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A (im-)pertinência de Martin Heidegger.
Heidegger's Heritage.
Esperienza del pensare e ideologia.
Ereignis – Événement.
Conscience et vérité. El significado de la
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M. Heidegger and R. Girard.
M. Heidegger e E. Jünger.
M. Heidegger y Ortega y Gasset.
Heidegger y Zubiri.
Heidegger em Portugal. O legado de
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A Herança de Heidegger

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Being, Opened-ness, and Unlimited Technology:

Ten Theses on Heidegger

THOMAS SHEEHAN*

DIE LEITFRAGE

1. *Das Sein = das "ist."*

- a. The guiding question (*Leitfrage*) of Western metaphysics is the question about the being of entities, *das Sein des Seienden*.¹ But the being of entities is the "is" of entities – in Heidegger's words, "*das ist, d.h. das Sein*"² or as William J. Richardson puts it, "the Is of what-is."³ "Being" shows up only as *what, that, and how* an entity is (*das Was-sein, Wie-sein, Daß-sein des Seienden*). It is also called the "is-ness" of what-is, *die Seiendheit des Seienden* (GA 9, 260.6-7).
- b. For Heidegger, however, unlike the classical tradition of metaphysics, *Sein* or *ist* is not an ontic characteristic of entities in themselves and does not occur on its own apart from human beings.⁴ To be sure, *Sein/ist* is always the "being/is" of

* *Stanford University* (Stanford, California, U.S.A.). — In this article "GA" abbreviates Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1975 ff.), and "SD" abbreviates Martin Heidegger, *Zur Sache des Denkens*, Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1969. Citations in these notes frequently refer to texts by page and line, separated by a period. (E.g., in the second note below, "GA 40, 97.12" means "*Gesamtausgabe*, volume 40, page 97, line 12.") The line-count does not include the "header" at the top of the page or any empty lines on the page, but it does count the lines of section titles.

¹ Martin Heidegger, "Die Frage nach dem Sein," *Heidegger Studies*, 17 (2001), 9.3 and 11.4-5.

² GA 40, 97.12. Cf. also GA 51, 28.23-27: "Das 'ist' . . . [ist] eine Abwandlung und Wortform des 'Zeitwortes' 'sein'. Dieses 'Zeitwort' 'sein' können wir durch Vorsetzung des Artikels zum Hauptwort erheben: 'das Sein'"; 29.30-32: ". . . daß wir an die Stelle des 'ist' ein Hauptwort schieben und den Namen 'das Sein' aussprechen"; 43.17-18: ". . . das Sein nennen, indem wir das 'ist' sagen"; and 45.3-4: "Was wir mit dem 'ist' meinen, nennt das Hauptwort und der Name 'das Sein.'"

³ William J. Richardson, "Martin Heidegger," in Babette E. Babich, ed., *From Phenomenology to Thought, Errancy, and Desire* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1995), 619.17.

⁴ GA 2, 244.5-6: "Sein aber 'ist' nur im Verstehen des Seienden, zu dessen Sein so etwas wie Seinsverständnis gehört"; 281.1-2: "Allerdings nur solange Dasein ist, das heißt die

an entity. But in Heidegger's phenomenological view, such "being" appears only within a human enactment of *lesein* (= *hermeneuein*, *Seinsverständnis*), a synthetic-differential act of taking-an-entity-as (*ti kata tinos lesein* = *etwas auf etwas entwerfen*). The original manifestation of *Sein* or *ist* occurs as the "as" of an act of taking-something-as. In theoretical objectivity we take an entity *as* this-or-that; in practical engagement we take the tool *as-suitable-for* a task. Thereby, whether thematically or unthematically, we understand that the entity *is* this-or-that, and that the tool *is for* a certain purpose. Only in this way do we know an entity's "being."

- c. Heidegger, both early and late, holds that "being" is phenomenological. It occurs only in a synthetic-differential act of taking-as; only as the what-ness, how-ness, and that-ness of the entities we encounter; and only as the *sense* or *meaningfulness* of those entities. To say "This entity *is* ..." is to say that this entity "makes-sense-as." *Das Sein = das Anwesen-als = die Bedeutsamkeit* [sc., *des Seienden*].

