
Martin Heidegger and Ontology

Author(s): Emmanuel Levinas and Committee of Public Safety

Source: *Diacritics*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Spring, 1996), pp. 11-32

Published by: The Johns Hopkins University Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1566250>

Accessed: 22-05-2020 16:06 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

The Johns Hopkins University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Diacritics*

MARTIN HEIDEGGER AND ONTOLOGY

EMMANUEL LEVINAS

The prestige of Martin Heidegger¹ and the influence of his thought on German philosophy marks both a new phase and one of the high points of the phenomenological movement. Caught unawares, the traditional establishment is obliged to clarify its position on this new teaching which casts a spell over youth and which, overstepping the bounds of permissibility, is already in vogue. For once, Fame has picked one who deserves it and, for that matter, one who is still living. Anyone who has studied philosophy cannot, when confronted by Heidegger's work, fail to recognize how the originality and force of his achievements, stemming from genius, are combined with an attentive, painstaking, and close working-out of the argument—with that craftsmanship of the patient artisan in which phenomenologists take such pride. In this study, it is important for us to understand, above all, the true intentions of our author, to illuminate what he thinks really needs to be said, and to surmise what is most critical for him.

To get to the heart of Heidegger's system, it seems fitting to begin with a problem that is generally familiar. We choose the problem of knowledge, a deeper understanding of which takes us to the very threshold of Heidegger's thought. For this problem, central to modern philosophy, is one of the main obstacles of modern philosophy that Heidegger wishes to surmount. Neo-Kantianism, which takes knowledge as the philosophical problem of the first rank, is the movement against which Heidegger rebels with all his strength. We have, thus, every chance of gaining access to his thought by the main door, so to speak. Once inside the system we will try to trace its outlines,² reserving, for a second part of our work, the determination of Heidegger's place in the history of ideas, especially in the phenomenological movement, as well as of his relations with the philosopher to whom he owes so much—Edmund Husserl.³

1

In its most general form, the problem of the theory of knowledge has a critical significance. It consists in delineating a domain where knowledge can be certain and in determining the criteria for the legitimate scope of knowledge. But this problem, as normal and as simple as it may appear, has deeper roots. That knowledge should need a criterion at all presupposes that truth is not identical to all that is known and that the course

1. Heidegger's main works are: (a) *Sein und Zeit* (Being and Time), vol. 1, 1st ed. (1926), 2nd ed. (1929) (unabridged); (b) *Vom Wesen des Grundes* (The Essence of Reason), an excerpt from a published collection in honor of Husserl's seventieth birthday (1929); (c) *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* (Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics) (1929); (d) *Was ist Metaphysik?* (What Is Metaphysics?), *Inaugural Address to the Faculty at Freiburg* (1930).

2. With thanks to the *Revue philosophique* for publishing the first sections of the first part of the work in preparation.

3. On the relations between Husserl and Heidegger, we refer the reader to our previous study *On the Theory of Intuition in the Phenomenology of Husserl*.

of things can fail to correspond with the course of thought. “How does knowledge correspond to being?” is a more profound formulation of the problem of knowledge.

But we are not going to touch anymore on the primordial phenomenon that generates the problem. The problem of correspondence between thing and thought presupposes a free activity of thought and its isolation in relation to the object. It is precisely this presupposition which renders their harmony and even their contact problematic. “How does the subject take leave of itself to attain the object?” is what the problem of knowledge, in the last analysis, boils down to. Its true source is thus the concept of “subject” as elaborated by modern philosophy. The *cogito* presided over the subject’s birth. The *cogito* was the affirmation of the privileged nature of the subject’s immanent sphere, of its unique place in existence; hence, the *cogito* was the *specificity* of the subject’s connection to the rest of reality, the *sui generis* nature which opens up the passage from immanence to transcendence, the passage from ideas contained in the thinking substance to⁴ their “formal existence.”

The concept of the subject, understood as a substance having a specific position in the entire domain of being, presents us with difficulties of two kinds. First, how do we understand this leave-taking from the self which the thinking substance brings about and which displays an entirely original aspect? Indeed, we could say that thought, in reaching out toward objects, does not actually take leave of itself, since its objects—considered as ideas and contents of thought—are, in a certain sense, already within it. In order to make sense of this paradox, Descartes had to invoke the existence of a veridical god who guaranteed the correspondence between things and ideas. Furthermore, he had to reflect on truth’s method and criteria—a reflection and preoccupation endemic to modern philosophy. Such reflection is a basic requirement for a subjectivity enclosed within itself which must search within its own interior for signs of its conformity with being. From there, it is but a step to idealism. Henceforth, the thinking substance will not have to reunite with extended substance; it will recover that extended substance within itself. The subject itself will constitute its own object. Idealism comes to be one of the consequences both of the Cartesian *cogito* and of the theories of knowledge whose flourishing has been fostered by this new conception of the subject.

But thinking substance characterized as a “subject having to transcend itself” entails a second antinomy still more profound, which is found to be at the very heart of idealism. Substance is that which is. Now, existence is for us essentially linked to time—whatever theory we might have about it. Even in the very terms which ancient philosophy has employed to speak of being we meet with these temporal indices [Heidegger, *KPM* 230]. What is more, once we admit that the subject is temporal—that it subsists as an eternally present substratum, that it unfolds in time in a chain of causes and effects—can that subject be called a substance and can it have being except in a purely nominal sense? But if we acknowledge the substantiality of the subject, how do we understand that next to this *temporal dimension*, life, precisely as conscious life, is related at each moment of its passing to an object? This relation to the object as such is not a *temporal event* of which, so to speak, we could become aware. The relation points in a direction to which conscious life is bound in each moment of its passing, but in which it does not endure. But on the other hand—and this is crucial—we cannot reduce the relation of *subject to object* as it persists within idealism, where the object is encompassed in consciousness, to one of these supertemporal relations we know in an ideal world. For it is a matter of a relation lived out and established effectively by the individual beings such as we are.

Going beyond this second antinomy which reappears within idealism is idealism’s most decisive step. It is fundamentally here that the true passage into subjectivity—in all its opposition to being, that is to say, in its opposition to temporal substance—is

4. [Trans. note] The French should read à. The sentence is omitted from the abridged version.

accomplished. This step is taken by means of an evasion of time. For the neo-Kantians, as for Leibniz, time becomes an obscure perception, alien to the profound nature of the subject; for Kant, it is a phenomenal form which conceals from the subject precisely its true subjectivity; for Hegel, it is something into which spirit is thrust, but from which spirit is originally distinct. Now time (and we are anticipating here the final sections of our exposition) is not a characteristic of the *essence* of reality, a *something*, or a property; it is the expression of the *fact of being* [*fait d'être*] or, rather, it is that *fact of being* itself. In a way it is the very dimension in which the existence of being comes about. *To exist is to be* “temporalized” [*se temporalizer*].⁵ To grasp time in its specificity is thus to challenge the very meaning of the word “being” which, as “transcendent,” traditional philosophy has excluded from its domain of research. The theory of time is thus ontology, but ontology in the specific sense of the term. Not only is ontology not identified with realism (as contemporary use of the term would have it), but it is also quite different from the study of the essence of *being* [*être*] in the sense of a *that-which-is* [*objet étant*]. Ontology is opposed to that-which-is in the very sense of *the fact that it is* and in its specific mode of being.

Consequently, we understand how much the destruction of time by the idealists allows them to emphasize the *sui generis* nature of the subject, the paradoxical fact that the subject *is something which is not*. The subject is not distinguished from the thing by such and such a differing property, or by its *essence*, or by the fact of being spiritual, active, nonextensive and opposed to what is material, inert, and extensive (which is how Berkeley distinguishes them); rather, the difference between subject and thing concerns the *existence*, the very manner of *being-there* [*être-là*]⁶—if we can still even speak of existence here. Now, this distinction is also equally susceptible of showing us that the opposition between the epistemological outlook, which foregrounds the theory of knowledge, and the ontological outlook is not purely nominal and that, in order to progress beyond the epistemological outlook, it is not enough to affirm purely and simply that knowledge is a being. For it is incontestable that in the indifference to time which the “subject-object” relation manifests, there is something like a negation of the existential nature of knowledge. But that is also why the ontological determination of the subject (if such a thing is possible) must seek a temporal sense in the transcendence of the subject in relation to itself.

