onwards.<sup>36</sup>

From a Diltheyan hermeneutic-methodological point of view, the problem for Heidegger seems to be this. In understanding the meaning of the statements 'the sky is blue' and 'I am happy', the meaning of Being itself is indeed thought in such experiences but it is not thought *out of that thought*; that is to say, the meaning of Being lies at once both *un-thought* (implicit) and *un-thought* (not thought by the author) in the understanding of such statements. It is as if in *becoming aware* in my actual experiencing of the fact that the sky is and that I am, or that you are and that the world is, or that 'the stone is' or that 'the lecture hall is illuminated' etc., these very awarenesses point to the fact that I must have already somehow forgotten (in my memory, as Augustine would add in Book X of the *Confessions*) the very thing itself (*die Sache selbst*), that is, the source of the intelligibility of those statements, namely, that the sky is understood by me to be a being in Being and that I understand myself to be a being who understands that I am a being in Being.<sup>37</sup> Recall Book 10 (17) of the *Confessions*, where Augustine remarks, 'I hid in my memory not their images but the realities.'<sup>38</sup> And recall Augustine's well-known remarks

<sup>36</sup> Cf. *BT*, pp. 47–8.

<sup>37</sup> Husserl speaks about such 'becoming aware' in the Sixth Logical Investigation, but Husserl's concept is of an entirely different nature and in an entirely different context from Heidegger's starting point and Heidegger's concern and argument about the question of the meaning of Being.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. J. McEvoy, 'Does Augustinian *Memoria* Depend on Plotinus?' in J. J. Cleary (ed.), *The Perennial Tradition of Neoplatonism* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997), pp. 383–96.

from *De Trinitate* (and often quoted by Heidegger in his lectures in the 1920s):

while there are three in numbers, existence, life and understanding, and though the stone exists and the animal lives, yet I do not think that the stone lives or that the animal understands, whereas it is absolutely certain that whoever understands also exists and is living. That is why I have no hesitation in concluding that the one which contains all three is more excellent than that which is lacking in one or both of these.<sup>39</sup>

It is this 'understanding of Being' – which Heidegger insists extends equally to the world, to myself, and to my fellow human being – that withdraws, hides and is forgotten in our very understanding of and experiencing of the things themselves that is expressed in such everyday statements as 'the sky is blue', 'I am happy', and so forth.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> There is, therefore, in Augustine's method of 'interiority' much more involved than reaching an understanding of one's own individual existence in Being. As one commentator points out, 'Augustine's demonstration of God's existence begins precisely where his refutation of the sceptics ended, that is, from the certainty that he exists, lives and understands, and proceeds by a very detailed line of reasoning to the conclusion that God exists. A careful analysis of this process of argumentation shows that it contains five steps.' J. McBride, *Albert Caus: Philosopher and Littérature* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), p. 36. This author then proceeds with admirable acuity to detail Augustine's line of reasoning (pp. 36–7). Cf., also, Tarsicius J. van Bavel, 'The Anthropology of Augustine', *Louvain Studies* 5 (1974), pp. 34–47 (p. 35).

<sup>40</sup> Such a pre-ontological understanding of Being that is deposited in our ontic experiences of that-which-is would have been as hidden from Parmenides as it would have been from Plato as it was from Aristotle and Aquinas – and so in the unfolding of the history of western metaphysics, from Parmenides to Husserl. And so, it also goes without saying that this 'pre-ontological understanding of Being' has absolutely no connection with Husserl's Sixth Logical Investigation and the latter's phenomenological elucidation of Kant's thesis 'Being is not a real predicate' that unfolds therein. Notwithstanding Jacques Taminiaux's meticulous investigations into this matter, I find Heidegger's own 'suggestions' philosophically misleading.

