

**SYMPOSIUM: ON ROBERT PIPPIN'S
THE CULMINATION: HEIDEGGER, GERMAN
IDEALISM, AND THE FATE OF PHILOSOPHY**

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The Culmination: Reply to my Critics

Robert Pippin

University of Chicago

Correspondence

Email: r-pippin@uchicago.edu

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 book. One was that entities are 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. In making this claim, he was concerned with the issue he called primordially or fundamentality. While various sensible and material properties of objects could be attended to, his phenomenological claim was that this sort of attentiveness was secondary, “founded,” an abstraction from our original, practical engagement. The second followed from that claim of primordially. It was that this availability could not be understood as 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. 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, that the know-how involved in hammer competency need have no basis in prior 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 equipmental context assumed as a background for that significance, a context itself not appealed to or invoked in any discursive way. That context was itself a component of a general horizon of possible meaningfulness, a source of comportments that would make sense to engage in, a “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. And this claim is the source of the important questions that Schear raises.

1 | RESPONSE TO JOSEPH SCHEAR

This issue of a nondiscursive form of intelligibility is all very familiar from the early reception of *Being and Time*, especially in the United States, where the issues of nonconceptual content and the mind-world relation in general formed

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a good deal of the discussion of Heidegger. But, as Schear's comments make clear, Heidegger's concerns are not limited to tool intelligibility. The final object of his concern is Western metaphysics itself, and its having "forgotten" the question of the meaning of being. The assumption since Plato has been that to be is to be rationally, discursively intelligible, such that beings could be meaningfully available only as possible objects of judgment. This is immediately paradoxical. How could Heidegger claim that the meaning of Being has been forgotten, when he also charges that the tradition has locked itself into "meaning" as rational intelligibility? He thinks this because he thinks the *question* of "meaning" has been forgotten by being dogmatically assumed, foreclosing any deeper interrogation. The tradition has committed itself to the claim that what matters in our engagements, what we cannot but most care about, what is originally salient is an attentiveness to the "what is it" question, rational explicability in various forms. We think of ourselves as subjects rendering an otherwise alien, opaque, mysterious world familiar and so "our own," manifesting itself as suffused with *nous*, in Aristotle's terms, open to our need to render it intelligible. This comes to a kind of culmination in Hegel because Hegel was not only interested in the indispensable elements of this potential knowability, the Concept, but he also insisted on its absolute scope and status. That is, the meaning of the modern state, or civil society or art or religion, even human history, its significance and importance to us, lay ultimately in its rational form, its being in some way comprehensible as the product of reason. In this way, for Heidegger, Hegel's position is not just uniquely "rationalistic." It expresses the driving force of all Western philosophy. From here he goes on to argue that the effects of this dogmatic forgetfulness have been catastrophic, leading to mass societies where inauthenticity is unavoidable, and initiating a predatory stance toward all the nonhuman world, such that in "our" world the meaning of being is "enframed" as material for technological manipulation.

Schear wants to question one aspect of this multi-layered and wide-ranging project. He asks: is it right to contrast a nondiscursive attunement to mattering from a "rationalistic" approach, or is there some way of preserving a role for reason in what ends up counting as mattering, significant, or ultimately in leading a life. He suggests that Heidegger (or my Heidegger) might have made it too easy to reject any primordial role for cognitive and normative rationality. There can be a revised version of the role of rationality that is not subject to Heidegger's concerns

Posing the question this way suggests one or two qualifications before arriving at Schear's main claims about the place of reason in experience. First, Hegelian dogmatism about the meaning of being involves charging it with a dogmatic assumption about what the question of meaning could amount to. Hegel assumes that what is primordial in the possible availability of anything for experience is determinacy, discursive discriminability from what a thing is not. That is certainly an issue one can attend to, but this leaves unasked whether the primary source of meaningfulness, the original, familiar sense the world makes to us is such determinacy. (And if so, what is the phenomenological evidence?) What has been dogmatically excluded is the primacy of mattering in such availability. Before the issue of the workings of reason in the world making some original sense to us can be raised, this claim for priority and its phenomenological evidence must get a hearing. His claim is that once we reassess how we understand such primordial availability, the modality of "apprehending" it must also be reassessed as necessarily nondiscursive, pre-reflective. This drastically elevates what we might otherwise consider a minor aspect of human experience, like being able to say that one feels "in tune" with a friend, or that one feels one understands Schubert in a way that has nothing to do with musical theory, to primary philosophical significance. Heidegger connects this claim with a notion of truth as disclosure or uncovering rather than assertion, and it leads him to assigning a crucial role to what he calls "poetry," or art in general, for philosophy. So the question Schear is raising is a crucial one.

Likewise the highest genus problem or the indeterminacy problem skews the discussion in the wrong direction. This will turn out to be foreign to how Heidegger understand the question of being (any assumptions relevant in a "thing" ontology will be incommensurate with considering the meaning of being as an event happening in a historical world).

