**Introduction to Metaphysics –** by Martin Heidegger

*Introduction to Metaphysics* is a lecture course Heidegger presented at the University of Freiburg in the summer semester of 1935. Contrary to the title of the course, Heidegger actually seeks to go beyond metaphysics (the beings of beings, hence still concerned with beings) to the ground of Being itself. He attempts to provide some insight into Being by comparing it with becoming, seeming, thinking, and the ought, and in doing so, explains how Plato and Aristotle knocked genuine inquiry into Being off the rails, where it has remained since, waiting for Heidegger to bring it to the fore once again.

The Fundamental Question of Metaphysics

Heidegger begins by raising what he considers to be the fundamental question of metaphysics, “Why are there beings at all instead of nothing?” But before he attempts an answer to the question, he wants to analyse the question itself.

This question is the broadest, the deepest, and the most originary question we can ask. It is the broadest because it “embraces [not only] all that is… but also what has previously been and what will be in the future.” (p.2) It is the deepest because it seeks the ground from which beings (as a whole) come. Finally, it is the most originary. Because we are asking about being itself, the ground for all beings, the answer cannot itself be a being. We are not seeking “the ground as a foreground” (p.6), that is, as simply another being. Indeed, “through this questioning, beings as a whole are first opened up *as such* and with regard to their possible ground, and they are kept open in the questioning.” (p.5) It is because of this that Heidegger says this question cannot be compared to any other; it is not some “arbitrary process” (p.6), rather it is a *happening*. He also calls it an “originary leap” (p.7) because it (the question) “attains the ground for all genuine questioning by leaping” (p.7). It must “leap”. It cannot follow a path backwards to an answer because it first opens the ground for the path in the first place. This question is the “*question* of all true questions… and it is necessarily asked, knowingly or not, along with every question.” (p.7)

Only philosophy can ask such a question because only philosophy willingly stands outside its own time in such a way that it can engage with the question authentically. Heidegger gives the example of Christianity as a discipline which cannot ask this question. The reason is that even before it is asked, it is answered. Why are there beings? God created them. Christianity begins with the answer to this question and as such, it can never get behind it to really investigate it.

This prompts a couple of general comments about philosophy. Heidegger says that all questioning in philosophy is essentially “untimely”. It “either projects far beyond its own time, or else binds its time back to this time’s earlier and *inceptive* past.” (p.9) In fact, anytime philosophy appears relevant to its own time, either there is no actual philosophy going on or the philosophy has been misinterpreted.

Despite this however, he insists philosophy can still be “a power” (p.10), not, for sure, a power in the sense that it can have a contemporary impact, but nevertheless “a power in the rightful sense.” (p.10) Heidegger means here that philosophy has power in the sense that it “can stand in innermost harmony with the authentic happening in the history of a people.” (p.10) We can’t *use* this power for anything (e.g. to make money or better perform a skill) but in giving us an understanding of how and why we are, it frees us for different ways of being.

Heidegger goes on to mention two ways philosophy has been misunderstood in his day. First, people demand too much of it. Philosophy “always aims at the first and last grounds of beings… in such a way that human beings themselves, with respect to their way of Being, are emphatically interpreted and given an aim.” (p.11) This makes it seem that philosophy can “provide a foundation for the current and future historical Dasein of a people in every age.” (p.11) It can’t “*directly* supply the forces and create the mechanisms and opportunities that bring about a historical state of affairs… because philosophy is always the direct concern of the few… [I.e. those] who transform creatively, who unsettle things.” (p.11) It therefore operates indirectly. Once it has been forgotten as original philosophy, it will become merely a truism.

Secondly, what philosophy can achieve has been distorted. Even if philosophy cannot lay the foundation of a culture, maybe it can at least make building it up easier. This attitude suggests, “philosophy orders the whole of beings into overviews and systems, and readies a world picture for our use” (p.12). This is incorrect. Philosophy makes things harder, not easier. By ‘burden’ Heidegger means “gives back to things, to beings, their weight (Being).” (p.12) Why is this good? Because it is only through burdening that anything great can be produced.

Heidegger summarises with the following; “It is entirely correct and completely in order to say, “You can’t do anything with philosophy.” The only mistake is to believe that with this, the judgment concerning philosophy is at an end… even if *we* can’t do anything with it, may not philosophy in the end do something *with us*, provided that we engage ourselves with it?” (pp.13-14)

Getting back to the topic at hand; language is important for Heidegger. He insists that “words and language are not just shells into which things are packed for spoken and written intercourse. In the word, in language, things first come to be and are.” (p.15) So, we will now consider what ‘metaphysics’ means. To do this, we will start with the Greeks. Originally they called being, what *is*, *phusis*. *Phusis* originally meant, according to Heidegger, “what emerges from itself… the unfolding that opens itself up, the coming-into-appearance in such unfolding, and holding itself and persisting in appearance – in short, the emerging-abiding sway.” (pp.15-16) So *phusis* was not ‘beings’, in the sense of ‘things’; rather, it was “Being itself, by virtue of which beings first become and remain observable.” (p.16)

Unfortunately, *phusis* was then mistranslated as ‘nature’, which means ‘to be born’. This narrowed down the meaning of *phusis* to beings. In order to question beings as a whole then, one, while having to start from individual beings, ultimately had to go beyond them. Beyond in Greek is *meta*, so questioning about beings as a whole (that is, beyond individual beings) is *meta ta phusika*, metaphysics. This is why our question is the fundamental question of metaphysics.

So what are we interested in with our “question of Being”? In metaphysics, this would be to ask about beings as such. But taking *Being and Time* as our starting point, we would be asking about Being as such; that is, the *disclosedness of Being*. Indeed, Heidegger admits, the “fundamental question of the lecture course is of a different kind than the guiding question of metaphysics.” (p.21) So, Heidegger has deliberately made the title of this lecture course, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, ambiguous. Why? To arouse the appropriate questioning attitude in the listeners.

This attitude consists in a “*willing*-to-know” (p.23). Willing is characterised by a word that had special meaning in *B&T*, resoluteness. And knowing is being able to “stand in the truth. Truth is the openness of beings. To know is accordingly to be able to stand in the openness of beings… Merely to have information, however wide-ranging it may be, is not to know.” (p.24)

Heidegger continues; being able to know also requires that one understand that one must always learn again. Indeed only one who can continually learn can know. And since being able to learn means being able to question, we have come full circle.

We will now examine the question, “Why are there beings at all instead of nothing?” Heidegger first wonders if we can eliminate the end of the question, “… instead of nothing”. After all, nothing is nothing. Is not the question; “Why are there beings at all?” more eloquent and more precise?