Because the meaning of Being is not thought but implicit, and this is precisely how Heidegger following Dilthey understands the 'unthought' (*das Ungedacht*), this points to *the possibility* of retrieving that meaning, but such a retrieval (*Wiederholung*) can only be enacted and set in operation hermeneutically. Thus Heidegger *can* now argue in *Being and Time* that *the only way* in which 'ontology' – where 'ontology' means post-Kantian study of the way the meaning of the living word of 'Being' is understood – is possible is 'as [hermeneutic] phenomenology'. This statement on Heidegger's part, therefore, cannot, without gross distortion of its significance, be turned around, as it has been by commentators, to suggest that Heidegger really meant 'only as ontology is phenomenology possible', where 'ontology' refers to classical metaphysics and 'phenomenology' refers to Husserlian (eidetic or transcendental) phenomenology. Rather, it means that the only way in which the question of the meaning of Being can be resurrected from oblivion and kept alive 'today' (*heute*), which is Heidegger's desire in the opening sentence of *Being and Time*, is by actively engaging in a hermeneutic reading of texts in the history of philosophy that deal with this matter<sup>41</sup> in order to relive the experience and understanding of Being itself that has been deposited and expressed in and through their written word but which has been left unthought. Thus in Heidegger's starting point, 'hearing' that which is unthought (in any talk about that which is) methodologically replaces 'seeing' that which is revealed in and through the 'seeing'. This is why it is only by way of hermeneutic-phenomenology that [post-Kantian] ontology is possible.

<sup>41</sup> This applies in all of Heidegger's reading of the texts of any other contemporary thinker, poet, politician that purports to address and express our understanding of the meaning of Being in a person's life, in a society, or in a nation. Heidegger's selection is not as innocent or arbitrary as it might seem, then, and this can call into question his entire approach to 'the Being-question', but such is outside the scope of this paper. Cf. H. Ott, *Martin Heidegger: A Political Life*, tr. A. Blunden (London: Fontana Press, 1993).

### Heidegger's 'Being-question'

Heidegger's starting point that there is an implicit (unthought) issue concerning the meaning of Being deposited in our everyday understanding of statements about that-which-is, nevertheless, is not identical to the question that he raises about this starting point in philosophy. Heidegger's 'Being-question' is simply this. If our understanding of everyday statements such as 'the sky is blue' and 'I am happy' implies that 'something like Being' is also understood and also meant in those statements, then what is that meaning of Being upon which the intelligibility of such simple statements rests? And where does the understanding of that meaning of Being that is evidently deposited and implicitly expressed in the statements and in these linguistic experiences come from, as I depend upon it in order to make such statements intelligible? This is Heidegger's 'Being-question'. Here, however, Heidegger's appropriation of Dilthey's thought seems to run aground, for the very fact that we all live in a vague and general understanding of Being – as important as this Augustinian anthropological postulate is both to Heidegger's starting point and to Heidegger's elevation of the ontic-ontological priority of *Dasein* in 'fundamental ontology' – this, in itself, does not and cannot a priori give us any solace or direction as to where an answer to this question that Heidegger is putting about such an experience can be found. The facticity of the understanding of Being that is exhibited in our everyday statements about the being of things-that-are is not enough, it offers no clue. Analysing those mundane-linguistic experiences will not lead to a recovery of 'the Being-question'. Rather, if the question of the meaning of Being is to be retrieved and reawakened and addressed *as a question*, then a different kind of experience containing its own understanding of the questionable nature of the meaning of Being itself needs to be found and brought into play. Here Heidegger advances Dilthey's thought in a direction that is clearly of no concern to Dilthey but of central significance to Heidegger. And Heidegger believes that he has found just such 'a phenomenal basis' that

makes the meaning of Being 'worthy of questioning [*fragwürdig*]' in the anticipatory awareness, in the present, of my own death in the future (*Vorlaufen zum Tode*), as disclosed from within the particular mood of *Angst*.