Ancient philosophy only knew the ontological mode in determining the subject. But it knew nothing of the modern notion of the subject. For that reason, it never sought the ontological structure of the subject-object relation. For Plato, for example, it is perfectly natural that thought should have an object. Thought is defined as a silent dialogue between the soul and itself, and that way, the basic characteristic of language, its universal and objective aspect, is attributed to thought: discourse always lays claim to truth. Furthermore, all the difficulties that Plato encounters in the *Theaetetus* in explaining error originate from his inability to form a true notion of the subject. The wax,⁶ of varying degrees of softness, in which the soul is covered—and which, at a certain point in the dialogue, must make us pay attention to error—symbolizes the specifically subjective element of thought but doesn't explain its true nature. On the other hand, when Plato determines the character of the relation of subject to object, he conceives of it as an objective relation made up of passion and action. The theory of visual sensation in the *Theaetetus* and the passages of the *Parmenides* and of the *Sophist* (where our knowledge of the Ideas—as objective relation of passion and action—amounts to a diminishing of the

5. *Obliged to resort to barbarisms, we translate by the word “temporalize” the German expression sich zeitigen. Like its German equivalent, it serves to highlight better the specific sense of time, which is not a “something” that exists or unfolds, but which is the very “effectuating” of existence.*

6. [Trans. note] *The abridged version reads La cire, while the original is missing the L.*

perfection of the Ideas): these texts, amongst many others, enlighten us sufficiently about Plato's thought.

The concept of the subject is not, however, absent from this philosophy. Only, unlike contemporary philosophy, the structure of the subject is determined with the help of ontological notions. This structure is, for Plato, subjective not in the manner that sight must take leave of itself in order to reach its object, but in the manner of belonging to a finite being, torn from the banquet of the Gods, and chained in the Cave. In a way, it is the *history* of the soul which transforms the soul into a subjectivity capable of griefs and errors. Subjectivity is defined by a *mode of existence* that is inferior, by the fact of being involved with becoming, by finitude. But this finitude does not explain—nor does it claim to explain—the aspect of subjectivity which modern philosophy has raised, namely, the unreality and the specificity of the subject/object relation. The chains of those imprisoned in the cave determine, certainly, the structure of human existence, but this structure is affirmed as *coexisting* purely and simply with the faculty of *vision* which man possesses essentially as an attribute. We are not shown how vision as an immanence which transcends itself is conditioned by the ontological modes of humanity. In order to raise the soul above error (which is the perpetual mark of subjectivity), “all the skill consists in turning the soul in the manner which is easiest and most useful for it. *It is not a question of bestowing the faculty of sight upon the soul, for it possesses it already* [see *Republic*, book 7].

But perhaps the affirmation of this coexistence does not mark the limit of philosophical wonder. Is it not necessary to follow Plato's work, as we seek the ontological foundation of the contemporary notion of subjectivity, while respecting the distinctiveness of the latter? Is it not necessary to ask if the “subject/object” structure is really the originary form of the transcendence of soul through self-relation? Is it not necessary to call into question the notion of being which is used uncritically even when it is drawn into relation with time, given that this notion of time is not gone into in sufficient depth, and given that being is allied with a notion of time that maybe no longer expresses the initial structure of such a phenomenon? And will we not, as a consequence, better understand this proximity of the existential determination of man—through the fall, through finitude—to his determination as an immanence having to transcend itself? Is not the “unreality” of the leap toward the object taken by the subject a mode of time, rather than being alien⁷ to time? Is not the theory of knowledge immersed in ontology? How does one genuinely reduce knowledge to existence? Such are the problems that are going to occupy Heidegger. His undertaking is thus diametrically opposed to that of dialectical philosophy, which, far from searching out the ontological foundation of knowledge, seeks for the logical foundations of being. Hegel asks: “How does spirit fall into time?” And Heidegger responds: “Spirit does not fall *into* time, but effective existence, in its fall, is thrown out of originary and authentic time.”⁸

2

In setting out from the relation between the theory of knowledge and ontology, we have encountered two problems. First, that of the duality within man between what we have called his ontological dimension—his existence, or time—and knowledge. And then the more general problem of the very meaning of existence; that is, the calling again into question of the notion of existence and of its relation with time. Now, it is the second

7. [Trans. note] *The French in both the 1932 and abridged form should read étrangère rather than étranger.*

8. *Sein und Zeit* 436. *We will show in the next section how the Heideggerian method is also opposed to dialectical progress.*

problem which is initially at the core of Heideggerian thought. Heidegger's hostility toward epistemology in the specific and distinctive sense which we have given it—namely, of being opposed to ontological inquiry—his attempt to grasp the subject ontologically is a logically subsequent move to make [*Sein und Zeit* 2, 15, and *passim*]. But, as we will see, the *ontological* analysis of the subject is alone capable of yielding a solution and even a sphere of investigation to ontology in the general sense that Heidegger seeks.

It is always the case that the way one finds oneself led into the heart of philosophical pursuit is, for Heidegger, entirely dictated by his fundamental ontological preoccupation, which consists in determining the meaning of the word “being.” This preoccupation is quite unconcerned with first establishing critically the validity of the instrument which is knowledge. That is why, after having shown by these reflections, whose progress we are going to follow, the central place of man in philosophical inquiry, he recalls, in a manner which at first surprises contemporary consciousness, not the rich flourishing of studies on consciousness which date from Descartes, but Aristotle's phrase which asserts the privileged place of the soul in the totality of being: *ē phygē ta inta pōs estin* (“*The soul is, in a way, all existing things*” [*Sein und Zeit* 14; Aristotle, *De anima* G.8.431b21]).

Let us then start with the fundamental problem of the meaning of being and specify its terms. Heidegger initially distinguishes between that which is “a be-ing” [*l'étant*] (*das Seiende*) and “the being of a be-ing” [*l'être*] (*das Sein des Seienden*).⁹ In speaking earlier about time we came up against this “being of a be-ing.” The history of philosophy has always recognized it in its specificity, for Kant, refuting Descartes, was able to affirm that *being* was not an attribute of a *be-ing*. The science that studies a *be-ing* is, for Heidegger, *ontic* [*ontique*], and it is necessary to distinguish it from the science of the *being of a be-ing* which alone is *ontological* [*ontologique*]. Let us examine these distinctions more closely. The *attributes* of a be-ing make it to be of this or that determination. In identifying its attributes, we say *what* it is, or end up at its *essence*. But alongside the essence of a be-ing, we can affirm, through a perception or demonstration, that it exists. And, indeed, for classical philosophy, the problem of *existence*, which was posited in addition to that of *essence*, was reduced to this affirmation of existence. But determining just what this affirmed existence means has always been considered impossible, since, being of a higher generality, existence was not capable of being defined. The philosophy of the Middle Ages called this “being of a be-ing” *transcendens*.

Now, Heidegger contests precisely the insolubility of the problem of the *meaning* of being and sees in it the fundamental philosophical problem—*ontology* in the distinctive sense of the term; he sees the empirical sciences at one and the same time as the “eideictic” sciences in Husserlian terminology (that is, the *a priori* sciences that study *essence*, the *eidos* of the differing domains of reality),¹⁰ and as leading to being; and he sees being as that to which ancient philosophy aspired in wanting, in the *Sophist*, to understand being and in positing, with Aristotle, the problem of *on ē on*. We must not apprehend being *per genus et differentiam specificam*, precisely because it is not a be-ing. The fact that, at every instant, we understand its meaning proves that it is possible to know being in some other way. *The understanding of being is the determining characteristic and the fundamental fact of human existence*. Maybe we should then say that inquiry is pointless in such an instance? But the sheer fact of understanding does not entail that understanding must be either explicit or authentic. No doubt, we are looking for something we already possess

9. [Trans. note] We translate throughout Heidegger's distinction between *das Sein* and *das Seiende*, which Levinas translates as *l'être* and *l'étant* respectively, as being and be-ing, in contrast to other translations which often render *Sein* as Being and *Seiende* as being. There is no felicitous way of distinguishing in English between the infinitive used as a verbal noun and the present participle used substantively as there is in both German and French.

10. Cf. our work on The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's *Phenomenology*, chapter 6: 173–74.

in some manner, but explicating this understanding is not, for all that, a subsidiary and secondary task. For Heidegger, the understanding of being is not a purely theoretical act but, as we will see, a fundamental event where one's entire destiny is at issue; and, consequently, the difference between these modes of explicit and implicit understanding is not simply that between clear and obscure knowledge, but is a difference which reaches unto the very being of man. The passage from implicit and inauthentic understanding to explicit and authentic understanding comprises the fundamental drama of human existence. We will retain, for the moment, this primary characteristic of man as a *be-ing* who understands being explicitly (i.e. *ontologically*, in Heideggerian phraseology) or implicitly (i.e. *preontologically*). And it is because man understands being that he is led into the heart of ontological inquiry. It is the study of man which is going to reveal to us the horizon within which the problem of being arises, for it is here that *the understanding of being comes about*.