This will require a look at nothing. The contemporary attitude to nothing is that whoever tries to talk of nothing, immediately makes it into something and thereby contradicts him or herself. Talk of nothing is therefore senseless and boils down to promoting the “spirit of negations and serv[ing] disintegration.” (p.26) It is, in short, “pure nihilism.” (p.27) However, before we relegate talk of the nothing to nonsense, Heidegger recommends that we question logic itself. “For we cannot just decide outright whether logic and its fundamental rules can provide any measure for the question about beings as such. It could be the other way around…” (p.28). Perhaps logic is grounded in the answer to our question about beings, which would mean that it would be “intrinsically incapable of even beginning to understand the question about beings” (p.28). Indeed, Heidegger points out that one cannot “talk about and deal with Nothing as if it were a thing… Nothing remains in principle inaccessible to all science.” (pp.28-29)

If we take our reduced question, “Why are there beings at all?”, we “start out from beings. They *are*… Now, the beings given to us in this way are immediately interrogated as to their ground.” (p.31) This approach can be represented in a simple formula: “Why are there beings? Where and what is their ground? Tacitly one is asking after another, higher being. But here the question does not pertain at all to beings as a whole and as such.” (p.31)

On the other hand, taking the question as it was originally posited; “Why are there beings at all instead of nothing?” prevents us from starting with beings unquestionably given. “Instead, these beings are held out in a questioning manner into the possibility of not-Being.” (p.31) Heidegger talks of the beings we are questioning now, “wavering” and “oscillating” into not-Being and Nothing. Our question also changes. “It does not just try to provide a present-at-hand ground for explaining what is present at hand – instead, we are now searching for a ground that is supposed to ground the dominance of beings as an overcoming of Nothing.” (p.32) Our full question questions beings in their very being. It is just as possible that this piece of chalk (Heidegger’s example) should *not* be here as that it should be here.

In general, possibility is something that is contained in beings. It is not something “that is just added on by our own thought, but beings themselves declare this possibility, they declare themselves as beings in this possibility.” (p.33) The possibility that the piece of chalk be drawn along the board, is not something we project onto it. “The chalk itself, as this being, *is* in this possibility; otherwise it would not be chalk as a writing implement… Possibility belongs to the chalk.” (pp.33-34)

Given that possibility (including the possibility of not-Being) is in beings, we want our question to open them up in this wavering between not-Being and Being, hence the full version of our question is more appropriate.

Heidegger now turns to the relation between the being and its Being. The former is “*what* at any time is in being... [the latter is] that which, as it were, “makes” this be a being instead of nonbeing, that which makes up the Being in the being” (p.34). It is the latter we are inquiring about with the question we started the lecture course with; “We are asking about the Being of beings. We are interrogating beings in regard to their Being.” (p.36)

There is a problem here in that, while we are surrounded by beings, nowhere do we see Being. As Heidegger says, “we are not able to lay hold of the *Being of* beings directly and expressly, neither by way of beings, not in beings – nor anywhere else at all.” (p.37) Consider a building. It exists, it *is*, and yet we can never find its Being within the being itself. “In addition, the Being of this building does not at all seem to be identical for everybody. For us, as observers or passersby, it is not what it is for the students who sit inside” (p.37).

It gets worse however. If we really drill down on our question, it turns out that what we are really inquiring about goes even deeper than the Being of beings. We are asking about “Being in regard to its ground” (p.36); in other words, “*How does it stand with Being?*” (p.36) How can we possibly uncover the *ground* for the Being of beings if we don’t even understand Being (of beings) itself?

All of this prompts Heidegger to wonder, “Is ‘Being’ a mere word and its meaning a vapor”? (p.41).

Our new, prior question; “How does it stand with Being?” is, in fact, a *repetition* and *retrieval* of the inception of our *Dasein*, in order to transform it into another inception. This repetition isn’t a regression to an earlier time to retrieve a glorious past. Rather, it is a new, *more original* beginning, a happening that grounds history anew. What is repeated is not the specific ideas or attitudes of the past inception. What is repeated is the *way* in which we mark this new beginning, the way we reclaim and transform history anew.

So, what is the ‘Being’ in this prior question? Some might approach this problem logically by keeping in mind the idea that the more universal and general a concept, the more empty its content. By this, since Being is the most comprehensive concept (encompassing everything), it must be the most empty. But Heidegger suggests that this has already misinterpreted Being from the start by treating it within *ontology*, a branch of philosophy that attempts to capture beings and represent them in a greater philosophical system. We don’t ask the question in order to compose an ontology here; instead we seek to “restore the historical Dasein of human beings” (p.46). Heidegger will therefore forgo the use of the words ‘ontology’ and ‘ontological’ from here on out.

What does Heidegger mean when he said above he was out to restore the *historical* Dasein of human beings? Does this not bring our study under the realm of science, specifically the science of history?

Heidegger’s answer is simple. No, because the science of history “does not at all determine… the originary relation to history; instead, it always already presupposes such a relation.” (p.48) An understanding of this requires that we ask what Heidegger means by ‘history’. It is not “what is past; for this is precisely what is no longer happening. But much less is history what is merely contemporary, which also never happens, but always just “passes,”… History as happening is determined from the future, takes over what has been, and acts and endures its way through the *present*.” (pp.48-49) The fundamental metaphysical question is historical because “it opens up the happening of human Dasein in its essential relations, that is, its relations to beings as such and as a whole – opens it up to possibilities not yet asked about, futures to come, and in this way also binds it back to its inception that has been, and thus sharpens it and gives weight to its burden in its present.” (p.49)

So how does our asking the question of Being, an act which is itself historical, belong to the world history of earth? In other words; how is it not mere vapour? Heidegger sees the world of his time as entering a darkening period. Since ‘world’ for Heidegger means “*spiritual* world” (p.49), the darkening of the world involves a “*disempowering of the spirit*” (p.50) which he saw playing out as Russia and America, which are metaphysically the same, closed on Europe. His primary criticism here is that all things have sunk to the same level and rank no longer means anything. The superior is not recognised as superior anymore, everything is good enough, the mediocre has become the order of the day. He calls this destruction of all rank “demonic”, by which he means “destructively evil” (p.51) and outlines four ways the spirit has been misinterpreted.

