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Hegel After Heidegger

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ABSTRACT

Martin Heidegger claimed that German Idealism, especially the thought of Hegel, had brought to light a deficiency in the entire rationalist tradition of philosophy, which, when exposed as clearly as Hegel had, meant that the tradition could no longer credibly continue. He went on to argue that the implications of this deficiency had spread far beyond academic philosophy, were manifest in the daily life of the modern West, contributing to a historical world dominated by the technological predation of nature, conformism, thoughtlessness and a degraded cultural life. The tradition, he said, had "culminated" in the thought of Hegel; that is, the deficiency and its implications had finally become clearest in his system. The question raised in this article is whether Heidegger meant to charge that Hegel had simply neglected a question ("the meaning of being") which he should have raised, or whether that neglect renders suspect the many other issues Hegel raises.

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The Geographical Significance of Hegel

Martin Heidegger claimed that German Idealism, especially the thought of Hegel, had brought to light a deficiency in the entire rationalist tradition of philosophy, which, when exposed as clearly as Hegel had, meant that the tradition could no longer credibly continue. He went on to argue that the implications of this deficiency had spread far beyond academic philosophy, were manifest in the daily life of the modern West, contributing to a historical world dominated by the technological predation of nature, conformism, thoughtlessness and a degraded cultural life. The tradition, he said, had "culminated" in the thought of Hegel; that is the deficiency and its implications had finally become clearest in his system. The same deficiency could be noted in the work of Kant, Fichte and the early, idealist Schelling and was already apparent at the founding of the tradition in Plato and Aristotle. But his claim about the deficiency was much more unusual than the critiques of philosophy by Marx, Nietzsche, the logical positivists, the later Wittgenstein, and the later poststructuralists. Philosophy, he argued, had from the beginning "forgotten" the question of the meaning of being.[1]

In putting it this way, he is actually misstating his own charge. He knows that since Parmenides, the issue of being qua being has hardly been forgotten and is often treated as the first question in any first philosophy. He means to say that the *question* of the *meaning* of being has been forgotten; it has never been asked as a properly formulated question. Rather, an assumption has gained dominance since the ancient Greek enlightenment: that to be is to be discursively intelligible, potentially if not actually knowable, and that discursive intelligibility requires predicative form, whether in a term logic or in some logical form that distinguishes argument from function. To be is to be a possible object of an assertoric judgment. There can be nothing alogos. (Another formulation would be to be is to be determinate; any being must be distinguishable from what it isn't.)

This formulation immediately raises a problem for Heidegger, and I would like in the following to explore some dimensions of that problem. If Hegel, to take him as the prime "culminating" example, has neglected to address a very important question (or addressed it only dogmatically) then why should this fact somehow discredit or render moot the entire line of other questions Hegel does pursue, not to mention the continuous line of other questions in the tradition before him? One could simply say: the meaning of Being (in the highly unusual way in which Heidegger understands the question, which I'll get to in a moment) is simply not one of Hegel's questions. Why should that mean that everything else in his work and in the tradition apart from that question has culminated in a dead-end? If no one has even asked the question, why should that matter to the questions they are trying to answer? It is certainly true that Heidegger's basic question is initially hard to pin down. He is not asking for a clarification of

[1] For a full account of the charge and a discussion of it, see my *The Culmination: Heidegger, German Idealism, and the Fate of Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2024).