So Schear formulates his question by construing Heidegger's claim in a certain way. He asks: must the rationalist accept the claim that the primary availability of beings in nondiscursive attunements is "unthinkable." "Unthinkable" goes pretty far. Heidegger's central claims about Dasein as being-in-the-world clearly does not mean that such primordial meaningfulness is unintelligible. As I understand the point we are being led to, the question is not whether attunements are "thinkable." They certainly are. I can certainly try to say what matters to me when asked. Schear's

question is whether they are in some way rationally redeemable, preliminary manifestations subject to some reflective regime of assessment even if not “engineered” or originally determined by reasoning. If I can say what matters to me, and if reflection and normative assessment are always possible, are implicit in human significances, then it goes too far, he claims, to argue that such mattering is wholly nondiscursive. But again, the question is primordially not subsequent discursive justification or even articulability. I (and Heidegger, as he notes) agree with Schear that a “rationalist” need not believe that experiencing something as mattering to one needs to be understood as the product of a reflective determination of what ought to matter. I can find something mattering to me and ask myself in a moment of reflection why it does or whether it ought to. But if mattering in the first place cannot be understood as guided or directed by reflection, then Heidegger’s case for the primordially of *Bedeutsamkeit* in the availability of being is made. Moreover, and more importantly, in his emphasis on finitude, Heidegger would also want to know how the considerations that one might advance in explaining or justifying one’s concerns themselves have come to matter, appear dispositive over other possible considerations. There is no reason to believe we are “in charge” of such considerations, apart from our inheritance of a historical world “horizoning” possible significances, the consideration that bear on our experience of what matters to us *in an assessment*.

Likewise, I agree that a rationalist, in order to count as one, as one of Heidegger’s opponents, need not be committed to the view that one can “engineer” what matters to one by reflection. And I agree that mattering is never a matter of a brute fact. When Schear speaks of a sense of agency “at work in our living rapport with what matters” and that it “consists in the mattering being expressive of one’s engagement with the world,” or “What matter figures in her life as something in which she participates,” neither I nor Heidegger should disagree. Something can certainly matter without self-conscious reflection, without making lists, and without engineering.

But how should we understand the difference between the role of philosophical reflection in determining what “really matters” as Schear puts it and “the role of reason in our ordinary phenomenology of mattering”? It is of course a fantasy to believe that if only more people would read John Rawls’s *Theory of Justice* that a welfarist program would be much more likely politically, or that people are capitalist because they have found good reasons for property rights. Schear seems to me to have suggested a “space” for a “reformed rationalist” not deluded by the fantasies of a “traditional rationalist.” Once we have cleared that ground, we are prepared for a more phenomenologically realistic picture of the role of reason in ordinary life. He enters that space at one point in his remarks. “One can have reasons for something mattering without having reasoned one’s way into it mattering, or even self-consciously holding beliefs about its importance.” On the one hand, this can sound like the hammer example we started with. There are reasons one could come up with, but having come up with them is no guarantee that they account for the mattering in the first place, and so can seem like rationalizations. And one’s own reasons need not be reasons, assuming that real reasons are good reasons. “That doesn’t matter to me because it’s women’s work” might count as someone’s reasons, but, as noted before, the “reasons” are already as infected with what has come to matter to the person as whatever particular mattering is being denied. I’m not sure how much space has really been opened up for our reformed rationalist.

Moreover, if there is a clear gap between philosophical attempts to show how certain institutions and practices can be understood as product of disinterested reason, and, on the other hand, “the role of reason in our ordinary phenomenology of mattering,” then what is the point of the former? Idealization is the usual answer, an ideal to be realized as much as possible. But that just pushes the question back to the role of philosophical idealizations if *they* play no role in the sources of and the instances of mattering. In Hegel’s work, the question would be what the point is of Hegel’s insistence in so many cases of his *Realphilosophie* that the ground of his claim lies ultimately in his *Logic*.

2 | RESPONSE TO DENIS MCMANUS

McManus’s rich set of comments raise an issue central to the interpretation of both Heidegger and the metaphysical tradition explored in *The Culmination*. Strictly speaking, metaphysics in the Western tradition is the attempt at an

priori understanding of substance, what pure (empirically unaided) thinking can determine about “the really real,” often beings not available sensibly because noetic, ideal, accessible only by the “light” of pure reason. Heidegger understands the notion in a much broader way and sees what he wants to call metaphysics in empirical study, moral theory, the hard sciences, aesthetics, theology and our everyday treatment of one another. The core of this notion of metaphysics is the idea of the “logical prejudice” (Dahlstrom’s phrase)¹ that McManus highlights. At first glance, this is Heidegger’s view that for the metaphysical tradition what could be intelligibly available (and so what could be) is what could be *discursively* intelligible, a fit object of an assertoric judgment, and so ultimately that the realm of beings is the realm of the potentially knowable (where the vehicle of knowability is the judgment, or its content, the proposition, the only possible truth-bearer). Pure thinking in the idealist tradition can thus determine what could be because the condition of thought being onto objects at all (having truth conditions) is the possibility of determinate predictability, and this, determinate discriminability, is the condition of any possible being being what it is and not anything else.