First, spirit has been reinterpreted as *intelligence*, a “cleverness in the examination, calculation, and observation of given things” (p.51). Second, once spirit has been demoted to intelligence, it has thereby been “reduced to the role of a tool in the service of something else, a tool whose handling can be taught and learned.” (p.51) Third, once spirit has been reduced so, the “powers of spiritual happening – poetry and fine arts, state-creation and religion – shift to a sphere where they can be *consciously* cultivated and planned.” (p.52) Standards of validity for culture, i.e. values, become empty and meaningless, yielding poetry for poetry’s sake, science for science’s sake, etc. Fourthly, this diminished spirit becomes a showpiece that people publicly trot out.

Heidegger defines spirit as an “originally attuned, knowing resolution to the essence of Being… the empowering of the powers of beings as such and as a whole.” (pp.54-55) Therefore, asking the question of Being is “one of the essential fundamental conditions for awakening the spirit, and thus for an originary world of historical Dasein, and thus for subduing the danger of the darkening of the world, and thus for taking over the historical mission of our people, the people of the center of the West.” (p.55)

So, while the question of Being is, in fact, the most important question we can ask, the fact remains that “Being is in fact almost nothing more than a word now, and its meaning is an evanescent vapour” (p.55) for people. One reason for this is that language has become “used up and abused” (p.56) so in order to remedy this, we will now turn to language.

On the Grammar and Etymology of the Word “Being”[[1]](#footnote-1)

For Heidegger, language – as a thing that is, i.e. a being among other beings – always arises out of a prior understanding of Being. It is on this basis that he investigates what the word ‘Being’ means. Furthermore, since it is the Greek conception of ‘Being’ that still holds in the West, although this original meaning has since been lost, it is to the Ancient Greeks that Heidegger turns.

There are three grammatical forms of the word ‘Being’: verb, infinitive, and substantive (noun). Essentially Heidegger notes that the infinitive form (‘to be’) immediately indicates its opposite; a finite form. In Greek the finite form of the verb was called the *enklisis* (*modus* in Roman, ‘grammatical mood’ in English) and the noun, *ptosis* (*casus* in Roman, ‘grammatical case’ in English). Both of these terms indicate “a falling, tipping, or inclining. This implies a dropping-off from an upright, straight stance. But this standing-there [of the *enklisis* or *ptosis*], this taking and maintaining a *stand* that stands erected high in itself, is what the Greeks understood as Being.” (p.65)

Pursuing this idea of the stand (which *enklisis* and *ptosis*, as finite forms,are), Heidegger goes on to say that; “Whatever takes a stand becomes *constant* in itself and thereby freely and on its own runs up against the necessity of its limit” (p.65). But the establishment of these limits here isn’t a restriction, “the having-of-itself wherein the constant holds itself, is the Being of beings; it is what first makes a being be a being as opposed to a nonbeing.” (p.65)

When one looks on what stands-there-in-itself, it appears as what puts itself forth. The ground that holds together in this way the Greeks called *ousia*, or *parousia*. This has been incorrectly translated as ‘substance’ which fails to capture the essence of the word. Heidegger recommends instead the German word *Anwesen*, which translates as ‘coming-to-presence’. “Something comes to presence. It stands in itself and thus puts itself forth. It is. For the Greeks, “Being” fundamentally means presence.” (p.66)

Unfortunately, despite this positive start, the Greeks never delved into the ground of Being but remained in the foreground of what comes to presence; i.e. on the level of beings.

Earlier, Heidegger talked about *phusis* originally meaning Being for the Greeks. This unfolding-holding sway “steps forth from concealment” (p.67), a happening Heidegger calls *aletheia* (unconcealment), “insofar as the sway struggles itself forth as a world. Through world, beings first come into being.” (p.67) The important point here is that it is only this initial “violent” struggle, or strife, that allows beings to emerge, to “step apart from each other in opposition, [and which] first allows position and status and rank to establish themselves in coming to presence.” (p.67)[[2]](#footnote-2) So this strife isn’t a bad thing (in the same way that the limits we discussed above weren’t negative) because it is only through opposition that beings can emerge as beings in the first place. As Heidegger says; “In con-frontation, world comes to be.” (p.67) This originary struggle is then sustained by “the creators, by the poets, thinkers, and statesmen.” (p.68) They capture in their works the world (of beings) that the struggle has opened up and preserve it for others. It is this becoming-a-world that Heidegger calls *authentic history*.

Of course, without struggle beings don’t disappear “but world turns away… Beings now become just something one comes across; they are findings… in which no world is worlding any more” (p.68). In another nicely put expression, Heidegger emphasises this idea; “To be sure, beings are still given. The motley mass of beings is given more noisily and broadly than ever before; but Being has deserted them.” (p.69)

Heidegger holds that for the Greeks, the *constancy* of Being was manifested in two ways. First, through the standing-in-itself as arising and standing forth (*phusis*), and secondly, doing so enduringly or abidingly (*ousia*). “Not-to-be accordingly means to step out of such constancy that has stood-forth in itself” (p.70). The word the Greeks used for such a situation was, strangely enough, *existasthai*, ‘existence’. Heidegger therefore rejects our modern use of the word ‘existence’ as a designation for Being and notes how this is one example of the way in which have become alienated from Being.

Heidegger now takes what appears to be a deviation but will link back up with the main argument shortly. He asks about ‘becoming’; that is, coming to Being. There are three aspects to this; 1) that which becomes, 2) that within which it becomes, and 3) the source of the becoming (the idea of the final Being).

Heidegger wants to focus on the second aspect; the medium. “That within which something becomes is what we call “space.” (p.72) However, the Greeks had no word for ‘space’ as we know it as *extensio* (extension). Their equivalent word was *chora* which meant “what is taken up and occupied by what stands there. The place belongs to the thing itself.” (p.72) What becomes, becomes in *chora* but since *chora* had no separate meaning apart from the thing that belonged there, it must “be bare of all the modes of appearance… For if it were like any one of the modes of appearance that enter into it, then in receiving forms… it would make manifest its own appearance in addition.” (p.72) In other words, ‘space’ must not appear as anything (i.e. not be a being) or else whatever appeared in that ‘space’ wouldn’t be able to appear ‘purely’, but would be ‘contaminated’ by the prior appearance of the space. Heidegger suggests that *chora* might therefore mean “that which separates itself from every particular, that with withdraws, and in this way admits and “makes room” precisely for something else” (p.73).

