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# ***De Servo Arbitrio: The End of Liberty in Martin Heidegger***

**Eugenio Mazzarella**

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Time, history and being are key words in the Heideggerian canon. Grasping the web inscribed by these guiding words is for Heidegger tantamount to touching the very thing of thinking. What calls for this tampering is a necessity of thinking, which is to know itself and its most intimate possibilities. This is especially true today when thinking is the thinking of a world which for over a century now finds itself bound by the constrictions of its planetary interconnexions, assuming them as a destiny. A destiny in which technology is no longer understood as an immobile mainspring but as a loaded gun or primary engine. In these straits thinking must still essay to know something about the status of its link to Being, at a time when this link -- which is originary to philosophy -- is, even after historical consciousness, even after Heidegger, wholly historically articulated.

Whether thinking, or human thought, is in some guise master of itself, or free, -- to say it with a word that is Christian, or at the very least referenced to an ontology of chance, of the occurrence as *arbitrio*, -- or whether it is bent on the mere reflection of necessity, is a question that can be decided on the basis of how this historical articulation of Being and thinking is concretely thought. If we assume, with Heidegger, that

the analysis of the historicity of Dasein will show that this entity is not 'temporal' because 'it stands in history', but that, on the contrary, it exists historically and can so exist only because it is temporal in the very basis of its Being,<sup>1</sup>

the real issue then becomes: what is the meaning of existing historically? Will it mean, against this foundation, being-dependent or being-free? Yet, in concreto, in concrete existence, the question is decided on the practical side of analysis, in the effective and unthought decision.

If the definition of philosophy as universal and phenomenological ontology and stemming from the hermeneutics of Dasein assumes thematically that the analytic of existence (insofar as a showing of the constitution of the Being of Dasein), remains only *one* way of the research, the problem for us becomes that of seeing how a philosophi-

cal inquiry returns to its place of origin, existence, once the sense of Being has been made manifest.

Everything revolves around the specific results of the programmatic structure of the inquiry in *Being and Time*, as is expounded in paragraph eight, especially the first part. That is, on the way the results of the first and second section (care, *Sorge*, and temporality, *Zeitlichkeit*) are related to the horizon of the third part, the *Temporalität*, which was not written in 1927 but much later and known as *Time and Being*.

It is well known how Heidegger connects the results of the first section, concerning the unitary structure of Dasein, *Sorge*, with the conclusions reached at the end of the second section, which deals with its sense, or temporality. If care is "the formal existential totality of the whole of the ontological structures of Dasein," "the having before being already (a world) insofar as being-alongside (the entity met within the world,") (SZ, § 41) in the concreteness of existence, the sense of the Dasein is manifested (as care which decides under the urgency of anxiety) through the assumption, on the part of the existing being, of its own temporality, *Zeitlichkeit*, in the self-appropriating temporality of the event (situation and occurring).

It is with the above determination of the *Zeitlichkeit* as the sense of the being of Dasein that *Being and Time* concludes. Yet this leaves open the question of the anchoring -- which is the declared aim of the *Seinfrage* -- of the sense of being of Being in relation to the sense of Being in general, a mooring which requires a more precise determination of the latter. However, leaving the question open does not prejudice possible developments.

Here a prejudice might reside in the fact that the sense of the being of Being is insufficiently determined the moment it is reduced, as in *Being and Time*, to a *Zeitlichkeit* in which temporality and spatiality of Being are not thought as co-originary and co-structuring the being of Being. The rethinking of the rapport between spatiality and temporality in the structure of the being of Being must be entrusted to an amplification of the ontologically disclosing character of Dasein, being-there (for entities as well), especially if directed toward the work of art. It is this redefinition in terms of the spatio-temporal character of Being-there that allows for the realization [esecuzione = execution, carrying out] of the Question of Being as anchorage of Dasein to Being. It is precisely the tempo-spatial trait that makes human Dasein and Dasein in general ontologically coherent with the being of Being, with its originary modality as aperture, which constitutes originary spatio-temporality, clearing of the origin, event that tempospacializes and spatiotemporalizes, in short the originary self-manifesting of Being which in its withdrawing allocates to itself the totality of entities. Otherwise put, this represents the concrete manifestation of the *turn*