In the anticipatory awareness, in the present, of one's own death, the questionable appearance of the meaning of Being becomes unavoidable because in that awareness the statement 'I am' both means and expresses at once an understanding that that I am, that I am not-to-be, that not-to-be is part of what it is to be an 'I am who am', and that my mode of being harbours no self-guarantee is being at all, yet is (fact), hence, why. Saying 'I am' in the mood of *Angst* in anticipatory awareness of one's own death, and understanding what that statement means, therefore, both contains and expresses a *different kind of particular experience* of the meaning of Being in comparison to such similar statements as 'the sky is blue', or 'I am happy', or 'Give me a glass of water, I am dying of thirst'. Heidegger believes that the anticipatory awareness of my own death in the present, and of my own death only, brings us *methodologically* to 'the Being-question' (BT 235). Dilthey, of course, could not regard any such inner 'brooding' over one's own death, from a methodological point of view, as a requirement of historical-hermeneutic research into the meaning of our life experiences or of death, and indeed it would be improperly invoked as such, if it were. And yet, it is not invoked by Heidegger as a historical-hermeneutic possibility in *Being and Time* either, rather it is invoked in that essay as an existential-methodological task (requirement), for, 'this possibility [disclosed in *Angst*] must not be weakened; it must be understood as a *possibility*, it must be cultivated as a *possibility*, and we must *put up with* it as a *possibility*, in the way we comport ourselves towards it [in such brooding over death]' (BT 306). Herein Heidegger gives Dilthey's manner of thinking a particularly Kierkegaardian-existentialist twist in the methodological elaboration of 'the Being-question', and it is one that sets Heidegger's project outside of the bounds of Diltheyan hermeneutic phenomenology and inside the bounds of the future memory inscribed in Easter

liturgical rites of Christian religious experience of 'Remember man that thou are dust, and onto dust thy shalt return.'<sup>42</sup>

*The ontic-ontological priority of Dasein in 'the Being-question'*

Strictly speaking, therefore, it is really only in and through the experience of the tenuousness of being and the accompanying questioning of that presence in the understanding of that Being that is evoked in the understanding of one's own being as a being-for-death, in the mood of *Angst*, for *that* individual being in *Dasein*, that *Dasein*, in Heidegger's scheme of thing, exhibits its ontic-ontological priority in 'the Being-question'. In fact, Heidegger explicitly tells us that 'we [he] have [has] chosen to designate this entity as 'Dasein', a term which is purely an expression of its Being [*als reiner Seinsausdruck*]' (BT 32).<sup>43</sup> What Heidegger seems to be saying here is that the meaning of this term is *purely* determined by the underpinning meaning of the particular experience itself, and not the accorded meaning of linguistic convention, and it expresses what is understood in that experience from out of itself, namely, the questionable presence of the meaning of the tenuousness of Being itself, i.e. the understanding of the essence of finite being in human (lived) experience of being itself. This is a highly creative use of language by Heidegger – what other German understands the term *Dasein* in the way Heidegger understands it as an expression depicting the awareness of the 'There' of 'Being', in which I find myself implicated as a being in Being who only in and through questioning the very meaning of Being itself makes 'the structural totality' of *Dasein* visible? And yet the meaning that Heidegger gives to this term *Dasein* and his use of language in

42 Cf. M. Heidegger, *The Concept of Time*, tr. W. McNeill (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), bilingual English-German edition, containing M. Heidegger, *Der Begriff der Zeit: Vortrag vor der Marburger Theologenschaft Juli 1924*, ed. H. Tietjen, with postscript (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1989).

43 Cf., also, *HCT*, § 17.

100 this way is strictly in accord with Dilthey's philosophy of life, and with the expression of part of life's meaning that we mortals are all to familiar with, namely, the contingency of Being. This underlines Heidegger's characteristic existentialistic rendering of Dilthey's triadic structure of *Erlebnis-Verstehen-Ausdruck* in his famous depiction in *Being and Time* of the human being as a being whose own being is the matter at stake for *that* being in the way that being expresses itself and goes about itself (*es geht um*) in its being-in-the-world. Thus it is Dilthey's manner of thinking, albeit radically modified through Kierkegaardian glasses, that is at work in the meaning that Heidegger gives methodologically to *Dasein*, and not Husserl's manner of thinking or Husserl's theory of perception, nor Aristotle's *phronesis*, nor Plato's *eros*,<sup>44</sup> nor what can be seen via listening to the normative power of Greek or German etymological terms (as Heidegger himself conceded, later, to Fr Richardson). If this is the case, then the particular 'understanding of Being' that is constitutive of *Dasein*'s ontic-ontological priority in the formulation of 'the Being-question' is one place where a relevant evaluation of Heidegger's philosophy can, and perhaps should, begin.