We have not casually used the expression "the understanding of being." And after all of the exposition in our first section, the expression should not seem surprising. The *understanding of being* which characterizes man is not simply an act, essential for all consciousness, which one could isolate within the movement of time in order to apprehend in that movement the being at which the act is directed, while denying all temporality to this act of aiming as such. A similar idea would amount to admitting the distinction between the temporal level and the "subject/object" level; it is necessary to progress beyond such dualisms. This would implicitly be to begin from the concept of "consciousness" and return to the standpoint of the theory of knowledge. Now, all of Heidegger's work tends to demonstrate that time is not a frame in which human existence—or some other such act of the understanding of being—is situated, but that the "temporalization"¹¹ of time, in its authentic form, is precisely this understanding of being. Truly, it is *understanding*¹² *itself that comes about*. Thus, we must not begin by imagining this specific structure of the understanding of being by means of notions which it is intended to go beyond. For in the analysis of this structure, which will show us time down to its foundation, time will appear in an unexpected manner and in its authentic and originary form. But we should not prejudge, trivializing the *understanding of being* right from the start, by seeing in it an act of the temporal flow. The concept of the temporal flow, borrowed moreover from the vulgar notion of time, must not be accepted uncritically.

To anticipate the conclusions of Heideggerian analysis allows us to specify in what sense the understanding of being is the characteristic of man. Understanding of being characterizes man not as an essential attribute, but is man's very mode of being. It determines not his essence, but his existence. No doubt, if we consider man as a *be-ing*, the understanding of being constitutes the essence of this *be-ing*. But to be precise—and this point is fundamental to Heideggerian philosophy—*man's essence is simultaneously his existence. That which man is is at the very same time his way of being, his way of being-there [être-là], his way of self-"temporalizing."* This identification of essence and existence is not an attempt to apply the ontological argument to man, as certain people may have thought. It does not mean that the necessity of existing is contained within man's essence—which would be false, as man is not a necessary being. But inversely, one could say, the confusion of essence and existence signifies that man's essence is enclosed in his existence, that all the essential determinations of man are nothing other than his modes of existing. But a relation of this sort is possible only at the price of a new type of being

11. We use the term to translate the German word *Zeitigung*.

12. Regarding this understanding of man as a being, it is a "preontological" understanding which takes an "ontic" form. Heidegger calls it "existential" understanding, opposing it to a plainly and explicitly ontological understanding which he identifies by the term "existential." [Trans. note] In French, as in German, it is the term "existential" which is the neologism, while in English, "existential" is the coinage.

which characterizes the fact of man. And the possibility of this relation is precisely the fundamental mark of being in man. For this type of being Heidegger reserves the word “existence,” which we will use from now on in this sense, and he reserves the name of *Vorhandenheit*—“presence”—for the being of brute, inert things. And it is because man’s essence consists in existence that Heidegger designates man by the term *Dasein* (being right-there) [*l’être ici-bas*], and not by the term *Daseiendes* (a be-ing right-there) [*l’étant ici-bas*]. The verbal form expresses the fact that each element of man’s essence is a mode of existing, of being situated there.

In brief, the problem of being that Heidegger poses leads us to man, for man is a *being* who understands being. But, on the other hand, this understanding of being is itself being—it is not an attribute, but man’s mode of existence. This is not a question of a purely conventional extension of the word “being” to one of man’s faculties, which in our case would be the understanding of being, but the bringing into relief of the very specificity of man, whose “actions” and “properties” are modes of being. It is the abandonment of the traditional concept of consciousness as the point of departure, along with the decision to seek for the basis of consciousness itself in a more fundamental notion of being—a notion of the existence of *Dasein*.

That being the case, the study of the understanding of being which must direct us to the explicit meaning of being is *ipso facto* a study of man’s mode of being. It is not only a preparation for ontology but already an ontology. This study of man’s existence Heidegger calls the “analytic of *Dasein*” [*analytique du Dasein*]. Under an *existential* form, and in its multiple studies on man—philosophical, psychological, religious, and literary—the analytic of *Dasein* is initiated. Grasping these studies in an *existential*¹³ form is what renders them ontologically productive. And that is Heidegger’s great discovery. We are thus going to perform an *existential* analytic of *Dasein*. From the purely formal structure that we have just established—that the existence of *Dasein* consists in understanding being—all the richness of human existence will be elaborated. The analytic of *Dasein* will be about rediscovering man in his entirety and of showing that this understanding of being is time itself. Each step forward in this analysis of man will be an advance in the elucidation of the structure of being.

3

Man exists in such a manner that he understands being. This proposition is equivalent to another which at first glance seems to say much more: “Man exists in such a way that his own existence is always at stake for him.” These could be two different propositions, were one to think of the *understanding of being* as purely contemplative and as following like an illumination upon *Dasein*’s mode of existence—a mode which, at first, could not understand itself. Now this would be precisely to effect the separation between existence and knowledge—a separation of which we spoke earlier and which Heidegger opposes.

In order better to highlight the legitimacy of this opposition, we must return to the idea of intentionality elaborated by Husserl and adhered to by Heidegger right to the end. We know that in intentionality Husserl saw the very essence of consciousness [see Levinas, chap. 4]. The originality of this view consisted in affirming not only that all consciousness is consciousness of something but that this striving toward something else constituted the entire nature of consciousness; that we must not imagine consciousness as something that first *is* and that then transcends itself, but that consciousness transcends itself throughout its existence. If this transcendence presented the structure of knowledge as a matter of theory, it had a different form in other dimensions of life. Sentiment also aimed at

13. See the preceding note.

something, which was not a theoretical object, but a thing appropriate and accessible to sentiment alone. The “intentionality” of sentiment did not mean that the affective intensity of sentiment—and all that sentiment entailed—was only a nucleus to which an intention directed toward the felt object was superimposed. Affective intensity in and of itself is open to something which, by its very essence, is only attained by this affective intensity, just as one has access to color only through vision.

We now understand in what sense the existence of *Dasein*, characterized as a way of existing such that, “in its existence, this very existence is always at stake,” amounts to an existence that consists in understanding being. Being is precisely what is revealed to *Dasein*, not under the form of a theoretical concept that one contemplates, but in an internal striving, in a concern that *Dasein* has for its very existence. And, inversely, this way of existing where “existence is at stake” is not something blind onto which knowledge of the nature of existence would have to be added, but this existence, in taking care of its own existence, amounts to the understanding of existence by *Dasein*. We now understand better than before how the study of the understanding of being is an ontology of *Dasein*, a study of *Dasein*’s existence in all its concrete plenitude, and not only of an isolated act of this existence—like a sort of door by which an existence, unfolding in time, would have to leave this existential plane in order to understand. Transcendence is an event [*événement*] (*Geschehen*) of existence.

4

To understand being is to exist in such a way that one takes care of one’s own existence. To understand is to take care. Exactly how does this understanding, this solicitude come about? *The phenomenon of the world*, or more precisely, *the structure of “being-in-the-world” presents the precise form in which this understanding of being is realized.*

If this thesis can be justified, the “leave-taking of oneself” [*sortie de soi-même*] in order to reach the world would be integrated into *Dasein*’s existence, for the understanding of being—as we already know—is a mode of existence. Fathoming this mode of existence which is the world should lead us to the phenomenon of time itself. The line of the “subject-object” structure and the line of time would converge, or rather the former would be a mode of the¹⁴ latter and would be rendered possible by it. But this understanding of being in the form of “existence being at stake” (which is, in the last analysis, the concept of time itself), will be, as the final sections of our work will show, the very characteristic of the finitude of *Dasein*’s existence. Thus, the transcendence of *Dasein*, by relation to itself, will be founded on the finitude of *Dasein*’s existence. And so, for the first time, the finitude of human existence, of which philosophy has spoken since antiquity (without, by the way, ever having grasped it ontologically), turns out to be the foundation of the concept of the subject, such as we have known it since Descartes. Finitude will no longer be a simple determination of the subject; we will no longer say only: “We are a thought, but a finite thought.” Finitude will become the very principle of the subject’s subjectivity. It is because there is a finite existence—*Dasein*—that consciousness itself will be possible.

