

THE TURN

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The term *die Kehre* – “the turn” – has an over-determined and complex history in Heidegger’s work and has led to major misunderstandings of his project. As Heidegger clearly says in *Contributions to Philosophy (CP)*, the turn is simply the bond between *Dasein* and *Sein*. Therefore, the turn in its basic and proper sense is the central topic of Heidegger’s thought. It is not, as many think, the 1930s shift in Heidegger’s approach to his central topic. The *Kehre* in its basic and proper sense never “took place,” least of all in Heidegger’s thinking.¹

I shall distinguish three meanings of “the turn”: (1) the basic and proper sense: the bond between *Dasein* and *Sein*; (2) the 1930’s shift in how Heidegger treated that bond; and (3) the act of resolve as a transformation in one’s relation to that bond.

Because the turn is Heidegger’s central topic, explaining it entails reviewing the core of Heidegger’s thought. This essay will attempt to do that within a new key, one that translates Heidegger’s technical terms out of an ontological and into a phenomenological register. That re-translation is the necessary prologue to understanding what the *Kehre* is and is not.

Some conventions: In referring to “the turn” (not “the turning”!) in this essay, I will favor the German word *Kehre*, which Heidegger interprets as the “reciprocity” (*Gegenschwung*) of *Dasein*’s need of *Sein* and *Sein*’s need of *Dasein*. The Latin *reci-proci-tas* means literally “back-and-forth-ness,” which is how Heidegger understands the tension or “oscillation” (*Erzittern*) between *Dasein*’s thrownness into and its sustaining of *Sein*.² Also I will sometimes use the technical term “world” as the name for *Sein*.³ As

¹ Citations in these notes refer to texts by page and line, separated by a period. The present text corrects my “*Kehre* and *Ereignis*,” in *A Companion to Heidegger’s Introduction to Metaphysics*, ed. Richard Polt and Gregory Fried, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000, 3-16. All translations are my own.

² *Gegenschwung*, *Gegenschwingen*, *Erschwingen*: *GA* 65: 251.4; 261.25-6; 262.2-4; 263.19-20 = *CP* 177.30; 184.28-9 and 36-7; 185.38-9. (That last text shows that the gods

regards the structure of *Being and Time* I will use the formula “BT I.1-2” to abbreviate Part I, Divisions 1 and 2; and “BT I.3” to abbreviate the unpublished Part I, Division 3, “Time and Being.” Finally, I use “man” and “human being” as gender-neutral and as the most formal of indications of what Heidegger means by *Dasein*.⁴

I.

Re-reading Heidegger

Aron Gurwitsch correctly noted that the one and only issue of philosophy – including Heidegger’s philosophy – is the question of meaning (*Sinn*).⁵ But on the other hand Heidegger’s key terms “being itself” and “the being of beings” come from a *pre*-phenomenological metaphysics of objective realism, and to that degree are an obstacle to understanding his project in general and the *Kehre* in particular. If one chooses (unwisely, in my view) to continue using those pre-phenomenological terms, one should be clear that Heidegger himself understood *Sein* phenomenologically, i.e., within a reduction from *being* to *meaning*, both (a) the meaning of the meaningful (= *das Sein des Seienden*) and (b) the meaning-giving *source* of the meaning of the meaningful (= *das Sein selbst*).

When Heidegger speaks of *das Seiende* (“beings”), he is referring to things not as just existing-out-there (*existens*) but rather insofar as they make sense within human concern and thus are meaningful and significant (*bedeutsam, verständlich, sinnhaft*). Even what is “just out there” (*das Vorhandene*) is meaningful as, e.g., “what happens to be of no practical interest at the moment.” In short *das Seiende* is “the meaningful,” and *das Sein*

are various formations/*Geschicke* of meaning). On reci-proci-ty: GA 65: 381.26-7 = CP 266.25. For Erzittern, GA 65: 262.9 = CP 185.3; *et passim*. Definitely *not* “enquivering.”

³ Compare GA 9: 332.3-4, “Die Lichtung selber aber ist das Sein” with, *ibid.*, 326.15-6 “Die Lichtung des Seins, und nur sie, is ‘Welt.’” = PM 253.1 and 248.36-7 respectively.

⁴ GA 10: 128.13-4 = PR 86.20. Both “man” and “human being” translate the Greek *anthrōpos* understood as *Dasein*: human being in its a priori structure. On formal indication, see Daniel O. Dahlstrom, *Heidegger’s Concept of Truth*, Cambridge, UK, and New York, 2001, 242-52.

⁵ *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, VII (1946), 652.

is its meaning. To adapt Woody Allen's phrase: Meaning is just another way of spelling being.⁶

In his first course after the Great War Heidegger made the point by asking his students what it is they directly encounter in lived experience. Is it beings? things? objects? values? No, he insisted. What one encounters is

the meaningful [*das Bedeutsame*] – that is what is primary, that is what is immediately in your face without any mental detour through a conceptual grasp of the thing. When you live in the world of first-hand experience, everything comes at you loaded with meaning, all over the place and all the time. Everything appears in a meaningful context, and that context *gives the thing its meaning*.⁷

To underline the point Heidegger frequently refers to this phenomenological “being of beings” as *das Anwesen des Anwesenden*: the meaningful presence of whatever is meaningful. Likewise he glosses the Greek *on* and *ousia* as *paron* and *parousia*, that is, not mere “beings” and their “beingness” but meaningful things and their meaningfulness.