the criteria for existence, not asking for a semantic account of the copula, not asking why is there something rather than nothing, and not asking what the purpose of human existence might be. So, it indeed may be that he is asking a question that has no resonance in Hegel or indeed in the rationalist tradition. To understand this forgetting as an accusation, we will need a brief summary of how Heidegger understands the basic question, the *Grundfrage*.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger wanted to convince his readers of two initial claims, along the way to a much longer project that he had planned for the incomplete book, which I'll discuss next. One was that entities are directly available for experience in their significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*), salient in experience because of the way they matter, given various comportments, practical undertakings in our engagements with beings and with others and by our being in a historical world which set an implicit horizon of possible significances. Clearly, any given perceptual field is capable of taking in a very large range of visible objects, but our experience involves an attentiveness which is, as Heidegger says, "concernful," primarily attentive to registers of significance that rise to a level of salience, given a particular comportment and a particular context. In making this claim, he was concerned with the issue he called primordiality or fundamentality. While various sensible and material properties of objects could be attended to, and while our conceptual and sensory capabilities must be properly functioning for experience to be possible at all, his phenomenological claim was that this sort of attentiveness to objects in their perceptual properties was, in experience, secondary, "founded," an abstraction from our original, practical engagement. The second followed from that claim of primordiality. It was that this availability-in-meaningfulness could not be understood as if that meaningfulness were a matter of discursive discrimination, as if the objects' significance was a function of or result of our judging or even being able to judge the objects to be significant. Beings directly show up in their mattering, not as a result of the application of some concept of significance. His now famous examples involved the use of tools or "equipment." While we obviously have reasons to grab a hammer by the wooden handle and not the metal top, our understanding of how to use the hammer was not a matter of those reasons guiding or directing our use. The know-how involved in hammer competency need have no basis in current beliefs or implicit beliefs about proper hammering. The hammer came to matter as some task or other arose, and it could so matter because of a nondiscursive familiarity with hammers and the whole equipmental context assumed as a background for that significance, a context itself not appealed to or invoked in any discursive way. That background context was itself a component of a general horizon of possible meaningfulness, a source of comportments that would make sense to engage in a historical "world." Our general orientation in any such equipmentman context, our knowing our way around in a given historical world, is much more a matter of what he called "attunement," a way of being onto, appreciating, registers of significance in experience, rather than rule-following or conscious directedness. This meant that there was a primordial normative dimension in the availability of entities, significances,

meaningfulness, mattering, that was not properly understood as the product of or even as subject to rational assessment. So primordiality and nondiscursivity are his two main issues, and his charge is that because such sources of meaningfulness are primordial and unacknowledged, our cognitive relation to the world assumes a distorted importance and renders any other appeal to significance in our own experience ultimately merely subjective.

There is nothing in Heidegger's critique that indicates that he does not believe that beings *can be* available to subjects as knowable, or that a determination of the requirements of knowability are not identical with what could be, considered as the region of knowables. His objection is to the claim of knowability, our cognitive relation to the world, as the fundamental or originary modality of the availability of beings. He wants to say that knowing is a "founded" mode of availability, and what it is founded on is, to use his early language, is an attunement to the meaningfulness of beings, all of which has been forgotten. (This is an important point because it would be understandable if someone responded to what Heidegger is claiming by saying "who cares about any such original manifestation in experience? I have no interest in how the beings in the world are primordially available; I just want to know what they really are." Such a response misses Heidegger's point. By treating as important what can only be abstractly treated as "standing presence" an order of significance and meaningfulness is established that delimits and excludes in ways that inform a wide array of cultural practices.)

What animates his critique of Western metaphysics is that in that tradition any such attunement to significance is taken to be the result of some sport of a subjective imposition, the projection of value onto the world. But for Heidegger, there is no such moment of subjective projection; Dasein is *subject to* a regime of possible worldly significances, not the subject of it. That an awareness of any attunement to such meaningfulness has been lost, forgotten, is how Heidegger wants to characterize our "destitute" time, a time of homelessness The meaning of being has been reduced to the mere perceivable presence of beings, a "*ständige Anwesenheit"* or a kind of meaningless form of intelligibility.[1]

(That is, there is a mode of meaningfulness now so deeply assumed as to be unchallengeable, that obscures, inspires a forgetting of, the originary availability of beings in their mattering at a historical time, this is the paradox that Heidegger welcomes in *Being and Time*: what is experientially closest to us has now become the farthest from our own distorted assumption about our very own experience.)

In this line, consider the way Hegel talks about his own enterprise in *The Science of Logic*:

[1] The essence of presence together with the difference between presence and what is present remains forgotten. The oblivion [forgetting] of being is oblivion [forgetting] to the difference between being and the being." AS 275. Heidegger does not distinguish his issues in the following way but it would have helped had he also distinguished the question of the very possibility of availability at all (as, fundamentally, meaningfulness; a kind of meta-ontology), from the determinate horizon of all meaningful availability in an epoch (e.g., "idea," *ens creatum*, representation, etc.), from the variety of inflections of such a horizon in regional ontologies of the beings, *Seiende*.

> The system of logic is the realm of shadows, the world of simple essentialities, freed of all sensuous concretion. To study this science, to dwell and to labor in this realm of shadows, is the absolute culture and discipline of consciousness. Its task is one which is remote from the intuitions and the goals of the senses. . .. But above all, thought thereby gains self-subsistence and independence. It will make itself at home in abstractions and in the ways of working with concepts without sensuous substrata, will develop an unconscious power to assimilate in rational form the otherwise dispersed manifold of cognitions and sciences, the power to grasp and hold them in their essentiality remote from feelings and from the world of merely fancied representation. (SL, 21.42–43).