So, with that in mind, let’s return to the main discussion about grammar. The basic position of the verb is the first person singular present indicative; e.g. *lego*, I say. One (*enklisis*) form of this is *lexainto*, “they could be called and addressed”. What does this inflection (the *enklisis*) do? It deviates from the base form and makes manifest a number of specific qualities; another person (not first), another number (not singular, but plural), another voice (passive), another tense (aorist), and another mood (optative). This is the purpose of the *enklisis*; “To make something else manifest in addition, to allow it to arise and be seen in addition” (p.71).

The infinitive of *lego*, *legein*, to say, is also an *enklisis* (a deviation) with respect to the first person form *lego* “but one in which person, number, and mood do *not* manifest themselves.” (p.73) The infinitive form does not limit itself to any specific details; it doesn’t manifest anything. It “cuts off what it means from all definite relations of meaning.” (p.74) Heidegger goes so far as to say we ought to be “on our guard against the infinitive word form, for precisely this form, seen grammatically, communicates the least of the verb’s meaning.” (p.75)

So, what about the infinitive “to be”? As with *legein*, the “definite modes of meaning are no longer in effect; they are blurred.” (p.81) But we then take this word whose meaning has become blurred and transform it into the substantive (noun), Being. This obviously does nothing to clarify things. “The substantive *das Sein* [Being] implies that what is so named, itself “is.” Being now itself becomes something that “is,” whereas obviously only beings are, and it is not the case that Being also is.” (p.76) So this linguistic transformation achieves nothing except to fix and objectify a word (the infinitive “to be”) that has already been emptied of meaning. Is it any wonder that Being appears empty to us nowadays? If we want to approach Being through language, Heidegger therefore recommends we keep to *enklisis* forms; e.g. I am, you were, they have been, etc.

Now we see what the detour into ‘space’ was all about. ‘Space’ understood by the Greek *chora*, i.e. not as extension, seems to be a parallel for the grammatical form of the *enklisis*. In the same way that *chora* withdraws to “make room” for something else, the *enklisis* also “makes room” by withdrawing from the base form and bringing forth other qualities.

Heidegger’s etymological investigation is short and concludes with him noting that “Being” originally had three meanings: living, emerging, and abiding. Today “these initial meaning have died out… only an “abstract” meaning, “to be,” has survived.” (p.79) In short, the meaning of “Being” has been blended in such a way that none of the three meanings is evident in the word anymore.

The Question of the Essence of Being

So, we have examined and explained why the word “Being” appears empty of meaning to us today. But is it so? We encounter beings all around us all the time, but how do we know they are beings? The truth of the matter is that while constantly being faced with beings, we do in fact “distinguish between their Being-thus and Being-otherwise, we judge about Being and not-Being. We therefore know unambiguously what “Being” means… The word “Being” is thus indefinite in its meaning, and nevertheless we understand it definitely.” (p.85) In fact, “Being, that which pertains to every being whatsoever and thus disperses itself into what is most commonplace, [far from being the most universal and therefore the emptiest word of all] is the most unique of all.” (p.86) Indeed, “Everything else besides Being, each and every being, even if it is unique, can still be compared with another being… But Being, in contrast, can be compared to nothing else.” (p.86)

Heidegger attempts a proof that Being cannot be empty and meaningless, by comparing it with the universal representation, ‘tree’. One might assume that we know the universal by appeal to the particular instances of trees we see around us. This would be a mistake however. “how are we supposed to discover the much-invoked particular, the individual trees as *such*, *as* trees – how are we supposed to be able even to *look for* such things as trees, unless the representation of what a tree is in general is already lighting our way in advance?” (p.87) This in turn supposes we know the essence “plant”, and the essence “living thing”, and so on.

One might object here that since “Being” is the most universal (therefore empty) concept, there are no ‘higher up’ essences for us to refer to and we therefore have to refer to what stands ‘under’ it to understand it. Heidegger rejects this for two reasons. First, he thinks the universality of Being does not function like a genus. He doubts “whether an individual being can ever count as an example of Being at all” and “whether the ways of Being (Being as nature, Being as history) represent “species” of the genus “Being”.” Second, if we try to illustrate Being by furnishing individual examples of beings, we end up distorting it because “every example in this case manifests not too much, as one might say, but always too little.” (p.89)

Finally, Heidegger asks what if we really didn’t understand the meaning of Being, even indeterminately? “Would there just be one noun and one verb less in our language? No. *Then there would be no language at all*. Beings *as such* would no longer open themselves up in words at all; they could no longer be addressed and discussed. For saying beings as such involves understanding beings as beings, that is, their Being, in advance.” (pp.89-90) This is, in fact, what it means to be human; “to be human means to be a sayer…. If our essence did not stand within the power of language, then all beings would remain closed off to us” (p.90).

It is important to note that this truth, that we understand Being, is not a fact like other facts about human beings. Without it, without “such an opening up of Being, we could not be “human” in the first place.” (p.92) Heidegger then says something interesting about human beings. We cannot say that there was a time when there were no human beings. Why? “At every *time*, there were and are and will be human beings, because time temporalizes itself only as long as there are human beings… [indeed] time is not eternity, and time in each case temporalizes itself only at one time, as human, historical Dasein.” (p.92)

Next, Heidegger emphasises one difference between science and philosophy. The domain of any science is “determined by the object, which… is always given in advance in some way. In contrast, it is not just that the object of philosophy does not lie at hand, but philosophy has no object at all. **Philosophy is a happening that must at all times work out Being for itself anew**.” [emphasis added] (p.93) Being is not something that is decided once and for all. It is an event that each era has to bring about anew.

So, in summary of this section we have seen that particular beings can’t get us to Being because they “can *open themselves up as such* to us only if and when we already understand Being in advance in *its* essence.” Basically, in order to apprehend beings in the first place, we must already be relying on Being. Being is always behind beings (or behind us) in such a way that we will never pierce them to get to it.

In addition, the word “Being”, in every one of its inflections, relates to its referent (Being itself) in a way that is essentially different from the way all other nouns and verbs in language relate to their referents. Why? Because “Being is not a being, nor any ingredient of beings that is itself in being.” (p.96)

Despite this, Heidegger closes this section by giving fourteen different sentences all containing the word “is”, in each one of which, the word carries a different meaning. This seems to prove nothing except that “Being opens up to us in a manifold way” (p.98), but then he notes that there is a common meaning within each of these modes of the “is”, a boundary within which Being seems to stay; ““Being” stays with the sphere of presentness and presence, persistence and subsistence, staying and coming forth.” (p.100) It is this thread we will continue with in the next section.

The Restriction of Being

In this chapter, Heidegger will attempt to further elucidate Being by looking at it in relation to four other concepts; becoming, seeming, thinking, and the ought.