The analysis of the World thus becomes the central component of the *Analytic of Dasein*, for it allows us to rejoin subjectivity to finitude, the theory of knowledge to ontology, and truth to being. No doubt we will need to begin by transforming the traditional concept of the world—as we will have to do with many other concepts—but such transformation will have nothing arbitrary about it. What Heidegger is going to

14. [Trans. note] *The French should read cette instead of cetle. The sentence is omitted from the abridged form.*

substitute for the traditional conception of the world is something that renders that traditional conception possible, and which always carries the obligation to reunite with or to explain the classical opinion which never departs from initial or authentic phenomena. For collective consciousness, the world amounts to the unity of what knowledge discovers. But this notion of the world is ontic and derivative. Indeed, things, if one holds onto the concrete meaning of their appearance for us, are *in* the world. The world is presupposed by every appearance of a particular thing. It is within an environment that things solicit us. What is the import of this structure which phenomenological analysis must neither ignore nor efface? This notion of the world—the condition of every particular object—is revealed at first analysis as being closely involved with *Dasein*: the “environment” [*ambiance*]—that in which *Dasein* lives; “our world” [*notre monde*]—the “world of an epoch or a writer” etc. Now, this encourages us to look in a *mode of existence* of *Dasein* itself for the phenomenon of the world, which will appear thus as *ontological structure*. Certainly, in the notion of “environing world” [*monde ambiant*] (*Umwelt*), the participle “environ-” [*ambi*] (*Um*) is the index of a spatiality, that is to say, the index of a mode of *Dasein*, since, to be precise, space would initially have an *existential* sense. The limits of our article do not allow us to dwell on this at any length. Let us simply remark that it is the notion of the world which will determine the notion of space—a position quite contrary to Descartes, who wanted to grasp the very sense of the world by space. We have already indicated in advance the conclusion of this inquiry: being-in-the-world is the understanding of being itself. We thus begin with enviring objects in order to determine the environment itself, the “worldhood¹⁵ of the world” (*Die Weltlichkeit der Welt*), as Heidegger terms it.

The things in the middle of which *Dasein* effectively lives are, above all, objects of care, of solicitude [*sollicitude*] (*das Besorgte*),¹⁶ of handling [*maniement*] (*Umgang*). These are objects useful for something: axes for chopping wood, hammers for hammering, houses for sheltering us, handles for opening doors, etc. These are, in the very broad sense of the term, *tools* [*ustensiles*] (*Zeuge*). Let us first ask what the *mode* of being of such tools is. To this ontological question we must reply that the being of the tool is not identical with that of a mere material object revealed to the contemplative perception or to science. Contemplation would not know how to grasp the tool as such. “The purely contemplative gaze, however penetrating it may be [*le regard purement contemplatif, quelque pénétrant qu’il soit*] (*das schärfste Nur-noch-Hinsehen*), cast over the appearance of such and such a thing, cannot reveal the tool to us” [*Sein und Zeit* 69]. It is by use itself, by the handling of the tool, that we gain access to it in the fitting and entirely new way. But the movement gains access to objects not only in an *original* way but also in an *originary* way; the movement does not *follow upon* a representation. It is by that above all that Heidegger is opposed to the current opinion—an opinion still shared by Husserl himself—namely, that the *representation* of what is handled precedes the handling itself. Tools are thus objects that *Dasein* reveals by a given mode of its existence—handling. Tools are not then simply “things.” Handling is in some way the affirmation of their being. Handling determines not *what* tools are but the manner in which they *encounter Dasein*, the manner *in which* they are. The being of tools is “handlability”¹⁷ [*maniabilité*] (*Zuhandenheit*). And it is precisely because handling does not follow upon a representation that handlability is not a simple “presence” [*présence*] (*Vorhandenheit*)¹⁸ on which a new property is grafted. Handlability

15. [Trans. note] Worldliness is the proper translation of *Weltlichkeit*, but, because of its pejorative association in English, we prefer worldhood for mundanité.

16. [Trans. note] We emend from the original *Besorgte*, which has been corrected in the abridged version.

17. We have taken this term in its etymological sense to translate the word *Zu-hand-enheit* [readiness-to-hand].

18. [Trans. note] *Vorhandenheit* translates literally as presence-at-hand.

is entirely irreducible. While denying the structure of representation to handling, we said that it *revealed* handlability. The reason is that in its intrinsic sense, handling¹⁹ is an intentionality. Intentionality, as Husserl said, is a *specific comprehension*, and hence, in handling, a *sui generis* vision comes to light which Heidegger defines by the term “circumspection” [*circospection*] (*Umsicht*). Language expresses moreover the fact of such circumspection: French, for example, says, “to know how to write,” “to dance,” “to play,” etc.

What is the structure of “handlability”? It is essentially constituted by “referral” [*renvoi*] (*Verweisung*). The tool is always “in view of” [*en vue de*] something, because it is not a separate entity, but always in tandem with other tools. Its mode of being entails giving precedence to the totality of the *function* [*oeuvre*] in relation to which the tool exists [*est*]. The tool is efficient in its role, and handlability characterizes its being “in itself” [*en soi*]; it exists uniquely in its role in the case where handlability is not explicitly present but recedes into the background, and the tool is understood in terms of its function. This function is itself instrumental: the shoe exists *in order to* be worn, the watch *in order to* tell the time. But, on the other hand, the productive function makes use of something in view of something else. What is handlable then refers back to materials. We thus discover Nature, forests, waters, metals, mountains, winds, etc. But Nature discovered in such a way is entirely relative to handling: these are the “raw materials” [*matières premières*]. We do not have a forest but wood, waters are hydroelectric power, the mountain is a quarry, wind is wind in the sail. Finally the function is not only *in view of something*, but also *for someone*. Production is oriented toward the consumer. Men as “consumers” [*consommateurs*] are present—along with the handlable and public life [*vie publique*] (*die Öffentlichkeit*) with them—and the whole body of institutions, all the apparatus of public life. The totality of referrals which constitute the tool’s *being* leads us thus well above the very narrow sphere of usual objects that surround us. Hence, we are, along with the handling, present in the world, in the “world” in the traditional sense of the term understood as the totality of things. But an even more precise analysis of handling will reveal to us the originary phenomenon of the world that Heidegger seeks.

We have emphasized that the tool is lost in some way within the function which it serves; it is thus that it exists *in itself*. However, when the tool is damaged, it stands out against the system in relation to which it *exists* [*est*] and it loses its character of being a tool, so to speak, in order to become, in a certain way, a simple presence. In this momentary loss of *handlability*, the “referral, in view of which the tool exists” [*renvoi à ce en vue de quoi l’ustensile est*], is achieved. It awakens, stands out, comes to light. And we are turned in that manner toward the totality of the system of referrals—a totality always implicitly understood but not till then emphasized. Here is a series of referrals which can only be realized in an “in-view-of-which” which is no longer in view of some other thing but in view of itself. We recognize *Dasein* itself in this structure. Put another way, understanding of the tool only comes about in relation to an initial understanding of *Dasein*’s structure, which, in virtue of the “referral to itself” [*renvoi à soi-même*] proper to *Dasein*, allows a glimpse within the things themselves of their handlability, their possible usage, their “in-view-of.”

Thus the world is announced. It is then not constituted by the sum of tools, precisely because the totality of referrals makes tools possible only on the condition that they remain in the background. But totality is the ontological condition of tools. Totality is their condition. For in order to understand the “in-view-of” which constitutes the tool, it is necessary to understand “that in view of which it exists” [*ce en vue de quoi il est*], which,

19. [Trans. note] Compare the abridged form, which, following the first sentence, reads: “The reason is that the relation of handling is a comprehension, a *sui generis* vision, an illumined power which Heidegger defines by the term. . . .”



in its turn, refers to another thing and is achieved in *Dasein*. This totality is an ontological condition. For handlability is not a property of the tool but its *mode of being*. That in relation to which handlability itself becomes possible can only be an ontological structure. *Dasein* discovers this structure throughout its very existence. *Dasein*'s existence consists in existing in view of itself. That also means that *Dasein* understands its existence. *Dasein* thus always already understands this "in-view-of-itself" which constitutes its existence. It is in relation to this initial "in-view-of" that the "in-view-of" of tools, their handlability, can appear to *Dasein*. *The World is nothing other than this "in-view-of-itself" where Dasein is involved with its own existence and in relation to which the encounter with the handlable can come about.* Thus this reference to *Dasein* which we have raised in the notion of the world is explicated. We note in passing, and in the wake of Heidegger's tightly linked chain of analysis, that this conception of the world, which identifies the world with the fundamental event of our internal destiny, gives its specific sense to the concept of the "inner world" [*monde intérieur*]. The inferior world, the "world of a historical epoch" [*monde d'une époque historique*], the world of a Goethe or a Proust, is no longer a metaphor but the very origin of the phenomenon of the world. And that is not in the idealist sense which identifies the world as the totality of existent things with spirit and bypasses this original phenomenon, which is entirely distinct from "the totality of things" [*l'ensemble des choses*].