Let us then revisit Aristotle's famous sentence about the meanings of the word “being.”

The term “being” has many meanings, but all of them point analogically toward one thing, one single nature” (*Metaphysics* IV 2, 1003 a 33-34).

Read in a phenomenological key, that says:

The word “meaningful” has many senses, but all of them point analogically toward a unified “meaning itself” [*Sein selbst* as *physis*] that is the source of all meaning.

⁶ Cf. Allen's comments on his film *Matchpoint*, Cannes, May 12, 2005, in Roger Ebert, *Roger Ebert's Movie Yearbook, 2006*, (Riverside, N.J.: Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2005), p. 852. In the present text *Sein/Sein selbst* = meaning-giving source, i.e., meaning itself; *Sein* = meaning; *Seiendes* = the meaningful.

⁷ *GA 55/57: 73.1-5 = TDF, 61.24-8*. When Heidegger says “the world worlds (“die Welt weltet”), he means that the world allows for the meaning of whatever is found within the world.

Before applying all of this to the *Kehre*, and in order to emphasize that Heidegger's work is anchored in a framework of *meaning*, I translate some of his terminology out of the usual ontological register into a phenomenological one.

I.	
<i>Sinn, Bedeutung</i>	sense, meaningfulness, meaning,
<i>Sinn haben</i>	something makes sense
<i>Verstehen</i>	to make sense of something
<i>Seiendes</i>	the meaningful, whatever makes sense
<i>Sein des Seienden</i>	the meaning of a meaningful thing
<i>Sein selbst</i>	the meaning-giving source of the meaning of a meaningful thing
II.	
<i>Sein selbst</i>	the a priori fact ("occurrence") of meaning-giving in and with human being
<i>Seyn</i>	" " "
<i>Es gibt Sein</i>	" " "
<i>Welt</i>	" " "
<i>Wesen des Seins</i>	" " "
<i>Wahrheit des Seins</i>	" " "
<i>Lichtung des Seins</i>	" " "
<i>Schickung des Seins</i>	" " "
III.	
<i>das Da des Seins</i>	"where" meaning-giving is a priori operative
<i>Dasein</i>	man as sustaining/holding open the a priori fact of meaning-giving
<i>Entwerfen</i>	projectively sustaining/holding-open the a priori fact of meaning-giving
<i>geworfen</i>	thrown into sustaining/holding-open the a priori fact of meaning-giving
<i>Ereignis</i>	the appropriation of man to sustaining the a priori fact of meaning-giving
<i>Kehre</i>	the turn: the reciprocal bond of man and meaning

The following may suffice for now:

1. All the terms above have the character of what Aristotle calls *to proteron tēi physei* and *to ti ēn einai*, i.e., that which, in any given situation, is always-already (a priori) operative. The terms in "II." name the a priori fact of meaning-giving. This fact has no chronological date: it does not occur only occasionally but is always-already operative. It is the basic structural factum that is a priori at work in conjunction with human being.⁸
2. The terms in "II." above refer to the *meaning-giving source* of the meaningfulness of things. However, this source is not some hypostasis separate from and lying behind

⁸ GA 65: 261.22-3 = CP 184.25-6: "Die Wahrheit des Seins und so dieses selbst west nur, wo and wann Da-sein"; *ibid.*, 263.28-9 = CP 186.3-4: "Das *Seyn* und die Wesung seiner Wahrheit ist des Menschen, sofern er inständig wird als Da-sein"; *ibid.*, 264.1 = CP 186.3: "Das Sein 'ist' des Menschen."

the meaning of the meaningful. Rather, the genitive in such phrases as *Wesen / Lichtung / Wahrheit / Da des Seins* indicates a pleonasm: *Sein selbst* is the *Wesen / Lichtung / Wahrheit / Da*. That is, *Sein* (whatever that is) is the a priori condition whereby things get their meanings. And such meaning-giving never happens apart from human being.

3. Readers who are uncomfortable with the translations above can simply substitute – without any damage to the argument – the traditional Heideggerian code words for the terms I use here, viz., be-ing / beyng, being itself, being, beingness, and beings; the swaying / destining / essencing / presencing / clearing / truth of being, along with enowning, enquivering, cleavage, and the like.

II.

What the Kehre is and is not

The basic question motivating all of Heidegger's work is quite simply "How does meaning occur at all?" (= the question about the *Sinn / Wahrheit / Wesen des Seins*). This basic question is focused on the meaning-giving source that enables (*läßt sein*) the meaning of things. Notice the crucial distinction between Heidegger's lead-in question about the meaning of the meaningful (*das Sein des Seienden*), and his basic question about the meaning-giving *source* of the meaning of the meaningful (*Grundfrage: das Sein selbst*).⁹

1. *The meaning of the meaningful* refers to the simple but astonishing fact that things are meaningful at all. Heidegger called this "the wonder of all wonders: that things *make sense*."¹⁰ This lead-in issue is the traditional one about *on hēi on* or *ens qua ens*, but now understood in a phenomenological mode: "What is the most