DIE GRUNDFRAGE

2. For Heidegger *die Sache selbst* is not *Sein* but that which makes possible the phenomenological occurrence of *Sein*.

- a. Heidegger designates the basic question about his focal topic (= *die Grundfrage* that pursues *die Sache selbst*) as *die Frage nach dem Sein selbst* or *nach dem Sein als solches*. This question moves beyond the *Leitfrage* (which asks what/how/that entities are and what the highest entity is) as well as beyond all takings-as in which such "being" occurs. The *Grundfrage* asks what it is that *makes possible* all such takings-as and thus all instances of "being."⁵

ontische Möglichkeit von Seinsverständnis, 'gibt es' Sein"; 299.31-33: "Wahrheit 'gibt es' nur, sofern und solange Dasein ist"; 304.9-11: "Sein – nicht Seiendes – 'gibt es' nur, sofern Wahrheit ist. Und sie *ist* nur, sofern und solange Dasein ist. Sein und Wahrheit 'sind' gleichursprünglich"; and 419.1-2: "Wenn es aber Sein nur 'gibt', sofern Wahrheit 'ist' ..."

⁵ The *Grundfrage* inquires beyond or behind "das Sein selbst" by asking for "das Wesen des Seins selbst," i.e., "das, von woher und wodurch es [= das Sein] als das Sein west." Such a question "rückt es [= das Sein selbst] also im voraus noch in einen noch zu bestimmenden Bereich, aus dem es [= das Sein selbst] die *Offenbarkeit* seines eigenen Wesens empfängt – seine *Wahrheit*." Cf. "... beansprucht sie einen Bereich, in den hinaus sie das Sein rückt, aus dem her sie das Sein ins Offene and damit in die Wahrheit stellt": Heidegger, "Die Frage nach dem Sein," 9.9, 12-13, 17-19, and 11.9-10. In its early form, Heidegger's focal question went beyond or behind "being" by asking whether "time" is responsible for the manifestness/availability of "being": "... inwiefern Sein (Anwesenheit) seine Offenbarkeit in der Zeit hat": *Zollikoner Seminare*, ed. Medard Boss (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1987), 157.27-28.

- b. If "being" shows up only in a *Seinsverständnis*, Heidegger's central topic is "*die Bedingung der Möglichkeit des Seinsverständnisses*" (GA 24, 405.12-13).
- c. If "being" is the is-ness we ascribe to entities, Heidegger is after what allows for such ascribed is-ness: "*Grund und Zulassung der Seiendheit*" (GA 68, 51.5)
- d. If "being" is the presence/accessibility of entities, Heidegger asks how such presence/accessibility comes about: "*Die Frage, inwiefern es Anwesenheit als solche geben kann*" (SD 77.17-18)
- e. If "being" is the manifestness/availability of entities, Heidegger's focal topic is the prior possibilizing of that manifestness/availability: "*die vorgängige Ermöglichung der Offenbarkeit von Seiendem*" (GA 9, 114.26-27).

3. *Die Sache selbst = die Welt, die Lichtung, das Da, etc.*

- a. The "as" of taking-an-entity-as underlies all instances of the "is" that we ascribe to the entity. In turn, what underlies the "as" of such taking-as are the human concerns that make an entity interesting, relevant, and significant, whether those concerns be practical, theoretical, aesthetic, or whatever.
- b. Heidegger calls the realm of such concerns and interests "the world" or "the clearing" or "the open"⁶ (*Welt = Lichtung = das Da*⁷). None of these titles refers to the "being of entities" or to "being itself." They refer, rather, to what makes possible all taking-as and hence all instances of "being."