that occurs between *Being and Time* and *Time and Being*, a showing of the circularity that exists in the appropriating-disappropriating dynamic of Being thought as Event. Of this redefinition of the Question of Being Heidegger offers a final version in the 1962 conference *Time and Being*, which we may take as a synthetic yet complete third part of the project begun in 1927.

In this context, the *Zeitung der Zeitlichkeit* of Dasein rethought in its co-originary spatiality is here shown as rooting itself in the structure of Being as *Anwesen*, as a coming to presence of the three directions of temporal-spatial ecstasies of Being itself. This *Anwesen* is really *Zeit-Raum*, the free space of time, *Dimensione*, originary *ekstatikòn* in which rests the *ekstatikòn* that makes up the sense of the being of Dasein. In the *ekstatikòn* the tridimensionality of the ecstasies is reunited in an originary and structuring quadridimension, the cogent correspondence of the ecstasies, which constitutes their cogent co-determination and, in their extension, the reciprocal determining factor, or the fact of their reciprocal necessity. This fourth dimension, that is, necessity, is actually the first of the four, "the bringing that determines all else".<sup>2</sup> The *Anwesen* is the bond, the Janus head, time itself become world that links the spatio-temporality of Dasein to the *Urphänomen*, to the *Ursache* of the *Lichtung* and wherein *Es gibt Sein*, *Es gibt Zeit*. This *Ursache* is the *Gabe*, which Heidegger modulates in the doctrine of the *Ereignis* as "destination" ("*Schicken*") of being, as time in the sense of the freeing bringing in the Open. (SD 18) In the giving of the *Es gibt Sein* "as destining and as gathering of the destinations...[what is] ordained each time in a destiny is the presence of Being in its epochal changes." (SD 17)

By means of this doctrine of the *Ereignis* as a marker of the *Geschick* of Being which assigns to itself every possible history Heidegger succeeds in "elaborating the Temporality (*Temporalität*) of Being." (SZ § 5) With this development the phenomenological ontology planned in *Being and Time* is accomplished: Heidegger's specific brand of phenomenology, its "theoretical" reason at least, appears legitimately to subside. The thought that sees has followed the phenomenon of Being to the last trace of the visible, along the guiding thread of time. Beyond that trace, where the phenomenon of Being "turns" upon itself, subtracting itself (as *Enteignis*) from sight, it is no longer possible to strive for a thought which intends to remain philosophically true to a universally communicable seeing undergoing the rigors of a "scientific" exhibition, to be shared through discourse, or loyal to a known verdict on the non transience (for finite knowledge) of the Absolute.

It is precisely here, however, at the place where Heidegger's theoretical reason calms down and all but vanishes, that a task arises for thinking, for our practical reason.

The moment has come for us to go all the way and attempt to figure out what is the meaning of existing historically for a Dasein whose temporal ecstaticalness is rooted in the ecstases of Being as sending and destiny. The problem facing us, therefore, is to verify whether Heidegger's way of thinking this rootedness of the Dasein in Being does not end up being a crucifixion of the *Zeitlichkeit* of human Dasein upon the *Temporalität* of Being. In other words, the question is whether Heidegger's freedom of the Dasein bears in its bosom the self-centralizing action of chance, of the *libero arbitrio*, or whether it doesn't actually relinquish this possibility in favor of the phenomenological rigor of theory as a thinking which conceives of Being reflexively, perhaps embracing it without reservations. Of course this may be read as the transcription of an intolerable anxiety for this mode of thinking, the anxiety for freedom which is proper to a man facing either the personal, free God (a free god who freely creates a man who is free even before god), or the radical nothingness of a nihilism of the world bereft even of the last, ancient god: the necessity of the world, the how of its holding together.