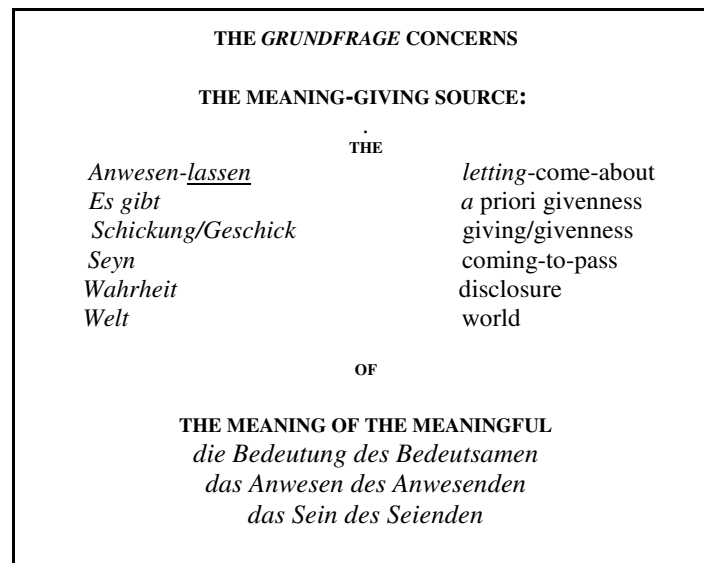
⁹ Meaning as such (*Anwesen als solches*) always entails meaning-giving (*Anwesen-lassen*: GA 14: 45.29-30 = TB 37.5, where it is misprinted), just as in medieval philosophy, having *esse* always entails giving *esse*: "Omne ens actu natum est agere aliquid actu existens." (It is the nature of every being-in-act to effect something [else] existing in act.) Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentes*, II, 6, no. 4. At GA 9: 369 = PM 280, note "d" equates *Sein*, *Wahrheit*, *Welt*, *Sein*, *Ereignis*, and *Sichankündigen des Seins*. GA 9: 201.30-2 = PM 154.12-4 equates *Sinn*, *Entwurfbereich*, *Offenheit*, and *Wahrheit* as the meaning-giving source (*das Sein selbst*) of the meaning (*Sein*) of the meaningful (*Seiendes*). On "the last god" as *die Wahrheit des Seyns*, see GA 65: 35.2 = CP 25.16).

¹⁰ In Heidegger-code: "daß Seiendes *ist*": GA 9: 307.23-4 = PM 234.18. Cf. GA 52, 64.24-5.

basic structure of the things we encounter?” – to which Heidegger answers:
 “Things as such are meaningful: they make sense.”

2. *The meaning-giving source* of the meaning of the meaningful – also called “meaning-itself” or “meaning-as-such” – refers to the a priori condition whereby anything meaningful has its meaning. The early Heidegger analyzed this source-of-meaning as the bond of “being-in” and “world.” This is the man-meaning bond that he originally called *In-der-Welt-sein* and later on called *Lichtung-sein* (GA 69:101.12). This man-meaning phenomenon will eventually be named *Ereignis*, the appropriating of man to the task of sustaining meaning-giving (GA 65: 261.25-6 = CP 184.27-9).

To put this in schematic form, Heidegger’s *basic* question was about the *source* of his lead-in issue.



Regardless of the terms given here, the phrase “meaning-giving source” is merely heuristic at this point. It name an unknown “X” that motivates and guides the basic question while remaining as yet undetermined. But whatever it might turn out to be, the meaning-giving source is operative only in and with human being. In 1955 Heidegger insisted that just as the process of meaning-giving constitutes man, so too man co-constitutes the process of meaning-giving.

We always say *too little* of “meaning itself” [*Sein selbst*] when in saying “meaning,” we leave out its presence *in and with* human being and thereby fail to recognize that human being itself co-determines [*mitausmacht*] “meaning.” We

also always say *too little* of human being if, in saying “meaning” . . . , we posit human being for itself and only then bring what has been so posited into a relation with “meaning.”¹¹

At the beginning I remarked that “*Kehre*” is an over-determined word in Heidegger’s work. It is now time to explain what that means. Richard Rorty was fond of saying, “When your argument hits a wall, make some distinctions.” And distinctions indeed must be made because, in keeping with Aristotelian *pros hen* analogy, Heidegger used the word *Kehre* in many distinct senses, all of them related to one basic, proper sense. Just as there is the analogy of being, so likewise there is the analogy of *Kehre*.

What I have said about the *Kehre* up to this point – that it is the reciprocal bond of *Dasein-Sein* – is based on Heidegger’s *Contributions to Philosophy*, written in 1936-38. That is, I have been dealing exclusively with the basic and proper sense of *Kehre*: the reciprocity or tension between man’s being *required for* and man’s *holding open* the fundamental factum of meaning-giving. Throughout his career, however, Heidegger used the term *Kehre* in at least two other senses that are analogically related to but not identical with the basic sense. To keep things distinct, I will use “*Kehre-1*” to designate the basic *Kehre* discussed in *Contributions*, and will designate the other meanings of *Kehre* by subsequent numbers.

Kehre-1: The fundamental and proper sense of the term.

In 1969 Heidegger stated simply and directly what the central topic of all his thinking was.

The basic idea of my thinking is precisely that meaning [*Sein*], i.e., the process of meaning-giving [*die Offenbarkeit des Seins*], *requires* human being; and conversely that human being is human insofar as it stands in [i.e., sustains] the fact of meaning-giving (GA 16: 704.1-5 = MHC 82.30-33).