One can thus say that the existence of *Dasein* is being-in-the-world. The *Da*, the "right-there," contained in the term *Dasein* expresses this state of things. And it is not the affirmation of the commonplace fact that man is in the world. It is a new expression of the initial proposition, namely, that *Dasein* exists in such a way that it understands being. The proposition shows us how the appearance of the world of things and of tools has its condition in the existence of *Dasein* and is an event of *Dasein*. The act of taking leave of oneself to reach objects—namely, this relation of subject to object with which modern philosophy is so familiar—has its basis in a leap accomplished beyond "be-ings" [*étants*] understood in an *ontic* sense toward ontological being; this leap is accomplished throughout *Dasein*'s very existence and is an event itself of this existence, not just a phenomenon imposed upon it. For this leap beyond be-ings and toward being (which is ontology itself, the understanding of being), Heidegger reserves the word "transcendence" [*transcendance*]. This transcendence conditions the transcendence of subject to object—a derived phenomenon from which the theory of knowledge issues. The problem of ontology is for Heidegger transcendental in this new sense. To summarize: being, for *Dasein*, is the understanding of being. To understand being is to exist in such a manner that "existence itself is at stake." "Existence itself being at stake" is "being-in-the-world." "Being in the world is to transcend oneself" [*Être dans le monde c'est se transcender*]. The whole paradox of this structure, in which existence in view of itself presents itself as essentially ecstatic, is the very paradox of existence and of time. But in order to see the paradox, we must push the Analytic of *Dasein* further, developing the structure of "transcendence," of this *in-esse* in the world that we have just established. We thus return to the finitude of *Dasein* and its temporal significance.

5

"Being-in-the-world" is an essentially dynamic way of existing—dynamic in a very precise sense. It is a question of *dynamis*, of possibility—not possibility in the logical and negative sense as sheer "absence of contradiction" [*absence de contradiction*]*—an empty possibility; but a concrete and positive possibility expressed by saying that we can do this or that, or that we have possibilities in the face of which we are free. The realm of tools that we discover in the world, tools fit for a given use, is a matter of our possibility—*

whether realized or not—of handling them. And possibilities are themselves made possible, as we have seen, by virtue of the fundamental possibility of being-in-the-world, that is, of existing in view of this very existence. The dynamic nature of existence, original and irreducible, constitutes its fundamental paradox. For it comes down to saying that existence itself is composed of possibilities, which, however, precisely qua possibilities, both are distinguished from existence yet anticipate it at the same time. Existence has the appearance of anticipating itself.

Let us first emphasize the positive character of possibility constituting existence. The relation of man to his possibilities is not the same as the indifference a thing manifests with respect to the accidents that could occur to it. Man is always already thrust into the midst of his possibilities, with respect to which he has always already taken such and such a decision, and which he always already has or has not realized. These possibilities are not imposed on his existence from without, like accidents. But, on the other hand, they do not lie in front of him as objects of knowledge, as full-blown images one contemplates while weighing up the pros and cons of a situation. They are modes of his very existence, precisely because to exist for man is to seize his own possibilities. The basis of existence can thus only be a capacity to seize or to miss one's own possibilities—a fundamental possibility of taking stock of oneself. But we already are familiar with this attentive soul-searching, this radical orientation of one's own existence, an orientation which is in no sense a detached contemplation but which is the essential event of human existence. In effect, this is only a more condensed analysis of the phenomenon we have already encountered in saying that, in existing, *Dasein's* very existence is always at stake or, again, that to exist is to be in the world. In order to convey the intimacy of this relation between *Dasein* and its possibilities, we could say that it is characterized not by the fact of *having* possibilities, but by the fact of *being* its possibilities—a structure that in the world of things would be inconceivable but that positively determines the existence of *Dasein*. To-be-in-the-world is to be one's possibilities. And the "in," the *in-esse*, encompasses this paradox of the *existentiel relation to possibility*: namely, to be something that is only a possibility without it being so by a pure and simple representation of this possibility. How do we determine this structure more exactly? What does "to be one's possibilities" mean?

To be one's possibilities is to understand them. We already made this point earlier: the fact that *Dasein's* existence is at stake amounts to saying that *Dasein* exists by understanding existence. But to describe this intimate relation between existence and its possibilities as an act of understanding does not amount to affirming in some indirect way that "to be one's possibilities" is to know them. For the understanding is not a cognitive faculty that is imposed on existence in order to allow it to become aware of its possibilities. The distinction between the knowing subject and the object known—an inescapable distinction in the phenomenon of knowledge—no longer has purchase here. Human existence *knows itself* prior to all introspective reflection and, indeed, renders the latter possible. But to say that does not imply a return to the concept of self-consciousness (even if we distinguish it from the concept of inner perception, understood as introspective reflection and in which, by all accounts, the subject/object structure ends up). The originality of the Heideggerian conception of existence, in contrast to the traditional idea of "self-consciousness" [*conscience interne*], is that this self-knowledge, this inner illumination, this *understanding* not only refuses the subject/object structure, but also has nothing to do with *theory*. It is not a *conscious awareness*, a pure and simple registering of that which one *is*, a registration capable of measuring our power over ourselves; *this understanding is the very dynamism of this existence, it is the actual power over self*. And in this sense, understanding constitutes the mode of which existence *is* its possibilities; that which was a conscious awareness becomes a seizing and, thereby, an event of existence itself. In place of the consciousness traditional philosophy talks about, which,

as it *becomes aware*, remains calm and contemplative, indifferent to the destiny and history of concrete man who is its object, Heidegger introduces the notion of *Dasein* *understanding its possibilities*, but which, *qua understanding*, *ipso facto* creates its destiny, is existence right-there. Thus, along with the concept of *Dasein*, the inner illumination, with which the philosophers of consciousness are familiar, becomes inseparable from the destiny and history of concrete man; both amount to the same thing. It is *concrete man* who appears at the center of philosophy, and in comparison with him, the concept of consciousness is only an abstraction, arbitrarily separating consciousness—i.e. illumination as illumination—from history and existence. We can already make out how theoretical knowledge itself, of which understanding is the originary phenomenon and foundation (we will show this further on), is involved in *Dasein*'s existence and how, here, for the first time, the theory of knowledge is integrated with ontology, but not purely by convention, by some formal definition of *being* in terms of knowing (see above, section 1).

6

How do we characterize this power of understanding? Or, to turn the question in a way that no longer has anything paradoxical about it, how *is Dasein* right-there? *Dasein* understands itself in a certain affective disposition [*disposition*] (*Befindlichkeit*). At first sight, this might seem to be a matter of the phenomenon whose superficial aspect classical psychology targets in saying that every state of consciousness is colored by an affective tonality: good or bad humor, joy, boredom, fear, etc. But, for Heidegger, these dispositions cannot be states: they are *modes of self-understanding*, that is to say, *of being right-there*.

But affective disposition, whose understanding is in no way detached, shows us its fundamental nature.²⁰ The affective disposition shows us the fact that *Dasein* is *riveted* to its possibilities, that its “right-there” is imposed upon it. In existing, *Dasein* is always already thrown *into the midst* of its possibilities and not positioned before them. It has always already realized or failed to realize them. Heidegger captures *this fact of being thrown* into the midst of one's possibilities and of being abandoned to them by the term *Geworfenheit* [thrownness], which we translate more liberally by the term “dereliction” [*déreliction*]. Dereliction is the source and necessary foundation of affectivity. Affectivity is a phenomenon comprehensible only there where existence presents this structure of being delivered up to its own destiny. Dereliction, the abandonment to imposed possibilities, gives to human existence a character of *fact* in the most specific and most dramatic sense of the term, in relation to which the empirical “facts” of science are only derivative; it is a fact that is understood as such by its effectivity. Having been thrown into the world, abandoned and delivered up to oneself—such is the ontological description of “fact.” Human existence and the positive characteristics of human finitude and nothingness, which we have pursued from the start through its multiple structures, are defined for Heidegger by “effectivity” [*effectivité*] (*Faktizität*). And the understanding and interpretation of this effectivity is the analytic ontology itself of *Dasein*. That is why Heidegger and his followers define ontology as “hermeneutics of effectivity” [*Hermeneutique de l'effectivité*] (*Hermeneutik der Faktizität*) [see Becker 425].