⁶ On *das Da* as "the open": GA 5, 40.1-4: "eine offene Stelle. Eine Lichtung ist"; "Diese offene Mitte"; "die lichtende Mitte." GA 9, 184.11: "eines Offenen, dessen Offenheit"; 184.25: "im Offenen eines Bezirks"; 185.29: "in ein Offenes"; 187.32: "das Offenbare eines Offenen"; 188.21: "das Offene und dessen Offenheit"; 201.30-32: "[Die Frage] nach der Offenheit." GA 15, 415.10-13: "Es gilt, das Da-sein in dem Sinne zu erfahren, daß der Mensch das 'Da', d.h. die Offenheit des Seins für ihn, selbst *ist*." GA 49, 56.31-32: "Die Frage nach ... dem Offenen." GA 65, 325.28: "das Zwischen, in dessen Offenheit das Seiende und die Seiendheit unterscheidbar werden"; 328.25, 28: "das Offene"; 331.23: "Offenheit." *Zollikoner Seminare*, 9.3-9: "offen," "Offenheit"; 156.35-157.3: "Das *Da* meint in 'Sein und Zeit' nicht eine Ortsangabe für ein Seiendes, sondern soll die Offenheit nennen, in der für den Menschen Seiendes anwesend sein kann, auch er selbst für sich selbst"; 157.31-32: "[D]as Menschsein als solches [ist] dadurch ausgezeichnet, auf seine Weise diese Offenheit [= das *Da*] selbst zu sein"; 188.14-15: "das *Da* [ist] dort [in *Sein und Zeit*] bestimmt als das Offene."

⁷ On *Welt = Lichtung = Da*: GA 9, 325.20-21: "das 'Da', das heißt die Lichtung des Seins"; 326.15-16: "die Lichtung des Seins, und nur sie ist 'Welt'"; 327.14-15: "das *Da* als Lichtung des Seins"; 336.27 "das *Da*, die Lichtung als Wahrheit des Seins selbst." GA 49, 56.20: "die Offenheit, die Lichtung." GA 65, 297.25: "Das *Da-sein* als die Wesung der Lichtung"; 316.26-27: "was das *Da-sein* auszeichnet, eben das *Da*, die Lichtung für die Verbergung, zu *sein*"; 331.23: "Offenheit und Lichtung." *Zollikoner Seminare*, 188.14-15:

4. Welt/Lichtung/Da occurs only with and as Da-sein, our apriori opened-ness.

- a. Heidegger, both early and late, holds that the human essence consists in necessarily (= apriori) *being-the-Da*.⁸ *Da-sein* = "being-the-open" in the double sense of "always already having been opened" and "having to be that already-opened-ness."
- b. Being-the-open = being *die Sache selbst*.

5. Thus, in one formulation *die Sache selbst* is the apriori (= always already) opened-ness of the open-that-we-are, which makes possible all takings-as and attributions of "is."

- a. In Heidegger's earlier terminology the apriori status of our opened-ness is called the *Geworfenheit* or thrown-open-ness of the *Da*-that-we-necessarily-are (GA 2, 74.25). Thrown-open-ness makes possible all taking-as (*entwerfen*). Our openness is called "thrown" because it arises from and is grounded in our groundless ("hidden," "withdrawn," relatively absential) finitude. (See no. 7, below.)
- b. In Heidegger's later terminology the apriori status of our opened-ness is called the *Ereignisheit* or drawn-open-ness of the *Lichtung*-that-we-necessarily-are (*Lichtung-sein*: GA 69, 101.12). Our *Da-sein/Lichtung-sein* makes possible *die Geschick des Seins*, i.e., the groundless – because grounded in our finitude – givenness (= *Geschick*...) of the ability to understand and affirm that anything is (= ... *des Seins*).

6. Heidegger scholarship should abandon the word "Sein" as a marker for *die Sache selbst*, for at least the following reasons:

- a. Heidegger's focal topic is not "being" in any form ("*das Sein [ist] nicht mehr das eigens zu Denkende*," SD 44.6-7). Rather, his topic is that which makes possible all *Seinsverständnis* and thus any appearance of *Sein/ist*.