In short, Heidegger’s central topic is the man-meaning bond as allowing things their meaning. Throughout his later work Heidegger will use two key terms to name that bond. Human being, he writes, is (1) required (*gebraucht*) (2) to belong to (*zugehören*, i.e., to sustain)

¹¹ GA 9: 407.22-8 (cf. 412.1-3) = PM 308.3-9 (cf. 311.21-3). Also GA 8: 85.13-9 = WCT 79.19-22. Thus, whenever I use “man” or “human being,” I intend them as completed by the word *Sein* – as in “man-meaning.”

the world.¹² These two terms – *Brauch* and *Zugehören* – parallel the early Heidegger’s terms “thrownness” (*Geworfenheit*) and “projectively holding open” (*Entwurf*).¹³

Man is by nature hermeneutical, ever in need of meaning and ever making meaning possible.¹⁴ Meaning is man’s life-breath. Take it away, obliterate its source, and there is no human being left. Correlatively, in order to operate at all, meaning requires human being as its grounding “where.” Without *Sein* there is no *Dasein*. Without *Dasein* there is no *Sein*. Man must be *claimed* for, or *appropriated* to, or *thrown* into, sustaining the a priori fact of meaning-giving. And as claimed / appropriated / thrown, man is required to *projectively hold open* meaning-giving. The tension of those two *is* the fundamental factum, the *Kehre* in its basic and proper sense. Heidegger writes:

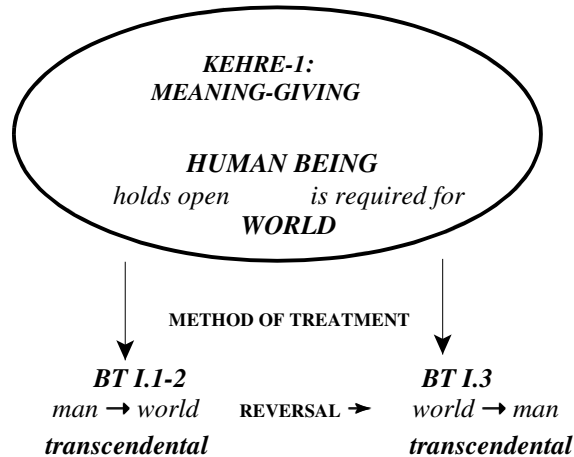
Appropriation has its innermost occurrence and its widest reach in the turn. The turn that is a priori operative in appropriation is the hidden ground of all other subordinate turns, circles, and circularities, which themselves are obscure in their provenance, remain unquestioned, and are easily taken in themselves as the “ultimate” (*GA* 65: 264.1-3 = *CP* 186.7-9).

In *Being and Time* the analysis of the meaning-giving reciprocity was to be treated in two steps, respectively *BT* I.1-2 and in *BT* I.3.

¹² *GA* 65: 251.24-5 = 177.30-1. With “sustain” I translate Heidegger’s (1) *Entwurf* als *Offenhalten*, “projection as holding-open/sustaining,” (2) *ausstehen* as at *GA* 9: 332.19 = *PM* 253.14, and in the sense of *ausstehend* at *GA* 65: 35.6-7 = *CP* 25.20

¹³ *GA* 65: 261.1-3 = *CP* 186.7-10: *Geworfenheit* and *Entwurf* become *gebraucht* and *wahren der Augenblicksstätte* respectively. Re thrownness as being-appropriated: “die *Er-eignung*, das *Geworfenwerden*”: *ibid.*, 34.9 = *CP* 24.32-3; “*geworfener*. . . *er-eignet*”: *ibid.*, 239.5 = *CP* 169.12. Heidegger sometimes refers to the interface of thrownness and holding-open as “*kehrig*,” i.e., reciprocal: e.g., *GA* 65: 261.29 = *CP* 184.32; *ibid.*, 265.26 = *CP* 187.21.

¹⁴ *GA* 21: 151.4-5: “Weil *Dasein* in seinem *Sein* selbst bedeutend ist, lebt es in Bedeutungen und kann sich als diese aussprechen.”



This diagram shows, within the oval, the two ways in which human being is a priori related to world: (a) “actively,” by projectively holding open, sustaining, and grounding the meaning-giving world; and (b) “passively,” insofar as man is claimed by or thrown into sustaining the world. Everything within the oval is the fundamental structural factum. Outside the oval are the places where and the modes in which Heidegger planned to analyze that factum.

Outside the oval: From the beginning Heidegger had already programmed into his work a *reversal of direction (Umkehrung)* between I.1-2 and I.3. *Being and Time* would emphasize *Dasein* and move from *Dasein* toward *Sein* (= *BT I.1-2*). Only then would it reverse direction, emphasize *Sein*, and move from *Sein* to *Dasein* (= *BT I.3*). The first step would show how human being projectively holds the world open. The second step (the reversal) would show how the meaning-giving world *requires* human being, such that man is *thrown* into the meaning-giving process. Both steps were to be worked out in a transcendental-horizonal framework where human being is read as projecting (transcending to) the horizon that confers meaning on things.

Heidegger made a first stab at *BT I.3* in his 1927 course “Basic Problems of Phenomenology,” where he continued to use the transcendental-horizonal approach of *BT I.1-2*. However, the effort made little progress, and at that point Heidegger’s plan to work out *BT I.3* within a transcendental framework collapsed.

Kehre-2: The “seinsgeschichtlich” approach.