### Towards a Critical Evaluation of Heidegger's Use of Hermeneutic Phenomenology in 'the Being-question'

According to Heidegger, the 'understanding of Being' that is definitive of *Dasein*'s mode of being-in-the-world differs from any understanding of Being that is gained in and through cognitive-reflection on beings as beings (*das Seiende*). In point of fact, identifying and pointing to beings that either come into existence or go out of existence cannot add to or subtract from *Dasein*'s 'understanding of Being' because such indications

44 Cf. R. Rojcewicz, 'Platonic Love: Dasein's Urge toward Being', *Research in Phenomenology* 27 (1997), pp. 103-20, esp. pp. 118 and 120.

presuppose some understanding of Being *already there* for *Dasein*, but deferred in the process. It is a central contention in Heidegger's formulation and elaboration of 'the Being-question', therefore, that there is 'an understanding of Being' that is always and already present *implicitly* in *Dasein*, back behind of which we cannot go, i.e. that we cannot think, when addressing 'the question of the meaning of Being' in phenomenology and phenomenological research. Heidegger thinks that this position in phenomenology and phenomenological research is unchallengeable and unquestionable, for, as noted above, pointing to beings in *their* being will *obstruct* the issue at hand, or at least it will lead to a fundamental *mis*-targetting of the issue at hand that Heidegger wishes to address in his 'Being-question'. 'Doesn't insistence on what is,' Heidegger asks rhetorically in his late lecture 'The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking', 'block access to what-is?' (*Versperert die Insistenz auf dem Beweisbaren nicht den Weg zu dem, was ist?*)<sup>45</sup> Insistence on what is deflects attention from *the way* what is, is. Hence, insistence *by us* on the being of the being of beings, deflects attention from the 'understanding of Being' that is already presupposed, according to Heidegger, as a precondition ~~both~~ for, to and in any such ostentation.

For Heidegger, then, questions pertaining to the 'understanding of Being' and to the being of the being of beings must be kept not only distinct but also unrelated. The former belong to phenomenology, the latter remains outside of phenomenological remit. The 'understanding of Being' and the being of the being of beings, therefore, are entirely different concepts of being in Heidegger's starting point in philosophy. Heidegger himself clearly *recognizes* this distinction in *Being and Time*. Heidegger, in fact, *insists* on this distinction in *Being and Time* because his 'path of thinking' about 'the Being-question' and its relation to *Dasein* clearly requires it. Heidegger, however, does not explore any further this distinction in *Being and Time* (or in

45 M. Heidegger, 'The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking', in Heidegger, *On Being and Time*, pp. 55-73 (p. 72).

later works). Heidegger's starting point and finishing point in philosophy and phenomenological research, therefore, remains asserted, and the same, namely:

Entities *are* [Heidegger's emphasis], quite independently of the experiences by which they are disclosed, the acquaintance in which they are discovered, and the grasping in which their nature is ascertained. But Being 'is' only in the understanding of those entities to whose Being something like an understanding of Being belongs. (BT 228)

In order for Heidegger to maintain this position, Heidegger must acknowledge, as de Boer has acutely pointed out, *that there is a being* [small 'b'] of the being of entities that *precedes* the Being of the understanding of Being [big 'B'].<sup>46</sup> Heidegger does not turn to the significance of this first being of the being of entities that is not reducible to the understanding of Being of those entities deposited in *Dasein* in his 'path of thinking' about 'the Being-question'. The being of the being of entities is set aside, and not returned to in the development of Heidegger's thought, as it had been set aside and not returned to in the development of Husserl's thought either. Recall Husserl's famous transcendental reduction. Outside of all that we can know and actually do know about things given to outer perceptual-sense experience, there is 'nothing' of any intelligible or sensible nature to know 'in itself'; there is only 'nonsensical thought'.<sup>47</sup> *That* such things or entities *are* is not a matter for phenomenology and phenomenological research. Likewise, outside the apodictic knowledge of the existence of a currently lived psychical-act experience (and its intentional object, if it exists) in an act of immanent perception – and whose non-existence is inconceivable – lies *its* existence; but *that* such an experience exists (in its facticity as Dilthey understands it) in immanent

46 T. de Boer, *The Rationality of Transcendence: Studies in the Philosophy of Emmanuel Lévinas* (Amsterdam: Giegen, 1997), p. 119.