But this is only at first glance, since it is very natural to proceed from this starting point and then argue that this is a misleading prejudice because of its conception of *logos*, thinking or understanding. Accordingly what gets ruled out as unintelligible (and so impossible) on this reading is based on a misleading notion of intelligibility and once unencumbered by such a narrow restrictions (whatever they are), we can see Heidegger’s project as *continuous* with some aspects of the last stages of the metaphysical tradition, in the way Kant and Hegel thought of it, or as McManus says, a “suitably refined” version that preserves the relation between *logos* and being, but “refines” the notion of *logos*.

I want to object to two features of this approach, or at least I have the space to raise two brief questions. McManus’s formulation makes it look like Heidegger wants to raise the question of being by asking for the *right* “measure of the real,” and so to introduce a picture of Heideggerian Dasein as a condition of the intelligibility of the real in that sense. (McManus thinks Heidegger might have heard an intimation of his view in Kant’s equation of the conditions of experience with the conditions of the objects of experience.) But on the view defended in *The Culmination*, Heidegger does not want a better answer to the traditional question, one that breaks from too narrow a view of the understanding; he wants to reject the whole enterprise. That enterprise has taken for granted and so forgotten that the fundamental question is not “what is the real and accordingly what sort of access to it is possible?” but “what is the meaning of being, (*Sinn des Seins*)” where, he frequently says, that question concerns Being in its “significance” (*Bedeutsamkeit*). What is going wrong with the way Plato and Aristotle inaugurated the metaphysical tradition by understanding being as idea or form is not their views on understanding. Heidegger wants to show that while our perceptual and cognitive faculties are in play in any fundamental access to the world, what is salient in our experience are not perceptual and conceptual characteristics, but fundamentally or “originarily” beings in their significance, meaningfulness, importance, rising or falling in salience, mattering or not, in accordance with practical “comportments” with the world. This is sometimes taken to be a view restricted to *Being and Time* (1927), and that it is one that he came to reject as subjectivistic. It is one of the tasks of *The Culmination* to argue that this is not so, and that this issue of primordial “availability as meaningfulness, mattering” persists throughout as Heidegger’s main question. And senses of salience, significances, are not objects of propositional attitudes or, more importantly, any form of apperceptive understanding. It is not the sort of “Sinn” we can be onto via the understanding in any form. We are, Heidegger says, “attuned” to such significances, and these in ways informed by the horizon of possible significance in any historical world. This introduces a much different way of thinking about the problem than McManus’s refined view suggests, and it leaves Heidegger with a somewhat paradoxical position. If beings are available in the way they originally matter, and under the assumptions of metaphysics, the way they matter, what counts in our engagements with them, is discursive knowability, then the question of the meaningfulness of being has been dogmatically assumed and many implications follow about everything from our relation to the natural world to our treatment of each other, all resulting he thinks in modern scientism and technological dependence. What has come to matter to us has obscured the whole regime of mattering (ultimately as “subjective,” mere projections) and, as Heidegger notes (and here the paradox), what is phenomenologically “closest” to us has become “farthest” from us.

Second, Heidegger's alternate position, with its notion of attunement to meaningfulness, world, and truth as disclosure, suggests a different task for philosophy, one very different from an alternative epistemology. That is, Heidegger is not trying to "do better" what the metaphysical tradition attempted; he is trying to do something else. (This is most obvious in his notion of truth as unconcealment or disclosure, and its rejection of the bivalence condition. This is not something McManus connects with his notion of "refinement" and would be a separate discussion.) McManus can rightly point out that there is some continuity with the *Logic as Metaphysics* (LM) thesis since Heidegger himself often emphasizes what he calls the "belonging together of man and Being," but he wants to strongly reject what have been taken to be the implications of this belonging. In his essay, "Hegel and the Greeks," he notes, "It has indeed often been remarked that there cannot be an unconcealment in itself, that unconcealment is after all always unconcealment 'for someone.' It is thereby unavoidably 'subjectivized'" (HG, 334). But he adds,

Nevertheless, must the human being – which is what is being thought here – necessarily be determined as subject? Does "for human beings" already unconditionally mean: posited by human beings? We may deny both options, and must recall the fact that *aletheia*, thought in a Greek manner, certainly holds sway for human beings, but that the human being remains determined by logos... The human being is the being that, in saying, lets what is presencing lie before us in its presence, apprehending what lies before. Human beings can speak only insofar as they are sayers. Ibid.