"Wie ist das *Da* dort [in *Sein und Zeit*] bestimmt als das Offene? Diese Offenheit hat auch den Charakter des Raumes. Räumlichkeit gehört zur *Lichtung*, gehört zum Offenen. . . ." Cf. GA 5, 40.1-10: "eine offene Stelle. Eine *Lichtung* ist." "Nur diese *Lichtung* schenkt und verbürgt uns Menschen einen Durchgang zum Seienden, das wir selbst nicht sind, und den Zugang zu dem Seienden, das wir selbst sind."

⁸ GA 9, 325.20-21.: "Der Mensch west so, daß er das 'Da'...ist." GA 15, 415.10-11: "daß der Mensch das 'Da', d.h. die Offenheit des Seins für ihn, selbst ist." *Zollikon Seminare*, 157.31-32.: "[D]as Menschsein als solches [ist] dadurch ausgezeichnet, auf seine Weise diese Offenheit [= das Da] selbst zu sein," 157.3-4: "Das *Da* zu sein zeichnet das Menschsein aus."

- b. Even when *die Grundfrage* is designated as "the question of being-itself," the crucial distinction between *das Ermöglichte* (= *das Sein selbst*) and *das Ermöglichende* (= the open as *das Woher und Wodurch des Seins selbst*⁹) is all too frequently overlooked.
- c. Heidegger scholarship tends to hypostasize *das Sein* into a non-phenomenological, quasi-metaphysical Something ("Big Being") that we can allegedly pursue and relate to, an "X" that performs such mythical tasks as revealing and concealing itself, dispensing epochs of itself, and so on.

DIE VOR-FRAGE¹⁰

7. What brings about *Welt/Lichtung/Da* is human finitude – the hidden, withdrawn *lack* that generates the open.

- a. What generates (*zeitigt*) and sustains the open is the finitude or lack-in-full-self-presence that defines the human essence as *Zeitlichkeit*. This lack is responsible for the fact that human being is "im-perfect" (not pure presence but pres-absence), a finite openness within which things are known not with the immediacy of intellectual intuition but only via the indirection of *Seinsverständnis* (cf. GA 3, 280.30-3). One's finitude/lack clears a "place of dif-ference" wherein synthesis becomes possible. This "place" is *Welt/Lichtung/Da* as the realm of possible relation ("as"), thanks to which entities can be taken as *being* this or that and thus can be understood as what and how they currently are. Our groundless finitude grounds the "e-mergence" (*a-leitheia, Wahrheit*) of all forms of being.
- b. Insofar as human finitude/lack is a non-presence, Heidegger describes it as "hidden," i.e., as the usually overlooked *lethe* or mystery that constitutes the essence of *Da-sein* (*das vergessene Geheimnis des Daseins*: GA 9, 195.23).
- c. Insofar as human finitude/lack is a relative absence, Heidegger likewise describes it as a withdrawing from presence (*der Entzug* or *das Sichentziehende*: GA 8, 10.30, 11.12, 13, 16, 17).
- d. The hiddenness/withdrawal that is our finitude "appropriates" or "draws" us into opened-ness and thus into the possibility of understanding the current being of whatever we encounter. Our finitude is our appropriation into opened-ness. (*Der*

⁹ Heidegger, "Die Frage nach dem Sein," 9.12-13. See note 5 above, the first sentence..

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.21. The *Grundfrage* (about whence and whereby "being itself" emerges) implies, Heidegger says, the prior question ("die Vor-frage") about the whence and whereby of e-mergence itself ("die Frage nach der *Wahrheit selbst*"). However, this Vor-frage has priority not of and by itself but only as pertaining to the *Grundfrage* ("nur in der Zugehörigkeit zur *Grundfrage* – nicht an sich"), *ibid.*, 9.20-24.

Entzug ist des Daseins: GA 65, 293.9; *Entzug ist Ereignis*: GA 8, 10.30 with 11.6-17.)

- e. Thus the *Vor-frage nach der Wahrheit selbst* – the question about the whence and whereby of emergence itself – finds its answer in human finitude.