Shortly after publishing *Being and Time* Heidegger began shifting his method for treating the second step in his program, the reversal of direction. Instead of a consistent *transcendental* approach in both steps, Heidegger adopted what he called a

seinsgeschichtlich approach to BT I.3. This shift in treatment constitutes *Kehre-2*, of which William J. Richardson's *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* (1963) is the authoritative treatment. As Heidegger writes in "Letter on Humanism" (1947), BT I.3 was foreseen as the place

where the whole project gets reversed [*sich umkehrt*] as regards the "what" and the "how" both of thinking and of what is thought-worthy.¹⁵

The reversal that Heidegger is talking about is the already planned reversal of direction *from* man → world *to* world → man. However, that second step, "Time and Being,"

was held back because my thinking failed to adequately express this reversal and did not succeed with the [transcendental] language of metaphysics (GA 9: 327.32-328.4 = PM 249.37-250.4).

In the mid-1930s, as a result of the inability of transcendental thinking to express the reversal of direction programmed for BT I.3, Heidegger changed his way of treating the second step of the process from a transcendental-horizonal to a *seinsgeschichtlich* approach centered on how man is required for meaning-giving to be operative at all. In the following diagram note that *Kehre-2* stands outside the oval: it is merely a way of treating *Kehre-1* and is not at all identical with the basic and proper sense of the turn.¹⁶ Note as well the shift from a transcendental to a *seinsgeschichtlich* approach, which constitutes *Kehre-2*.

¹⁵ GA 328.1 with note "a" = CP 250.1 with note "a." The change in *thinking* refers to abandoning the transcendental approach. The change in *what is thought-worthy* refers not just to the shift from BT I.1-2 to BT I.3, but more specifically to the world's "claiming" man to sustain meaning-giving. The basic thought-worthy issue for Heidegger is always the factum of meaning-giving: GA 79: 70.28-9 = QCT 40.11-12.

¹⁶ It is important to distinguish between (1) the reversal in the direction of the analysis, viz., *from* man → world *to* world → man, which was programmed into BT from the start and which was initially intended to proceed within a transcendental framework, and (2) the shift from a transcendental to a *seinsgeschichtlich* framework. Only the latter is *Kehre-2*.

4. Meaning from out of this source.¹⁷

This note outlines the four steps that go to make up *Kehre-2*.

- No. 1 refers to the transcendental framework of *Being and Time* and of Heidegger's courses and shorter works up to the autumn of 1930. The transcendental difference is an early name for the "ontological difference" and is the distinction between the meaning-giving world sustained by human being *and* whatever shows up within that world.
- No. 2 refers to *Kehre-2*, the shift from the transcendental to the *seinsgeschichtlich* approach for working out "Time and Being."¹⁸ Note that this step entails overcoming the horizon *as such* – i.e., insofar as it is taken *as* a transcendental horizon – while leaving that field intact for further *seinsgeschichtlich* investigation. In other words, the gains of *BT* I.1-2 – the temporal holding-open of world – remain in place, but the sequel (*BT* I.3) ceases to use a transcendental-horizonal approach.
- No. 3 refers to the *seinsgeschichtlich* working out of *BT* I.3 (= *Kehre-2*) and specifically the turn of the analysis to a focus on the abiding source of meaning while, in the process (and as already planned), reversing the approach *from* man → meaning *to* meaning → man.
- No. 4 refers to the outcome of the analysis: an understanding and acceptance of the fact that all meaning derives from the finite meaning-giving source, which soon will be called *Ereignis*, the a priori "appropriation" of man for sustaining meaning-giving.

¹⁷ "Die transzendenzhafte Differenz. / Die Überwindung des Horizonts als solchen. / Die Umkehr im die Herkunft. / Das Anwesen aus dieser Herkunft," *GA* 2, 53, note "a" = *BT* (Stambaugh), 35.33-35. For a variant story of the transition to the later work see *GA* 65: § 132 = *CP* § 132. Heidegger first uses the term "ontological difference" in his 1929 essay "Vom Wesen des Grundes." In this marginal note he uses the (presumably pre-1929) term "transcendental difference" in place of "ontological difference." Re "transzendenzhaft" as "ontologisch" cf. Max Müller, *Existenzphilosophie im geistigen Leben der Gegenwart*, Heidelberg: F. H. Kerle Verlag, 1949, p. 73f.

¹⁸ Cf. *GA* 65: 250.14-17 = *CP* 176.33-6: "Deshalb bedurfte es der Bemühung. . . die Wahrheit des Seyns aus dessen *eigenem* Wesen zu fassen (Ereignis)."

Conclusion: From this note it is clear that Heidegger's central topic, *Kehre-1*, remains unchanged even while the method for treating it shifts from transcendental to *seinsgeschichtlich*.¹⁹

As regards the second text: Heidegger says that his 1930 essay "On the Essence of Truth" already offered "a certain insight into the thinking of the *Kehre* from 'Being and Time' to 'Time and Being.'"²⁰ Heidegger is referring here to *Kehre-2*, the shift to a *seinsgeschichtlich* approach. The question now is where and how *Kehre-2* fits into the 1930 essay and what the shift in the "thought-worthy" consists in.