But the saying he has in mind is interpretation. (That was already clear in *Being and Time*: "The phenomenology of Dasein is a hermeneutic in the primordial signification of this word, where it designates this business of interpreting." (BT 37)) And interpretation can certainly be thought of as a way of rendering intelligible. But I would suggest that to consider it a refinement of the LM thesis obscures what is radical about Heidegger's proposal, and would make it hard to understand his later thought on "poetic thinking."

3 | RESPONSE TO ANDREA KERN

Andrea Kern proposes to make a distinction that I do not include in my assessment of Heidegger's critique of German Idealism, a distinction between a dogmatic rationalism and a dogmatic cognitivism. The distinction will allow her to defend a "liberated" rationalism, liberated from its identification with cognitivism. Second, she proposes a different reading of the Heideggerian notion of *Stimmung*, or attunement, different from my account of it as a mode of primordial disclosure in the availability of anything at all, and so prior to knowledge claims about beings.

The distinction between rationalism and cognitivism is drawn from the work of John McDowell. The key component of rationalism in this view is "the objective world or reality is exhausted by what can be truly said to be the case." I find McDowell's formulation in line with Hegel's reflections on thinking and being in the *Logic*, and say so in my book on the *Logic*, *The Realm of Shadows*, emphasizing McDowell's apt formulations about the "unboundedness of the conceptual," and "there is no ontological gap between the sort of thing one can mean, or generally the sort of thing one can think, and the sort of thing that can be the case," or especially, "The constraint comes from outside thinking, but not from outside what is thinkable."² This formulates the central claim of Hegel's rationalism, but it is not the end of the story. The main player in that story for Kern and for me is Kant. For what it is to liberate rationalism from dogmatism is to distinguish it from cognitivism. The key claim is that the equation in McDowell's rationalism is a truism, adds nothing substantial to what we know about the world, is not a claim in ontology. If we think it does, we accept cognitivism; we think that the two sides of the equation, what there is and what can be said to be the case, must be understood separately and then somehow joined together, whereas in "rationalism," "neither can be understood independently of the other." It certainly seems, at least initially, common-sensically, to be the case that they obviously can be understood as distinct, and that therefore the equation is hardly straightforwardly analytic. So,

the next part of the story, where Kant makes his appearance, is the question of the source of the “illusion” that the two “sides” can be understood separately.

(So as not to get lost in terminology, I should note that what is at stake in the cognitivism issue is whether philosophy can establish that the meaning of being is exclusively its discursive availability, and whether this is the case because of a dogmatic assumption that amounts to a kind of subjective “impositionism” as I have called it, a “positing” or *setzen*, as Heidegger puts in in his Kant work, of being as what can be the content of assertions. The claim is that that this imposition blocks our ability to appreciate that the meaningful availability of being is not originally a matter of its availability to discursive thinking, and that the consequences of this block go far beyond issues in epistemology.)

For, famously, Kant thought, at least in all traditional interpretations, that a transcendental deduction was necessary to establish the equation in the formula. (Here I think Kern somewhat misspeaks when she says that “McDowell thinks that the very idea of such a Deduction already shows a confusion that explains why Kant cannot but fail to execute his own ambition.” As she goes on to show herself, though, McDowell's reading of the Deduction is precisely to show that the work *it* does is to free us from the illusion that a deduction is necessary. This is a heterodox reading of the deduction, but it is not without textual evidence, although it would require a treatise on the Deduction to sort out. But since Heidegger thinks that Kant thought he needed a deduction, let me say something very briefly about this view, which is overwhelmingly the traditional view.)

That view is of course inspired by what Kant himself said at the beginning of the Silent Decade in his famous letter to Herz in 1772, as the critical period proper began with his move away from the Inaugural Dissertation on precisely this issue. It is worth quoting in full.

Therefore, the pure concepts of the understanding must not be abstracted from sense perceptions, nor must they express the receptivity of representations through the senses; but though they must have their origin in the nature of the mind, they are neither caused by the object nor bring the object itself into being. In my *Dissertation*, I was content to explain the nature of intellectual representation in a merely negative way, namely to state that they were not modifications of the mind brought about by the object. However, I silently passed over the further question of how a representation that refers to an object without being in any way affected by it can be possible.

(Kant 1999, 133; my emphasis)

The last sentence is the crucial one. It makes clear that Kern's formulation of the equation is anodyne, a truism, because it broadly represents the identity theory of truth, which McDowell defends. That is, it is a formulation of what truth amounts to *when* a proposition is true. But a priori knowledge presents the problem that Kant noted in the letter: we have no warrant to claim that concepts not derived from experience (but from forms of judgment) nevertheless are objectively valid for all objects of experience. I agree with Kern's condensed formulation of the task of, basically, the two parts of the second edition deduction. Kant must show that everything in the deliverances of sensibility must be subject to the categories and, in the second part, that nothing can be presented to sensibility that is not a priori subject to the categories. The latter is an extraordinarily broad claim that requires a complex theory of the involvement of our conceptual capacities in our intuitive capacity, and it is hardly a truism, but a substantial commitment that relativizes the results of the deduction and originates the notion of an unknowable thing in itself.