SEINSVERGESSENHEIT

8. What Heidegger calls *Seinsvergessenheit* is the forgottenness not of *Sein* but of what makes possible *Sein* and *Seinsverständnis*.

- It is impossible for human beings to forget “being” without ceasing to be human. Indeed, metaphysics has never forgotten “being” or the ontological difference.¹¹ Even the failure to thematize one’s unthematic awareness of “is” does not count as what Heidegger means by *Seinsvergessenheit* (cf. GA 9, 263.28-30).
- Seinsvergessenheit* is shorthand for “the forgottenness of what *allows for taking-as* and thus ‘being’” (cf. SD 40.6, 18-24). *Seinsvergessenheit* means overlooking our hidden-withdrawn finitude and the *Welt/Lichtung/Da* that it holds open.
- This lack is already intrinsically hidden and withdrawn (= *lethe*), but its hiddenness is “redoubled” (doubly and improperly hidden) when it is overlooked or forgotten in *Seinsvergessenheit* (SD 44.14-19, 26-30).
- However, one can also understand and embrace that intrinsically hidden finitude – as one’s own essence, as what generates the open clearing, and as the source of all taking-as and occurrence of “is.” In the early Heidegger the act of understanding and embracing one’s finitude is called “resolve” (*Entschlossenheit*: GA 2, 393.26). In the later work it is described as returning to and settling into one’s opened-ness (*die Einkehr in das Ereignis*: SD 44.16-17, 26).

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

9. The intrinsically hidden lack/finitude that is responsible for the apriori opened-ness of the open guarantees both the *groundlessness* and the *in-*

¹¹ GA 15, 310.12-13: “daß alle Metaphysik sich zwar in der Differenz bewegt (stets wird das betont, besonders bei Thomas von Aquino).” Cf. GA 2, 304: “Was es bedeutet: Sein ‘ist’, wo es doch von allem Seienden unterschieden sein soll” [Heidegger’s note to the last phrase: “Ontologische Differenz”]. See GA 65, 325.28–326.1: “Er [= der Entwurf] ist erst das Zwischen, in dessen Offenheit das Seiende und die Seiendheit unterscheidbar werden, so zwar, daß zunächst nur das Seiende *selbst* (d. h. eben verborgen *es* als ein solches und damit hinsichtlich seiner Seiendheit) erfahrbar wird.”

principle unlimitedness of our ability to take-things-as – for example, in theoretical-scientific knowing.

- The in-principle unlimitedness of such theoretical-cognitive takings-as and occurrences-of-being is the positive gift of our finitude and of the *Welt/Lichtung/Da* that it holds open. The universe is endlessly knowable and should be known as such.
- Such unlimited knowing need not stand in inverse proportion to the understanding and embrace of one’s essential finitude, nor need it entail the overlooking or forgetting of *die Sache selbst*.

10. The in-principle unlimitedness of takings-as and occurrences-of-being likewise makes possible unlimited global technology.

- One form of unlimited taking-as is unlimited using-for – for example, the adapting and reshaping of entities into commodities, into means for achieving human ends, etc., *ad infinitum*.
- As with scientific knowing, such in-principle unlimited using-for need not entail *Seinsvergessenheit* or stand in an inverse relation to *Entschlossenheit*, *Eigentlichkeit*, *die Einkehr in das Ereignis*, or *die Überwindung/Verwindung der Metaphysik*.
- Overlooking human finitude and the *Welt/Lichtung/Da* that it holds open is not the cause, or even a contributing cause, of the globalization of technology.
- Heidegger’s published thought provides no good arguments for limiting (much less opposing) the endless spread of technology. While such arguments might well be made, Heidegger’s philosophy fails to do so.
- There is no necessary connection between the self-assertion of the technologically efficient self (*sc.*, Jünger’s “worker-dominating-the-world”) and *Seinsvergessenheit*. Aquinas could just as easily have overlooked and forgotten the *Welt/Lichtung/Da* during his mystical vision at Fossanova, as Stalin could have understood and embraced his essential finitude while industrializing the Soviet Union.