The phase that resonates with Heidegger is "at home." The very broad problem concerns the sources of meaningfulness for human life, the status of the horizon of possible meaningfulness in a historical world. For Hegel, as the culmination of the philosophical tradition, the answer to that question is (and has always been, from Plato on) reason, that the exfoliation of all possible intelligibility is the way in which human beings reconcile themselves to their world and so find themselves at home in it. (This is the source of the ancient view that the cosmos is good. It is not hostile to us; allows itself to be known, does not remain forever strange.) This is true from the heights of speculative thinking to the claim for the rationality of modern ethical life, to the sweeping claim about our possible reconciliation with the course of history itself. For Heidegger this is ultimately dogmatic; it can be shown to be inadequate and that there must be sources of meaningfulness other than this, which, by being ignored, send the fate of reason so understood into misleading, obscuring, and ultimately unacceptable directions that we have not been able to free ourselves from. This can be hard to get a handle on because we tend to think of meaningfulness as radically individual, that what might matter to one farmer in a small village need not matter to another, nor to a young student in Paris. But such individual inflections of meaning are inflections of a common historical world, the shared historical world of the second half of the twentieth century. And this notion of a world, as used say by Heidegger (or as a form of life is used by Wittgenstein), a horizon of possible meaningfulness, is not, given that it is not a matter of explicable shared conscious commitments, available as any sort of object in the world. It is available only in worldly comportments, doings, and projects, where 'available' is clearly in the 'can be shown but not said' category. (What matters can be said, but the source of possible mattering is always already presupposed.)

Finally, to conclude this all too telegraphic summary, if the issue concerns the way in which the world can be said to matter in a life, how we should understand a source of meaningfulness that can inspire, sustain and direct human life, then it is also true that discursive articulation and rational assessment of such matters have to be secondary because it already assumes what is at issue. It already takes its bearing from the supreme significance of articulability and rational

assessment, as if that matters most of all. And Heidegger goes to some lengths to persuade us that how things might come to matter and (especially) cease to matter involve complex modes of being in a world into which we are thrown, not the sort of concerns that can be brought to the bar of reason. We are rather attuned to sources of meaningfulness, and it is dogmatic to assume that only some rational deliberation can set down what ought to matter in a way that leads to it mattering. Money, philosophical influence, philosophical excellence, a religious life, power, friendship, sex, romantic love, or a sports team do not rise in salience in a life because of arguments in favor of them. It is in fact naïve to think so, since no rational assessment of norms of any kind has ever led to any settled result with the solidity and consensus of the germ theory of disease or the laws of classical mechanics.

But again, philosophy, as understood in the Western rationalist tradition, might not be equipped to raise such a question about the sources of primordial meaningfulness, and how one might be said to be onto, to care about some such source. Perhaps no procedure is. And what about all the other concerns of philosophy, the puzzles and paradoxes and eternal questions that have made up the substance of philosophy for two thousand years? Are there not contributions by Hegel, for example, that, while still disputed, are simply still worth a hearing on their own, despite what Heidegger wants to shift our attention to?

For example, consider what seem to be stand-alone contributions by Hegel to philosophy, or at least I believe they should count as such contributions. There is his theory of pure thinking, what he called a science of logic, the successor to Kant's transcendental logic, but fortified by a new theory of the interanimated nature of conceptual content determinacy for pure, nonderived concepts, and a new account of the identity of the determinations of pure thinking and the determinacy without a being could not be the being it is. This also has an analogue in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where Hegel argues for the inseparability of epistemology and metaphysics, that there is no possible theory of knowing without a concomitant theory of the knowables, and vice-versa. This means that any account of knowing cannot be measured against its successful grasp of some independently identified knowable; the two must always be considered together and so the mark of adequacy must be different than traditional. Then there is Hegel, "the great foe of immediacy" as Sellars called him, insisting on a concept-intuition relation which allows for distinguishability but, contra Kant, not separability, such that there is no nonconceptual content in perception. There is his denial of any account of human agency grounded on the notion of inner mental states causing bodily movement, in favor of an expressivist account involving an inner-outer dialectical identity. There is his powerful critique of contractualist theories of state authority, his critique of rigorism and formalism in Kantian morality, his attempted re-animation of an Aristotelianism in ethics, his insistence as the key component of social justice of a collective establishment of ethical standing (the possible social sources of self-respect, or the whole mutuality of recognition dimension of freedom secured institutionally). There is his theory of freedom itself, neither voluntarist nor involuntarist, or