Heidegger is acutely aware of this issue in his brilliant 1929 Kant book, as I try to show in *The Culmination* in Chapter Four. I argue there that Heidegger tries to show that Kant was on the verge in the first edition of the *Critique*, with its emphasis on the imagination as a possible common root of understanding and sensibility, of shifting the whole problematic to a different question about meaningful availability, rather than the priority of cognitive grasping, but that he shifted back to what Kern would call cognitivism in the second edition.

I should also note, although this is even larger a philosophical and textual issue, that Hegel himself does not think the equation is a truism. He appeared to believe at various points that the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, by assuming and then, as a “science of experience,” undermining the assumption that the fundamental forms of thought were not the forms of being, was a “deduction” of the standpoint of the *Logic*, and at various points that the *Logic*, as a “science of pure thinking” could establish the unthinkability of being, anything at all, without the categorical predicates by which the mark of being, determinacy, was possible, and this by a kind of internal, inter-animated deducibility of such categoriality.

That brings me to the second of Kern's points, about *Stimmung*.

My claim is not that the orientation to available meaningfulness in experience is a “ground” of the possibility of knowledge. The claim is that our primordial experience of the world is a disclosure of meaningfulness that is not a conceptual grasping. Heidegger does indeed call knowledge a founded mode of being in the world, but I interpret that to mean that it is an *abstraction* from this original experience, not one that relies on it to be the knowledge it is, in the normal sense of ground. So *Stimmung*, attunement to such sources is not a ground in the way sense-data might be said to be, or clear and distinct ideas, or impressions. We can of course attempt to say in discursive prose what has come to matter to us, but that, I claim, is a matter of interpretation, not simple exfoliation, and the original event is such an attunement, what we are trying to interpret, not its conceptual articulation. So, of course, it is not the case that mattering is beyond our ability to grasp conceptually, but that conceptual grasping is not how the event of mattering originally shows up in our experience. This is so even though our perceptual and cognitive capacities must be functionally normal. It is just that we do not first of all experience solid flat objects reflecting light rays in a certain spectrum, but tables to put things on, if we are about putting something on a table. Again, the issue is primordiality, and the claim that the world first presents itself in experience as material for cognition is also an implicit claim that what matters primarily in our engagement with the world is our ability to know it, and that any other “coloring” of experience in terms of saliences of significance is “subjective.” That, Heidegger and I want to claim, is a distortion of what we experience as original availability.

The example of the relation between nondiscursive know-how and propositional knowledge that Kern appeals to is playing tennis and her claim is “the idea of the practice is not intelligible without the sentences that purport to describe it.” I fail to see why. Many people learn to play tennis without taking lessons. They imitate others, for example, or watch films of people playing. But no one can learn to play tennis well by rule following, any more than one learns the meaning of a concept by reading dictionaries. One has learned a concept's meaning by an understanding of how to use it that is not, famously, a matter of rule-following or instructions, but is one on which rule-following depends. In that sense, the nondiscursive aspect of a practice is prior to and independent of any explication. Again, the issue is primordiality, not possible explicability. (As far as I understand her, I take it that this is similar to or the same as the point she makes about counting.)

I agree with Kern that Heidegger does not think that the question of what a human being is can be addressed by asking what sort of being, among and like all other beings in the world, a human being is. *Dasein* is a kind of openness to the meaning of being, something no thing-like ontology can account for. That does not mean, though, that the Heideggerian “world” is “the totality of that to which one's knowledge is answerable.” In Heidegger's view, any cognitive relation to the world presupposes an answer to the question of the original availability of the world, and, I have argued, Heidegger's most radical and interesting claim is that this primordial disclosure is nondiscursive and involves an attunement to issues of salient significances, mattering. These cannot be the result of reflection on what ought to matter or captured by any notion of “seeing” what matters. Kern has framed Heidegger's main question in terms of what she calls liberated rationality and I have tried to say why I think this epistemic framework misses the major issue.

Her own view of the availability of the world as a matter of *Stimmung* is to claim that the world as a whole can only be a nothing, not any sort of object of attention, or a nothing, an absence because it is, by assumption, considered apart from my knowledge of it. Thus, the whole hubbub about anxiety and “the nothing” in *Being and Time*, is another “triviality.” What else could a world apart from our knowledge of it be but not an object of knowledge?