My thesis is that the freedom of the Heideggerian Dasein is a freedom which is merely "reflexive," which is reflection of and adherence to the freedom of Being as it manifests itself. It is a freedom which is bound phenomenologically. If we bear in mind Heidegger's critique of Husserl's eidetic reason, it is paradoxically the link of the *eidōs* which forces thinking to say yes to it: the manifest historicity of the event that becomes the thing itself of thought, and a determining factor. Understood in the wake of the freedom of thought as freedom from the lack of awareness, from the darkness of cognitive egoism, radical *jahsagen* to one's situation in the world, Heidegger's freedom is nothing other than the acceptance of truth understood as manifestation, the freeing of Being in the beings. Despite his critique of the traditional notion of truth as the conformity of thought to thing, Heidegger is still operating in the shadow of this very notion, albeit ontologically radicalized. The freedom of the Dasein is for him solidly anchored to an idea of freedom as conforming to Being, ultimately to the *eidōs* of the event, despite the fact that this *eidōs* is thought in a *kairological* manner, in the imperscrutable certainty of its when and why. Of the Christian *kairological* appeal what fails is the essential postulate, the eventfulness of the answer which may actually not be given. Yet with this possibility what falls apart is Christian freedom itself, the freedom of faith, which always requires the essential invisibility of the things believed in. This is an entirely Greek answer to the anxiety of faith, or if we prefer an answer to the essential freedom in nothingness. Being certainly no longer needs justification -- god cannot be sought through the *pietas* of Job or the *Quo lehet*. Yet for this ultimate *pietas* of thinking toward god or toward Being, which no longer calls for judgment, in

the end what is required is adequation to the dicta of the "seen" of Being in order to be justified in terms of *pietas*. What permeates this perspective is still the mythology of the eye which does not mislead if only it is purified by vision. The faith in invisible things -- non verifiable or vivified faith, *ex auditu* in one's own conscience -- is the untenable territory of Heideggerian anxiety which, beyond radical nothingness, exhibits the binding necessity of the event given to the gaze.

This "reflexive" determination of the freedom of Being on the part of the freedom of the Dasein is directly influenced by the Ontological equivalences that Heidegger sets up between Being and being, manifestation, truth, freedom. Freedom is but "a free yielding to a conformity which obliges:" a yielding which is "possible only if we are free for that which manifests itself in a disclosure. This being-free expresses the essence of freedom which until today has remained misunderstood: the opening of the relating that makes conformity intrinsically possible is founded on freedom: *the essence of truth is freedom.*<sup>3</sup> And further on, we read that

'man does not possess' truth, if anything he is truth, the *ek-sistent* and un-concealing Dasein [which] possess man in a more originary way so that it can, by itself, guard and guarantee for humanity the relationship to being as such in its totality...freedom understood as the letting-be of being, sets forth and realizes the essence of truth in the sense of the unconcealing of being. (WW, p. 190)

As can be gleaned from these texts, it is not only the conformity of logical truth which is possible solely upon the foundation of ontological truth (freedom as the manifestation of Being, its giving itself freely in the clearing that allows being to come forth), but moral truth and freedom as well. The link is all the more cogent as it is imper-scrutable. The kairological element of the *Geshick* of Being, of the decree of Being, does not lend itself to comprehensive analysis or to discursive reason, but only to suggestions, to hints of thought. Moreover, it does not lend itself to intuition or to a seeing within the occurrence, preferring rather to emerge with some *aspect*, from everything that thinking can touch insofar as presence, to a beckoning toward what befalls us, to ourselves, to meditative clues that hover about. Heidegger's relationship to Being is aptly described by Rilke: "I fly about God, around the ancient tower, and I fly along the centuries." It is only upon this "we ourselves" as *weltet*, that is, as *Selbstwelt*, *Mitwelt*, *Umwelt*, that it is possible to unfold a continuing analysis. Yet in the Heideggerian perspective this analysis shows an originary reciprocal link that extends from the necessary and cogent factual coexistence of these concentric spheres to the reciprocal co-determination within the intimate sphere of the *Selbstwelt*, in that existential seed which makes it authentic: decision. In the existential concreteness of