Hegel's distinctive compatibilism, where freedom itself is a form of self-realization, understood as necessarily social. "Being with self in another." Or there is his wholly original understanding of the relation between art and philosophy, and his transformation of the study of art into a historical form. Finally, if one follows Brandom's line, there is his greatest accomplishment, his distinctive appreciation of "the one great event" in all of Western history, the advent of modernity, and for Brandom, the unique realization by Hegel of "the defining insight of modernity: the attitude dependence of normative statuses." (Brandom 2019: 533)

Considering such a list as a list of Hegelian claims in philosophy, they do not seem contaminated in some way by a neglect of the role of significance or mattering as primordial in the initial salience of beings, nor by any neglect of the role of some nondiscursive or attuned experience of such registers of meaningfulness. They all just seem to be other topics. But it would be shortsighted not to notice that the very nature of the claims involves a competing position about *primordiality*, a way of not counting as significant or even possible the dimensions of experience Heidegger is interested in. From Hegel's point of view, Heidegger is reintroducing a form of immediacy in experience, immediate because nonconceptual, and in doing so purports to delimit a kind of experience Hegel would find impossible because if not indeterminate, then not determinate enough. In both the beginning of the *Phenomenology* and the *Logic*, what first drives his argument forward is a purported demonstration of the unavailability of the merely indeterminate. There can be no immediate moment of sense-certainty because the subject cannot without conceptual resources distinguish such a moment from any that it is not, and in the beginning of the *Logic*, the thought of mere being, since it has no contrary, immediately collapses into what it cannot be distinguished from, *das Nichts*, nonbeing. This kind of charge is consistent with Hegel's frequent complaints against the Jena romantics and romanticism in general. As he says about the *Frühromantik* in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*: "With them [the Romantics], the profundity of feeling takes the place of rational thought… the form is not philosophy, but rather a play of wit, a romantic fancy." (Hegel 1825: XX) In the *Lectures on Aesthetics*, while romantic lyric poetry represents the culmination of all art forms, its extreme emphasis on the experience of inwardness also means it is the end of a significant role for art in human culture. Hegel of course has his own account of feelings in his Philosophy of Spirit, but Heidegger is not talking about a responsive emotional reaction but an orienting sense of importance, mattering, that is orienting in that way without being conceptually articulable. Now indeterminacy is itself an indeterminate notion. Heidegger's notion of *Bedeutsamkeit* is not wholly indeterminate, for example; its experience is distinguishable from the insignificant, and it offers up a certain space for interpretation and even, as we shall see, a disclosive notion of truth.

There is, however, one area that should be mentioned where Hegel's account of our social world is much more promising than Heidegger's. Th latter has roughly only two broad notions of how we ought to think of our social interdependence. In his early work, it is a matter of

inheriting a common historical world of interconnected significances, a commonality that is always already presupposed as a condition of, and ever a possible object of, any self-conscious reflection. This in an unusually quiescent, even irenic notion of our commonality. This characteristic is most of all represented by his chief characterization of the modern social world – its domination by *das Man*, the They, and his assumption that the main characteristic of modern social life is thoughtless conformism.[1] In his later work, what had been social conformism seems to be solidarity with the folk, *das Volk* and its "destiny."

Hegel's account, at least in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, is much less a matter of background, or a kind of stage for Dasein being able to have itself at issue. It is, famously, a struggle, and it involves a much more fine-grained account of such phenomena as love (never an issue for Heidegger), friendship, the family, work solidarity, and ultimately mutuality of recognition in modern institutions. Nevertheless, Heidegger would still be (rightfully) suspicious that this struggle has for Hegel an internal teleology and cannot but ultimately conclude in such mutuality. This is another reflection of his view of the unboundedness of the regime of reason. Social being, like all being, must be rationally intelligible.

Heidegger's emphasis on the nondiscursive can all sound quite paradoxical but consider what was early on for Heidegger the most important form of a non-object-related experience, Dasein's experience of the meaning of its own being. Dasein has always its own being, the meaning of its own being, at issue for it, but Dasein is not a determinate being. It ***is*** its being at issue for itself. It is of course a member of a biological species with various species requirement, but none of that counts as a determination of its meaning, the way in which some sense of importance (or "care," *Sorge*, in his early terms) orients it in a life. It has no inherent teleology to rely on. (By contrast *Geist is* teleological for Hegel, not by virtue of its species being, but by virtue of finding in any enterprise that it cannot but be committed to the realization of its own freedom, the attempt to come to understand what that involves and its actual realization. Or so Hegel claims.) For Heidegger Dasein is, as he puts it, the ground of a nullity. Dasein must assess itself without possible appeal to an independent norm. It must face the issue of its own being in anxious anticipation of its death, all in no way informed by what it is to be, and so to be a good, Dasein. One's sense of what Heidegger calls one's existence is precisely, anxiously, not determinable. Anxiety is an immediacy but not a given since there is nothing given to Dasein as if a being with a natural end.