47 De Boer, *The Rationality of Transcendence*, p. 119. Cf., also, de Boer, *The Development of Husserl's Thought*, pp. 338ff., 369, 381.

perception is not a matter for phenomenology and phenomenological research in Husserl's definition of phenomenology. The facticity of lived experiences is to be ignored because their meaning is not susceptible to scientific analysis and scientific generalizations or conceptual analysis in any form in Husserl's eidetic eyes. There can be no eidetic science of the 'thisness' of this particular experience here and now. And since the essential features of such lived-experiences is all that counts, the very lived nature of the particular experiences themselves in their uniqueness must be passed over and not be entertained as a matter for philosophy and phenomenological research. This is what Heidegger, influenced by his reading of Dilthey, means when he says to his students in his 1925 lectures that 'the being of the intentional [acts of consciousness] . . . gets lost precisely through them [i.e. both the eidetic and the transcendental reductions]' (HCT 110). And yet Heidegger himself does not return to this facticity of the life experiences of *Dasein*. That I exist, that you exist, that you die, that I die are not the concern of Heidegger's phenomenology either, but my understanding of myself as a being-for-death is. Outside of one's own actual understanding of oneself as a being-for-death, then, that you are murdered, or that blood-lust and domination 'exists' (not in Heidegger's sense of that term) is not the concern of *Dasein* in *Being and Time*. It is at this point that Levinas, inspired by Dilthey's philosophy of life, raises the following, critical question within both Husserlian and Heideggerean phenomenology and phenomenological research: is not the very anonymous existence of things that are and of experiences that are a presupposition itself requiring and inviting a hermeneutic investigation? This investigation, however, would lie both beyond and outside the dual limits set by Husserl in the transcendental reduction on the 'understanding of Being' as thing given to outer sense perception and on the 'understanding of Being' as (conscious) experience immanently perceived, and outside the existential-phenomenological limit set by Heidegger on 'the understanding of Being' as *that which is hermeneutically deposited and revealed in anxious anticipation, in the present,*



of one's own death in *Dasein*, whose own being, and own being alone, remains the root of 'the understanding of Being' and the sole matter at stake that needs to be thought in philosophy and phenomenological research. If Heidegger is right, and if our 'understanding of Being' extends equally to the world, to myself and to my fellow human being, then the critical question that Levinas raises is how can I reach 'an understanding of Being' that is not mine but shareable and for the good of our human existence, and *therefore* for the good of our human understanding? Focusing on *Dasein* – i.e. on the awareness of the 'There' (*Da*) of 'Being' (*Sein*), in which one finds oneself implicated as a being in being and as a being-for-one's-own-death – methodologically excludes a prioristically such an *ethical* (or 'meta-physical' in Levinas's sense) possibility within phenomenology and phenomenological research. Heidegger's insistence on the ontic-ontological priority of 'the understanding of Being' in *Dasein* as the back behind of which we cannot think, then, is itself a presupposition, an assertion that needs to be tested for its phenomenological credentials.

If 'the understanding of Being' that I possess, and in which I live, move and have my being, extends equally to the world, to myself and to my fellow human being – as Heidegger suggests – then the very existence of the other human being and of that being's understanding of Being has at least the potential to call into question 'the understanding of Being' that I *have* acquired (and *can* acquire) about the world, about myself and about my fellow human being. Would not my concern for the being of another shatter the concern that I actually can have and do have about that which is at stake in my own being a being in Being? 'Do not do unto others, that you would not have done to yourself' (Matt. 7.12; Luke 6.31) is a familiar injunction recorded in the Bible but it is one that is rooted in human 'ontic' experiences. So, who are the 'others' that is referred to here? Clearly 'the other' is not *merely* an empirical other given to acts of outer perceptual-sense experience through perspectival variations, nor the 'other' who plays a necessary role in the dialectical constitution of the consciousness of the self in relation to the other,