That is trivial, but again, Heidegger never wants to frame the question of the availability of the horizon of possible meaningfulness in a historical epoch as a matter of knowledge. He is in fact terribly anxious that he will be understood that way, as proposing a *Weltanschauung* theory or a philosophical anthropology, a kind of empiricism. And there is nothing anxious making about realizing that an object considered apart from any way we have of knowing it is not knowable. This line of approach does not hook up with the famous Heideggerian themes of thrownness, being the null basis of a nullity, *das Nichts nichtet*, being towards death, and the other modalities of Stimmung like that presented in *The Origin of the Work of Art* or “What Are Poets For?” (*Wozu Dichter?*) I try to defend what Heidegger says about unconcealment as truth, rather than discursive answerability to the world, and the modalities of disclosure of meaningfulness (not cognition of objects) in Chapter Nine of the book, “Poetic Thinking.”

4 | RESPONSE TO THOMAS KHURANA

Khurana has raised four important, thoughtful points on Hegel's behalf, each one of which would require at least an article length response. I shall have to be content with a somewhat telegraphic rejoinder.

The first point concerns something of great importance to Heidegger but difficult to discuss in isolation from several others, and which can seem quite internal to Heidegger's project. It concerns the relation between the question of being qua being as distinct from a question about any of the beings. Heidegger seems mightily concerned with a confusion he finds in the tradition between a question about Being qua being and the way questions about any of the beings are raised. (An example might be assuming that the question is “what being qua being” is, in the way we might ask of an entity, “what is it?”) It is a Hegelian worry, which Khurana argues bears on Heidegger's project, that trying to discuss the problem of the meaning of Being (*Sein*) in abstraction from the being of beings (*Seiende*), which from his point of view, Heidegger is doing, leads to a dark indeterminacy. For Hegel (for Khurana), the meaning of Being will turn out not to be a substantive answer, as if to a “what” question, but to be the internal interanimations of The Concept, something that will, can, only emerge in the course of that interanimation, as if “shown” not “said.” Thus, what Heidegger charges Hegel with, can be turned around against him with the charge that Heidegger, in requiring a treatment of Being in abstraction from the Being of beings, is in danger of treating Being like a being, and an empty treatment at that.

Heidegger's claim, though, is not that Hegel has addressed “the question of being” in the wrong way, but that he has not addressed it all. It is a thesis of *The Culmination* that the problem of Being for Heidegger is not the problem of “what is being?” or “what is there?” or “what distinguishes being from not-being?” or “what do we mean by the term Being?” Or, to come closer to the beginning of Hegel's *Logic*, his question is not: how could the thought of anything at all be an actual thought (a version of Aristotle's version of the question)? If the answer to that last question is “it can, but only as the full articulation of the moments of The Concept,” then it is first of all the case that the appropriately considered “thought” of being still treats being in terms of its (speculative) thinkability, even if not directly but only in the manifestations of “thought determinations” (*Denkbestimmungen*). What the Hegelians call the identity of being and thinking is assumed. Khurana will make another point about the status of the *Logic* in Hegel's *Encyclopedic* system, but on the issue of what he calls “logical being,” Heidegger's point, it seems to me, still applies.

Moreover, it is a Heideggerian maxim too that the question of the meaning of being is always inseparable from the question of the meaning of beings,³ but that must be understood in terms of his main project, which has nothing to do with the problem, “what is Being?” He has accepted from the beginning the Parmenidean thought (as he understands it) about the belonging together of thought and being, which he formulates as the belonging together of Dasein and the meaning of being, but he takes that to mean that any being must always be considered in the light of its primordial availability.⁴ And so any being is available only in terms of its experienced meaningfulness. Beings show up, rise to an experienced salience in terms of the horizon of a possible meaningfulness in a historical world, our own distinct openness to meaningfulness, mattering, as Dasein, and the particular comportments in the world we are engaged in. This already introduces the widest difference with Hegel: that our possible attentiveness to such

saliences is nondiscursive, a matter of attunement (*Stimmung*). But the point at issue with Khurana's worry about the "ontological difference" is that this way of treating the issue raises for Heidegger the issue of the source of possible meaningfulness, or the relation between that source and episodes of significance. Heidegger has some extremely unusual ways of formulating this issue. One of his most frequent is: "what 'gives' being" (understood as significance) and that this itself cannot in any sense be considered an episode of such significance, the significance that allows being to be salient. (This is how he understands the ontological difference.) Or, while the tradition understands being as presence, that beings are meaningfully available only as determinacies enduring in time (*Anwesenheiten*), available simply as thinkably detectable, it does not ask the question of the emerging-into-presence, presencing, *Anwesen* of such meaningfulness. This is not a matter of conceptualizing or detecting but what he calls *Anwesenlassen*, something like letting the presencing happen.⁵ This emergence, or source, or bestowal and its possibility and implications is the forgotten question about the *Sinn des Seins*, the meaning of Being, meaningful beings in their being-ness or meaningfulness. This framework – that what makes available what is available is not itself simply available – is the source of his later language about the inextricability of revealing and concealing in such dispensations and obviously caused him a great deal of effort in the thirties, as he struggled to find an appropriate language for his phenomenon, leading to the almost impenetrable *Beiträge* with its central concept of *Ereignis*, now translated mostly as "appropriation" rather than "event."