*I. Being and Becoming*

Becoming is “not yet. What is, no longer needs to become.” (p.105) So, this distinction lies at the core of our questioning of Being and we can conclude that Being is “the proper, self-collected perdurance of the constant, undisturbed by restlessness and change.” (p.106)

*II. Being and Seeming*

This distinction is also clear; “Being as opposed to seeming means what is actual as distinguished from and opposed to what is not actual” (p.108). However, Heidegger asserts that there is some deeper belonging together here, a “concealed unity of Being and seeming” (p.108) which lies in the fact that the essence of both seeming and Being lie in *appearing*. To *be*, but also to *seem* to be, require that something first appear. Heidegger here rejects two false paradigms that mislead and confuse; subjective and objective, realistic and idealistic.

In appearing, Being is a “letting-step-forth from concealment. Insofar as a being as such *is*, it places itself into and stands in *unconcealment*, *aletheia*.” (p.112) This word, *aletheia*, has been “thoughtlessly” translated as ‘truth’ (even Heidegger does this in *B&T*) but if we remember that truth means unconcealment, what we find is that “*Truth belongs to the essence of Being*. To be a being – this implies to be made manifest, to step forth in appearing… Not-Being, in contrast, means to step away from appearance, from presence. The essence of appearance involves this stepping-forth and stepping-away, this hither and hence in the genuinely demonstrative, indicative sense.” (p.112) This is how Being discloses itself, allowing beings to appear.

What exactly is this appearing? Heidegger thinks of it as “the offering of a look and of views” (p.114). This means it is the being itself which is doing the offering. It “lets itself… be apprehended at this or that time, from this or that viewpoint. The vista that offers itself alters with each new viewpoint. Thus, this view is also one that *we* take and make for ourselves.” (p.114) In appearing by way of a look or viewpoint which we also have a hand in making, beings necessarily stand in the constant “possibility of a look that precisely covers over and conceals what beings are in truth, that is, in unconcealment. This… is *seeming* in the sense of semblance.” (p.114)

We can now refine our assessment of seeming. It actually belongs to Being itself as appearing. It is a variant of Being itself in the same way we saw that *enklisis* was a “falling over” from the infinitive. Of course, while “Being as seeming is no less powerful than Being as unconcealment” (p.119), it differs from the latter in that it “lets beings appear as what they really are not” (p.119). However, in doing this, it also “covers over itself as seeming, inasmuch as it shows itself as Being.” (p.119) What this means is that since Being itself, even as unconcealment, conceals itself (hence the need for this questioning), seeming, which is a deviation (*enklisis*) of Being (and therefore a concealing of Being), also conceals itself.

Heidegger then sees three paths before human beings. “If they are to take over their Dasein in the clarity of Being, humans must [1] bring Being to a stand, [2] they must endure it in seeming and against seeming, [3] they must tear away both seeming and Being from the abyss of not-Being.” (p.121) Distinguishing between, and acknowledging, these three paths, Heidegger calls “de-cision”. Clearly, this has nothing to do with human judgement and/or choice. Rather, de-ciding for or against these three paths, because it looks to Being itself and separates Being, unconcealment, seeming, and not-Being, marks the beginning of history.

He then goes on to outline how Parmenides discusses these three paths in his famous poem but this is a non-conventional interpretation and seems fairly questionable to me. Most interpreters see only two paths in Parmenides; that of Being and not-Being.

In conclusion of this section, Heidegger wants to tie Being and seeming to Being and becoming. “What maintains itself in becoming is, on the one hand, no longer Nothing, but on the other hand it is not yet what it is destined to be. In accordance with this “no longer and not yet,” becoming remains shot through with not-Being. However, it is not a pure Nothing, but no longer this and not yet that, and as such, it is constantly something else. So now it looks like this, now it looks like that. It offers an intrinsically inconstant view. Seen in this way, becoming is a seeming of Being.” (pp.126-7) He closes with this nice line; “Just as becoming is the seeming of Being, seeming as appearing is the becoming of Being.” (p.127)

*III. Being and Thinking*

What is thinking? Essentially it “brings something before us, *represents it*.” (p.131) Heidegger identifies three key aspects within this: 1) a *free* re-presenting, 2) re-presenting in the mode of analytical connection, 3) a representational comprehension of the universal.

Heidegger picks up “logic” (number 2 above) as what has become the essence of thinking although puts it in quotation marks because it itself, is “something worthy of questioning.” (p.133) By way of definition, he tells us that logic is “the exhibition of the formal structure of thinking and the exposition of its rules” (p.134) and claims that it was only able to be developed after Being and thinking had already been separated from each other. Ultimately, Heidegger will argue for the overcoming of logic (which does not mean the “rule of mere feelings” (p.135)) which will result in a “more originary, rigorous thinking that belongs to Being.” (p.135) There are five questions we will answer in what follows; 1) How did the original unity of Being and thinking unfold in the unity of *phusis* and *logos*? 2) How did the separation of *phusis* and *logos* come about? 3) How did *logos* (the ‘logical’) gain pre-eminence? 4) How did *logos* become the essence of thinking? 5) How did *logos* (as reason and understanding) come to rule over Being?

Heidegger mines Heraclitus to demonstrate that *logos* originally meant “laying one thing next to another, bringing them together as one – in short, gathering; but at the same time, the one is contrasted with the other.” (p.137) He later describes it as the “gathering gatheredness, that which originally gathers.” (p.141) It takes no great stretch of the imagination to apply this to Being to get; “*Logos* is constant gathering, the gatheredness of beings that stands in itself, that is, Being.” (p.145) And just like that, *logos* is Being.

*Logos* and *phusis* came to be separated in Christianity where *logos*, taken as “word”,was translated as one particular being; namely, the Son of God, but Heidegger thinks the separation took place even earlier than this, in the Greeks, no less. The two ideas came to be separated through a schema which sees Being as the objective, the object, and thinking as the subjective, the subject. To see how this comes about requires that we shift from Heraclitus to Parmenides. Of course, Parmenides agrees with Heraclitus that Being is “that which holds itself together in itself… the constantly complete, constantly self-showing sway, through which there also constantly shines the seeming of the one-sided and many-sided” (p.151), but then Heidegger points out one verse in Parmenides; *to gar auto noein estin te kai einai*. This has been translated as; “but thinking and Being are the same.” (p.152) *Noein* has been taken to be thinking, and since thinking is an activity of the subject, this means that Parmenides is saying the subject’s thinking determines Being. Heidegger’s re-translation of this saying runs: “belonging-together reciprocally are apprehending and Being” (p.162), which is clearly quite different.