But if the understanding of possibilities by *Dasein* is characterized as dereliction, this existence, precisely *qua* understanding of possibilities, implies a propensity to go beyond the situation imposed. *Dasein* is always already beyond itself [*au delà de soi-même*]. But

20. We hasten to add: affectivity is not the symbol or index of this nature—it is that nature itself: the description of affectivity does not prove existence but furnishes its analysis.

being thus beyond oneself—to be one’s possibilities—does not mean, as we have already said, to contemplate this *beyond* as an object, to choose between possibilities as we choose between two paths that intersect at a crossroads. This would be to deprive possibility of its character of possibility by transforming it into a plan established beforehand. Possibility must be seized in its very possibility—as such it is inaccessible to contemplation but positively characterizes the way of the being of *Dasein*. This way of being thrown forward toward one’s own possibilities, of adumbrating [*esquisser*] them throughout one’s very existence, is a crucial moment of understanding, which Heidegger defines by the word *Entwurf*, which we translate as “project-in-draft” [*projet-esquisse*].²¹ The index of futurity contained in the word *Entwurf*—project-in-draft—allows us to emphasize its existential relation to possibilities (that is, a relation that is a mode of existing).

A *Dasein* understanding its possibilities in and by existence is at the same time *Dasein*’s self-understanding which discovers tools in the world. Indeed, the initial possibility of *Dasein* being in view of itself (being-in-the-world) constitutes the condition of handling of tools. Only, in place of understanding of self in the fundamental possibility of being-in-the-world, that is, as we already know, in the possibility of being in view of itself, entirely delivered up to the anguished care of its own finitude and its own nothingness, *Dasein* avoids this authentic mode of self-understanding; it disperses itself in understanding of secondary possibilities which the fundamental possibility, always implicitly but never explicitly understood, alone makes possible, *Dasein* understands itself from the standpoint of possibilities relating to tools, from entities within the world, and not the world²² itself. This is the phenomenon of the “fall” [*chute*] (*Verfallen*), the third characteristic of existence alongside *dereliction* and the *project-in-draft*. The fall, from which we need to detach all moral or theological recollection, is a mode of the existence of *Dasein* shunning its authentic existence in order to relapse into everyday life [*vie quotidienne*] (*Alltäglichkeit*). *Dasein* does not understand itself in its true personality but in terms of the object it handles: *it is what it does*, it understands itself in virtue of the social role it professes. We have not been able to insist on the character of *Dasein* by virtue of which it understands other persons, by virtue of which it *coexists*. We make the point here to say that in “everyday life” this coexistence becomes equally commonplace; it is reduced to superficial social relations, which are entirely determined by *handling in common* [*maniement en commun*], other persons being understood as one understands oneself, in terms of things. *Dasein*, fallen, is lost in things and knows another personality only as “the one” [*l’on*] or “everyone” [*tout le monde*]. It understands itself—and this term always means *it is its possibilities*—with an optimism which is nothing other than a flight in the face of anguish, that is, in the face of its authentic understanding.

In *Dasein* fallen into “everyday life,” we rediscover all the structures of understanding in an altered and fallen form. The word, whose union with understanding we will demonstrate later, and which authentic *Dasein* possesses under the modality of silence, becomes chatter and verbiage, introducing equivocation into existence. The analytic of *Dasein* thus possesses a parallel form—and a good part of *Sein und Zeit* is occupied with it—which is the analytic of fallen *Dasein* plunged into “everyday life.” But the mode of everyday existence is not something that happens to *Dasein* from without: the fall is an inner possibility of authentic existence. *Dasein* must authentically possess itself in order that it may be lost. The point is not without importance. Later on we will see the authentic understanding (or existence) of *Dasein* revealing itself as authentic and finite time itself. Consequently, the fall into everyday life, to which is linked, according to Heidegger, the

21. The German terminology shows us clearly the opposition that there is in Heidegger’s thought between *dereliction* and the *project-in-draft*—between *Geworfenheit* and *Entwurf*.

22. “World” in the sense defined above—see section 6.

appearance of calculable time, of the infinite time of the sciences, and later, of timelessness itself, appears as a temporal event of authentic time. To exit toward the timeless and eternal is not to be detached from time, for, by virtue of the inner possibility of existence, this exit is a mode of time. The progress toward the eternal, which Western consciousness believes to have accomplished with the supertemporal point of view of the sciences, is not a victory achieved by spirit over concrete and temporal existence, but a moment of the very drama of this existence. This leap toward the eternal does not transcend this drama that it may give a new birth to persons; it does not transfigure the eternal by an act of grace come from beyond. But, by virtue of the integrating element of existence, this leap is completely dominated by the leitmotiv of this drama. We wanted to emphasize Heidegger's reduction to time, and to the most concrete time—as he at least so thinks—of all that one might be tempted to call supertemporal, the reduction to existence of all that one would wish to call relation. This is his fundamental ontology, which we must bring into relief in this work.

7

In the way Heidegger develops his thought, the description of everyday *Dasein* occupies considerable space, and the many pages devoted to it are of singular beauty, of rare analytical perfection. It is this that is the best proof of that instrument called phenomenology. We are limited to brief remarks on the personality of *Dasein* lost in “the one,” on the word becoming chatter, to degraded coexistence, etc. We will need to become more explicit in the remainder, when it will be a question of working back from structures, which we have just established, to time. But from now on, we need to explain the importance that Heidegger gives to these analyses, for it involves the very essence of his ontology.

Our previous arguments have familiarized us with the idea that man's existence is understood throughout this existence itself and not by an act of contemplation imposed, in some way, from without. If, in the first place, philosophy is an understanding of being and of human being—of existence (for it is existence that has the privilege of understanding being), philosophy does not come about *in abstracto*, but is precisely the way in which *Dasein* exists; it is a *possibility of existence*. Philosophizing thus amounts to a fundamental mode of *Dasein's* existence. But, as such, philosophy is a finite possibility, determined by dereliction, by the project-in-draft and by the fall, that is, by the concrete situation of existence that philosophizes. Now, when, in our fallen condition, we usually understand ourselves, then all the categories with the help of which we try to seize *Dasein* are borrowed from the world of things. The reification of man, the absence of the very problem concerning the meaning of the subjectivity of the subject (an absence that characterizes all traditional philosophy): none of these phenomena are contingent errors owing to the blundering of this or that philosopher; rather, they come from the fall, from the very situation of philosophizing *Dasein* established in everyday life. But also for that reason *the analytic of Dasein*, appointed to *adumbrating the authentic possibility* of human existence, consists above all in *getting one's bearings again* [*remonter la pente*] and, in the first place, in ontologically clarifying the very situation of the fall into which *Dasein* is initially plunged. Moreover, this tendency toward the authentic understanding of the self—that is, toward a mode of authentic existence—does not issue from an abstract and intellectual principle, but is manifested in the form of a call that *Dasein*, fallen and dispersed amongst things, hears, and which, for Heidegger, amounts to the originary phenomenon of moral consciousness [*conscience morale*] (*Gewissen*).

The importance and necessity of the analysis of “everyday existence” is thus explained. *Dasein*²³ is always already fallen, and philosophy, as finite possibility, takes everyday life as its point of departure. Also the *via negationis*, followed by phenomenologists in order that they may stand before the phenomenon in question in order to describe it, is not a contingency of method. It is determined by the fundamental structure of the fall, by the chatter and the equivocation which comprise it. In virtue of the very state of things, Heidegger conceives of the history of philosophy as a *destruction* [*destruction*], namely, essentially as an attempt to get back one’s bearings after the fall. For this reason, also, the history of philosophy thus conceived is not a simple aid to systematic philosophy—whether in the form of information or of critique of errors in the tradition—but the historic element is a constitutive movement of systematic philosophy itself. The second volume of *Sein und Zeit* was proclaimed in advance to be dealing with this destruction, and we can say now that this will not be a matter of the *history* of philosophy but of *philosophy*. On condition, however, that this mere history becomes a *destruction* and that it is not restricted to exposing and critiquing errors in the tradition; it is a question, in fact, of destroying something more profound than error by returning from the fall to authentic existence.

We will understand, finally, that Heidegger’s constant preoccupation with “everyday life,” whose conditions in existence and authentic time he ceaselessly investigates, is not due to a simple interest in vindicating supposed abstractions to common sense. For we could ask whether, in Heidegger’s thought, the fact that the philosopher feels obliged to start from common notions or to return to them is not better explained than by a simple invocation of the commonplace that all abstract truth must conform to the facts of experience. The alleged evidence of this dictum becomes contestable if we understand by “experience” the vague experience of our everyday life. If, nevertheless, it is such experience that philosophers mean to take as their point of departure, then philosophy is not at heart contemplative knowledge about which one must pose such and such a question of method, but, conforming to Heidegger’s ontologism, it is, in its most intimate essence, a possibility of concrete existence already in progress, as Pascal would say, always already fallen, finite possibility in the most specific and most tragic sense of the term.