This is all necessary to state in this way in order to defend Heidegger from Khurana's *tu quoque* objection about the thought of being, but it is obviously deeply internal to Heidegger and requires a good deal more exposition. I hope I have gone some of the way towards that in *The Culmination*.

Khurana's second point is that Heidegger's emphasis on *The Science of Logic* ignores both the "introduction" to the standpoint of the *Logic*, the 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and the fact that any adequate understanding of the *Logic* must do justice to its place in the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, the full exposition of his system and the "completion" in some sense of the metaphysical category theory of its first part, the *Logic*. Khurana is right about the latter point (that Heidegger does not deal with the *Encyclopedia*), and right too that Heidegger's treatment of the *Phenomenology* in his commentary on that work's Introduction does not treat it as necessarily linked to, preparatory for, the *Logic*. So, the reminder is supposed to be that "Hegel does not maintain that discursive intelligibility exhausts the meaning of being"; the role of the *Phenomenology's* account of "experience" must be respected. This is also supported by a charge against Heidegger's criticism of the "infinity" of thinking as Hegel understands it, the claim for the full adequation of speculative thinking (the moments of the Concept) to anything that could be.

To support this latter charge, Khurana makes a difficult and very compressed point. That point is that it is "wrong to think that Hegel has simply tried to remove intuition from the picture to instead claim that our thinking is a purely spontaneous conceptual activity." Rather, "passivity and receptivity of intuition is internal to, essential to thinking. He [Hegel] has not removed our finitude [reliance on intuition] but internalized it such that it is not the other of our unlimited, purely spontaneous, capacity to think but inherent in our thinking." But if reliance on intuition is not "other than thinking" but internal to pure thinking, then Heidegger's point still stands. It is the insufficiency of pure thinking to determine itself that Heidegger admired in the first edition of Kant's *Critique*, and while in some sense thinking's self-determination is always apperceptive, aware of its determining as it determines, this is not a passive intuiting of itself (any more than apperception is a self-observation in any act of thinking) but a moment of the determining thinking itself, not a seeing or a reliance on passivity. His extreme point in the *Encyclopedia Logic* still stands.

This kind of being purely with itself is inherent in free thought, sailing off into the free, open space where there is nothing below or above us, and where we stand in solitude alone with ourselves.

(EL, §31)

The former point about the system is very similar to the objection raised by Schelling in the *Philosophy of Revelation*, but if we do consider the point – that the *Logic* is not fully sufficient as a theory of pure thinking alone, but must be

understood in terms of what is other than thinking, Nature and Spirit – then, especially when we realize that Hegel is hardly claiming that developments in the natural sciences and human history that he relies on in those parts have come to an end, Heidegger's isolation of the *Logic* would be misleading at best. But whatever could be discovered in the sciences or whatever happens in history, if it is to be intelligible must always be “shadowed” by the metaphysical determination of “what could be” in the *Logic*. (The Philosophies of Nature and Spirit are as they are, have the form they do, and that they will have, *because of the Logic*.) That is why the *Logic* is a metaphysics, a determination of *all* that is knowable in its knowability, assuming that “the meaning of being” is its basic knowability.

This likewise vitiates the point, or vitiates it as an objection, that Hegel acknowledges our finitude more robustly than Heidegger admits by virtue of just that insistence on the Philosophy of Nature and the Philosophy of Spirit, or that “True infinity is therefore only available if we fully grasp our finitude, even acknowledge its necessity. Infinity is therefore not the overcoming of finitude, but is infinite finitude.” The latter phrase still counts as a denial of real finitude, in the unusual way both these philosophers are using that term, for one thing since there is one being whose meaning is not available to pure thinking – Dasein, and that is the true mark of our finitude.

The issue of the relation between the *Phenomenology* and the *Logic* is probably the most contested in the Hegel literature. In his “Hegel and the Greeks,” Heidegger takes note of the issue but makes a point similar to that made above, that the *Phenomenology* can only be convincing if it already presupposes the logical movement defended in the *Logic* and so cannot be a proper introduction or deduction (something many scholars believe Hegel himself realized.) Heidegger's claim is summarized in this passage.

If Hegel allows the fundamental position of his system to culminate in the absolute idea, in the complete self-appearing of spirit, this provokes the question as to whether disclosure must not also be in play even in this shining, i.e., in the phenomenology of spirit and therefore in absolute self-knowing and its certainty.