"On the Essence of Truth" demonstrates two things:

1. Truth as correspondence is made possible by human freedom, which is man's a priori relatedness to the meaningful (= sections 1-5 of "On the Essence of Truth").
2. Human being is bound up with *two newly formulated* dimensions of the *hiddenness* of the meaning-giving source (= sections 6-7 of the essay):
 - 2a. the source as intrinsically concealed (*Verbergung* as the "mystery");
 - 2b. the source as overlooked and forgotten (*Irre*).

With some effort one can recognize that "1." above is cognate with *BT* I.1-2, namely, human being as sustaining the meaning-giving world, man as *alētheia* and *Zeitlichkeit*. But in "2a." Heidegger adds a *new* dimension to *BT* I.3 by showing that the source of all meaning is intrinsically "concealed" (i.e., unknowable in the strict sense of the term) if only because in order to know what meaning-giving is, we would have to presuppose that very meaning-giving itself. At best we can only experience *that* the source is, without knowing *what is responsible* for it. We can sense our fate (facticity) as thrownness into finite and mortal meaning-giving and then either embrace it in an act of resolve (authenticity) or flee from our essential involvement in it (inauthenticity). Moreover, as "2b." argues, this concealed source of meaning is for the most part overlooked *because* it is intrinsically concealed.

According to Heidegger, between section 5 and section 6 of the essay – i.e., between "1." and "2." – there occurs "the leap into the *Kehre* that is a priori operative in appropriation."²¹ This simple phrase is actually quite complex. What Heidegger refers to

¹⁹ *GA* 9: 328.7-8 taken together with note "c" = *PM* 250.7-8 taken together with note "c."

²⁰ *GA* 9: 4-8 = *PM* 250.4-7: "gibt einen gewissen Einblick in das Denken der *Kehre* [-2] von "Sein und Zeit" zu "Zeit und Sein."

²¹ *GA* 9: 193 note "a" = *PM* 148 note "a": "Zwischen 5. und 6. der Sprung in die (im Ereignis wesende) *Kehre*."

as “the leap” corresponds to No. 2 in the marginal note to *Being and Time*: the “leap” is *Kehre-2*. (He calls it a “leap” because he considers it impossible to make a smooth and simple transition from a transcendental to a *seinsgeschichtlich* approach.) However, the leap of *Kehre-2* lands one in *Kehre-1*, along with the *seinsgeschichtlich* way of treating it. Thus “the leap into the *Kehre* that is a priori operative in appropriation” means overcoming the transcendental-horizonal approach of *BT* I.1-2 and starting afresh with the *seinsgeschichtlich* (“meaning-is-already-given”) approach of *BT* I.3. And with that fresh start, and with his new recognition of the twofold hiddenness of the source, Heidegger says he finally arrived at the site from out of which he experienced and wrote *Being and Time* namely, (1) the intrinsic hiddenness of the source of meaning and (2) the overlooking and forgetting of that hiddenness.²²

Heidegger summarizes the ultimate intent of “On the Essence of Truth” in a chiasmic thesis: *Die Wahrheit des Wesens ist das Wesen der Wahrheit*.²³ To translate that sentence as “The truth of essence is the essence of truth” is to say nothing. Properly interpreted, the sentence says: “The fact of meaning-giving” (*die Wahrheit des Wesens*) is “the source of truth-as-correspondence” (*das Wesen der Wahrheit*).

Unfortunately Heidegger’s less than precise language has contributed to the confusion between the *Kehre-1* of *Contributions to Philosophy* and the *Kehre-2* of “On the Essence of Truth” and “Letter on Humanism.” Heidegger finally got around to distinguishing clearly between the two only in his letter to William J. Richardson (April, 1962) when he denominated *Kehre-2* as a “shift” (*Wendung*) in his approach to the central topic, as contrasted with *Kehre-1*, which is operative in the very content (*Sachverhalt*) of the central topic.²⁴

A final note on *Kehre-2*: Does a sentence like “Meaning-giving *claims* or *calls* man” risk anthropomorphizing the meaning-giving process? Yes, it does. Given Heidegger’s penchant for using anthropomorphic metaphors to express his central topic, there is

²² *GA* 9: 328.9-11 = *PM* 250.8-10: “In ihr [= *Kehre-2*] gelangt das versuchte Denken erst in die Ortschaft der Dimension, aus der “Sein und Zeit” erfahren ist, und zwar erfahren in der Grunderfahrung des Seinsvergessenheit.” See loc. cit., note “d.”

²³ *GA* 201.3-19 = *PM* 153.27-154.2. Although Heidegger presents the thesis in the reverse order to the above, he insists that the subject of the sentence is *die Wahrheit des Wesens*.

²⁴ Richardson, *Heidegger*, xvii.25 (*Wendung*); xix.6-7 (*Sachverhalt*). Also in *GA* 11: 149.21-2 and 149.34-5 respectively.

always the danger of hypostasizing meaning-giving into a Super-Power endowed with agency, a cosmic Something that “does things” to human being, such as “drawing” them into meaning-giving. For example, the later Heidegger will use the term *Ereignis* for the man-meaning bond. That technical term refers to the fact of meaning-giving insofar as it “requires” human being (*brauchen*) to belong to (*zugehören*) and sustain that fundamental fact. However, *Ereignis* is said to “appropriate and own” (*ereignen*) man as *Sein*’s own “property” (*Eigentum*), while in turn making possible man’s proper authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*). Do all these metaphors mean that *Ereignis* is a Super-Something with power to act on human beings? If such a monstrosity is to be avoided at all costs, what then about the later Heidegger’s own quasi-hypostasization of *Sein*? William J. Richardson answers that question with exquisite *délicatesse*, “Only truly great philosophers should be indulged for their obscurity.”²⁵