[1] He does have an account of the "with world" (*Mitwelt*) and our experience of relevant others, and has an account of what he calls the "positive" aspects of that relationship, "*Fürsorge*," concern for others or solicitude. But the encounter with others is always already a component of, mediated by, our comportment, and so always already involved in our tasks, and the latter positive aspect involves an unusual account of "leaping in" for the other, something like a solicitous concern with the other's being him or herself, being able to be authentic. This all has to count as a pretty minimalist account of our stake in others and theirs in us. BT, 153ff.

So, Hegel's claims, like those above, cannot be treated as safely hived off as, say, a theoretical concern with perceptual objectivity, or logical determinacy among pure concepts or as Geist's inherent teleology. In a way Hegel would have recognized, the position excludes as well as includes and what it excludes as mere "fancy" Heidegger considers primordial.

Moreover, the same is true of what Hegel wants to claim about modern social and political relations. There is a great deal that now seems appealing to many in Hegel's rejection of liberal individualism, his affirmation of moral responsibility but also in his critique of moralistic rigorism and formalism, in his insistence that human social subjectivity is "mediated" by multiple institutional context new in modernity, even while one would want to concede that the details of the *Philosophy of Right* are painfully out of date, that Hegel could not possibility have anticipated the thin, barely existent level of modern ethical life in a globalized mass consumer culture, the humiliation experienced by most wage-laborers, the industrialization of agriculture and the degradation of political will formation by social media. But this issue with Heidegger turns on a different matter. Hegel's case for what he wants to say in the PR is not a phenomenological or experiential one. The case for the right relation between Abstract Right, Morality, and Ethical Life is a conceptual one, where that means it relies on his theory of the dialectical interrelation of concepts in his *Science of Logic*. And here it is possible to say that what Heidegger says has been forgotten is telling. There is no account, and none available to Hegel, to explain whether and if so why, modern subjects would come to care in the way Hegel assumes about property, crime, law, the family, their standing in corporations, their rather weak power as citizens in a constitutional monarchy and so forth. The assumption in political philosophy is that the rationality of institutional arrangements justifies their authority and can explain the allegiance of its subjects. But Hegel must assume a vast and very controversial historical and socialization process such that the domestic, social, economic and political world that subjects experience has fostered a specific sort of attentiveness to a specific sort of significance – that I can experience the institutional world as non-alien, as my own, that I can recognize myself in my deeds and even in the reactions of others to my deeds and justifications, even though there is no experiential way to attribute this identity to a recognition of "what a rational will would will." But, apart from an implausible historical theodicy, there is no reason to think that such a state of affairs has been achieved, or that it has proven satisfying in the way Hegel claims. Whatever "identification" is experienced could just as easily be the result of a social organization that requires such a reaction to function efficiently and profitably. The claim that any human being in the early nineteenth century cannot but be committed to, cannot but care about, such a state of affairs is question-begging without that historical theodicy, and hopeless if it relies on it.[1]

[1] According to Hegel, human beings are essentially reflective, socially dependent, *historically ser, or self-transformative* embodied free beings. If Hegel is right about this, then every aspect of our reflection on just or "right" political and social institutions must take account of it, and our understanding of what it is to be such a

II

I noted earlier that Heidegger claims that an implication of believing that our primordial care about the world, what we most care about in seeking a reconciliation with the world, is discursive intelligibility or cognition, is that so many other questions that arise in philosophy are considered secondary and dependent on allegiance to the regime of reason. And this will ultimately mean that questions of significance or meaningfulness will be construed as subjective, and thus will have no standing except as an expression of an individual's preferences. Cognition itself will be understood as a subject's homecoming by being a subjective appropriation of the world, a rendering it as its own. It is such a charge of subjectivism, a measuring of being by what pure thinking requires of it, rather than being in some genuine sense open to being in its meaningfulness, that seems initially most unfair to Hegel. It was Kant who thought that the moments of pure thinking, what pure thinking required for any content to be objectively thinkable, the subject of possibly true or false judgments, the categories, were only the requirements of pure thinking and could not be said to be objectively valid without a deduction linking the pure forms of thought with the pure forms of intuition. A deduction could show that there could be no receptivity to sensible objects that was not categorially informed. Hegel is the one who claimed to show that the whole picture of a pure thinking subject facing possible object as if across a divide that must be bridged was an illusion, and who proposed to show by his *Phenomenology of Spirit* that any model of knowing which made that assumption would contradict itself determinately, requiring eventually the inseparability of modes of knowing and the nature of the proper knowables.