To clarify this, Heidegger resurrects another of Parmenides’ sayings where he purports to find the ancient thinker using the same word, *noein*, in a way that doesn’t say anything about human beings, humans as subjects, or a “subject that absorbs everything objective into something merely subjective.” (p.155) Indeed, the statement in question Heidegger translates as saying, “Being holds sway, but because it holds sway and insofar as it holds sway and appears, apprehending *also* necessarily happens *along with* appearance.” (p.155) It also says that if human beings are involved with this appearance and appearing, “then they must themselves be, they must belong to Being. *But then the essence and the manner of Being-human can be determined only on the basis of the essence of Being*.” (p.155)

So what is human being? Humans apprehend or re-present (as we have seen), but according to Heidegger, apprehending is not a “faculty of the human being, who is otherwise already defined; instead, apprehending is a happening in which humanity itself happens, and in which humanity itself thus first enters history as a being, first appears, that is itself comes to Being.” (p.157) In other words, the essence of human being is inextricably bound up with Being. Any other definition of humanity, say, as a rational animal, in a sense, came too late to provide us with our essence. This is one barrier that has cut us off from our essence. “The other barrier is that even this *question* about humanity remains alien to us.” (p.158)

Heidegger next gives seven “points of orientation” (p.159) concerning the essence of human beings:

1. The essence of the human being is *never* an answer, but is essentially a question
2. The asking of this question and its decision are historical – not in the sense that they occur in history, but that they are the essence of history; i.e. “this questioning first creates history (p.159)
3. This is the case because questioning what the human being is can only happen in questioning about Being; i.e. Being and the human essence are deeply intertwined
4. “Only where Being opens itself up in questioning does history happen, and with it that Being of *the human being* by virtue of which the human being ventures the confrontation with beings as such.” (p.159)
5. This questioning first brings humanity back to the being that “it itself is and has to be.” (p.160)
6. In this historical questioning humanity comes to itself and is a self. Selfhood here doesn’t mean an “I” and an individual. “The selfhood of humanity means this: it has to transform the Being that opens itself up to it into history, and thus bring itself to a stand.” (p.160)
7. The question is not, “What is the human being?” but, “*Who* is the human being?”

So, “Who is the human being – we do not learn this through a scholarly definition, but only when humanity steps into the confrontation with beings, by attempting to bring them into their Being, that is sets beings into limits and form, projects something new (not yet present), originally poetizes, grounds poetically.” (pp.160-1)

Heidegger calls the writings of Heraclitus and Parmenides, which we have relied on here, “poetizing thinking” (p.161) which therefore is predominately thinking. Now, he will investigate the separation of thinking and Being from the other end, “thinking poetry” (p.161). To do this, we will turn to Greek tragedy, specifically Sophocles’ *Antigone*.

Heidegger divides his analysis of *Antigone* into three phases (of which we will only cover two because the third doesn’t really add anything to the second). In the first phase he talks about how Sophocles (by Heidegger’s translation) describes beings as a whole, the sway, as *deinon*, which means terrible, violent, overwhelming. This is how Heidegger sees beings as a whole. But this same word is also used to describe human being. There are a few reasons for this. First, because humanity remains exposed to the overwhelming sway of beings as a whole, it is caught up in this overwhelming itself. Second, humanity is *deinon* because it is violence-doing in the sense of the strife or struggle that is required to bring beings forth (gathering what holds sway and letting it enter into an openness). The third reason manifests in another translation of the word *deinon*, as uncanny. He describes human being as “the uncanniest” (p.166). Why uncanny? The uncanny is “that which throws one out of the “canny,” that is, the homely, the accustomed, the current, the unendangered.” (p.168) In being thrown out into the midst of the overwhelming sway, the human being is uncanny; “because they step out, move out of the limits that at first and for the most part are accustomed and homely, because as those who do violence, they overstep the limits of the homely, precisely in the direction of the uncanny in the sense of the overwhelming.” (p.168)

In the second phase, we see Sophocles describing the sea, the earth, and the animal as “the overwhelming that the violence-doer allows to break into openness in all its excessive violence.” (p.173) He also adds to this list; language, understanding, mood, passion, and building, which are all just as much a part of the overwhelming sway. A very interesting consequence of this is that, because these things are all part of the sway, while people think “it is *they* who have language and passions at their disposal” (p.174), this is clearly impossible. “How is humanity ever supposed to have invented that which pervades it in its sway, due to which humanity itself can *be* as humanity in the first place?” (p.174) The point here is that the violence required to bring forth beings *as* sea, *as* earth, *as* animal can only happen “insofar as the powers of language, of understanding, of mood, and of building are themselves conquered in doing violence” (pp.174-5), but these things aren’t the application of faculties or qualities the human being already has, because *they are what makes humans human in the first place*. Insofar as the human being “enters into them” (p.175), the human being becomes human and beings disclose themselves. (Examples of these things include; “poetic saying… thoughtful projection… constructive building… [and] state-creating action” (p.175))

Here, Heidegger also builds on the distinction he made in the first phase between *deinon* as the overwhelming and *deinon* as uncanny human being with a new word, *deinotaton*, which seems to mean “what is authentically to be said… [and] consists precisely in the unitary, reciprocal relation between the two senses of *deinon*.” (p.176) First, the violent (human being). Heidegger uses the word *techne* to capture this aspect of *deinon*. *Techne* doesn’t mean art, skill, or technology. Instead, Heidegger translates it as “knowing” but not knowing as “the result of mere observations about something present at hand” (p.177). For Heidegger, knowing means “the ability to set Being into work as something that in each case *is* in such and such a way.” (p.177) This is why the Greeks considered art *techne*, not because it required technical skill, but because “art is what most immediately brings Being – that is, the appearing that stands there in itself – to stand [in something present (in the work)]” (p.177). Heidegger calls this the ability of art to “set to work” (p.178). “Setting-to-work is putting Being to work *in* beings, a putting-to-work that opens up. This opening-up and keeping open, which surpasses and puts to work, is knowing.” (p.178) *Techne* thus characterises the *deinon* as violence-doing. Second, he characterises *deinon*, as the overwhelming, with the word *dike*, which he translates as “fittingness”, a word Heidegger seems to associate with almost construction-like overtones; joint and structure, arrangement. The third element here is the relation between the two, the *deinotaton*, regarding which, Heidegger says; “The knower fares into the midst of fittingness, draws Being into beings [in the “draft”], and yet can never conquer the overwhelming. Thus, the knower is thrown this way and that between fittingness and un-fittingness”[[3]](#footnote-3) (p.179). This reciprocal relation between the two is “the happening of uncanniness” (p.184), which is also the happening of unconcealment.