whether conceived in Hegelian or Husserlian dialectical manner, nor the 'other' whom I hold in friendship and she in friendship to 'me', as Aristotle and Aquinas would have it. Rather, the other that is spoken of 'not to be done as one would have done to oneself', is he and she who have been *othered* in society: the poor, the widow, the orphan, the leper, the marginalized.<sup>48</sup> This is what is expressed and understood and meant in this biblical injunction, and it has a universality of meaning, albeit not arrived at or as clearly seen in eidetic ideation as Husserl would like, or in existential brooding about one's own death as Heidegger would like, but nonetheless it contains a universality all the same, 'for those who have eyes to see it'.<sup>49</sup> In this invocation to serve the other, the other, Levinas remarks, takes 'the me' (*le moi*) in me as hostage or pledge (*otage*) of his and her responsibility; this is an 'ontic experience' and it is an 'ontic' experience whose meaning is expressed and documented in biblical verse and in everyday life experiences. 'Biblical verses do not function here as proof but as testimony of a tradition and an experience. Don't they have as much right as Hölderlin and Trakl to be cited?'<sup>50</sup> And, of course they do, if you follow Dilthey's revolutionary philosophy of life, for, 'The religious thinker, the artist, and the philosopher create on the basis of lived experience.' Hence the expression and understanding of life experiences that are written about and spoken about by the prophets in the psalms and in the stories of the New Testament invite the reader to engage both in and with a person's reflection on his and her own self understanding. Here, however, there can be no 'science' of human self-understanding, only hermeneutic 'retrieval' and 'interpretation' of the significances of the way of life that unfolds *in* and *through* human experiences themselves.

48 Cf. T. de Boer's excellent treatment of this in 'Beyond Being: Ontology and Eschatology in the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas', *Philosophica Reformata* 38 (1973), pp. 17–29 (pp. 23–4).

49 De Boer, *The Rationality of Transcendence*, pp. 169–83.

50 E. Levinas, 'Without Identity' in *Humanism of the Other*, tr. N. Poller (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2003), pp. 58–69 (p. 66).

Outside of my actual experiences lies the very existence of my fellow human being, but this is an experience, and it is an experience that must be thought. And outside of that the God who calls me to be responsible before the other, for the other, to the other, is also an experience, an experience recorded in the Old and New Testaments, and an experience that must be thought. A true existential humanism is a humanism of the other, then, but such a humanism of the other is only intelligible in light of affirming a relation to a third, to He, who is present, in addition to you and me, as Absolutely Other, 'who can never be seized directly and always remains a "He"'.<sup>51</sup>

If Levinas is right, then we should be able to go back to Heidegger's *Being and Time* to traces where Heidegger acknowledges, but does not listen to, the word of God. And, indeed, there is documentary evidence in *Being and Time*. At a critical point in his analysis of death, Heidegger declares that even if one were assured of one's whither and thither, the meaning of the tenuousness of being experienced in *Angst* cannot be cancelled, struck out, denied in the affirmation of such a Creator God.<sup>52</sup> In *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger takes a different view. He suggests that affirming the existence of a Creator God would cancel the questioning of the meaning of Being, as an answer to that question has been accepted.<sup>53</sup> But is Heidegger correct? If

<sup>51</sup> De Boer, 'Beyond Being', p. 24, and, as de Boer continues, 'For this Levinas uses the term "illéité", which is derived from *il, ille*.' Cf. also, E. Levinas, 'Signification and Sense' in *Humanism of the Other*, pp. 9-44 (pp. 41-2).

<sup>52</sup> Cf. *BT*, p. 175.

<sup>53</sup> This is what lies behind Heidegger's famous remark in 1953 that if he were to be called by faith he would have to 'shut up shop'. 'Report of a session of the Evangelical Academy in Hofgeismar, December 1953', tr. J. Greisch in R. Kearney (ed.), *Heidegger et la question de Dieu* (Grasset, 1988), p. 335. Cf. also, J. Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, tr. G. Bennington and R. Bowlby (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 115, n. 3. Walter A. Brogan says that Heidegger hints at this as early as in his 1922 Aristotle essay 'and queries whether the idea of a philosophy of religion is not itself contradictory, even though his own courses had more than once bore this title', *Heidegger and Aristotle: The Twofoldness of Being*, p. 12.

the tenuousness of not only mine but of all particular finite beings in being is dependent on an act of the will of a Creator God, would this not leave the contingency in being that is experienced more questionable, and not less questionable? It is certainly not anchored ontologically in any necessity, and it is certainly not anchored hermeneutically in an already necessarily deposited meaning, however unthought, in texts that need to be read in order to raise anew the question of the meaning of Being, as Heidegger's path of 'thinking' about the 'Being-question' does. It certainly would require, however, engaging in addressing the unthought in Heidegger's own understanding of the certainty of faith as opposed to questioning, in favour of the way faith questions thought.