being must be historically diagnostic, not "ideal." We must try to understand what a historical life at a time is like, does to, inspires in, the persons who find themselves subject to it. I have been arguing since *After the Beautiful: Hegel and the Philosophy of Pictorial Modernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 2015) that Hegel's historical diagnosis fails, and fails to provide a way to understand the transformations to come. This is largely because of his assumption that the regime of reason is absolute, that to be is to be rationally intelligible. This is a claim for practical rationality (there is no "Hegel" at all without a commitment to a teleology, the gradual realization of human freedom), exercised retrospectively, and which fully accepts the role of contingency, unanticipated disasters, and long periods of historical stasis. So I agree with Slavoj Žižek that bourgeois society as Hegel understood it is not capable of a self-transformative reform. See his *Absolute Recoil: Towards a New Foundation of Dialectical Materialism* (London: Verso, 2014): 1-47, especially pp. 23, 24, 30. But I don't agree that if we understand the true "materialism" inherent in Hegel, his framework is salvageable. The "deflated" Hegel as he calls my interpretation is all the Hegel there is because Hegel is the culmination of a deflated and dead-end bourgeois philosophy, tied essentially to its inheritance of the core dogmatism of Western rationalism. For a fuller discussion, see "Hegel, Allegiance, and the Problem of Ethical Standing," in *Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Critical Perspectives on Freedom and History*, ed. Dean Moyar, Kate Padgett Walsh and Sebastian Rand (New York: Routledge, 2023). I also have no hope for an "abyssal, irrational moment" as a revolutionary moment. Such moments must have resonance in the historical world in which they occur, a resonance one needs to account for. The situation of such an agent would be like that of the poor curé in Robert Bresson's *Diary of a Country Priest* (1951), who is mystified and depressed that absolutely nothing of his faith and faith-based ministrations has any resonance at all in his village.

But Heidegger still considers such a claim for inseparability to make possible a reconciliation with the world, what Hegel called Absolute Knowledge, by an unwarranted or dogmatic stipulation both that what could be must conform to the requirements of pure thinking, and that experientially the way objects show up as mattering is most importantly as possible objects of cognition, as obstacles, threats, puzzling, mysterious, and especially as means for human projects. (For example, there is absolutely no basis in Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature* or anywhere else for any restraint in the appropriation of nature for any human purpose, and so no possible Hegelian hesitation about industrial farming, strip mining, or even water pollution; none except the standard problem of short-sightedness.)

Here is the way Heidegger puts his point in the essay, "Hegel and the Greeks."

> However, this subject is first taken hold of in the right way—namely, in the Kantian sense, transcendentally and completely, i.e., in the sense of speculative idealism—when the whole structure and movement of the subjectivity of the subject unfolds and is taken up into absolute self-knowing. In knowing itself as this knowing that conditions all objectivity, the subject is, as this knowing, the absolute itself. True being is the thinking that thinks itself absolutely. For Hegel, being and thinking are the same, specifically in the sense that everything is taken back into thinking and is determined according to what Hegel simply calls "thought." (HG, 325)

"Taken back into thinking" is the unusual formulation that begins the expression of Heidegger's dissatisfaction. The issue he wants to raise in the light of Hegel's claim about absolute subjectivity is the philosophical notion of truth. Basically, he wants to deny that the truth, or "the True," the meaning of Being, could culminate in absolute subjectivity's self-satisfaction or self-certainty. The movement of the Logic, the demonstration of conceptual interanimation, is a kind of radicalization of Kant on the spontaneity of thinking, leading Hegel to insist that pure spontaneous thinking can provide itself its own content just by thinking and reflecting. This is the equivalent of the idea that philosophy (classically conceived, or pre-Kant) is self-sufficient, autonomous, not originally or fundamentally a reflection on empirical discoveries, ethical intuitions, ordinary language, the development of mathematics or current social conditions. Pure reason, the domain of philosophy, answers only to itself. So, all philosophy, whether acknowledged or not, is reason's reflection on itself, and that is why Hegel counts as its culmination. But Heidegger raises his familiar objection. In this context, he wants to note that the modern notion of subjectivity ignores rather than incorporates a crucial aspect of the Greek beginning: truth as *aletheia*, uncovering. All discursive specification must rely on some original disclosure, that on which the specification relies. So, what Hegel culminates is a kind of continuous forgetfulness. In this text, Heidegger uses another of his words for disclosure, this time *Entbergung*, an unconcealing or literally "un-hiding."