While discussing the second phase, Heidegger makes a comment which captures an important aspect of his whole philosophy. Most people think that “the inception of history is primitive and backward, clumsy and weak. The opposite is true. The inception is what is most uncanny and mightiest. What follows is not a development, but flattening down as mere widening out…” (pp.172-3). Heidegger’s entire philosophical project turns on this insight so it is worth us noting it.

Now we are in a position to revisit Parmenides’ saying. If we do so, we find that “the belonging-together of *noein* (apprehending) and *einai* (Being)… is nothing but this reciprocal relation.” (p.184)

So, we are still trying to understand how *phusis* and *logos* came to be separated. Heidegger will demonstrate three more things on the way: 1) Apprehending isn’t a process, but a de-cision, 2) Apprehending is closely entwined with *logos*, 3) *Logos* grounds language.

On 1. Apprehending is “taking up a position to receive the appearing of beings.” (p.187) This taking up a position involves “a passage through the crossing of the threefold way. Apprehending can become this passage only if it is fundamentally a *de-cision* *for* Being *against* Nothing, and thus a confrontation *with* seeming. But such essential de-ciding… has to use violence…” (p.187).

On 2. Heidegger, taking Parmenides for his source again – “Needful is the gathered setting-down as well as the apprehending of this: being (is) Being.” (p.188) – asserts that apprehending cannot take place without *logos*, that is, without a gathering, specifically, a “human self-gathering to fittingness” (p.188). The essence of Being-human is, in fact, this apprehending-gathering, a taking-over of *techne*, the knowing setting-into-work of Being. From this, history arises.

We need a small detour here, into language. Language is crucially important for Heidegger:

The word, the name, sets the self-opening beings out of the immediate, overwhelming assault, back into their Being, and preserves them in this openness, delimitation, and constancy. Naming does not come afterward, providing a being that is already otherwise manifest with a designation and a token called a word, but to the contrary: from the height of its originary act of violence as the opening-up of Being, the word sinks down to become a mere sign… In originary saying, the Being of beings is opened up in the structure of its gatheredness. (p.191)

So, *logos* is part of the essence of historical humanity, but so is language, which was basically the way “Being itself opened itself up to [the Greeks]… [and the way] in which they brought Being to stand in beings [i.e. through poetry]” (p.191). This close interconnection between the two seems to be why Heidegger thinks *logos* came to be incorrectly understood as discourse.

On 3. Originally however, “the essence of language is found in the gathering of the gatheredness of Being… [(i.e. *logos*)which means] language as everyday discourse comes to its truth only when saying and hearing are related to logos as gatheredness, in the sense of Being.” (p.192)

There are two slightly tangential points Heidegger makes here which I want to note. First, he talks about pessimism and optimism, bringing up Schopenhauer’s proposition: “Life is a business that does not cover its costs.” (p.198) Both approaches are wrong because “life (as Being-here) is not a business at all” (p.198) despite the fact that this is the way we tend to treat it.

Second, and this is central to Heidegger’s philosophy, he makes it clear that Being is not something brought about by human beings. Rather, “Dasein is the constant urgency of defeat and of the renewed resurgence of the act of violence against Being, in such a way that the almighty sway of Being violates Dasein (in the literal sense), makes Dasein into the site of its appearing, envelops and pervades Dasein in its sway, and thereby holds it within Being.” (p.198) In other words, the overwhelming sway of Being takes over human being which then becomes the site of the gathering and apprehending, the setting-into-work of appearance. Humans don’t *cause* unconcealment, we *steward* it.

To crystallise (and finally) wrap up this winding discussion on how *phusis* and *logos* came to be separated, we will now go to the end of Greek philosophy (as Heidegger sees it) in Plato and Aristotle. In Plato, the meaning of Being (*phusis*) came to restricted to the word *idea*, *eidos*, “idea”. So what does *idea* mean? It means “what is seen in the visible, the view that something offers. What is offered is the current look or *eidos* of whatever we encounter.” (p.201) Now the way Plato uses it, it doesn’t mean simply what we see with our eyes; but everything that can be apprehended. If this was as far as it had gone, there wouldn’t have been a problem because this understanding of *phusis* certainly follows from our understanding of Being (*phusis*) as the unfolding-sway. But what happened was that “the *idea* rises up as the sole and definitive interpretation of Being.” (p.203) For sure, *idea* captures an aspect of *phusis*; it is “the look as what is seen… a determination of the constant insofar as, and only insofar as, it stands opposed to a seeing” (p.203), but if it comes to define *phusis*, then it misleads and perverts it.

Both *phusis* and *eidos* do involve appearing, but in very different ways. The appearing which “denotes the self-gathering event of bringing-itself-to-stand and thus standing in gatheredness” is quite different from the appearing that means “as something that is already standing here, to proffer a foreground, a surface, a look as an offering to be looked at.” The former opens up “beings in such a way that it sets beings back into their Being, so that apprehending takes beings with regard to the fact *that* they set themselves forth and as *what*.” (p.204)

This runs full speed into Heidegger’s distinction between what-Being and that-Being; the former being the essence of a thing (*essentia*), the latter its existence (*existentia*). What happened next was that the essence (*idea*) of beings, their whatness, came to be identified as *the* Being of beings. Whatness, *idea*, was then “promoted to the status of what really is, and beings themselves, which previously held sway, sink to the level of… that which really should not be and really *is* not either – because beings always deform the idea, the pure look, by actualizing it, insofar as they incorporate it into matter.” (p.205)

What about *logos*? We have seen that the “opening up of beings happens in logos as gathering. Gathering is originally accomplished in language. Thus, logos becomes the definitive and essential determination of discourse.” (p.206) Accordingly, truth, as unconcealment, originally resided in *logos* as “a happening of the beings themselves that held sway, and was stewarded by means of gathering” (p.207), but afterwards, truth was preserved in *logos* as discourse “in such a way that the being that was originally opened up in gathering is not itself expressly experienced in each particular case. In what is passed on, truth loosens itself, as it were, from beings.” (p.207) In other words, truth is no longer connected to beings themselves; rather, it holds in abstract, unconnected saying. “We arrive at Aristotle’s proposition according to which logos as assertion is what can be true or false.” (p.207) All assertion (*logos*) involves relation (e.g. this is in such and such a state, or this is so and so large, etc.) and all relations are determinations of Being. Being is therefore reducible to *kategoriai*, categories. This is what the study of Being, as ontology, has amounted to since the time of Aristotle, and it has been “taken to be self-evident… that the essential characteristics of Being are categories.” (p.208)

In this final twist in the tale not only has *logos* separated from *phusis*, but at the same time it has come “forth *over against phusis* as *the* standard-setting domain that becomes the place of origin for the determinations of Being.” (p.209) *Logos*, which was originally grounded in *phusis* as a gathering force for unconcealment through language, has now separated from it and delimited the boundaries within which *phusis* is to be understood.