the Dasein, the care that decides assumes upon itself its own temporality: for at the urgency of anxiety, one must decide for something, and this something is time, one's proper time, being insofar as it gives itself as past, as present, as future. Heidegger's assumption that temporality is part of the care that decides, is grounded entirely on the necessary co-determination and reciprocal necessitating of the ecstasies. In its ontological fullness, that is, in its deliberate awareness, the ecstatic *Zeitlichkeit* is here nothing but re-reflection of the ecstatic *Temporalität* of Being. The way in which there's no horizontal caesura between the ecstasies of the *Zeitlichkeit*, in like manner there's no vertical caesura between the complex of these ecstasies and the ecstasicalness of Being.

The problem of human freedom, on the other hand, would consist in inserting a caesura in this corraling of human freedom toward the reflexivity of the freedom of Being, and within the same co-exstensivity of the temporal ecstasies of the *Zeitlichkeit* of Dasein. A caesura right in the necessity of the continuum Being-Dasein and of the continuum of Being with itself. In other words, it becomes a question for Dasein to recover that characteristic of *Enteignis*, and of withdrawing from the continuum of Being, that arbitrary withdrawing which is in Being itself. Again, our goal is: to recuperate for human Dasein its veritative character, free to refuse to submit to the reflection of the announcing of Being, the free choice (*arbitrio*) of denying this announcing in favor of another one, even if it is posited by itself to itself. The identity of Being and thinking, which is onto-logic co-belonging, cannot be resolved in an excessive Parmedian (pseudo)moralistic intellectualism, in a common moral identity.

When framing man's being within Being, and thinking as action (and as moral action) is effectively reduced to the reflexivity of the ontic, then there's nothing left of concrete human freedom. Thinking can be *denken* as *danken*, "serving that frees"<sup>4</sup> within the ontological realm, not the moral one. In this case thinking may at best free us from the anxiety of a truly moral way of thinking by linking up with a choice which we wish to be "right" insofar as being merely taken, even within the spiritual storm of the ineluctable. Free moral thinking is instead a lordly thinking which does not possess the fallacious *pietas* that relinquishes its sovereignty, and which refuses to take refuge in the binding force of a decree -- what to all effects amounts to an expected *excusatio*, for when matters unfold in an unwanted manner, one can always say "I was following an order." Moral thinking is always open, constitutively a crossroads whereupon we can be lost. There is no other moral way of thinking. Of course we can always follow precepts, or a venerable tradition, or even accept the divine word as revealed and unquestionable truth. Yet once again the question whether action taken is really moral -- intentionally, beyond actual effects, beyond any discourse on the responsibility of the effects -- is

something that can be known only *a posteriori*: the certainty of heartfelt judgment is always also a judgment dependent on timeliness, or on the appropriateness of time. The peculiar anxiety of Heideggerian ontology is actually a fleeing from this anxiety, which is dependent upon time and wherein my freedom yields itself as truth.

Because in concrete, historical existence to decide is always to decide for the being which is given as past, present, or future, and which as ecstasy colors all other ecstasies, action, choice itself, the resulting anxiety yields an ontologization of the present, of what happens now, rooted not in the future (which would correspond to hope in Christianity, to the awaiting the result of my present decision), but in the past, in the ctonic weight of having-been. In the concrete indecision of the present, of the now, the anxiety of the ineluctable is not as great, for this *Stimmung*, as the pure anxiety of the future. In fact, it seems to give this anxiety a reassurance: I will be because I have-always-been. To partake of a destiny is still more reassuring than risking not having any.