At this point, we come to what many regard as the weakest aspect of Heidegger's project: how could we understand a contrast with the logical correlate of the standard ontology? That is, how could there be a contrast with the claim that only judgments are truth bearers? If Heidegger just keeps pointing to a mysterious source of meaningfulness which is prediscursve, and claim that this involves some sort of disclosure, why can't we ask ***what*** is disclosed and thereby insist on a judgmental formulation with normal., testable truth conditions.

The truth issue is complicated in the case of Hegel because in his account of speculative truth claims a concept is not said to agree with its concept but with itself. He means that the truth of a concept like house is what makes a house a good house, or a polis a good polis, and so forth; not empirical agreement. But Hegel would certainly not accept any notion like Heidegger's of disclosive truth, and the speculative propositions are still attributive and so discursive.

The example I want to use in this final section is what Heidegger has to say about aesthetic truth, or what he calls truth in "poetic thinking." It is an important example because if we ask ourselves what happens to the status of poems, novels, films, paintings and the like in the contemporary academy, then we would have to say that they are increasingly studied in a way consistent with what Heidegger would expect in a historical world where the meaning of being is "standing presence": as objects, distinctive kinds of things. Like all objects they can be "studied" by the invocation of some science of objects, neuroscience, sociology, economics, or even in philosophy, "experimental philosophy." It would not be a popular view to insist that artworks should be considered conveyers of truth; that this modality of truth is disclosure, unconcealmenet, uncovering of what would remain hidden without that disclosure.

To be sure, one philosopher who believes that there is a modality of aesthetic truth is Hegel. He thinks that when artists produce public works, they express a kind of collective self-knowledge at a historical time. We represent ourselves to ourselves and it is in doing so that we learn something we would not know otherwise. We learn this, but not discursively; we learn it by feeling the aptness and credibility of the representation; it strikes home at a time. When Creon and Antigone are at a tragic impasse in Sophocles's play Antigone, we "experience" the inability of that Athenian society to reconcile the demands of familial with political duties and we come away with some sense of why. But for Hegel we can say that what we have experienced is at least partly or incompletely true only because Hegel also believes that art is something like a preliminary expression of what philosophy alone can justify as true; art is a sensible and affective modality of a developing philosophical truth and cannot be said to be true otherwise. This, though, does not get to our question of a distinct mode of truth in the arts themselves and it relies on an extremely controversial and complicated theory of philosophical truth, one that is unique to Hegel.

By contrast what Heidegger calls ontological truth, as in his discussions of Rilke, Hölderlin, and van Gogh, is unconcealment, *aletheia*. As we have seen, the meaning of Being after the

ancient Greek enlightenment is understood to be intelligibility or knowability, and the corresponding notion of truth is what Heidegger calls "correctness," correspondence with the beings about which assertoric claims are made. We are at home in the world by being able to understand it, though reason, making claims about it we can rely on, and that also involves our being able to make it ours, to appropriate and manipulate it for our ends. This will, he thinks, inevitably lead to the construal of being as mere presence at hand. By contrast, Heidegger insists that such a notion of truth cannot be fundamental because any assertoric claim clearly already relies on some prior disclosure, an unconcealment which an assertion depends on and points to. This original "uncovering" must count as primordial truth, because discursive truth depends on it.

But, as in a famous critique of Heidegger, if Heidegger responds to this by claiming that such asserting presumes a prior "disclosure," then, contrary to what Heidegger says, truth must *still* reside in some assertion *about* what is disclosed. (There is that assumption again: *only* an assertion can be a truth-bearer, can be true or false. And if true, then an assertion says how things are, corresponds with being.) A disclosive *event* or *experience* cannot itself be true or false goes the criticism. There is no truth claim without a contrast with falsity, and a disclosure by itself is just that, a manifestation. And about that we have to say it *could* disclose something true or could only *seem* to. If there is a form of Dasein's openness that is originally receptive to this disclosure, should we not ask what would distinguish a spurious disclosure from a genuine one? And if we do, do we not have to say that *an assertion that it was genuine* could be true or false?