8

To sum up, then, the existence of *Dasein*, consisting in understanding being, manifested as “being-in-the-world,” becomes clearer as existence that understands its fundamental possibility of existing in the state of *dereliction*. It understands possibility *adumbrated* throughout its very existence but with an understanding always already shifted toward its possibilities of *everyday life*, always already lost in things.

Precisely what is the unity of these structures? But first, in what sense is it necessary to seek unity here, given the general attitude of Heideggerian thought? The concepts that Heidegger elaborated in order to grasp *Dasein* do not express its simple essence, in the way that “color” or “length” translate the *quiddity* of a material object. For the peculiarity of *Dasein*—and we have already drawn attention to this many times—consists in existing in such a way that its quiddity is at the same time its way of being; its essence coincides with its existence. That is why the mode of being of *Dasein*, defined by the term “existence” [*existence*], presents an irreducible originality compared to simple *presence* [*présence*] (*Vorhandenheit*) or to *handlability* [*maniabilité*] (*Zuhandenheit*). Reserving the term “category” [*catégorie*] for fundamental structures constitutive of entities, which

23. [Trans. note] We emend from the original Dessin, which has been corrected to *Dasein* in the abridged version.

do not have the character of *Dasein*, Heidegger calls *Dasein*'s fundamental ways of being "existentials" [*existentiaux*]. Dereliction, understanding, possibility, being-in-the-world, being-in-space, the fall, etc. are not categories but *existentials*. Heidegger's achievement consists thus in grasping the subjectivity of the subject by means of existentials and of going further than ancient philosophy, which, whilst looking at the problem of ontology, did not see existentials. For, based on the state of fall, ancient philosophy had not got its bearings right [*remonté la pente*] because it understood *Dasein* in terms of things, that is, by means of categories. The opposition between being and becoming—even if one tries to clarify the latter, grasping it in its intimate sense as duration and making it into the being of consciousness—does not seem sufficient to make an existential of becoming and, as a consequence, to transform radically the ontological basis of consciousness. For the meaning of the existence of duration always remains obscure.

Let us allow ourselves a brief digression to explain the allusion just made to Bergsonism, adding, however, that Heidegger himself did not have occasion to remark upon this philosopher to whom all thinkers of our time are so indebted. And we would not venture to present these few reflections on a doctrine whose richness, full of nuance, is so refractory to all schematization if it did not seem that they could throw some light on Heidegger's point of view. Could it be, indeed, that Bergsonian duration corresponds, in Heidegger's thought, to the existence of man, in the sense that existence is opposed to essence and *quiddity*? This opposition, with all the force Heidegger gives to it, is not anticipated by Bergson. Duration is opposed to space as a spiritual being to a material being, and not as being to a be-ing. By that we imply that, for Bergson, it is a question of the metaphysical problem of the quiddity of spirit rather than the ontological problem of its mode of existence. Duration seems to constitute the *quiddity* of consciousness. But suppose that Bergson was in agreement with Heidegger in saying that the quiddity of consciousness is simultaneously the *mode of existence* of consciousness. Suppose even that the discovery of duration, at the heart of consciousness, signifies the disappearance in the domain of spirit of the very distinction between being and a be-ing. It would still be necessary for Mr. Bergson to show how the *quiddity* of multiple states of consciousness— affective, volitional, intellectual—a *quiddity* which, at least in a duration dethroned [*déchue*], could appear as distinct from the mode of production of those states— form their *being*—which is time; he would have to show how this quiddity is grounded in time, and in what sense we find in time the final foundation of their modalities. The dethronement [*déchéance*] of duration might explain the splitting and multiplicity of these states, but not their *quality*, their essence, neither desire as desire nor volition as volition.

Now, it is precisely the sense of these states, handling as handling, affectivity as affectivity, that Heidegger takes as his point of departure. He notices, we have insisted, that the so-called states of consciousness are not simple quiddities, but *modes of existing*, and thereby he divines time in them—but time that is intimately bound up with them, that inheres in them as such and such an essence, and not simply that encompasses them like a container into which they flow. We began our work with these considerations. We insisted, as far as knowledge is concerned, that the passage from subject to object, which seemed to owe to time no more than its place of action in the flux of duration, as it harbored time, only had in human existence one single direction—that of time, if it is even necessary to speak here of direction. Likewise, in the structures we have just established, in dereliction, in the fall, in the project-in-draft, there is time. There is time in these structures as such and not by virtue of dimension, of form where they could be produced. But, on the other hand, this is not a time conceived of as a succession of moments (which far from representing the originary phenomenon is a reification itself due to the fall); this is not a *time-category*. It is an *existential time*, whose production—temporalization [*temporalization*] (*die Zeitigung*)—does not have this innocuous [*inoffensive*] (*harmlos*)

and indifferent aspect we are familiar with as fallen time, as the unilinear unfolding of moments of handling, as scientific time.

Heidegger is able to grasp human existence ontologically by virtue of having grasped the modalities of *Dasein* as modes of existence and not as simple attributes. That does not imply that *Dasein* ignores its own structures prior to constituting the analytic of *Dasein*; on the contrary, preontological understanding of its existence constitutes its very existence. Only, not having explicitly formulated the problem of ontology, which consists in tackling *the existence of the existent* and not *the existent*, this preontological existence can be understood not as existence but as existent (in a manner that is ontic and not ontological). Heidegger defines each of these modes of understanding by different terms: the understanding of existence qua existence—ontological understanding by the term “existential understanding,” and ontic understanding by the term “existentiel understanding.” Existentiel understanding is not necessarily fallen and does not necessarily involve reification. Thus, for instance, *Dasein* is understood in a way that is fragmentary but adequate in the great works—theological, philosophical, and literary—of history. Likewise, the conception of anguish such as Kierkegaard presents to us is *existentiel* according to Heidegger, but not necessarily fallen and categorical. And Heidegger owes much to this thinker, whose analysis he knew how to utilize in such an original way. But *existentiel* understanding can come about in the state of fall, and then it slips necessarily toward reification. The passage from *existentiel* understanding to *existential* understanding, the affirmation of the primacy of the latter and its rigorous realization—this is the great originality of Heidegger, for it enables him to pose, in all its novelty and with all necessary clarity, the problem of ontology, which, for him, is identified with philosophy.

This said, we can better understand in what sense we must seek the unity of the structures of existence. This unity cannot be that of *categories* [*catégories*] but of *existentials* [*existentiaux*]. Everything depends on the fact that we do not have to find the unity of existents but that of an existence. It is thus not necessary to think of the unity of substance or of genus— notions taken from existents reified and accessible to the contemplation that seeks what is common to these different structures in order to identify it with the principle that underpins them or that they follow from. Now, it is not contemplation which reveals *Dasein* in its existence, but rather *existence which understands itself*. The unity we seek cannot be a concept but is a *concrete way of being* in which the structures signaled are condensed and intensified—not dispersed and lost from view as happens in the fall, essentially blind to *Dasein* as such. This will be the unity of the very fact of *Dasein* but, once again, not the empirical unity known from without and through contemplation, but the unity brought about internally, the ontological effectivity of *Dasein* understood as fundamental possibility throughout its very effectivity. What is the uncategorizable mode of understanding that adumbrates this possibility?

9

This mode of understanding is anguish. Every understanding comes about in an affective disposition. Affectivity, such as joy, fear, or sadness, is characterized—a point we have not stressed until now—by its double direction: toward an object [*vers un objet*] (*Wovor*) that is in the world, and toward itself, toward the one “for whom” [*pour qui*] (*Worum*) one is grieved, happy, or frightened. This taking stock of itself, fundamental for affectivity, shows moreover in the reflected form of verbs that express affective states—being delighted, frightened, saddened, etc.²⁴

24. [Trans. note] In French, as in German, these verbs are all reflexive, demonstrating the element of self-regard in the emotion. For further elaboration, see Levinas's comments in *Ethics and Infinity*, trans. Richard Cohen [Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 1985] 119.