III. *Kehre-3*

A final use of the word *Kehre* – we shall call it *Kehre-3* – refers to the existentiell transformation (*Verwandlung*) of human beings and their worlds of meaning by way of an insight into *Kehre-1* and a corresponding act of resolve. Heidegger himself points to this usage in his letter to Richardson. Arguing that *Kehre-3* was at work in his thought as early as 1937-8 when he was in the process of carrying out *Kehre-2*, Heidegger quotes his own words from a lecture course he taught that winter:

Over and over again we have to insist: What is at stake in the question of truth. . . is a transformation in human being itself. . . . Man comes into question here in the deepest, broadest, and genuinely fundamental perspective: human being in relation to *Seyn* – i.e., in *Kehre-2*: *Seyn* and its truth in relation to human being. The determination of the essence of truth is accompanied by a necessary transformation of man. The two are the same.²⁶

²⁵ My thanks to my colleague Professor Richard Capobianco for the report of this *bon mot*.

²⁶ The text first appeared in Richardson, *Heidegger*, XXI.7 ff. It has since been published in *GA* 45: 214.15-27 = *BQP*, 181.5-15.

The existentiell-personal transformation that is *Kehre-3* had actually been at issue as early as *Being and Time*, the motto of which was, in effect, “Become what you already are.”²⁷ Heidegger understands that sentence as an exhortation coming from one’s own nature to *become* that very nature by way of a personal conversion from living inauthentically to becoming what and how one essentially is. *Being and Time* is ultimately meant as a phenomenological protreptic to coming back to and taking over the facticity that defines human being.²⁸ It is an exhortation to personally assume one’s hermeneutical mortality, one’s making sense of things while always living at the point of death.²⁹ Only in such a radically first-person act of conversion is authentic meaning-giving at work.

If, in *Being and Time*, *Kehre-3* was the radical transformation from self-alienation to liberation, in a later lecture entitled “*Die Kehre*” (1949) Heidegger steps back and takes a global view of the possibility of such a transformation in today’s Westernized world.³⁰

Recall that *Being and Time* defined man as concerned and temporal being-in-the-world, thrown into sustaining meaning-giving. A world is a specific formation of meaning, a particular *Geschick des Seins* (givenness of meaning) that is always-already operative in and with human being. To review:

1. Each world, as a meaning-giving field, requires a corresponding way of “being-in-it,” more precisely, a way of man’s being appropriated to sustaining that world. We may call the specific way of “being in” and “living” a world the existential ethos of that world. Sustaining a world existentially and living its ethos existentially makes us “complicit” in that world’s mode of giving meaning to things.

²⁷ GA 2: 194.3 = BT 186.4: “werde, was du bist!” The phrase stems from Pindar’s *Phythian Odes*, II.72: *genoi’ hoios essi mathōn*.

²⁸ Coming back to and taking over: GA 2: 194.3; 431.13, 21-2, 34; 506.21-2; 524.2 = BT 186.4; 373.16, 21-2, and 374.7; 434.34-5; 448.34.

²⁹ Human being makes sense of things *because* it is mortal. Making sense means “taking X as. . .,” i.e., synthesizing “over” (i.e., both despite and because of) separation (διάρπестς). The ultimate separation “over which” we synthesize (i.e., make sense) is our own death. I translate *Sein-zum-Tode* as “being at the point of death.”

³⁰ Note that in 1952 Heidegger calls *Kehre-3* a *Wende*, “a turn today against the raging of the technological world.” Martin Heidegger, “*Mein liebes Seelchen!*” Munich: Deutsche Verlag-Anstalt, 2005, 281.17-18 = *Letters to his Wife*, Cambridge UK: Polity, 228.14-15.

2. The meaning-giving bond of man-meaning is intrinsically “hidden,” i.e., unknowable in the strict sense (see above), even though we are able to sense our attunement to that particular formation of meaning (GA 46: 221.14-6).
3. Even though we are a priori appropriated to sustaining the worlds we live in, for the most part we overlook and forget the very man-meaning bond – the appropriation – that constitutes them. Early on, Heidegger called this condition “fallenness” and in the 1930s he called it “errance” (*Irre*).

In his 1949 lecture, Heidegger focuses on three issues: (1) how sense is made in the present formation of meaning; (2) the danger that the present formation of meaning poses to the man-meaning bond; and (3) the possibility of liberation from that danger by the “conversion” mentioned above.

The Construct. Heidegger sees today’s Westernized man as locked into a global paradigm of meaning that he calls *Gestell*, the “Construct.” (*Gestell* is derived from Meister Eckhart’s neologism *Gestellnis*, which translates the Latin *forma* and ultimately the Greek *morphē*, namely, that as which something is construed.)³¹ This growing global ethos, dominated as it is by techno-think (*Technik*), is characterized by a compulsion to construe everything as a mere resource to be exploited for consumption, whether that be nature (“raw material”) or human beings (“human resources”).