(HG 332)

This is (yet again) a difficult, compressed point but it goes to the heart of Hegel's enterprise, and I think Heidegger is right that it is unsatisfying. If we are to defend the *Phenomenology*, we need to defend Hegel's notion of determinate negation, the heart of his claim about a self-sublating or self-overcoming thinking. This is his claim that in the historical changes in the history of philosophy, in political history, in the history of art and the history of religion, or in the “science of the experience of consciousness,” the incompleteness and so insufficiency of some form of self-understanding can only occur if that insufficiency *already* reveals what would be necessary to overcome and resolve the insufficiency. There is no Hegel without something like this claim, ultimately the basis for his claim for various progressions, but the claim itself can be compared to an exclusive disjunctive syllogism, $p \vee q, \sim p$, therefore (determinately) q . We only know what the inference shows if we know the first premise is true, if the field of possibility has already been set. That assumption is the source of the possible determinacy resulting from the negation. It is too much to go into here, but that is the basis of Heidegger's claim that Hegel always presupposes what he should show – the “Absolute.”

Khurana then makes two countercharges to Heidegger in Hegel's name. First, “The meaning of being is not simply that it is something to be discursively known, it is something to which we are to relate *freely* – something that gains its significance as being to the extent that we constitute ourselves as free beings in relation to it.” The issue here is what it could mean to say that the meaning of being, at least as I interpret that issue in *The Culmination*, could be “something to which we are to relate *freely* – something that gains its significance as being to the extent that we constitute ourselves as free beings in relation to it.” As I understand what this means, this (“*constitute ourselves as free beings*”) is precisely the opposite of what Heidegger is trying to show. The key Hegelian point Khurana is making – “the first and last word in Hegel is not reason per se, but freedom” – is something he interprets as Geist “letting go of itself,” not merely a liberation from nature but a liberation in or as natural beings, or “second nature” beings as Hegel understands it. This is a version of the earlier point about the insufficiency of pure thinking thinking itself, the

Logic, that thinking must “release itself,” come to understand itself as a thinking nature, and in so far as it does, realize itself as a freedom in nature. So thinking comes to understand itself as not merely other than nature, and nature is understood as not other than thinking but “internal to thinking itself.”

What I want to say is that this excursus on Hegel is not so much something that responds to Heidegger's concerns as does not address it. Heidegger's claim is that the Hegelian account leaves something out, forgets something, rather than directly gets it wrong – the possibility of the meaningfulness of being in its primordiality. An account which addresses that question by complicating Hegel's account of pure thinking with its necessary completion in nature, with the concomitant dialectical understanding of nature, and freedom understood as a Hegelian second nature realized in historical time, simply complicates the account of pure thinking as the measure of the meaningfulness of being. If Khurana's more complicated account of thinking still assumes that how what comes to matter in the original availability of being is a result of our reflectively thinking it matters or even that it ought to matter, then Heidegger's main charge is bypassed. And for Heidegger that means that there is no realization by Hegel of the distinct mode of availability that “Bedeutsamkeit” is, and the new sense of its availability required by the recognition of its primordiality, and so the secondary status of thinking, however related to nature.⁶

On Khurana's last, Derridian point, while there is certainly a Heideggerian resonance in the restricted versus general economy of meaning issue, the point about the limitations of anti-idealism – “Anti-idealism insist on the radical exteriority and inexhaustibility of what is other than thinking, but threatens to simply oppose this other to the finite expressions of our thinking and thereby reify and mystify this inexhaustible other,” still invokes the language of “interiority and exteriority” that is orthogonal to Heidegger's main concern. The question is the possible meaningfulness of being. It is only if this issue is recast as the traditional problem of being can any question of reification or inefable otherness arise.

ENDNOTES

¹ Dahlstrom (2001).

² McDowell (1996), 24ff., 51, 52.

³ “Because phenomena, as understood phenomenologically, are never anything but what goes to make up Being, while Being is in every case the Being of some entity, we must first bring forward the entities themselves if it is our aim that Being should be laid bare.” (BT 61)

⁴ I agree with Sheehan (2015) that Heidegger, for all the variations, remained a phenomenologist.

⁵ On logos itself as “gathering into meaning.” See GA 9: 279.

⁶ The larger question: could there be for Hegel an understanding of freedom that does not regard it as the work of reason? Moreover, in a footnote, Khurana asks: “To make the same point in a different way: When Pippin writes that ‘there is no such absolute congruence of thinking and being’, what is the status of this proposition? I take it this is something we know. But if it is, how does knowledge know of the absence of such absolute congruence? It can only do so if the difference between being and thinking is internal to knowing itself.” Fundamental ontology is always a matter of phenomenology for Heidegger, and his claims in the project are matters of phenomenological “attestation,” matters we are supposed to be awakened to, that are disclosed, not known discursively.

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