The anguish [*angoisse*] in which this structure is found presents, however, a particularity that makes of that structure an uncategorizable understanding. We must first distinguish it from fear. The one “for whom” we are frightened is “ourselves”; it is *Dasein* attained and threatened in its “being-in-the-world.” On the other hand, we encounter the object of fear *in* the world by virtue of a determined being [*être*]. It is different for anguish: the object of anguish is not in the interior of the world like a “menacing thing” [*quelque chose de menaçant*] about which one must make this or that decision. The object of anguish remains entirely indeterminate. Indeterminacy is in no way purely negative: specific and original, it reveals to us a sort of indifference that all the objects usually handled by *Dasein* possess for anguished *Dasein*. *Anguish presents a way of being in which the nonimportance, the insignificance, the nothingness of all innerworldly [intra-mondains] (innerweltlich) objects becomes accessible to Dasein.* In passing, let us make a point that should not be forgotten: we say that anguish reveals to us the insignificance of “innerworldly” objects; this does not mean that it acts as a sign for us, that we deduce this insignificance from the fact of anguish, or that we prove anguish *after having taken note* of the nonimportance of things. Anguish itself reveals and understands this insignificance. And correlatively, this insignificance is not revealed as something innocuous, a sort of purely theoretical negation and theoretically conceivable, but as essentially anguishing and, as a consequence, as taking leave of the domain of *Dasein*, as something *human*.

But with “innerworldly” objects, swallowed up in nothingness, anguished *Dasein* does not lose its constitution of being-in-the-world. Quite the contrary: anguish brings *Dasein* back to the world as world—as possibility of being in view of itself—and not to the world as totality of things, of handleable tools. It is in anguish that *Dasein* is in the world and, consequently, that it understands itself in an authentic manner, led back to the bare possibility of its existence, delivered up to itself in a sort of nothingness²⁵ which we will see being stressed more and more. The *object* of anguish is identified thus with its “for whom”: it is being-in-the-world. In making “innerworldly” things disappear, anguish renders impossible the understanding of the self in terms of possibilities that relate to these objects; anguish thus leads *Dasein* to self-understanding from its own point of view; it brings *Dasein* back to itself. We can already guess from where the theory of personality and freedom, according to Heidegger, will begin—a theory with which we will be occupied later. Anguish, in bringing existence back to itself, saves it from its dispersion into things, and reveals to it its possibility of existing in a particularly acute fashion as being-in-the-world. Anguish thus must constitute the situation in which the totality of *Dasein*’s ontological structures are individualized into a unity.

But anguish understands. It understands in an exceptional way the possibility of existing authentically. Heidegger defines this possibility of existing by the term “solicitude”²⁶ [*sollicitude*] (*Sorge*). Anguished solicitude must provide the ontological condition of the unity of *Dasein*’s structures. Let us try to find their roots in solicitude. As anguished, solicitude is an understanding. It understands its fundamental possibility of being-in-the-world. As adumbrating this possibility, it is always ahead of itself [*au devant de soi-même*]. It is important to emphasize that this being-ahead-of-oneself signifies a relation not to an external object but to its own possibility of existing. The relation to the external object, in its initial form of handling, is itself possible by virtue of this relation to itself,

25. *The nothingness to which traditional philosophy from Parmenides to Bergson tried in vain to gain access, supposing it to be of a theoretical nature—as theoretical negation of being—is essentially accessible to anguish. Theoretical negation is a modality of it. See Was ist Metaphysik?*

26. [Trans. note] *Compare the abridged version in which Levinas renders Sorge as souci rather than as sollicitude. As he has already rendered Besorge as sollicitude above, the emendation has the merit of distinguishing between Besorge, as care for “things in the middle of which Dasein effectively lives,” and Sorge, as care for Dasein’s effective existence as such.*

of this initial “in view of” of solicitude, itself anguished, that is, which is-in-the-world. On the other hand, the possibility understood by anguish, being-in-the-world, is revealed to anguish in the isolation and abandonment in which *Dasein* is delivered up to this possibility. Solicitude understands its possibility as a possibility into which one is *always already thrown*. This irretrievable feature, which follows from the fact of being always already thrown *right-there*, will appear later to us as the initial phenomenon of the past. The project-in-draft and dereliction, “being-ahead-of-oneself” [*l’être-au-devant-de-soi*], and “being-always-already-in” [*être d’ores et déjà dans*] are concretely reunited in solicitude understood by anguish.

But in anguish, the fact of having always already been in the world is strictly entailed by the fall. Usually, *Dasein* does not understand itself in its own terms, that is, it does not determine its possibilities from the bald fact of its own and individual existence right-there, but in the form of everyday existence; it is lost in the objects of the world and is defined in terms of them. Anguished solicitude is nothing other than the mode of existence in which *Dasein* takes leave of its dispersion and returns to its isolation, to its initial possibility of being-in-the-world. The phenomenon of the fall as *presence of Dasein next to* [*présence du Dasein auprès*] things and from which anguish takes its leave, is thus revealed throughout this leave-taking as a structure of solicitude, firmly attached to those things. The complete proposition expressing solicitude is thus composed of these three elements: “being ahead of itself” [*être au devant de soi*]; “having already been in the world” [*avoir d’ores et déjà été dans le monde*]; and “being ahead of things” [*être auprès des choses*]. Their unity is not the unity of a proposition that one could always establish arbitrarily, but that of the concrete phenomenon of solicitude revealed by anguish. This is indeed an excellent example of the Heideggerian mode of thinking. It is not a question of reuniting concepts by a “conceptual synthesis” [*synthèse pensée*]. Modes of existence such as these are only accessible to effective existence itself. To think their unity is to realize it in existing.

But that is not to relapse into empiricism. For what characterizes empiricism is the strangeness of the empirical object in relation to the spirit that grasps it. Hence, the incomprehension of the empirical fact. The fact of *Dasein*, on the contrary, is *essentially understood*, to such a point that this understanding characterizes its very effectivity. The notion of the fact of *Dasein* no longer possesses the sense one attributes to it as the sciences might speak of facts. And the notion of necessity following from this fact no longer has anything in common with empirical and rational necessity. *We do not stand before the fact—we are this fact*. In revealing existence and all the specific dimension of the analytic of *Dasein*, Heidegger is thus, to a certain extent, above empiricism and rationalism, which are themselves only modes of existence, and consequently, kinds of effectivity of *Dasein*. All intellectualist philosophy—empiricist or rationalist—seeks to know man, but it means to do so through the *concept* of man, leaving aside the *effectivity* of human existence and the sense of this effectivity. The empiricists, whilst beginning from real men, did nothing else. The sense of the individuality of the person had to escape them, for the very level in which this individuality is could not appear to them, in view of the intellectualism of their attitude, which consists in *objectifying* [*se trouver devant*] the fact. They lacked the Heideggerian notion of existence and of understanding, that is, of an inner knowledge in the most specific sense of the term, *of a knowledge that comes about throughout its very existence*. This knowledge makes possible that famous “introspection” but is thoroughly distinct from it, for introspection is already intellectualist. It contemplates an object that is thoroughly distinct from it; in introspection there is no longer understanding throughout its very existence, no longer understanding being confounded with existence. Heidegger descends from the universality of theory to the existing fact. But in the fact of man, Heidegger was seeking not the “foreign” [*l’étranger*], not the object that reveals the introspection of psychologists, but effective existence

understanding itself throughout its effectivity. He has tried to speak of this understanding of existence, for ontological interests push him to interpreting existence.

The phenomenon of anguish and the unity of the solicitude that anguish has revealed to us presents the first stage on the road of the ontological characteristic of existence. From there, the interpretation will be pursued to the unique source of solicitude. We will find there the root of personality and of freedom. We will deduce from it finally the phenomenon of theoretical knowledge. We will find time at the heart of everything. Already the fact that the structures studied are modes of existing and not “quiddities” allows us to guess their kinship with time which is not *a be-ing* but *being*. And already expressions such as “always already,” “in front of,” and “next to”—all charged with the tragic sense which is that of solicitude—allow us to discern in them the ontological root of that which one calls in everyday life, which is plunged into a trivialized and inoffensive time, the past, the future, and the present.

Translated by the Committee of Public Safety

WORKS CITED

- Becker, Oskar. *Mathematische Existenz: Untersuchungen zur Logik und Ontologie mathematischer Phänomene. Jahrbuch für Phänomenologie und phänomenologische Forschung* 8. Ed. E. Husserl. Halle: Niemeyer, 1927. 441–809.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*. Bonn: Cohen, 1929. [KPM]
- . *Sein und Zeit. Jahrbuch für Phänomenologie und phänomenologische Forschung* 8. Ed. E. Husserl. Halle: Niemeyer, 1927. 1–438.
- . *Vom Wesen des Grundes*. Halle: Niemeyer, 1929.
- . *Was ist Metaphysik?* Bonn: Cohen, 1929.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. *On the Theory of Intuition in the Phenomenology of Husserl*. Paris: Alcan, 1930.