What the nature of time is on a formal plane has already been grasped and described once and for all by St. Augustine: ecstasy of past-present-future (such at least is the apperceived structure of our present consciousness, of the mind that follows the collapse of the bicameral mind). But is time, in its concreteness, solely this formal structure? The answer is clearly no. This structure is full of content, it is a content: the content of the decision here and now of a sliver of time. This decision, the tooth in the wheel of time, strikes on the past, or the present, or the future. In the Christian version of time, one of its fundamental modalities is the beating on the future that guides the rolling of the wheel. Every decision, decision-time, is ancient (then), monumental (now as then) or critical (cut the now with a new now, so that there is no longer a word: then, now?), the clearing of a passage in the necessitating continuum.

At this juncture, that the ontological reflexivity of Heideggerian freedom ends up yielding on the ontic plane to the ctonic weight of the past is, in Heidegger's mind, a matter not only of fact (its specific political result), but of right. Heidegger's ontological freedom as "conscious staying-inside the being in its totality, which must be borne,"<sup>5</sup> a *realization* of Being in us for which the resolved Dasein finds itself always already decided, has at its side the structure of Schelling's freedom from the 1809 treatise, to which Heidegger dedicates a symbiotic commentary. Here also, in Schelling's words,

the single action follows from the inner necessity of being free..which should not be misunderstood...with the empirical necessity based on constriction:... This inner necessity is itself liberty, man's being is essentially his own act: necessity and liberty are between themselves as a single being, and it is only if looked at individually that they seem to be



different: but in itself it is liberty, formally is is necessity . . . in the original creation, man is un undecided being, but he can decide for himself. Yet this decision cannot happen in time, but falls outside any time, it doesn't itself belong to time, but to eternity . . .<sup>6</sup>

As we can see, it is the monogram of the resoluteness of *Being and Time* that engages in the "ineluctable" of the historical decision of the German Dasein of the thirties of being for oneself, of assuming one's proper essence when facing nothingness, at the risk of disappearing on the scene of the being: the monogram of secularization, in the Weimer climate, of the specific Schellingian curvature of the pre-destination which "saves" freedom by making of the man who acts thus here the man who has acted since eternity and already in the beginning of creation. From its inception the German Dasein has chosen to be such, once it has been thrown into beings. And today's choice, the today of 1933, of the *Discours der Rektorat* on the self-affirmation of the German university, is simply the confirmation of German Dasein's having been wanted to be from the very beginning.

But this liberty as agreement with the dictates of a root which is effective influence of the past upon the now-choice for a future, which removes from this future the *novum* of hope in order to consign it to the execution of a dictate, and which at most has been desired solely in the dimension of the immemorial, this liberty is no less than the freedom-necessity of private Dasein. Its only mode of subsisting, if it were to be authentic, is by the appropriation of a link to human will which lies outside of it yet constitutes its truth. Thereby disclosing the constrictions of a fate that rebukes the essential responsibility of salvation, or the chance of losing oneself as a real alternative. It is more a subtle proud and nihilistic gesture, the assumption of the inexplicable in terms of the ineluctable, than a true letting oneself be that, understanding not, yet entrusts itself to a mimesis of faith as trust, the Heideggerian *Gelassenheit*.

#### Notes

1. See M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, Niemeyer, Tübingen, 1972, p. 376; par. 72. All subsequent references to this book will be incorporated in my text, abbreviated as SZ followed by paragraph number.

2. M. Heidegger, *Zur Sache des Denkens*. Niemeyer, Tübingen, 1976, p. 16, hereinafter abbreviated SD.

3. M. Heidegger, *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit*, in *Wegmarken*, Klosterman, Frankfurt A. M., 1976, p. 185-86. Hereinafter WW.

4. M. Heidegger, *Unterweg zur Sprache*, Neske, Pfullingen, 1975, p. 155.

5. M. Heidegger, *Schellings Abhandlung über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit* (1809), Niemeyer, Tübingen, 1971, p. 196.

6. F. Schilling, *Über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit*. Stuttgart, Reclam, 1964, pp. 102-03.