Heidegger would say that this first of all this begs the question. A disclosure can be a disclosure before it is formulated in an assertion, and there is no necessity that what is disclosed be formulable in an assertion to be the disclosure it is. Paraphrase is a very poor form of interpretation. (If a teacher presents Shakespeare's sonnet #130, with its opening lines,

"My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;

Coral is far redder than her lips' red"

And a student asks what it means, and the teacher said, "Oh he means my girlfriend is not very pretty but that's OK with me," we would not count that a successful interpretation. The force of the whole sonnet, its meaning, lies in the more and more sensitive experience of the poem, and the task of the teacher is to help create that re-experience, not paraphrase.

Moreover, the phenomenon in dispute should not be held hostage to whether a genuine disclosure can be detected from a spurious one. There might have to be a reliance on such a disclosure even if this distinction cannot be clearly made or only with great difficulty. And there is no a priori reason why the distinction can only be made by an assertion. That is precisely what is at issue. Heidegger could not be more explicit about this than in his 1936 essay on Hölderlin.

> The word as work therefore never directly offers a guarantee (*Gewähr*) as to whether it is an essential word or a delusion [*Blendwerk*]. On the contrary – an essential word often looks in its simplicity like an inessential one. And what on the other hand presents itself in its finery as the look of the essential is only said by rote or repeated. Thus, is language ever obliged to place itself in a seeming [*Schein*] produced by itself, and thereby threaten what is uniquely its own – true saying. (EH 37)

He appears to mean that there *can* be something like or parallel to bivalence *in the disclosure itself*. In fact, he thinks that any disclosure of any significance is always accompanied by a concealing or obscuring, is never just straightforwardly manifest. The meaningfulness of Being involves the partial emergence into presence from obscurity or hiddenness into disclosure, and this is not the result of true judgments but their condition, and that emergence is never complete. (It is especially important that the disclosure is a disclosure of meaningfulness, something that does not play the role one might expect in the criticisms of Heidegger. The question-begging assumption is that meaningfulness must be determinately statable. Meaningfulness could be expressed, but not determinately as some matter of fact, as when we ask, without a clear referent, "what it meant to him" that his child is estranged, or that his circle of friends all died in the war. If we ask such a question, we do not expect a list of propositions. Indeed, very often we expect some sort of narrative.) This copresence of uncovering and concealment clearly admits of all sorts of ambiguities in and qualifications on what is disclosed. The event itself then should not be said to be simply "true," as if every putative disclosure in a fundamental attunement or art work is necessarily true in the sense of statable in true judgments. The issue of the original meaningfulness of being in any historical world is simply not statable in propositional terms, and its availability in literature and life is a matter of interpretation, not cognition. In fact, Heidegger is encouraging philosophy to think of itself as now a matter of hermeneutics, a matter of interpretation, not essentially cognition or analysis. The meaning of terms or concepts as a subject of analysis and clarification is one thing; the meaningfulness of beings is another.

His summary claim in his *Introduction to Metaphysics* is

> We know from Heraclitus and Parmenides that the unconcealment of beings is not simply present at hand. Unconcealment happens only in so far as it is brought about by the work: the work of the word as poetry, the work of stone in temple and statue, the work of the word as thinking, the work of the polis as the site of history that grounds and preserves all this" (IM, 2024, my emphasis).

A summary and final way to put the point would be the following. If we want to understand the late modern world, where we mean what has come to generally authoritative, what is regarded as merely subjective, a matter of personal preferences, what registers of significance lie behind

institutions ranging from the modern family to the workplace to the culture industry to geopolitics, and to assess what it is like first-personally to live out such restrictions, incentives, restrictions and taboos, how are we to do so if such a world id only available non-discursively and, as it were, behind the backs of such subjects?

Heidegger more and more, particularly after his Hölderlin lectures in the nineteen-forties, seemed to rely on appeals to the experience of the arts as occasions for such disclosure, subject to the recognition that such experiences require interpretation and that such interpretations can never claim anything like what Heidegger had called correctness. There is no philosophical or sociological disclosure oh what is happening to us more revealing, even if not summarizable in a paraphrase, than the novels of Flaubert, Stendahl, Henry James, Proust, the work of Kafka, Pound, Eliot, Joyce, Beckett, the films of Renoir, Welles, Ford, Ozu, Kiarostami, Bresson, or Hitchcock. If Heidegger is right, then we might find that the real value of such works is not soimply to identity nondiscursive sources of meaningfulness, but help us see what it is like to like in the vanishing of such sources in the face of the dominance of exchange value, scientism, anti-humanism, microeconomic explanations, instrumental reasoning, not to mention hopelessness, despair, anomie, resentment, tastelessness and vulgarity.

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