The paradox of the Construct is that insofar as human beings are appropriated to sustaining that specific formation of meaning, they ineluctably are complicit in and collaborate with the exploitation of *themselves* as well as of nature and each other. And yet all of this – the Construct, its ethos of exploitation, the techno-think that is its way of disclosure, and our essential complicity with all of that – is itself a *Geschick des Seins*, a gift of meaning that, like every other *Geschick*, overlooks and forgets appropriation, the hidden, meaning-giving source of all meaning.

The Danger. In the Construct, as in any other paradigm of meaning, the appropriation of human being that sustains the ethos of exploitation is “hidden” for the reasons given earlier. And as in any other *Geschick des Seins*, that hiddenness is generally overlooked. However, what is specific to the Construct’s form of appropriation is a *third* level of hiddenness. The lock that the Construct has on us due to our complicity in its ethos of techno-think and exploitation effectively *obscures the fact that we overlook our appropriation to it*. The Construct traps us in a vicious circle that blinds us to *any* mode of appropriation and therefore occludes what Heidegger calls “the mystery of human being” (GA 9: 195.23 = PM 149.28), viz., human facticity as

³¹ GA 81: 286.6-10. Cf. GA 9: 276.6 = PM 211.5. “Construct” is derived from the Latin *construere*, to pile up and arrange.

throwness into sustaining the intrinsically hidden factum. And human being, as appropriated to sustaining the Construct, colludes in blocking any awareness of its exploitative appropriation, or of any other possible appropriation for that matter.

To summarize in the reverse order: In the current paradigm of meaning there is, then, a threefold hiding of *Kehre*-1. The Construct (1) effectively obliterates (2) one's overlooking and forgetting of (3) the naturally hidden appropriation of oneself to sustaining any formation of meaning. The result is that today we are trapped in a prison of self-alienation.

A possible liberation from the Danger. Heidegger argues that although the Construct effectively blots out all traces of the true nature of man, it nonetheless harbors the possibility of a radical transformation of the Construct into another, non-exploitative paradigm (GA 79, 69.24-5 = QCT 39.3-4). Every *Geschick des Seins* holds the possibility of such a change insofar as the hidden and indomitable source of meaning (the *Es gibt Sein*) remains an inexhaustible treasure of yet further meaning-giving.³² Heidegger's hope is that at least a few souls will experience what he calls a "brief glimpse into the mystery from out of errance" (GA 9: 198.21-2 = PM 151.36) – a flash of insight into the source of all meaning – and thus, by an act of resolve, can step through and beyond the Construct.³³

Paradoxically he finds the possibility of liberation *within the very danger* posed by the Construct. Yes, the Construct *is* the Danger insofar as it imposes a virtually complete black-out of appropriation in any form. And yes, the result is a pervasive feeling of deep boredom, of profound alienation from the grip that meaning itself has on human being. Heidegger's hope, however, is that this stifling atmosphere of alienation from one's own nature will eventually lead to a personal epiphany in which one finally recognizes the Danger *as* the danger it is and thereby awakens to one's true nature. *Being and Time* couched such an epiphany in the language of a decisive *Augenblick*, a sudden insight into oneself as mortally bonded to meaning-giving. In the 1949 essay, the epiphany is discussed analogously in terms of a *Blitz/Blick*, a lightning-flash of insight (Heraclitus,

³² Cf. GA 65: 241.17-8 = CP 170.34-5: die Verweigerung = die erste höchste Schenkung des Seyns; and *ibid.*, 246.17-9 = CP 174.6-8: das Sichentziehende as höchste Schenkung.

³³ "A few": GA 65: § 5 = CP § 5. Also "Das stille Einverständnis Weniger," Heidegger, "*Mein liebes Seelchen!*" 208.9-10 = *Letters to his Wife*, 163.9.

fragment 64: *keraunos*) that can lead to the transformation of oneself and of the current world of meaning.³⁴

We see, then, (1) that the intrinsic hiddenness of appropriation facilitates (and to that degree is responsible for) the overlooking of appropriation; (2) that the *gift* of the current formation of meaning (which occludes its own source) is an ethos of disclosure that understands everything as an exploitable resource; and (3) that all this adds up to the immense Danger of utter self-alienation. However, (4) once the alienating power of that Danger is seen for what it is, the current self-endangering of the man-meaning bond can be transformed, at least for a few individuals, into a non-alienating world of meaning. Heidegger poses this possibility in Hölderlin's words:

Where the danger expands, that which frees us
Also grows (*Patmos*, 3-4).

In the moment of insight, described as an epiphantic "lightning bolt," an elite few who are now exploited and alienated might raise anew, within *themselves* and not merely in formal philosophy, the question that goes to the core of human being: How does meaning occur at all? At that point one might say with Heraclitus (fragment 119), *ēthos anthrōpōi daimōn*: To live authentically is to live the mystery of the thrown sustaining of meaning.

³⁴ Note that in the lightning flash of insight what shows itself / comes to pass is *world*: GA 79: 73.13 and 74.25 = QCT 43.22 and 45.13-6.

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Biography

Thomas Sheehan is Professor of Religious Studies at Stanford University and Professor of Philosophy Emeritus at Loyola University Chicago. Among his books and editions are *Becoming Heidegger: On the Trail of his Early Occasional Writings, 1910-1927* (2007) with Theodore Kisiel; *Edmund Husserl: Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology and the Confrontation with Heidegger (1927-1931)* (1997) with Richard Palmer; *Karl Rahner: The Philosophical Foundations* (1987); and *The First Coming: How the Kingdom of God Became Christianity* (1986).