In addition to all of this, language itself has been diminished. What was originally in truth as unconcealment is now, as assertion, “just another thing that one comes across. This present-at-hand thing is something handy, something that is handled in order to attain truth as correctness and establish it securely.” (p.209)

Heidegger summarises our progress so far thus:

phusis becomes the idea (paradeigma), truth becomes correctness. Logos becomes the assertion, the locus of truth as correctness, the origin of the categories, the basic principle that determines the possibilities of Being. “Idea” and “category” will now be the two titles under which stand Western thought… (p.210)

And:

from the point of view both of the idea and of assertion, the original essence of truth, aletheia (unconcealment), has changed into correctness. For unconcealment is that inner core, that is, the relation that holds sway between phusis and logos in the original sense. The sway essentially unfolds as coming-forth-into-unconcealment. But apprehending and gathering are the stewardship of the opening up of unconcealment for beings. The transformation of phusis and logos into idea and assertion has its inner ground in a transformation of the essence of truth as unconcealment into truth as correctness. (pp.211-2)

Next, apprehending (*noein*) is also taken over by *logos* as assertion, so it becomes “the apprehending that, in determining something as something, analyzes it, thinks it through… This analysis by means of assertions, *dianoia*, is the essential determination of the understanding in the sense of the representing that makes judgments. Apprehending becomes understanding, apprehending becomes reason.” (p.215)

Can we connect this with the previous two distinctions we have made? The opposite of becoming is continuous endurance and the opposite of semblance is the really viewed (the *idea*). As what really is, the *idea* is also what endures continuously. However, the *idea* is only determined by *logos*, judgement as assertion, so becoming and seeming are determined by thinking.

The diagram which represents this (including the ought which we will look at next) looks like this:

 the ought

 becoming Being seeming

 thinking

*IV. Being and the Ought*

If we look at the diagram, we see that *thinking* is below *Being*. “This indicates that *thinking* becomes the ground that sustains and determines Being.” (p.219) *The ought*, being above *Being* indicates that “whereas Being is grounded in thinking, it is surpassed by the ought. What this means is that Being is no longer what is definitive, what provides the measure.” (p.219)

For Plato, the highest idea was the *idea tou agathou*, the idea of the good. Now, this never meant good in a moral sense but “the valiant, which achieves and can achieve what is proper to it. The *agathon* is the standard as such, what first grants Being the potency to unfold essentially as *idea*” (p.219). Indeed, this is precisely what Plato says when he compares the Good to the sun. The sun is that which makes sight possible, while the Good is that which makes knowledge possible. The Good is to mind what the sun is to our eyes. So, while Being is *idea*, Plato is “setting something *above* Being that Being never yet is, but always *ought* to be.” (p.220)

So, we’ve covered a lot of ground in this section. What was the point again? Well, we wanted to see if we could get some traction on Being by considering what it isn’t; i.e. by delimiting Being in relation to some restrictive concepts. What we have seen is that:

Being, in contradistinction to becoming, is enduring.

Being, in contradistinction to seeming, is the enduring prototype, the always identical.

Being, in contradistinction to thinking, is what lies at the basis, the present-at-hand.

Being, in contradistinction to the ought, is what lies at hand in each case as what ought to be and has not yet been actualized, or already has been actualized. (p.225)

All of these things can be expressed in the term: *constant presence*. However, this understanding of Being has emerged from our historical Dasein as incepted by the ancient Greeks and, while solid in many ways, remains incomplete. “*Thus, the concept of Being that has been accepted up to now does not suffice to name everything that “is.”*” (p.227) Heidegger suggests that “Being must therefore be experienced anew” (p.227). In what way? Well, we have seen that Being, which has been delimited, restricted, encircled, by these four separations, “must itself be transformed into the encompassing circle and ground of all beings.” (p.227)

Heidegger moves on to respond to those who claim this “asking about Being brings only confusion, that it has a destructive effect, that it is nihilism.” (p.226) Rather, he thinks merely to “chase after beings in the midst of the oblivion of Being – that is nihilism… *In contrast*, to go expressly up to the limit of Nothing in the *question* about Being, and to take Nothing into the question of Being – this is the first and only fruitful step toward the true overcoming of nihilism.” (p.226)

Another point that Heidegger makes at the end of this lecture course, which he has made before but is worth repeating, is that the “question about the essence of Being is intimately linked to the question of who the human being is.” (p.228) By this, he obviously doesn’t mean humans as animals:

Within the question of Being, the human essence is to be grasped and grounded, according to the concealed directive of the inception, as the site that Being necessitates for its opening up. Humanity is the Here that is open in itself. Beings stand within this Here and are put to work in it. We therefore say: the Being of humanity is, in the strict sense of the word, “Being-here” <”Da-sein”>. The perspective for the opening up of Being must be grounded originally in the essence of Being-here as such a site for the opening up of Being. (p.228)

There is one more important Being-collocation we have yet to raise, one which is fundamentally different from the separations we have analysed thus far; Beingand *Time*. So, why time? Well, if Being turns out to be constant presence (*ousia*), then the only thing that can remain to “ground… the essence of stability and the essence of presence…” (p.229) is time. This understanding of time hasn’t yet been “unfolded” and can’t be according to current scientific models. Heidegger hints that a fuller understanding of time must treat it as “something that somehow comes to presence, *ousia tis*.” (p.229) He envisages this happening on the basis of “the “now,” that which is in each case uniquely present. The past is the “no-*longer*-now,” the future is the “not-*yet*-now.”” (p.229) It is with this tantalising preview of what is left to uncover, Heidegger concludes the lecture course.

1. I find Heidegger’s linguistic forays, while mildly interesting, somewhat contrived so I won’t pursue them in any detail. Instead, I will re-join Heidegger when he finally arrives at definitions for key terms, *sans* the linguistic justifications he discovers. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Heidegger finds support for this idea in an unconventional translation of Heraclitus. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The word “draft” seems designed to capture the strife involved in bringing beings forth. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)